

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, March 18, 1991**

2:30 p.m.

Date: 91/03/18

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

We give thanks to God for the rich heritage of this province as found in our people.

We pray that native-born Albertans and those who have come from other places may continue to work together to preserve and enlarge the precious heritage called Alberta.

Amen.

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

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 52 I hereby present four copies of the 1990-91 report of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act. Copies are presently being printed and will be available to members shortly.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I rise under the provisions of Standing Order 40 to request consent of the Assembly following question period today to agree to switching the order of private member's motions such that the one currently numbered 201, standing in Mr. Martin's name, be switched with the one currently numbered 208, standing in Mr. McInnis's name.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Procedural.
The Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under Standing Order 30 to request leave at the end of question period to move to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss this government's role in privatizing AGT and buying back NovAtel Communications, which has led to the massive debt recently reported by NovAtel and the major layoffs announced last Friday.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

Bill 10 Powers of Attorney Act

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 10, the Powers of Attorney Act.

The purpose of this Bill, which has been developed in close co-operation with the Alberta Law Reform Institute, is to make it possible for a person to grant a power of attorney that endures beyond the donor's possible mental incapacity and would therefore make it unnecessary for the expense of an application for a trusteeship under the Dependent Adults Act.

[Leave granted; Bill 10 read a first time]

Bill 4 Social Work Profession Act

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce and move first reading of Bill 4, the Social Work Profession Act.

This Act is to help maintain our high standards of the social work practice for Albertans.

[Leave granted; Bill 4 read a first time]

Bill 3 Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 1991

MR. CHERRY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 3, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 1991.

The purpose of this legislation is to provide for improvements in the government's ability to control burning, prevent forest fires, and it would increase the maximum fines for infractions.

[Leave granted; Bill 3 read a first time]

Bill 5 Mines and Minerals Amendment Act, 1991

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 5, the Mines and Minerals Amendment Act, 1991.

Bill 5 proposes several changes primarily of an administrative nature. The Bill does, however, address such issues as accretion of lands and misdescription of zones. I look forward to debate during the subsequent readings of this Bill.

[Leave granted; Bill 5 read a first time]

Bill 7 Turner Valley Unit Operations Amendment Act, 1991

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 7 being the Turner Valley Unit Operations Amendment Act, 1991.

This Act will no longer require a hearing on routine, noncontroversial matters, permitting same to be dealt with by the energy conservation board.

[Leave granted; Bill 7 read a first time]

Bill 6 Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 1991

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave today to introduce Bill 6, the Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 1991.

This amending legislation will allow the Energy Resources Conservation Board to implement a more simplified crude oil prorationing program replacing an outdated, overly complex prorationing system that's been in effect since 1950 and is no longer appropriate for a deregulated industry. I might add that these amendments have been developed after several years of extensive consultation with all sectors of the industry.

[Leave granted; Bill 6 read a first time]

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bills 10, 4, 3, 5, 7, and 6 just introduced be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent of the Assembly to waive Standing Order 68 to permit the introduction of private members' public Bills today only.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The motion carries; let the record show unanimously.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Bill 201 Financial Accountability Act

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 201, being the Financial Accountability Act.

This Bill amends a number of statutes, among them the Treasury Branches Act, the Auditor General Act, the Financial Administration Act, the Pension Fund Act, and the Interprovincial Lottery Act. Its intention is to remove a lot of the secrecy which has surrounded government management of the financial affairs of Alberta. Its effect would be to make more information available to the public and to the Legislature and in that way make government more accountable for their decisions and their financial management of the affairs of the province.

[Leave granted; Bill 201 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Before the Chair continues, perhaps members wishing to introduce their Bills would follow the numerical sequence, as it would be much easier for the Chair to deal with it. Thank you.

Bill 202 Environmental Bill of Rights Act

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a Bill being the Environment Bill of Rights Act.

The Bill provides access to information on environmental issues for Albertans in a form they can understand. It includes procedural rights, such as the right to be heard and the right to take legal action to protect our life-support system. In the years since I first introduced the Bill, the government of the Northwest Territories has passed such legislation and Ontario is expected to later this year.

[Leave granted; Bill 202 read a first time]

2:40 Bill 203 An Act to Create a Commission to Examine Legal Reform in Alberta's Justice System

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a Bill being An Act to Create a Commission to Examine Legal Reform in Alberta's Justice System.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this Bill is to have a commission examine the justice system in Alberta and recommend changes that would better meet the challenges of the '90s and the needs of all Albertans.

[Leave granted; Bill 203 read a first time]

Bill 204 Freedom of Information and Protection of Personal Privacy Act

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce for first reading Bill 204, being a Bill entitled Freedom of Information and Protection of Personal Privacy Act.

The Bill is intended to open up for Albertans access to information at every level of government including commissions and independent agencies governed by either municipal or provincial governments. The Bill contains provisions whereby independent reviews would take place on decisions to withhold information.

Thank you.

[Leave granted; Bill 204 read a first time]

Bill 205 Children's Access Rights Enforcement Act

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane I beg leave to introduce Bill 205, the Children's Access Rights Enforcement Act.

This Bill seeks to protect noncustodial parents' rights to access their children when ordered by the court. This Bill provides various remedies to those who feel they have been wrongfully denied access by the custodial parent. It also attempts to speed up the processing of such claims by specifying strict time lines in which a case must be heard.

[Leave granted; Bill 205 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Calder.

Bill 206 Children's Rights Act

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 206, the Children's Rights Act.

This Bill establishes all children's rights to the basic necessities of life and would commit the government to improving the quality of life for all Alberta children. This Bill is particularly important because of the need for all provinces to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child this year.

[Leave granted; Bill 206 read a first time]

Bill 207 An Act to Require Full Disclosure and Maintenance of Government-Backed Pension Plans

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 207, being a Bill titled An Act to Require Full Disclosure and Maintenance of Government-Backed Pension Plans.

This is an Act which would require the orderly paydown of the unfunded pension liability in the government's six guaranteed pension plans and the TRF, the Teachers' Retirement Fund. The Act would require full disclosure of any actuarial studies

relating to these pension plans.

Thank you.

[Leave granted; Bill 207 read a first time]

Bill 208
An Act to Amend the Public Service
Employee Relations Act

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to request leave to introduce Bill 208, an Act entitled An Act to Amend the Public Service Employee Relations Act.

This Act has an amendment which will allow public service employees the right to strike.

Thank you.

[Leave granted; Bill 208 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Bill 209
Air Quality Act

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 209, the Air Quality Act.

This Bill would ensure that air in Alberta is of the highest quality and presents no hazard to human health, with standards for ambient air quality being set at levels approved by the Minister of Health.

[Leave granted; Bill 209 read a first time]

Bill 210
Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value Act

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 210, the Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value Act.

It establishes the principles and general procedures for addressing the well-documented inequities that exist in Alberta between job classes dominated by women and men. It establishes a pay equity bureau and is founded on the principle that pay equity should exist everywhere in the workplace in Alberta, not just the government and not just workplaces with unions and collective agreements.

[Leave granted; Bill 210 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

Bill 211
Labour Relations Code Amendment Act

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 211, Labour Relations Code Amendment Act.

This Bill when passed would facilitate the organization of those workers who so desire into collective bargaining units. It also provides for automatic certification of those organizing drives that have signed up a majority of workers at the jobsite.

[Leave granted; Bill 211 read a first time]

Bill 212
An Act to Amend the Water Resources Act

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Member for Smoky River I beg leave to introduce Bill 212, being An Act to Amend the Water Resources Act.

This Bill establishes a system of provincial water management districts to ensure that decisions with respect to surface water and groundwater reflect local or regional conditions and interests.

[Leave granted; Bill 212 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Norwood, Leader of the Opposition.

Bill 213
Community Health Centre Act

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 213, the Community Health Centre Act.

This Bill would enable a variety of low-cost frontline community health centres to offer health care services by a variety of licensed providers on a salary basis. It would also enable government to directly fund the operational and capital costs of these nonprofit health care centres.

[Leave granted; Bill 213 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Drumheller.

Bill 214
Tobacco Control Act

MR. SCHUMACHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to reintroduce the Tobacco Control Act as Bill 214.

The objective of this Bill is to protect adolescents from the disease, disability, and death associated with the consumption of tobacco products by, one, ensuring that tobacco products will not be sold to individuals under 18 years of age and, two, increasing the penalty of those found guilty of selling tobacco products to persons under the age of 18 years.

[Leave granted; Bill 214 read a first time]

2:50
Bill 215
An Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a Bill being An Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act.

The purpose of this Bill is to enable a lawyer/layman grievance board to be developed to better address the needs of the general public when they feel the present system of the Law Society fails them.

[Leave granted; Bill 215 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on behalf of the Member for Calgary-McKnight.

Bill 216**An Act to Amend the Amusements Act**

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the Member for Calgary-McKnight I beg leave to introduce Bill 216, this being An Act to Amend the Amusements Act.

The purpose of the Act is to make it an offence to rent or exhibit pornographic films to minors.

[Leave granted; Bill 216 read a first time]

Bill 217**An Act to Eliminate Ancillary Fees at Colleges, Technical Institutes, and Universities**

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave on behalf of the Member for Calgary-McKnight to introduce Bill 217, An Act to Eliminate Ancillary Fees at Colleges, Technical Institutes, and Universities.

This Bill would eliminate all mandatory, campuswide ancillary fees used by these institutions for purposes already covered by tuition fees. This should not preclude the collection of fees for student association activities, athletics, or recreation fees.

[Leave granted; Bill 217 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

Bill 218**An Act to Amend the Crown Property Municipal Grants Act**

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 218, An Act to Amend the Crown Property Municipal Grants Act.

The purpose of the Act would be to ensure that the provincial government provides a regularly scheduled payment to municipalities in lieu of taxes for Crown land.

[Leave granted; Bill 218 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Vegreville.

Bill 219**An Act to Amend the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act**

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 219, An Act to Amend the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act.

This Act if passed would require that producer plebiscites be held prior to the establishment of any commission collecting refundable levies from farmers; for example, the western barley growers commission or the canola growers commission.

[Leave granted; Bill 219 read a first time]

Bill 220**An Act to Amend the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act**

MR. GESELL: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a Bill being An Act to Amend the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act.

The purpose of this Bill is to create a new division under the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund: the environmental investment division. The division is intended to consider investments for projects that will provide short- and long-term benefits to the people of Alberta through enhancement of our environment and through reduction of pollution.

[Leave granted; Bill 220 read a first time]

Bill 221**An Act to Amend the Daylight Saving Time Act**

MR. MOORE: I beg leave to introduce Bill 221, An Act to Amend the Daylight Saving Time Act.

Mr. Speaker, when this Bill is passed, it would make daylight saving time year round. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. It's not customary to comment during first readings, hon. members.

[Leave granted; Bill 221 read a first time]

Bill 222**An Act to Amend the Planning Act**

MR. GESELL: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 222, An Act to Amend the Planning Act.

The purpose of this amendment is threefold: one, that the dedication for deferred reserves should not exceed 10 percent of the original titled area; two, to overcome situations where private land may be frozen through municipal bylaws; three, that joint general municipal plans may be mandatory.

[Leave granted; Bill 222 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands.

Bill 223**An Act to Provide for Elected Representation on Post-Secondary Educational Institute Boards**

MS BARRETT: Thank you. I beg leave to introduce Bill 223, An Act to Provide for Elected Representation on Post-Secondary Educational Institute Boards.

Plain and simple, Mr. Speaker, this puts an end to either political or patronage appointments to postsecondary education institutions and allows stakeholder groups to elect their representatives to those institutions.

[Leave granted; Bill 223 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Forest Lawn.

Bill 226**Public Accounts Committee Act**

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 226, which is the Public Accounts Committee Act.

This Bill would enhance the powers of the Public Accounts Committee, thereby strengthening an important link in the public accountability chain.

[Leave granted; Bill 226 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Beverly.

Bill 227
Rent Review Act

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 227, a Bill to provide a Rent Review Act.

This Bill when passed would provide for a rent review process which would be of benefit to both tenants and landlords.

[Leave granted; Bill 227 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Rocky Mountain House.

3:00
Bill 229
An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce a Bill being An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act.

This amendment would allow workers the option of having coverage if they're owner/operators.

[Leave granted; Bill 229 read a first time]

Bill 291
An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Code

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a Bill being Bill 291, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Code.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill proposes changes to the Employment Standards Code in order that employees can avail themselves of the maternity leave and parental benefits available under the federal unemployment insurance program.

[Leave granted; Bill 291 read a first time]

Bill 301
An Act to Amend the Employment Pension Plans Act

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a Bill being An Act to Amend the Employment Pension Plans Act, Bill 301.

The purpose of this amendment is to clarify pension plans for private-sector individuals and public-sector individuals, to make their pension plans the same.

Thank you.

[Leave granted; Bill 301 read a first time]

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to table the annual report of Alberta Environment.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members, I am pleased to table the 1990 annual report of the Legislative Assembly Office.

In addition, I am tabling all Members' Services Committee orders passed since December 14, 1990, pursuant to the Legislative Assembly Act.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table copies of a letter from the Alberta Forest Products Association indicating their concern that the government's commitment of resources is insufficient to meet its obligations under the government's own Free to Grow reforestation regulations.

Introduction of Special Guests

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism.

MR. MAIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I'm about to introduce a group of people who are leaving the galleries now; nevertheless I will. We have a group from the Avalon junior high school here who are also hosting a group from Quebec. There are 64 in all in both the members' and public galleries. Included with the students are teachers Claudette McLean, Marie Claire Foster, and Roger Belliveau and parent Mrs. Francesca Jost. I'd ask that we give the standard traditional greeting to the teachers and students.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me on behalf of the MLA for Edmonton-Glenora to introduce a very special group of visiting students today, a group from the Glenora elementary school. They are some 20 students in number, along with their teacher Mrs. Shirley Pukanich and parents Stuart Steinhauer, Betty-Ann Rostrup, Hilary Fields, and Susan Gilbertson. I know that they've been watching us for the last 40 minutes and that they will go back and write, I am sure, a spine-tingling report on their visit to the Legislature. I would ask them to rise and receive the very warm welcome of our House.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly 44 students from Vernon Barford junior high. They are accompanied by five teachers: Wendy Ioannides, Cheri Kaiser, Al Gossman, Dianne Pysyk, and Pat Shields. Unfortunately, they may have left the galleries because of the introduction of the Bills, and they may now receive the warm welcome of the House through *Hansard*.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Glenmore.

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly representatives from the Alberta Association of Social Workers. They have helped me for the past two years in putting together the Social Work Profession Act, Bill 4. I'd like to introduce Margaret Dewhurst, past president – if you wouldn't mind standing, Margaret – and Margaret Duncan, executive director; Linda Cargill, council member; Debbie Morrison-Wright, council member; and her daughter Aimee Nadeau. They're in the members' gallery. Would you please rise, as you are, and receive a warm welcome.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce two individuals from the town of Fort Macleod who are up here today to meet with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and also the minister of culture with respect to their historic downtown. They are two members of the town council: Mr. Mike Dawson and Mr. Shawn Patience. They're in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the customary warm welcome.

MR. ZARUSKY: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me today to introduce to you and to the rest of the Assembly four special people from the Redwater-Andrew constituency, a group of them who are meeting today with the Solicitor General. They are, firstly, Mr. George Topolnisky, my predecessor and the MLA who served in this House from 1971 to 1986; Mr. Albert Holubowich, administrator of the village of Andrew; and two

special guests, Mr. Mike Kapicki and Mr. Bill Woychuk. Would they please rise in the members' gallery.

head:

Oral Question Period

NovAtel Communications Ltd

MR. SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. Late Friday afternoon NovAtel announced that it was going to lay off 222 employees at its Lethbridge manufacturing plant. We also heard from the minister of telecommunications that one of the reasons for the deep problems NovAtel is having is that it must compete against larger, diversified telecommunications companies. Ironically this is exactly the type of company that AGT was before this government ripped it apart. Alberta taxpayers are now stuck with a company that posted over \$200 million in losses in 1990 alone, and we're on the hook for over half a billion dollars more in guarantees. My question to the Premier is this: given that the minister of telecommunications said on Friday that the privatization of AGT was a total success, will the Premier tell us if he also views this as a total success?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. Leader of the Opposition is mixing two points in one question. One is regarding the privatization of Telus, and if he will just review *Hansard* he will see the details that the minister gave to the House which show the success of the Telus privatization.

He also is raising at the same time the matter of NovAtel, which the minister dealt with and said that it was a problem and that there was an action plan to either put the company back on firm footing or perhaps even close it. Now, Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister has been quite straightforward with putting out all of the information for the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

3:10

MR. MARTIN: He may be straightforward to you, Mr. Premier, but he's certainly not straightforward to the taxpayers of Alberta, who are pretty upset about this.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the point that I want to make is that this company was in business before as one company, not as two. Now all we have are the losses in terms of taxpayers' dollars and Lethbridge people losing their jobs. That's the reality of it. My question is simply this to the Premier: given that the minister of telecommunications has totally failed to protect the public interest in this affair – \$200 million, 222 jobs down; that may be just the beginning – will the Premier respect the tradition of parliamentary democracy, hold his minister responsible for this fiasco, and ask for this minister's resignation immediately?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I was going to suggest in a joking way that I would sleep on the question and think about it. Absolutely not. I'm not considering in any way asking for the resignation of the minister. He's dealing with his portfolio in a straightforward and effective way, doing a fine job for the people of Alberta that he represents. I don't know where the Leader of the Opposition is coming from with that kind of a request.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier may find this a joking matter, but the taxpayers of Alberta don't find it a joking matter. We don't have money for advanced education, education, and health care, but we have money to put into this company. If he finds that funny, I don't. I don't know what it

would take to get fired around here; \$200 million obviously won't do it.

My question, then, to the Premier: if the Premier won't do the right thing and ensure that the buck stops at that cabinet minister over there, will he at least call a public inquiry to get to the bottom of this fiasco before we lose millions more in this whole deal?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, to be clear, when I was referring to the hon. Leader of the Opposition's previous question, I think him yelling about the minister being forced to resign is silly. It has nothing to do with the serious nature of NovAtel, which the minister has dealt with in the House and explained to everybody. He has told them about the plan that's in place. I see no reason why there should now be some huge inquiry taking all kinds of taxpayers' dollars to look into it. The member has told the House about the action plan that's in place. We're looking forward to seeing that action plan followed through, and we trust that it will end up with a successful company continuing into the future.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, it's awful silly that we've lost \$200 million in this fiasco; that's what's silly.

Federal/Provincial Fiscal Relations

MR. MARTIN: My question is to the Provincial Treasurer. Mr. Speaker, three weeks ago the federal Conservatives brought down their 1991 budget, a budget which, frankly, hurt working families across the country and which specifically hurt this province. This budget will cut \$1.2 billion in transfer payments over the next five years to our health care and educational systems. Other provincial treasurers were outraged right across this country. What was our Provincial Treasurer's response? He said that he applauded his federal party, and he said that this represents Alberta's agenda. My question: will the Provincial Treasurer explain to Albertans how cutting federal money from Alberta's schools and hospitals represents Alberta's agenda?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that the member knows full well that this government places the highest possible priority on health and education. I may as well get that out right away, because through the course of the next three months that will be confirmed by a business plan, a budget plan which will simply identify those priorities and provide adequate money to meet those commitments. Now, we have done that consistently.

The second point, Mr. Speaker, is that the people of Alberta and the people of Canada expect governments to reduce the size of their spending. That commitment is clear on behalf of this government. We have taken an action plan going back to 1985-86 which will bring us to a balanced budget. That's what the people of Alberta are asking for, and that's what this government is planning to deliver.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the unloading of costs, of course the province of Alberta would like to have more money and of course we would like to see more dollars transferred to other provinces on behalf of the federal government, but one thing the Member for Edmonton-Norwood forgets: we may well be Albertans and have Albertan commitments at our heart, but we're also Canadians. We all have to be jointly responsible for a deficit and a debt which by now is close to \$400 billion. We all have to . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. [interjection] Thank you, hon. Provincial Treasurer.
Supplementary.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's so nice of the Provincial Treasurer to worry. We'll cut back on our hospitals; we'll cut back, you know, on our schools and advanced education institutions.

My question to the Treasurer is a very simple one. He's prepared to do this to get tax points, the old disentanglement argument again; I've heard him say it. I say to this Treasurer: this is before the Deputy Premier has announced a new committee to go around and talk about precisely this, what the federal government and the provincial government should have. My question is: how does the Treasurer justify making public statements on federal/provincial relationships that completely prejudge what this committee is supposed to do?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, there's a spurious argument. What you see here is a traditional response by the not-knowing Member for Edmonton-Norwood. What he has said is that the traditions of this government and the traditions of Canada whereby the provinces participate in tax transfers which have been clearly recognized by the fiscal arrangements Acts in this country going back over the past decade should be changed for some reason. Now, that isn't in any way changing what is the constitutional position of this province or the constitutional debate which is about to come. That's pure nonsense. What we do have before us in this province is the following: one of the strongest economies in this country, real growth rates taking place, the lowest unemployment, as the minister for manpower has pointed out. What the budget points out is that interest rates are going to come down. Do you know what that means? That means more jobs for Albertans, more investment in this province, and a stronger rebound. That's what we want, and that's why he doesn't like it.

MR. MARTIN: I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, that that had anything to do with my question, but it was a nice speech anyhow.

My question clearly is in terms of fiscal provincial relations. If you start to take tax points away from the federal government, then you're going to erode national programs like medicare. It's very clear. My question to the Treasurer, then: how would the federal government enforce national standards in medicare if they didn't have the right to tax and present that money to the provinces? How would they do it?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, here again we have the centralist view of the New Democratic Party. They always look to Ottawa for the best plan. We look to the people of Alberta for our policies, and that is what contrasts us to that socialist party across the way. Let us point out that in terms of cash transfers under established programs financing you will see, and I will probably provide an opportunity to debate it at some point, that the dollars provided by the federal government to the provinces are now moving towards zero, whereas the tax points that have been given to the provinces are the dynamic base; they're growing. Why are they growing? Because the economy of Alberta is growing: more people at work, higher employment levels, more income. That means more tax dollars come to the province of Alberta. That's how it works. It's a simple equation. I'll put it in black and white if he likes, but I still don't think he'd understand.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

Freedom of Information Legislation

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, last week my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark tabled certain leaked letters that relate to the illegal logging being done by Canfor in buffer areas that are alongside rivers and a lake. Today we note that a senior forestry official is calling for a police investigation with respect to that leaked information. My questions are to the Premier: will the Premier agree that this kind of leaked information is exactly the kind of information that would and should be available to Albertans under freedom of information legislation, which should be put in place in our province?

MR. GETTY: Well Mr. Speaker, that's a pretty tortuous route to get to his representation about freedom of information legislation. Frankly, there's a tremendous amount of information available to the public and the members of this Legislature. We've seen it come in here and go in wheelbarrows full to the hon. members when they request it. Now, it is true that there are occasions when you're dealing with the health of an individual or perhaps the competitive nature of a person or a company or the security of your country where that kind of information can't be put out, but basically the information is all available.

3:20

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, given that the protection of the environment is the ultimate goal of every Albertan and given that the leaking of the information is a positive step to protect the environment, will the Premier agree to direct his officials to stop police action on these individuals or this individual?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I guess the hon. member being a lawyer knows that if there are laws, the laws have to be obeyed and that the police are there to enforce the laws. Now, surely the hon. member is wise enough to know that. If the hon. member feels that he wants to be like any other member – and I think perhaps he may have done it today: put freedom of information legislation before the House. All he has to do is convince the Legislature. That's all. Do a good job, convince the Legislature, and you get the legislation.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Premier is doing a very bad job in informing Albertans. It's day after day and hour and hour that questions are put regarding Pocklington and Kananaskis and every other item. Given that almost every government in Canada now has freedom of information legislation except Alberta, I'd like the Premier to explain why information should be held back from Albertans the way it is. Use any example you want: Kananaskis, Pocklington, Bill McKay. They're all . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. You've asked your question.

MR. GETTY: I guess, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. leader of the Liberal Party wasn't listening when I answered the first question he raised. That is; the reason is that it's not being held back. I mean, information is made available by the wheelbarrow loads here in this Legislature. We mail it to people. It's provided on a day-to-day basis. So what we've done is make sure that Albertans get all the information they require. As I said, even *Beauchesne* makes the case that when it's the health of an individual or if it's the competitive nature of a person or a

corporation or the security of your country, you would not do it. All of the information is available, and for the hon. member to try and make the case differently is just wrong. Again I challenge him: try and convince the Assembly. Do a good job of convincing the Assembly, and you'll end up with the legislation if you need it.

Rural Economy

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, recently my constituents have expressed a great deal of concern regarding the government's substantive decentralization program that they feel is in place, and it has caused a great deal of uneasiness. My question is to the Premier. Could the Premier outline the direction or policy this government has with regards to any decentralization program?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear to the Assembly and to the hon. member that this government is very strongly and firmly committed to a policy of balanced growth across this province. We know that the cities are strong and are growing and can take care of themselves, but we also know – and I think a lot of members know – that rural areas are not. They need particular initiatives to make sure that balanced growth is all across this province, and we are going to make sure that we do everything we possibly can. We have good examples where it has worked. I think of AOC in Ponoka, the Agricultural Development Corporation in Camrose, the school-book branch in Barrhead, the Hail and Crop Insurance Corporation in Lacombe. There are many examples. We're going to continue to try and have balanced growth across the province, always with the idea of making sure it's efficient and effective delivery of services.

Now, just one more thing, Mr. Speaker. I have given a special responsibility to the Minister of Municipal Affairs to make sure that the government's initiatives are co-ordinated, and I would ask the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs if he might want to comment on the local development initiatives program, which he is heading up.

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps the supplementary will go in that direction.

Calgary-Glenmore.

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs. A few months ago the minister did circulate the local development initiative plan, and I was wondering if perhaps the minister could update this Assembly with regards to the program.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, the local development initiative program is programmed to bring about balanced growth across the province of Alberta. The program was developed with many local governments across this province whereby the minister's council spent a major portion of 1990 talking to people, to local governments in their communities and asking for recommendations. The basic recommendation was: we as communities would like to help ourselves in terms of our economic future, but we would like you as the provincial government to give us backup support and act as a facilitator and encourage us in our initiatives. We as a government feel that's a very respectable approach and one that we wish to pursue with local governments to bring about balanced economic growth in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Belmont, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Tradespeople Training

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Career Development and Employment. The throne speech notes that there's concern by the government in the area of health and safety for workers. Indeed, the Manpower Development Act has paramount concern for the general safety of the public and people at the worksite. Yet the proposed industry and training Act will permit certification without the comprehensive training provided through apprenticeship for all trades but those proficiency trades. Given that the changes will result in fewer workers taking those important safety training courses, how can this government justify putting workers and the public at large at serious risk? [some applause]

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what all the applause is for, because if there was some research done, I think they'd be quite surprised. Obviously the hon. member is looking into his crystal ball and coming up with the wrong answer. If he would wait until the legislation is introduced, I'm sure he would find that it's not in reference to what he has already stated. I don't believe that's any attempt to mislead the House. I would just ask him to be a little more patient, because there's certainly no cutting back of the apprenticeship system. In fact, the apprenticeship and industry Act as it is being proposed will strengthen the overall system and not lessen it.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of people in the industry and in the trade union movement that would certainly disagree with that. When industry is not compelled to provide adequate training, what happens is that public safety goes down, worker jobsite safety goes way down, and the only thing that goes up are profits for companies that are taking advantage of it. So I ask the minister: will the minister today admit that the only thing that safety standards are going to do is be sacrificed for the friends of the government so that they can make more profits on the backs of workers?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Speaker, once again I'm unable to deal with the question, because he's not dealing with the facts. I think if the hon. member, as I stated earlier, will wait to see what happens with the legislation as proposed, he'll be more than pleased.

I might indicate, though, that he has stated that there are some people from industry and from labour who are not pleased. I will accept that. It's going to be awful tough to please all groups, but I believe there is a balance. I think he'll find that the majority of people from the Building Trades Council and other groups will be very supportive of the revised proposed legislation.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Forest Management

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a letter dated December 3, 1990, the president of the Alberta Forest Products Association indicated his industry's grave concern that the government has not committed adequate resources to fulfill its own obligations under its own reforestation regulations entitled

Free to Grow. To the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife: how can the minister tell us that his regulatory program will ensure proper reforestation when the government has itself failed to make a sufficient commitment to carry out its own obligations under this program?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the hon. member finally mentioned what date the letter is. I don't recall the letter particularly, and it would be helpful if the hon. member would send the letter over prior so that I'd have an opportunity to review it. I must say this: the Free to Grow standards that are mentioned were made effective March 1, 1991, and are the most stringent regulations anywhere in the country. They ensure that our forests grow for tomorrow. I can assure you that the strategy in my department is to make sure that we also in this government fulfill our obligations to forests that we're responsible for.

3:30

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, why should the government – that is, the taxpayers of Alberta – pay for reforestation in any event when it would be much more appropriate that a levy be placed on the industry which benefits from cutting down these trees in the first place?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, that sounds nice if you don't use common sense, but common sense would tell you that you have areas that have been burned in the past and haven't regenerated properly; you have areas that were cut in the past at some time, and that company may or may not be in business. So we have wide areas that we need to look at, making sure reforestation is done properly. It falls to the government in those cases to do that, and I assure the hon. member and this Assembly that that's exactly what we intend to do.

MR. SPEAKER: Lesser Slave Lake, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

Weldwood Mill Closure

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Weldwood plant in Slave Lake has recently given notice of its closure. Unfortunately, in an area of high unemployment this affects some 112 jobs at the mill site, also resulting in serious consequences to contractors and other supporting services. Can the people of Lesser Slave Lake get the commitment from the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife that the FMA stays in the area so that we can ensure that a developer has the ability to use the FMA for development in the Lesser Slave Lake constituency?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, it's truly unfortunate that the Weldwood mill had to close. It's not only unfortunate for the company itself when a mill like that closes, but it's truly unfortunate for the employees of that company. The plant closure came about because of the very difficult times in the panel board industry and the solid wood industry today. Weldwood is also searching out if there is a company that could take over the plant.

I want to assure the hon. member that it would be our intention to make sure that the wood supply that was designated for the Weldwood plant will, at least for the foreseeable future, be held to see if we can find someone that would come in and utilize that mill in Slave Lake and, hopefully, employ people again.

MS CALAHASEN: In view of this disastrous situation could the minister ensure that a decision for Polyboard be made as quickly as possible to help alleviate some of the unemployment?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are two proposals for that particular High Prairie region. One is the Polyboard proposal, and the other one is the YFY project. We are moving as quickly as possible to review those two projects, and hopefully a decision will be forthcoming.

Minimum Wage

MS MJOLSNESS: Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Minister of Labour. Alberta's minimum wage is the lowest in western Canada and has not been increased for three years. There are 43,000 families working in Alberta still living in poverty. In view of the minister's public comment that \$4.50 an hour is an unlivable wage, will the minister make a commitment to the working poor of this province and tell them when specifically the government is going to raise the minimum wage?

MS McCOY: The comment to which the hon. member is referring is no doubt this: working with the poverty line established by the National Council of Welfare, for a single parent and two children living in Edmonton or Calgary, it would take the equivalent of something like \$10.50 an hour to reach the poverty line; for a single person it would take a considerably lesser amount per hour; and of course not living in the larger metropolitan centres would take less as well. I can advise the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, that the minimum wage is under review, particularly since the economy of Alberta is outperforming anyone else in this country, and we will be looking at this issue over the next few months.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last time this government reviewed the minimum wage, it took eight years to get it increased. It's worrisome that this minister may stand alone amongst her Conservative colleagues when it comes to supporting an increase to the minimum wage. I would ask: will the minister outline her plan of action to bring government members on side so that the government will raise the minimum wage in this session?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, the last time the minimum wage was raised was 1988, and we are reviewing it again.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Vegreville. [interjections] Order please. Vegreville.

Tuberculosis in Elk

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have over the last several months been many confirmed cases of tuberculosis found on game ranches in the province of Alberta, posing a threat not only to the captive elk but to elk in the wild and cattle in the province. There have been some cases discovered of threat to people involved in the industry as well. This is in addition to millions of dollars of public money going into compensation for people whose animals have to be destroyed as a result of this tuberculosis infestation. I'd just like to ask the Minister of Agriculture why he has steadfastly refused to suspend proclamation of the Bill legalizing the sale of elk meat and why he's

steadfastly refused to allow a full public investigation and review of this matter before it gets any more serious.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I've stated on previous occasions in the House, the control of disease among animals is a federal government responsibility. Agriculture Canada, I think, has effectively dealt with the situation and is still continuing to effectively deal with it. As I stated when we took Bill 31 through and in subsequent discussions, if you're really concerned about the control of disease, the meat inspection system that comes along with the slaughtering at the slaughterhouse is one of the best ways of detecting disease in its early stages.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, now that Agriculture Canada has announced that they will put strict and reasonable limits on the amount that's paid for elk that have to be destroyed, will the Minister of Agriculture assure Albertans that he will not yield to pressure from the Game Growers Association to supplement that compensation with provincial money?

MR. ISLEY: In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, it is he who is fulfilling and carrying out the responsibility, which in this case is the federal government through Agriculture Canada, that is responsible for dealing with the compensation. That is a matter of debate between the Game Growers and Agriculture Canada.

Lottery Funds

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, there is an apparent conflict on the use of lottery funds within the government caucus. The Minister of Education is publicly stating that the use of funds should be expanded to include core services such as education, health, and social services. My concern is that any discussion regarding the future use of lottery funds will be held behind government closed doors, away from this Assembly and away from the public. To the Premier: will he give us assurances that all members of this Assembly will have the opportunity to participate in discussions and the decision-making process before determining the final outcome of lottery revenues?

MR. GETTY: I don't think it's unusual that different people might have different views about how lottery funds are used. I don't see anything particularly strange about that at all. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, the government has a responsibility to handle the funds which it controls, and it's the government's job to make those decisions. That's what the people elected the government for, and we're going to do it. The hon. member, if he wants, could put a motion on the Order Paper and have full discussion in the Legislature, and I welcome him to do it.

MR. WICKMAN: Bring it forward. We'll participate.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister responsible for lotteries and now also the Gaming Commission, the minister who prides himself as being a rural kingmaker with the use of lottery funds: does the minister have a master plan for the use of current surpluses of lottery funds, reported to be as high as \$300 million, and will he file any such documents within this Assembly?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, as I've in fact indicated on several public occasions in the last year, the surplus in the Lottery Fund as of April 1, 1990, is \$237 million. In response to the second question, the answer is yes.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Highwood.

Little Bow Reservoir Project

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a recent speech to the Macdonald-Cartier Club the Minister of the Environment stated that the current 60-year-old Water Resources Act was primarily designed to license consumptive usages of water and as such is not effective at recognizing that certain flow qualities and quantities are necessary to maintain the overall health of rivers and streams and the fish, wildlife, and vegetation they support. My question reflects on an issue in my constituency. A clarification, Mr. Minister: when the new Water Resources Act is passed, will it impact on the proposed Little Bow reservoir project, which will use water from the Highwood River?

3:40

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it will probably impact on the operation of both the reservoir that will be filled and the diversion weir which, if approved through the environmental impact assessment process, will be widened and upgraded. The process will continue. There is a public advisory group in place right now to determine the inflow requirements for the Highwood River.

Basically, the rewrite of the Water Resources Act won't occur until probably the spring or fall of 1992, and basically it won't be rewritten until there is a full public consultation with Albertans. In other words, Albertans will have every opportunity to advise and assist the government in the rewrite of this particular Act. In the future hopefully it will help to avoid problems such as those that have occurred along the Highwood as it respects the Little Bow River.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question, then, is again to the Minister of the Environment. Will this Act require new IFN and EIA studies, therefore changing the proposed timetable for this Little Bow project?

MR. KLEIN: No. It's not proposed, Mr. Speaker, that the rewrite of this Act affect any programs that are now ongoing. The process that is now in place to determine a proper inflow requirement for the Highwood River will continue, and the environmental impact assessment will be based on the current procedures to determine those inflow requirements.

MR. SPEAKER: Stony Plain.

Education Funding

MR. WOLOSCHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Due to the government's chronic underfunding of the education system from the general revenues the Minister of Education is desperately trying to shift the burden of education funding onto the local taxpayers. In addition, he's even trying to access the lottery coffers. Will the minister now admit that the provincial government has an obligation to fund a certain percentage of basic education from the general revenues and commit to convincing his caucus colleagues to provide a guaranteed proportion of the education funds required so that educators can plan properly for the future?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the inequities that exist in education funding across this province are due primarily to the different distribution in the wealth of this province, primarily related to economic development that occurs unevenly across

this province. What we are trying to do, after a series of discussions, is come up with the best possible solution to a problem that besets a number of school boards across the province. I only have to look at any number of boards. I think of the board of my colleague to my left here, the county of Barrhead board of education, which levies 13.3 mills and raises \$1,230 vis-à-vis another school board in the province that levies 2.3 mills and raises \$3,340. I have to ask the hon. member across the way: does he think that is a fair way to fund education? Well, we on this side of the House do not believe it is fair, and we are trying to find a solution to that problem.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Mr. Speaker, as usual the hon. minister wasn't listening, so perhaps I'll take a little different direction.

MR. SPEAKER: Just ask the question.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Mr. Speaker, this minister would also like to support basic people services with lottery money, but its allocation is currently not even debated in the Assembly. Given the minister's interest in the distribution of lottery moneys, will he now agree that lottery funds should be a part of the General Revenue Fund and propose such an amendment to the lotteries Act so that the views of Albertans can be represented through their MLAs in the allocation of lottery funds?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I expressed a point of view about the use of lottery funds consistent with how the government has used and invested those lottery funds in the past, including investing in medical equipment in a variety of hospitals across this province, and suggested that on a one-time basis they could be used for the same purposes and perhaps upgrading computer technology within our schools.

I go back to the hon. member's earlier question. The two in fact were supposed to be linked, but I didn't hear that. What I say to the hon. member and all Albertans who are listening is that we are looking for a solution to a problem that besets a number of school boards across this province, and it's one of fairness. If the hon. member wants to put on the record that he doesn't believe in fairness, then that's fine; we know where the NDP stands. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order.

MR. FOX: Why don't you survey your constituents?

MR. SPEAKER: Very clever, hon. member, but not necessarily in good taste.

Westlock-Sturgeon.

Agricultural Assistance

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Early last December the minister along with a couple of other ministers toured the southern Alberta dryland areas. One of the ministers, Municipal Affairs, said the farmers could have the money by the end of the year. I think he meant 1990. I'd like to ask: in view of the fact that in a number of phone calls I've found not one soul yet to have qualified for the money that they so grandiosely offered last November and December, could the minister explain just what's gone wrong? It's seeding time yet, and the money still hasn't come through.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would have to say that the member is suffering under some misinformation. The summary sheets of the southeast disaster assistance program that crossed my desk show that the loans are flowing, that a number of millions of dollars are already in the hands of producers down there. With the input of some of the MLAs of the area we've done some refinements on the program, and things seem to be working relatively smoothly.

MR. TAYLOR: They're smooth all right; they're still flowing around his desk. I suggest that he get up and chase it around to the other corner or wherever he's put it. It hasn't got out to the farmers.

A supplemental then. Also last fall in a question in the Legislature you announced to me that you would not consider a husband and wife partnership as a partnership in applying for the loan. Due to the fact that many farm women's groups have pressured the government to change their mind on that, is it still the stand of this minister that he will not consider a husband and wife that are in a legal partnership farming – they will not be considered a partnership?

MR. ISLEY: I think, Mr. Speaker, it's fair to say that the hon. member will be pleased to hear that the Agricultural Development Corporation board of directors is currently reviewing the issue that he identifies to see whether or not they can treat husbands and wives as two separate applicants providing they're running specifically separate, if you wish, although in a co-operative way, farming operations.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. TAYLOR: Pretty complicated, Ernie.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon, please.

MR. TAYLOR: Pretty complicated.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order.

MR. TAYLOR: I'm sorry. I didn't think he heard me.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order. Keep it buttoned up. You had your two questions. That doesn't mean you get another two or engage in a shouting match with the Chair. [interjections] Order please. Order. If it's once more, you're going for a walk.

Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Disabled Persons Programs

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, the government has frequently stated their intent to improve the status, dignity, and quality of life for disabled Albertans, reinforced by the Premier's council in support of persons with disabilities. Therefore, one would assume that the problem surrounding accessibility would be one the government is anxious to solve. Considering the constant barriers faced by the disabled in areas as simple as public and private parking lots, it seems obvious to me that the government isn't all that concerned with the issue despite the Premier's council recommendations regarding accessibility. My questions are to the Premier. Will the Premier ensure that proper changes

are made to the Building Code and to the highway standards Act that will see disabled parking standards included under the code and allow for provincial enforcement standards?

3:50

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I don't think you ever have things perfect, and there always can be improvements. The Minister of Education, who works with the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, is working on these matters, co-ordinating a large government effort to do everything we possibly can in this area. The minister may want to supplement my comments. I only say to my friend the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar that we will do everything we possibly can.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton Gold-Bar, supplementary.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have preferred a yes, but perhaps we'll learn more later.

My supplementary question is then: if it's to be believed that we're doing everything we can, perhaps the Premier can explain to the House how it is that the new provincial building in Medicine Hat is not wheelchair accessible.

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's information is out of date. It is true that there was a problem, but that problem's been fixed. Just a little better research, I guess, is what you're going to have to get.

Employee Wage Collection

MR. SHRAKE: Mr. Speaker, in Calgary in my constituency there's a company called Norstar, also known sometimes as Vector Ballistics, Maxon, Land Tool, etc. They've gone bankrupt, and a lot of innocent people did not get their wages. A lot of these people can't afford to lose this kind of money. Can the Minister of Labour please explain why her department has not helped these unfortunate people retrieve their hard-earned wages?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, it is truly an unfortunate circumstance for the people who have been working for that corporation; however, we have been able to collect almost a quarter of a million dollars for the employees. There is some \$60,000 still outstanding, and we have issued an order against the individual, who is a director of the company, and hope to pursue him for the balance.

MR. SHRAKE: My supplementary question, Mr. Speaker: can the minister explain why this employer can get away with not paying his employees, goes over and starts up another company, carries on the operation, and ends up doing the same thing again? How can he do this? Why?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, we did trace the director over to another company under another name and discovered that once again he owes a considerable amount of money to employees, this time about a hundred thousand dollars to about 90 employees. Again we have issued orders against all of that, and most of them have been filed as judgments. We are also asking the Department of the Attorney General to review this case with the prospect of perhaps prosecuting the individual in question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question period has expired.

Might we have unanimous consent to revert briefly to the Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

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

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the mayor of Fort Macleod has arrived to lead the rest of his council in the meetings this afternoon. He's in the members' gallery. I would ask him to rise: Mr. Terry Lyon.

MR. SPEAKER: Standing Order 30. Edmonton-Kingsway.

head: **Request for Emergency Debate**
NovAtel Communications Ltd.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request leave to move to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss this government's role in privatizing AGT and buying back NovAtel Communications, which has led to the massive debt recently reported by NovAtel and the major layoffs announced last Friday.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak to the urgency of this debate, and there are a number of reasons.

First, NovAtel has already announced 222 layoffs and indicated there may be more in the near future. Now, the workers especially but all Albertans deserve to know more of the details as to timing and number, and they need to know why this is happening. Therefore, we need this debate.

Second, the fact is that NovAtel's hemorrhaging was mostly in the last three or four months; this \$204 million was almost all lost in the latter part of the year. So the people have the right to know . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Would hon. members leaving the House please keep on moving.

MR. McEACHERN: . . . and so far they've been kept in the dark. Now, the minister said he was also kept in the dark, although recently he claims to know what's going on. So the reason for this debate is that he can tell the people of Alberta, take them into his confidence.

Third, the Premier has said that there will be no public inquiry, so we should at least have a chance to get all the right questions on the floor even if the government isn't willing to answer them.

Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that it's urgent that this hemorrhaging be stopped and that the people of Alberta be given a chance to ask the government specific questions about exactly what's going on, why it's going on, and what the government is doing about it, in much more detail than has ever been indicated by this government.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to support this motion by the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway. The urgency was, I think, most clearly driven home only this morning when I listened to the questions being put to the minister by members of the media. Unfortunately, of course, the duties of the House required the minister to leave. I know I have a great many questions. I know we in the Liberal Party

have a great many questions, as I'm sure the members of the New Democratic caucus also have.

Speaking to the urgency, Mr. Speaker, it is that this government, and this province indirectly, has a \$525 million loan guarantee backing NovAtel, and we have no information to date, as far as I am aware, as to how much of that option has been exercised, if it is going to be exercised, and so on. We have a lot of dollars riding on this company; this exposure that we have is very large. I think it is incumbent upon this government to release all the information, all the documentation, tell us what's going on, and not only what has happened in the past but where we are likely to go in the future.

So I support this motion for urgency.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I repeat the comments I made on Friday last when a similar motion was brought forward by the opposition relative to debating issues. I refer hon. members again to *Beauchesne* 390: that the question of urgency is not as to the matter itself, but means "urgency of debate", when the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of House do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough.

Well, right now the Leader of the Opposition could commence debate on the Speech from the Throne as he adjourned the debate. If he regards the matter to be as serious as the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway feels it to be, he can devote his entire attention to that issue. It's the urgency of debate. Obviously, the members of the opposition are just not familiar enough, I think, with the particular rules respecting this matter. The ruling which Your Honour made on the motion which was brought forward on Friday last, page 14 of this *Hansard*, I think applies equally here. I would urge that you find as you did on Friday: that this is a matter which can be dealt with in the throne speech debate and get on with that debate.

4:00

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members, under Standing Order 30 indeed the proper requirement was fulfilled, the two-hours' notice being given by the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

Once again the Chair is compelled to refer, as did the Government House Leader, to page 14 of *Hansard* for last Friday. The Chair really does not want to repeat what is said there. Indeed, I believe the same matter applies.

The difference here is that on Friday last this particular issue was indeed raised by more than one member during question period; the matter has been raised through question period again on this day; the Chair expects the matter is going to be raised in question period over the next number of days. So there's ample opportunity for questions to be put to the government during question period. In addition, shortly I trust the Leader of the Official Opposition would be able to make his remarks, and under Standing Orders has 90 minutes. So he should have almost enough time to be able to deal with this issue as well as others. Therefore, the Chair does not see fit for the matter to proceed.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**

MR. SPEAKER: A Standing Order 40 request. Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did consult the House leaders of government and Liberal caucus prior to requesting the opportunity to bring forward this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. We have two things happening here. First, the request: we require unanimous consent for the matter to proceed. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Let the record show that it was carried unanimously.

Sequence of Business

Moved by Ms Barrett:

That the Assembly consent to switch the order of the following two motions: to renumber Mr. Martin's motion currently 201 to 208 and Mr. McInnis' motion currently 208 to 201.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, the real effect of this would be that the motion on forestry would come tomorrow and not in subsequent weeks. I appreciate the help of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The House has now heard the argument. All those in favour of the question, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried unanimously. Thank you.

head:

Orders of the Day

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I received certain messages from His Honour the Honourable Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order!

MR. SPEAKER: The Lieutenant Governor transmits a schedule of certain sums required in the interim from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund for the 12 months ending March 31, 1992, for the purpose of making investments, pursuant to section 6(1)(a) of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act, in projects which will provide long-term economic or social benefits to the people of Alberta, but which may not necessarily by their nature yield a return to the trust fund, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly. Signed by Gordon Towers at the city of Edmonton, March 15, 1991.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits schedules of certain sums required in the interim for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31, 1992, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly. Signed by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at Edmonton, March 15, 1991.

Please be seated.

head:

Government Motions

1. Moved by Mr. Johnston:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve itself into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider the 1991-92 interim supply to be granted to Her Majesty for the General Revenue Fund, the Capital Fund, and the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, capital projects division.

[Motion carried]

2. Moved by Mr. Johnston:

Be it resolved that the messages of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the schedules detailing the amounts required for 1991-92 interim supply, and all matters connected therewith be referred to the Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried]

Days for Consideration of Interim Supply Estimates

3. Moved by Mr. Horsman:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 58(6) the number of days that the Committee of Supply will be called to consider the 1991-92 interim supply requirements for the main estimates, Capital Fund, and the 1991-92 proposed investments of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, capital projects division, shall be one day.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find that the provisions contained in the motion sponsored by the Government House Leader are inadequate to meet the needs of the full Assembly to determine the interim supply plans of the government. If the motion said "one day each" for the trust fund, Capital Fund, and GRF, it might be reasonable.

I understand that the House will adjourn for the Easter break, and I also understand the importance of passing the interim supply Bills prior to that adjournment. Obviously, the business of the government need not come to a full halt because we're not here on Good Friday. On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, given the order of the introduction of Bills and the time allocation for them, there is absolutely no need, in my opinion, nor has there been a need in the past since I have been elected and since predecessors in my caucus have been elected, to limit interim supply debate to one day.

Mr. Speaker, we know that it's being called tonight; there's no secret about this. That's fine, but I don't understand why it is that we can't have a full look at the books. Now, I know that the sponsoring minister may reply, "Well, you do get to look at some other things when the Bills come back for Committee of the Whole reading." That's true, but by then we have not properly been apprised of the information that isn't necessarily in black and white on the interim supply estimates just tabled a moment ago by the Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Speaker, there's no need for the motion to be this restrictive. Speaking I believe on behalf of my colleagues, I oppose it adamantly and request that the time allocation be expanded to at least one day for each of the three funds.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed the Official Opposition House Leader does speak for the Official Opposition when she objects to the way this government is managing the affairs of this Legislature. They knew full well what the calendar looked like when they decided to call this Legislature into Assembly on March 14, and it's all part of an attempt to limit the amount of scrutiny and debate that's provided by this Legislature to the estimates of this government. It's all part of an overall management of the affairs of this Assembly to keep debate to a minimum. They could have easily

called us into session on March 7, March 13, March 12. Any other day would have allowed for greater debate in order to get the interim supply dealt with by this Assembly before the end of March. This is all part of their management to limit the debate and scrutiny that the estimates receive from this Assembly, and I for one add my voice in objection to that of our House leader.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: A call for the question. All those in favour of the motion moved by the Government House Leader, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The matter carries.

4:10

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

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Ady	Gesell	Osterman
Anderson	Gogo	Paszkowski
Black	Horsman	Payne
Bogle	Hyland	Schumacher
Bradley	Isley	Severtson
Calahasen	Johnston	Shrake
Cardinal	Jonson	Sparrow
Cherry	Kowalski	Speaker, R.
Day	Laing, B.	Tannas
Dinning	Lund	Thurber
Drobot	McClellan	Trynchy
Elliott	Mirosh	Weiss
Evans	Moore	West
Fischer	Nelson	Zarusky
Fowler	Orman	

Against the motion:

Barrett	Fox	Mjolsness
Bruseker	Hawkesworth	Pashak
Chivers	Hewes	Sigurdson
Chumir	Laing, M.	Taylor
Decore	Martin	Wickman
Doyle	McEachern	Woloshyn
Ewasiuk		

Totals: For - 44 Against - 19

[Motion carried]

head: **Consideration of His Honour
the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

Moved by Mr. Paszkowski:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable Gordon Towers, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate March 15: Mr. Martin]

4:20

AN HON. MEMBER: You've only got 70 minutes.

MR. MARTIN: Only 70 minutes? I can go 20 tonight though, right?

Mr. Speaker, first of all, as I lead off on the Speech from the Throne, let me say I was glad that the Deputy Premier said they were going to answer all the questions that we have on NovAtel. We certainly look forward to hearing from them about this matter, and as you've said, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure we'll hear a little bit more about it before the day is through.

Today on the Speech from the Throne I'd like to get into three areas. I think the first area, I suppose for lack of a better term, is: whither Canada? Where we're going. The Provincial Treasurer has some ideas about it, flowing from question period. They're not exactly the same ideas that I have, and I look forward to that particular debate with the Provincial Treasurer. Also something he may be quite interested in is to take a look at the financial state of the province and what that means in terms of a lot of areas: in terms of social spending, people services, debt reduction, the human and economic deficit. Finally, third, just to talk about a system of government that's much more open and much more honest than we've had in the past, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I think all of us, and I expect I'm speaking for all members of the House, have some concern about where we're going as a country. In fact, I don't think anybody in this Assembly or in this province or perhaps across the country can say for certain what Canada is going to be like three or four years from now. I don't think any of us have that amount of wisdom. Needless to say, we are facing some very, very difficult times, and I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that in the next three or four years we will know whether we even have a country left or the potential for the same kind of country that we've had.

Mr. Speaker, there's a great deal of cynicism out there among the public. I'm not going to rehash all the things that happened with Meech Lake. Needless to say, I think it was neither as bad as the opponents made it out to be nor as good as the proponents said it was. I think that clearly what happened, and I said this at the time we came back from Ottawa, is that the process at least had turned a lot of people off, not only Albertans but Canadians right across this country. If we've learned anything about constitutional talks, Mr. Speaker, we should learn that the public not only has to be involved, but they have to feel that they're involved. No longer in this country, no matter what kind of country we end up with, will we ever have 11 men behind closed doors deciding it again. It just will not happen. I don't think the public will put up with it.

So obviously the one area I'm talking about that has pressures in terms of the country and where we're going is the constitutional talks, Mr. Speaker. But let me move from there and say that obviously Quebec, being disappointed and angry after the end of Meech Lake – and I don't think that they should have been, because as far as I considered in looking at what happened, that was not a rejection of Quebec. It was a rejection of the process; it was a rejection of a lot of other things not being part of those constitutional talks, and people being left out. So

it's a mistake for the people of Quebec to think that was a rejection of their demands.

For those people that flippantly say that Canada will go on; it doesn't matter what Quebec does; if they move to sovereignty association or independence or whatever – I've never understood what sovereignty association means; I'm not sure people in Quebec understand it totally – it will not impact on us in the rest of the country: think again. Mr. Speaker, I don't think any of us can predict with certainty what it will do, but – and I think the Provincial Treasurer would agree with me on this – the minute a country starts to break up, there is going to be instability within the money markets. It is going to have some implications for all of us in this country, and I would say probably much more negative than positive.

So we must look and say that if Quebec leaves, what will that entail? Does that mean more and more fragmenting, more and more splitting up, some provinces perhaps looking towards the United States, or whatever? I'm not saying I have the answers to this, Mr. Speaker, but clearly if that starts, I think we have some serious particular problems.

The Allaire report passed by the Quebec Liberal Party is the first reaction from the Quebec government. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that unequivocally those of us who believe in a country called Canada cannot accept that Allaire report. All they'll basically be leaving for the federal government is the debt – and that's nice of them – currency, national defence, and external affairs. In reality, I say to you that that would be a backdoor approach to separation, because there would really be no need for a federal government. What you would have if each province took those powers is, depending on what happens in Yukon or the Northwest Territories, 10, 11, or 12 little principalities. So in fact, you would not have a country. People might argue that's the type of country they want, and I suppose they could make that case, but it is certainly different from the country we now know as Canada.

The other part that bothered me about it was the tone of that, Mr. Speaker. I remember when it came out. I saw the words. It said: this is the final and decisive test for Canada. I find those terms, a final and decisive test for Canada, offensive, because it's not just the Quebec Liberals or one province that's going to decide the final, decisive test for Canada. I'm sure all of us are going to have a say in that. So the point I'm trying to make . . . If they say, "Well, here's the proposal; it's a decentralization model; this is what it might take, but we're prepared to negotiate" – very much what Mr. Ryan, I thought, was saying – I can understand that. I may not agree with it, but I can certainly understand. But don't tell me it's the final and decisive test, because as I say to you, if that Allaire report is followed, there really is not much role for the federal government in this country at all.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to watch constitutional debates. Going back in the '70s and '80s, I would have considered myself a provincialist; in the debate even within our own party I had certainly taken that particular stand. When you get into the Allaire report, it's going much beyond what I would consider reasonable in taking powers away from the federal government. I don't think there's any doubt about that. So there's one set of pressures on Canada: the constitutional matters. We're all going to have to deal with them one way or the other.

But there are other pressures on this country, Mr. Speaker, pressures that this government supported. I'm talking about the trade deal with the United States. That also has a decentralizing mode to it. In other words, it's putting pressures to move north/south rather than east/west, make no mistake about it.

Now, certain people may agree with that, but the reality is that that is taking away from the Confederation we call Canada. For those people that said: "Oh, it's going to answer all our problems. We'll just get into the trade deal and we'll have no problems at all; the economy will be booming, and social programs will not be affected, our orderly marketing in agriculture will not be affected," we see the truth coming now. For those people who said that it would be good for our economy, it's rather interesting that even the Canadian Manufacturers' Association now is worried about it. They blame it on high interest rates, but very much part of the trade deal is that 289,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost, according to Statistics Canada, and a loss of 430,000 full-time jobs. There have been some service jobs created, but these have been generally low-paying, part-time, without benefits. We're losing those better jobs to the United States, and that trend is continuing. That puts pressure also, as I said, on this country called Canada in Confederation.

Now we see the Conservatives federally and their cheerleaders here provincially saying that that's not enough, to put those pressures on; we want to get into a trilateral deal with Mexico. Well, I can understand American capital loving a deal like that, Mr. Speaker, because then they can afford to take Mexican wages, about 74 cents an hour if you're lucky to get a job there, use our resources, and help the centre make profits. Even American workers are starting to worry about the Mexican deal. It certainly makes sense for capital, mainly from the United States, but I really question when this government says, "Well, we have to be there to compete." The only thing that will do, the only trend will be clearly to lower wages to compete with Mexico. We already see people setting up and moving to Mexico. Now, you think this is not going to put pressures on our country? You know, it's bad enough, the trade deal, but now they're going to make it worse with the trilateral deal. Mr. Speaker, I say to you they are all trends, very difficult trends that make it very difficult for this country to stay together. Brian Mulroney was right about one thing. He says, give me two decades – or something along that – and you won't recognize Canada. Well, he's certainly right about that. We may not even have a country left by the time Mr. Mulroney's through with us.

4:30

Now, Mr. Speaker, let us then move from there into some other pressures, and this is a continuation of the debate that the Provincial Treasurer and I were holding during question period. Now, I remember when I brought this up after the western finance ministers got together. They talked about disentanglement, and they talked about this and that and how they could get more power for themselves and forget about our social programs; we'll just take tax points. I said at the time that this would have direct implications, that there would never be another national program like medicare, and even the ones that we have like medicare, forget it. Mind you, I agree that under Bill C-69 they're going that direction anyhow.

There's a few things that keep this country together. One is our universal social programs; medicare, for example, one that was brought in by our party. We have very few things that determine and make us proud to be Canadians, but one is medicare. It's true that while you live in Newfoundland, you can expect a certain standard in terms of health care, and right to B.C. Interestingly enough, even the people of Quebec better recognize that if they lose a universal program like that, as they would with the Allaire program, then I'll guarantee, because the Liberal government in Quebec has been talking about a two-

tiered system, about user fees, and all the rest of the matters . . . I know that the Minister of Health has often said that, well, she doesn't believe in a two-tiered system; they don't believe in user fees. I'm not sure that's true of the Provincial Treasurer, because that's why he would want the tax points, but I would remind this government that before the Canada Health Act was brought in by the federal government, we had user fees in this province. The only reason they abandoned them – and we were clearly moving towards a two-tiered system, if you recall – is because under the Canada Health Act the federal government had some power, had some clout. They could say that if you keep using user fees, you're going to lose that amount of money. Even this government understood they couldn't afford to continue to lose millions and millions of dollars. That's why they got rid of our user fees. Make no mistake about it; if there wasn't a Canada Health Act, we would have user fees in this province and we'd be moving towards a two-tiered system.

Now, again this may be a debate we could have. I suggest that maybe some people in this government have never really wanted universal medicare. They'd love for the province to have tax points, they'd love for the province to be able to charge user fees, and they'd love for the province to move towards a two-tiered system of health care, Mr. Speaker. But I suggest to them and to the Provincial Treasurer that you're not talking for ordinary Albertans. This is one of the things they expect and they're prepared to pay their taxes for. They're prepared to have a federal government with enough clout to ensure that they reach at least our minimum national standards. So that will be an interesting debate as we debate "whither Canada?"

Now I move to there, Mr. Speaker, to talk about the committee that we're setting up in this Legislature. My point to the Treasurer: if already you're talking ahead of us going out to debate what kind of Canada we want, what kind of power should be for the province, what kind of power should be for the federal government, and it's a serious exercise where we're actually going out to listen to people and letting them have their say, doesn't it seem premature when the Treasurer says, "Well, this is great; we'll trade tax points and get the federal government out of these areas"? I would say that clearly, then, you're prejudging what that committee is going to say. Now, our caucus is going on the assumption – at this point, we have some problems with the committee that you've set up, but we're prepared for the time being to participate, because I'm going to go on the good word of the government that they are serious in actually listening to Albertans and that they are prepared not to push ahead. As I've said before, the process is as important as the final product, that we don't rush this and worry about Quebec's agenda, that we follow our own agenda, and Quebec will eventually have to negotiate with the rest of us. That's one where I do agree with the government. It can't be just federal government to Quebec; all of us have to participate in that process, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going on the assumption that the time frames aren't that rigid, that we're not going to push something through and be a charade and come back and we have to do a minority report. I'm taking the government at their word, Mr. Speaker, and our caucus is taking the government at their word that they are legitimately wanting to listen to the people. I want to say that it certainly does worry me, though, when the Treasurer is talking about tax points before even going through that process, trading that, because he knows full well that if you trade tax points, eventually if the federal government – it has to come to my question today – doesn't control any funds and if they have no clout in terms of the finances, people will say: "Well, so what?"

We'll do whatever we want." The only clout we have in terms of having national standards, frankly, is to have some money in transfer payments. Now, if we're not going to that, if we do go to provincial tax points, I'm saying to the Treasurer that that is a major, major shift in the way we do things in this country, and it has constitutional implications. That's all I'm saying. It's taking away power from the federal government and giving it to the provinces. Now, that may be a legitimate approach to take in terms of a debating point. I don't happen to agree with it because I think we do need some national standards, but that's legitimate. That's a legitimate thing to hear from people, from Albertans as we go around, but let's not set it up ahead of time that we're going in that direction. That's the point I'm trying to make at this particular time.

Mr. Speaker, let me move from there and talk about the finances of the province. Again, I was trying to remember which questions I asked in question period, because the answers evaded me. The Provincial Treasurer I think had his three little speeches ready ahead of time. The message he wanted to get out had little to do with the questions I was asking, but that doesn't surprise me. Now, the point I want to make is that we have, contrary to all the rosy talk, some serious, serious financial problems in this province. We start to look at the deficits, the debt, the unfunded liability. You add it all up – I'm not including the trust fund at this particular time – and that's \$23 billion when we look at all the debts put together, or close to it. Our consolidated debt, our deficits, and our unfunded liability would be very close to that. I would agree that though the trust fund is there, it's not worth that sort of money. I'm not sure what it's worth anymore, and I'm not sure the Treasurer is. It's certainly not worth what they say it is on paper, and he knows that full well. Even the Auditor General is telling him.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

The point is that we do have some serious financial problems. There's no doubt about that, Mr. Speaker, and I would say: frankly, let's put the blame where the blame is. It's this government that's been in power over all these years. We weren't over there making the decisions that led us to the debt. Well, the Treasurer can wipe his brow, but even if we'd tried to create a bigger debt, we couldn't have done it.

Now, I won't go into this in great detail, but he knows full well why we have that deficit: wasteful spending in the '70s. The fact is that we didn't diversify when we had the chance, and that we've talked about before; I won't bore him. The fact is that we went to deregulation when the world price of oil went down. Fifty-one percent of our revenues in 1980-81 came from oil and gas, so they joined and went into deregulation. Now that's less than 30 percent; there is a lot of the money. You can blame it on all sorts of things, but I think that's the bottom line. As I said before, it was the triumph of ideology over common sense. If I may say so, Mr. Speaker, this Conservative government has made a mess of our finances in this province. But we're there. You can't turn the clock back, unfortunately, or we could say that it's just been a nightmare since '71 and get on with our lives. The reality is that this party has been in government and it's created a mess. What do you do now?

4:40

Well, Mr. Speaker, there are two basic questions to ask. It doesn't take a genius, not even anybody as smart as the Treasurer. The first question one must ask when you're dealing with the finances of the province is simply this. All governments collect

money, collect taxes, collect lotteries, various sorts of revenues. The first question you ask: are they collecting them fairly? Is everybody paying their fair share? The answer, clearly, in this government is an absolute and definite no. This is a debate that we've held before and we will continue to hold. In the last four years – and we don't know what's going to happen in the next budget – this Conservative government has collected over \$4 billion in taxes from ordinary Albertans. Now, they don't always call them taxes. They call them health premiums, but they're health taxes. They're for motor vehicle registrations. They've got a way to ding you almost every way around; \$4 billion is a lot of money.

Now, at the same time, Mr. Speaker, let's look at whom they're collecting taxes from and whom they're not. In 1987, the latest year we can get the figures on it, we collected \$50 million in provincial taxes from people earning less than \$15,000. At the same time, in the '80s, there were 600 wealthy Albertans who made \$1 billion in income. Guess what? They didn't pay one single penny. Now, does that make sense to anybody, that in '87 people making less than \$15,000 pay \$50 million, and wealthy people do not pay a single penny? Clearly the answer is no. We're missing a tremendous amount of revenues that we could be collecting in terms of dealing with our deficit that the hon. Treasurer created.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've also had this debate before. If you look at the last four years, where the goal was at one time to balance it off roughly 50-50 between the corporate sector and the individual taxpayers – and we were before this government came to power roughly around 60-40 – 94 percent of the taxes collected in this province came from individual taxpayers and only 6 percent from the corporate sector. Again we're missing a tremendous amount of revenue there in terms of dealing with the deficit. So the answer to the first question is: no, we're not collecting money fairly from all sectors. The sector that's most able to pay is not paying, and that's created part of our problem at least.

The second question that one must ask, Mr. Speaker, is another simple question. All governments, regardless of their stripe, spend money. Now, the question that must then be asked: are they spending it wisely? Are their priorities straight? Have they got it together? Guess what the answer to this question is? Again an absolute and definite no. At least \$250 million over the last four years to failed business ventures, probably a conservative estimate; \$250 million. It's cost us \$480 million because we failed to properly regulate the financial institutions in this province. Now we have NovAtel, another one where we learned that not only are we hurting the workers – 222 laid off in Lethbridge late Friday; a nice little press release goes out about that – but just before the Speech from the Throne we find out that for this company what originally went out on the prospectus was that there was going to be \$4 million in profit. Then it's \$21 million in losses, \$66 million in operating losses, and \$203 million, and where it's going to stop, the Lord only knows. We don't have money for things like health care to keep up to inflation, like advanced education to keep up to inflation, public education to keep up to inflation, but we can throw out millions and millions of dollars to their friends and failed business enterprises. They're so obsessed with privatization, they can't even do that right. It ends up costing the taxpayers millions and millions more, and where it's going to stop, nobody knows. That's the type of priorities that people are angry with, an absolute total waste of taxpayers' dollars.

Now, in the Official Opposition we tried – not having access to the books, I might point out, because we don't have a

freedom of information Act here in this province – to find out what is necessary spending. In doing some work, we were able to say to the people of Alberta that we would be able to cut this budget that they have by \$521.5 million. That's starting at the top, Mr. Speaker; you do not need 27 of you over there. Even Ontario, with three times the population, has four less cabinet ministers, if you want to send a message out. At least the Premier of that province has the guts to do what's right there when his cabinet ministers get out of line, and that's the reality. The point is: we have the second most cabinet ministers outside of Quebec and not nearly the population they do. It's not just their cabinet ministers' salaries; it's all the bureaucracy around it. That's where you should start to cut, and there are many other areas you could cut and be more efficient. But no, no; they want to lay off the secretaries. That's who they want to go after. They don't want to take away their own perks. If they were serious, that's what they would do about cutting the budget.

If you went through this government, there is no doubt that there is fat. You could cut out \$521 million without affecting the people programs and, frankly, without affecting government services. No doubt about that. Again, Mr. Speaker, that's probably a conservative estimate, if I may again use that term loosely. The point is that they've created the mess; they don't know what to do with it. It was easy to govern when the price of oil was up. Boy, they were big shots. They could spend all over, no matter what. It didn't matter; nothing was too good for the people of Alberta, or the politicians at least.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the point that I want to make, though – and this comes back again to the Provincial Treasurer – is that of course the economic deficit is important, and you have to be concerned about the deficit that we already have. Of course, ultimately you try to move towards a balanced budget, as I might point out that Alan Blakeney did 10 years in a row and Tommy Douglas did while he was in power. But what you have to do is balance the fiscal deficit with the human deficit.

I say to the Treasurer, when I look at their announcement, I believe with the Premier – and I have it here in front of me – that they go through the press releases and tell us, oh, how fortunate we are to live in Alberta, as they dealt with the local authorities. Sure, there was an increase in money, but the Treasurer knows full well that falls far below institutional inflation. What it means is that in health care, municipal services, and advanced education there's going to be a further deterioration. Now, this is what people want and are prepared to spend their money on, their taxes. This is what they think is important. They don't think it's important that we have 28 cabinet ministers, Mr. Speaker, and that's a reality. Over the long haul I suggest that you pay a bigger price. It wasn't just this one year. If you look at what's happened just using the consumer price index, which is probably low because institutional inflation runs higher, as the Treasurer is well aware, since '87-88 – and you include into '91-92 what the Conference Board is predicting in terms of inflation – there'll have been over those years a 14 percent cut in real dollars in advanced education; a 13.1 percent cut in public education; in health, in the hospitals and nursing homes, 10.4 percent; in health units, 14 percent; in municipal grants, 15.5 percent: cuts in real dollars.

Now, the point I make is that that doesn't even make good economic sense over a longer period of time, because your infrastructure crumbles, Mr. Speaker. If your infrastructure crumbles, it's hard to make that up. I would suggest that if we have a healthy population, that makes good economic sense. If we have a well-educated population, if we have well-educated people coming out of our universities in this so-called global

economy that they're always talking about, they're going to be much more efficient, but that's a reality that's not happening in Alberta. I say to you that not only are we going to pay a big social price, but we'll pay a big economic price as we go down the way. That's where you should be spending your money. The point that I'm trying to make is that you balance the two over a period of time. You balance your human deficit with your economic deficit. They both work together, they're both important, and you have to take them both into consideration. To achieve some mythical balanced budget on a certain date on paper and put more people in the unemployment line or in the welfare line, or you don't have a decent educational system and you don't have money for the poor: over the long haul that's so shortsighted. Again, what this government has failed to do is balance off those two important priorities, like I say, the human deficit with the economic deficit.

4:50

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me go on and look at another human deficit just very briefly. One of the concerns that I have had – perhaps I'm aware of it, representing an inner-city riding – is that we have a serious problem growing in terms of children: more and more falling below the poverty level; a growing problem, I admit, not only in this province but right across the country. As the Treasurer is, I hope, aware, the figure that we see in Alberta is roughly 93,000, over 93,000 children that fall below the poverty level. That's one in five of our children that is below the poverty level.

Now, as a result of this, Mr. Speaker, seeing as I am an inner-city MLA and seeing some of the problems that develop in the schools in terms of crime within the inner-city with youth – you know, I thought that this was a serious problem, but I wanted to check. We wanted to check as a caucus to see if other Albertans, not only in Edmonton but across the seven centres, felt some of the same things we did, so as you're well aware, we held a task force. It was called Healthy Children for a Healthy Future. We came back with this report. I hope the government will read it because there's some very good recommendations in it, and not all money matters. The point that I'm trying to make in here is that you may save some money in the future by spending some money now. It's either do you want to spend money on schools, on prevention and day care and pay equity and these things, or do you want to spend it later and build more institutions and more jails? I think we have a fundamental decision to make here.

We've come forward with a number of recommendations. The report summarizes 44 recommendations, and there were over 130 submissions. They've been received from right across the province, with some people very concerned; some excellent, excellent presentations. I wish some members of the government could have been there to see some of the presentations that were made. We've made these recommendations; I would hope the government would take a look at these. Some of them we've talked about before and some are new. I won't bore you by reading the whole book, but the point that I wanted to make . . . [interjection] Well, this is not a laughing matter, Mr. MLA. There are some very serious problems out there, and if you don't know that, you're just not listening to people other than your wealthy friends.

Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that this is a serious social problem, and again I come back to the human/economic deficit. Maybe you say you don't have money for an increase in welfare, for pay equity, for a higher minimum wage, or for this or that, but I also want to tell you that if you don't, you're still going to

pay the price down the way. You're going to pay a social price and an economic cost later on, so I think we have some fundamental decisions to make in that matter.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go into my third area, and that has to do with the style of government, what I call open and honest government. Now, I'm not talking about honesty in the narrow sense of people being honest personally, although that's obviously important, but what I'm talking about is a system of government. I already alluded to processes like Meech Lake and secretive approaches done by this government, and that people are turned off by politics and politicians. If we don't believe that, then we're hiding our heads in the sand. I mean, people here may think they're the most popular people around, but I can tell you that's just not the case.

Mr. Speaker, I say to you that after 20 years of Conservative rule, public confidence and the integrity of government has never been lower, and it's no wonder. Secrecy, dishonesty, and backroom deals have become standard procedure for the Conservatives in this province. A few examples make this abundantly clear. There is the continuing saga of Mr. Pocklington, which has probably taken \$120 million from taxpayers' pockets. What has been the Conservatives' response? Well, they bolt for cover behind the courtroom door. They have repeatedly rejected our calls to let Albertans see the agreement that gave away our money, and they've outright refused to answer the questions in the Legislature. Now we're seeing the same thing all over again with NovAtel, again not coming clean with us and not prepared to hold a public inquiry. Maybe they'll find out it's like the Principal Group, where they're forced into it and have to pay the price for it later.

Then there was the spiraling patronage of this government. I say, Mr. Speaker, that this is patronage that makes even Pierre Trudeau and Brian Mulroney seem like rank amateurs in comparison. Everyone from defeated Conservative candidates to loyal party functionaries has received plum appointments to high-paying posts of questionable value – under tough times I doubt that we need half these things – or won lucrative government contracts without being subjected to tender. These are only a few of the examples of a government that is closed to, but openly contemptuous of, the people it's supposed to serve.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we in the Official Opposition say that this is wrong. It's wrong, and the people are saying it's wrong. We have to start from a much different perspective. We believe that government must respect the democratic process. They must respect the wishes of those of us elected to serve. They must respect the rights of all Albertans to participate in the governance of our province.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of this session – some of them were announced today – we intend to carry this message forward for this government. We will present a motion calling on the Legislature to end patronage appointments by requiring broad advertisement of all positions on provincial boards, advisory councils, commissions, and tribunals, so that all Albertans, not just card-carrying Conservatives, have an opportunity to apply.

Mr. Speaker, also we will be introducing, as will the other opposition party, a freedom of information Act that guarantees Albertans the right to request and receive information that concerns them. We've done this many, many years in the past, and we will continue. We will introduce a whistle blower's protection Act which guarantees the protection of citizens that report government or industrial wrongdoing. We will also bring forth legislation that prevents ex cabinet ministers sitting as MLAs from receiving their pensions, an unjustifiable practice that the Conservatives have allowed. We will press the government.

We're told that it's coming. We'll make sure that it is in fact legislation with teeth. We will be pressing the government to bring in strong conflict of interest and ethics legislation that's been promised for years and is long overdue.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is time that we as politicians, all of us, regardless of our political stripe, should be approaching this issue and these matters. We can no longer do politics in the old ways. We have to have politicians and governments that mean what they say and say what they mean and are prepared to take the political consequences of that. I'm telling you that if this government doesn't recognize that the public, ordinary Albertans, are not demanding a different approach in government, they are just not listening. They are just not listening, and they will not be the government after the next election if they're not getting that message, because it's not politics as usual out there with the public anymore. In some ways that's healthy. In most ways it's healthy because people are becoming more interested in politics and much more concerned about what politicians are doing.

5:00

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I want to just refer back to the Speech from the Throne from the government. Quite a document. How many pages? Eight pages. I believe I have to say there's something good about the government's Speech from the Throne. It has to do with the themes. Yes, I agree with this: it talks about challenges, balance, and change. Yes, I do agree with the government that we have a challenge. We certainly have a challenge fixing the mess this Conservative government has left both socially and economically. Yes, we do have to find a balance, I agree with the government there, between millions and millions of dollars that are squandered on failed business ventures – as I mentioned, most recently Telus – but again no money for the poor. We don't have enough money for health care, education, advanced education. We have to find a balance there. Yes, I do agree with them that we definitely do need change. We can no longer afford this Conservative government.

As I said Thursday night, this is a complacent, tired old government that has totally run out of steam. They have no initiatives to deal with the very, very serious problems. Mr. Speaker, I leave it to this government. Can you imagine what they would have said if they'd been sitting there as an opposition and there'd been another party in power and they came forward with a document like this, eight pages with no new initiatives? That's the reality of what's happened with this provincial government.

We intend to keep pushing this government; you know, criticize. There's lots to criticize, and nobody loves criticizing Conservatives as much as I do. But we will also present alternatives, as we've tried to do with these papers – an alternate throne speech, Healthy Children for a Healthy Future – and we will continue to do that through the private members' Bills and getting that out to the public. I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that people are looking for a difference. They're looking for a different approach from their politicians, and they're also looking very carefully at all the political parties. If these people want to stay in power, they'd better start listening, because we're going to be coming at them hard and strong.

Thank you very much.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those last threats, that they're coming after us, have really got me shivering in my boots here. It sounded like the mother of all threats to me.

You know, it's interesting. A political leader of approximately 3,000 years ago made a comment that there's no new thing under the sun. His name was Solomon. He didn't have to worry about getting elected, so he could make bold comments like that. And there is no new thing under the sun when it comes to listening to the Leader of the Official Opposition as he reads his speech. However, I'm given some comfort because the same thing could be reflected back to us: there's no new thing under the sun, so what new do you have to offer? That same wise political leader writes in Ecclesiastes in a very interesting verse that the wise man's leanings will lead him to the right, whereas the foolish man will be led to the left. It's a very interesting statement.

I do want to assure the member and the members opposite that I feel it's incumbent upon us as elected people to at least do our opponents – if I can use that word – do our adversaries in the parliamentary process the courtesy of looking at what they're presenting to see indeed if there is something good or something positive in what they're presenting. Year after year I do that, and in the last two or three years I've been very disappointed in not being able to find something, but I'm encouraged – and I say this to my own colleagues, and I hope they won't be offended by the fact – that indeed I have spent time looking through the alternative speech from the throne, which the member opposite has been quoting copiously from over the last several minutes. I have read through it; I have read through their paper in which they talked about going around the province and looking at poverty and family concerns and things like that. I commend them for at least doing that. I have found some good things, I say quite sincerely, in both of those documents, their task force policy paper and also the alternative speech from the throne.

Those things which I have found positive, Mr. Speaker, happen to coincide perfectly with the programs and initiatives we already have in place. I don't know how they have missed those. We've tried to make sure they are adequately funded in the areas of research, but constantly they miss the fact that many of the things they're telling us we should do – and I say this with some trepidation – we are already doing. It's a little scary to think that at times they think like we do, but in fact that is the case. It was interesting, though, going through the alternative throne speech and listening – oh; I'm not allowed to comment at this point – to the member's comments. It was interesting. In their alternative throne speech alone, their alternative offers 34 – count them, Mr. Speaker: 34 – initiatives that would grossly increase government influence in the lives of Albertans, no less than 34 separate initiatives that would bring more government interference in the lives of Albertans.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Albertans that I talk to tell me they want the role of government reduced in their lives, and here again we have the socialist response: an increase. Big Brother or Big Sister has all the answers. We don't want to be sexist; I appreciate that, hon. member. Big Person, whatever we want to refer to, has all the answers. The constant return is to answers of strong government involvement in virtually every area of our lives. Now, I don't know where they hear that, because Albertans that I talk to don't say that to me.

They talked about going to a few centres around the province in formulating their task force on family policy and things like that. I looked at that paper; I also looked where they were. They attended at some – and I repeat, at a few – of the cities in Alberta. They ignored rural Alberta, except that one day they did drive out to Edson. They did talk to three people out there, Mr. Speaker, three people out there in Edson, and that's their reflection of the views of Albertans. When they're cloistered in this marble mausoleum here day after day, week after week year-round and don't get out and talk to Albertans, it's no wonder they can develop the strong centralist view for which they're known.

They talk about a number of issues through their alternative throne speech, and the Member for Edmonton-Norwood mentions a number of different things. He went off on a tirade about free trade, and I thought that was interesting. There's an interesting approach that the member takes to issues. Basically, if I can steal a quote from Stephen Leacock, he looks at any of these issues and he wildly throws himself onto a racing horse and charges off in all directions. That's what he does, Mr. Speaker, refusing to look at fact. That's all I'm asking, that we look at the facts.

You know, he was rambling on about free trade. I appreciate the remarks about free trade, but there was no reference to what has happened under the free trade agreement since 1988. What has happened? Now, of course, one of the things that the great prophets over here predicted was that our exports would plummet; we would be devastated in terms of the export market. Well, in fact, exports have jumped by about \$4 billion. This is Stats Canada figures. This isn't trumped up somewhere like with the members opposite, who have their poor, tired little researcher working in a darkened office somewhere, and they throw in some raw meat and raw vegetables every now and then and say: "Keep pumping out the propaganda. Forget the facts." These are actual Stats Canada facts, not party policy propaganda like we see from the members opposite.

It's interesting to note that there was an increase in manufactured exports – an increase in manufactured exports. As a matter of fact, Canadian sales to Americans rose about 7 percent, and that's after removing inflation. That's not tying in inflation. A 7 percent increase in exports. We were supposed to be devastated by that. We were told that, you know, manufacturing north of the border would absolutely be wiped out and hollowed out and everything else. It's also interesting to note that in 1988 Canada exported about \$97 billion worth of goods and services to the United States, for those who are interested in the statistics, and by late 1990 export trade was already running at about \$102 billion. Well, unless you're using the math of the hallowed finance critic opposite, that sounds like an increase to me. I could be wrong, but it does sound like an increase. Actually, when you net out that about a fifth of that involves manufactured goods, the net gain of this \$4 billion in the end product represents a pretty healthy increase of about 20 percent in a pretty short period.

5:10

Now, the member chose to ignore the basic facts. He talked about, and we can remember the dire predictions, how Canadian primary products were going to be just drained out of the country, that overnight this great chute was going to open and all of our primary products would be gone. As a matter of fact, Canadian exports of primary products to the U.S. suffered a net decline of about \$2 billion. Where are the prophets of doom?

They're still prophesying, but they're not using stats to do their prophecies with.

Also, it was noted very clearly that the free trade agreement would just enable the U.S. forces to overrun us with countervails and all kinds of other things. I haven't heard the members opposite applaud a fairly recent ruling in terms of countervail of a bilateral trade panel when they were dealing with the issue of Canadian pork products. Well, we were told that the big bad Americans were going to beat us to death on these bilateral trade panels and that it would be a long process. In a relatively short period of time, that countervail pork dispute was settled, and for whom? In favour of the Americans? No, Mr. Speaker, in favour of the Canadians and in favour of the Alberta market. The prophets of doom strike out again, unfortunately overlooking the facts.

The U.S. buys over 70 percent of Alberta exports, and you know, that portion has also risen since the FTA has been in place. As a matter of fact, Alberta sales of manufactured goods have actually doubled in the last two years. I guess they all went to sleep. They didn't applaud that. I thought they would be delighted. They're always talking about the working Albertan and the small businessman and the small businesswomen, and here we have those small businesses doubling their exports since 1988 and not a murmur. A little whimper here and there, cowering under their papers, saying: "Oh, my goodness, it's facts. It's truth. We can't deal with that. We like propaganda better."

I could go on. It's actually interesting to note, as I'm sure they've observed, that since 1988 there have been some real crunches that have come upon the Canadian economy – we're well aware of that – factors like relative interest rates and the value of the Canadian dollar versus the American dollar. We know that's had a severe impact on our economy. Even predictions that were made then, without those negative influences on our economy – we were predicting in 1988 that even a gain of 6 to 7 percent would have been tremendous, and that's with an improved economy. Yet with factors like the interest rate and the dollar difference having an excruciating effect, still we achieved a net export performance target of 6 to 7 percent. Unfortunately, those facts don't jibe with the prophets of doom at all, but those are the facts, Mr. Speaker.

Then, of course, we're hearing now the similar screaming and shrieking about having anything to do with trade to Mexico. "Oh, we don't want that." Do you know what they tell us, these people concerned for the working person of the world? I understand one of their members is down there in Mexico right now doing a little fly-around tour, making sure that Mexico is handling things right. Concern for the working poor is what they say, but do you know what the argument is that comes from the socialists, Mr. Speaker? We face it here every day. We heard it from the member opposite. I've faced it in debates in agricultural sessions. The argument that comes is: "We don't want to trade with the Third World. We don't want to trade with Mexico." Do you know why? They work for less money. They work for a cheaper rate. Isn't that terrible? Do you know what they suggest? Let's just keep sending the Third World welfare. Let's just send them lots of food to eat, and let's send them lots of drugs to keep them doped up, but don't let them compete with us. Don't let their low rates of payment compete with our union rates. Oh, heavens, that they could become self-sufficient and independent? Shame. Perish the thought.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

You know what, Mr. Speaker? If there's somebody right now in Mexico organizing and working for \$1.60 an hour, how long do you think they're going to be happy with \$1.60 an hour? As their product improves, their labour rates are going to go up. You know what's happening in Mexico as they see the opportunity of joining in a trilateral trade deal? They see for the first time in possibly a hundred or more years the opportunity to dig themselves out of a welfare cycle, and do you know what? They're starting at it by working at lower rates. It's not always going to be like that. As their standard of living improves, they're going to want the health benefit packages, they're going to want the vacation packages, and they're going to want the things that Canadians enjoy. It's forcing us to be competitive, to let them rise up to the value that I believe they have.

You know, their president just in the last couple of years has disbanded, has privatized, about a hundred formerly state-owned operations, including their airlines, their post office, and other areas of the economy. They've privatized it. They're moving away from socialism, and that's what has the people across here upset. They're losing another world toehold, and little Gerry is down there trying to keep the toe in place, I understand. It's so ridiculous. What they're saying is: continue to impoverish the Third World; don't let them compete because they'll work at lowered rates.

I say let them compete, Mr. Speaker. I say let them become part of a trilateral deal. I say let the figures stand for themselves. In North America we're up against a European trade market of about 326 million people, representing about a \$6 trillion economy. In a trilateral deal with the United States and Mexico we can top that; we can surpass that. That gives us a population of about 360 million and an economy of some \$7 trillion. We heard the member opposite: oh, no; these deals are bad. He denies the FTA figures already of two years that show that it's positive in spite of an economic down time, and what is he saying to the Third World? Make them suffer; make them starve; don't let them compete. I say shame to that, and I don't think Albertans support that.

Then we hear interesting things about words like the "human deficit." I think it's irresponsible, Mr. Speaker, to toss out terms to Albertans, who may not have the facts at their fingertips, like "human deficit." You know, that's shameful, especially when you look at all of the increases in our program spending since 1986. They've been directed towards what? School boards? Yes. Postsecondary institutions, hospitals, nursing homes, local health units, and municipalities: all increases in our program spending have gone to human services.

MR. McEACHERN: Pocklington? Yes. NovAtel? Yes.

Speaker's Ruling Interrupting a Member

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. Standing Order 13(4)(b) still applies, and the Chair is going to keep enforcing that.

Red Deer-North, please.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I acknowledged that Standing Order while the member opposite was talking, and I felt I gave a good listening ear and did not interrupt. I appreciate you making this ruling to just kind of bring him under control here.

Debate Continued

MR. DAY: We hear statements like: our fiscal deficit must be brought under control. I had to chuckle at that because when we hear that from the members opposite, from the socialists opposite, then we say, well, what are examples of the few times Canadians have been bold enough to trust socialists to run a government? Let's look to the examples of fiscal deficit being brought under control.

In B.C. in 1970 there was, under the Socreds there, a \$63 million surplus. We know that shortly after that, for reasons which some of us still don't understand, the NDP took power. By 1976 what had they done with the \$63 million surplus? What had they done with it? Well, they left office, and the official record shows that they left the province with a deficit of \$405 million. They took the \$63 million surplus that was there in 1970; when they left, \$405 million. Even their leader – who is not here in the House, obviously; he's in the federal House; I don't think I can mention his name, and I won't – made a comment that they had gone too far and too fast. I appreciated his honesty on that.

Well, maybe we can look to Manitoba, but that's so depressing.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: How about Saskatchewan?

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. DAY: It is so depressing and discouraging to look to Manitoba and what an NDP government did there that I'd rather not even raise it. My colleagues in the House are in a buoyant mood because the economy is so good and things are looking good here in Alberta that I don't want to drag them down by these other examples.

It is interesting to notice, though, that in Ontario the net cost of the NDP agenda over the next two years is estimated to be \$1.8 billion, and their government there has indicated on several occasions, without even a flutter or batting of an eye, that they anticipate running a deficit of close to a billion dollars. They say it with a smile on their face.

Those are the examples we have to go from when they talk about fiscal restraint and bringing in fiscal control. What's the example here in Alberta? We made a determination – we've said it in our throne speeches for the last two years – that we're going to bring this deficit under control, a deficit that was brought upon us by a devastating drop in oil prices. Overnight, prices dropped to as low as about \$7 a barrel. We took control at that time. I'd tell them to hold their breath, but you don't even have to do that. Just wait. We are pushing hard; we know what our goal is. I'm hoping as I stand here that we can meet it, but that is our goal, to balance our budget. We put action to our words. We don't just blab off at the gums and come up with a lot of diatribe that doesn't make sense on anything.

5:20

Then we hear about conflict of interest guidelines. Wasn't that interesting? This is the problem with the Leader of the Official Opposition. You know, we listened to what they had to say. I read their throne speech. I did go through it, and I found some things that were positive there. As I said, they co-ordinate with some of the things we're doing, that are already in place. But this alternate throne speech was written before ours was even written. There was no waiting to see even what we had to say, just the knee-jerk response to nothing. They didn't even wait to hear our throne speech to give a knee-jerk response, so

it's not surprising that they say: "You know what we need? Conflict of interest and ethics legislation." Well, isn't it interesting that in the throne speech it was announced that the government would amend the Legislative Assembly Act to include certain recommendations from the Conflict of Interest Review Panel. I don't even know if they've done us the courtesy of reading our own throne speech yet. They were here in physical presence the day it was being read, but I don't know where their thoughts were.

They say we don't recognize things like fiscal management, yet the fact remains that since 1985-86 to this day – and it's even recorded in the federal budget – this province has the best management record in terms of fiscal, budgetary restraint of any government in the nation, keeping our annual program expenditure growth to 1.8 percent average. They just don't like those facts. They ignore them, or maybe they don't understand them. We'd be willing, Mr. Speaker – I think my colleagues would concur with me – to hold basic math, basic economic sessions free of charge for members opposite who'd like to be engaged in some of that activity. But they prefer to sail along into oblivion looking for that utopia that doesn't exist.

Then we hear about lending to companies that the market won't support and lending institutions wouldn't touch. You know, I hear from Albertans that they don't like the fact that the central banking system doesn't like to take the kind of risks that Albertans would like to take and that the control of the economy coming from central Canada is really not in the interests of Albertans. So what have we done, Mr. Speaker? We've taken some risks with Albertans. We've taken some risks. The export loan guarantee program alone saw \$200 million in loan guarantees turn into \$760 million in export sales. They're always screaming about jobs. What is the statistical evidence of job growth just on the export loan guarantee program just in Alberta? Fourteen thousand jobs, Mr. Speaker.

You know, they point out the failure rates of the loan guarantee program, and so they should. We need to be aware of those, and I appreciate that. But that's all they focus on, and it takes quite a bit of their time, because in the entire program the success rate is 97 percent. There's a 3 percent failure rate on those, and there are 14,000 Albertans today – they talk about caring about the working person. I suggest to you that we care more than any party in this province about the working person: 14,000 jobs just as a result of the export loan guarantee program. The failure rate is 3 percent; the success rate is 97 percent. I don't know if the finance critic ever got near a mark like that in any of his math exams, but I suggest that that's a pretty good score.

Then comes the comment that you have to diversify the economy. Mr. Speaker, I have to ask myself: where have they been? Where have they been? Their thoughts are in Mexico with Gerry, I guess, because here it is: between 1986 and 1990, because of diversification alone, 89,000 new jobs were created in Alberta, and virtually all of them were outside of the primary industries, hon. member, of energy and agriculture; 89,000 new jobs and outside of the primary industries . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Through the Chair, Red Deer-North, please.

Hon. members, you can also listen very attentively, I'm sure. Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, on and on we go. They talk about in their speech and the Leader of the Official Opposition mentioned that the forestry initiatives will create

relatively few jobs. Well, our estimation, our conservative estimation – relatively few? In our language that's 12,000 new jobs. They say that's relatively few? I don't know. It's the math problem they've got, and it's maybe the finance critic. I don't know who's trotting out the numbers around there, but a 97 percent success rate is nothing to applaud, they think. Twelve thousand new jobs in one industry alone, they say, is relatively few. They're a hard group of people to please, but we're trying to please them. We really are.

Then they talk about balancing the budget and cutting services to children and to the sick and to the poor. I don't know of a type of political opportunism that distresses me more than dragging in children, the sick, the poor and trying to make it as if a government is either ignoring them or being the cause of their disadvantage. All increase in project spending since 1986 has been exactly in the areas that the members opposite are talking about: school boards, postsecondary institutions, hospitals, nursing homes, health units, municipalities. Mr. Speaker, we care and are caring actively, and we can put our actions where our mouth is for the children, for the disadvantaged, for the sick of this great province.

In the 1990 budget alone, which they probably still haven't read, overall health care spending increased nearly 7 percent, and low-income Albertans continue to have their premiums

subsidized. They keep saying that we make low-income Albertans pay for their health care. It's simply not a fact; it just isn't true. This is a caring government, and if you noticed – and not our figures but again Stats Canada figures. Which government puts more money per capita into health? Which government puts more dollars per capita into education? This government, the provincial government of Alberta under Premier Getty's leadership, and knowing what his priorities are. This government. When you're balancing a budget and you're already number one in terms of the dollars you're putting in, how much higher than highest should you go? Faculty members of postsecondary institutions in this province enjoy more research dollars per capita than any other province. Our student loan packages are the most generous in the country. Only Quebec has a slightly lower tuition rate.

They trot out these wild phrases. I can see in my mind's eye the Leader of the Official Opposition as I opened my remarks flinging himself onto that wild horse and galloping off in all directions. Well, we are going in one direction. It's a direction of positive growth for Albertans. I'm excited about it, and I'm supporting it a hundred percent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

