

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, March 21, 1991**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 91/03/21

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

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

Bill 16 **Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1991**

CLERK: Under Orders of the Day, Government Bills and Orders for third reading, Bill 16, hon. Mr. Johnston. [applause]

MR. JOHNSTON: With that kind of applause I should almost make a speech, Mr. Speaker. Instead, I'll simply move third reading of Bill 16.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Perhaps we could revert to Introduction of Special Guests.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Avonmore.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure tonight to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 33 members of the 196th Lakewood Cub Pack. They are seated in the public gallery, and they are accompanied by leaders Charlie Sarnoski, Ben Bathgate, Graham Smith, Joyce Nethercote, Ross Cunningham, Jim Bauer, and parents Bruce McGarvey, Janet Enns, Beth Ewasiuk, Brian Paul, Jack Stewart, and Joan Tucker. I would ask that they now rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Bill 16 **Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1991** *(continued)*

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just saying earlier that I thought the Treasurer was going to give us a speech. I'm disappointed. However, I'll make a few comments that might help him to get into it a little bit. We have, in fact, had quite a good debate on Bill 16 in the last couple of days, the Treasurer and myself, and I want to pick up on a point where we left off.

The Treasurer noted that I'd said something to the effect that the sale of AGT had cost a hundred million dollars, and he said that, no, the underwriting fees and brokerage fees did not come to a hundred million dollars. My reply is that I didn't intend to imply that they did. There were other costs to the sale that I did not mention specifically.

According to the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications, the brokerage fees, underwriting fees, and advertising fees were about \$35 million. We haven't had any update on that figure, so I'm using that number. However, the installment purchase plan, which would defer the interest on about \$400 million for about a year, would amount to probably \$45 million or \$50 million that we'll never see and that will never show up in the books in any way, shape, or form as far I know.

It's a bit like the tax expenditures that we don't account for in our budget. It sort of fits into that category. The other \$15 million or so – it's probably more than that actually – I was attributing to the three-shares-for-the-price-of-two purchase plan for employees. I think I was making quite a conservative estimate of what that would cost, and I said about \$15 million. So I was using \$50 million, \$35 million, and \$15 million for about a hundred million dollar cost.

Of course, in buying back NovAtel, there have been a few more incurred. There was a \$50 million bonus for Bosch, which the minister said the other day would probably end up being more like \$40 million. So it's fair enough to use his number on that. They did find some ways to cut that bonus down, because it had no value that we were buying for that bonus. So there's about \$40 million there to add in terms of just money down the drain. Then, of course, there's the \$204 million loss that we just had to take. That's all in 1990.

For 1991 I think you'd have to look at the possibility that the company isn't worth what we paid for it. NovAtel may not turn out to have a value equal to the dollars we paid for it.

MR. JOHNSTON: It's worth more.

MR. McEACHERN: NovAtel? I'd be very surprised if it's worth more. Try selling it and see who wants to buy it. Don't forget that we've got \$525 million on the line to cover losses. If they keep coming at the rate they have in the last three or four months into this year, we're going to lose a lot more.

The point I'm trying to make, Mr. Speaker, is that while the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications and the Treasurer and the Premier can tell us what a great deal this privatization of AGT was, how the shares have now increased in value and this 44 percent is now worth more than it was before and so on and so on, in fact they've got a backlog of money to make up before they start making any money for the taxpayers of this province, because we're sure having to dish out an awful lot of it in a hurry. So that would be my explanation on the \$100 million and a few of the other related facts, but I would just like to remind the Treasurer and the people of Alberta through *Hansard*.

Needing to ask the Assembly for about a third of the budgetary expenditures for each of the departments at this stage, as we said earlier, is a bit sloppy in terms of the approach to government. We could certainly have brought the House in sooner and not had quite such a big bill that we had to vote blindly on, as we have to do for most of these expenditures. Certainly it's rather extraordinary to be doing it before the budget's even introduced, but so be it. The bills will be paid. The thing will pass the Assembly, as the government has the majority to do so. We on this side of the House decided not to support it, not because we think you don't have to vote supply, but because we wanted to register our protest of the process and the lack of information that we get from the government and the general concept that they can do as they please and hide information from us and just give us something with as little information as this, answer questions as little as they have, and still expect that we are blindly going to go along with whatever they do. So we wanted to just register that protest and say: "No, we don't like the way you're looking after the books of this province. We don't like what you're not telling the people of Alberta. We don't like having to do things in the dark." We're just protesting. I mean, why haven't we got the public accounts yet for this year? Why can't the government be more forthcoming with

information? That's why we've decided not to support the interim supply Bills this time around.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
No.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you. I'd like to take the opportunity presented by the final reading of Bill 16 to put a number of comments on the record. I get the feeling that at times some members of the government feel that these are numbers on a piece of paper. But behind the numbers, Mr. Speaker, are people, are families, are services to the people of this province; they are people who have made the service of others their career. So when we deal with these estimates, it's not as frivolous, as routine as some might make it out to be: simply a matter of procedure that has to be adopted; something that we have to go through in order to meet some time line and let's not worry about what the numbers mean; let's not bother to explain what's behind the numbers; let's not stop to consider who they affect and how they are affected.

It's becoming patently obvious, Mr. Speaker, that the directives that have been given by this government for the coming budget year are hurting a lot of people. I'm particularly concerned by decisions taken yesterday by the board of the Calgary General hospital in response to indications of budget cutbacks from the Minister of Health. These 303 people who are about to receive layoff notices in Calgary are real people with real families, and they serve real Calgarians with important and vital health care services to that city. They were informed like everyone else. There were no consultations, no discussions about the implications of what the government's cutbacks mean; handled in a most unfortunate manner.

So when we deal with the estimates here, the numbers that this Provincial Treasurer has put on this piece of paper, we should realize that behind that are decisions being made tonight to affect thousands of people in the city of Calgary.

8:10

We're going to see two medical units cut, one at the Bow Valley centre and the other at the Peter Lougheed centre, which includes the layoffs of about 100 nurses, nursing aides, and unit clerks. This government has attempted to privatize, contract out, the housekeeping services at the Calgary General hospital since the day they completed the Peter Lougheed centre. They succeeded in keeping the Peter Lougheed centre under private contract, but now people who have worked for many, many years at the Bow Valley centre are being told that they, too, are being laid off; somewhere on the order of 160 to 165 employees to be sacrificed for this government's political philosophy and agenda.

I feel particularly badly in a number of ways. On one hand, the minister of hospitals and health told the boards of the hospitals in this province that they had to balance their budgets. The Calgary General hospital did that, as far as I've been informed. The thanks they get for helping the department with its objectives is to have the minister take the savings provided as a result of these cuts to the Calgary General hospital and transfer them, among other places, to the Foothills hospital, a Crown provincial hospital for which the minister and her department have all the members on the board and for whom

they are directly responsible. So there are lots of feelings in the community tonight of a sense of having the rug pulled out from under people, being cut off at the knees. There are a number of feelings that people have about these numbers on this piece of paper the Provincial Treasurer has tabled for our debate tonight.

What's particularly hurtful to many people is that they have worked hard for many years at the Calgary General hospital and provided good service to the public, and they're being told that that means nothing to this government. Many are visible minorities whose first job when they came to this country was the kind of job that they could qualify for with their language or whatever. It's been their entry point into this country and into this society. They've been able to receive remuneration for their services that keeps them somewhat above the poverty line, but in the order of \$11 or \$12 an hour is nothing on which to raise a family these days.

What this minister and this government want to happen is to put all these people out on the street. They can go to a private contractor and try and get jobs at \$5, \$6, and \$7 an hour. If there's any question over on the other side of this House of where the people are coming from who line up at the doors of our food banks in Calgary and other cities and towns and communities in this province, they need look no further than families who are put in a situation of trying to make ends meet, sometimes with very few skills, at wage rates on the order of \$5, \$6, and \$7 an hour. I think it's shameful for a government to be aggressively pursuing a policy of creating the economic conditions that lead people to line up at the door of food banks in the city of Calgary.

So, Mr. Speaker, on one hand, it may be – I'm not sure of the right words that I want to use – an academic exercise for the Provincial Treasurer and the Minister of Health to see how we can make these numbers on a piece of paper add up to a certain political objective. It's a whole other thing to stand back and ask oneself how this is going to impact on a community and on the lives of families and individuals. That's an entirely different question, and that's a far more important question in terms of what budgeting ought to be about.

I'm not sure whether even at this late stage the Provincial Treasurer is interested in trying to help the Calgary General hospital find somewhere in the order of \$5 million or \$6 million in order to solve their budget problem. I do recall, however, that very recently this cabinet passed an order in council voting somewhere in the order of that amount of money to pay for an overrun in the budgets of six foreign offices this government operates in other countries around the globe. If it's so easy to find money for the celebration of the Hokkaido 10th anniversary and to find money to pay for cost overruns in our foreign offices, why is it so difficult to find \$6 million or \$4 million to preserve the jobs of 300 and some employees at a hospital in the city of Calgary? What is it about a government's priorities that in one budget for one department adding up the figures means finding a special warrant to pay for an overrun and make the budget balance, and in another budget affecting so many Calgarians, the answer is for people to be forced into the streets and given layoff notices?

That's what the numbers on the piece of paper in Bill 16 in front of us this evening represent, Mr. Speaker. Behind it are people, families, and a community. I would hope that sometime between now and the evening of April 4, when the Provincial Treasurer is poised to bring in his budget, he will think very seriously, look very closely, and find the dollars it's going to take in order to provide for the health care system of this province

and the individuals and people who serve our community by working and using their skills in the health care system, that he will find the money to ensure that those services continue to be offered to the people of our province, and that we continue to pay those people to perform those services.

So it's not an academic exercise, Mr. Speaker. It's not even a procedural exercise, although it's often treated that way: simply bring through these dollar amounts, sit and listen to the opposition make all their comments, and then get on with business. These are real people, real lives, real communities, and I would hope that the Provincial Treasurer will find the wherewithal to ensure the well-being of all of those people.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to make a few . . .

MR. SPEAKER: What was the comment?

MR. GIBEAULT: I have no comments to make, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a third time]

Bill 17
Appropriation (Alberta Capital Fund)
Interim Supply Act, 1991

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 17.

8:20

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I intend to make my comments on Bill 17 in French: non.

MR. SPEAKER: Merci beaucoup. Le question, s'il vous plaît.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a third time]

Bill 18
Appropriation (Alberta Heritage Savings
Trust Fund, Capital Projects Division)
Interim Supply Act, 1991-92

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 18.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's never been clear to me why some capital spending is done under one budget of this province and other capital spending is done under a totally different budget. In doing that, it's hard to understand what are the priorities between this budget and that budget. So we have, for example, under Bill 18 capital spending under the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, and under this Bill we have capital spending that seems to bear no relationship whatsoever to the requirements and priorities of the General Revenue Fund. In fact, they seem to have taken a life of their own.

Speaker's Ruling
Decorum

MR. SPEAKER: Forgive me, hon. member.
Edmonton-Mill Woods, what's in the glass before you?

MR. GIBEAULT: Apple juice.

MR. SPEAKER: Sorry, hon. member. Page, would you remove it from the House? This is not the Committee of the Whole. Thank you, page.

Please continue, hon. member.

Debate Continued

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that much of the spending that goes on under the capital projects division has taken on a life of its own, whether it be irrigation or private irrigation water supplies or headworks, land reclamation. Many of these projects in here got their life back years ago when the provincial Treasury was flush with cash, the trust fund was flush with nonrenewable resource revenue, and it didn't seem as if the tap was ever going to be turned off. Because these projects have been created, it just seems that year after year the Provincial Treasurer feels that he needs to bring in appropriations and spending estimates for the capital projects division.

The financial state of the province in 1991 is not the same financial state that the province was in in 1981. As a result, every dollar that's spent under the capital projects division erodes the capital of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund; by that I mean the revenue-generating capital of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. So more money spent under the capital projects division means less money available in subsequent years for the Provincial Treasurer to draw upon to support the General Revenue Fund.

Now, as a result, over the last several years the purchasing power of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund has eroded dramatically. There's no fund in place to build up the endowment or the capital for the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. In fact, this appropriation being requested of the Assembly tonight is draining the capital away from the trust fund, and at the same time it's being eroded by the effects of inflation to the point that the value of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund to the people of Alberta has deteriorated significantly just even in the last four or five years.

So what I think the Provincial Treasurer ought to do is put all of these appropriation requests into the General Revenue Fund or into the Alberta Capital Fund and see how they compare. If they're worth doing, then let's do them from those other sources of revenue. If individual line service is more important than another hospital in some community in Alberta or if the grazing reserves enhancement is more important than a new addition on a building at the University of Calgary, fine. Let's put all of these together and see which have the higher priorities and which don't, which we can afford and which we cannot afford. By bringing them in under a separate appropriation under the capital projects division, they escape that sort of review, that sort of comparison with other capital spending being undertaken by the government.

So, Mr. Speaker, I've become persuaded in recent years that in order to do what we can in the short term to maintain the integrity of the capital of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, capital spending for the capital projects division needs to be transferred to capital spending under the General Revenue Fund or under the Alberta Capital Fund. I'm speaking in opposition to the appropriation request tonight.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Call for the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a third time]

head: **Consideration of His Honour**
head: **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 20: Mr. Taylor]

MR. SPEAKER: Next.

Call for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Grande Prairie.

DR. ELLIOTT: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to make some comments with respect to the Speech from the Throne on behalf of the people from the Grande Prairie constituency. [some applause] Now I am speechless.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make reference to the fact that we did have a new Lieutenant Governor a week ago today present the Speech from the Throne. For those of us that have been around here several years, it was interesting to see a new Lieutenant Governor on the job. It was also a mixed day for us, because it was our first day in the new part of our life when we didn't have our former Lieutenant Governor with us, the Hon. Helen Hunley. We have some very fond memories, I'm sure, of the former Lieutenant Governor, and I know that we all wish her well in her new work.

It was also interesting to see the vigour and the enthusiasm and the emotion and the sincerity that our new Lieutenant Governor put into the reading of the speech the other day. To him we say thank you. I am sure that he is going to make a major contribution to this Assembly and to the history of this province in his new role, which will just be another jewel in his crown of the activities he's already had in this province.

In addition to the Lieutenant Governor, Mr. Speaker, I want to make reference to yourself and your staff. In the opening of our third session of this Legislature a week ago today, there were certain little activities that were introduced into the process that were very subtle, but they were tidily done and very significant with respect to the history of the Commonwealth Legislature. To you, sir, for doing the research and making sure that these little items were included in that ceremony and having the staff brought up to speed on the execution of this portion of the ceremony, I say thank you, because the deportment and the way in which we conduct ourselves in this Assembly, the function and the meaning of this Assembly, to me is one of the major attractions of being part of the process. It's important to see it done with historical significance and in a very proper manner.

8:30

If I may concentrate on the speech and how it impacts on the Grande Prairie constituency, it's interesting to note that the speech had five major challenges, and it's with real pride that I make reference to these challenges as they apply to the Grande Prairie constituency, because I think our Grande Prairie constituency can be considered the real model constituency for explaining what this speech refers to and what its hopes are. In

Grande Prairie we have one of the largest, if not the largest, rural constituencies in Alberta, with 23,000 voters. The largest portion of those voters, about 65 percent of them, are in the city of Grande Prairie, and the rest of them are in the west end of the county, from there to the B.C. border, taking in towns like Wembley, Beaverlodge, Hythe, and numerous small communities that were established when the communities were settled back in the very early 1900s, communities which still have names like Hinton Trail and Royal Banner, Lymburn, Goodfare, and so on. People who reside in those communities retain their community spirit and the community dimensions with real pride.

The first challenge in the throne speech was the fiscal challenge, obviously the one that should be first and the main thrust of this government, and it made reference to balancing the budget but to maintaining the basic services of "health, education, social services, seniors programs, and protection of the environment." All of these things we'll find in the Grande Prairie constituency, where this government has been proceeding and progressing at a fairly rapid rate in each of these areas. We have examples that exemplify each of these areas, and we do so with real pride.

The throne speech also made reference under the fiscal challenge to the fact that through the "government's fiscal and diversification policies, Alberta will continue to grow in spite of the recession around us," not only in the constituency of Grande Prairie, Mr. Speaker, but throughout the entire north. I must apologize that occasionally I will switch hats: sometimes I'll wear the hat of the MLA for the Grande Prairie constituency; occasionally I'll find that I'm doing my thinking and I will find myself wearing the hat of chairman of the Northern Alberta Development Council. I don't want to take away from other members who represent other constituencies throughout the north, but as I do my work as chairman of the Northern Alberta Development Council, I see a lot of northern Alberta from a different point of view.

Referring to growth in spite of the recession, northern Alberta as an entire community can record growth in all of its small towns and communities between the area of 1980 and 1990. This has been the product of diversification policies that apply to the support of small towns, rural communities. This is particularly true in the city of Grande Prairie. The change there has been so rapid that people visiting Grande Prairie come back in a year or two years or three years and can't believe the change they see, not only in the city but in the surrounding communities. So the change is there.

We have a diversified constituency. We have major industry sectors. It's primarily an agricultural community but is blessed with a major forestry sector. It's blessed with a major oil and gas sector. We have the Elsworth deep basin gas field. Apparently, there's an energy reserve there that exceeds even that which we often hear about with the tar sands, where we think we have an energy reserve that will last forever and ever and ever. In terms of total energy, the deep basin in the Elsworth area, about three-quarters of which is in Alberta and one-quarter in British Columbia, apparently is a reserve of natural gas that is hard to comprehend.

Our forestry sector is well defined. Another area that has grown right up to where it is becoming one of our major activities is the tourism sector, through the diversification of the community and the province, and the other one is technology. I think one of our best-kept secrets in the Grande Prairie area is the technology in the Grande Prairie area, particularly as it applies to the forestry and energy sectors. We have people in that area that are experimenting with and developing and

researching and inventing and constructing and marketing equipment for handling both the energy and forestry sectors. I can take you into factories in the Grande Prairie area where machinery is being constructed for harvesting forests, and this equipment is being marketed around the world in all countries where forests exist. They do a marvelous job on that marketing process.

The second challenge in the throne speech was the economic challenge, and it says that our government will work "to ensure that our plan for Alberta's economic future continues to be successful." Well, in each of those areas of agriculture, forestry, energy, tourism, and so on I can give some very fast examples, Mr. Speaker.

Agriculture. We've had the new markets where our agricultural products are harvested and marketed on the Pacific Rim. Trade barriers have come down in some sectors, and we have seen the product of that. We have a broad sector of agriculture in crops and livestock. One of our shining lights is our canola program and the forage and seed program involving both grasses and legumes, most of which is marketed outside of Canada.

Forestry. Again we're talking about the promotion of diversification. We have room here to expand in that area at the local level, and we're looking forward to seeing in the future, with the diversification in the forestry sector, a forest seedling nursery program come into the community. We are also pressing the department with the hope that we can establish some portion of the research sector as it applies to forestry in the Grande Prairie area.

Under energy, as it applies to our area, we have people producing this equipment I was telling you about, and our province is going to continue in a very aggressive way to pursue new markets. I'd like to make reference to one sector there, Mr. Speaker, with respect to marketing Alberta products. It was my pleasure last summer to accommodate the government by representing them in Moscow. We went over there to sell Alberta energy and expertise as it applies to the energy market. What it was was a trade show. There were 16 countries represented at this trade show in Moscow, and Canada was one of the countries.

The significant thing is that the 12 entries from Canada in this trade show all came from Alberta. They were there because Alberta provided the encouragement and the support to make sure that these 12 Alberta companies got to Moscow to exhibit their products. Out of the 12 companies only one has not been active in the Soviet Union in the past, but all 12 expanded and became included in the new development of markets in the Soviet Union. Indeed, one of the 12 companies that was there, a company from Calgary, has been doing business with the Soviet Union for the last 22 years. So Alberta has a very firm marketplace in the Soviet Union in that particular type of work.

Tourism. I made reference to tourism coming into our community as one of the major economic sectors. The throne speech says, and I quote, "Everywhere we are surrounded by change." Mr. Speaker, the change in the tourism industry in the Grande Prairie area is one that is not at all appreciated by people who are not living there. If there's one place where I have to continue to work harder in the community of this Legislature and on the cabinet members of this government, it's to have them understand the importance of tourism in the northern half of this province. That is going to impact on our need for policies with respect to tourists and promoting tourism, and it is also going to impact on things like the infrastructure upon which tourism depends. That means landing strips for aircraft and, above all, hard-surface highways.

Without any hesitation I now jump right into the topic of the highway between Grande Prairie and Grande Cache, which is a tourist highway and an energy highway and an economic highway. It's called Highway 40, the Bighorn route, and we just have to have every possible consideration given to the hard-surfacing of that highway.

8:40

Technology and telecommunications. As modern as we are with our technology, we are still linking northern communities with extended flat rate coverage or toll-free line service. Even in the community of Grande Prairie where the population is relatively heavy compared to many of the communities throughout northern Alberta, we still have families living on opposite sides of the same road and it's a long-distance call for them to phone across the road. We have to work harder on getting that aspect of our telecommunications within the province brought up to the 1990s.

Our throne speech made reference to the fact that we have to "provide a climate in which business can be successful": very fitting under the economic challenge. Well, the good news there is that there's a lot of opportunity for people to go into business in our community and in our province. One of the impediments in the north has been the high cost of car and truck fuel. I compliment the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs for supporting some of our northern representatives with having the federal minister of consumer activity check and challenge some of the prices that we have throughout this province with respect to car fuel. We've noticed as a result of some of that action that the minister has taken that the price of fuel at the pump has come down in certain centres like Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie, and Fort McMurray. However, when you get east or west of some of those mainline highways and out into rural Alberta, the price of fuel is still up to the point where you could probably fill a tanker truck out of a gas pump on Jasper Avenue, truck it out there, sell it through the same pump out in rural Alberta, and still make a profit, working at retail prices, with the discrepancy in the price of car fuel.

We're going to "continue to improve . . . health and safety," says the throne speech. This is an important sector in northern Alberta, especially the portion applying to occupational health and safety. I'm really proud of the amount of progress that has been made by our government under the Workers' Compensation Board program: the new approach, the new support that the program has been getting, the involvement of Albertans throughout the province to become involved in occupational health and safety, and watching the changes that are being made with the present minister. To him we all say thank you. Grande Prairie happens to have the most northerly office of the Workers' Compensation Board. The staff there is extremely proficient and co-operative, and to them we say thank you for the contribution they're making.

New training programs on safety are being introduced, and are an example of how Albertans are being included in the safety programs. We use the logger program at present. That has got the full support of our minister in that area.

The third challenge is the environmental challenge, and goodness knows we have lots of opportunity for this challenge throughout northern Alberta. In the Grande Prairie area, with our rivers, our water, our air, pulp mills, activity of all sorts, we have seen tremendous progress in recent years as the government has pursued this challenge. We are noticing the new legislation, the new attitudes, and the new programs being

brought in by the Minister of the Environment. We are going to see more progress made with waste management and fuel efficiencies and recycling and all of the other things, and we're looking forward to continue to make important progress.

There are two things I'd like to make reference to, though, with respect to the Department of the Environment. Northern Alberta is one of the few remaining sectors of the entire world where we still have an excellent supply of potable groundwater through our aquifers and recharge areas. Not only are they being threatened because of the removal of the recharge areas and the forests, but the groundwater source's supply is also being threatened by the energy sector pumping this water and injecting it back into the ground to flood the oil well to recover the last oil out of these wells. Now, we are constantly told that this is not happening, that they're going deeper and they're bringing up saltwater or doing something else. It's a real irritation, the number of times that some constituent of mine will provide evidence that no, they're actually pumping from the same level the farmer's wells are pumping from because they can see the wells going up and down with all that activity. I think there's still a fair amount of research to be done. A lot of communication is required to convince everybody that we are in fact using the appropriate kind of water for flooding oil fields and that we are not using our potable water.

The second point I'm concerned with is that we are like the rest of the world, not only the rest of Alberta or the rest of Canada but the rest of the world: the problem of finding satisfactory sites for sanitary landfills. The problem we're having is that it seems as though we have a policy with respect to the Department of the Environment that is one of adjudicating or ruling on applications for sanitary landfills, otherwise known as the local dump. It seems like it's the responsibility of people not necessarily skilled in this art to find the location, make application, and then have the department turn it down. Then the search starts all over again. We have too many examples in this province of agonizing and frustration and the waste of immense amounts of emotion in trying to find places to put our garbage. I'm encouraging the Department of the Environment to become more involved in the search for the ideal location for disposing of our garbage, which in our present society we seem to generate so much of.

The fourth challenge, the social challenge. The major feature here was managing health care resources. Well, our health care resources in the Grande Prairie constituency have really made major strides in recent years. We boast a hospital in Grande Prairie called the Queen Elizabeth II hospital. We cut the ribbon on that hospital about six years ago, and the senior program, the extended health care program associated with it called Mackenzie Place, more recently.

We're currently doing a major facelift in the Beaverlodge hospital. The hospital in Hythe was completed in the late '70s, so it is not all that old and is providing an excellent service to the Hythe community. Our ambulance services throughout the community are first-class and growing.

Sometime this summer we hope the Premier will be available to cut the ribbon on a facility known as the northern Alberta addictions centre, a facility built in Grand Prairie that is going to be state of the art, if you'll pardon the expression. It's going to be the facility to handle this particular problem in our society. As other members in this Legislature representing northern Alberta have pointed out in other speeches, Mr. Speaker, northern Alberta does have a reputation of which we are not very proud, and that is that it happens to have the highest level of alcoholism of any portion of Canada. We have all of the

problems that go with this substance abuse, and this list is endless. You get substance abuse especially with alcohol, and that spins right off into family violence and child abuse and early school leavers and family home fires, the loss of life in fires. We hold a reputation in all of those sectors throughout the entire north – notice, Mr. Speaker, I'm wearing my Northern Alberta Development Council hat now – but as a result of these problems, we will have this summer in Grande Prairie Canada's foremost facility for addictions and treatment centre.

We also have in Grande Prairie another little item that we always brag about, and that is an item called Crystal Park school. Under the education area reference was made to the fact that we have to have "a new vision for education." That's what the throne speech said. I sometimes feel that when it comes to a new vision for education, the Grande Prairie community wrote the book, because we have what we call Crystal Park school, a facility that accommodates the handicapped and the child that is not handicapped from kindergarten through to grade 9. They're in a blend in that school. They're helping each other, they're learning from each other, and the gains that are made in the education of those children, both the handicapped and those that aren't handicapped, by working together is something you have to see to believe. It's not uncommon to see the most hard-nosed politician walk in there and come out with wet eyes.

8:50

Bolster volunteerism: another of the words used in the throne speech. They also talk about recreation, culture, ethnic diversity. Well, under that area in the north we have what we call an excellent program under community facility enhancement. That's where our government should put lottery dollars: into bolstering volunteerism. That's the impact it had in my constituency. Volunteers were out there doing the thing that they wanted to do for their community, the things that they thought were important to recreation, culture, ethnic diversification, but they had to find dollars for the nuts and the bolts and the paint and the board and the roofing. By coming up with a program called the community facility enhancement program, dollars that were matched by volunteer people, we were able to see things happen in the community that gave each of those communities an opportunity to expand their self-pride and their future ambitions.

We had two excellent examples of how volunteerism is bolstered. The minister responsible for public works and the lottery dollars promoted something which had an impact throughout the entire province this last January. It was called the Canada/Russia hockey series, where the Soviet Union hockey team came into Alberta and played at seven different locations. Grande Prairie was one of the locations. Some of that expense was funded by lottery dollars, but you should have seen the impact it had on volunteerism and on the minor hockey programs throughout rural Alberta. The other place where we've seen volunteerism exemplified to its highest degree was when the city of Grande Prairie turned out in full force last fall and put on a display to prove to the national selection team for the 1995 Canada Winter Games that Grande Prairie was the place to hold the games. They won that competition, so in 1995 the Canada Winter Games, which were just completed at Charlottetown, will be held in Grande Prairie. The entire nation will be there with all of their athletes, their families, their coaches, the observers. The participators and everybody in the city and surrounding area of Grande Prairie will be there showing what volunteerism really means.

Education. Under the fourth challenge of social challenge, education is top priority. We have a major addition going to

what I call the flagship of the Alberta college fleet: the Grande Prairie Regional College. Within that addition we have a gymnasium, among other things, which will be a tourist attraction in its own right for people to come and see the new facilities that are being provided there. When we talk about equal opportunities for students, it's through facilities like these regional colleges that convinces me that we do have equal opportunities for students. Those of us that are concerned about the education of our northerners are looking forward to the day when we will be brokering degrees for the University of Alberta or some other university in some areas, particularly in bachelor of education degrees. Bachelor of science and nursing are the two which were at the top of the list. We compliment our government and the Department of Education for their support in the new school programs and in modernizing schools. Many of the schools in the Grande Prairie constituency have taken advantage of that program, and we are seeing schools in various stages of being modernized.

It is also under this challenge, the fourth challenge of the social challenge, that we talk about protection and stability and choice and freedom. The point I want to emphasize there is our Royal Canadian Mounted Police. We have a police force throughout all of northern Alberta, in fact in all of northern Canada; I suppose I should say in all of Canada. The role that the members of the RCMP play in the remote areas of northern Alberta and even the areas that aren't so remote – I have to take this opportunity to say thank you to those people. The contribution they make to the community, the contribution they make to youth and youth programs, to seniors, to security and safety and assurance that things are well, and their patience with people who need extra special guidance and encouragement and control: my hat goes off to our Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the people who are serving in northern Alberta.

Our fifth challenge in the throne speech is the constitutional challenge. All of the proper words were used in the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, and I just will highlight them: special words like "what Alberta's future will be in Canada"; we need "co-operation, commitment, and consensus"; it is our "future [that] is at stake." All of these apply to all Albertans, and our constituency of Grande Prairie is no different. Everybody in the Grande Prairie area is looking forward to the special select committee of the Legislature where they'll be able to participate directly in determining this province's future, and we are encouraging all Albertans to take part in that exercise.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your patience.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-McKnight.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne attempts to portray a government which is balanced in its priorities. In fact, it appears to me that it is not balanced at all. It is woefully unbalanced. This is especially obvious in the areas of education, advanced education, and culture: those areas with which I am most familiar. They are my critic areas, so I will restrict my comments to those areas, although I care deeply about other issues: the future of my beloved country as well as our future in an environmental sense.

I am quite amazed, Mr. Speaker, that the government has the gall to talk about maintaining government services given its record over the last six years under this Premier. We know that advanced education has been decimated through excessive and successive cuts to operating grants to the extent that institutions now are cannibalizing programs to maintain the core. The lack of adequate capital funds to postsecondary institutions has led

to substandard maintenance with the net result that safety has been compromised. We recently saw flooding at the engineering building in Calgary, which could have been averted through preventative maintenance, but the moneys simply were not there to maintain the safety of that building. When and where will this happen next?

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

The declining library resources, antiquated computers, inadequate lab equipment, monstrous classes, lack of availability of instructors, and, most obviously, the inability of eager and qualified students to gain access to any part of the postsecondary system, except maybe in Fairview, is the legacy of this government. By the way, I note that the government did not mention in the throne speech accessibility as one of its priorities, something that we noted last year. It is clear to me that this government has now abandoned even the illusion of attempting to convince Albertans that there is accessibility for qualified and desiring students in the colleges, technical institutes, and universities of Alberta.

At many points in his throne speech references are made to the importance of research and development, to the economic diversification and competitiveness of Albertans. While I completely agree with this sentiment, it seems totally at odds with the actions of this government: another inconsistency. Research initiatives have been under attack in this province along with postsecondary education. The threatened and actual cutting of university departments and research programs, the increasing demands on academics to teach instead of do research, along with the Premier's suggestion that the University of Alberta sell their research farm: all these have dampened the climate for research and creative thought in Alberta.

The government will be introducing a new tuition policy which it believes will reflect the evolving needs of our advanced education system. What this really means is that the government will establish a policy entrenching its devolving fiscal responsibility for advanced education from the province to the student. Yet even with the massive tuition fee increases that this government is contemplating, the resources of individual postsecondary institutions will continue to decline. While the claim is made that student aid will counter the impact of the proposed tuition hikes on individual students, the reality is that student aid has declined by 20 percent over the last seven years forcing many students, especially single parents, to resort to food banks. We are talking here about people who wish to borrow money. They don't want a handout, but they are unable to borrow the necessary sums to meet their particular circumstances.

9:00

The throne speech also refers to enhancing education, training, and certificate programs. We know that by 1994, according to Career Development and Employment, 58 percent of the jobs in this province will require a certificate or diploma from a college, technical institute, or apprenticeship program. The government continues to send mixed signals in this regard by turning away thousands of students from technical institutes and colleges throughout the province. This is exacerbated by the conditions in which the K to 12 education system exists, where students are actually discouraged from entering technical or vocational programs. It seems as though the tridiploma system, where the emphasis is placed on the advanced diploma, is discouraging many parents from supporting their children's

inclinations to take technical courses rather than academic courses. We've created almost an elitist kind of system where everybody feels they must take the advanced diploma, to the detriment of the students and also of excellent programs which would create the kind of diversified adult population that we have.

In education the local tax base has been forced to assume more and more of the fiscal responsibility as the government eagerly withdraws their financial support. Where once the Alberta government funded over 80 percent of the cost of education in Alberta, it is now below 60 percent in most areas of the province. This failure in adequate support has directly led to the current inequities between school jurisdictions in Alberta. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Education has done a wonderful job of polarizing school boards in the province over the issue of equity. We have rural board fighting rural board and urban board fighting urban board, people taking a stand on this issue of equity: not at all the way to achieve consensus and co-operation, which we are going to need if we're going to solve the problem of equity. Instead of taking responsibility for creating this mess, this government has now, as I said, chosen a strategy of divide and conquer by blaming more affluent jurisdictions for the problem that the government caused in the first place by inadequate provincial funding of education.

In the throne speech we also heard about a new vision for education, which the minister spoke about last fall at an ASTA luncheon. The vision, it seems to me, is not realistic whatsoever, and for the 21st century, which they face, the students need a lot more than flamboyant rhetoric by this minister and by this government. Issues such as high-needs students, dropout rates, violence in the schools, English as a Second Language, vocational education, curriculum development all require action by this government now.

I would like to congratulate the government on its commitment to recognize minority language education rights in Alberta. It was unfortunate, however, that recourse to the Supreme Court was necessary to effect this change. Why does our official minority have to keep going to the Supreme Court to have its rights met?

Culture as well has not escaped the wrath of this government. The government seems to support culture depending on the vagaries of lottery funding. It also seems to me that the minister has not maintained the arm's-length approach to funding of cultural projects, something which I think would be very healthy and not as subject to political interference.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to encourage the government during this session to remember the basic needs of Albertans. Education, advanced education, health, and social services must not only be sustained, but they must be nurtured to ensure that Albertans in the 21st century will have the skills and the resources to be successful as individuals and in the world marketplace.

Thank you very much.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Lloydminster.

MR. CHERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the next few minutes I just want to talk about the Speech from the Throne, but before I do that, I want to congratulate the new Lieutenant Governor on his appointment. Also, I want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on another term in your chair. If I may say so, with the responsibilities you have, I know that it's not an easy task.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say a few words about the world situation which we've seen in the last six or seven months. With our advanced technology we have today, it was brought home, right into our living room: the invasion of Kuwait, the United Nations' activities we saw which Canada was a part of, which as a Canadian I was very proud of. No one – and I say again no one – wants war, but at times you have to stand up and be counted, and as a part of the United Nations Canada stood up. We saw our troops go to the Middle East. Just last night I was watching television. Quite a few of the troops are now returning to Canada. Some people might say that we should not have been a part of it at all. Well, I would like to ask any one of the members of the forces who went over there, stood up and was a part of Canada, what they would say. Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that I'm sure they would say, "I was proud to be a Canadian; I was proud to be a part of our armed forces which did the job." Today, thank goodness, there is peace in the Middle East, and hopefully it will be a lasting peace.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go on to the economy of our province and, I'm sure, what we all want to see in the next year. You know, I was just reading not very long ago that Alberta is the leader in all of Canada; that Alberta has more economic development, more high tech, more manufacturing than any other province in Canada today. Other provinces are wondering what Alberta is doing, what Alberta has done, why we're at this position. Well I can tell you that one reason is because five years ago a man by the name of Donald Getty, the leader of our party, the leader of our government, had a vision for Alberta. He could see that the energy and agricultural sectors were not the only things that we had to look into. As you know, agriculture right now is suffering; the energy sector does fluctuate.

9:10

So diversification is one of the goals that this government put forward, and as much as we hear in different parts of this Assembly about what the government has done or hasn't done, in diversification this government has led the way. The reason I say that, Mr. Speaker, is because my location, the constituency I represent, borders our sister province of Saskatchewan. They are having a hard time in Saskatchewan. There were too many years of the socialist rule, of never looking forward, with their head in the sand. Today, after six years of rule by a government that was progressive, they are looking ahead too, but there's a noticeable difference, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] I hear these people over here talking about it. They don't know what they're talking about. They're from right here in Edmonton. My goodness, just listen for a while. You'll learn something. We have done an excellent job, and I know that with our economic growth which we have in this province, we will go forward.

I want to say one other thing about economic growth in the constituency I represent. Just over on the other side in Saskatchewan is an upgrader. Now, again there'll be people who say – I'm sure they'll say it – that there's doom and gloom with it. I want to tell you something. This is going to hurt these people. There's 2,800 employees over there this summer, 1,500 right now, as a result of good government, a lot of these people out of Edmonton. They're looking for jobs. They're there right now. A lot of the manufacturing, incidentally, comes right out of the city of Edmonton. It's really helped to generate a lot of activity throughout the whole province. Mr. Speaker, that project will be completed next year, in September of '92. I believe it's a year or two later by the time it gets fully rolling, but it will convert 45,000 barrels of heavy oil a day into light synthetic crude. Now, that is something. If you look at energy

self-sufficiency, there is one place where this government plus the federal government plus the private sector have done one heck of a great job, and you're going to see it.

I just want to go to the local area, to the constituency itself, for a few moments. I want to look back at education. In the last three years there has been a total of \$8 million spent on the modernization of two schools in the constituency which I represent. That is in two small rural areas, one of 450 people, the other one of 300. Mr. Speaker, the folks in those two towns are very, very happy with what has been accomplished in their school systems.

You know, it's always a problem when you think of rural Alberta and the declining population that there has been. Any one part of rural Alberta is no different from the other. The trend has been to move into the cities, so you have a problem with the population in the small centres. Hopefully, from what we understand and what we hear today and decentralization of some of our departments, we're going to see a revitalization in rural Alberta again through this government taking a look and doing the right thing and putting, for example, a lot of the agricultural jobs out in the rural area. That's a great thing for rural Alberta in my mind.

Mr. Speaker, I was just noticing also that this province is the envy of other provinces. You know, when we go back to 1985-86, we see that our budget has increased on the average by 1.8 percent. Other provinces? It's doubled; it's tripled.

MR. McEACHERN: You realize that means you're not delivering services.

MR. CHERRY: Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a buzz here in the system. I hope that we can spray the flies and keep them down.

You know, I've often listened and tried to pick up some good thoughts from the different members that I hear here, but it's a pretty tough road to try and grasp some of the material that's coming from that side. When we talk about education, let's talk about the campus of Lakeland College in Lloydminster, a campus that has 700 students. It's only two years old. My good friend and colleague the Minister of Advanced Education opened it. It was really and truthfully needed in the area. More than that, when you talk about co-operation with the city or towns, I just want to tell you a story about the campus in Lloydminster.

Because of the restraints that we have we were not able to put dormitories on it. When the planning came, they cut them because of the fiscal restraints we were into. With the co-operation of the private sector we now have dormitories, which were just completed last fall, which will house 750 workers for the upgrader project on the campus property. Now, once the upgrader is completed, those people of course will be gone, and the dormitories will revert to the campus. That was one of the best ways I know of that co-operation between the private sector and the college itself has ever happened. I think it's unique. Yes, if the dormitories had not gone forward, then there would have been a big camp put up at the upgrader site. But in this way, as you can see, and I hope I'm giving you the right description, the dollars have been utilized, and they will be utilized for years and years to come. I haven't heard of it before in the province – maybe it has been – but that's one thing that I believe in, where the partnership is with the community, with the people, with the private sector. The biprovincial upgrader board in conjunction with the Husky people decided that this

was what they would do for the benefit of the community. Just an excellent, excellent idea, and it's working today.

9:20

Mr. Speaker, I haven't a great deal of things to say, except that before I close I did want to talk about our community facility enhancement program, one of the best programs. People in the Lloydminster constituency continually, continually come up to me and say what a great program this has been, the partnership between government and the local community. They said: "This is what we've been looking for. We've enjoyed it." I think if you'll look around at even our opposition members, they've just really gone into it also. Well, I hope they haven't – they've indicated that they haven't – because I'll certainly take their money because the people that I represent certainly want more money out of these facility enhancement programs. It has been a truly, truly great program.

Mr. Speaker, just in closing, what I wanted to say is that sometimes we don't realize how very, very lucky we are. You know, Alberta is a place of envy in all Canada if not in North America, and I'm just so proud to be an Albertan, so proud that I can represent a constituency that is positive, that is looking forward to the programs that this government has put out and will put out in the future.

Thank you.

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

MR. GIBEAULT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to add a few comments tonight in the debate on the throne speech. I'm going to follow the format that was presented to us, and the first one that is in the throne speech is comments on the fiscal challenge.

You know, it's interesting for this government to talk about the fiscal challenge when we look at the way they've been operating the finances of this province. We could go on at length – I'm not going to tonight, Mr. Speaker – about the bungled investments of this government in Gainers, NovAtel, GSR, Climate Master: there's an awfully long list for anybody that cares to look. It's all on the public record; at least most of it is. Then we have the government talking about the fiscal challenge and how they're all concerned now for the taxpayer. Yet another example of the extravagance of government agencies was just about a month ago or so when we had this instance of the Workers' Compensation Board getting antique brass furnishings for their executive officer's desk; no restraint or fiscal challenge there, I guess. Or another \$40,000 spent to send an executive to Harvard Business School; no fiscal restraint there. We could go on and on with examples like that, and that's what annoys my constituents so much in Edmonton-Mill Woods, ordinary working people who pay taxes and see this kind of extravagance going on day after day after day.

So when they read, Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech that the government's concerned about the fiscal challenge, they just have to chuckle, because if they didn't chuckle they'd cry because it was so pathetic. Of course, when we look at the fiscal challenge and we contrast that with the social challenge, we notice that in many areas around the province we're facing cutbacks in health services and in hospitals, in beds in hospitals, in services that are available, with longer waiting lists. I could tell you many cases in my own constituency of reductions in finances available to the Grey Nuns hospital in Mill Woods; for example, the lengthy waiting lists that have taken place, that the hospital has gone

on red and yellow alert, which means that they have a more restricted access for people who have been injured in accidents who are taken to the hospital by ambulance. So we're very concerned. My constituents are concerned about the deterioration of health services in the province on the part of this government.

Another example: some of the employees at the University of Alberta hospital who are my constituents advised me that the University of Alberta hospital now is looking at phasing out their laundry services with the idea of going to disposable linen. Not only is that likely going to be more costly; it will involve job losses and it will be incredibly irresponsible in an environmental context. We now have recyclable linen clothing in that hospital – and this is just one example – we have recyclable materials, reusable materials, and now the hospital is looking at going with disposables, which will just fill up the landfill site. We already know the kinds of problems that we're having in Edmonton and elsewhere around the province in that area.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

The other thing that has to be mentioned, of course, is the reduced educational opportunities that my constituents and others are facing in this province. I've had several representations made to me as the MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods from parents who are concerned about the increasingly difficult situation facing their children in getting university placements. Parents are very concerned about that because they know that a postsecondary education is essential to participating in a meaningful way in the economy of the future, and not only university but trade schools and colleges and so on.

It concerns them as well, Mr. Speaker, when they read in the throne speech here on page 4 about the government's intention to look at changes in training and certification programs. Many of the tradespeople are concerned that this is going to mean the downgrading, if not degrading, of trades training in this province. Tradespeople have had built up in this province over the years one of the best apprenticeship training programs in North America. In fact, I had one of my constituents come to a town hall meeting just a while ago to say that he, as a boilermaker, was offered work in Argentina. Around the world Alberta's tradespeople are well regarded, and here we've got the provincial government talking about changes and downgrading the trades training system in this province. On behalf of my constituents I'm very concerned about that. We're going to be watching that very closely when the Minister of Career Development and Employment brings his proposed legislation before this House.

Mr. Speaker, the economic challenge is the next part of this document, on page 3, and I'd like to make a couple of comments about that. It's interesting to note that with the concern of Albertans and certainly my constituents about the lack of fairness in our tax system, we don't see much if anything of the economic challenge or any initiative on the part of this government to look at working in co-operation with the federal government to improve the fairness of the tax system. It is hard for us, I think, as legislators to convince our constituents that the tax system is fair when, in my own case, I qualify for a GST rebate cheque. A person getting the salary of an MLA gets a GST rebate cheque. Now, how can that happen? Well, it did happen. I haven't heard anything on the part of the Treasurer of this province or in the throne speech here as to what's going to be done to try to make the tax system fair. I could go on with other examples on that, but I want to tell the members of

the House that Albertans are very concerned about the inherent unfairness of the tax system. It always seems to be that the people at the top get the breaks and the people at the bottom get extra taxes. This government seems to have not cared enough or has not listened to that public concern to even find it worth mentioning in their throne speech this year.

Well, we talked about the economic challenge on page 4 in the throne speech, the concern of the government in the international field. Now, I have to wonder about international efforts, if that's going to mean additional cutbacks in the Alberta international aid program, as has been the case for the last several years. The Alberta aid program was one that has been a significant program in Alberta of which we could all be proud some years ago, supplementing funds of the nongovernment organizations who have international development projects around the world. This had contributed to the image of Alberta and Canada internationally in a very positive way. Yet in the last couple of years this has been cut back, and we will see on the evening of the budget, on April 4, if in fact that is going to continue, and I hope that it will not. I hope that we're not, as it says in the throne speech, just looking at establishing and enhancing and increasing and expanding the international offices of the Alberta government, the pork barrel prizes that this government loves to hand out to its party friends, defeated cabinet ministers, and so on, one of the worst abuses of the patronage system around. Mr. Speaker, we've got to address that in a much more meaningful way.

9:30

The other one that's perhaps even more important now, of course, is the reference there to the Canada/U.S./Mexico continental free trade deal. Now, Mr. Speaker, I was in Mexico recently, and I would like to suggest that other members may want to avail themselves of those kinds of opportunities, because we want to know that this kind of an agreement . . . Based on the kind of negative experience we've already had in many ways with the agreement that Canada has with the United States, to include an expanded international trade zone including Mexico could be very disconcerting. It could involve significant job losses on the part of Albertans and Canadians. But I want to bring to the attention of the members of House that it's not only Canadians that are concerned about the increasing domination of the American economy over Canada; Mexicans are also concerned about that. They are looking at this continental free trade idea with a very skeptical eye as well. From their point of view, as they mentioned to a delegation of Canadians and Albertans which was there just recently, including myself, they are concerned, and they are not interested in simply being an exploited pool of cheap labour, because they realize that if their economy is based on that approach, it will only be a matter of time until foreign enterprises, mainly American, relocate to countries that offer even cheaper labour.

Of course, they are also concerned about having sovereignty over control of their own natural resources. Mr. Speaker, members of the House should remember that in the free trade deal that Canada signed with the United States, we surrendered a certain amount of sovereignty over the control of our natural resources. We are now committed to always selling the Americans as much oil as we have, no matter if there are shortages in our own country. I want to tell you that a lot of Mexicans are very concerned about that prospect as well, because they have a nationalized energy sector run by Pemex, an enterprise that could be compared in some ways to Petro-Canada, and we know how the Conservatives here federally are trying to destroy that.

The other concern, of course, that Mexicans have is that they don't want to be used as a dumping ground for dirty and hazardous industries which are rejected by North American legislative jurisdictions; that is, toxic waste processing, all kinds of industries that have health and safety hazards for workers and environmental hazards as well. Mexico, like other countries, does not want to become a dumping ground for the dirty industries in North America.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very concerned about the direction that's indicated in the throne speech on behalf of the government in favour of this continental free trade arrangement. I think it's something that should concern all members of the House. The implications are going to be very serious and very far reaching. We should be very, very careful about getting further into those kinds of relations now, especially since there's no mention here in the throne speech, and I haven't heard it yet from the provincial government, in terms of a position to take with the federal government in these talks. There's no commitment to a social charter like the European community has when they are looking at the integration of their economies next year, a social charter that has a workers' Bill of Rights, minimum standards, common standards, environmental protection provisions, and so on. There's none of that mentioned in the throne speech here, none of that that I've heard from this government as a position that they want our federal government to take on behalf of the workers of Alberta and the environment of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, we are not going to support any agreement that does not have those kinds of protections in it.

Mr. Speaker, we go on to the social challenge on pages 5 and 6 of this throne speech, and I have to add a couple of comments there. Once again we have nebulous and sort of motherhood statements about allowing "for the full expression of our ethnic, cultural, linguistic" diversity and so on. I see nothing in here about something meaningful, something that cultural communities and minorities in Alberta have been asking for; that is, some commitment on the part of this government to an employment equity policy. I remind the members of this House that we already have such a law federally. Several other provinces also have such a law, and it's an embarrassing situation to be here in Alberta where this government cannot make such a basic commitment to fairness in the workplace.

It's also disturbing, under The Social Challenge, Mr. Speaker, considering that we have recently witnessed a prominent case of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, not to see in the throne speech a commitment on the part of the government to enhance the Individual's Rights Protection Act to prevent discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. It seems to be that this government simply does not care that gays and lesbians, among others, continue to be victims of discrimination. It seems that when it comes to human rights, this government seems to have a very narrow and parochial kind of focus. That, Mr. Speaker, is unacceptable and is going to be a continuing embarrassment to Albertans, considering that many of the other jurisdictions in this country and elsewhere have such provisions in their legislation.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to rise tonight to join in the debate on the Speech from the Throne. First of all, I'd like to add my compliments to Lieutenant Governor Towers on his appointment, and I would agree with him on his kind remarks that he paid to Her Honour Helen Hunley.

I'd like to make some comments first of all on the first challenge, the fiscal challenge. If we look compared to five years

ago, Alberta is stronger and more diversified than ever before in this province's history. This did not happen by accident. There is strong evidence that points to the government's and to the people of this province's efforts in building on our traditional strengths; indeed, strong evidence that our drive to diversify has begun to pay off. A case in point, then, is the current economic outlook. Alberta's economy is growing. The rest of Canada is in a recession. Economists, not necessarily government economists, forecast Alberta's growth will be 2 percent this year. Meanwhile, unfortunately, Canada's economy will shrink by something like .3 of a percentage. Our growth, then, is expected to be steady despite the low grain and energy prices.

Alberta will continue to grow because of international investment. International investment has been historically and traditionally an important part of Alberta's economic growth, if you want to go back to a couple of centuries ago when the Hudson's Bay Company, a company of adventurers from England trading into the Hudson Bay area, first opened up this area economically to Europeans. Perhaps the next big economic move was with the railway, again financed in part by Canadians, but a lot of international investment. Then settlers who came from the United States, western Europe, eastern Europe, southern Europe, and, of course, from eastern Canada; that was in the last century and in the early part of this century. International investment has played an important part in the development of our oil and gas industry, particularly in the late '40s, the '50s, and the '60s. Most recently international investment has been a source of capital for development in the pulp and paper industry and for the light metal processing industry located in the wonderful constituency of Highwood.

In those earlier instances of economic development by foreign investment, Canadians have over time gained operating and even financial control and, I believe, eventually will gain financial control over most of these international investments. Capital investments will continue to make strong contributions to this province's economy and to our long-term economic growth. Capital investments are usually made only in those areas where there's a favourable climate, where there is in fact a favourable climate for enterprise, where profit is a good word, where initiative is rewarded. It's no accident, then, that Alberta has a growing economy, because it has a government that welcomes investment, investment that will produce jobs which produce wealth that will enable Albertans then to continue to enjoy one of the highest standards of living on this continent and indeed in the world.

9:40

We need to exercise financial restraint as a government – that is clearly mentioned in the throne speech – so that we don't outspend our ability to pay our debts. This government's commitment to fiscal restraint is clearly laid out for all to see, yet I can fairly predict we'll hear all kinds of calls for more money for this, more money for that, and on and on. Indeed, the opposition has cried on many occasions in the past and again this session on various things. They call that there are cuts to health care; they call that we have given Pocklington money but nothing for health care.

Well, maybe we should stop for a moment and just see what we're talking about when we get health care. In the past 10 years in Alberta spending in the acute care sector alone has increased some 300 percent, from \$522 million in 1980 to \$1.7 billion in 1990. This fiscal year has seen health care spending increase by almost \$300 million over last year. That's hardly a cut. These levels of increase are difficult to sustain. Therefore,

managing with a budgetary plan is not an option; it truly is an obligation. As a government and as individual hospital boards, the fastest and most irresponsible way they can move to jeopardize the future viability of our health care system is to continue to accumulate debts and deficits. If we look at 1979, the estimated expenditures in health in that year were \$832 million. The total provincial budget was approximately \$4.5 billion. In 1990-91 the current estimate in health care alone is about \$3.5 billion, nearly equal to the budget of the whole province only 11 years ago. Those are pretty hefty cuts. It depends on how you define "cuts." Well, I think we need to look at the economics of this province. If we try and crush our investors, businesspeople, with unrealistic and heavy tax burdens, we won't have the income to support our fine social services at the levels we currently enjoy.

A few days ago we were entertained by a self-styled alternate throne speech, and I'd like to cite a couple of limp claims issued in that document. One was that the government hasn't been very responsive to the plight of farmers. What are the facts? Well, there are a number of new programs in place as well as longtime existing ones to help farmers in these tough times, not counting the emergency help which has come for various disasters, whether climatic or others. We have the farm fertilizer price protection plan. That results in a saving of perhaps \$20 million to farmers. The farm credit stability program, while it's now complete in its lending phase, continues to benefit agricultural production. Many of the 30,000 farmers who have made use of this program use it to restructure their debt situation, resulting in a continuing benefit of over \$100 million in there, for a total of \$2.5 billion in that program alone. So much for not being very responsive. The farm fuel distribution allowance still provides farmers in this province with the lowest farm fuel prices in Canada. We have the hail and crop insurance; it's been expanded to include forage. The safety net program is now being worked on in co-operation with the federal government.

Another limp claim was that this government somehow was not doing enough to keep the expenses down for farms so that farms can continue to exist. Well, Alberta farmers have the lowest input costs of any farm population in Canada, and all of these things that I've just mentioned – direct payments, benefits to producers – in 1990 alone will exceed \$400 million.

Some members have made some reference to an economic mess, that somehow we're in an economic mess. Well, I want to look at what this alleged mess is like. A few of the comments that one could make: right now the strongest economy in Canada. I already mentioned the growth of 2 percent in the past year, estimated to be 1.5 to 2 percent for the coming year: continuing to grow.

We said diversification is a reality. About 90,000 new jobs were created between '86 and '90. Virtually all of these new jobs have occurred outside the primary energy and agricultural sectors, showing you once again that diversification is indeed moving along.

It's one of the best places in North America to invest at the present time, and indeed about \$24 billion in major industrial development projects are announced, planned, and under construction. In order to facilitate our economy, Alberta has six trade offices in strategic locations around the world. New investment out of Japan alone in 1988 equaled \$2.5 billion.

An average annual expenditure growth in '85-86 of 1.8 percent shows you something of the responsibility in fiscal management that this government has managed to bring into being in the last few years, compared to the average annual increase of 17 percent prior to '86. The increases in program spending since

'86 in this province have been directed towards school boards, postsecondary institutions, hospitals, nursing homes, local health units, and municipalities. Another part of this economic mess, of course, is that we pay the lowest taxes of all Canadians and we don't have a provincial sales tax.

In 1990 Alberta experienced the sixth consecutive year that unemployment has decreased. Alberta consistently has an unemployment rate lower than the national average, and we have the highest proportion of the working population employed when compared to other provinces.

Labour negotiations. Of the 1,376 collective agreements registered in Alberta, only nine were in dispute in the past year, 1990. Alberta lost only 5.9 person-days per 10,000 days worked during the first six months of 1990, when the national average was something like 14.85.

As you know, we have the most educated work force in Canada; 29.2 percent of the population over 15 has a university or college degree compared to 26.1 percent for the national average. Alberta spends more on basic and postsecondary education than any other province in Canada, even with 28 institutions.

In the telephone area, individual line service will provide individual telephone lines to 106,000 households. Even Edmonton-Kingsway can remember how important those party lines were for getting across a certain amount of information, but in today's world having individual line service is an important part. This program is expected to be completed in July of 1991, a total expense of over \$200 million to the province.

Hundreds of Alberta companies have turned \$200 million in export loan guarantees into more than \$760 million worth of export sales, and approximately 14,000 jobs can be attached to that. Since it's been introduced, then, it has something like a 97 percent success rate. A lot of people want to talk about the 3 percent that didn't work. Over \$1.1 billion in assistance has been given to small businesses at a reduced rate of 9 percent, and some 10,000 businesses have availed themselves of that opportunity.

Forestry. New pulp and paper and lumber projects have been announced. We know about those. We've heard a lot about them. Over \$3.4 billion in investment, 12,000-plus jobs in Alberta. Reforestation, an interesting good-news story: 106 million seedlings have been produced at the Pine Ridge Forest Nursery in the last five years.

We could talk about the Swan Hills Special Waste Treatment Centre. As you know, it's the only one of its kind in North America.

Manufacturing shipments: \$7.4 billion in 1978. They now total \$18.6 billion in 1990; \$4 billion of that is in international sales. Our food and agricultural processing is rapidly expanding and a year ago, in '89, reached \$4.5 billion and is growing rapidly. We could talk about petrochemicals, film production, the magnesium plant, and a number of other things.

9:50

One thing I'd like to just quote from is the Investment Dealers Association of Canada investment outlook, where they say:

The pace of business investment will hold up far better this year in Alberta than in the country as a whole. The rate of increase in business investment, measured in inflation-adjusted terms, will average 9 percent this year. This is three times the national rate. In comparative terms, Alberta's investment performance ranks in the top two provinces in Canada . . . for the third consecutive year.

Well, most fair-minded people would say that that's some mess. It's a wonderful mess. Our challenge is to keep it on track, keep it moving ahead, leading the way. That's the good news from Alberta, where the people are strong and all the children are above average.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to adjourn debate in view of the late hour.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The motion carries.
Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, business in the morning will be a continuation of the throne speech debate as well as Royal Assent of the interim supply Bills.

[At 9:51 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Friday at 10 a.m.]

