

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Friday, March 22, 1991**

10:00 a.m.

Date: 91/03/22

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

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

Amen.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the public accounts for the year ended March 31, 1990.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, under section 19(4) of the Auditor General Act, it is my pleasure to table four copies of the 1989-90 Auditor General's annual report.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the financial statements for the year ended March 31, 1990, for the University of Calgary.

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table four copies of a resolution passed by the Alberta Steel Fabricators' Association requesting this government to get out of the steel-making business.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 18 students from Malcolm Tweddle school, which is in the constituency of Edmonton-Avonmore. They are accompanied by their teacher Mr. Don Poohkay, and they are seated in the public gallery. I would ask that they now rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased and privileged to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly this morning 54 students from the W.D. Cuts community school in St. Albert. They're accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Sharon Loewen and Mr. Rick Nesselbeck. Mr. Brian Sadler is with them also. I would ask them to rise and receive the cordial welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**

### Advanced Education Funding

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, feature this: you go to university for a couple of years, you're in a program, and then in year three or four the door suddenly comes down and you're told you can't carry on in this program, you've got to switch programs. Now, what this means is not a cost saving to the taxpayer; it means that the students actually have to stay in university longer, borrow more money from the Students Finance Board, and stay out of the job market longer. I'd like to ask the Minister of Advanced Education or perhaps the Provincial Treasurer, who seems to really control the issue, if they have come up with any

solution to the crisis in postsecondary education, which isn't saving taxpayers money but actually costing taxpayers money.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I think the records will show that we have one of the finest postsecondary systems in the country. It's a principle that board-governed institutions must set policies within their institutions. Surely the opposition cannot disagree with a government that respects that. The amount of funding available, as I've said ad nauseam, is amongst the highest in Canada per capita. I feel, and this government feels, that the institutions now must choose their priorities in order to run the institutions.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the per capita funding in Alberta has fallen dramatically compared to the rest of Canada.

Let me point this out, Mr. Speaker: it's not just in universities; the disarray is throughout the system. For example, paramedic training at NAIT requires a prerequisite called the emergency medical technician course, which isn't available at NAIT. It's available only in Lac La Biche or SAIT, so students have to travel and spend more money while being away from home. Has the minister understood that the gross and continued underfunding of the postsecondary education system is not saving the taxpayers dollars? It's costing them because there is no continuity of programs anymore.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that just a year ago the institutions were asked to participate in a process called Guidelines for System Development whereby the 28 institutions would co-operate in a way that would best serve the interests of adult Albertans. We have the highest participation rate in the country in terms of those attending. I am confident that the day of a student choosing the institution of their first choice or the program of their first choice is perhaps part of history. I would simply ask the hon. member to bear in mind that the government continues to set education amongst its highest priorities.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, so much of a priority that they give it half the amount of the rate of inflation every year to live on. That's their priority.

I think maybe the Provincial Treasurer should answer this question. Why is it that this government can come up with hundreds of millions of dollars in a stroke of a pen for every time they bungle issues like Telus and NovAtel but can't fund the most important investment in our future, education?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, the member is so far wrong that it's probably going to take us another three or four months, through the entire debate of the budget which will be forthcoming, to explain to her how it is that this government has been able to balance its budget on very reasonable terms over the past six-year period and at the same time maintain considerable priority, if not very high priority, in the areas of education and health. It's going to take us some time to do that, because the opposition likes to take the narrow advantage and point out really false information. However, we will set the record straight. The ministers of Education, Health, and other programs will spell out for the opposition how we have crafted the way in which we fund these organizations. The clear strength of the Alberta economy is part of the response, of course, because people in Alberta are at work. Jobs are being created and new

investment is coming here, and that's the heart of how you generate opportunities for the youth the member talks about.

MS BARRETT: Does that mean that the Telus nightmare is just that: a nightmare, a dream?

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to designate the second question to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. SPEAKER: It took a long time, but here we are. Calgary-Mountain View.

#### **NovAtel Communications Ltd.**

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister of telecommunications. On January 11, just after this government repurchased NovAtel, cabinet approved \$525 million in loan guarantees and another \$175 million in loans to NovAtel. The government has tried to hide and duck all week from responsibility for their management of the NovAtel mess. What we need to know from this minister is this: did he request or receive from NovAtel a briefing on NovAtel's financial circumstances before he went to cabinet to ask for that commitment from the taxpayers of Alberta?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, no one is ducking any particular questions at all. We have been forthright. When information has come forward, we have put that out, even within 24 hours from the time we got that information.

Insofar as the information on the \$525 million that the hon. member refers to, all I need to do is refer him to the January 11 news release that was put out with full information with respect to those matters.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, NovAtel was a big embarrassment for this minister last September. They made a commitment on behalf of Alberta taxpayers to cover all the losses at NovAtel, and then they had to purchase it for \$160 million. Now he's trying to tell us that the information that was provided, which proved to be quite false, subsequently in March . . . I'd like to ask the minister: on what basis did he satisfy himself that this request for cabinet last January 11 was supportable? Was he in any way misled by NovAtel before he went into that cabinet meeting?

10:10

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, at all times during the matters that related to the privatization of Telus, and latterly with respect to the losses, we have been forthright and have put out the information as provided to us and upon which we relied in the earlier days because of the fact that it was authenticated and certified by auditors.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, given that the Auditor General has told the Official Opposition that work on NovAtel's 1989 audited financial statements is virtually complete – in fact, they could be signed off as early as today – will the minister agree to make these audited statements public next week so that the taxpayers who are paying the bills will know exactly what this mess has cost them and who exactly to believe in terms of the total cost to them for this NovAtel mess?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, we will make those statements available to this House in the way in which they always have been: full information, audited statements, including the Auditor General's review. Yes, the Auditor General has been

very involved with all the accounting changes that have been undertaken. The once-only entries have been indicated, and full information on that has been given to the hon. member as well as other members. The Auditor General will pursue that and make his report in due course.

#### **Pension Liability**

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday the Premier gave his famous wheelbarrow statement wherein he set out three reasons Albertans would be denied information; that is, if it fell in the category of health of the individual, the category of competitiveness involving individuals or corporations, or national security. In 1984 the then Provincial Treasurer undertook to provide information relating to actuarial data that pertained to Alberta's unfunded pension liability. That information has been requested, and it has been denied. My first question is to the Provincial Treasurer. Given that the Provincial Treasurer has in fact denied providing this information, I'd like to know from the Provincial Treasurer whether this means that Albertans don't deserve to know this information about a most serious matter affecting Albertans.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, it is not just a coincidence that today I tabled the public accounts. Did you notice how large that massive volume of information was? I'm sure the members here did. The stacks were that high, volumes and volumes and volumes of information detailing specifically what this government has done, including all information that's ever been relevant to the operations of this government, including, I should point out, information on the pension liabilities provided specifically in the public accounts. So we're not holding back at all.

The member is looking for some narrow reason to criticize us, taking the foolish position of the wheelbarrow example. The only thing that would fill that wheelbarrow is his own words. I could be more specific about what his words would be, but I won't. We provide all kinds of information . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. [interjections] Thank you. Supplementary, briefly.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, we continue to get that matter deflected. I'd like to then put the question to the Premier. In which of the three categories does he put the refusal of providing to Albertans the information we have asked for that pertains specifically to the undertaking given by Mr. Hyndman?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, obviously I was not in the House or even a member of the Legislature when Mr. Hyndman did something in 1984. I'm not familiar with that matter.

I want to straighten out the hon. leader of the Liberal Party about the comments regarding what is available as information in this Legislature, because I told him to learn how to do it. I mentioned certain areas where tradition has said that you do not provide information, but I also mentioned that we live by *Beauchesne* as well, which has lists of things we are not to provide, and it's very clear. So there are many more than the three items which I tried to give him as some examples, and I'm sorry if he doesn't understand the communication.

Let me say one other thing. The Provincial Treasurer just tabled the documents which deal completely with the pension liabilities. You saw the size of the information. Nothing is being kept from anybody in this Assembly.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I expected this. I expected the Premier to start waffling. He gives a definition, his own definition, and then starts to waffle. Given that the Premier said that any MLA need only stand in this Assembly and ask the question and answers will be given, I'm putting the question: will you provide all the information Mr. Hyndman undertook to provide; that is, the actuarial data that relates to the unfunded pension liability? Yes or no.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the public accounts carry all the financial information having to do with the operation of the government, including the pension information. Now, the member doesn't do his work; he doesn't understand this Assembly. That's why he fails so badly in here. That's why, I repeat again, his wheelbarrow effort is as valuable as his Liberal membership card. It isn't worth a damn thing.

### **Tyrrell Museum**

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism. Tyrrell Field Station at Dinosaur park is a very important tourist attraction in the Bow Valley constituency, and the staff person that worked for the department of culture at the field station was recently transferred to Drumheller. My question is: how will this affect tourist attraction to Dinosaur park and the Tyrrell Field Station?

MR. MAIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I should say first of all that the Tyrrell Field Station in Dinosaur provincial park will not be closed, as some earlier reports had suggested. The member is quite right: the staff position that was assigned to that particular location has been reassigned to other duties at the main museum in Drumheller. But there will continue to be dinosaur materials on display at the field station in the park. It will continue to be used as a staging area for the important palaeontological field work that's done in that area.

True, some of the specialized programs that were available there will end, but we're going to continue to work with the community and with other supporters of our museum activities to continue to provide a very strong and very pleasant visitor experience not only at the field station but also in Dinosaur provincial park. We're working in close concert with the Department of Recreation and Parks and my colleague the minister to ensure that that happens.

MR. MUSGROVE: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. It's my information that this staff position was transferred to Drumheller and a new position was created in Drumheller for this person. Can the minister advise if this could be conceived as a benefit to the museum in Drumheller at the cost of the Tyrrell Field Station at Dinosaur provincial park?

MR. MAIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, in an effort to do more with fewer people and with less resources this year, the Department of Culture and Multiculturalism engaged in a complete reorganization of not only its historic resources division but also its cultural development division. In some cases jobs were reassigned, duties were changed, and positions had been moved, but in all cases, whether it's at the field station, at the Tyrrell Museum, at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, or here in Edmonton at the Provincial Museum of Alberta, the fine work done by the historic resources division at those facilities and the important preservation work will continue to be done.

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

### **Hospital Funding**

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not only is the Calgary General hospital attempting to deal with a massive \$6 million deficit by closing 64 beds and laying off about 300 health care workers; the hospital is the province's big loser in the new acute care funding model. This new accounting procedure will see the hospital lose \$4.4 million, in effect canceling out the 3.5 increase in its operating budget. My question is to the Minister of Health. Inasmuch as the minister has said that under the new funding model the only way hospitals will get more money is by ensuring their beds remain open and are filled with gravely ill patients, will the minister not admit that her acute care funding model is making an already bad situation at the Calgary General even worse?

10:20

MS BETKOWSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we should probably re-enter the discussions on the acute care funding plan. We had extensive discussions in this Assembly with the last budget estimates for the Department of Health. Both parties contributed to that discussion and supported the model and the aim of the acute care funding, which is to basically say we need to ensure there is a better fairness in terms of how we allocate our health dollars, given that the rate of growth in health care cannot continue at the 300 per cent level we've witnessed over the last decade.

With respect to the insinuation in the hon. member's question that there is an improper use of the acute care funding model or that it's not proceeding in the way it should, I would like to remind him that when we built the model it was built with 35 large, over-60-bed hospitals in the province contributing to it and was managed by a steering committee made of the Alberta Hospital Association, the Alberta Medical Association, the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses, the Council of Teaching Hospitals of Alberta, and two representatives from the Department of Health. Those recommendations were the ones made to me, which were to make the adjustments. I accepted the recommendations from that steering committee, and I believe the direction we are proceeding in is right. Although I don't for one moment deny that the management decisions being placed on hospitals around our province are difficult ones, I think the alternative is that we're going to be spending money for debt servicing costs as opposed to health, and I happen to be an advocate for spending our dollars on health.

MR. PASHAK: Mr. Speaker, regardless of what the minister has just stated, what she's done is created a zero-sum game whereby one hospital gains at the expense of another. This is a highly competitive, dog-eat-dog situation, and it creates an atmosphere of competition rather than co-operation and regionalization of services. My question . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: You'd just pour more money in, wouldn't you?

MR. PASHAK: No, no. There are other things that could be done. [interjections]

### **Speaker's Ruling Decorum**

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. [interjection] Order. Take your place. Hon. members on both sides, stop that chit chat

back and forth, because we get this business going on that just occurred.

The question, Calgary-Forest Lawn, without responding to anybody else.

### **Hospital Funding** (continued)

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question, then, is: will the minister not reconsider the manner in which she's implementing the acute care funding model to ensure that hospitals like the Calgary General don't have to lose so that other hospitals gain?

MS BETKOWSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, welcome to the management style of the New Democrats. You know, governing in the 1990s is all about adding more money, never saying no, and everything's going to be fine, folks, and you don't have to worry. In fact, what we are doing is looking at how we spend our dollars on health, and contrary to what the hon. member is alleging, that it's a dog-eat-dog process, it's in fact the complete antithesis of that. We have all those hospitals working together to build the funding model, and the health performance index, which is a result of the model those 35 hospitals have built, is that there is now a disincentive to close down hospital beds in our province. When you close down hospital beds, you make your health performance index a poorer index. So that's not going to occur. I think, in fact, it's a very creative and very progressive review of how we're going to manage social programs in the '90s in this province, and the NDs are just out of it right now.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Buffalo.

### **Youth Court**

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is to the Attorney General. When we hear the Attorney General telling us that there's no big problem in our youth courts, it's hard to determine whether he's so badly out of touch or whether he's trying to emulate the Premier and be a comedian in the House. We're not dealing with isolated incidents here but with a situation in which justice is being so badly delayed that the whole system of dealing with young people is being perverted. Indeed, the Attorney General's own prosecutors have compiled statistics showing that the delay in disposition of serious cases has increased from an average of 168 days to 231 days from August to December of last year, and it's getting worse. I'm wondering whether or not this Attorney General is ready to accept trial delays of eight to nine months and more as the norm for impressionable young people, and if he isn't prepared to accept that, then what is this government's goal?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, as I attested to the other day, there is no doubt that there are some stress points in the justice system, and it prevails mainly in the family and youth sections of the Calgary and Edmonton court systems, more particularly in Calgary than in Edmonton. But I can assure the hon. member and the Assembly that the issue is well, well under control.

We have a number of initiatives which the hon. member will hear about after our Budget Address. It's not within my jurisdiction to be able to stand up before we present the budget through the Treasurer to the House. We will have a number of initiatives that will answer some of these problems. It's also very important that all the players in this, be it the judges, the

prosecutors, the practising bar or the government, work together to solve these rather than try and do it in a very disseminate way.

MR. CHUMIR: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not just stress points; it's a crisis. The minister's own department is telling him so. Now, we heard of a committee being established last fall, and the question is whether or not we're going to have a plan of action released and divulged to the people of this province quickly or whether or not it's going to proceed at the same leisurely pace as the Principal Group criminal investigation.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had been listening, I told him a plan of action will be unveiled after the budget is tabled. The plan of action everybody has been screaming for entails more money, and there is a process to enable this money and plan to be brought forward. If he waits with patience, he'll hear that.

I would like to correct the hon. member on one of the specifics he did raise when he said that the court cases were undue, over a nine months' delay. Custody cases in the family and youth have a one-and-a-half month delay. Noncustody cases do have up to a nine months' delay. That is not a crisis. The very, very important or serious offences where custody is at issue are one and a half months: well, well within any bounds anyone might set.

MR. SPEAKER: Innisfail, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

### **Agricultural Assistance**

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Associate Minister of Agriculture. I've had a number of grain producers phone my office with concerns about the revenue protection plan, sometimes referred to as GRIP. These producers feel that the area average falls far below their own production record. My question to the minister is: is there any way this program can accommodate these producers?

MRS. McCLELLAN: To answer the member, I'd like to just comment briefly on the program for all members, with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, because the revenue protection plan is an option being offered in addition to crop insurance and is continuing our government's commitment to our agricultural producers to provide safety nets. The gross revenue income plan . . . [interjections]

AN HON. MEMBER: Ignore it.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Shall I?

### **Speaker's Ruling Decorum**

MR. SPEAKER: No, hon. member. You might as well sit down for a while. The hon. member, I'm sure, will learn parliamentary behaviour in due course, starting in the next 30 seconds.

Associate Minister of Agriculture.

### **Agricultural Assistance** (continued)

MRS. McCLELLAN: Thank you. The gross revenue income plan is calculated using a 70 percent index moving average price

times the average yield of a producer or his individual yield to calculate their guaranteed price per acre. Because we do not have a majority of our producers in Alberta under individual coverage, many producers have not established their individual yield, and the member is correct in their assumption that they're being disadvantaged to the program. To counteract that, we have introduced a production offset model which will allow those producers to protect their offset between the average yield and their calculated yield that can be demonstrated.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Innisfail.

10:30

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary question to the minister: since this option has just been made available, what is the deadline for application to this program?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, the option has been available for about as long as the program has been in place, but the member is correct in not all producers understanding it. My understanding – and I will check the date with the corporation that operates it – is that the deadline has been extended to April 22 to give all producers in the province an opportunity to better understand the program. I should also add, Mr. Speaker, that we are holding regional meetings across the province to help producers understand the greatly enhanced program.

#### **Youth Court** (continued)

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Attorney General. With the Crown attorneys' report in today's newspaper that the Alberta youth court backlog is more than 3,000 cases, which fails to meet the legal requirements for speedy trials, it's clear that delay is the rule rather than the exception. In light of these facts, how can the minister contend that we do not have undue delay in the youth court system and dismiss the Calgary robbery case as simply an aberration?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate the member wasn't present in the Assembly a few moments ago, because this item was just answered. The member was told the other day that, yes, there are delays; the justice system across Canada has delays. Standard delays have been six to eight and sometimes nine months, and there are aberrations where they go a bit further. The issue that he discussed the other day and has brought up, the case in Calgary, I'm not at liberty to discuss the details of because it's a matter still before the courts. But I would be delighted, after the disposition of it, to set the record clear that there is not a three-year delay, relative to the Askov decision, in this instance.

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday the member suggested that the Calgary case was an aberration, and he also suggested that Alberta's system compared favourably with that of other jurisdictions in the country. Is it really the Attorney General's position that being the best of a bad lot is sufficient when it comes to the administration of justice in the youth court system?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, again in the absence, the comments were missed. [interjections] I'll withdraw that reference, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Speaker's Ruling** **Member's Absence from Chamber**

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. You're entirely correct in this instance, and I'm sure the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona can read the answer to the previous question.

Edmonton-Kingsway.

#### **AGT Privatization**

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications. For many years NovAtel lost money, but AGT was always able to pick up those losses. Then you sold AGT and had to turn around and repurchase NovAtel. Now, since the taxpayers are on the hook for something like \$900 million, will the minister finally admit that selling AGT was a bad deal from the point of view of the Alberta taxpayers?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, that question absolutely really gets me. Let's just look at the facts: the taxpayer of Alberta was on the hook for over \$2 billion while AGT was a Crown corporation.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, AGT was never a risk to this province. It was a controlled public utility; it always made a profit. But since this boondoggle the taxpayers have picked up a \$100 million tab for selling AGT, they've picked up \$160 million for the repurchase of NovAtel, they've picked up a \$204 million loss, and they're on the hook for \$525 million more in guarantees. How far is this minister prepared to dig into the taxpayers' pockets, into that \$525 million, to prove that the sale of AGT was a good deal for the shareholders?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, for a schoolteacher, I marvel at his arithmetic. [interjections] The fact of the matter . . .

#### **Speaker's Ruling** **Decorum**

MR. SPEAKER: The fact of the matter is that there are enough schoolchildren in the galleries to realize that this really isn't being run the way it ought to be run. Perhaps we could have some silence to listen to the answer.

Hon. minister.

#### **AGT Privatization** (continued)

MR. STEWART: Well, Mr. Speaker, during the last session of this Legislature, when we had the full opportunity to debate all matters that related to the privatization of AGT, we reviewed all of those circumstances at that time. It would do the hon. member good just to refresh himself with respect to the facts that are set out there.

#### **Speaker's Ruling** **Seeking Opinions**

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Chair also draws the attention of the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway to *Beauchesne* 409(3) and (11). The hon. member is not the only one in the last few days who has been standing up asking ministers what their opinion is. Those questions are clearly out of order.

Calgary-North West.

**Northern Steel Inc.**

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. The people of Alberta have the unenviable position of owning 83 percent of a steel company that has mortgages and loans totaling \$21 million, backed by loan guarantees from this government of 14 and a half million dollars. In recent discussions with industry experts Northern Steel's true value has been placed at approximately two and a half million dollars to \$3 million despite the 14 and a half million dollars in loan guarantees. My understanding is that a prospectus has been issued by the government for the sale of Northern Steel, and apparently the sum in there is a grand sum of \$1 and an assumption of some \$5 million of the total debt. My question to the Minister for Economic Development and Trade is simply this: will the minister confirm that in fact the selling price is \$1 and assumption of some \$5 million of the total debt of Northern Steel?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, let me indicate to the hon. member, and give a little background too, recognizing the seriousness with which he has posed the question, and share with him that it is our desire to privatize Northern Steel. It is my hope that we can have this accomplished prior to year's end. We have a couple of serious interests in assuming this company, which we are in the process of pursuing.

I'm curious, though, as to whether the hon. member is suggesting that we should not have involved ourselves with this company. If the hon. member is suggesting that, I would hope he would be open enough to state that. We involved ourselves so we could continue with the strong economic growth that we have within this province. If one examines the record and looks at the job creation that has taken place within the province of Alberta over the last number of years, we are proud of our involvement. Because of that involvement we are the number one province as it relates to economic growth in all of Canada.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. Save some for the supplementary.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, in response to the minister's question: no, I don't think you should have been involved, and so does the Alberta Steel Fabricators' Association.

MR. SPEAKER: Let's have the question, please. Let's not have questions coming from the government benches.

MR. BRUSEKER: I thought I'd give him an answer.

My supplementary question to the minister: will he please tell the House why this supposedly business-knowledgeable government would get themselves involved and finance a company 500 percent more than the actual value? They gave them \$15 million, and it's only worth \$3 million. Why would you do that?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is on the record as indicating we should not have supported this company. The hon. member should be very much aware of the statements of the union to the contrary. This government is concerned with job creation in the province of Alberta, unlike his friends opposite. Because of our concern for job creation we did involve ourselves in the economy. We recognized the important role Northern Steel played in the activity within the province of Alberta.

I also share with him that I recognize the legitimate concerns of the steel fabricators. That is why I've indicated to them, as I've indicated to the House, that we're going to do our utmost to make sure this company is privatized. I am working towards the goal of year-end, and hopefully we can accomplish that. But, again, we want to make sure that Albertans have jobs and meaningful employment within the province. We're not going to take any sides. We're going to walk that fine line down the middle so we can continue being a province that is strong and a leading province as it relates to economic growth.

10:40

**Constitutional Reform**

MRS. MIROSH: There's been a great deal of discussion recently about the federal government considering major revisions to Canada's policy of official bilingualism. An interim report released yesterday by the Select Committee on Ontario in Confederation discussed a plan to give the provinces control over their language and culture and that Ontario should act as a mediator between the regions in Canada. To the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs: are there any similarities and/or common themes between the Ontario interim report and the Alberta discussion paper produced by the constitutional task force?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I've just received a copy of the Select Committee on Ontario in Confederation. I am in the process of reviewing that. It appears that they have issued an interim report somewhat similar to the discussion paper which our task force brought forward and which will form the basis of discussions with Albertans on the issue of Alberta in a new Canada by the select committee, which is shortly to be brought before this Assembly for consideration.

With respect to the issue of languages, that is indeed a subject of discussion which the Ontario select committee has considered and will be considering as they now move into the next phase of their committee's work. That, of course, will be something we expect to hear about, and indeed we have asked Albertans to give us their views on the subject of a language policy for Canada. Obviously, there has not been at this stage, though, any discussion with the federal government on revisions to the language policy of Canada in a constitutional setting.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, would the minister please outline this government's plan for intensive public participation relating to Alberta in Canada's Constitution?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my first response, we will shortly be tabling for debate in this Assembly a motion which will outline the composition of the select committee on the future of Alberta in a new Canada. When we get to that particular motion, there will be ample opportunity for debate, and I would urge all members to start considering that. Therefore, I don't think I could really respond in detail to the question as posed today. Members should look forward to it, and I hope the Liberal Party will consider their ill-advised position not to participate.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Vegreville, followed by Calgary-McKnight.

### Agricultural Assistance

(continued)

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Net farm income in Alberta declined by 55 percent last year and is projected to decline a further 43 percent this year mostly due to disastrous conditions in the grain and oil seed sector. Given that any improvements offered by the GRIP or through GATT negotiations are at least a year away, I'd like the Minister of Agriculture to tell us and the people of rural Alberta just what exactly he's doing to lobby for and help with the deficiency payment for Alberta's grain producers this year.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, the first thing the province of Alberta has done is to participate in the new gross revenue income program at an additional cost of about \$50 million. I think the point the hon. member misses is that the revenue option for the first time in history is going to give the grain producer a guaranteed return. He's going to know the minimum amount of money he is going to take either out of the marketplace or out of the program. It brings a stability to that sector of agriculture similar to what the red meat stabilization brings to the livestock sector. That program, if the farmer chooses to take it, is certainly bankable and will assist farmers in getting operating credit this year. That program is deemed to be a second line of defence which we've agreed, under the Growing Together discussions with other provinces and the federal government, should be shared federally and provincially.

We have agreed that the third line of defence program, and that was reaffirmed and put out in print after the Regina meeting, will be solely the responsibility of the federal government. It's our understanding that the Hon. Don Mazankowski is contemplating some type of third-line assistance which may come into place in the near future. But that will be strictly a federal response.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, you don't put crops in the ground by contemplating or by wishing and hoping about programs that may be in effect next year. It takes money, and it takes money now.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Agriculture, who appeared on TV in front of hundreds of farmers and said that there were no problems in agriculture in Alberta – for many that was indeed the last straw – when he's going to do his job and stand up and advocate for farmers rather than trying to defend this government's pitiful record?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I well realize that many farmers depend on an operating line of credit to put in crops in the spring. I stressed in my opening comments that the gross revenue insurance program is bankable and for the first time will give some comfort to the farmer and to the banker that there is going to be a return, and the first part of that return will probably be before the end of 1991.

With respect to the accusation from the hon. member that I stated that there were no problems in agriculture, that is totally false. He is totally construing a falsity. I analyzed the agriculture industry sector by sector and acknowledged that there were two areas: one of difficulty being our sheep producers, and one of very deeply serious problems being our grain and oil seed producers. We've discussed some of the programs and responses that we have made to that sector. But to try to tell the public that agriculture is at a crisis when our livestock sector is doing well and when for the first time in history the total income to

the farmers from beef exceeded that from wheat would be creating a false view of what I view as an industry that has some good strengths in it.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister.  
Calgary-McKnight.

### Vocational Training for the Handicapped

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the Claiming My Future report authored by the Associate Minister of Family and Social Services the following comment is made:

Education for people with mental disabilities must continue into adulthood. They must be given the same opportunities and access, with support as required, to a wide range of post-secondary education, trade schools, and upgrading.

To the Minister of Family and Social Services: given the recent cuts to the oversubscribed transitional vocational program for developmentally delayed adults at Olds College, will the minister now concede that the government has forsaken these rural special needs students and, concurrently, the intent of the report mentioned earlier?

MR. OLDRING: No, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Speaker, I've received letters from developmentally delayed students who are desperate to get into the Olds program and are pleading with this government not to desert them. Does the minister agree that cutting this program will actually cost the province more in the long run since it will force these students back in the welfare or AISH system instead of allowing them the dignity of becoming proud, active, and employable Albertans?

MR. OLDRING: Again, Mr. Speaker, the member is asking for an opinion, but the answer is no.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications wishes to give answers to previous questions.

### NovAtel Communications Ltd.

(continued)

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, during my absence from the House the last two days there have been a number of questions put forward that I would like to respond to. First, I refer to the question from the hon. Leader of the Opposition on March 20, on page 105 in *Hansard*, with respect to the limitation on the commitment of taxpayers' dollars relative to NovAtel. The prospectus the Telus investors received indicated that they could expect earnings from NovAtel of \$16.9 million for the six-month period. That amount was included in the payment at the time NovAtel was reacquired, and no further amounts are required to be paid by NovAtel or this government to Telus.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands, on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was expecting a different response from the minister. Is he able now to confirm that the executive, John Burrows, who was fired from his position at NovAtel last November, is on the board of NovAtel as well as on the board of Telus? Is this true or not? I'd like to know.

10:50

MR. STEWART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was going to come to that one as well. That was on March 21, on page 129 of *Hansard*. The state of Mr. John Burrows was that at the time he was terminated by Telus, NovAtel was not part of our government; it was a subsidiary of Telus. He was in fact removed on November 29. NovAtel or Telus or whoever's responsibility it was at that point in time has not filed as yet – but it's apparently drafted and in place – the usual notice that is given to the registry. So, clearly, he was not a director of NovAtel after November 29.

Insofar as Telus is concerned, he is still a director of Telus because the board of directors of Telus is unable in any legal way to remove him as a director. That's up to the shareholders, and that will be dealt with at the next annual meeting.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, the minister with respect to the next line of questions, which the Chair understands was from Edmonton-Kingsway. The minister's response. [interjection] No, you don't get a supplementary. Minister. [interjection]

#### Speaker's Ruling Supplementary Questions

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair understands it this way, and this is one of the difficulties which is involved with trying to go back to this process. The minister stands and makes a statement in response to a question raised in a previous question period. In this case it was the Member for Edmonton-Highlands acting on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition getting a chance for one question. The minister then responds. We've now completed that action. The minister now rises to make a statement, if he has one, with respect to a question raised in an earlier question period by Edmonton-Kingsway and then responds.

MS BARRETT: Don't we get two?

MR. SPEAKER: No, only one. The Chair will check with the Table.

#### NovAtel Communications Ltd. (continued)

MR. STEWART: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway raised a question to the Premier on March 20, page 109 in *Hansard*, in connection with what was referred to as the extra \$90 million in funding in January. Today, Mr. Speaker, I responded to that directly in my answer to the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. McEACHERN: Just to be very clear, are you saying that on January 11 you didn't know that this deficit of some – well, you had to make up to \$16.9 million profit. Whatever the losses were, you had to make up that whole amount. It turned out to be \$204 million instead of the \$21 million you talked about earlier. Are you saying that on January 11 you didn't know any of that, that it was going to turn into a \$204 million loss? Is that what you're really saying?

MR. STEWART: I'm saying that I did not receive any statement of loss from this company for the year 1990 until 24 hours before the day that we released it to all members.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Now, with respect to the questions by the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry. Minister.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry posed a question on March 20 to the Premier, on page 107, concerning bonuses that he alleged had been paid to senior managers last year and the year before. We did check into that, and in accordance with the ongoing corporate practice there were bonuses given in both 1989 and 1990 to two senior managers in the marketing areas in the United States. They received bonuses for exceeding targeted revenues, and the incentive bonuses far exceeded the target revenues which are customary, actually, within the industry. They amounted to \$30,000 Canadian in 1989 and \$25,000 U.S. in 1990, and they were based on performance that resulted in tens of millions of dollars of extra revenue. So two of the total of 1,800 employees received bonuses in those years for that specific purpose.

#### Speaker's Ruling Oral Question Period Rules

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The Chair would remind all hon. members of some references in *Beauchesne* because this has been occurring from time to time throughout question period in this first week of the sitting. All members are asked to make reference to *Beauchesne* sections 425 to 430 before returning to the House on Monday. In addition, consideration could also be given to *Beauchesne* 407 to 420.

In particular, the Chair would point out that the procedures of this House which are dealt with on Tuesdays and Thursday afternoons dealing with written questions and motions for returns are really not the subject of question period. The questioning in question period of the way procedures are dealt with on Tuesdays and Thursdays should really be raised on the matter on those particular days and not in question period.

MR. CHUMIR: Why?

MR. SPEAKER: In the shout as to why: when the Speaker is supposed to be standing here giving a ruling, the Speaker is not to be interrupted, Member for Calgary-Buffalo. If you wish to disagree with any of this, I am quite certain you can put a motion on the Order Paper and censure the Speaker if that's your desire.

The House goes by what Standing Orders require and also by the operation of *Beauchesne*. In particular, I'll read into the record *Beauchesne* 416:

#### Replies to Oral Questions

(1) A Minister may decline to answer a question without stating the reason for refusing, and insistence on an answer is out of order, with no debate being allowed.

And further:

A Member may put a question but has no right to insist upon an answer.

I'm sure all hon. members will take that into consideration.

Now, am I looking at a point of order? Hon. minister.

#### NovAtel Communications Ltd. (continued)

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, I had one more response to give to a question raised by the hon. leader of the Liberal Party on March 20, on page 107.

MR. SPEAKER: Before you proceed with that, the note that came to me, hon. minister, simply said that there was one for



each of three members of the House. So next time I'd like to have the specifics, please. Thank you.

Minister, please continue.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader of the Liberal Party made allegations in his question that the three senior managers that were terminated by Telus in November received generous severance packages. That is false. No severance packages have been issued to the three senior officers terminated by Telus.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, do I understand, then, that no compensation whatsoever has been paid to any managers that have left the employ of NovAtel?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, there are packages with respect to those that were layoffs, and NovAtel has made opportunity packages for those that were laid off recently in Lethbridge. But as I understand the hon. leader's question, it related to the three members who were terminated by Telus. The response is in that respect.

MR. SPEAKER: Before we go to the point of order, because we have guests waiting in the gallery, might we revert to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

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

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly a group of students from the Alberta Vocational College in Wetaskiwin. These 34 students are seated in the public gallery with their teachers, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly 24 bright and eager students from Rideau Park elementary school who are here today accompanied by their teacher Mrs. Dianne Gillespie. Twelve are seated in the members' gallery, and 12 are seated in the public gallery. Would you stand and receive the warm welcome of this House, and I'll see you for a photo session in a few minutes.

MR. SPEAKER: Redwater-Andrew.

MR. ZARUSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and to the rest of the Assembly 54 fine junior and senior high school students from the town of Lamont. They are accompanied by teachers Miss Dach and Mr. Dmytrash and parents Mrs. Rudko and Mrs. Bowes. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I ask they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

11:00

#### **Point of Order Supplementary Questions**

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order, Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the minister stood up to give an answer to a previous question asked by the Leader of the Opposition, it wasn't clear that he was going to be answering a series of questions one at a time, so the Opposition House Leader . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: We need a citation here.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order. We're dealing with the procedural process.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Opposition House Leader, not being aware that she was going to be able to ask a supplementary to a second question that the minister was going to reply to, anticipated the second question and thereby didn't get the opportunity to ask the supplementary to the first question. So he made two replies to two questions that had previously been asked by the Leader of the Opposition. The Opposition House Leader had the opportunity for one supplementary to those two, and I would ask, with your indulgence, that you rule that she be allowed a second supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, hon. member, the answer to that is no, but the Chair also has listened to not only your comments but obviously was a participant in the exchange.

The difficulty there is that when a number of questions are taken as notice and then the minister has to stand and reply, the procedure generally has been that it's with respect to one member rather than three as was the case here. The problem here is this multiple thing that's going on and the Chair not really being apprised that this is the day that this whole process was going to transpire. What happened originally was the Chair received a note saying that questions were going to be replied to. A note went back to the minister requesting that they be broken down into three instead of just an omnibus so that three members would have an opportunity to respond, and that is indeed what happened. In the normal course of events the minister would stand, give the information, there would be opportunity for one question, and then the response by the minister.

Now, there's a problem involved here today, as I stand here and reflect on the problem – and I don't need all these finger signals, thanks, people – that as the Chair allowed two questions and two supplementaries for the Leader of the Liberal Party, therefore the Chair in its present condition will allow one more question from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands responding to the minister and then the minister will be able to respond.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure all members of the House that this morning has been a confusing one in all sorts of procedures.

#### **NovAtel Communications Ltd.** (*continued*)

MS BARRETT: My supplementary to the minister is this, because the information he's provided is as clear as mud. In the net, then, who is responsible for picking up the tab? If the minister says he didn't know that the debt was going to be, you know, \$204 million by January, is Telus not responsible for picking up the tab, or are the taxpayers? Can he explain who or why?

MR. STEWART: Well, Mr. Speaker, the loss that we advised the members on for 1990 of \$204 million, which consisted of \$66

million operating and the balance were one-time-only adjustments in the accounting procedures of NovAtel, were losses for the year 1990. I don't know; companies have losses. I mean, it's not unusual for companies to have losses. It's unusual that the losses should be the extent to which they were, but that I think has been fully explained. The other aspects with respect to those matters that haven't been explained are being examined in a due process of assessment and evaluation to determine exactly how this company can best respond in the future.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Points of Order**

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The Chair would add one footnote to the point of order that was raised. It has been established that the member who feels aggrieved is the one who raises the point of order in future, and certainly Edmonton-Highlands has the capability of raising the point herself.

head:

#### **Orders of the Day**

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 21: Mr. Tannas]

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this morning to conclude my speech on the debate of the Speech from the Throne. The good news is plain for all to see; no beefs should be made about it. Alberta's economy is the strongest in the dominion; our growth is 2 percent and better, well ahead of other provinces.

I'd like to read from the Investment Dealers Association of Canada's October Investment Outlook summary:

Alberta is better positioned than most Canadian provinces to weather the coming downturn in economic activity. The rate of growth in business investment in Alberta will outperform business spending growth in almost every region in the country and, in per capita terms, lead the country for the third consecutive year.

We're experiencing major investments, then, both international and domestic, which is, as we know, the sincerest form of confidence in the provincial economy and the Alberta government. The export loan guarantee program, with a 97 percent success rate, has generated three-quarters of a billion dollars in new export sales for our province. Our employment growth continues, and unemployment declines for the sixth consecutive year. Mr. Speaker, the good news shows clearly that Alberta is still a great place to live.

MS MJOLSNESS: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne and to extend my congratulations to new Lieutenant Governor Towers on his appointment. I would say that his delivery of the throne speech was quite superb, but I do have some problems with the content of the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, I believe Albertans have very high expectations of politicians as we move into the 1990s. They expect honesty from their politicians, they expect openness, they want politicians and their representatives to be straightforward, and they want them to be accountable. These are very positive expectations. I know through some phone calls I've been getting lately that even Conservatives are expecting these things from their politicians. I believe, of course, that every single MLA in this Assembly should deliver no less than those expectations. But when we look at the government's track record, I would have problems when I consider how they have done in areas of being open or being straightforward or being accountable. I think their track record speaks for itself. We've got the latest fiasco with NovAtel. I think people want answers, they deserve answers, and they want their government to be straightforward and accountable to them in their spending.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech begins by talking about a fiscal challenge. When the throne speech speaks of a fiscal challenge, it says, and I quote:

Fiscal responsibility is not a blind obsession; fiscal responsibility helps our people and allows us to provide special help to those who really need it.

Now, this sounds compassionate, and it sounds quite acceptable, but when we again look at the Conservative track record, I wonder who we are talking about when they say people "who really need it." Is it the Peter Pocklington of the world, who managed to get approximately \$120 million of taxpayers' money? Is that who they're talking about when they say "those who really need it"? Are they talking about the shareholders of Telus, who have done extremely well in the privatization of AGT? Are they talking about ex-MLAs and friends of the Conservative government? Is that who they are talking about when they talk about people "who really need it"? Mr. Speaker, it's very clear whose side this Conservative government is on.

#### **11:10**

The throne speech speaks of a balanced budget. They make this a priority in their throne speech. The throne speech, Mr. Speaker, recognizes that budgets are about basic services, and they list health, education, social services, seniors' programs, protection of the environment. But something that is worrisome to me is that there is no commitment in the throne speech that a balanced budget will not be achieved at the expense of these basic services. I believe very strongly that we do need a commitment by this government so that basic services are not eroded in their blind obsession with dealing with a deficit that they created.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

All we have to do is understand the real agenda of this Conservative government, or any Conservative government for that matter, whether we're talking about the federal Conservative government or this provincial government, Mr. Speaker, and especially in terms of how that agenda affects basic services. When we look at education in the province of Alberta, we are now in fifth place in all of Canada when it comes to funding. The government in this province at one time funded 85 percent of education from general revenue. That commitment to education funding has now dropped to below 60 percent. Is education in jeopardy in this province? You bet it is, especially if this trend continues.

At the postsecondary level we have heard a lot of concerns being raised. Some 3,000 or more students marched to the

Legislature not very long ago to express their opposition and their concern to what's happening in regards to underfunding of the postsecondary institutions in this province. The other night, Mr. Speaker, a representative from the students' union at the University of Alberta spoke to a group of us in my riding about some of the concerns that they have. He talked about the overcrowded classrooms, just the deterioration in general of the education that they're receiving. Capital grants have been cut by 63.5 percent since '85-86. Libraries are cutting their hours and their purchasing of books. One student said that when they go to the library to try and get books on certain courses, the only books available date back to the 1920s or whenever. So they're not being able to keep up in the purchasing of books.

Mr. Speaker, we look at the health care system in this province. All you have to do is be near a hospital to know what's going on there. We've got waiting lists. We've got patients sleeping in corridors. We've got overcrowding and layoffs of staff. It's no surprise that health care is deteriorating in Alberta and throughout this country. Underfunding and mismanagement by this government . . . I spoke to someone lately that was hospitalized, spent quite a few hours in a corridor, and later told me that the only way she was able to get a room was that she broke a bunch of bottles that happened to be on a tray near her stretcher. I said to her at the time, "Not many people would take that approach." She said, "Yes, and they're the ones that will suffer and stay in the hallways of a hospital." She said this was the only way she was able to get a room.

Mr. Speaker, if we look at community agencies delivering very important services in our communities, we realize that they have been underfunded by this Conservative government for years. There is a lot of concern when it comes to agencies delivering mental health services, treatment and counseling services, services for people with disabilities. All of these agencies have been underfunded. We've been getting letters, as I'm sure have all MLAs in this Legislature, expressing concerns over the great wage disparities between government positions and positions with community agencies. They're having a very difficult time recruiting staff and having them spend some time in that particular agency, because they're leaving to get better paid jobs elsewhere.

When we look at the federal Conservative government – and I think this is very important because it's having some severe impacts at the provincial level in Alberta – we see that cuts to transfer payments from the federal government have escalated into millions and millions of dollars, and to me this certainly illustrates how dispensable our social programs are to Conservative governments. It illustrates where people are in terms of the Conservative agenda and where they place them as a priority. Canada is far down on the list of major industrialized countries when it comes to social spending. The only major country whose social spending record is consistently lower than Canada's is the United States, and we know what kinds of situations they're facing in the United States right now. Mr. Speaker, Alberta has a similar dismal record when it comes to social programs, and it's the Conservative agenda that's paving this destructive path.

The throne speech stated that we're exempt from the recession and talks about financial strength. Well, does the throne speech recognize that our unemployment rate is over 7 percent? That translates into thousands and thousands of people. It's truly unacceptable to have such a high percentage. I know it's all relative, Mr. Speaker, and you can look at, "Well, we are the lowest in Canada," but when we look at those figures, I wonder how many people have left the province, how many people have

moved onto social assistance and then do not become part of those statistics. I'm not sure, but when all is said and done, thousands remain unemployed in this province, and that's not acceptable.

During some of the layoffs with the department of culture the media attempted to bring to us in human terms what it means to lose your job and be unemployed: what that does to your self-esteem, your feelings of security, what effects it has on your family, and how devastating this can be. Mr. Speaker, I think the throne speech would have at least admitted that 7 percent unemployment is far too high for any province and then set out some goals to deal with those numbers.

When they talk about financial strength, I can't help but reflect on the types of presentations we had during our leader's Task Force on Healthy Children for a Healthy Future, because it was very clear to us as we traveled throughout the province that food banks are operating throughout this province. Food banks are feeding thousands of families, thousands of children. Where is the financial strength for those families, Mr. Speaker?

We heard about very young children going to school hungry. This is still a reality in this province. We can turn a blind eye to this, but it is still a reality, Mr. Speaker. We know from a lot of the information that we've been receiving and research that has been done, from all kinds of groups throughout Alberta and Canada, that children who go to school hungry or grow up in poverty are affected by poorer health, they are absent from school more often, they have a harder time concentrating, they end up in the child welfare system more often, and the dropout rate is a lot higher for these children than other children. Where is the financial strength for these children? We did not hear about this in the throne speech.

Mr. Speaker, I talked about food banks and school breakfast and snack programs. One of the presenters to the task force in Calgary read us something that I think was very, very moving. Apparently, in one of the schools where a breakfast program is being run, one of the teachers wrote a note to the principal after one of her students had been involved in the breakfast program that morning. The first morning the child ate something like seven bowls of yogurt and five glasses of milk because she was so hungry. The teacher then wrote that that morning that child, who had never been able to write more than two sentences, wrote two or three paragraphs. The next day that child went to school, she ate five or six bowls of cereal, and that day her work improved dramatically. These were the kinds of things that we heard throughout the task force. Now, people can say, you know, "Well, why is a child going to school that hungry?" There are a lot of issues involved in that, but the fact remains that this child was being fed at school and was able to perform a lot better.

**11:20**

Mr. Speaker, we talk about family violence. It's a growing concern in the province. Many women and their children who are seeking shelter in a safe place are turned away from the shelters. This is very, very serious. When I was a volunteer at WIN House a few years ago, in talking to a lot of the women that came into WIN House, it was very apparent that these women often had no clothes with them when they came. They had no furniture, no skills, no job experience. They had low self-esteem. Where was the financial strength for these women and their children? Often the only alternative for these women is social assistance, and one thing for sure is that when you go on social assistance, you become very, very poor. Even when

many of these women did get jobs, they were very low-paying jobs. Very, very little financial strength for these women.

When we take a look at people in the province with disabilities, where is their financial strength, Mr. Speaker? Every person that lives on the assured income for the severely handicapped in this province is living well below the poverty line. Even with the meagre increase that the government saw fit to give the AISH program in the fall, a single person living on AISH would fall about \$3,000 below the poverty line. One thing I find appalling is that the government still will not allow AISH recipients to keep pension money that they are receiving. It might be from the Canada pension plan disability benefit from Ottawa; it might be other pension programs. The money may only amount to \$20 or \$30 a month, but this government is deducting dollar for dollar any money that these people might get from a pension plan. This is just unbelievable. They saw fit a couple of years ago, though, to let these people on AISH keep any cost of living increase from the federal government, which did not amount to very much but nevertheless the government saw fit to let recipients of AISH keep this money. As typical Tory governments do, they've reversed that decision now, and they are deducting even the meagre cost of living increases from people on AISH.

So when we talk about financial strength, we have to keep it in perspective. Families throughout this province continually pay more and more in taxes and get less and less for what they pay for. Families continue to struggle under this Conservative government. We'll know more, of course, when the budget is brought down in a few days' time.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech certainly doesn't talk about minimum corporation taxes or a fairer taxation system for average Albertans. These are the kinds of things we need to hear.

Again, Mr. Speaker, child care in the province I think is a very serious issue. Even though the government has announced a major program in child care, or at least they thought they had, still a child can spend five years in a day care and never ever once come across a trained child care worker. In many cases our child care has become unaffordable to many families. Since the government brought in their program on day care, fees have risen in almost every centre.

When we talk about out-of-school care, which is a major concern for many families, we're still the only province in all of Canada that does not have any out-of-school care standards. It's a serious concern. We've got municipalities now that are really strapped for funding. As you know, out-of-school care is funded through FCSS. This is a major concern because there is not enough money to go around and the out-of-school care funding in many municipalities takes up a lot of that money. Many municipalities, though, don't have out-of-school care in their areas. They don't have any standards, and this is very badly needed in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech does talk about challenges and how we need to face these challenges, but I would say that these challenges will continue to escalate for this government as long as this government fails to address many of the issues that I've mentioned earlier. As long as they ignore the plight of battered women and children, the need for treatment of batterers . . . We know that programs are not being funded. Of the very few we have, some are closing their doors. It's ignoring environmental issues while jeopardizing future generations. It's ignoring the thousands of children who are living in poverty in this province. The situation is not getting any better. I could go on to name a number of issues that need to be addressed, but as long as this

government is prepared to ignore these very serious issues, the challenges for this government will continue to escalate.

Mr. Speaker, we need a government that when entrusted with the responsibility of managing our resources – be it our human resources, our natural resources, or our financial resources – will act at all times with the best interests of Albertans in mind. I believe that this government has been given a golden opportunity in creating a province which can experience a high quality of life for all Albertans, but they have failed to respond in many of these areas. It is certainly clear to me that this government has wasted and mismanaged millions of dollars in this province. We have wasted millions of dollars, that's very clear, while they lay off employees in service areas that are badly needed. They turn women and children away from shelters, they send people to food banks, and they underfund our postsecondary institutions. To me this illustrates a clear Conservative agenda, but one that doesn't make sense to me.

Again, the throne speech speaks of challenges in five areas. They identify fiscal challenge, economic challenge, environmental challenge, social challenge, and constitutional challenge. Mr. Speaker, we need solutions to these challenges, and there are solutions that are fair and effective and caring.

I believe that this government must work on behalf of all Albertans, not just a select few, to truly improve the quality of life for all Albertans in this province.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest.

MR. BRADLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate today. First of all, I'd like to say a thank you to the former Lieutenant Governor, the Hon. Helen Hunley, for the fine way in which she carried on her duties during the six years she was Lieutenant Governor of this province. I had the privilege of serving with her in the Assembly from '75 to '79 and was very impressed with the way in which she carried out her duties during that period of time. Now that she is no longer Lieutenant Governor, I would just like to say: Helen, you did a great job. That is, being no longer restricted by royal protocol.

I'd like to congratulate our new Lieutenant Governor, the Hon. Gordon Towers, on assuming his duties and wish him the very best in carrying out those duties over the next five years.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to congratulate you on the efforts that you are making to restore decorum in this House. In meeting with a number of local municipalities and elected officials prior to the spring session, one of the items they brought forward to me was the lack of respect in our institutions in this country. They demonstrated that by the performances both in the federal House and what has been taking place in this House over the last four or five years. I really congratulate you on the efforts that you are making in this session to restore decorum to this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne is about challenges, solutions, and directions. It is also about confidence: confidence in our people, confidence in our economy, confidence in our ability to adapt to change, and confidence in our ability to meet the challenges of the 1990s.

11:30

Talking about confidence, the first place that is exhibited in the Speech from the Throne is regarding fiscal responsibility and this government's management of the affairs of this province.

When you look at fiscal responsibility and you talk about confidence, there are a number of things which come to mind. First of all, in terms of program expenditure control this government has the best record in Canada over the past five years. We have the lowest tax regime in Canada. We are on target to come forward with a balanced budget in this spring session of the Legislature, and I am looking forward to the Provincial Treasurer's balanced budget speech on April 4.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about confidence we have to look all around us. We look at Canada in recession and the United States in recession, but here in Alberta we are showing positive growth in our gross domestic product. We have the lowest unemployment rate in the country. In terms of lost time due to labour dispute we're one of the lowest in the country with only 5.9 lost days per 10,000 employees versus 14.85 as a national total.

When we look at confidence we also have to look at what others are saying about the Alberta economy and the management of this government. I refer to the Investment Dealers Association of Canada October 1990 report. They state, if I may quote:

In comparative terms, Alberta's investment performance ranks in the top two provinces in Canada and, for the third consecutive year, investment spending per capita is the highest in the country. Now, that's confidence. They also say, "Real economic growth will average 2.5 percent this year, more than double the national rate." That, Mr. Speaker, is confidence.

Further, they go on to say, and they're talking about expenditure control:

The rate of growth in Alberta program spending averaged 1.8 percent in the past five fiscal years, well below the rate of growth for all provinces, and one-half the rate of growth in federal program spending in a corresponding period.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's confidence.

Further they go on to say:

Alberta is better positioned than most Canadian provinces to weather the coming downturn in economic activity. The rate of growth in business investment in Alberta will outperform business spending growth in almost every region in the country and, in per capita terms, lead the country for the third consecutive year. Steady investment in the energy, forestry and utilities sectors will contribute to buoyant real growth, averaging 2.5 per cent, more than double the national rate, and continued job creation [will occur]. Strengthening oil and gas markets provide the catalyst for further investment gains next year.

They go on to say:

A well-managed deficit reduction program over the past five years, emphasizing expenditure restraint, has strengthened the province's fiscal position. It has also enabled the province to build the most competitive provincial tax system in the country for investment and economic growth. An effective incentive for equity investment in Alberta companies would stimulate further diversification.

Further they go on to say:

The 1990s will be a decade of growing economic prosperity in Alberta, reflecting improving energy economies and benefits from continued diversification of the economy.

That's what others are saying. Mr. Speaker, that tells me that there is confidence in Alberta within our province and from without.

Other statistics we might look at in terms of confidence is housing starts. Last year housing starts across the country dropped in every province except for two. They increased by 4 per cent in Nova Scotia and by 20 per cent in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, let's look at what's happening in the rest of Canada in terms of recession. There have been 143,000 manufacturing jobs lost in Ontario in the last 16 months. In the past

12 months 46,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in Quebec, and the most recent statistics show that manufacturing jobs have been increasing in Alberta. That again is an exhibit of confidence.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne talks about the economic challenge. It talks about diversification, and that has been occurring here in Alberta, as witnessed by the comments of many of my other colleagues in the Assembly attesting that there has been diversification in tourism, forestry, and advanced technology areas. In fact, in the advanced technology areas there are now 50,000 jobs in this province that rely on the advanced technologies and contribute some \$2 billion to the GDP of this province. So diversification is taking place. We are moving away from reliance on just the resource sector in terms of drawing out the raw resources. We're upgrading them. We're adding value to them, and that is the diversification that is taking place.

Mr. Speaker, part of the economic challenge is that we must maintain our competitive edge. We must also look that the prosperity in this province occurs throughout our regions, and the Speech from the Throne talks about prosperity for all of our regions. That's part of the balanced growth policy of this government, a policy we've had for a number of years, which we must continue to maintain if we're going to have those opportunities for all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne also talks about our international relationships and the importance of maintaining those. Those are very important if we are going to maintain our competitive edge in the world marketplace, but I notice that the Official Opposition says we should close down our international offices, that we should shut down those windows on the world economy and the world advantage which we can gain globally. They would shut down those windows of opportunity for Alberta businesses. We must remember that we are an exporting province; we depend on exports. We must export into the international marketplace, and our international offices are a key part of our strategy to provide for trading into the international marketplace. So closing those offices, I think, would be one of the dumbest moves that any government could make, because they're extremely important to maintaining that competitive edge.

The Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, also in terms of economic challenges talks about, if I could quote from the speech: "My government will also pursue closer economic ties with the Pacific Northwest Economic Region." I think that is a very significant statement in the Speech from the Throne, and I think it will lead to further opportunities for Alberta. The Pacific Northwest Economic Region consists of states and provinces in the northwest part of the United States and western Canada, being the states of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and British Columbia and Alberta. Legislators from those states and provinces have met to discuss how they could work together to improve economic ties for the benefit of their citizens. If this concept moves further into some formalized economic region, once approved it would create an economic region of more than 15 million people with an annual gross product of \$280 billion.

Some of the ideas that the Pacific Northwest Economic Region is discussing, areas of co-operation, would be promoting tourism development, creating markets for recycled materials, expanding environmental enterprise, investing in the future work force, expanding markets for value-added wood products, and improving telecommunications and higher education. If you looked at the Pacific Northwest Economic Region in terms of

gross national product on a world scale based on those states and provinces which I have mentioned, it would be the 10th largest economy in the world. So there are definitely advantages for pursuing co-operation and economic ties with this very important part of our trading area.

I'd like to quote former Ambassador to the United States Allan Gotlieb. This is what he has said regarding co-operation amongst entities: "It's important that we reinforce and make ourselves more competitive in the light of this vastly changing international economic and political market." He goes on to say: "Any state or province is at a competitive disadvantage with powerful 'transnational organizations'." So it's important that we form these types of associations to promote economic development and trade. We cannot remain as an island. We must be outward looking, and this would give us a vehicle to accomplish some of these goals. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to the government's initiatives in this area of pursuing closer economic ties with the Pacific Northwest Economic Region.

So there is an economic challenge, Mr. Speaker, and that is a challenge which I believe this government is prepared to meet head-on. The challenge is also for us to continue to provide the climate for the private sector which really is the driver of the economy, to provide that climate for Alberta entrepreneurs so they can build a stronger and more diversified Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne also speaks about the environmental challenge, and other of my colleagues have referred to that. The Minister of the Environment eloquently the other night went over that challenge and how we are responding to it. We are responding to that challenge. We are looking at sustainable development in terms of our policies, recognizing that the economy and environment are interlinked and that in order to sustain an economy over the longer term we must manage our environment appropriately. Some of the initiatives that are being taken are the environmental protection enhancement Act; the clean air strategy, which is being developed by the Department of Energy and the Department of the Environment in consultation with Albertans; the new Natural Resources Conservation Board; the recycling initiatives which have been announced by the Minister of the Environment; and a number of other things which we are doing in that area. It should be noted that although there's been certain controversy instigated by others regarding the pulp mill development in this province, we have adopted some of the toughest pulp mill standards in Canada to protect our environment so that we can have the economic growth which will occur from the pulp mills being located in this province, the value added in terms of the processing of these goods here in terms of paper mills finally coming here which create really diversified value-added jobs. At the same time, we've got the toughest environmental standards to ensure that our environment is appropriately safeguarded.

**11:40**

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne also talks about the social challenge. It talks about our health resources and ensuring that they are affordable, sustainable, and accessible into the future. Surely that is a very important challenge for Albertans, for Canadians, but surely the key to being able to have that affordability and continued high-quality health services is that we get our fiscal house in order. I've already alluded to our plan for a balanced budget, for if we don't meet that number one challenge, there won't be the funds to continue on an affordable system for our province.

It's interesting to note in terms of the area of expenditures in terms of health in this province that the total expenditure when

you look at all the activities of government is some \$3.8 billion, but in terms of the revenue side the total amount that is raised by personal income tax and by health care premiums does not meet the amount which is expended on health in this province. That's an amazing figure when we look at it in those terms. So we must continue our efforts to ensure that we have affordable, sustainable, and accessible health care, and getting our budget in order is certainly something that will sustain that into the future.

In terms of education there's certainly a challenge there, which is identified by the Speech from the Throne in terms of providing equal opportunities for all Albertans, accessibility, and quality education. I have to congratulate our Minister of Education for taking this challenge head-on and looking toward solutions in terms of fiscal equity in this province. I congratulate him for his efforts.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the social challenge I want to also talk about the work that the minister of social services and community health is doing in terms of the supports for independence program and reform to the social assistance programs in the province. It's very important that he continue with those efforts, because we must allocate funds to those who need those funds, those unfortunate people who through no circumstances of their own require our assistance and the safety net which government can provide, but it's also important that we assist those who are capable of being responsible for themselves, capable of managing their own affairs, that we bring them to the point where they accept that responsibility for themselves. I support the minister in his efforts in the supports for independence program.

The Speech from the Throne also talks about the constitutional challenge that we face in this country and that a select committee will be appointed to get input from Albertans. A document has been published called *Alberta in a New Canada*, which is a paper which provides food for thought for Albertans. It asks a range of questions and asks for direction from Albertans, asks them what they think about the different positions which are outlined in that paper. Mr. Speaker, I've been privileged to serve on the Constitutional Reform Task Force of Alberta and also understand that my name will be nominated for the select committee in the House. It is very important that Albertans contribute to the process, that they look at the document which is out there, and that they respond to it, because I believe the very fabric of our nation is being challenged. We are at a very significant watershed in terms of our country's history. We must consult our citizens, and we must look forward to solutions as to how we will continue as a strong Alberta within the framework of a new Canada.

I should note that the Spicer commission has recently come forward with an interim report. I'm sure it is no surprise to many Albertans that one of the concerns identified in the interim report is a concern over the official bilingualism policy of this country. I'm sure that no Alberta elected politician was not aware that that has been of significant concern to our citizens and how that policy has been implemented. For Mr. Spicer and his commission to acknowledge that, Mr. Spicer having been a former commissioner of bilingualism in this country, I think it's of significance that they have now recognized that that is a concern to our citizens.

The very nature of our federal system is being challenged, and at this point of it being challenged and our Assembly forming a select committee to address those challenges and to consult Albertans, we have one party in the Assembly not quite sure that they want to participate in this very open, nonpartisan forum for

gaining the input of the citizens of Alberta. It is very amazing to me that having criticized previous constitutional approaches to formulating changes in the Constitution, saying that there wasn't enough public opinion, there's a party that is now going to reject the opportunity to participate in a nonpartisan way in gaining advice from Albertans. Mr. Speaker, where are the Liberals? This is a significant constitutional challenge which we as Albertans must face: Alberta in a New Canada, looking forward to gaining input from Albertans on this very important issue and looking forward to what Alberta solutions might be put forward in the national context, which may arise from that select committee report.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne also talks about a conference on the economy. I think that's a very important idea as we look towards the 21st century, that we have this input in a conference bringing together all sectors of the Alberta economy looking into the future. That's a very important and dynamic new direction and approach.

The other issue I want to comment on briefly is the initiative alluded to in the Speech from the Throne in terms of bringing in conflict of interest legislation. I know we as politicians, in terms of our public stock, if one could say that, are at a low ebb, and I think addressing this issue in a very forthright manner should bring that matter to a conclusion which will see the public having restored confidence in our institutions and in the way in which we as public figures operate.

Mr. Speaker, I want to comment briefly on some initiatives that are taking place in my constituency since the Assembly last met. I want to talk about the southwest Alberta renewable energy initiative, which was announced for the southwest corner of the province. It is a program which has moved forward because of the vision of our leader, Don Getty, his concern for sustainable development, looking at alternate energy, creating a capacity for research and development in this very important area. It's not only an energy initiative; it's also an environmental initiative. This initiative is well under way in the southwest corner of the province in the Pincher Creek area. It's an initiative that will stimulate the development and use of energy generated by solar and wind power, energy conservation methods, and other renewable forms of energy.

The program was formally launched in December of 1989. It was followed in May of 1990 with the announcement of an Alberta Office of Renewable Energy Technology, which would manage this southwest Alberta renewable energy initiative; would advise the government on renewable energy technologies; would promote the development and use of renewable energy technologies, very efficient, economic, safe, and environmentally acceptable; and would liaison and promote co-operation with the private sector, research agencies, universities, and other government organizations involved in renewable energy research and development. The Office of Renewable Energy Technology, Mr. Speaker, is chaired by Dr. John Rottger of Pincher Creek, who's done a yeoman job in terms of moving this initiative forward, and there are five other citizens from Pincher Creek and Calgary who form the balance of the Office of Renewable Energy Technology.

#### 11:50

Mr. Speaker, as part of that initiative a Pincher Creek Renewable Energy Information Centre was open by the minister in October of last year. It's a very valuable resource centre for the alternative energy industry and citizens interested in receiving information on it. The program is funded through the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. A million dollars per year

has been allocated to it, and it is just in the formulation stage of moving forward in a number of exciting areas over the balance. But in terms of the first year of operation, I think it's been very successful.

On February 1 of this year the chairman of the Alberta Office of Renewable Energy Technology announced a number of important projects which were going to be funded from the initiative or were part of the initiative. The four major projects which were announced on February 1 included a 30-turbine demonstration wind farm to be located at Cowley ridge, southwest of Cowley. This wind farm would be capable of generating nine megawatts of electricity and would be sold to TransAlta Utilities Corporation, Mr. Speaker. The cost of this wind farm is some \$11.4 million and will be totally financed by U.S. Wind Power Inc. The construction, operation, and maintenance of the wind farm will be performed by an Alberta company, Wind Power Inc., which is based in the Pincher Creek area.

A second project is a 2.4 megawatt hydroelectric power plant to be located at the Waterton dam structure, southwest of Pincher Creek. This is to be built and financed by the Canadian Hydro Developers, Inc. The total cost of the project is expected to be some \$3.65 million, and the Alberta Office of Renewable Energy Technology will only be providing some \$150,000 to this project. It's a very important application of renewable energy.

Two smaller projects. There will be a demonstration of solar- and wind-powered water pumps to provide water for wildlife habitat near the Oldman dam. This is being done by Canadian Agtechnology Partners of Olds. The Office of Renewable Energy Technology will provide some \$221,000 to this project. The total project cost is some \$446,000.

Finally, the further development of a wind-powered water pumper will be made by Maverick Wind Energy of Twin Butte, which is south of Pincher Creek. The Office of Renewable Energy Technology will provide some \$60,000 in funding to this \$132,500 project. Two other proposals which have received approval in principle would be detailed wind energy mapping in the Pincher Creek-Crowsnest area and also the testing of a small 1 to 1.5 megawatt electric generating wind facility involving Canadian made equipment.

Mr. Speaker, this renewable energy initiative is well on its way. As I've said, it's an environmental initiative, and I'm pleased to report the progress on this to the Assembly.

I wanted to comment on some other activities taking place in the constituency. The community of Pincher Creek and district in southwest Alberta is looking forward to the development at the Westcastle ski facility. Currently that development is managed by the Westcastle Development Authority, which is owned by the MD and town of Pincher Creek. They are working with private-sector partners to develop a first-class ski facility and resort area at the base of the mountain. They are currently involved in finalizing their environmental impact assessments. The people of the area are looking forward to this development, which will provide opportunities for Albertans who now go to major resorts in British Columbia and in the United States. We're looking forward to some progress being made on this, and I should compliment our Minister of Tourism for his assistance to the Westcastle Development Authority in this process.

I want to talk briefly about the Oldman dam. It's certainly been a subject which has been debated in this Assembly. It's a very important project for southern Alberta. It is now over 90 percent complete. In terms of some of the local impacts that are taking place and some of the facilities we're looking forward to

in the future, I'd like to comment on that briefly. The recreational facilities are going to be first-class at the Oldman dam site: a number of areas for access by citizens to the reservoir, boat launches, day-use areas, camping facilities, looking at converting the construction camp into a recreational vehicle park. One of the interesting things in terms of reclamation downstream from the main dam itself will be a world-class kayak run, which is being developed in terms of the reclamation of the river channel there. They will hopefully be hosting international events as a result of this project.

The local community is working on an information/interpretive centre. They've been given the challenge of looking at managing and financing certain aspects of it. They're a very enthusiastic group. I'm not sure of the title of the society that has been formed; I think it's the water society of southern Alberta. They're working on that aspect of it.

In terms of local benefits from the project an allocation of sufficient water to irrigate 15,000 acres of land has been dedicated, which will be stored in the reservoir, which will have an important impact in terms of the local area, providing water for irrigation to over 15,000 acres in addition to those acres that already have licences in the area. An important commitment from the government in terms of this project was to provide an improved and enhanced road transportation network around the dam. I'm pleased to announce that with the co-operation of the minister of public works and the minister of transportation, the ring road around this dam will be paved by 1992 and also that the village of Cowley will see some needed improvements in terms of the roads through their community as a result of this project.

In terms of the Oldman dam, Mr. Speaker, we've had a local advisory committee that's been working on this project since 1984. They've had over 40 meetings with local citizens to discuss the impact of the project and look at ways in which the project could benefit the local area. They've done just an excellent job under the chairmanship of Mr. Hilton Pharis.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to turn to some other matters in my riding. I'd like to talk about the coal industry, which is very important to the citizens of the Crowsnest Pass. Although we do not have an active coal mine on the Alberta side, over half the citizens of the Crowsnest Pass gain their employment in the British Columbia coal fields. Unfortunately for the economy of the Crowsnest Pass in the future, it is not as bright as it had appeared in previous years. One of the coal companies, Byron Creek Collieries, which is a subsidiary of Esso Resources Canada, has put its mining operation up for sale and has announced that if it is not sold by 1992, it will be shutting down its operation. Byron Creek has some 300 employees; two-thirds of those employees live in Alberta. So what is happening to our province externally is having an impact upon the economy in the Crowsnest Pass. Byron Creek has already sent out layoff notices to 84 of their employees, and further layoff notices will be coming over the next year unless a buyer is found for the company. They have a major contract with Ontario Hydro which runs out in 1992.

Mr. Speaker, I have put forward a motion for debate in the Legislature promoting clean coal technologies and looking at other initiatives which would promote the competitiveness of Alberta in coal, not only in the Canadian domestic marketplace but also in the international marketplace. I look forward to debating that at that time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had further remarks, but I guess I've taken up my time.

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

MR. DECORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: Where's your team, Laurence?

MR. DECORE: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: Where's your team?

MR. DECORE: I don't need any more. I've got the big guns here with me today. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

12:00

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, it's Friday, and the hon. members, I think, are anxious to get away and get to their constituencies, but I'm going to give them a little information on things that I think need to be done to change the parliamentary system in our province, because I think that Albertans very much want to see these changes.

First, allow me, Mr. Speaker, to express my congratulations to our new Lieutenant Governor, who presided over his first legislative function just a few days ago. I'm particularly delighted that the new Lieutenant Governor wasn't in any way held back because of his health – and I know a little bit about that – to undertake and perform the responsibilities of being Lieutenant Governor. I think that in the past our society has tended to shunt aside, put aside people who have had difficulty with health. I have great admiration for the decision in this respect, that that was not a negative factor, that that wasn't in any way part of not allowing him to proceed and to become the Lieutenant Governor.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, my second observation is to compliment the former Lieutenant Governor of our province. This truly is a role model for all Albertans, women of Alberta, because of the tremendous success she has had as a businesswoman, as a person involved in her local community, as a Member of this Legislative Assembly, and then representing the Queen of our country. We wish her well in what she called her second retirement.

Mr. Speaker, my last general observation is with respect to the constituents that I serve in Edmonton-Glenarry. I have had, I think, a good rapport with those constituents. I continue to be part of their community affairs, and I attempt to bring forward and will continue to bring forward their concerns on the issues of the day.

Mr. Speaker, in touring Alberta, I have come across observations, statements made by Albertans that I find disquieting, uncomfortable. I think they're statements and observations that have been made to other hon. members. I remember when I was in Banff speaking to a group of high school students, one student said to me, "Mr. Decore, I have no interest in politics because I think that politicians are crooked," and there was tittering at that. We talked about why that perception exists. Then at the University of Lethbridge just a few months ago, again in a conversation with students, a young lady who attends the University of Lethbridge said to me that politics was irrelevant to her. She couldn't get information; she couldn't become part of the process. Why should she be interested in it?



Last week on Thursday I spoke at a symposium at the University of Calgary, and a gentleman stood from the audience and said that the democratic process in our province, in our country was in dire need of change. He thought that in the high-tech world we live in, we should move to a system like the Greeks, where issues of the day were determined by the citizens of the state or the province or the city. In fact, he went as far as suggesting that some sort of card be issued to every Albertan and that all issues be in fact referenda that are determined by all of the people of Alberta. I didn't agree with that. I said to him that that was overkill.

Everybody that you talk to says that change is needed. The Spicer commission: my hon. friend who preceded me just moments ago spoke of that first report, that interim report, indicating that there was dissatisfaction with politicians in Canada. Well, what do we do? Do we continue on with the way and make people more cynical? Does that then allow for greater mediocrity to develop, and does mediocrity then breed more mediocrity? I think we're getting a signal, hon. members. The signal is that we have to change; we have to have parliamentary change.

One of the things that I did when I spoke at the parliamentary conference in Fredrickton this summer – I was pleased to accompany the Speaker of our Assembly to that parliamentary conference – was give an observation on the rigidity of parliamentary discipline in our democratic system in Alberta and in Canada. In preparation for making that speech, I had to do some homework to find out what was happening in other places. I looked at England, I looked at Germany, I looked at France, and I looked at the United States. I discovered that in England from the period roughly from 1970 to 1985, over Labour governments and Conservative governments, there are considerable examples of motions or Bills or amendments that relate to the government having been defeated. Yet the government didn't fall. They need one extra step in the House of Commons in England, and that is a motion that holds that the House finds the government to have lost confidence, and therefore it should fall. Almost never does that motion come, or when it comes, the government members of that particular party get behind the government, and the motion is defeated. It allows for the Members of Parliament in the English system to be much more responsive to their constituents. It allows them to think and to act and to be better representatives.

The same is true in Germany; the same is true in France. When our offices phoned the clerks of the Assemblies in the House of Representatives and of the Senate and asked for the statistics on how often Democrats vote for Republican motions or Bills or whatever and vice versa, the clerks of both Assemblies told us that they couldn't give us those statistics. They couldn't give them to us because it happens so often that tracking isn't done, but Canadians maintain this rigidity of party discipline.

Now, what do we do if there is a problem? Maybe members of this Assembly will stand and say that there is no problem, that they're not hearing anything from their constituents, but I am. I think there is a problem, and I think there's a need for reform. The first area that I think you need to look at is the very issue of a Speech from the Throne. Pomp and circumstance is important to the kind of democratic system that we have, but to allocate the number of days that we have and the time and the moneys that are put into allowing members to speak I think is a waste of time, and I think we could find a measure, a means, some new method of dealing with the reason for having a Speech from the Throne.

If you look at *Beauchesne*, it says that the reason for a Speech from the Throne is to set out the causes for summoning the members of the Legislature to the Assembly. What are those causes? Cause to me implies a justification, a motive, a need for a plan. I think that a statement by the government that would be sent to all MLAs saying, "Here are the problems; here's the plan; here are the things that we are going to deal with," would be much better. I recognize that there are MLAs that need opportunity to sort of get up and find their wings. We could make provision for that, but I think this is the first area that needs change.

Mr. Speaker, I am a very strong believer in freedom of information, and today is a perfect example of the difficulty I feel, the frustration that I feel in not being able to get information from the system, from the government. We are now one of two governments, I think it is, left in Canada that do not have freedom of information legislation. Every municipal government in Canada that I know of has that kind of legislation. It is, I think, only British Columbia and Alberta that refuse to legislate freedom of information legislation. Now, why is that important? I don't think that MLAs or elected representatives can do a good job unless they have all of the information that makes it possible for them to debate better, more effectively, and to vote more effectively.

I want to relate one incident to hon. members just to exemplify the frustration that can occur in this area. When the GST documents came forward, I noted in the technical document that there was a provision whereby provincial governments would have to pay tax on any land that they bought and sold to the federal government. Now, having been the mayor of the city of Edmonton and knowing that many millions of dollars each year are involved in the buying and selling of land for road widening and so on, I thought it would be in this Assembly's best interest to find out quickly what Alberta was facing in that regard. When I attempted to get that information from the Treasury, I was told that I would first have to write a letter to the minister, who would then write a letter to the deputy minister, who would then, if he deemed it appropriate, give me that information. Now, that is a goofy way, an improper way, and an ineffective way of providing the kind of necessary information that MLAs should have.

Even today, in attempting to get information on pension fund liability – we have some \$9 billion in unfunded pension liabilities – we couldn't get it from the Premier, and we couldn't get it last November from the Minister of Education. The Minister of Education has even had the audacity to go and meet with representatives of the teachers, the Alberta Teachers' Association, and he hasn't been able to give them and doesn't to this day give them the information that they need. [interjections] You can say all you want. You can try to cover up . . . [interjections]

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

Please proceed.

12:10

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, you can see that raw nerves easily become uncovered in this area of a \$9 billion unfunded pension liability and no plan, no action to deal with it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what are some of the needs, then? Well, I think you have to have freedom of information, and there are enough models and enough examples in the world, in England and in the United States and in our provinces, to be able to put

forward a good information legislation package so that we can get the kind of information that we need. Even today, as I speak, we have the Auditor General's report issued by our Auditor General showing the same kind of frustration that Members of this Legislative Assembly have in not being able to do the job, get information and provide it to the people of Alberta. I think that the chickens will come home to roost for this government if change doesn't happen in this area of freedom of information.

Mr. Speaker, the third need for change, in my view, is to free up MLAs to be able to vote as their constituents want them to vote. I think it's important . . . [interjections] I see that the trained seal over there from Red Deer, who likes to pull the string and have all the seals vote the way he thinks they should vote, doesn't like the idea. I understand that from the hon. Member for Red Deer-North, but people of Alberta do want a different system.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the . . . [interjections]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

Please proceed.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, what really amazes – and I think it should be set out for the record – is that the hon. members on the government side think that these explanations I'm giving on freeing up members are funny, and they're ridiculing these ideas. I'm surprised that they're not interested in looking at the possibility of parliamentary reform. I'm surprised, and I think it should be recorded that this has become a big joke for the hon. members on the government side. The Member for Lethbridge-East, who has just arrived, more than any other member of this Assembly, I think, hides things under the table and tucks things away and doesn't allow for members to get the kind of information they should receive. [interjections] I've touched a raw nerve over there, I'm sure.

Mr. Speaker, the next area that I think is in very great need of change, of parliamentary reform is the area of budget review. I think it's important that MLAs have the opportunity to grill – and I mean grill – ministers and deputy ministers and any functionary who is part of any kind of program where taxpayers' moneys are being spent. That process isn't allowed. It is allowed in other jurisdictions. If we look at the changes that were made in Ontario that came about as a result of the minority situation there, the members of the opposition are allowed to isolate some 12 ministries and then in very great detail look at each program, look at everything that happens in those ministries, talk to the deputy ministers, ask them questions, call on functionaries or officials to explain certain programs, and if explanations aren't given that are satisfactory, those programs are cut out. If Albertans saw the kind of system that we operate, they would be ashamed of how the budget review is done here.

Mr. Speaker, the next thing that I think is necessary – and this isn't something that I've dreamt up; this is something that comes out of England and out of the United States that allows MLAs to be much more productive. I think it's time to reduce the importance, the demagoguery of ministers in a cabinet system. It is those ministers that have information. Information, I think, controls and makes it possible for them to be in control. I think it's important for MLAs to have the same kind of information that ministers are able to get, ministers are able to have. What I propose is the same kind of system that exists in England, where MPs are allowed to be part of a committee that tracks or

is part of a ministry. Those Members of Parliament on those committees know as much about what is happening as the minister himself or herself. I'm informed that those committees are even allowed to initiate legislation, to start legislation, and then bring it into the House of Commons for debate and consideration. That is a meaningful system that allows MLAs in this Assembly to be more productive.

MR. MAIN: Our MLAs are productive.

MR. DECORE: You're not very productive, Mr. Minister, not at all.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. DINNING: Touched a nerve, did we?

MR. DECORE: Yeah, there's a nerve that I touched over there as well.

One of the things that I noted in Ontario, again as a result of the minority government situation, was that every Tuesday and every Thursday the motions and Bills of the opposition MLAs are allowed not only to be debated but to be voted on, including backbenchers' Bills and resolutions. Mr. Speaker, very rarely do you see a vote taken on a backbenchers' Bill, and very rarely do you see a vote taken on an opposition Bill or resolution, very rarely. Most often it's talked out. [interjections]

Again, I note that the members of the government find this funny and are laughing and don't believe in parliamentary reform, but I want it on the record that this is important.

#### Point of Order Decorum

MR. JOHNSTON: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. Provincial Treasurer has a point of order.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, we have sat through these personal attacks against the government over the past few minutes. Certainly *Beauchesne* 319 is very specific about general decorum, about the way in which the House should operate. More specifically, what we do have here under *Beauchesne* 481(c), (e), and (f) is a clear reason for a point of order to be raised. It is abundantly clear that the member from wherever he's from has in fact imputed motives, particularly to the Treasurer, when he suggested that we were hiding information or doing things under the table. That clearly is outside the bounds normally established in this Legislative Assembly for decorum of the House.

The rules of conduct set down by yourself, Mr. Speaker, are clear, and the parliamentary tradition is just as clear in this matter. If the member wants to make some reasonable comments about process, about disclosure of information, about any other matter, he should do it at least on a nonpersonal basis. Clearly, in accordance with *Beauchesne*, the sections I've already cited, he should be more specific. If he wants to impute motives, then there is a way to do that, but if he's simply casting motives, then he is obviously out of bounds with respect to *Beauchesne* and should stand corrected.

12:20

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the citation . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Excuse me. Order please. Could the hon. Provincial Treasurer inform the Chair as to what the second reference was in *Beauchesne*?

MR. JOHNSTON: I'll be glad to, Mr. Speaker. I'll read it if you'd like.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, I don't like; I'd just like the . . .

MR. JOHNSTON: It's under the general section of Content of Speeches. Under 481, Mr. Speaker, it says very clearly that "a Member, while speaking, must not . . . refer to the presence or absence of specific Members," which in this case the member did. It goes on to say that "a Member, while speaking, must not . . . impute bad motives or motives different from those acknowledged by a Member," and (f) "make a personal charge against a Member." Now, all of those clearly were in the member's comments.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: First of all, before the Chair comments, did the hon. member wish to reply on the point of order?

MR. DECORE: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously I was getting to the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East. I do know where he comes from, and I won't insult his constituents.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order please, Edmonton-Glengarry.

The Chair would just like to comment on the point of order. Twice previously in this morning's sitting the Chair has requested order of all hon. members, particularly, I have to say, on the government side. In the course of the bantering back and forth, I would agree with the hon. Provincial Treasurer that references were made on both sides of the House that are clearly out of order according to *Beauchesne* and our own Standing Orders. That does occur when there is that degree of disorder within the House.

I would like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry to proceed with his remarks, as appropriate, and would request the co-operation of members of the Assembly.

#### Debate Continued

MR. DECORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last point that I wish to address is the issue of our party's noninvolvement, refusal to involve ourselves, in the constitutional committee that has been set up by the government. I want first to give a little history of how that committee was set up so that the hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest has a better understanding of the issue. He will recall, I'm sure, that in August of 1990 the hon. Member for Medicine Hat struck the Constitution committee. He indicated at that time that he would not allow and not invite any Liberal members nor any NDP members to participate in that Constitution committee because in his opinion the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry had too much of a centralist attitude, and because of that and because he didn't want that to be any part of the constitutional committee, he didn't want Liberals or NDs to sit on the committee. Now, I would offer that press clipping to my hon. colleague if he wishes to see that just so that he's clear on the kind of start that this constitutional committee had in Alberta.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

I should say that the constitutional committee was started without any representation from the NDP or from the Liberals. In a unilateral way the hon. Member for Medicine Hat made that decision, and I guess the hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest must have been part of that decision because he sits on the committee. That committee met for five or six months and, I think, got itself into difficulty, because Albertans didn't like the idea that but one party was reviewing what Albertans were going to see happen insofar as Alberta was concerned in their relationship with the rest of Canada. So a bad start, a tainted start, a very improper start, and the hon. member was part of that decision, I am sure.

I suppose you can see the light and things can get better and people can change and reversions can take place, but I haven't seen the evidence of that. I saw a document that I liked that was issued by the committee, and I've said publicly that I thought the document was a good one. It was fair and objective. What I didn't like were the statements that were coming from a number of hon. ministers on the government side indicating that their position on immigration was such and such or their position on taxation was such and such or their position on health care and how the Alberta government should have power over health care or social services or education was such and such. These indicated to me, Mr. Speaker, that the mind-set was the same mind-set that the hon. Member for Medicine Hat had in August and probably the mind-set that the Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest had.

So, Mr. Speaker, what's the point in participating in a committee where you know what's going to happen? What we asked was that there be a free vote, that there be some parliamentary reform starting with something that could easily be comprehended by all of the members. We allow for a free vote, to vote on conscience, on the final report or the final position that that member wanted to take with respect to the constitutional committee and then the final vote that would be taken in this Legislative Assembly.

I thought we had learned from Meech Lake, because the government was totally out of sync with what Albertans wanted done with respect to Meech Lake. They felt that the Premier of Newfoundland was better representing their position than our own Premier. I thought from that education that we would have learned that we needed to open up the process and that we needed to make it real and that we needed to have a vote on conscience so that we really could have an expression from all of the constituents that that member represented. But obviously the Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest already has it determined. He already knows what is going to happen, and that's the reason I didn't want and we didn't want to participate in that committee. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, to end the discussion, change is very much needed, not only in this Assembly but in the Assemblies of the democratic forums of our country. We took democracy from England, the mother of democracies, as the Speaker often speaks of, but it is the mother of democracy that has already evolved much further than we have, and even Assemblies in our own nation have evolved further than we have. I think it's time for us to take action, because if we don't, I think Albertans are going to continue being more cynical and more unhappy with political leadership in this province.

Thank you.

MR. NELSON: First of all, I'd like to certainly offer my congratulations to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor for his presentation of the Speech from the Throne and to offer congratulations to our retiring Lieutenant Governor, the Hon. Helen Hunley, who has graced the province as a representative of the Queen for six years, and to you, Mr. Speaker, for the difficult task that you have in seeing to the orderly conduct of this House. I'm sure it does give you some trying moments from time to time.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne is one that certainly was short but does give an idea of an agenda to assist Albertans in the many facets of our lives. It has been identified previously that the challenges are fivefold: fiscal, economic, environmental, social, and constitutional. I'm going to spend some time discussing these and other issues.

**12:30**

MR. SPEAKER: Order, hon. member. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but I believe it's the desire of the House that we entertain His Honour.

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, I was just going to identify that after I did a little interlude on what I was going to commence with. However, considering it's time for His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I would wish to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The motion carries. Thank you, hon. member.

Government House Leader.

head: **Royal Assent**

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor will now attend upon the Assembly.

[The Premier and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Associate Sergeant-at-Arms opened the door, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise, please. Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor is without.

MR. SPEAKER: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order!

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Gordon Towers, and the Premier entered the Chamber. His Honour took his place upon the Throne]

HIS HONOUR: Pray be seated.

MR. SPEAKER: May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has, at its present sittings, passed certain Bills to which, and in the name of the Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

CLERK: Your Honour, the following are the titles of the Bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed.

No.	Title
16	Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1991
17	Appropriation (Alberta Capital Fund) Interim Supply Act, 1991
18	Appropriation (Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Capital Projects Division) Interim Supply Act, 1991-92

[The Lieutenant Governor indicated his assent]

CLERK: In Her Majesty's name His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these Bills.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise, please.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour and the Premier left the Chamber]

[Mr. Speaker took his place in the Chair, and the Mace was uncovered]

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

Okay; Government House Leader.

MR. HORSMAN: I should indicate that business for Monday would consist of the throne speech debate and then in the evening second readings of Bills on the Order Paper.

[At 12:39 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 2:30 p.m.]