

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, April 18, 1991**

2:30 p.m.

Date: 91/04/18

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

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

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

Amen.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I move the petitions for private Bills that I presented to the Assembly yesterday be deemed to have now been read and received.

[Motion carried]

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I wish to give oral notice of motion under Standing Order 40 that at the end of question period today I will seek unanimous consent of the Assembly in order to deal with the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta congratulate Dr. David Schindler, Killam Memorial professor of ecology, University of Alberta, on being awarded the Stockholm Water Prize in recognition of his outstanding contribution in the field of water conservation.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I wish to file with the Assembly the response to Written Question 279.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with pleasure that I introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two members from Calgary of the Shared Parenting Association of Alberta. We have Mr. Merv Enes, the co-president, and Mr. Garry Melcosky, the volunteerism director. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly Ms Elaine Schmidt and Mr. David Paterson along with 46 grade 10 students from Central Memorial high school visiting from Calgary. They are in the members' gallery, and I'd like them to stand and receive the very warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.  
The Member for Innisfail.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure today to introduce to you and to the rest of the members of the Assembly 36 grade 6 students from the Innisfail

John Wilson elementary school accompanied by their teachers Janet Hanwell, Peter Doell, and parents Mrs. Sharpe, Mrs. Bjarnason, and Andrea Doell. I'd like all the students to rise and receive the greeting.

head: **Oral Question Period**

**General Composites Canada Ltd.**

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the spring of 1989 department officials advised the Minister of Economic Development and Trade with respect to the outstanding loan guarantees to General Composites Canada Ltd., and I'm quoting now from the briefing book, that

notwithstanding assurance from the company president, the department is concerned about the company's ability to raise equity in time to avoid a cash crisis.

That's exactly what the minister had in his briefing book, and they knew that this company was losing \$160,000 a month at that time. Now, the minister had already given General Composite a \$3 million loan guarantee.

AN HON. MEMBER: Where did you get the briefing book?

**Speaker's Ruling  
Decorum**

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order please. [interjections] Provincial Treasurer, thank you.

The Chair had the pleasure of listening to question period yesterday via radio. There's an awful lot of static that goes on, so perhaps we could cool it here. Let's hear what the question really is, and then we'll get around to responses.

**General Composites Canada Ltd.**

*(continued)*

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, the taxpayers know that this minister had already given that company, which was failing, by the way, at the time, a \$3 million loan guarantee. Will the minister now confirm to the taxpayers that he also after that authorized a \$1 million loan guarantee under the exports loan guarantee program?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, as is the tradition in this House, the hon. member again is mistaken. If she has my briefing book, which was taken from my desk in this Legislative Assembly, I would suggest that hon. members opposite, when they're sitting in committee . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. ELZINGA: If they're proud of going through hon. members' desks, then let them put it on the record. [interjections]

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, all she has to do is read that briefing book and she will find that the original \$3 million was not advanced by this minister as she has indicated, which again is another error in her proposition. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.

MR. ELZINGA: We did in turn involve ourselves in the export loan guarantee after the fact. The papers were processed by my predecessor, and I was happy to support that going ahead. I

should indicate to the hon. member, though, that if she wishes, I could be more forward if she would table the so-called briefing notes that she does have. As I indicated to her, in the spring of the previous session somebody did take information out of my desk in this Legislative Assembly.

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's shameful that he would accuse us of a problem he started by losing his briefing book. He's been as sloppy with his briefing book as he has been with the taxpayers' money, and if he were working for a private company, he would have been fired years ago.

Now, this company was already in trouble. He knew it, and he loaned out another \$1 million on an unsecured program. Why on earth would the minister lend out another million dollars of taxpayers' money on an unsecured program like this knowing they were in trouble?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, let's examine the diversification record of this government. We have to look at the big picture, unlike the member opposite. They can take items in isolation; we've got an obligation to look at the big picture to make sure that this province is sound economically. If one examines the big picture, you will find, as I've repeated so often in this House, that we've got the strongest economy of any province in Canada. In addition to that, you will find, if you examine the record over the last five to six years, that 102,000 jobs have been created in the province of Alberta. You will also find, if you examine the overall economic record as it relates to our diversification projects, that the majority of those jobs have been created outside of agriculture and energy, whereby our diversification endeavours are working within the province of Alberta.

We acknowledge, and I've acknowledged on a consistent basis, that there are failures. If one examines venture capitalists, they have a much higher failure rate than we have had as a province. In talking to the financial institutions during the depressionary period that we went through in the province of Alberta, their rates were comparable to ours. We don't apologize. But what I do find distasteful is that the hon. member will consistently raise rather than offer in a fair way an assessment of a big picture.

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Speaker, after I photocopy it, I will file what I have from that briefing book. It makes it really clear: the minister authorized a million dollars of taxpayers' money when he knew the company was already in trouble despite a \$3 million loan that had come the year before.

My question is this: if the minister is so convinced that the loan export guarantee program is such a raging success – and by the way, the loans are unsecured and unreported – why doesn't he open up the books for that entire program and table them in the Assembly and let the taxpayers decide?

**2:40**

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted that the hon. member is going to table the information that was taken from my desk. I'm delighted that she's going to do that.

Let me table or file, whichever is the correct procedure, with the Legislative Assembly a book put out by my colleague the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications which outlines some 1,200 companies creating some 50,000 jobs in the province of Alberta. In addition to that, as the hon. member has just requested, I would like to file with the House the success/loss ratios of total assistance offered under our export loan guarantee program, which show that we have had

a success rate of some 97 percent. In addition to that, I'm going to table with the House our activities as they relates to nonprogram guarantees, direct loans, and small business term assistance plans so that all hon. members can see that our success rate varies anywhere from 95 to 99 percent.

MR. SPEAKER: Vegreville.

### Health Facility Construction

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not just the taxpayers who pay for all of these Conservative business failures; Albertans whose needs are ignored or denied are victims as well. Now, the favourite target in this year's budget is seniors, who will each pay up to \$1,000 per year more for services they need. It's a shameful way to treat the women and men who built this province. In Vegreville, with the highest percentage of seniors of any constituency in the province and with over 50 people still on the waiting list, this government refused again to provide the much-needed funds for construction of a 40-bed addition to the Vegreville auxiliary hospital and nursing home. I'd just like to ask the Minister of Health how she can justify being part of a government that wastes hundreds of millions of dollars on phoney business deals while refusing to spend a few million to build this much-needed facility.

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I know that the New Democrats have been throwing around this figure of \$1,000 per senior citizen both here in the House and outside publicly. I want to set the record straight: some senior citizens will not be impacted at all by some of the decisions that we've made in the budget; others will be. So to say and to leave the impression with senior citizens of this province that they're all going to be paying more money for services is false, and I want to set that record straight.

Secondly, with respect to capital programs we've certainly had to make some difficult choices not only on the operational side of this budget, as we've discussed at length in the Legislature, but also on the capital side. We had to identify some priorities in the Health capital budget, which this year has about \$130 million worth of capital projects that are being built around the province. Projects like the Royal Alexandra hospital in Edmonton, the Holy Cross hospital in Calgary, and many other facilities, including long-term facilities, are part of that \$130 million that we're building.

The Vegreville centre is not one of those that will be on the building list this year, but let's look at the things that we are doing in Vegreville to ensure that we minimize the impact on those seniors who are in need of long-term placement. One is a pilot day program that we've started out in the Vegreville community, which will hopefully take some of the pressure off the need for long-term beds.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here signed by over 2,100 Albertans reminding the Premier of his promise during the 1989 election campaign to build this facility and urging action on this important project. I'll send it to the minister.

Recognizing that only \$500,000 would bring this important project through the final design, ready-for-tender stage and recognizing that the minister of economic development can waste that much money over coffee making up these phoney business deals, will the minister make a commitment today to provide the \$500,000 to bring this project one step closer to reality?

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member has a petition, presumably he would like to table it in this Assembly in order that those people's views may be made known to all members of the Assembly as opposed to just this one-on-one contact that he's trying.

He should also be aware that there are some other projects that we had to delay, including Vegreville but including many others. There are about 30 on that list that were deferred. We chose the ones that we thought were the most important to proceed with this year. As I've explained, the project in Vegreville will be assisted, in terms of those people waiting, by community programs that we're putting into Vegreville on a pilot basis. I am hopeful that the project will be able to go in the shortest possible time and the most needed health spaces. That's the criteria by which we judge those projects.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, in spite of the best efforts of the staff and administration, conditions at the Vegreville auxiliary hospital and nursing home leave much to be desired. It's not wheelchair accessible. There's poor heating, inadequate space for dining and recreation, limited washroom and bathing facilities. I'd like to ask the minister how she can justify increasing the cost to seniors of living in this facility when she doesn't seem to be prepared to make a firm commitment to replace and make additions to it.

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the staff and the people that work in that facility are doing their very best and, I believe, are providing excellent care to the people in that facility, and that should be their goal. Remember: this was the party that said we should not be building any capital programs in this province. [interjections] This government happens to believe that a capital development . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. [interjection] Thank you.  
Edmonton-Glengarry.

### Farm Income

MR. DECORE: My questions are to the Associate Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker. Today the federal government announced a \$400 million package to bolster the safety net programs for Canadian farmers. As part of that package, there are new incentives to involve provinces in the NISA plan; that is, the net income stabilization account. The government of Alberta had previously chosen not to involve itself in this plan; the Saskatchewan government has. Alberta farmers tell me that they like the NISA plan because it allows for money pools to be developed to allow farmers to draw on those money pools in bad economic times, and it allows for, as they see it, an easier transition of the family farm to the children of the mothers and fathers that are running those farms. My first question to the minister is this: having had an opportunity to look at these new details, will she confirm that the Alberta government will now participate in NISA and give Alberta farmers that little extra hand that they need?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is aware, in January we participated in an announcement on the safety net program with the hon. federal minister. At that time, we entered into the revenue insurance option and said that we would defer our decision on the net income stabilization account. The reasons that we outlined at that time were that we had a significant contribution of some \$49 million to the revenue

insurance option, and we felt it was imperative that that program be in place by spring. Obviously, that took a lot of time, because it involves a contract as an addition to the crop insurance contract on yield insurance. I would say that our staff in the Hail and Crop Insurance Corporation and in Alberta Agriculture have been working very, very hard to implement this program in time for our producers to enter into it this spring.

We also discussed the NISA program and said that we would be deferring our decision at that time because there was not the time crunch on NISA that there was on GRIP. We deferred that decision also because of our fiscal responsibilities and our very significant contribution to agriculture in the GRIP program as well as other programs. No, I cannot confirm today that the Alberta government will enter into NISA.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.  
Supplementary.

2:50

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I can't think of an industry that is as badly hit economically as the agricultural industry. Everybody else in Canada seems to be able to deal with this. I think the minister has enough staff to be able to make decisions. Why is it that we continue to be tardy and negligent and leave moneys on the table in Ottawa and not help Alberta farmers? Why are we doing that, Madam Minister?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, that's a very noble plea on behalf of agriculture from the opposition leader; however, he makes some very, very erroneous assumptions in that. First, this government's commitment to agriculture is unprecedented by any province in Canada. We have been there for our farmers, and we continue to be there for our farmers. We contribute in a farm fuel distribution allowance, in fertilizer, on the input cost side, on the credit side: our farmers receive benefits that no other farmers in Canada receive. I would remind the hon. member . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. I'm sure we're going to have shorter questions and shorter answers and a little more quiet in the place too.

Edmonton-Glengarry, final.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, all I want to know is when this decision will be given. When will it be made so that Alberta farmers, Madam Minister, can start planning for their future and dealing with this tough economic time? When are we going to get that answer?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the decisions that have been made by this government are what give the farmers of this province the opportunity to plan for their futures and have allowed them for many years to plan for a future, not just jumping in today with one program. We are there in many of them. I won't go through them again.

We had an opportunity Thursday last to discuss Agriculture estimates and our commitment to agriculture. I would have invited the hon. member to be a part of that discussion. The announcement this morning of \$400 million involves a commitment to the permanent cover program, which we are a participant in, and involvement in the reduction of the producers' premium costs in the revenue portion by 25 percent; also, the very substantial commitment to the continuance of cash advances. These are very important to our farmers, and we on

this side of the House have worked very hard with our federal government to see that these are in place.

We will consider the offer under NISA with our colleagues, and we will do it, as we have, in a very careful and measured way as to what the best interests of the agricultural producers in Alberta are.

MR. SPEAKER: Innisfail.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question, too, is to the Associate Minister of Agriculture. There has been some confusion among my constituents regarding the GRIP program. Since it was first announced, there have been many changes to it, and I have come across a number of people who feel uncomfortable about enrolling in a program without knowing all the details. Will there be any more changes to the GRIP program?

MRS. McCLELLAN: The changes that the member is discussing in the revenue insurance program have been made. I think the information is going out now to all producers in follow-up meetings that we're holding. The most substantial change in the revenue insurance option involves those producers who have not been involved in crop insurance and who are high producers, above the area average. We have introduced an offset in that program to assist those. As we indicated when we introduced the program, Mr. Speaker, this is an interim year, and we will have a committee that will be monitoring the program over the year to see if there are indeed any other enhancements or adjustments that are required to make the program work better for our producers.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Innisfail.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister mentioned that they've held a number of meetings, but due to the time of year, the farmers are now in the field and haven't been able to attend the meetings. My supplementary is: is there one particular place they can go to receive that information?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, there is. Our hail and crop offices are spread throughout our province in a very decentralized way to offer that opportunity to our producers, wherever they may be, in agricultural production. Our staff has been working very hard, very long hours to answer the questions. There is also the staff at Alberta Agriculture district offices, who have been participating in sharing this very important information with our producers in time preceding. Also, we invite calls to the minister's office if required.

Thank you.

### Mental Health Services

MS MJOLSNESS: On April 11 in the House the Minister of Health outlined a number of initiatives which she says will meet the needs of people who are in desperate need of psychiatric crisis services, one of those being hospital emergency units. But hospital emergency units, Mr. Speaker, are geared for people experiencing physical trauma, like heart attacks and car accidents. This is just not the appropriate place of care for people who are in a severe mental breakdown or in crisis. To the Minister of Health: given that even a Department of Health memo, which I will table, states that the establishment of a psychiatric crisis centre "is a high priority for the Mental Health

Division," will the minister admit that general hospital emergency units are inappropriate and take immediate action to establish a community-based mental health crisis centre?

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I've referred often to the choices that were part of the Health budget, and not everyone got what they wanted in terms of working through an appropriate budget plan, including the Minister of Health. I have said publicly that I was a proponent of that centre but made a choice, and that was to increase and enhance the community side of our mental health programs this year by an increase of 13 percent.

I agree with the hon. member that in times past an emergency unit in a general hospital was not the best place for a psychiatric emergency. But I believe we all have to work better to get best use out of the facilities we have, and that is why we've asked our provincial suicidologist, to my knowledge the only one operating within a department of health in Canada, to work with hospital emergency teams and community support to ensure that we can have a better mix between the community and the institution as we deal with the issue of psychiatric emergency.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Edmonton-Calder.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People are dying because they cannot get appropriate services. It is proven that community-based support services like a crisis centre would be less costly than using general hospital units. I would ask the minister: will the minister not reconsider working with groups like the Canadian Mental Health Association to develop this 24-hour emergency care with the appropriate people in the appropriate place, which is in the community?

MS BETKOWSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can make that commitment and continue to make the commitment that I will continue to work with the Canadian Mental Health Association, but not just the Canadian Mental Health Association. There are other players in this, including general hospitals, including, for example, the Alberta Hospital Edmonton, and also other community groups who are interested. I am certainly prepared and will continue to work with these groups to ensure that we're getting the best value out of our health resources, including those that are specifically aimed at supporting the psychiatric patient and those in crisis situations.

### Municipal Grants

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, last year this caucus raised the matter of grants in lieu of taxes being reduced by 6 percent. After an outcry and a very successful lobby by municipalities, the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services reversed his position and provided the same funding level as the previous year, which incidentally is still a decrease when one takes into consideration inflation. Apparently this hard-line measure was because of budgetary concerns. My question to the minister: would the minister explain why, according to the *Alberta Gazette* of March 30, 1991, \$1.4 million of surplus funds available in the grants in lieu of taxes program was transferred to buy furniture on February 24, 1990, a month before the minister made his initial hard-line announcement?

3:00

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, in any program that occurs over a 12-month period, the program ends on March 31 of any particular fiscal year. A program such as the grants in lieu of taxes program is a grant the province pays to all municipalities

in this province in lieu of property taxes. This is an optional grant. At any time during that year some property that the province would own is liquidated or sold and other additional properties are brought in. So what you do is estimate at the beginning of a year.

The fact of the matter is that for the fiscal year 1991-92 the amount of money that's available under the grants in lieu of taxes has been increased a whopping 18.7 percent as compared to last year. Municipalities are extremely delighted with this whole program. I've undertaken consultation, along with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, with the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, and the Association of Alberta Improvement Districts. Mr. Speaker, there's general harmony in the land.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, would the minister tell this Assembly what furniture was more important to him at that time than an obligation he had to the municipalities?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, when you look at a budget of some \$500 million-plus – and one of the great joys that I have each year in this Legislative Assembly is an opportunity to appear before the Public Accounts Committee in which the specifics of a particular budget are dealt with. I would look forward to receiving an invitation from the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, who, by the way, is a member of the NDP caucus. Should I be invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee, I would be delighted to deal with any specific item that any hon. member would have with respect to any expenditure item in any budget under my supervision in previous years.

I would point out as well, Mr. Speaker, that tomorrow the estimates of the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services will be before this Assembly, and I would really look forward to discussing the estimates that would include a whopping 18.7 percent increase in grants in lieu of taxes to all of the municipalities in the province of Alberta that are beneficiaries under this program.

MR. DECORE: Point of order.

### Safety Code

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Labour, and it's regarding the proposed new safety codes Act. A constituent recently expressed concern to me that the new proposed Act is actually going to lower safety standards in the province. I would suggest that any government lowering the standards of safety would be irresponsible. Also I would suggest that anybody who would tell citizens untruthfully that standards are going to be lowered would also be irresponsible. My constituent got this information from a news release from the opposition. I'd like to ask the Minister of Labour to clarify the situation and take responsibility. Is this new proposed safety codes Act going to lower safety standards or not?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, the answer is: absolutely not. It will lead to improved safety. Let me make two points: one is that the Liberal Party news release which has been disseminated has been misleading Albertans on two grounds. The first of them is an allegation that the International Union of Elevator Constructors was not consulted. Surely enough they are a major stakeholder group, and surely enough that is a misrepresentation. Now, Mr. Ty Lund, who is also MLA for Rocky Mountain

House and who chairs our steering committee, our implementation committee on this code, was very quick to point out to me afterwards that in fact they are represented. They're represented by Mr. Blakely, who also happens to be president of the Alberta Building Trades Council.

Secondly, Albertans are being misled about the purpose and effect of the new Act. Let me be clear that the new Act will not replace existing safety statutes, and it will not replace existing safety codes. Those are going to remain in effect. What the legislation is is enabling legislation, and it will allow us to in fact set up a more stringent and also a more comprehensive framework for safety in this province and to give the stakeholders more of a role in that network.

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's possibly some reassurance there, but I'm still concerned. The minister mentioned the elevator situation. My information is that over the last six years there's been a decrease in the number of elevator inspections. Could the minister please tell us: as there appears to have been a corresponding rise in investigation, why is her department decreasing these investigations, and is safety being threatened in this area?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, in fact what we are doing is establishing a risk management system, and in the elevators and other fixed conveyances area we have moved to a more preventative role and have relied and leaned very heavily on manufacturers and other such to maintain the elevators in safety. Certainly, since they have a legal liability to do so, that has happened.

As for the question of statistics, let me just review a few numbers here. Accident investigations have not steadily increased in recent years. We had 33 investigations in 1983-1984. Last year we had only 18. So in fact there is no clear trend. They go up and down year to year, if I may say so. There is, however, no clear trend. Now, as well, only a small portion of those investigations involved passenger elevators. Some, in fact, are investigations on freight elevators, some on dumbwaiters, some on escalators and other elevating devices. There are about 7,500 elevators in Alberta. Last year only six of those elevators had problems that required our investigation, and that is a rate . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. [interjection] Thank you, hon. member. I'm sorry to go up and down, but we need to escalate the speed of question period.  
Edmonton-Kingsway.

### Peace River Fertilizer Inc.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Both the Treasurer and the minister of economic development have tried to fool Albertans into believing that they would not lose any of that loan guarantee to Peace River Fertilizer. In August of 1990 Mr. Keith Wiggins, the senior director of business finance in the minister's own department, is on record as saying that the government will make no attempt to recoup the \$6 million in that loan guarantee. Mr. Wiggins is also on record as saying that the fertilizer plant would not sustain such a heavy debt and further that the plant itself has only a fairly nominal value, were his words. Now, given that a senior official of his own department has contradicted the minister's words, will he quit distorting the facts and admit that the taxpayers of Alberta are going to lose that \$6 million?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member to show me where in the record we indicated that we were not going to suffer any losses. I've indicated to them on a consistent basis when they've raised these issues as it relates to our loan guarantees and our involvement in improving the economy that there are going to be certain failures, and we acknowledge that, but for the hon. member to suggest that we've indicated otherwise again is a misrepresentation of the facts. We've indicated that we've got an obligation to create jobs, and in the process of creating those jobs, sometimes we are going to have failures, and we acknowledge that.

MR. McEACHERN: If you read *Hansard* yesterday, quoting from the minister, he says, "For him to suggest," meaning me, "that there has been money lost is a total distortion of the facts." There has been money lost: \$6 million.

Now, Mr. Wiggins is also on record as saying that legal difficulties still stand in the way of selling this company to a new buyer. So will the minister admit that for this department to give a loan guarantee to a company whose ownership was in the middle of a bitter dispute was absolutely foolish?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is involving himself in distortion of facts, as I indicated yesterday. All he has to do is look at the record. I indicated, and I readily admit, that for him to indicate that we're going to lose \$6 million at this time is a distortion of the facts. We haven't determined to a large degree the amount that we're going to lose. We are in the process of attempting to sell our security to another company that wishes to take over this fertilizer business. Once that is completed, I'm more than happy to share it. The possibility is good that we're going to lose money. I indicated earlier and I tabled in the Legislative Assembly earlier a percentage of losses that we're involved in: some 3 percent in our export loan guarantees. We readily admit it. As the hon. member requested, I was happy to table the information. I wish the hon. member in turn would table the information that he is referring to.

3:10

### Speaker's Ruling Anticipation

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair has really been quite concerned about that last set of questions. I know that yesterday some other questions were offered by Athabasca-Lac La Biche, and there was some concern there: violation of the rule of anticipation. I would hope that caucuses would at least save us all this hassle, that on a day when the estimates are going to be called we can avoid questions on that department entirely so we don't need to worry about the fine line that's going on. This went across the line.

AN HON. MEMBER: Why worry?

MR. SPEAKER: Got a problem with Standing Orders, hon. member? [interjections] Thank you very much.  
Edmonton-Belmont.

### Vocational Training for the Handicapped

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has been long on rhetoric on supporting people services and very short on funding the number of necessary programs. The money that the government has lost due to mismanagement directly

affects the programs that very many needy Albertans require. A case in point is the funding of the support services for the physically challenged at AVC, Edmonton. So my question is to the Minister of Career Development and Employment. There's every indication that the government will end support services for the physically challenged program at the end of June due to a lack of funding. Can the minister assure the students that are currently in the program that these essential support services will be continued after June?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Speaker, to all hon. members of the Assembly, I think the hon. member should be well aware that it is the federal government's participation that has been lax, not the commitment by the province of Alberta. As well, the province of Alberta in co-operation with other departments has ensured that the program will be in place and is working very closely with the institution to keep in place the commitment it had made.

MR. SIGURDSON: Now, Mr. Speaker, it's our understanding that it's a 50-50 cost-shared program, but the 50 percent that Ottawa gives is driven by the 50 percent that the province of Alberta first puts up. That's what's happened: the province has cut back its share of funding. So given that this program can be cost shared with the federal government, will the minister reconsider his decision to fund the program now?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting. I don't know what I have to do to penetrate the answer to the hon. member. The answer is simply and clearly this: we have honoured that commitment; we have kept our end of the bargain and are continuing with the program. What else can I say?

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

### Family Violence

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I think all members agree that the Cawsey report produced some extremely shocking statistics with respect to aboriginal women. Eighty percent of aboriginal women from reserves or otherwise had experienced family violence, clearly eight times higher than the incidence for society as a whole. A study of Metis families in the Edmonton area reported that 70 percent of respondents had been physically abused, 87 percent had been emotionally abused, and 39 percent had been sexually abused. The report also points a very direct finger at the government for their lack of leadership in programming and support, particularly for Indian and Metis women. We simply must respond to this most tragic and critical situation. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. The Cawsey report recommended that the province provide assistance in establishing "holistic Aboriginal family-oriented counselling services" and also counseling centres for men. When will the minister be acting on this recommendation?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, we're certainly appreciative of the good work that Justice Cawsey has done, and this government takes all those recommendations very seriously. I'd want to point out to the member, though, that firstly, as a department we're very sensitive to some of the special and unique needs of our native and Metis communities. I know that the member is very familiar with some of the recent legislation that we've tabled in this Legislature. She's very familiar with some of the good work that we're doing in co-operation with the native and

Metis communities. I would only say to the member that I currently am involved in discussions with my colleagues, along with discussions with the federal minister responsible for native issues, the hon. Mr. Siddon, and that we're working very closely to bring forward some administrative reforms that we think will help to address some of these outstanding issues.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. No one expects the government to go it alone, but we do expect some leadership here.

The report also called for assistance to aboriginal groups to establish "safe houses for Aboriginal women, especially in remote and rural communities." When is the minister going to do something about this particular part of the tragedy that we see?

MR. OLDRING: Again, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is quite right: no one expects this government alone to solve all of those outstanding issues. I can only reiterate that we are working very closely, myself and my colleagues; we are involving ourselves in a very meaningful way in discussions with the native and Metis communities; we're working with our federal counterparts. I can say again some of the recent initiatives that we've taken within my own department as it relates to cross-cultural awareness and cross-cultural training, as it relates to a native child welfare unit in Calgary, as it relates to native bursaries, recognizing that it's important to have native workers that are trained and able to provide those services directly.

The member knows full well that we've made much progress, but we know full well that there is more to be done. We're committed to continue to work with our federal counterparts, with my colleagues on this side of the House, and directly with the native community. I believe that with that kind of a partnership, with the kind of genuine efforts that are coming forward on behalf of all parties, we are going to be able to forge ahead, we are going to be able to continue to make meaningful progress, and we are going to find solutions, Mr. Speaker.

#### Community Facility Enhancement Program

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. minister in charge of lotteries. We all know that the community enhancement program ends later this year. My constituents are asking a lot of questions about what's going to happen to the lottery money. Will the community enhancement program be extended, or will it be put into other programs?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the community facility enhancement program, which was introduced by the Premier of Alberta on October 17, 1988, will terminate on October 17, 1991. At the conclusion of the program nearly \$100 million will have been transferred from the Alberta Lottery Fund to literally upwards of 3,000 community-based groups throughout the province of Alberta. That program is scheduled, I repeat, to terminate October 17, 1991, and there are no plans to have another program. That would depend entirely on what the response of the citizens will be.

As I indicated several days ago, a survey is being undertaken with respect to the importance of this program. Presumably by the end of June of this year we'll have a pretty good understanding of what the citizens have said with respect to this program, and we'll take that data and that information to assess whether

or not the citizens of Alberta would ask the government to implement another program like the community facility enhancement program.

MR. MUSGROVE: Well, Mr. Speaker, a lot of people in Alberta now are making suggestions about earmarking programs for the use of lottery money; other ones are concerned that it will just go into general revenue. Could the minister tell us whether or not there has been a decision to put all the lottery money into general revenue?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, one of the positives that has occurred in recent years is the fiscal management by this government of the dollars that it has responsibility for, and we've been able to accumulate in the Alberta Lottery Fund a surplus, which at April 1, 1990, was some \$237 million. A few weeks ago the Provincial Treasurer brought down the provincial budget for fiscal 1991-92. Statements are contained in the budget that there will be a transfer of surplus lottery funds of \$225 million into the General Revenue Fund. Those dollars would go to assist senior citizens, victims of violence, programs such as the one the Minister of Career Development and Employment talked about a few minutes ago – the physically challenged through the Alberta vocational centres – health care, assistance to postsecondary institutions.

3:20

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, a document that was made public by me effective April 1, 1991, would also show that there would be a commitment of \$114 million to a large variety of volunteer groups throughout the province of Alberta for this fiscal year. Examples: the Alberta Sport Council will receive \$9,110,000; the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, \$2,850,000; the Alberta Environmental Research Trust, \$200,000; \$5 million would be set aside for advanced medical equipment. Mr. Speaker, the list . . .

MR. SPEAKER: And so on and so on.

#### Point of Order

#### Replies to Oral Questions

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order, Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. DECORE: *Beauchesne* 408(2), Mr. Speaker. It relates to the series of questions that were put by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud to the minister of public works. We're used to having deflections in answers from hon. ministers. That's part of the daily routine of this House. Except when we saw the last questions and answers put, the answers were pretty direct to the question that was put by the hon. member. But with respect to the exchange that took place that I referred to earlier, that had to be the lowest of the low, because there was no answer. It was not a deflection; it wasn't even cleverly crafted. It was a waste of the time of this Assembly, and it shouldn't be allowed to take place again.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you for the representation, hon. member. I'm sure that it does apply to a number of the answers, but unfortunately it also applies to a lot of the questions. Nevertheless, I do accept it as a valid point. Again I'm quite certain that all hon. members involved in question period will themselves read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest.

Orders of the Day.

MR. McEACHERN: May I take just a few moments to file three copies of . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: No. [interjection] Order, hon. member. No. A very curious procedure for an experienced member of the House. [interjection] Order. I'm quite certain that you'll be here tomorrow morning. We could try it then at the appropriate place if you wish.

The Chair apologizes for having called Orders of the Day, but that allows the television cameras to retire.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**

MR. SPEAKER: Now Standing Order 40. Edmonton-Meadowlark.

#### **Stockholm Water Prize**

Mr. Mitchell:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta congratulate Dr. David Schindler, Killam Memorial professor of ecology, University of Alberta, on being awarded the Stockholm Water Prize in recognition of his outstanding contribution in the field of water conservation.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Stockholm Water Prize is an international environmental award made every year in recognition of an outstanding contribution in the field of water conservation. The prize is sponsored by the World Wildlife Fund and several Swedish corporations. The selection process is under the auspices of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. This is an enormously prestigious award and represents an outstanding achievement by Dr. Schindler.

Dr. Schindler received his doctorate from Oxford University, where he studied as a Rhodes scholar. He has had a highly distinguished . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, we're not to the motion; we're on a request for urgency. Perhaps the House will proceed, but if we could deal on the urgency, please.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm actually following the process that was followed earlier by a member of the Conservative caucus, but it is urgent . . .

#### **Speaker's Ruling Relevance**

MR. SPEAKER: Order, hon. member. Please do as the Chair directs, and then we'll get on to the motion. I would hope that this would proceed, but that's only the Chair's personal opinion, which is not supposed to be offered. Let's deal with urgency, according to Standing Orders, and not get into this other nonsense.

#### **Stockholm Water Prize (continued)**

MR. MITCHELL: This is an award that, as I say, Mr. Speaker, is extremely prestigious, and I would ask for unanimous consent of the House so that we could extend our best wishes and congratulations to Dr. Schindler at this time.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: There's a request under Standing Order 40: may the matter proceed? Those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Shame. Shame.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Cries of "Shame"**

MR. SPEAKER: All right. All right. [interjections] Order. Order. [interjections] You can stand all you want. Thank you, hon members. Standing Order 13 still applies.

Order please, Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. Perhaps the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark would care to visit me later this afternoon in my office, please.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I move that the written questions appearing on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places, except for written questions 227 and 282. [interjections]

#### **Speaker's Ruling Warning a Member**

MR. SPEAKER: Just settle down, hon. member. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands, don't get exercised about something that doesn't really relate to you at this particular moment.

MS BARRETT: I'm not getting excited; I'm just asking.

MR. SPEAKER: Please. [interjections] Hon. member. Hon. member.

MS BARRETT: What?

MR. SPEAKER: Be quiet, please. That's the "what."

MS BARRETT: No. I asked a question.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member.

MS BARRETT: You stood there for . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member. Once more and I'm afraid you'll be going for a coffee break.

head: **Written Questions  
(continued)**

MR. SPEAKER: We have a motion before the House.

[Motion carried]

#### **Alberta-Pacific Forest Management Agreement**

227. Mr. McInnis asked the government the following question:  
(1) On what date did negotiations leading toward a forestry management agreement between the Crown in right of Alberta and Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc. begin,



- (2) who conducted these negotiations on behalf of the province,
- (3) on what date were these negotiations concluded, and
- (4) on what date was the draft agreement forwarded to the Attorney General's department for legal review and approval?

MR. GOGO: The government rejects that question, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: Wheelbarrow, wheelbarrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. members. The Chair would now like to hear what the member said.

Government House Leader, would you repeat that please. I couldn't hear.

MR. GOGO: The government rejects the question, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

### Fuel Consumption

282. Mr. Mitchell asked the government the following question: How many barrels per day has Alberta's average fuel consumption dropped since the announcement of the \$90,000 Energywise fuel conservation campaign by the Minister of Energy on January 30, 1991?

MR. GOGO: The government rejects that as well, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Motions for Returns**

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, in view of the important motion by the Leader of the Opposition on today's Order Paper, I move that the motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places.

MR. McINNIS: That's about the lamest excuse I've ever heard.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections]

All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. [interjection]

### Speaker's Ruling

#### Debate on Procedural Motion

MR. SPEAKER: No, you cannot speak on that motion. It's a procedural issue. That's been clarified with the House. [interjections] That's correct, hon. member. Would you take your place, hon. member. Take your place, hon. member.

MR. McINNIS: Are you refusing my right to speak on . . .

MR. SPEAKER: That is indeed correct, hon. member.

MR. McINNIS: Is that your ruling?

MR. SPEAKER: It's my ruling. It was communicated to all members of the House about three or four weeks ago. I'm sorry you were not able to read your own correspondence, but it is there. I'm sorry, hon. member. [interjections] Thank you, hon. member.

head:

3:30

### Motions for Returns

(continued)

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The motion carries.

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

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

head:

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Debate on Procedural Motion

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. There is a motion before the House, but before we proceed, the Chair will now be forced, because of the question and the member persisting to stand in place even though the Chair was standing, to read into the written record a letter which was circulated to the House leaders on March 19. The Chair apologizes if this was not communicated to all hon. members, but the Chair leaves that communication to the House leaders; then these things happen. I will quote from my letter sent to the House leaders March 19, 1991, with respect to written questions and motions for returns.

It has just come to my attention that one of our recent practices has been in contradiction to Standing Order 43(1) and (2).

A number of years ago the House practice on Tuesdays and Thursdays was to move and pass one omnibus motion to have Written Questions and Motions for Returns stand and retain their place on the Order Paper when not being dealt with on that day.

After 1986 this practice was altered to have two separate procedural motions; one for Written Questions and the other for Motions for Returns.

On occasion last year [1990] the motion for Written Questions was briefly debated, then voted on. A similar procedural motion for Motions for Return was often debated at considerable length. As a result, Private Members' day was seriously affected to the detriment to the rights of all Private Members.

The advice given to the Chair at that time was to follow that practice, however, a further reading of Standing Orders namely Standing Order 43(1) and (2) clearly indicates that such procedural motions are made "without debate."

The Chair apologizes for any inconvenience to the House but the Chair is compelled to adhere to Standing Orders.

Written Questions are either accepted or rejected by the Government without comment and without debate.

head:

3:40

### Motions for Returns

(continued)

MR. SPEAKER: The question before the House is with regard to: that all Motions for Returns on the Order Paper stand and keep their places.

For the motion:

Ady  
Anderson

Fischer  
Fjordbotten

Mirosh  
Moore

Betkowski	Gesell	Musgrove
Black	Gogo	Payne
Bogle	Horsman	Schumacher
Brassard	Hyland	Severtson
Cardinal	Johnston	Shrake
Cherry	Jonson	Sparrow
Clegg	Klein	Speaker, R.
Day	Kowalski	Tannas
Dinning	Lund	Thurber
Drobot	Main	Trynchy
Elliott	McClellan	West
Elzinga		

Against the motion:

Barrett	Gibeault	Pashak
Bruseker	Hawkesworth	Roberts
Chumir	Hewes	Sigurdson
Decore	McEachern	Taylor
Ewasiuk	McInnis	Wickman
Fox	Mitchell	Woloshyn
Gagnon	Mjolsness	
Totals:	For - 40	Against - 20

[Motion carried]

## head: Motions Other than Government Motions

### Public Agency Appointments

#### 201. Moved by Mr. Martin:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly introduce legislation to provide all Albertans with the opportunity to apply to serve in available positions on government-designated commissions, boards, tribunals, and advisory councils by requiring broad public notification and posting of all available positions at least 30 days in advance of the selection deadline and endorse a fair selection process that ensures selection of candidates on the basis of ability and experience and not patronage.

[Adjourned debate April 16: Mr. Lund]

MR. SPEAKER: Rocky Mountain House.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe when I ended debate on Motion 201 the other day I was commenting on how naive this motion is. Now, as I mentioned the other day, there are about 1,500 such positions in the province of Alberta. We know that many of those positions require specialties. Various pieces of legislation lay out the qualifications that are necessary. Some examples of that are the Energy Resources Conservation Board, the Alberta Liquor Control Board, the Workers' Compensation Board, and many others that could be cited.

I really question whether the opposition fully understand what they're talking about when they talk about job competition. I found it extremely interesting just recently how the opposition were so opposed to competition out in the workplace, and here we are talking about going for open competitions. Mr. Speaker, the posting of these positions or advertising for applications would be a tremendous, time-consuming job. For an example, in order to cover the whole province, we would be talking about some 63 papers as a very minimum. Now, we'd have to contact all of those and put the job description in and ask for people to return their applications. On top of spending and posting and advertising positions would be the time necessary to review all

of the applicants that sent in a résumé to fill one of those positions. In some cases, of course, we would also have to have an examination that these people would have to go through so that we could understand their skills and their knowledge of the subject that they were going to be dealing with. Of course, when you're going to be on such a broad basis, you're going to have to arrange for interviews. To co-ordinate that and have people spending the time to do that would be an extremely onerous job.

When we start talking about all this time and co-ordination, it raises another whole area: who would be responsible for organizing and arranging this whole process? I suppose we could follow what the Leader of the Opposition has suggested is happening in Ontario, where you have a form that anybody can get hold of and send in. Of course, it's not specific to any position. It's just to indicate that yes, I'm interested, but no indication as to what they're interested in. Then who would look at the résumés? Who would administer the examinations? Who would conduct the interviews? Would this be done by the various departments where the board or commission is in a specific ministry, or would it fall on the personnel department administration office that we already have in place? If so, how much staff do we have to add to that? Is it even possible for them to handle such a huge undertaking?

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

In any case, Mr. Speaker, we can see that this is going to add immensely to the bureaucracy that we would have to have in place to administer something like this. Now, one of the things that I certainly have been hearing from my constituents is that they don't want more bureaucracy. We're told by many people that we have too much government already, and here we're talking about going and putting in place some more bureaucracy. I consider my constituents very intelligent people, and intelligence would tell you to keep things as simple as possible. This motion certainly does not indicate that there is going to be anything simple about this process. Mind you that's typical of the opposition: keep things mixed up; keep things from moving; keep good things from happening.

As soon as you start talking about the process that was suggested by the hon. member, we lead into many budget implications. I mentioned to you earlier the 63 papers that the 1,500 positions would have to be advertised in. If you start multiplying that out, you're going to find that just the advertisements to cover the province to give people the opportunity to make an application, that in many cases is not applicable, is going to cost about \$9.6 million. Well, one of the things that has really been stressed to me in the last while is fiscal restraint, the importance of getting the best value for our dollar spent and reducing it as much as possible.

As a matter of fact, I've had many compliments to this government from my constituents on the most recent balanced budget, and I want to take this opportunity to thank the Premier and the Treasurer for making sure that happened.

3:50

Now, I've just touched on the advertising. How about the posting of the job descriptions? How about the cost of administering the applications: the interviews, the exams, the cost of mailing notifications back to the applicants that they maybe were successful or that they weren't successful, and then, of course, setting up these interviews that would be necessary? No question; a needless spending of money. Once again, is that surprising that that would come from the NDP? We've heard

day after day now since we are going through estimates, "Spend more, spend more, spend more," as if there's a never-ending amount of money to do things. Some things are certainly necessary, but a lot of things are not, and this sure falls in that latter category.

I don't think that the problem with Motion 201 even stops there. We read "to provide all Albertans with the opportunity to apply to serve in available positions." As I said earlier, the qualifications that are necessary for some of these boards not every Albertan possesses. I think it would be absolutely ludicrous to go and conduct public competitions for positions and jobs that the general public couldn't generally fill. I think it's also unfair to Albertans to build that expectation that perhaps they could get a position on a board or commission when in fact they don't qualify.

Another problem that I see with this: we're making an assumption that all Albertans are interested in sitting on the various boards, commissions that we have throughout the province. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that many of these are part-time or voluntary and many times you have to go out and actually persuade someone to take a position on one of these boards. Again you can see the tremendous waste that would be inherent in this process when in fact you may go through it not to get any applicants.

I really question why this is coming forward and what's the need for it. The hon. member mentioned in his address the other day that he didn't know how many of these positions on the various agencies, commissions, boards, advisory councils, or tribunals there were. Well, I would be only too happy to advise the hon. member that in fact there is a document produced every three years. It's titled Inventory of Agencies, Boards, and Commissions in the province of Alberta. In this document are listed all the different agencies, boards, commissions; complete information about their purpose and the particular board or commission: the membership, the vacancies, the appointment procedure, term of office, remuneration, and the frequency of meetings, et cetera. All that information is available. Also included in this booklet is the name of the contact person and the phone number in case there needs to be personal contact to get more information. This inventory, this booklet, is distributed to all ministers and deputy ministers, the Legislative Assembly Office, all agencies, boards, and commissions, foreign offices, government libraries, and educational institution libraries. Now, I know that Executive Council is currently considering a proposal that would distribute the upcoming 1991 issue to all public libraries, and if individuals are interested, they can obtain a publication from publication services. So, Mr. Speaker, you can readily see that there is nothing hidden; everything is out in the open. I would invite the hon. Leader of the Opposition to avail himself of all that information. I think that process that we've got in place already is enough, that it would convince the hon. members of this Legislature not to support Motion 201.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly suspect that the Official Opposition has brought Motion 201 forward as another of their attempts to portray this government as doing things behind closed doors and without public consultation. Well, I believe that is very misleading. There is an attempt to make this government look like a political country club with a select membership. Nothing could be further from the truth. That is simply untrue. Furthermore, this tactic will not work.

Let me review as I conclude. This motion does not understand the process involved in implementing competitions for public positions on boards, agencies, commissions, tribunals, and advisory councils. It would result in another unwanted and

unnecessary level of government bureaucracy. It is grossly cost prohibitive. It is arguable that in a significant number of instances, despite the expenditures of thousands of dollars, Motion 201 would prove no more effective than our current system or, even worse, that it would disillusion thousands of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge the members of this Assembly not to support Motion 201.

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

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in support of Motion 201. It's especially a pleasure to rise following the speaker from Rocky Mountain House. You know, I'm not at all surprised that the Member for Rocky Mountain House wouldn't want to support Motion 201, because what does it do? It takes away from the government the right to appoint all of their friends to the little boards and commissions and some of the big boards and commissions that we have throughout the province. My goodness, once you lose the right to appoint all of your friends here and there, and once your friends don't have the opportunity to go out at public tax dollars' expense to attend certain meetings, well, all of a sudden you lose a little bit of the power. You lose a little bit of control. They call it management, but I call it absolute control.

One of the things that the hon. member talked about was that you would have to have exams and interviews so that you could find out whether a person was able and eligible to do the job that so many others volunteer to do. Yes, perhaps you'd have to make sure that a person would have some understanding of the board or commission that they wanted to be appointed to. What's wrong with having some experience in the area that you've got an interest in? All it takes right now is, my goodness, a little blue and orange card that says: I'm a member of this constituency association; shouldn't I be appointed?

Motion 201 changes all of that, Mr. Speaker, and that's what this member, that's what this government doesn't like. You know, I can remember when I was a researcher for the late Grant Notley. Grant Notley used to have an expression that he would repeat time and time again in this Assembly, and it's worth repeating right now. That is: when everybody thinks alike, nobody thinks very well. What we've got right now are all of these people that are all making similar kinds of appointments. Why? So that we can have the unanimous recommendation of a committee that's been prearranged, preconditioned to respond a certain way. It's almost Pavlovian. Maybe that's the P word in PC: Pavlovian commission. There it is, the Pavlovian commission, because then what we've got is all of these people that are so trained and so conditioned to respond in the way that the government wants them to respond.

4:00

You know, the other point the member makes is the cost of advertising to have these independent commissions: \$9.6 million he thinks. Well, I think that's a bit high; I think that's awfully high. I don't see why you would have to advertise throughout all of Alberta for matters that relate to certain parts of Alberta. You wouldn't have to advertise in some areas of the province that have nothing to do with, no reflection on what goes on in other areas of the province.

Let's talk about advertising. Let's talk about the waste in advertising that we have currently. You know, when we had the budget that was introduced by the hon. Provincial Treasurer,

what did we have? We had massive amounts of advertising. You couldn't watch television without in an evening seeing two or three ads that came on from the department of Treasury boasting about a balanced budget; well, boasting about a budget that he hopes to be balanced at least. Now, there's a waste of money. Maybe that money could go into advertising for individuals to come forward to volunteer to serve on certain commissions.

Another area of advertising that this government has put a lot of money into, and we're not really sure whether or not it's going to have any effect – I would argue that it hasn't and won't have any effect – is the area of apprenticeship training. Here's a government that has gone out at the end of the fiscal year and spent all kinds of money to try and get young people to take a look at apprenticeship programs. Why are they doing that? Why are they doing that when we're proposing to have all kinds of changes in the proposed industry training Act from the Manpower Development Act? We're inviting people to come in, all of the people that in 1985, 1986, 1987 left Alberta to move to Ontario and Quebec and other parts of Canada because they couldn't get jobs here. All of our skilled labour left our province. Now we're saying that we've got a shortage of skilled labour, so let's advertise, train them all again – maybe; we'll have to wait and see what happens with Bill 11 when it's introduced – so that we can bring some degree of skilled labour back to the Alberta work force. Well, perhaps there is an area where we could cut advertising and put those dollars into advertising for positions for commissions and boards.

The member says, you know, that what this is is the opposition saying that we're concerned about decisions that are being made behind closed doors. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly. My goodness, we've been talking about that for days upon days, weeks upon weeks, year after year. Not just in this Legislature but in previous Legislatures as well we've been talking about the decisions that have been made behind closed doors and how it's time to open it up. Absolutely right: we have some concerns about the decisions that are made behind closed doors. Who are those instructions coming from? My goodness, if you had a board that was appointed in a nonpartisan way, what would you have? You would have decisions that were being made in the open. If there was political interference in the decision-making process, you can bet your bottom dollar that somebody on that board or somebody on that commission would say: "Wait a minute, Mr. Member; wait a minute, Mr. Minister or Madam Minister. We have a problem with your interference. We have a problem with your influence. It's time for you to take a hike." It's no wonder, Mr. Speaker, that the Member for Rocky Mountain House would be opposed to that. This government has been in power for so long that it doesn't want to have anybody out there ruffle the feathers; it doesn't want to have anybody out there that might throw pebbles into calm water. It's been in power for so long that it's forgotten about open and honest government.

Mr. Speaker, I took a look at recent orders in council. Here we have the orders in council from a cabinet meeting of yesterday, April 17, approved today. What have we got here? More reappointments made by the Minister of Advanced Education under the Colleges Act; he appoints a number of people. I'm not questioning their credentials; I wouldn't do that, but I wonder why there isn't some kind of mechanism for the community to be involved in the election of some of those individuals to those boards and commissions.

Why is it that at Keyano College in Fort McMurray the faculty and staff can't vote for the board of governors? Why is it that

the local chamber of commerce and people that are involved in the local districts of labour can't have their input? Why is it that city council is excluded? Quite frankly, I would like to know how the Minister of Advanced Education from Lethbridge sitting together with a group of other honourable people can determine what kind of standard, what kind of quality some individuals can bring to a job, to serve on a board or commission that's far removed from Edmonton: people they may not even know. Well, I would hazard the guess that the faculty and staff of Keyano College might know the individuals, might say: "He's very all right. We should reappoint that individual; let's support that individual." The chamber of commerce and the local labour council may say: "Yes, there's a good individual. Let's reappoint that individual." Indeed, the school trustees and the city council may say: "There's a good individual. Let's have some kind of participation in that reappointment; let's make sure that that individual has our support."

What Motion 201 says is that it gives people the opportunity to apply. It opens up the process. It allows for input in a nonpartisan way. That's all it does. It removes from the Legislature, from the Progressive Conservative caucus, or from the Pavlovian commission process, the appointment that allows for the kind of political interference that we on occasion hear about. What we're trying to do, Mr. Speaker, is change that system. We want to change the way it works. We believe that where there is local interest, that local interest should be expressed by the communities that hold the interest and that they should have the opportunity to make their point known. That's all that 201 does.

If the Member for Rocky Mountain House is upset with Motion 201, I'm not surprised – he probably holds the majority view of the Progressive Conservative caucus – because what we're talking about is taking away the ability for some of these people to have a little too much influence, taking away some of the power, some of the grip, and some of the control that these individuals have unnecessarily. It puts the power back where it rightly belongs: back in the community and back with those people that have vested interests in those boards and commissions.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Drumheller.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess the first thing I would like to say in regard to Motion 201 is that it's nice to see the stains from all the crocodile tears that were given by the hon. Leader of the Opposition on Tuesday gone from the Chamber today. You know, it's really, really heartwarming to know that the Leader of the Opposition has such great concern for the welfare of this government that he's bringing this motion forward so that it can help perpetuate itself in office. I'm wondering whether any hon. member here today seriously believes that argument by the Leader of the Opposition, but he did spend a lot of his time expressing those concerns.

I think the hon. member who's just spoken understands how government works, but you really wouldn't know it from what he said today. He's trying to give the impression of some great theoretical way in which this should be done, but, hon. member, I would remind you that the people of Alberta chose a majority of Progressive Conservative candidates in the last election and the one before that and the one before that and the one before that and the one before that and the one before that because

they felt that they had confidence in the way that the business administration of this province would be performed.

4:10

MR. SIGURDSON: Forty-six and falling.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Well, the last result I saw was 59 members of the Conservative Party here, 16 there, and eight there.

In any event, the hon. member, I think, really insults a lot of really good Albertans who have been selected to help the government administer the affairs of this province, and not all of them are card-carrying Progressive Conservatives; a lot of them are not. It indicates to me what we're in store for if we ever, heaven forbid, turn over the administration of the affairs of this province to the New Democratic Party, because they preach a great game.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that actions speak so much louder than words, so why don't we review some of the actions of New Democratic administrations in this country. I think we'd find it very informative. We'll come to Ontario, because that's the classic, but let's start a little earlier.

Way back in the '60s – and I don't know whether it was under St. Thomas of Douglas or Woodrow Lloyd – a fellow by the name of David Cass-Beggs was brought over from the United Kingdom, a great supporter of the Labour Party over there, to run Saskatchewan Power. They couldn't find anybody in Saskatchewan or even in Canada; they had to go over to the motherland to do it. He misadministered Saskatchewan Power for many years, and the people got tired of the way things were being done. You know, that government intervened in business too. There were box factories, things like that in the old days; we can hear what happened there. There was great economic development, anyway, in Saskatchewan.

In any event, in 1971 some people in Saskatchewan said, "We want somebody new." So they chose the Liberals under Ross Thatcher.

MR. SIGURDSON: That was '61, Stan.

MR. SCHUMACHER: No. In 1961 St. Thomas went to Ottawa and Woodrow Lloyd took over the affairs of Saskatchewan. In 1971 the Hon. Ross Thatcher, I believe, took over, or maybe it was '67.

In any event, he found he couldn't use the services of David Cass-Beggs anymore, so he was out of a job for a while and I guess maybe some good Liberal was put in there; I don't know. But where does David Cass-Beggs show up next? I guess it was '67 that Thatcher took over, because the Schreyer government assumed control in Manitoba in 1969. What was one of the very first appointments? David Cass-Beggs to head Manitoba Power. Then what happened? He couldn't handle the job they'd given to him, so even the Schreyer government said, "We have to get rid of you." So he's at loose ends again. What does he do? He waits until 1972 when Dave Barrett takes over in B.C., and David Cass-Beggs ends up in B.C. Hydro.

AN HON. MEMBER: Oh, no.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Oh, no. Those fellows over there know nothing about patronage, nothing whatsoever.

Look at the Penikett government in Yukon.

MR. SIGURDSON: A good government.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Oh, a great government.

He goes to Manitoba again. He gets somebody by the name of Nick Poushinsky to be Deputy Minister of Social Services.

MR. KOWALSKI: Where'd he come from?

MR. SCHUMACHER: Manitoba. He's been very astute. Right now, if any interested observer of the administration of Yukon would look at it, they'd find that 60 percent of their middle management are very well known New Democrats. [interjection]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, hon. member. Order please.

MR. TAYLOR: I was wondering, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. gentleman would permit me just one question.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a request for a question, hon. member.

MR. TAYLOR: I would like to know . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Order just for a moment please. While the Chair has the opportunity, perhaps we could have a little more quiet in the House. Confine your appreciation of remarks, whichever side you're on, to your own thoughts.

MR. TAYLOR: Well, I know the hon. member is very knowledgeable and has spent as many years or maybe more as I have around, but on that very extensive list that he has compiled, can he find anyplace where any other party besides his own has rewarded a barber as well as they have?

MR. SCHUMACHER: Well, Mr. Speaker. I would say there's a great example of elitism coming from the so-called Liberal Party. I don't really think it's worthy of the hon. member to ask such a question, and it's certainly not worthy of a reply.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I think it's time to get to the most recent example of what the people over there in the New Democratic Party say could never occur under them, because they're going to follow Ontario. Well, let's look at Ontario. Premier Bob takes office in mid-September of 1990, not very long ago. Who is his first appointment to a board?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Who?

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Bob White, leader of the Canadian Auto Workers. What does he do? He gets appointed to the Skydome board, one of the flagship boards in the province of Ontario. Was there any advertisement for that? Was there any public input? No way. But before that even, what happens to Premier Bob, who is going to go for the election of a Speaker, to allow everybody to have an equal say in the choosing of a Speaker? A secret ballot it was supposed to be, but Premier Bob came out in the press with an announcement of who he favoured to be Speaker.

MR. SIGURDSON: Democracy.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Oh, yeah. Great democracy. Hon. members, come on now. I think that sets the tone of what

Premier Bob's approach to the appointments is. It goes on; there are others.

It didn't take very long before Ontario got a new Deputy Minister of Energy.

AN HON. MEMBER: Who's that?

MR. SCHUMACHER: Well, I don't know where he comes from, whether it's Manitoba or Ontario, but it's one Mark Larson. He used to be Ed Broadbent's chief policy adviser. Then when the Lyon government was retired in Manitoba, Howard Pawley comes along and recruits him to be a deputy minister without any competition, no advertisement. From then, of course, the Filmon government took over, and I don't know whether he was fired or not. He probably wasn't, but it didn't take long. As soon as Premier Bob takes over in Ontario, he's parachuted in to take over the Energy department of that government.

So that's the way it works, boys and girls. It ill behooves the Leader of the Official Opposition to be coming in here crying over the welfare of our government and telling us how we should be changing our processes to better represent the people of our province, but the crowning example of their attitude – and you know, it might be some excuse for what happened to Bob White and Mark Larson because that was very early in the term; they didn't have time to get their secretariat and all the other ins and outs established, because I'm sure that when that secretariat is established you will find well-known New Democrats manning that secretariat. We'll find out; we'll see what it looks like when it happens. Then, of course, once they get the secretariat, it doesn't matter whether the Liberals win again or the PCs or some other party. There's the good old continuing secretariat to look after all the good New Democratic friends no matter what the people say in an election as to how they want things done.

Time passes. The secretariat has probably been set up now, and there was a very recent appointment. We've heard comments time and time again from our friends over there about foreign offices and people who are so-called friends of the government getting appointed to foreign offices. Patronage plums, they call them. That's what they say, but what do they do? Ontario has a large foreign office in Tokyo, and who is the new director of the Ontario foreign office? Can anyone guess? Robin Sears, a well-known independent-minded person in our country.

Hon. members, how can anyone take a motion . . .

4:20

MR. SIGURDSON: A point of order, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. A point of order, Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: I wonder if the hon. member would entertain a question at this point in his speech.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: It's not a point of order. It is a request to pose a question. It's up to the hon. member.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm wondering if the hon. member could advise the Assembly when Mr. Sears was appointed to the job in Tokyo. Was it before September 6 or after September 6?

MR. SCHUMACHER: Of 1990? Robin Sears was appointed in the last couple of months. [interjections]

MR. SIGURDSON: By Peterson; a Peterson appointment. [interjections]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Let's proceed with the remarks, hon. member. We're not getting into a question and answer on a continuous basis.

AN HON. MEMBER: Good information, Stan.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, hon. member.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SIGURDSON: If they hadn't, maybe we would have. I don't know.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Well, I always stand . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Please proceed.

MR. SCHUMACHER: People do it to me, Mr. Speaker.

In any event, my information was that it was a fairly recent appointment, and if I am incorrect I will be prepared to stand corrected.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, this motion by the hon. Leader of the Opposition I don't think speaks seriously to the question before the province in this area. When the people elect a government they elect a government to see that their point of view is carried out. Obviously, when they elect a government they elect a government that has a majority. Just look at what happens to the membership and the participation of members in political parties in this province. Our party is very broad based, representing all areas of endeavour in the province. [interjection] And farmers and school teachers and nurses and social workers. It doesn't matter what area of endeavour is involved, we represent them. They work with us, and you only have to look at the convention of 10 or 11 days ago: 2,300, 2,400 participants.

MR. SIGURDSON: Twenty-five.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Twenty-five. I had to be corrected again; I'm very inaccurate today. In any event, I try to approach this in a conservative manner.

It was well above the combined attendance of the Reform Party, the Liberal Party, and the NDP. If you put them all together, we have more participants.

MR. SIGURDSON: There's a lot of employees there, Stan. How much are your annual dues?

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. SCHUMACHER: This is an open party. Everybody is welcome to join on the payment of a fee. It's not a great fee; it's modest, but at least it is a fee, and therefore we do have access to a lot of talented people.

I think it's rather insulting of the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Edmonton-Belmont to say that the members of these boards really aren't qualified, aren't competent, are only there because of the fact that they might support the governing party. I myself know many members of boards and commissions who do not support this government but who have been appointed by this government. I don't think there's a monolithic organization in effect. I think we have an open, pluralistic society in this province, and I hope it will continue and will not get all bound up in more bureaucracy that if they had their way and had their hands on the lever would certainly perpetuate their point of view long past the next election or the one after that or the one after that.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge all members to defeat this really cynical motion that's been put before us today.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, I have to get in a few comments in support of Motion 201. I have to say before I begin that it is shocking to hear the comments of the Member of Drumheller, the same member who not long ago shamed himself and his party by standing up in this Assembly and saying that the idea of one person, one vote was some kind of foreign ideology. It was embarrassing, and these are the kinds of comments we're getting from that member.

AN HON. MEMBER: Is that what he said?

MR. GIBEAULT: That's what he said in this Assembly.

Talking about the motion, Mr. Speaker, what we're doing by bringing this motion forward is trying to get around many of the problems that have been associated with patronage appointments to public bodies. There's an awful long list, too many to get into in the time remaining, but let me just highlight a few.

There was the chairperson of the board of governors of NAIT who was involved in conflict of interest and improprieties in tendering processes at the institution. She was forced to resign. A coincidence, I'm sure, that she was the Tory candidate for Edmonton-Gold Bar in the last election. Then we had the board member for the Medicine Hat College who then went on, coincidentally I'm sure, to become president of the Medicine Hat PC Association.

Mr. Speaker, what we're trying to say here is that very partisan appointments of this nature bring into disrepute the credibility of boards of institutions in the public sector, in the public interest, to the ongoing problems of those institutions' functioning properly in the public domain. We're suggesting that by adopting this motion we bring into being a much more nonpartisan basis for making these appointments. We consider this to be one of the priorities of the next government, the New Democratic government of Alberta, and we're going to have no problem I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, getting members to do the reviews and make sure we have broadly based representatives on these boards.

The Member for Rocky Mountain House seemed to complain that this would be too much work to be doing. Well, we have a Legislative Offices Committee already in place, and I for one am prepared to volunteer – and I challenge him to do the same – to put in a few extra hours to go through some résumés to make sure we have properly appointed people that are based on their merit and their ability to make a contribution rather than their orange and blue membership card.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is there a call for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: I hear a call for the question. All those in favour of Motion 201, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The motion is defeated.

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

4:30

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Barrett	Gagnon	Pashak
Chivers	Gibeault	Sigurdson
Chumir	Hawkesworth	Taylor
Decore	McEachern	Wickman
Ewasiuk	McInnis	Woloshyn
Fox	Mitchell	

Against the motion:

Ady	Fischer	Moore
Anderson	Fjordbotten	Musgrove
Betkowski	Gesell	Orman
Black	Gogo	Payne
Bogle	Horsman	Schumacher
Brassard	Hyland	Severtson
Clegg	Klein	Shrake
Day	Kowalski	Speaker, R.
Dinning	Lund	Tannas
Drobot	Main	Thurber
Elliott	McClellan	Weiss
Elzinga	Mirosh	

Totals:	For – 17	Against – 35
---------	----------	--------------

[Motion lost]

**head: Public Bills and Orders Other than**  
**head: Government Bills and Orders**  
**head: Second Reading**

**Bill 204**

**Freedom of Information and Protection**  
**of Personal Privacy Act**

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party puts forward as its flagship legislation a Bill for freedom of information. I note with great interest the laughter from the government side.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Perhaps those that are leaving could leave quietly.

Please proceed.

4:40

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, there is clearly a need for reform of the parliamentary system in Alberta, and I think clearly there is a need for reform across Canada. I've spoken previously

about the rigid party discipline system in our country and the need to relax that rigid party discipline system.

One of the very critical components of reform is the right of members of this Assembly and the right of any and every Albertan to obtain whatever information he or she may need in order to make them better informed of the matters affecting Albertans. I don't know how it could be possible for members of the Legislature to continue having their hands tied behind their backs, not getting access to information, and be productive and provide the kind of insight into legislation that's needed. But we continue to have that because the government does not pick up the challenge, does not meet the need for reform, and does not bring forward any kind of indication that they would support this legislation or bring forward their own legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I've indicated in this Legislature before that the initiative for freedom of information legislation was started in Canada by the member from the Peace River country, Ged Baldwin. For many years that Member of Parliament, I'm sure, felt like he was alone with nobody listening and probably had the same kind of experience that some members of this Assembly showed to me when I rose to speak to this issue. They laughed when I started speaking about freedom of information legislation. I think that's a sad . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: And who was the government?

MR. DECORE: Yeah, and it's not a good commentary on the Liberal government of the time that was putting it down or others that were putting it down. There are mistakes that were made, and I think they need to be cleaned up. They've been cleaned up in almost every part of Canada because Baldwin eventually did get his legislation through in the House of Commons, and it's now possible for Canadians and Members of Parliament to get the kind of information they need to be effective members of Parliament and for citizens to be properly informed.

You can go to almost any province in Canada and find similar legislation except for three. British Columbia you would expect. It is sad to see that Prince Edward Island still doesn't have legislation. I note with interest that since I spoke to this matter, the province of Saskatchewan has moved and introduced legislation for freedom of information. It is an embarrassment as an Albertan to note that such legislation doesn't exist in our province.

Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry I submitted legislation in 1989. I note with interest that the hon. Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn had made attempts even before I got to this august Assembly to get similar legislation put into effect.

The legislation and the principles that I want to speak to today I think are simple. People should be entitled to get information. They should be able to ask for that information at a cost of simply the photocopying of the information at the government level, wherever it is. If there is a dispute as to whether that information should be provided or not, there should be a mechanism in place that adjudicates and says yes or no. Yes, this information should be made available to an Albertan; it will make for a better Alberta. Or no, at the moment there is a particularly sensitive matter, and it would be harmful to Albertans and the public interest at this moment; therefore, the information at this time shouldn't be released. That's the way it works.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

There is another principle included in legislation such as this that deals with the privacy of the individual. You want to ensure that you're not poking around in Workers' Compensation Board files and releasing names and medical reports on people which would contravene their privacy, encroach on that right of privacy. This Bill that we're submitting does that. It allows for information, it allows for adjudication when there is a dispute, it sets time limits in terms of how quickly that adjudication must take place, and then it sets up mechanisms to protect individuals.

Mr. Speaker, when I started with this debate in 1989, there wasn't a great deal of interest, I don't think, in freedom of information legislation. The hon. Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn was making his yearly debate and pressing for the matter, but the public had not yet, I don't think, appreciated the issue.

MR. McINNIS: Till you came along. Thanks, Laurence.

MR. DECORE: Well, I'm giving credit to the hon. member's party now and before, and I think we've added to that debate, hon. member. I don't want to sound like we've brought forward and the waves have parted with a new idea. I give you credit for that, hon. member, and I will continue to give you credit.

I think the time is now right. I think Albertans really have decided, discussed, listened to the debate, and determined that such legislation is needed. What evidence, somebody may say, is there that that is the case? Well, we have on March 23, 1991 – and I tabled it in this Legislature – the resolution from the Canadian Association of Journalists, who in a meeting unanimously passed the following resolution:

That because the Province of Alberta is one of the few provinces in Canada not to have a Freedom of Information Act nor an Access to Information Act . . . and because that directly conflicts with the goals of the Canadian Association of Journalists, the [association] will petition the Government of Alberta to enact legislation allowing journalists and the public access to all government documents.

What other response are we getting from Albertans? Well, the Association of Alberta Taxpayers and the Canadian Taxpayers' Federation have also called for freedom of information legislation and have asked for a Bill to be submitted in this Legislature and voted on. I think that if you read the editorial pages of most of our newspapers in our province, it is clear that they understand the issue, that they accept the need for such legislation, and that they are calling for this legislation to take place.

Mr. Speaker, today we had a good example of the inability to get information. I rose on a point of order to bring to the Speaker's attention the fact that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud asked a very simple question that related to the budget. The minister of public works need only have stood and said, "Here's why furniture has been bought; here's the reason why there was an adjustment in the budget," but he fumbled and fuddled around, and we never got an answer. He gave us a goofy response, saying that there was harmony in the nation. Everybody on his side, on the government side, thought that was a terrific joke, and a good laugh was had by all.

The unfortunate part is that we don't have that information, and it is day after day that we . . .

#### **Point of Order Imputing Motives**

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. Member for Highwood is rising on a point of order?



MR. TANNAS: Yes, I am, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to cite 481(e) and the Standing Orders 23(i). Members shall not impute "false or unavowed motives to another member." We have heard in the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenarry's speech so far at least three or four references to the government laughing at the importance of his motion. I think until those members say, "Yes, we're laughing at you," then you really can't keep repeating that. I don't think that is the avowed motive.

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

#### Debate Continued

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, continuing with the presentation on freedom of information legislation. Every question period has a series of questions that are put to government ministers that are deflected. I guess that's part of the game that some think is amusing and should be perpetuated. I don't think that's the case; I think it is the case that Albertans want answers to questions. When I stand, as I stood this afternoon and asked a question of the Associate Minister of Agriculture and said, "When can we expect an answer . . ."

#### Point of Order

##### Replies to Oral Questions

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

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

MR. DAY: *Beauchesne* 416, both parts (1) and (2), is very clear that it is absolutely out of order for any member to demand an answer of a minister during question period. There may be an interpretation of was an answer given or not, but it's absolutely out of order. Why is it out of order? Because it's redundant; it's a waste of valuable time. It cannot be demanded by a member. If this member opposite had a clue at all of what he was doing in this House, he wouldn't be wasting our time on this. He'd be getting to the point, if he has one.

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

#### Debate Continued

MR. DECORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Question after question put to government ministers by the opposition, question after question put to government ministers by this party, the Liberal Party, go unanswered. The point is this: we've been told in this Legislature – the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East was one of those individuals who told this Assembly – that you need only ask and you will receive answers in this Legislature, or you need only put a matter on the Order Paper and you will get the answer. The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury has given the same kind of response on behalf of the government, the response being again that you need only ask a question and you will be given the answer; you need only put a matter on the Order Paper, and you will be given that answer to that question or motion for a return.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it isn't true. The statistics that we now have compiled for the year 1990 show that in terms of written questions and motions for returns, there were some 303 in that period of time and 224 were rejected. That's a 74 percent rejection of written questions and motions for returns. "You need only ask the question, and it will be given to you."

Baloney. Seventy-four percent of the time we don't get the answers that we're asking. In 1991, as of April 17, 64 written questions and motions for returns were put to the government. Forty-one were rejected. That's a 64 percent rejection statistic.

4:50

AN HON. MEMBER: You're getting better.

MR. DECORE: Somebody said, "You're getting better." Well, yeah, I guess you are getting a little better.

Mr. Speaker, this is appalling. When you add these statistics to the statistics that we all experience every day, of the deflection of questions in question period, you can see why Albertans want change, why they want parliamentary change, why there are these motions coming from journalists, and why taxpayers are starting to say: "Come on; get with it. Get some action on freedom of information legislation."

Mr. Speaker, we were under the frustration of attempting to get answers to questions. The Premier of our province was pressed on this particular matter, and in question period he gave us for the first time some limitations or conditions that would be placed on oral questions or written questions or motions for returns. At least this is the way we are interpreting that wheelbarrow speech, that wheelbarrow answer. Those conditions were that if something involved competition to an individual or to a company, you can't get that information. If it involved the health of an individual, you couldn't get that information. If it involved national security, you couldn't get that information.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let me just take a couple of examples out of the statistics that I've already given to the members of this Assembly on written questions and motions for returns. One of the questions that I had on the Order Paper to the minister responsible for public works was to give information on the federal building, what the costs of maintaining that federal building were and are, what the plans for the federal building are. The question was rejected. My colleague from Calgary asked the question: what's the plan for students that want to access postsecondary institutions for the next five years? That was rejected. The questions that I put with respect to actuarial documents that relate to unfunded pension liability have consistently been rejected. Questions I asked that related to some kind of a high-powered team of experts looking at unfunded pension liability, as to when this team would be reporting and when the minister would be reporting, have been rejected. These questions and many, many, many more are not questions that even fall into those three categories of health, of competition, or of national security.

So, Mr. Speaker, when one of these members on the opposite side stands up today and says that you need only ask the question or you need only write it as a motion for a return or a written question, think about what you're going to say when you try to say it, because I'm going to be laughing on that side, reminding you of the statistics that I've read in for the record.

It goes on and on and on. Environmental questions that are put in this Assembly clearly don't fall – even if you do accept the Premier's three conditions, which I don't. Even if you accept those three conditions, when a question is put to the Minister of the Environment asking for environmental information on the rivers and the air and the soil of our province and they're rejected, there is no basis for that rejection.

Mr. Speaker, when those questions are rejected, we don't even have a response as to why the rejection has taken place. Now, it's time for action. It's time for us to show Albertans that we intend to answer their questions and to provide them with the

information they need. It's time to make members of this Assembly effective.

I've got lots more to say, but I think I'd like to limit my comments. I've gone at length through the Act itself – I don't think we have to do that – last year and the year before. I want to challenge members on the government side to say, "No, you can't have it, and here are the reasons why." I want to be able to take those reasons to Albertans and say to them, "Here's why the government continues to put down freedom of information legislation."

Thank you.

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

MR. DAY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The request for freedom of information is obviously something that all of us support and that we look for.

I think what we need to do is to first of all look at other jurisdictions and then also look at the intent behind the request. Most specifically, especially in the case of the presenter of this request, being the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, I think you need to look at: what do they do with the huge amount of opportunities that are already provided to them for information? How do they handle those opportunities? I think it's very instructive for us to look at the dismal track record of the abuse and misuse and the nonuse of the gigantic and almost limitless opportunities for information that are made available to them.

I find it curious that the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry continues especially to have a particular desire to want to see confidential business records of companies. I wonder how quick he was when he was asked, as I know he was many times in years past, especially during the years of the Liberal/Trudeau regime, about special tax status for Decore holdings in Jasper, which was of course under the feds at that time. How quick was he to give out the private information of Decore holdings up in Jasper? I think it would be very instructive to see how quick he was to respond to those, Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of freedom of information. [interjection] Yeah; I think the questioners are still wondering what happened there.

Some jurisdictions specifically lay out legislation along the lines of freedom of information, but when you look at it, it's quite clear that any time somebody comes up with some access to information legislation, immediately coming with it are exceptions. Exceptions come quite quickly. You have to wonder if some of the jurisdictions that have already brought it in haven't done it just for reasons of window dressing, planning all the time to be able to say no; this is a restricted area; that's a restricted area; that's a restricted area. We do have the opportunity and we've put in legislation to kind of call off the dogs, as it were, but when it comes to the really pertinent information, history shows and the record shows very clearly that exceptions are brought in. Personal information held by Air Canada or Petro-Canada, for instance, falls under that type of situation.

5:00

You look across the country at different jurisdictions that bring in the legislation. Nova Scotia, for instance, although they had the first legislation of this kind anywhere in the country, was very quick to come out with lists which all of a sudden determined what types of information could fall under the freedom of information. Actually, you have to look at the track record regardless of whether there's legislation or not. When questions

are asked, what happens? We know that something written on paper, something down in words, can mean nothing if there's no intent behind it. For instance, the constitution of the Soviet Union on paper, when you look at their constitution, appears to be one of the most free-minded documents that you could probably find in constitutional history, but the acting out of those freedoms is a totally different story. You have to look at not only how it's handled by the jurisdiction in power but the opportunities that are there, how they are being availed by those who have the opportunity to call upon them.

In Alberta, when you look at the opportunities that are available, it's very interesting what happens. Also in talking about track record – I know it's a sensitive matter to bring up track record – when you look again at the member bringing forward the motion, I think back to his previous life trying to be the mayor of Edmonton. I remember a very sensitive case coming before, actually, the city of Edmonton, very sensitive. I even hesitate to mention it, but it was regarding the behaviour of a certain individual and the shock in the minds of the public at the behind the closed door severance package that was put together in that particular case, while the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry was presiding as excellency over Edmonton. So I think you need to look at track record when you're considering the request that's coming forward.

I don't want to name anything specific; we don't want to get people upset. But, you know, when you look at and request, as the people of Edmonton did, certain documents, certain tender agreements for certain architectural considerations that were going on at certain times while His Worship was reigning over the fair domain of the city of Edmonton, it really makes you question the sincerity of this request here before us today in terms of freedom of information. We don't like to look at these situations. I realize they're uncomfortable for the member, but it's the reality. In fairness to the constituents of Alberta we have to say to them: you've got to consider the track record of individuals asking. Is the request sincere or is it a trumped-up attempt to try and make it look as if no information is available? You know, I guess it's an acceptable political practice to try and distort the reality of things. If I was a member of the opposition, well, I don't like to think I would stoop to that, but in stages of desperation, having to resort to handing out free memberships and things like that, I suppose I would resort to some pretty low levels of attack.

Now, the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry talked about written questions and motions for returns. It's a very elementary tactic to load up a paper like this with questions and then stand up and say, "We don't get any answers on this." I only spent a few moments, if members will forgive me, in terms of looking at all the motions for returns just as the member was speaking. I thought, well, I should just flip through this here, flip through it. I haven't even given it a microscopic examination, but I look at Written Question 148. It's the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry asking for some detailed information in terms of the pension plans, and they're all listed here. Then, you know, you just flip a couple of pages over, and lo and behold, here's one of his colleagues in his own party virtually with the same written question. The words have been changed around to alter things a little, and instead of the pension plans being listed in numerical order, they're listed in alphabetical order, but it's the same old thing. It makes you question; either there's no organization . . .

MR. DECORE: Can I ask the member a question?

MR. DAY: Oh, I can see we're getting to them. Okay, let's hear it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenarry wishes to ask the Member for Red Deer-North a question. Does the Member for Red Deer-North accept?

MR. DAY: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. As soon as I've finished my remarks, I'm going to entertain the questions because I'm part of a government that is open and wants freedom of and access to information. So I'm delighted in that.

Anyway, that's just starting to look through. What we've got here is a doubling-up, first of all, of the written questions. Now, you have to ask yourself: have they done that specifically and on purpose? Do we grant that they have the mental ability to connive and things like that? That'd be one possibility, that they did that. The other option is, of course, that they're operating in a total vacuum as related to one another. They don't even know the questions they're asking, and they're doubling up on the work of government and the work of the various departments.

You continue to flip through. Again, this is just a superficial walk through these many very superficial questions. There are some good ones on here, by the way. There are some good questions that are even as good as some of the government members ask ministers here, probably, so they're following our example in some areas. But here's the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark wanting detailed information on the Oldman River dam. That particular member was in the Assembly here the same day I was when another member, who used to sit opposite there and has since been blown into oblivion and is no longer here, asked a similar question, and the minister responsible had to come in carrying stacks – actually, I forget how many pages. I forget how high the pile eventually measured in terms of studies done on the Oldman River dam. Now, the member who asked that question that particular day, who is no longer here – I'm willing to bet, if I was a betting man, that that member never even did read through those studies.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Wrong.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order.

MR. DAY: He thought he would be able to trump up this accusation that no information was available. But all the information was trucked in that day, brought in by the pound or the kilogram, whichever system you feel free to operate under . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Over \$100,000 worth.

MR. DAY: Over \$100,000 worth. The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark was there. Why did he not avail himself of the information at that time? Why could he not maybe even phone up that member and get illuminated in terms of what the member found out?

Now, this is a burning, scintillating, searing question here. It's number 257, and it's an order wanting a return showing the annual amount of the revenues forgone by the province . . .

Not taken in but forgone.

. . . due to the permission of sales of alcoholic beverages through nongovernment outlets.

Now, I'm trying not to laugh because the member opposite was quite sensitive about the laughing part. By the way, I'm not advocating the sale of alcoholic beverages through these particular venues. But the question here, one of the reasons the wine boutiques were set up – again, I'm not advocating it; I'm just giving you the rationale – was to make available certain brands, certain types that would not be available otherwise. So what the member is asking is that we somehow get a crystal ball and try and magically postulate which people, having gone to those boutiques, would or would not have gone down to the government vendor to purchase the same article or to look for it. Such a bizarre question. You have to question: what do they do with the opportunity?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo is . . .

MR. CHUMIR: Might I get on the question circuit as well, Mr. Speaker?

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

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to entertaining a question from that member also.

Here's a beautiful one, again from a member of the Liberal opposition. This one's great. It's from the member for Clover Bar. She wants copies of all documents . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Clover Bar?

MR. DAY: I'm sorry. Excuse me; I was possibly insulting both members at once. Gold Bar.

. . . "all documents confirming the Minister of Health's remarks" related to operations on demand. Now, the studies that have been written around the world on both sides of that issue – does she want the ones from Alberta? No, not just Alberta. Does she want Canadian? No; those alone would fill truckloads. Just North America? No. "All documents confirming the Minister of Health's remarks" relating to operations on demand. You have to say to yourself: when they have the opportunity to ask questions, what on earth are they doing with them?

Here's a delightful one, again from the Liberal Party. This request is for

all documents and correspondence between the government and postsecondary institutions . . .

I think there are – what? – 28, 29 of them.

. . . providing direction to the institutions regarding budgetary matters.

All documents. For one week? No. For a month? For a year? This is astounding. Why is this done? So that they can stand in front of the media and say, "I asked a question, and I didn't get an answer." Well, look at the questions they're asking, for goodness' sake.

Also, the member for Clover Bar, and I usually respect the . . .

5:10

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Gold Bar.

MR. DAY: Gold Bar. It's just that I'm so naturally assuming it to be a government riding in the next election that I'm thinking ahead.

Anyway, the member for Clover Bar . . . Did I get it right?

MRS. BLACK: No. Gold Bar.

MR. DAY: Gold Bar. Let me write that in here. Thanks. There's a good example. I asked a question; I got an immediate answer from the government right away.

I'm sure that the member does not intend this question to really be here. I'm sure that she had asked something else of the researcher, because what it's saying is frankly scary:

. . . copies of all family violence reports submitted by the Department of the Solicitor General since the implementation of the family violence . . .

All copies of family violence reports? You're talking about some of the most confidential, some of the most sensitive, some of the most damaging information that could possibly be available in our society today. She wants them all; she wants all of them. This is what's done, Mr. Speaker, when the opportunity is given.

Now, under Written Questions you can go from 314, page after page after page, to the end – and again, I've just done a quick look. You know, we could subject this to a more searing look and really embarrass and demolish them. But all of these questions, all of these considerations here, fall under the Financial Administration Act. All of the questions asked here, all of the departments involved, fall under the scrutiny of the Auditor General. All of them are found in public accounts. For any one of these, the information is out there. What they're saying is: "You do the work for us. We're too tired. We're too busy running around the province doing other things. You do the work for us. We don't know how to look through those big blue books and find the little bitty numbers." This is astounding.

Not only is that available, but how long do they have in a session to ask questions to ministers about areas of public accounts and estimates? Twenty-five days. Twenty-five days are assigned to that period of scrutiny; incidentally, Mr. Speaker, the same amount of time that's available in the House of Commons for their entire budget. What, \$150 billion? The same amount of time is allotted to these members as is allotted to 295 members in the House of Commons.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: They're never here.

MR. DAY: Well, I was going to say they're never here, but you get ruled out of order on that, so I'm not going to mention that particular aspect.

Even if they didn't want to and wanted to continue their policy of not coming to estimates, even if they wanted to continue that, still there's even the Public Accounts Committee. And do we have one of our government members as chairman of that committee? No, sir. No, sir; it's an opposition member. But you can't blame the chairman of Public Accounts for the fact that opposition members don't ask questions. You can't blame the chairman; he's not allowed to spoon-feed them. I know there are times he would like to. I know there are times he probably feels embarrassed by his own opposition members, that they can't even ask questions. I can tell you, you look through the transcripts of those meetings, and our government members do a far tougher and better job putting ministers on the spot than the members opposite. What do they do with the opportunities that they have? The record shows that they simply blow it; they simply can't handle it.

Now, I've mentioned estimates, I've mentioned written questions, I've talked about . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Do they get any money for research?

MR. DAY: Do they get money for research? That's a very valid question. I think it's slightly over \$500,000.

AN HON. MEMBER: Over \$550,000.

MR. DAY: Five hundred and fifty thousand dollars for research: that's just for the Liberals.

Now, I don't want to accuse people who aren't here in the Assembly. I believe they have good people working for them, but you know, you're only as good as the people giving you the directions. I'm sure those researchers for that party are saying, "If they would just give us something decent to work on, we could go to work for them and try and boost their image a little bit."

It goes on and on: government Bills coming into the House, government motions. A government Bill: there's second reading; there's the time in Committee of the Whole; there's third reading. There's all kinds of time. What happens when they have the opportunity? Frankly, Mr. Speaker, they absolutely blow the opportunity. They are totally negligent in doing their duty in terms of asking the right questions, so when they read the columns there which the media are starting to write about the ineptness of the opposition, they definitely feel badly. What do they think? They say: "Well, we've got to do something to cover up our own inability. Let's just say that we're not getting the answers. Let's say we need an information access Act. Let's say anything but face the truth."

A select committee on the Heritage Savings Trust Fund: that's not just government members. There are opposition members there. Again I challenge you: look through *Hansard*, see who asks the tough questions, see who puts the ministers on the spot with the tough questions, and also see who gets the answers. It's the government members. Again and again that happens to be the case.

I always am amused, too, by the concerns about financial considerations. On the one hand, you know, we present a balanced budget. The say it's rude to laugh. We present a balanced budget; they laugh. If we hadn't presented a balanced budget, they also would have laughed. You know, the financial considerations alone that go into – because when our ministers have these questions put to them, as responsible members they say: "Well, we've got to see what we can do to get the answers. Get out all the reports. Trudge all the information out there." That isn't done for free.

An MP from this province recently has recorded in *Hansard* in the House of Commons that they did a cost estimate on answering questions, and there it was about, on average – because some questions are more extensive, take more work, et cetera, than others – \$8,000 per question. Now, I'm not saying that we shouldn't ask questions because it's costly. The government needs to be open, to face tough questions. But these people opposite have a total disregard for the cost of asking those questions, for the number of staff that is involved, and that's why they come trudging out these superficial, namby-pamby questions to try and make it look like there's a bunch of questions not being answered. I wish they would give some consideration, some small consideration, to the costs and the time involved for hardworking public servants dredging out information for them that frankly is available in practically every public account, Auditor General's report, and everything else. It's there.

As a matter of fact, Canada's Information Commissioner in one year, on this whole area of questions and digging out information, cost \$5 million – \$5 million in one year. You know, it used to average one or two visits to a department to fulfill an information request. Their volumes are so great now that their requests average more than five or six trips per department for the Information Commissioner's staff.

Again, I don't want it to be thought or to be said that I'm saying that because there's work involved or there's cost involved, it shouldn't be done. Of course it should be done. But if members opposite are really concerned about costs and really want answers, let the questions be good questions, let them be questions where the information has been overlooked and isn't out there somehow, and let them try and evaluate the cost and the demand on the public service and on the ministers' offices in terms of digging those out.

It is interesting to see the similarity between this Bill here and Ontario's legislation.

MR. DECORE: It's modelled off it.

5:20

MR. DAY: Right. I don't think there's anything wrong with looking to another jurisdiction and trying to get some ideas. I don't think there's anything wrong with that.

Ontario's legislation, however, is curious. It does allow, Mr. Speaker, for fees to be charged for that information. So what do we have the member here saying in modeling after Ontario's information Act? The rich can know. But what about the poor? They can be charged, and it can be anything like – you know, it can start at a low fee, but it can go up and it can go up.

Again, there are the lists. There are the famous lists that every government has that does have freedom of access to information. They develop them and they say, "Well, yes, we do have an Act, but there are some exceptions, and here are the exceptions." It comes back to not what's written on paper, but what is the heart and what is the intent of the government. In the government here in Alberta the heart and the intent are very clear: we are open. Ask us the questions. We will try our level best to get you the information. [interjection] Exactly. We'll try and get you the information.

It's interesting that the information commissioner in Ontario also operates as a one-man appeal board. That's very significant. How do you point to or really bring out that you've had a fair appeal? I'm not saying anything about the present commissioner there. I don't know the person who is there, but just speculating here. Who appoints that person, that commissioner? How are you going to know you've got a totally neutral person there who is going to do the job of the opposition and pursue information that the opposition is not able to pursue or not able to get? Those are some of the factors that need to be looked at, whether you're talking about Nova Scotia, whether you're talking about Ontario, wherever you're talking about.

The fascinating part of the democratic process, of course, is that by nature it's adversarial. You know, I try and explain that to constituents when they come and sit in question period or take in the debates. It is adversarial by nature. People who aren't used to that just have to be prepared for that. The part that is difficult for them to understand is that the level of questioning does not appear to have substance or content to it. I've already talked about and mentioned what we saw when we flipped through written questions. These are some of the struggles we have.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

New Brunswick's 1980 Right to Information Act talks about working on a premise that they would give all the information contained in a document relating to public business. Again, when you look at New Brunswick, the exceptions are many, and again there in New Brunswick a fee is levied. So what the member is suggesting: "Sure, we're going to give you the information, but we're going to charge you for asking. There's going to be a penalty. There's going to be a cost to you for asking." Now, I'm not opposed to generating some revenues to government. Obviously I'm not opposed to that as a principle of government's small "c" conservative thinking. I think there's some merit to that. But when it comes to freedom of information, to be able to say you charge for that – I can imagine how the member opposite would react if he stood up and asked a question, and we said, "Sure we'll get you the information, but because you can't get it yourself, we're going to charge you." I can imagine what the member's reaction would be. Well, imagine the reaction of a financially disadvantaged citizen wanting some information and the government then turning around and saying, "Oh yeah, we'll take a stab at getting that information, but I'll tell you what: we're going to charge you for that."

Quebec is an interesting case. It's regarded as having the most comprehensive freedom of information legislation. It's regarded as being effective. Again, they have certain conditions under which that can or can't be applied. Those conditions are very extensive, they're very specific, and appeals have to be directed to a Commission of Access to Information for review. If that fails, the commission's decision may then go before three judges of the provincial court. What we have in Quebec's case – I mean, I commend them for trying to make information available – is a government that is saying, "Well, we make information available." They tried to show that by coming up with a freedom of information Act, but then look at the rigmarole that a person has to go through after being charged, after being assessed a fee for doing it. Appealing to the Commission of Access to Information and then, still not getting the information, appealing to three judges of the provincial court: I would say that by the time they got the information, the whole issue is going to be long past anyway. Our response as a government here is to make use of all these mechanisms: Oral Question Period, written questions, motions for returns, estimates, our select committees, our public accounts, the whole process of government Bills in second reading and committee. On and on it goes.

It has to be measured by the actual actions taken. Never mind what the written word says. You need to look at the record; you need to look at the actions. I would suggest that the actions of this government are very forward, are very open when it comes to giving forth information. I've regularly heard in this House ministers stand up and talk about the successes of diversification projects when the questions have been asked. I've also heard them stand up and openly discuss the failures, not hiding that, bringing it to the opposition's attention long before the opposition was even aware of it, bringing it out very publicly. You can go through large examples, some that are painful for us to look at. You can talk about NovAtel; you can talk about Myrias. You know who talks about those a lot? We do as a government. We are very free with information that is not always good news, but the information comes out there. And who brings it out? It's the people in these front benches, and sometimes even the people in the back benches have to come to

their aid and help them bring that information out. But it's there. The record shows it's clearly there.

Public trust has to be developed. When I get a question from a constituent about what's happening in a minister's department, I don't try and hide it. My constituent files, which are open all the time, would be open for subjection to members of the opposition. I call the minister, write the minister, meet with the minister, whatever it's going to take, and I say I want the information. I can't think of a case over the last five years – I don't know how many hundreds of requests – where information has been refused. When the government is asked, in every case that I know of . . . Now, sometimes the minister will say to me: "You know, that's a tough question. That makes me a little uncomfortable, but I will get you the information." My record personally is one of being able to get the information. I can think of times standing in this House where the opposition has applauded my questions in Oral Question Period to ministers, but what they didn't applaud was the fact that the ministers would come out with the answers. This is not a government that is secretive. Now, the government will unashamedly say in cases as . . .

I regret to say the time has run out, but I think our record stands for itself.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the freedom of information legislation. This is about the 16th year that I remember this Bill being introduced, and if I could amend the hon. leader's opening statement, he forgets that the hon. the late Grant Notley was the first to introduce freedom of information legislation in this Assembly. He worked very closely with Ged Baldwin. They worked together. We welcome their support. We wish it was a little more than putting their name on our initiatives sometimes.

I think the government has to realize, though, that they may feel that they're open honestly, but they're only open when they feel it suits their purposes, and the purpose here is to make sure that right is available to everybody, not just members of the Assembly. Now, this isn't a debate about who asks the best questions, and regardless of whether the Liberal leader may have failed to give out information in the past, that has nothing to do with the question of whether everyone should be able to objectively have access to information that's gathered at public expense, which deals with the health and safety of the public, which affects public finances, and on commitments made on behalf of the taxpayers.

On that note, I'd beg leave to adjourn the debate.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I move that when the members reassemble this evening, they do so as the Committee of Supply.

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.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:29 p.m.]