

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Friday, June 14, 1991**

10:00 a.m.

Date: 91/06/14

[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: **Introduction of Visitors**

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased this morning to welcome a special visitor to the province of Alberta from Swaziland. We have with us Her Excellency Mary Kanya, the high commissioner of Swaziland, who is stationed in Ottawa and is visiting Alberta to enhance trade development between Her Excellency's country and the province of Alberta. She had planned to meet with the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife and later this morning will be calling upon His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

Her Excellency is the first Swazi woman ever to be appointed to an ambassadorship, and as hon. members know, when a Commonwealth country is involved, the office is that of high commissioner as opposed to ambassador. Her Honour is accompanied by her husband, Mr. Kanya. Mr. Speaker, they're seated in your gallery, and I would ask them to rise and be welcomed by Members of the Legislative Assembly.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to file with the Assembly copies of a brochure published by the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta with the assistance of Alberta Health. It's entitled Schizophrenia: Youth's Greatest Disabler.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to file with the Assembly today six copies of the irrigation and resource management division applied research report for the period 1989 through to 1991 and a news release officially recognizing today as Farmers' Day. Agriculture is important to all of us, and annually we set aside this day to honour the rural communities and farm families that are so dedicated to this industry.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 1989-90 annual reports for the Students Finance Board and the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file with the Assembly a number of documents: Ownership Retirement Housing Projects in Alberta; the improvement district No. 17(W) terms of reference for the preparation of a general municipal plan, April 1988; and New Home Warranty in Alberta: The Case for Extended Coverage, 1986. I'd like to present these documents to the Legislature.

MR. SPEAKER: West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to table an itinerary of my trip to Ontario for the promotion of western

Canadian coal to eastern markets. This is paid for by myself. I'd like to table this with the Legislature.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Drumheller.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this morning to introduce to you and through you a group of 29 people in the public gallery. They are primarily 22 bright, energetic, and enthusiastic grade 6 students from St. Anthony's school in Drumheller, and they have the support of their teacher Mr. Gerry Hamilton and a parental group of Mrs. Chris Storrs, Mr. Steve Hummel, Mr. Ken Chartrand, Mr. Larry Pugh, and Mrs. Mary Anne Vickers and bus driver Mr. Tim Harasym. I would ask them to rise in the public gallery and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Grande Prairie.

DR. ELLIOTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and members of the Assembly a group from the Grande Prairie constituency. They're students and staff and families from the elementary school in Hythe. We have 44 in the group, under the guidance this morning of teachers Mr. Speager, Miss Howard, and Mrs. Maple, along with several parents and drivers and chaperons. I'd ask the group from Hythe to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Forest Lawn, followed by Calgary-Glenmore, followed by Clover Bar.

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the second occasion this session when I've had the pleasure of introducing to you and through you to members of the Assembly special guests from Calgary-Forest Lawn. Seated in the public gallery are 38 exceptionally keen students from Holy Trinity school in Calgary. They're accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Arndt, Mrs. Barrett, and Miss Nienaber and by parents Mr. Barrett and Mrs. Mathews. I'd ask that they rise and receive the warm applause of the House.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you a group of grade 6 students from Nellie McClung school in Calgary. These students are not in the gallery since the galleries are full, but they are in the Legislature Building watching how the Assembly works. With them is their teacher Ross Ferby. This is a special school because my three sons attended this school and Ross Ferby was their teacher as well. I'd like the Assembly to give them a warm welcome.

MR. SPEAKER: Clover Bar.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce 23 guests from the Colchester school in Clover Bar. The students are accompanied by Ms Carlson, Mrs. VanPeteghen, and Mrs. Ryll. They are seated in the members' gallery. I would ask that our guests rise and the members of the Assembly extend a cordial, warm welcome.

head: **Oral Question Period**

Premier's Trade Mission

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. One of the very few tidbits of information the Premier has condescended to let the Alberta taxpayer know about his junket is his plan to meet

with the Queen. I think it's becoming quite clear now why this Premier is so reluctant to release any details about his upcoming overseas trip, because yesterday it was revealed that not only has Buckingham Palace not even been contacted whatsoever in this regard but the royal staff did not even know who the Premier is. My question to the Premier: will he now explain to Albertans why he has been misleading them by saying he plans to meet with the Queen when he has not even made a single arrangement to do so?

Speaker's Ruling
Parliamentary Language

MR. SPEAKER: We're back into this business. Could we take away "misleading" when we're directing them at specific members? Sometimes the Chair lets it go when we're talking about the government.

MR. MARTIN: I said misleading Albertans.

MR. SPEAKER: We'll take a look at the Blues again.

Let's go on, Mr. Premier. It's obvious we're not going to get a retraction.

Premier's Trade Mission
(continued)

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'm really disappointed with the hon. member, because I guess he is going to take his research just from reading the media. I want you to know how foolish he is, because it has been confirmed that I am meeting with the Queen and here we have just had this ridiculous, insolent, foolish statement.

10:10

MR. MARTIN: Donnie, Donnie, Donnie. The people of Alberta are disappointed with this Premier because he's wasting taxpayers' money. That's the disappointment, Mr. Speaker. Don't be thin-skinned. You've made a fool out of yourself; nobody else did it to you.

Mr. Speaker, all Albertans are well aware that this trip is a cheap junket at their expense. Not only is this Premier too afraid to release any information about it because he believes the information might not even be true; we have also learned that the Premier's Paris itinerary, or at least part of it from what we can gather, consists of a five-minute meeting with a trade official and a half-hour meeting with another representative. Now, that's 35 minutes. I hope he can keep up to that schedule. It'll be very hard on him, I'm sure. My question is simply this: will the Premier justify spending our tax dollars to go to Paris for 35 minutes worth of meetings?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader has just been totally shot down on the first question; he stood up and did not know. Now I can confirm for him that his second question is completely incorrect as well. He should stop taking his information from the CBC.

MR. MARTIN: This Premier still does not understand what is wrong. We wouldn't be playing this game if he'd been honest with the people of Alberta to begin with, Mr. Speaker. If he'd laid out an itinerary, done it in a proper way, and taken along proper . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Please. Order. [interjections] Order. We'll now have the question.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is simply this: why didn't the Premier do the right thing in the first place, lay out a proper itinerary and answer the questions in a proper way?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can understand the Leader of the Opposition's concern now, because he's looked so foolish. He is now finally up trying to make a statement and has been wrong on all of them, so I can see why he is so disturbed. For the people of Alberta, we want to express our concern as well that they are so negative in the opposition here that they will try to actually damage efforts to build this province with investment and trade and to undercut efforts by the government to work towards trade and investment in Alberta. Only this group is so negative that they can't stand the thought of some positive things like that. We just saw today where his first two questions were absolutely wrong and then he said "Why don't you give us some information?" when we have dealt with the matter many times in the House. I think the real agenda for this opposition is finally showing through.

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question, Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, what is foolish is this . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question, Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: I'll wait until you put the light on.

MR. SPEAKER: That's right. Now we'll have the question on the second main issue.

MR. MARTIN: I wish the Speaker of the House would stop playing games and get on with it, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Speaker's Ruling
Oral Question Period Rules

MR. SPEAKER: For clarification to the House, hon. member, we'll go through this. The Leader of the Opposition gets two main questions, the first one plus two supplementaries.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, we know all this. Let's get on with it. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: First main question plus a supplementary without preamble; the next one is without preamble. Then the next part is that the leader has been coming back and making a fourth comment. [Some Official Opposition members left the Chamber]

Edmonton-Glengarry. [interjections] Take your place, hon. member. Thank you very much.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the New Democratic Party on its first free vote in this Legislature.

Premier's Trade Mission
(continued)

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the hon. Premier. Trade missions are supposed to be a great benefit to our province; nobody can deny that. But this junket - and it is

a junket – has become a great embarrassment to Albertans, a sad embarrassment, a black eye to the Premier and to all the people of Alberta. It's not well organized, there are no objectives, we see no benefits, and the people of Alberta are being asked to pay for a trip that's going to cost many thousands of dollars. My first question to the Premier is this: given that this matter has caused great embarrassment to Albertans and to you, Mr. Premier, will you agree to postpone the trip, organize it properly, set some objectives, get some people that are real assets to the trip, and get it done right? Will you agree to do that, sir?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. leader of the Liberal Party would like to see it not work and not be effective. I'm afraid he's going to be unsuccessful in that, because in fact we have dealt with the objectives, we have dealt with the subjects, and we have dealt with the people and organizations we'll be talking to. It has taken some time to do it. I find it very disappointing, as a matter of fact, that both opposition parties are so much in a negative mode that they would do everything possible to damage what can help the province. They can't seem to forget their opposition tactics. I mean, we have laid out for the Legislature on at least four occasions now the purposes of the trip, the organizations and the people we'll be talking to, the subjects that will be discussed, the objectives, and the fact that we always report back, of course, to the Legislature or to the public of Alberta. So I find the allegations in the hon. leader of the Liberal Party's comments completely false.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, if something looks like a duck and smells like a skunk, you've got to look in on it. The people of Alberta are entitled to look in on this smelly, skunky thing. A trade mission is supposed to have, I think, trade experts that go along and provide advice and assistance, maybe a trade minister that does the follow-up, not wives that accompany a Premier on what looks like a personal trip. This matter can be cured very easily. Will the Premier agree to invite the press to go along with him on this junket to see what's going on?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, that would help a lot. Yes, that would really help a lot. It's typical of the leader of the Liberal Party to try and pander to some area to try and get himself some support because he's looked so bad in this area.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, it's not uncommon for Prime Ministers of our country and Premiers of our provinces to take the press to show and prove to the people they represent exactly what happened, to show that they're not off on some personal little trip.

My last question is this. Yesterday I asked the Premier if he would give a complete disclosure statement, a statement that would show costs not a year and a half down the line but immediately when he gets back, a statement that would show who he saw, when he saw them, the objectives that were obtained, and the benefits that would accrue to Albertans. Will he agree to give that disclosure statement to this House immediately upon his return?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it is always the custom. I'm happy to say that I will absolutely report on the trip, and in the full, normal operations of this Legislature I would make sure that every dollar spent also comes through our public accounts and that everybody has all the information. [interjections]

MR. DECORE: Not two years later. Now.

Speaker's Ruling Insisting on Answers

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order. Thank you, hon. Premier. Edmonton-Glengarry, there's a chance you might even get to have a second question later in the day. You've asked your three on this set. [interjections] Order please. Hon. member, read *Beauchesne*, where it says the Chair has no power to direct that answers must be given. That is 400 years of parliamentary practice. I'm sorry that sticks in your craw, but that's 400 years of parliamentary practice.

10:20

MR. DECORE: Be fair.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I'm being very fair.

MR. DECORE: You're not being fair.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, would you like to retract that?

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that members of this Assembly not dodge questions or weasel out. They should give answers, and answers should be directed by the Chair. You come down on opposition members to put their questions . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Take your place. I know you have a legal background. I know you have the ability to read. Would you turn to page 123 in *Beauchesne*. The reference is 416.

A Minister may decline to answer a question without stating the reason for refusing, and insistence on an answer is out of order, with no debate being allowed. A refusal to answer cannot be raised as a question of privilege, nor is it regular to comment upon such a refusal. A Member may put a question but has no right to insist upon an answer.

We're dealing with 400 years of parliamentary practice, and again I say that I'm sorry if it sticks in your craw.

MR. GETTY: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, to respond to the comments from the hon. member, surely if the hon. member can't handle his job within the rules of the House, then that's his failing. It's hardly the failing of the House or the Speaker. They have to learn that their responsibility is to try and criticize the government but they don't do that by criticizing the Chair or the office of the Speaker. To do that is disgraceful, and they ought to be ashamed of themselves. They can't do their job within the rules.

Premier's Trade Mission (continued)

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we report back on these missions. It's quite different from the type of mission when you take a great number of businesspeople. Sure, then of course you have detailed itineraries and detailed media availability. You have a press conference every day with the media that travel with you. But this is a fact-finding, a door-opening for that kind of mission. I'm very disappointed in the hon. members. They are so intent on being negative that they feel they have to hurt the province in order to continue that negativity.

Now, I just want to say one other thing. When I was an Edmonton taxpayer, the leader of the Liberal Party ran all over

China and other places and never ever gave anybody any account of . . .

MR. DECORE: And took the press with him. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you.

MR. DECORE: Do your homework, Mr. Premier. Do your homework.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. "Do your homework" is a very interesting phrase, hon. member.

Calgary-Fish Creek, please.

Investment Management Industry

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In view of the government's commitment to a balanced budget, there's an obvious need to maximize the income from our pension funds and other fund assets. In that context a number of my constituents from time to time have advocated that private-sector investment counselors be used in developing our various fund investment strategies. Would the Provincial Treasurer be prepared to authorize and encourage such use of private-sector investment counselors?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, several of my colleagues, including the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, have from time to time suggested that the province should do more to encourage the development of private-sector strength around the investment management area. It is unfortunate that even some of the Alberta companies are using companies outside Alberta for that purpose. At the encouragement of my colleagues, I have been reviewing ways in which we can put the management of some of the funds the province controls in the hands of the private sector. I am pleased to say that over the past six months we have been working on a set of criteria evaluating Alberta-based companies that may be appropriately asked, and I'm in the process of making some decision in that area right now.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the answer. However, I'm curious by what means the Provincial Treasurer and the government will be able to evaluate down the road to what extent these private-sector investment counselors have improved the investment performance of our various funds.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, that's particularly a concern of the province and the government. We want to be sure that the maximum return is afforded to the investment of our funds: for pension funds, for the Workers' Compensation Board, and in particular for the Students Finance Board fund. Mr. Speaker, we have done things on a gradual basis. First of all, we've undertaken a very careful examination of the firms involved. We want to be sure there's a series of capable people in place in both these entities. They must have decision-making powers here in the province. Moreover, they have to have a track record; they have to have been in the business and have some performance.

Secondly, in concert with the managers we will set out a set of criteria, and those criteria will in fact be evaluated on a consultation basis. We will check against their performance and will set certain guidelines in place to ensure they measure up to what we consider to be minimum tests of investment. At the same time, we will carefully describe the kinds of investments

that may be used. At this point, for example, Mr. Speaker, we'll limit the investment only in Canadian-based assets as opposed to other currencies.

I think it's an important step. I certainly support the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, who's encouraged us to do just this. We think this will bring back to the province of Alberta a very core set of financial experts which will afford a new diversification of our economy, continuing along the line we have done over the past five years.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Blue Cross Ambulance Coverage

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The gradual erosion of health care services has become what seems to be a strategy of the provincial government. Now we've got another example of the erosion: the increasing refusal by Alberta Blue Cross to cover ambulance costs. Individual operators, as well as the ambulance association, confirm that over the past year the number of ambulance claims rejected by Blue Cross has increased dramatically because Blue Cross has deemed these claims to be nonemergent cases. It appears that many operators are now finding it necessary to pull out of Blue Cross contracts. My questions are to the Minister of Health. Will the minister please explain her understanding of what the procedure and guidelines are that Blue Cross uses to reject a claim three weeks after the fact, where they disagree with the decision of an operator who was on the spot?

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'd suggest that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar raise her question with Blue Cross. It's not any direction the Department of Health has given to Blue Cross as an insurer for ambulance services.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, that's a cop-out. The government does in fact have tremendous involvement in Blue Cross and certainly is in a position, having written the ambulance Act, to intervene in this case.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister then think it's appropriate for ambulance operators, who must diagnose as to the severity of the condition, to be challenged as to whether or not the individual should be transported by ambulance?

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, there's no question that we have an administrative agreement with Blue Cross. Blue Cross runs a lot of benefit programs such as our established health benefits, such as special programs of support for seniors and others in this province. The ambulance Act, contrary to the hon. member's question, has nothing to do with this, because the Act hasn't even been proclaimed.

I would remind her that the article she read in the paper was an issue between a private operator and Blue Cross, and if she would like to have some information on how Blue Cross deals with the people that contract with them, I would suggest she raise the question with Blue Cross themselves.

Free Trade

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, given that expanded trade to the United States has been a great benefit to hog farmers, producers in my constituency, and I'm sure all across the province, were very concerned when the matter of subsidies and hog exports was referred to the Extraordinary Challenge Committee, provided under the free trade agreement. It is my understanding

that the ruling of this committee was to be communicated to provincial ministers of agriculture today. To the Associate Minister of Agriculture: is the minister able to advise the Assembly of the committee's decision?

10:30

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to advise the Assembly today that the Extraordinary Challenge Committee in the pork countervail case unanimously dismissed the charges and upheld the previous panel's decision. This is certainly a very important victory for our Alberta pork producers, and I would want to say that the Alberta government and the pork producers worked very hard and presented a very good case to this committee. Certainly we have always maintained that this extraordinary challenge wasn't warranted, and I think the decision today confirms that.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I think that answer will certainly be good news to the farming community generally across the province.

However, Mr. Speaker, this whole matter does raise another concern by way of the protracted nature of this overall dispute. By way of a supplementary question, can the minister advise the Assembly if this ruling will have any implications for the overall free trade agreement and particularly the disputes resolution mechanism?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, certainly the FTA has been getting a lot of rather bad publicity, and I would really like to say that on behalf of agriculture, the free trade agreement has worked very well. In 1989 our exports increased by about 13 percent. Our indications for 1990 are 20 percent. So we feel very much that it has worked to our advantage.

This is really an important decision today, and although it's true that it was protracted, I think this is a landmark decision. I think this final decision will demonstrate clearly that the dispute resolution process is a very effective means of impartially settling disputes between two of the largest trading partners in the world. So we welcome the decision, and we're very pleased for our pork industry in Alberta today.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-North West.

Alberta-Pacific Terminals Ltd.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. With the news that the provincial government has decided to put Alberta-Pacific Terminals into receivership, I think it's time Albertans were told how much of the \$12 million we've invested the government is prepared to lose. I want to point out that this is Alberta money, not government money. The concern here is that the terms and the agreements and the conditions are all well-kept secrets of the government. So my question is to the minister. Given that this latest announcement with respect to Alberta-Pacific Terminals follows closely on the heels of MagCan, of NovAtel, et cetera – the list is almost endless – I want to know from the minister: is this simply, appropriately perhaps, an economic decision or is it more political and is it simply a decision to get the financial dogs off the books before we get around to the next election?

MR. ELZINGA: Let me first correct the hon. member and in doing so indicate my thanks to him for putting this question. We did not put this company into receivership. What we simply

have done is filed with a court that we believe the six-month period should not be extended whereby there was protection from the creditors. I should indicate to the hon. member, too, that our loan guarantees were just one component of many components we involved ourselves in to make sure we had a strong economy within this province, whereby we have the lowest taxation rate for the small business community, whereby we have contributed substantially to the infrastructure of both transportation and communication costs. We've involved ourselves extensively in making sure that we had markets other than our own within the province of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, because of that involvement over the last five years, 107,000 jobs have been created within the province of Alberta.

I indicate to him, too, that there is nothing secret about this deal. We've indicted our exposure right up front. For the hon. member's edification, too, in the event that there is any loss, we have first call on all the assets along with Alberta Treasury Branches. In the event that there is any loss – and I say "in the event" because it's too early to determine – all of this is highlighted in the public accounts whereby there is full public disclosure.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, on any loss with respect to Myrias and GSR we only got 6 cents back on the dollar.

My supplementary question to the minister with respect to Alberta-Pacific Terminals is: are the assets of Mr. MacKay on the hook as well, or does he have the Peter Pocklington prerogative of just getting money and not having his personal assets on the hook? Are you going to go after him?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, again the hon. member's accusations are inaccurate. I should indicate to him, too, that he is asking for a legal opinion. I'm not a learned lawyer as . . .

MR. DECORE: That isn't a legal opinion; that's a fact.

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. ELZINGA: I'm not a learned lawyer as some Members of this Legislative Assembly are, and there are also certain sensitivities. I'm surprised that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, who is a lawyer, on a consistent basis reflects opinions that are contrary to the legal advice that is given by lawyers. He should recognize that this issue is before the courts, and we're not about to do anything that is going to prejudice our first call on the assets. [interjections] That's why we have to be sensitive as to how we do respond, and I'm surprised, again, that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, who's supposedly a learned individual in the legal profession, knows nothing as it relates to the legal circumstances of this case.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Cypress-Redcliff.

Diabetics Services

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health, and it's related to some of the changes under the Aids to Daily Living program that are about to come into force on July 1. To the minister: I understand that now the new lists of ADL qualifications are out, and they exclude diabetic supplies. I've had contact from drug stores in my constituency about how diabetics will now be served. How are the discussions coming with their association, with the Canadian

Diabetes Association towards distribution of the strips, the needles, the insulin, that sort of stuff?

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is correct in that the old AADL program will be ending with respect to diabetic aids and a new program will be starting up in Alberta with a far greater and expanded list of diabetic aids. We are currently in discussions with the Alberta Pharmaceutical Association and the Canadian Diabetes Association to ensure that the transition between the two programs is as smooth as possible. I'm sure the Pharmaceutical Association will be in contact with its members throughout the province as soon as those discussions have concluded and we have an action plan in place.

MR. SPEAKER: Cypress-Redcliff, supplementary.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary is two pronged. I understand that the Diabetes Association is mostly centred in the larger municipalities or cities. Is the minister attempting to negotiate an agreement whereby drug-stores in smaller rural areas further removed from the city will be able to supply some of these so that our people dependent on diabetic supplies and seniors don't have to go to the city to get some of their supplies?

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, there's no question that pharmacies will continue to be involved in the distribution of supplies as well as the traditional distribution of insulin for diabetics, and how the outlets of the Canadian Diabetes Association and pharmacies work together for the purpose of ensuring that we're able to provide Albertans with the most highly updated diabetic supplies possible is the whole purpose of the program. I understand that some of the pharmacies are nervous about this because they don't quite understand how the program will work, and I certainly acknowledge their concern. What we are trying to do in the discussions currently is ensure that there isn't a time lag for Albertans who suffer from diabetes between the old program and the new one that's coming on, which is certainly a far more valuable program than the former one was. I can only tell the hon. member that we will continue not only to work with the association but to ensure that pharmacies across the province are well informed about the program and continue to be involved in delivering AADL and especially the diabetic aids to Albertans.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon.

10:40 Alberta Wildlife Park

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to pose a question today back to the Minister of Parks and Recreation on the unholy mess he has created and is largely responsible for out here at the Wildlife Park. We now find that it may cost millions to move the park. The interest on the millions to move the park would probably be bigger than the subsidy they've been paying in the past. I'd like to ask the minister a very simple question: is he aware of any studies by a management organization, chartered accountant firm, or something that would indicate what the costs of moving the farm would be and what it would cost to keep it going?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, when the foundation asked for proposals to be brought forward for a solution to the long-term

future of the Alberta Wildlife Park, those individuals who had made proposals to the foundation undertook their own studies to look at the ramifications and costs of such a move. Those studies are again with those private-sector individuals or organizations that had come forward. I will leave it to the foundation to peruse those.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I gather then that the minister has not seen or didn't ask for any studies to be tabled with him.

It would appear that certainly the native band is in conflict as to what they wanted, and there's been no money available to loan to the native band. The next person in line was the Helen Ridgeway foundation, a widely based public foundation. It is now apparent that the native band cannot come through with the financial commitments. Will this minister go to bat for the Mrs. Ridgeway group and turn the park over to them to run?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I can't deal with a hypothetical situation. It's supposing certain end results of a process that's been ongoing, and I will have to wait until the foundation reports back to me.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Glenmore.

Constitutional Reform

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A group of 22 people consisting of businessmen, politicians, and academics represented from right across Canada and calling themselves the Group of 22 have recently submitted a report to the federal ministers outlining proposals on Canada's economic future. This group recognized four economic freedoms and feel that these should be recognized in the Constitution of Canada. These four economic freedoms are the free flow of people, goods, services, and capital. They've also pointed out the need to look at central Canada for strong economic leadership. Could the Minister of Economic Development and Trade outline the government's position on the position these people have outlined on economic freedoms in relation to this report?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, let me indicate that we have done a quick perusal of the paper and that we are doing an in-depth analysis: the Treasurer and his department and our department. I would underscore what the Premier has indicated on a consistent basis in this Legislative Assembly and throughout the province whereby the purpose of his establishing the Horsman committee of Members of this Legislative Assembly is to look to the Alberta population for input as to what they feel should be included in the Constitution.

There are a number of worthy suggestions in the report from the Group of 22, as the hon. member has suggested, on the free flow of goods and capital and people, also recommendations whereby they are suggesting that we reduce the size of government and reduce overlap that exists within the various levels of government. Those are suggestions that we will thoroughly analyze, but we wish to also underscore, as our Premier has done on a consistent basis, that we are going to the Alberta population to ask them for input as to what they feel should be included in the Constitution.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, the Group of 22's report states that provinces should gain power in some areas and have less in others. How could this government play a role with the federal

policy in establishing powers of decentralization pertaining to economic development?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, our government has been consistent in its approach as it relates to suggestions of overlap, the reduction of duplication. What we would like to see is the areas within our Constitution that relate to provincial jurisdiction not be intruded upon by the federal government. This is one of the recommendations within the report. Again, as I indicated earlier, we are going to do a thorough analysis, but we're not about to preclude the valuable input we receive from the Alberta population as it relates to constitutional issues.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Premier's Trade Mission

(continued)

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's quite a sight to witness the saga of a Premier who seems incapable of doing right even something as simple as making travel arrangements. In fact, it must be a real treat for this government back bench to witness that kind of display from the middle of its front bench. My first question is to the Premier. Why is it that when Peter Lougheed went on a trip of this nature years ago, he would release a detailed itinerary, he would indicate exactly where he was going and who he was going to meet with, and he would actually invite the press along so Albertans would get objective reports about what was going on? Why is it that he would do those things and this Premier denies categorically to do the same thing?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, just as the Leader of the Opposition was so totally incorrect and found himself so embarrassed he couldn't stand to be here, the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark is just as incorrect. He doesn't know what he is talking about. Again, they insist on doing their research by going to the nearest newspaper or the media. Because I was the minister of intergovernmental affairs involved in the trips when the former Premier was traveling, I know that there were two kinds of missions, and I've already talked about it today. There's one when you are taking with you businesspeople and others, after you have made the initial trip to open the doors. For the second trip, when you take businesspeople, sure, you take media, you take other people, and you put out an itinerary, yes. But that's a completely different trip.

I want to straighten out the hon. member. First of all, the Liberal leader took the press because all he wanted was publicity. I mean, he wasn't trying to help the city of Edmonton. He just wanted publicity, so he had them hanging right there with him. Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is trying to help the people of Alberta.

Now, I want to just talk about the former Premier, because I don't want to reflect backwards in any way except positively, and say that when the former Premier went on the initial door-opening trips, there was not an itinerary. It was not made public, and the media did not go.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, then I guess he's saying that the former Premier took the press just because he wanted the publicity as well in later trips.

Mr. Speaker, under the government's new freedom of information legislation for municipal councillors there would be no question but that a municipal councillor going on a junket of

this nature would have to release detailed information about who he or she was going to meet with and when and where and why and what would be accomplished. How can it be that this Premier can, on the one hand, say that's good, that's proper, and that's okay for municipal councillors but have the hypocrisy to indicate that's not okay for himself or presumably for his government and his front bench?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, once again the hon. member is so wrong. I mean, it is really a shame when the opposition are so much into negativism that they just can't stand to see something going on that's going to benefit the province of Alberta. That is the worst kind of negative opposition. Unfortunately it's all that we have been able to receive from that party, and it's a shame. It's a shame for the people of Alberta and it's a shame for this Legislature that they are so bad.

Now, what I have done, Mr. Speaker, is issued press releases on the trip, the people that we'll be talking to and their positions, the days I'll be going. Three days, of course, of the 11-day trip are traveling. Then I've talked of the subjects and the objectives and that there would be a full reporting back to the people of Alberta. So for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, just because he wants to be negative, to try and say there's something that's not being laid out here is absolute poor, negative politics, and it's a shame.

MR. SPEAKER: Lesser Slave Lake.

Vocational College, Lesser Slave Lake

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've got a beautiful educational facility in Slave Lake, thanks to a government which has a vision of getting education to the people. The students that are being served come from a surrounding area with a population of about 13,000. One problem exists: there is a shortage of housing for those students who come in from the north and the surrounding area. Would the Minister of Advanced Education please indicate what steps we have to take to get some student housing in Slave Lake either in dormitories or for single- and multiple-family housing?

10:50

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quite correct about the success of Alberta Vocational College at Lesser Slave Lake as well as the one at Lac La Biche. The government recognizes the uniqueness of the student population that the AVC at Lesser Slave Lake deals with, and accommodation is unique, I think, in that area. The college at Lesser Slave Lake has taken the appropriate step by submitting it as their priority. The government has considered it, and it's a priority with the government. However, to date resources simply have not been available to provide that additional accommodation.

MS CALAHASEN: Boy, it's sure wonderful to be able to get a question out without being harassed.

My supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate what the minister has said in terms of making sure we try to get something in place. However, we still have a problem relative to what can be done, and I would like to get some steps which we can put in place in order for us to be able to get the housing crisis that we have in Slave Lake resolved.

MR. GOGO: Well, Mr. Speaker, I recognize the enthusiasm of the hon. member on behalf of her constituents. There has been a success story, of course, at the Lloydminster campus of

Lakeland College involving the private sector. Because the Department of Advanced Education is responsible for the AVC at Lesser Slave Lake, there's perhaps a unique difference there. I would commit myself to meeting with the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake to see if in fact anything can be done to assist particularly those native students taking important training at Lesser Slave Lake campus.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

Restricted Development Areas

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1974 the provincial government initiated what at that time was seen to be a very, very positive move, and that's a greenbelt around the city of Calgary and the city of Edmonton with the idea of earmarking it for utilities and roadways. At first, land was initiated; sales were taking place. Now, of course, that land is frozen, and we have landholders that can't sell. They can't develop. They can't do anything. We're talking 17 years later. To the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services: is the minister prepared to undertake a commitment to this House that he will initiate transactions to acquire those properties to allow those landowners to get on with their lives?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, one more time, I guess, it's really important to be brought up to date. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud mentioned 1974. What he ignored was 1988. In 1988 the then Minister of the Environment and the then Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services put out a statement that for the first time in 14 years clearly identified what the parameters of the transportation and utility corridors would be in both Edmonton and Calgary. At the same time a policy statement was also put out that allowed for the acquisition of those unacquired pieces of land in the RDA.

To this point in time, in June of 1991, we've acquired over 85 percent of the parcels of land in the RDAs of both Edmonton and Calgary. There are about 120 files that remain there, and there are circumstances behind each and every one. Some individuals want to have their land sold. Some other individuals say, "No, we don't want you to purchase our land until the next two or three or four years," for whatever purposes there are. Since 1988 we basically have dealt with all the cases that are there. There are a few before the courts, because individuals have the right to go through the Expropriation Act or to ask for a land compensation hearing with respect to it. Where we're at at this point in 1991 is considerable progress ahead of where we were in 1974.

MR. WICKMAN: My second question is again to the minister responsible for Public Works, Supply and Services. For those lands that have still not been acquired, if after the next 12 months the minister has not responded to their initiations to dispose of that land or put expropriation procedures in place, is the minister prepared to release those lands from that frozen designation so those landowners are able to exercise what I believe is their right to do with their land what they want to do with their land?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows from his years on council in the city of Edmonton, the lands that are part of the transportation and utility corridor are lands that in fact the council of the city of Edmonton has said they require for their transportation and utility corridor aspects. If the hon.

member, after spending so many years on the council of the city of Edmonton, after determining what that transportation and utility corridor would be, is saying, now that he's a member of this Legislative Assembly, that everything they had done for all those years was wrong, that is really quite an admission, and that is part of this speaking out of both sides of your mouth.

Mr. Speaker, we have a transportation and utility corridor. It's clearly identified what it is. It's being surveyed. Since 1988 we've had a very aggressive policy of attempting to deal with outstanding cases. We whittled them down to a handful. Something that I have wanted to do since 1988 is make sure we can clean up these outstanding files as quickly as we can, but there are cases where the individuals who own the land don't want us to purchase it at this point in time. I think we have a responsibility to listen to what their concerns are as well.

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

MR. SPEAKER: It will have to follow on a considerable list of things, but thank you.

Might we revert to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Opposed?
The Member for Lacombe.

head: Introduction of Special Guests (reversion)

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure this morning for me to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislature 120 students from the Nelson school situated in Lacombe. They're accompanied today by teachers Mr. Jardine, Mrs. Ree, Mrs. Kiist, and Mr. Maloney, and also by several parents. They are seated in both galleries. I would ask them now to rise and receive the traditional welcome of the House.

Point of Order Relevance

MR. SPEAKER: Yesterday at the end of question period a point of order was raised by the Leader of the Opposition. The Chair has examined the Blues and notes that at that time the Leader of the New Democrats was interceding on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry. I'm quite certain that the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry is not too shy and is able to stand up and defend himself. However, having examined the Blues, the Chair finds that the Premier's comments were in order.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

MR. SPEAKER: A second issue was brought up by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands, at which time the member quoted fairly extensively from her letter, however failed to quote from my letter. There was a letter from myself to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands which was sent on June 6 of 1990 which reads in part:

To keep the matter in perspective, it is essential to point out that Hansard did not exist in Alberta prior to 1972. There are no verbatim records of debates in the House and as such, casual reprimands by the Speaker on the use of unparliamentary phrases or the numerous times that Speakers traditionally ask for the withdrawal of an offensive phrase are not recorded prior to 1972. The only records of Speakers' rulings on the use of certain words

or phrases occurs in Votes and Proceedings, which in most cases did not record a reprimand, caution, or request for withdrawal of a particular phrase by the Speaker unless it was brought forward in the House as a formal point of order and was dealt with by the Speaker as a formal ruling.

And, again, to quote further:

It is also important to note that Alberta has traditionally had governments with very large majorities and thus less opposition intervention in the Chamber. This is certainly true dating from the days of the UFA Government, the Social Credit Government and the Progressive Conservative Government. In legislatures where there are few opposition members, the frequency of points of order significantly drops, and the Chair accordingly has to intervene less in the debates within the Chamber.

11:00

MR. TAYLOR: Tough luck, Ray.

MR. SPEAKER: Am I interrupting you, hon. members?

MR. TAYLOR: No. I'm ready when you're ready.

MR. SPEAKER:

In our last two Legislatures, opposition members have increased in number, and I don't think it is unfair to point out that they are very vocal and more likely to test the limits of parliamentary practice and decorum than their predecessors. I make this observation not only pointing to the Alberta House, but the House of Commons and other legislatures as well. It is my opinion that parliamentary order and decorum has diminished as a tradition in legislatures everywhere and this often requires a more active intervention of the Speaker

or whoever is in the Chair. [interjections] Thank you, hon. members. I'm sure coffee is brewing in the lounge if you wish to go back and have a second cup.

MR. DOYLE: You're misleading the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Forgive me, hon. member?

MR. DOYLE: That was an untrue statement you just made, hon. Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: If I may continue with the glorious assent of the Member for West Yellowhead.

Lastly, concerning your comments about certain words or phrases in particular, I would again bring to your attention Beauchesne's 486. The Chair has frequently made reference to this citation . . . and urges all Honourable Members to study it carefully. With all phrases or words ruled unparliamentary in the Alberta House, the important matter to consider is the context in which each word or phrase is used. In some cases, it is entirely appropriate that a word should be deemed parliamentary. In other circumstances the same word may draw offence if the temperature of debate is very heated, if the intonation of the word elicits offence, or if words used previous or following the phrase put it into a context of unacceptability. In other words, to merely look at a list of words deemed parliamentary may be futile. In most cases, "you had to be there."

Finally:

Beauchesne's 491 is the best rule of thumb because it provides authority for the fact that any language used in the Chamber should be temperate and worthy of the place in which it is spoken.

Copies of that letter will be distributed to the whole House.

MS BARRETT: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: You'll have to stand in line, hon. member, but it's noted.

First, Westlock-Sturgeon.

Point of Order

Recognizing Members in Oral Question Period

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, Mr. Speaker, on the point of order, I'm referring to the rules of order, number 13, where the Speaker "shall explain the reasons for his decision" to the House. I am addressing what would be the apparent unfairness of the allotment of questions when one of the opposition parties left today. There were just seven or so left in the House. Repeatedly you have given two opposition questions back to back, sometimes in their own party, sometimes between the two parties. Yet this time – and it certainly would appear to be quite unfair – you alternated one question over here and then went back to get a puffball from the government side.

Now, I know that they expressed a great deal of happiness, Mr. Speaker, and possibly you are happy with that type of a House, but I think it was a rather evident admission of unfairness to limit us to one question after each of the government backbenchers' questions when you have had a habit of leaving a couple of questions in a row go to the opposition parties. It would appear that maybe in a fit of dudgeon, or whatever it is, you've decided that the only voices you wanted to hear were the sweet blue and orange ones, but I think we could have had a reasonable allotment of questions.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. I'm intrigued that you complain that as a caucus as a whole you got more questions than you usually do. Let us review. From your caucus we had Edmonton-Glengarry; we had Edmonton-Gold Bar; we had Edmonton-Whitemud; we had Westlock-Sturgeon; we had Edmonton-Meadowlark; we had Calgary-North West . . .

MRS. GAGNON: Everybody but me.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm so sorry, Calgary-McKnight.

MR. TAYLOR: And Sheldon had given me one to ask.

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

I'm sorry; you were next in the question lineup. It still works out that members of this House have the right to be in question period, and that was the luck of the draw on this particular day.

MR. TAYLOR: Who was spinning the cage for the numbers, though?

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair was responding to the two lists that were sent up to the Chair by your caucus. Thank you; that's enough.

Edmonton-Highlands.

Point of Order

Oral Question Period Practices

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your comments earlier today where you read from your correspondence to me dated June 6, 1990, I would like to point out that when you said:

In legislatures where there are few opposition members, the frequency of points of orders significantly drops, and the Chair accordingly has to intervene less in the debates within the Chamber.

I'd like to point out that I attended question period in the Nova Scotia Legislature last week. What I saw is a House that is almost split 50-50. The government holds only a very slim majority. What I also saw was one of the most interesting question periods I've ever seen, and I've been told, by the way, that question periods like this can be seen in Quebec, Ontario, and other provinces as well.

The Chair did not intervene. The Chair did not use a little device to cut the microphone off of the person speaking. The Chair did not . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me. What is your reference here so we can deal with that?

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, the point you made is that when there are more opposition members, more intervention from the Chair is required. I am pointing out that in fact that is not the case. The Chair in fact can set the tone of the Assembly, and that is what I saw. The Chair, knowing that about 45 percent of the members in the Assembly were opposition members, did not attempt to cut off preambles, did not interrupt with points of order, did not at any time stand up between the moment of a question being posed and the minister or the Premier responding; not once. The preambles were not cut off. I think the point is very clear: it has nothing to do with the size of the opposition. That is totally irrelevant, and a visit to other Legislatures might demonstrate that for the Chair.

Thank you.

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order. I find it absolutely incredible that the member would bring into the parliamentary traditions in this Chamber what takes place in other Chambers and use that as an example. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. BRADLEY: We have seen in this Chamber over the last five years a deterioration in terms of the question period in this House. Question period is for the purpose of asking questions. The Speaker and the House leaders have agreed to a new formula in terms of asking questions in which preambles are allowed for the first question, but no preambles are supposed to be allowed for the supplementaries. This has been taking place in this House: long preambles, long beyond the traditions of what this Assembly has had in the 17 years that I have been here. Mr. Speaker, I don't think the hon. member has a point of order whatsoever.

MS BARRETT: On the point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: You have not been recognized, hon. member. You're not recognized.

MS BARRETT: No one else is standing, Mr. Speaker. I understand the Speaker has . . . Oh, now the minister stands. That's unfair. The Speaker has the obligation to recognize the only person standing. The Speaker has the obligation to do that, by our own rules.

MR. SPEAKER: The normal practice would be that if we indeed have various people speaking to points of order, other people get a chance to get in on the action before . . .

MS BARRETT: No one was standing. Read your rules.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member who raised it might indeed get a chance to sum up at the end. There was movement on this side of the House, and then there was other movement. It's the Chair's prerogative to recognize.

The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

11:10

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to this particular point of order . . .

MR. McEACHERN: Why two Tories in a row? You've got nothing against . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me, hon. member. You have a problem over there. Please keep quiet and keep order.

MR. McEACHERN: I'll explain the problem. She was up first . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. [interjection] Order.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, why don't you . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, with regards to this particular point of order, it speaks to the parliamentary tradition both of this House and of others in the parliamentary system. I think the point is well made that the opposition has a responsibility, not just the right, in *Beauchesne* and in other documents to question the government, to put the case from that side of the House to the government, and the government has a responsibility to deal with that as best as the government is able to do. Nonetheless, with regards to the point made by the House leader of the opposition party, since I have been in this House, since 1979, it is true that the tradition was much more strictly adhered to in previous years. It is absolutely true that when I became a member of this Assembly in 1979, I was cut off in preambles more frequently. Opposition members were as well.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that in this parliamentary democracy our citizens want those traditional roles of government and opposition upheld, but I also very strongly believe that with respect to this point of order, the decorum of the House is important to the people of Alberta and of Canada. If you ask the citizens we represent in this Assembly whether or not they want an increased show of points of order and of the yelling and arguing back and forth, of the information in preambles that is condemning rather than information-based, or the answers which are more responding dramatically to that rather than answers of fact, you'll find that the citizens of Alberta and of Canada are in favour of fact. They're in favour of a reasoned debate and of an operation in this House which is based on rules, based on a relationship and tradition that allows for reasonable debate of issues, not a debate of personalities, and does indeed have respect for the Chair and for the traditions that the Chair upholds.

The point which the opposition has raised – sometimes, I believe, they raise reasonable points. I haven't seen many of those in recent days but have instead seen instances where they have challenged, in fact, what are established rules. Established rules, not something that you, Mr. Speaker, have created, but established rules of the Assembly, and not just established by

any majorities here but by our parliamentary tradition. I believe Albertans would want us to uphold those traditions.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, the problem with what the minister says is that the government never gives us any answers when we ask questions. We ask and ask and ask questions, but we don't get answers. So if they become a little rhetorical, that's so that one can make a point, because you don't get an answer to any legitimate question that is seeking information anyway. So I think the minister's point is not well taken.

What we're objecting to is the amount of interference we've been getting from the Chair in this House, and that's what was based at the start of this point of order. All we expect is a neutral referee that serves this House, not somebody that controls it like a schoolmaster picking on little kids. That's my objection.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, my participation, albeit brief today, is triggered by the most recent reference to a referee. I'm reminded somewhat of a game of hockey, perhaps involving adolescents, in which a referee's there to ensure that certain rules of play are honoured. A penalty is called, and instead of that call being honoured, there's a snit raised and a temper tantrum alleging that the referee has somehow improperly made that call. I think at the bottom of our discussions today in the House is a fundamental difference of attitude with respect to rules. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. McEACHERN: You guys set the rules, yeah.

MR. PAYNE: Speaking for the government members, I think we are committed to honouring and operating in this Assembly under those rules – not, as has been alleged, rules developed by the government members but rules that are a result of an evolutionary development in this Assembly involving members from all parties.

MR. McEACHERN: After 20 years of Tory rule, you can kid me that?

Speaker's Ruling Interrupting a Member

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me, hon. member, for half a moment. Edmonton-Kingsway, you have consistently tried to interrupt members. You're in violation of Standing Order 13. If you do it once more, you will be named to the House. Now, please pay attention and allow the member the courtesy of listening to his comments.

Point of Order Oral Question Period Practices (continued)

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I could conclude, it's my view that the opposition members have a different attitude to the rules. They are something to be bent, twisted out of shape, or in fact periodically even ignored, and it's that underlying difference with respect to rules that is giving cause to these difficulties today and our past difficulties. I would, with all the genuineness that I can muster, invite the opposition members to re-examine their attitude toward rules. They're here for a

purpose. It's a purpose that I know our government colleagues support, and I suspect this view would be supported also by all of our constituents.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I think perhaps it is appropriate that we have some discussion of the nature of question period and how we struggle through this time. I appreciate that there are strong emotions and sensitivities all the way around the House, and it's perhaps true, in deference to the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, that we do tend to view question period differently depending on where we sit in the House. The opposition clearly feels it has an obligation to bring the government to account. Accountability is, in our minds, the number one purpose of question period. In the minds of some of the members, it's a way to bring forward some of the good points about the government. Occasionally members from the government side will ask, "Was there an announcement made yesterday that you'd like to highlight in the Assembly?" and occasionally they will make representations on behalf of constituents. Obviously, government ministers look at it from a different viewpoint altogether.

But that's not the issue that we have in front of us in deciding the question period. I think that the best thing we can do is to try to let some of the issues develop in the course of question period, and I appreciate there's some difficulty from the point of view of the Chair in terms of the degree of intervention. I think that's really where there's an area of discomfort, if I can put it that way. Perhaps we need to find our way to relate through this thing as members and not so much from the Chair. What I'm saying by that is not that we don't need rules, but the intervention of the Chair should come at the point where the thing is getting disorderly.

Now, it seems to be on many occasions in the last week in particular that the Chair has stopped all proceedings to try to get dead silence in the room, a very difficult thing to obtain with this number of people and with whatever may be going on. Now, the difficulty with that is that it makes all of us feel a little awkward having to be hushed in that particular way. It also puts every single member here in the position of being able to slow the proceedings at the expense of one or possibly two people who happen to be at the tail end of the list. What it means is that one or two people who have potential questions are being punished for something that may be a sin by all members of the House or by one or two other members of the House. So the punishment goes not to the perpetrators in that particular case.

I'm not certain that a little bit of noise and a little bit of heckling is altogether out of place, given that we are partisans, given that we have strong feelings about issues, and given that we approach this thing from somewhat different angles. So if I could make one plea, it would not be that we throw out the rule book but that we consider whether the extent of the intervention is necessary. Maybe we do have to find our own way as a House. Maybe the House develops a personality of its own in the course of these proceedings, and maybe it should be allowed to do that.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Foothills.

11:20

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to comment on the point of order. As a new member and a Tory backbencher I feel sometimes that opposition parties forget that question period does not belong just to the opposition parties,

that it belongs to all members of this Legislature. As such, quite often with the agreed process by the House leaders, with questions going two to the opposition and one to the Tory party, we don't often have the opportunity to take our place in question period. One of the things that seems to be very apparent that is causing that is the long preambles on both the first question and the two supplementals, as it was again today.

Now, when we look at today's situation, Mr. Speaker, quite clearly the events occurred as a result of the Leader of the Official Opposition making a gross error in his selection of questions, which became an embarrassment to him, and as a result he was frustrated.

MS BARRETT: Oh, give me a break.

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MRS. BLACK: That's understandable; we've all had that experience. But he was frustrated on camera. Then what followed was a little bit of a temper tantrum from the ND Party. Quite frankly, as a result I have to say that I think this was the nicest question period that I've sat through in this House. The opposition party – the Official Opposition, not the Liberals – actually all ran out in a temper tantrum, and we actually got questions asked of ministers and were able to actually ask our questions without yelling and screaming back and forth like a bunch of children. Now, surely, Mr. Speaker, if members want to be respected in this House, you earn respect. It's not given. For people that are grown adults to act like children, maybe they must be treated as children and be disciplined more often. I would say that if the hon. members opposite have a problem, I would suggest that they go home and address their own behaviour patterns. Surely they were taught better when they were children.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't my intention to get into this point of order until the last speaker prompted me to stand up. I can assure the hon. member that today during question period what happened was that questions were asked by the Leader of the Opposition to the Premier, responses came back, and there was an intervention by the Chair. It was at that point that there was indeed some frustration that started to percolate in the benches of the Official Opposition, but it wasn't because of the response of the Premier that that frustration started to grow. It was because of the intervention.

At the point when the Leader of the Opposition had completed his remarks with respect to the first series of questions and prior to getting into the second series, there was another intervention. To refer back to the analogy that was used by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek and to expand upon that, where he talked about a referee in a hockey game, we don't need to be given lessons on how to skate or how to put on equipment or what a puck is or what a stick is. That's what happened today. The intervention that happened today was that we were getting comments that dealt with how question period is to flow. Well, we've been here for a period of time. I'm sure every single member sitting in this Legislative Assembly knows that there are 45 minutes a day that are allocated to question period, that in that 45 minutes the Leader of the Opposition is given the first

two questions, with two supplementaries. We know that. It happens. It happens every single day that we're in this Legislative Assembly. We are aware of the rules.

What we didn't like was the intervention, and it's been going on for a long period of time. You're right that there are different perspectives. There are perspectives, I would imagine, from the government bench, where certain projects go on in constituencies and you want to get questions into *Hansard*: fine; so be it. We hold the government accountable, and we want to get that on the record: fine; so be it.

For the Member for Calgary-Foothills to stand up and say, you know, that everybody has the right to get into question period – well, indeed you do. But there's one other option that you've got that's not afforded to either the Liberal opposition or to the New Democrat Official Opposition, and that's that you have your caucus. Surely to goodness, sometime in your caucus meetings you must be able to ask ministers questions about the policies they're bringing forward. I would imagine, Mr. Speaker, that those caucus meetings sometimes must get rather heated, because I know that some of the members have said: my goodness, I don't necessarily agree with that policy; however, I am a Conservative backbencher and I support it. I would imagine that you're not just coming into the Legislative Assembly to put on a show, that part of your argument is extended into your caucus meeting, where you are afforded the opportunity, unlike the members of the opposition, to put questions that quite frankly are not recorded in *Hansard*, that don't get any air time. But you hold the ministers accountable there. That's your role as part of being a back-bench Member of the Legislative Assembly in the governing party. It's our role to hold the government accountable in the Legislative Assembly during question period and during debate. That's part of the difference. All members have that, absolutely right, but you are afforded another opportunity that we are not. To have intervention, to constantly remind us of rules that we're already aware of, is unnecessary.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, speaking to the point of order, which has obviously strayed somewhat from the initial point that was raised. Recognizing that hon. members are elected to come to this Assembly to do the public business, perhaps not much has occurred since the question period this morning that many hon. members can be proud of. I well recognize, as do most hon. members, that there are some 400 years of history in the parliamentary system which devised the rules which we use, yet we still develop our own Standing Orders because this House will make rules which apply to this House.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, there are very few ill winds that don't blow some good. I would make the observation that most hon. members have had the opportunity this morning, sir – unfairly, in my view, to direct it in the form of criticism to the Chair – of expressing their views, positive or negative, satisfaction or dissatisfaction. I would hope that all hon. members have had their say. We're here to do the public business, and I would certainly urge all hon. members, Your Honour, to follow as well as possible the Standing Orders of the Assembly, recognizing that the Official Opposition and other opposition parties have an obligation to criticize the government but that they would act in the spirit of co-operation to see in the final analysis that the good of the public was observed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Innisfail.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to make a brief intervention on this point of order. Today we've heard how Speakers act like referees, interfering with the game of question period. But I'd like to mention to the whole Assembly where I think the problem is starting from: our question period is becoming members' statements, and it's not the preambles that are the problem, it's the statements. I don't know the day, but the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place was quoted in question period, saying to the Speaker: Mr. Speaker, it's not a question; it's a statement. I think this is where we've gone wrong in the question period. Time and time again, every question and supplementary is followed by a statement. Then the ministers have to get up, and they have to make a statement on the other member's statement. I think that if this House got back to question period for questions and answers, it would be a lot better.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Drayton Valley.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the previous comments by my hon. colleague. I don't think anybody has a problem with question period, with questions being asked and answered. But lately question period has deteriorated to a hurling of insults and innuendo which have to be dealt with by some means or other. Question period is also the only portion of our discussions in here where the press participate and it is televised on TV. We go out on the streets and we continue to wonder why politicians are held in such low esteem by the public. This is not only common here, but it's common federally, and it's common internationally right at this time.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that until we can get back to acting like human beings, educated, normal adult human beings who have some things that we wish to debate or discuss in this House, that perception of politicians is going to continue to go downhill, as long as we continue to act as small children in a sandbox fighting over turf and just hurling insults instead of asking questions, reasonable questions, and debating the issues before this House.

11:30

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't going to get into the discussion, but obviously after the hon. Minister of Advanced Education spoke and kind of suggested that we had had enough discussion, members within his own caucus didn't agree, so I'll participate in the debate as well.

We have been to a degree going around and around here, but I think it's healthy. It gives us an opportunity to maybe reflect what the parliamentary system is all about. It's fine to sit back and visualize like it's going to be a love-in here, but let's be realistic: it's no love-in. You have government members, as the Member for Barrhead will constantly remind us, and we have members of the opposition. Part of the role of opposition is to be critics, not to sit back here and ask puffball questions, and part of the role of government private members, of course, is to ask those puffball questions, which to us at times can be very, very irritating, but they are allowed. Many, many times those puffball questions are obviously rehearsed. The minister is there with the answer all typed out ahead of time in his briefing book. Obviously, it's been prepared. Many, many times a ministerial statement would take the place of that.

There are always going to be those downsides when it comes to our parliamentary system. One can sit back and say it looks like a kindergarten class, but that is the parliamentary system. The process is such that it lends itself to that type of abuse. We've talked in terms of parliamentary reform. We've talked in terms of parliamentary reform from day one, but there's never been any indication on the government side that there are better ways of changing the rules to make it work more compatibly for all parties. We're locked into rules that are not beneficial to all Members of the Legislative Assembly, and rules that members of government are not prepared to consider entertaining. So until we get away from this 400-year-old tradition and look at today's world and say maybe there's a better way of doing it, this type of thing is going to continue.

While it continues, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we as opposition, we as Members of the Legislative Assembly – myself as one individual, what I want to see demonstrated time and time and time is fairness. If I feel that as an individual I'm being treated equally to other Members of the Legislative Assembly, then that's fairness, but if I feel I'm not being treated on the same basis as other Members of the Legislative Assembly, then that's unfairness. As long as there is the perception that there is unfairness as opposed to fairness, these types of interventions are going to continue.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I may just for a second . . . The *Calgary Herald* yesterday carried a column by Mr. Don McGillivray, a writer who's covered the national scene since 1962, which gives him nearly 30 years. He's written a column on question period that's well worth – I'd recommend it to all members to read, on both sides, because the national government is trying to cut down on question period. If you'd bear with me, may I read just a couple of short paragraphs. They're very easy. It says:

The Commons question period doesn't need to be tamed. This is after watching for 30 years.

It's one of the few really effective institutions in Ottawa.

Question period is the most powerful instrument in the hands of the opposition parties, much more so than the formal debates on bills and budgets. It makes the government instantly answerable for its stewardship.

The process makes the government [as a whole] subject to sudden and unexpected public scrutiny . . .

Democracy works by confrontation.

He points out, Mr. Speaker, that back in 1961, for instance, June 10, 15 questions were asked in the House. Every one, 100 percent, was from the opposition. In 1971, 10 years later, 42 questions were asked in question period, all were by opposition members. In 1991, which is another 20 years forward, June 10, just the other day, 35 questions were asked, four of which were government backbenchers'.

Now, the point that this gentlemen is making, and I think many experts on parliamentary tradition, is that we seem to have escaped in Alberta for many, many years, starting with the Liberals and then the United Farmers and the Social Credit and the Conservatives – huge government majorities. Somebody who has questions in the opposition is sort of looking like someone that made a bad joke at the Queen's birthday party or something. It's taken a long time for us to realize the confrontation and heat and yelling back and forth – and I know, Mr. Speaker, you quite rightly have said that nobody has any right to demand that a minister answer a question. You're quite right. But then there's nothing wrong with the opposition heckling or

booing and telling them they're a dog for not answering the question. It's the commenting on the not answering that seems to be causing a lot of the problems.

All I'm saying is that I'd recommend Don McGillivray, "Questions keep government sharp" – very good reading – to both sides of the House. In there it's well indicated, as one of the members mentioned earlier – I think it was the Member for Edmonton-Belmont – that the government side gets a chance to ask questions in caucus and so on. The opposition's only chance – and this is what, after all, democracy comes from, the original Greek word. Somebody puts forward a thesis, the other side puts out an antithesis, and together we get synthesis. I know I'm giving you a lesson in Greek, Mr. Speaker, which you're probably much more versed in than I am. But the heat of the exchange, as somebody once said, creates friction, friction creates heat, the heat creates light, the public then can see what the reasoning was about. That's the whole process, and to get in there and say: "Now, now, now; don't body check. Don't get rough in the corners," and all that, is not following the system, Mr. Speaker. I'll agree that if the guy has a guy in the corner and two of them are beating the hell out of him, maybe you've got to interfere. But you can't stop body checks, a little elbowing now and again when they're not watching as they come across the blue line. That's part of the game, and I think we get all too concerned about it.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Additional? [interjection]

Well, first the Chair points out that this is a very unusual circumstance. Ordinarily on points of order members get to speak once, but having forgotten that and I mentioned earlier that you could speak again, I'll allow it in this case. Only this does not establish a precedent, and I'll listen to you for a few brief comments.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to resituate this debate. I took notes from every person speaking. What I'd like to do is start with . . .

MR. SPEAKER: No. No, I don't think we're going to go into great detail, hon. member.

MS BARRETT: Oh, is there a time limitation now?

MR. SPEAKER: Forgive me, hon. member. Did you not listen to what I said a few moments ago?

MS BARRETT: I'm not deaf. Of course.

MR. SPEAKER: It didn't seem to register. So if you'd like to make your comments, please go ahead. You've got five minutes maximum.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the sarcasm too.

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me, hon. member. Then in turn, if we're playing tennis, thank you for your sarcasm.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I was not being sarcastic. It's the tone . . . That's my whole point of order. Let me resituate this debate.

The Speaker responded to my letter last year. He says
In legislatures where there are few opposition members, the
frequency of points of order significantly drops, and the Chair

accordingly has to intervene less in the debates within the Chamber.

My point was that that is blaming the opposition. There is already an indication by the Chair that he assumes it is the opposition that causes the problem. I said that I went to Nova Scotia. I saw their Legislature in action, and I was very impressed. The Speaker didn't intervene. It was great. You know, the posture was wonderful, the preambles were completed, and the questions were dealt with by the ministers. It was wonderful.

Now, I'd like to point out why I got this letter from the Speaker. He had distributed a list of words that were now illegal in Alberta, and I said:

Some of the words ruled unparliamentary in Alberta since 1986 are very surprising indeed: Autocratic, Buddy, Collusion, Crazy (this drives me), Flunky, Honest (come) . . .

Now, that's what started this whole thing, because I was of the view that there were a lot of brand-new rulings caused by a lot of intervention from the Chair. The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs says: come on, folks, things are a lot nicer now than they were in 1979 when he first came to the House. Well, I was an observer after the '82 election as a researcher for the Official Opposition up in that gallery, and I can tell you that I saw Grant Notley ask up to 17 supplementary questions, Mr. Speaker. Now, don't tell me that things were more strict; okay?

11:40

Secondly, the Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest says: don't refer to examples used outside of Alberta; we make our own rules. In response I say that we didn't write *Beauchesne*, we didn't write *Erskine May*, and they're usually cited, at least when it's politically convenient, as the top authority.

Third, I would say that the Standing Orders, our little black book, are in theory written by the Assembly; right? Not so. We know that there's been a fight over every change to these Standing Orders since the day of Tom Sindlinger blowing the whistle on the heritage trust fund loss of \$60 million and the invention of closure. That was the first step, Mr. Speaker, and a number of other changes have occurred against the wishes of the opposition, driven through by the majority government. So don't say that we all make the rules. Quite frankly, you people make the rules, and you make us live with them.

A third point. I'd like to just respond to the Member for Calgary-Foothills. The intervention of the Chair is what causes the frustration. As I said in my opening remarks, I saw a Legislature work absolutely brilliantly, lots of debate, some heckling, lots of good questions. No intervention from the Speaker at all. It was wonderful. Nobody got mad. Just great.

I'd also like to point out to the Minister of Advanced Education, who spoke on this matter. He said that we're really criticizing the Chair. Yes, that is correct, because of the amount of intervention and where it occurs and the type of intervention. He said: let's get on in a spirit of co-operation. My point precisely. It can happen. I saw it happen last week. I was very impressed with what I saw. You can do it. All you need is a referee who (a) doesn't make personal insults or sarcastic comments, (b) doesn't intervene frequently throughout question period. That's all you need. In fact, the Chair sets the tone of the meeting. For the purposes of chairing, everybody who's ever chaired meetings knows that the Chair sets a lot of the agenda just by the tone. So quite frankly, that is the point.

Last night's debate: three hours in Bill debate. Only two Bills got debated, but was there a lot of intervention? No. The fact of the matter is that the opposition and the government can both proceed in debate without invoking a lot of intervention

from the Chair. Our point is that we should not be blamed, as the Speaker has done essentially in his letter to me, for interventions by the Chair when we know that in other Legislatures where the opposition is darn near 50 percent of the Assembly constituted, the interventions are nowhere near as frequent nor as personal.

That was my point.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. members. There are a number of comments to be made. First, with respect to other parliaments in this country, I too have sat in on question period in nearly every parliament in this nation, and believe you me, this one has the best decorum in the whole country.

I was intrigued to hear from Edmonton-Belmont that everybody here knows the rules. Could I perhaps remind you of one or two? It's that business of questions again. A question "must be a question, not an expression of an opinion, representation, argumentation, nor debate": *Beauchesne* 409(1). That is violated daily in this place. "A supplementary question should need no preamble." That's 409(2). That is violated daily in this place. Section 409(3) reads in part, "The question [should] seek information . . . [should] not . . . be argumentative or make representations." That, too, is violated daily in this House. Section 409(7):

A question must adhere to the proprieties of the House, in terms of inferences, imputing motives or casting aspersions upon persons within the House or out of it.

That is violated almost daily in this House.

So that's why some of the interventions occur, and to say nothing about unparliamentary language.

So I am greatly encouraged that all members know the rules, and I look forward to the fact you're going to read them all over the weekend, because the Chair is not going to change its approach to question period.

Now, a couple of other interesting points here. Question period has not been curtailed. To be curtailed, you'd have to shorten question period. That has not occurred. It's been slowed down in the last couple of days by members themselves. If there's not going to be due respect for other members in this House – oftentimes members in your own caucus are making noise so that the member who's trying to ask the question doesn't even get a chance to get started. So question period has not been curtailed. If the noise of the House continues, then the Chair will not recognize hon. members until at least they stand a chance of the first five words getting out of their mouths to be heard.

Comment was made again about what occurred earlier today. It occurs on a regular basis. The Leader of the Opposition gets two main questions, the first question, and two supplementaries. The two supplementaries are never succinct. There's always a preamble and then the question. But what occurs after the first question is that the Leader of the Opposition takes that opportunity then to make a counterstatement to whatever the last answer was from whichever member of the front bench the question was directed to. That then is akin to slipping in another question or another comment and then saying: "Oh, well, that isn't my real question. Now I'm going to go to the second main question." That admonition was given in the last couple of days, and again that's what caused some of the confusion of this day.

It was also pointed out that the late Grant Notley on occasion was given up to 13 or 14 supplementaries. Yes, but the member conveniently forgot to mention the fact that the House in that day . . .

MS BARRETT: I didn't "conveniently" forget anything. Cut your sarcasm.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, order.

The hon. member conveniently forgot to mention that in that day the numbers in the House were 74 to 5, and indeed there was a different practice in place because of the fewer numbers in the ranks of the opposition, so that extra questions were allowed. That has not been the case in this House since '82 nor '86, and we have negotiated what is the present system.

MS BARRETT: It was set.

Speaker's Ruling Criticizing the Speaker

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

Now, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands has once again both overtly and in other manners made an attack upon the Chair. Yesterday the Chair had to read section 168 in *Beauchesne* to the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry. The Chair will now read it again to the House, and it's now directed at Edmonton-Highlands.

Reflections upon the character or actions of the Speaker may be punished as breaches of privilege. The actions of the Speaker cannot be criticized incidentally in debate or upon any form of proceeding except by way of a substantive motion.

The direction was given yesterday to Edmonton-Glengarry; it's again given to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands this day. The Chair is prepared to accept an apology now, or else the Chair looks forward to the member being good enough to prepare a substantive motion with respect to the Chair, and failing that action, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands will not be recognized in question period until such time as either action transpires.

Now we have a point of privilege, I understand. Calgary-North West.

Privilege Debate on Appropriation Bills

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on a point of privilege as a result of events which transpired in the House on Wednesday afternoon of this week. I forwarded a letter to your office yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and therefore rise today to deal with the point.

11:50

Mr. Speaker, I'm referring here to *Beauchesne*; in particular I'm looking at sections 75 and 76. Both those sections deal with the privilege of members to have freedom of speech in the Legislature. One of the things which occurred on Wednesday: we were in the Legislature that afternoon dealing with the appropriation Bills, in particular Bills 46, 47, and 48. Mr. Speaker, my task as a member of the Legislature is to come to this Legislature to conduct public business, as I believe was the phrase used by the hon. Minister of Advanced Education, and my constituents want me to speak on issues of concern. One of their big concerns deals with finances and budget, which in particular were the Bills before the House that day. When you review *Hansard* of the day – the date for that particular event was June 12 of this year, 1991 – the Provincial Treasurer introduced the appropriation Bills. If you look at the heading on page 1670 of *Hansard* for that day, the Provincial Treasurer introduced Bill 48, Appropriation (Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Capital Projects Division) Act.

One of the conveniences in *Alberta Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, as you are certainly aware, is that we now have the time posted every 10 minutes, so some time between 4:40 and 4:50 we had that Bill introduced. Under Standing Orders the effect is that the debate must be cut off 15 minutes before the end of the day. On that particular day the Provincial Treasurer had the opportunity to speak to Bill 48. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View had a brief opportunity to speak and then, under Standing Orders, was interrupted. The unfortunate result was that not only did I not have an opportunity to speak, as I was hoping and prepared to do and wanted to do that day, but no member of the Liberal caucus had the opportunity to speak to Bill 48 in third reading, and unfortunately no member of the Liberal caucus had any opportunity in third reading to speak to the other two appropriation Bills as well, being Bills 46 and 47, which did not receive any discussion.

I reviewed back to the committee stage the other *Hansards* that deal with these particular Bills, because they're related. The committee stage occurred on June 7 of this year, and because of the way our rules of the House are set up, at that time we had the opportunity again only to debate one of the three appropriation Bills, that being Bill 47. There occurred no debate on Bill 46, no debate on that day on Bill 48. We had the opportunity for only one member of the Liberal caucus to speak, and that was the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, who has been our finance critic, and of course he perhaps most related to these. Again, other members of the Liberal caucus did not have the opportunity to speak even though we would have liked to have had the opportunity. Again, no one spoke at all because there was no time allowed for debate on Bill 46 at the committee stage nor on Bill 48. Mr. Speaker, those Bills are clearly fundamental to the operation of government, but they're also fundamental concerns of my constituents and I'm sure the constituents of every single member in this Legislature.

I looked at that particular date, Mr. Speaker, and was concerned that only one Liberal member had the opportunity to speak, so I went back to two days prior to that. That was June 5, when we had the opportunity for second reading of these three Bills. At that time, in reviewing *Hansard*, only Bill 46 was introduced by the Provincial Treasurer. There was no debate at all on that day of Bills 47 or 48 despite the fact that the end of that day at the allotted time those Bills were voted upon and carried along. We had two members of the Liberal caucus speak only to Bill 46, the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon and the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. No Liberals spoke to the other Bills. Again, I unfortunately did not have the opportunity because of time constraints.

My reason for rising on a point of privilege is that after third reading – I understand that there are times when we have to allow other members of our caucus the opportunity to present viewpoints, and clearly we can't have every single member speaking on every single issue. On third reading in particular, Mr. Speaker – and that's why I raised the issue with your office yesterday – no Liberal member had the opportunity at all to speak. In fact, when we look at the total time allotment for the debate of Bills 46, 47, and 48 at all three stages, it comes to approximately 155 minutes or slightly less; we don't have the exact times in there. My concern is the way the Bills are moved through, where you debate one, and the other two kind of get carried along at the end of the time frame without sufficient debate. I think that's a breach of the privilege of myself as a member of the Legislature and I know is a concern for my constituents.

Therefore, I rise under a point of privilege requesting that the debate for these Bills be reopened so that all members have an opportunity to deal with these Bills. The time span we had to deal with these particular Bills, as I said: approximately 155 minutes, slightly more than 2 hours. When we total up all those Bills and we look at the time allotment, we spent \$79 million a minute for the debate that we had, and I don't feel that's sufficient for these particular Bills.

I will leave it with your office to deal with it appropriately, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, on the point of privilege.

MR. SPEAKER: I need to think about that for a moment. Just half a moment, please.

First, hon. Member for Calgary-North West, this is not a point of privilege, but it is indeed a point of order. Therefore, the comments you've made will be seen in the context of a point of order.

So now speaking to the point of order, Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking to the point of order, first of all, just for purposes of checking on this, April 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 26, 29, May 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, and covering through in June right up to the present date are all very significant dates. I'd like to explain why. First, we've heard from the member opposite the insinuation that they have not been given the opportunity to speak either on Bills or in committee. Well, there's something very significant about those dates which I just gave. On all of those dates, all of those nights, and right through into June there never has been at any one time more than two Liberal members in the House, two only, yet they say they have not had opportunity to speak. Last night we were here until 11:30. We went until the members of the Official Opposition had presented a number of amendments, even some of them reasoned amendments, reasoned arguments. There was ample opportunity for the Liberal opposition, again of which there were two here, to speak. There was no indication that they wanted to. We went until the members of the Official Opposition had thoroughly exhausted their interesting points of view, their arguments, their amendments, almost till 11:30 last night.

Mr. Speaker, on the point of order I think it would have to be demonstrated that there were large numbers of members just dying and champing at the bit to get in on debate, whether it was committee, whether it was estimates, whatever it was. On all of these dates, what do we see? Two members present and on some dates only one. I'd like to present that to suggest that there is no point of order. Those members have had ample opportunity. Where they've been is up to them. I can't comment on that. It's not procedurally correct for me to do that, so I won't. But I would suggest that they don't come into this House and suggest they're being robbed of an opportunity to speak when they don't even take the time to be here.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite makes an interesting point but quite an irrelevant one.

The point of order raised was to do with the passing of the appropriation Bills in such a fast procedure considering that that is built on top of an estimates debate which allows only one department for one day; in other words, 25 departments, 25 days. So we've got an automatic closure built into the debate on the

budget as we go along that leads to passing, say, the health care Act of some \$3 billion in two and a half hours of debate or maybe one and a half, which is totally ridiculous.

12:00

On top of that, then the government adds insult to injury by saying that when we bring in the appropriation Bills, we will debate one of them one day but pass all three. Debate one of them, maybe the same one or another one. They've been kind enough to usually make it a different one, the second at committee. Then also at third reading we'll bring in maybe the last one and give everybody a chance, supposedly, to say a few words about that depending on how long you get to debate. The member is quite right: we had half an hour on the heritage trust fund appropriation Bill at third reading, and at the end of that half hour we not only passed that Bill through third reading but the other two that were not even before the Assembly. It is most extraordinary. What's the problem? Because some years ago one of their own members who jumped ship or was pushed out, whichever way you want to say it, along with a couple of opposition members held a bit of a filibuster over losses in the heritage trust fund? I mean, the most extraordinary and overwhelming response on the part of this government was just to close ranks and say: we're not going to allow anybody to talk any more than we can possibly help.

The fact is that the way the Standing Orders read, the government doesn't have to give us more than five minutes of debate on any of those, and they can still pass all three through each of the three readings. It's most extraordinary. I don't know what they're afraid of.

You see, by the time you consider that the budget was brought in three months or so ago, a number of things have changed and a number of things have happened that make it so that we can see and get some kind of a sense of whether that budget is still viable or not. For instance, the Treasurer brings in another Bill, the Financial Administration Act, and admits that he's going to have to borrow \$2 billion extra this year, which rather makes mock of the budget that he says is balanced, yet we don't have time in the appropriation Bills to debate that because we get a few minutes. If the government had any sense of decency and the right for a legitimate debate, they would at least on Wednesday have given us the full period of time to debate Bill 48, the heritage trust fund appropriation Bill, instead of letting us debate Bill 45 for most of the time and then switching at the last minute to Bill 48. That is what we object to.

You know, you said that the Standing Orders tell you what you've got to do, but these Standing Orders were built over 20 years by this Conservative government, and they have made all the rules to fit the Conservative agenda so that it's difficult for the opposition to do its job. I can't imagine why the people of Alberta would want to keep re-electing a government that says that one day's debate on one department is enough and then brings in a draconian Bill like this to finish off that debate. It's absolutely incredible.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. There is no point of order. There is indeed a complaint, and it certainly has varying degrees of legitimacy depending on where you happen to sit in this Chamber. The Chair would like to extend some sympathy to the Member for Calgary-North West but also a reminder that while things are set up this way, that the Official Opposition gets to respond first and therefore a member of your caucus was not able to get in, one needs to look at what transpired earlier in the day as to why we didn't get to that portion of the business of the

House that much sooner. First, one of your own colleagues, the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, brought forward a motion under Standing Order 40, which is indeed his right.

MR. McEACHERN: So what?

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Are we bothering you, Edmonton-Kingsway? Please remember the previous admonition. It still holds.

So it was that on Wednesday afternoon, in what is often the case of a pro forma message of congratulation, in this case it took a bit longer than usual, so a fair amount of time was then taken up by the House. Again, that's quite legitimately within the operation of the House. Then because of some confusion, if you will, about members on all sides of the House . . . Order please, Wainwright. Because of confusion in the House about handwritten motions and amendments and not bothering to follow the practice of the House, we then had to deal with that. Then the Member for Edmonton-Highlands didn't like what the explanation was, so we had to go on for most of another page before the House could get to the business of the House. Now, had we not had that conjunction of the planets, there then probably would have been more time for the House to deal with the issue which the Member for Calgary-North West has raised as a matter of complaint. I'm sorry, but Standing Orders did apply all the way through.

Thank you.

Point of Order

Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

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

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order, and what is your citation this time?

MR. BRUSEKER: Just under citation 13(2) you suggested that this was not a point of privilege and not even a point of order. I in my citation talked about the lack of my having the opportunity to express concerns under freedom of speech, which in *Beauchesne*, page 22, sections 75 and 76, is shown as being "the most fundamental right of the Member of Parliament on the floor of the House and in committee." I was not provided that opportunity, so I'm wondering why you denied that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. What else shall we give to you? First, the matter was not raised at the earliest opportunity; secondly, you were defective in your notice to the House; thirdly, you . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: How?

MR. SPEAKER: The how was communicated to you by telephone yesterday, that if you felt that severely done by, you would have then followed Standing Orders and given two hours' notice before the House yesterday instead of dropping it in the office at 20 minutes to 2 o'clock. You failed on notice with respect to privilege. Secondly, you failed because the matter as put forth in your letter to me is somewhat deficient as to what the issue is. If you'd like to read carefully Standing Order 30, you will see that. The Chair has ruled that this is not a matter of privilege. The House then listened with this being a matter of a point of order, and the Chair has ruled on that.

Now, before saying Orders of the Day, the Chair would also like to read into the record for those of you who feel that there

have not been sufficient questions in question period that the cumulative totals up to the end of June 7 was this: for the New Democratic Party including questions and supplementaries, 660; for the Liberals, 405; for the Conservatives, 297.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Bills and Orders**

head: **Second Reading**

Bill 36

Safety Codes Act

MR. SPEAKER: Rocky Mountain House.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure today to rise and speak on second reading to Bill 36, Safety Codes Act. Perhaps before I begin I should explain the reasons for this Act.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Safety is one of the most important concerns of Albertans, and one of the most important responsibilities of government is to ensure everything possible is done to reduce the incidence of accidents and injuries. We can never completely eliminate risk, but risk can be managed. This Act is designed to bring Alberta into the 21st century in risk management. Managing risk is becoming more complex. We have new technologies being introduced almost every day, we have buildings that are aging, and we have a growing population. We have a lot more people to protect. Albertans want and deserve assurances that their inner environments are as healthy and secure as possible. In fact, public awareness of safety issues is higher than ever. It was against this backdrop of public awareness and the growing complexity of managing risk that Bill 36, the Safety Codes Act, was designed.

12:10

Bill 36 will enable our government to work with Albertans in building a safer, more secure province. It is a concrete example of our government's commitment to working in partnership with Albertans. Bill 36 is a framework for partnership. The Safety Codes Act was developed in consultation with all interested parties throughout the province. We are not imposing this legislation in a hasty manner from the top down, Mr. Speaker. I am satisfied that Bill 36 represents the best possible consensus of all the stakeholders in the safety arena, and there are many stakeholders. They include the municipalities, industry, trade unions, and technical experts. The stakeholders come from many fields, including fire prevention, building standards, plumbing, electrical and gas installations, elevators, amusement rides, and pressure vessels.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 36 is in one sense enabling legislation. It will enable government and all of the many stakeholders I've mentioned to build a safety system that is comprehensive, flexible, and effective. It will enable us to be state of the art and manage risk the best way possible.

I want to highlight the two major features of the Safety Codes Act. First, it will eventually incorporate Alberta's seven existing safety statutes into one more clear and consistent framework. I want to stress that our existing safety codes will not be eliminated or diluted or weakened in any way, Mr. Speaker. They are simply being brought together under one safety umbrella.

Secondly, the Act will allow stakeholders from across the province to take an active and ongoing role in the setting and enforcing of standards. In this way the Act will allow us to be flexible and to respond quickly and be effective in the new technological changes and other issues that may arise, issues that can't possibly be foreseen today.

At the centre of this partnership system will be the safety codes council. It will be a body of technical experts representing all interest groups covered by this Act. The council will review safety codes and standards. When necessary the council will recommend changes. It will also be an appeal body for administrative orders issued under this Act. To ensure the greatest degree of participation possible, the council will set up subcouncils. These subcouncils will specialize in individual technical disciplines. As new technologies and disciplines develop, different subcouncils may be established. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, we are aiming for maximum flexibility. We have designed an Act that can respond to changing conditions.

Field services, such as inspection of new buildings, will be more flexible than in the past. The province will continue to be a major partner in providing field services, particularly in sparsely populated areas and more complex technologies. Many municipalities are now providing some safety services. This Act will allow municipalities, if they wish to do so, to become accredited. It allows municipalities to implement the range of services that best suits their needs. The Act also gives municipalities and the province the option of engaging certified agencies to provide safety services. Corporate bodies such as universities and large industrial installations may also apply for certification within their own facilities.

It will be the responsibility of the accredited municipalities or corporations to employ certified safety codes officers. The safety codes council will set out the necessary requirements for these officers. They will be managed by recognized administrators.

The advantages of the new approach are as follows: it will provide for regulation by a body of skilled experts; number two, it will allow administration of services in close proximity to the activities which may threaten safety; number three, it give us the ability to adapt rapidly to technological change. As a result, Mr. Speaker, Alberta will have the most advanced system in the country for assuring safety.

With those few comments, I look forward to hearing the comments of other members of the Assembly.

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

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just before I get into the body of my remarks, if I may I'd like to thank the Member for Rocky Mountain House and the Deputy Government House Leader for accommodating my schedule and holding back this Bill for second reading. Sir, I had a rather hectic schedule in the last few days, and I did want to participate. Having communicated that to both the hon. member and the Deputy Government House Leader, they were kind enough to hold this Bill till today so that I could participate.

This is a very important Bill, because it takes the seven safety Bills that are currently in place – the Fire Prevention Act, Uniform Building Standards Act, Electrical Protection, Elevator and Fixed Conveyances, and a few others – and rolls them into this Safety Codes Act.

The Member for Rocky Mountain House is absolutely correct when he talks about the level of public awareness with respect to safety in a changing technological society. That safety is of

paramount concern. Mr. Speaker, that's part of the problem that I think is contained in this Act. There are two major areas of concern that I have with this Act that permeate throughout the entire piece of legislation. It's the areas of accountability and accreditation.

The area of accountability, I think, is not at all contained in this new Act. I listened carefully to the Member for Rocky Mountain House make his opening remarks. He spoke of the council of experts that's to be made up. I know that we're not to get into the specifics in debate today, but as I look at the makeup of the council, I see it as being far too permissive. Section 16 deals with the makeup of the council. Quite clearly in there it says that

Among the persons appointed to the Council the Minister may include persons who are experts in the area of fire protection, buildings, electrical systems, elevating devices, gas systems, plumbing systems, private sewage disposal systems.

The use of the word "may" is very permissive, and that's part of the problem with this piece of legislation. If we are going to have as a paramount concern the safety of Albertans, then surely to goodness we would want to make sure that we do have experts on that council and make it incumbent upon the minister who is going to be responsible for this Act to appoint people who are experts in those systems, not people who just "may" be expert in those systems.

So I hope that when we move into committee stage, the Member for Rocky Mountain House and indeed all government members would be supportive of an amendment even if it doesn't come from the government that would impose a certain condition on the makeup of the council: that the minister would have to appoint people who are expert in those areas.

The other area that I think is far, far too permissive is in section 18, the duties and the power of the council. There are a couple of subsections, (a), (b), (c), and (d), that are rather minuscule in terms of the powers that are granted under those subsections. Oddly enough, it's in those subsections where it's clearly defined what the council shall do. When you get into the crux of the matter in subsections (e) through (i), it's all extraordinarily permissive. That's again part of the problem, that the accountability just isn't here. The council, it says, "may promote uniformity of safety standards for any thing . . . may provide a liaison between the Minister and any person."

MR. JOHNSTON: You have an upset stomach?

12:20

MR. SIGURDSON: Sometimes water helps.

Mr. Speaker, it's a section that is just far too permissive with respect to accountability. I'm absolutely shocked that in the section that is dealt with in (i), again you've got that the council "may recommend to the Minister that it undertake to provide the Minister with advice on safety information." Surely to goodness the safety council should have to provide that advice to the minister. The minister has a responsibility to make sure that safety is being given the highest regard with respect to the new technology that's being employed in our province.

Now, the other area that I've got a great deal of concern about is in the area of accreditation. The Member for Rocky Mountain House pointed out that municipalities are going to, if they want to apply, be accredited, that corporations that want to apply may indeed be accredited, and that other agencies may be accredited.

It was with some irony today when I walked into the Legislative Assembly a few minutes before question period that I saw a number of people outside that had placards. These people

suffered great loss in an accident that took place at West Edmonton Mall some number of years ago. These people lost family members because the Mindbender at West Edmonton Mall had some problem with its braking mechanism. Now, Mr. Speaker, if I could take the attention of the members back a few years, if we recall when that accident, that tragedy took place, we didn't know what the technology was. We had people installing equipment that didn't know what they were doing. And it was certified. It was certified because the Act that was appropriate to that equipment was the Elevator and Fixed Conveyances Act. Those people that installed the equipment were using instructions that weren't even written in English; it was written in the language of the manufacturer, and in my recollection that was German. They didn't realize that they should have had the English documents there when that equipment was in operation.

Now, I would imagine that Triple Five or the people that are responsible for the Fantasyland amusement rides could very well apply to become an accredited corporation, and under this Act they would probably be successful in getting that kind of an accreditation. But there's no accountability back, and that's part of the problem. Once they've got the accreditation, there is limited accountability back to the people that are going to be enforcing this Bill. So even though there were some problems a few years ago with the installation of equipment and the lack of knowledge about the equipment that should have been properly checked out, I would have greater concern if a corporation were to say, "Well, this is new equipment; it's new technology, and we're going to bring the people over and have them check out the system," because sometimes in order to expedite the installation and the operation of equipment, certain things might be overlooked. I know that people get tired of bureaucratic holdups, but sometimes those bureaucratic holdups are in the best interests of public safety. I think it's extraordinarily important that in this legislative package somebody have the ultimate authority that says: "Wait a minute. We've got to slow the process down. We've got to make sure that the technology that's being employed is properly constructed so that safety is of paramount concern."

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said, I see two problems with this Bill, and they permeate throughout the Bill. It's the area of accountability, and the other area is in the accreditation process. It's my intent at committee stage to move a number of amendments that I think would provide for more accountability in the Bill and address my concerns about accreditation.

So at this point, Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared to stop my comments, advise the member that I look forward to hopefully seeing some government amendments, and if not seeing those, move some amendments at committee stage.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to make some comments with respect to Bill 36, the Safety Codes Act.

Mr. Speaker, over the course of my tenure in the Legislature I've seen some Bills come in with which I agree; I've seen some Bills come in with which I disagree. Rarely, in fact this is the first time, have I seen a Bill come in that leaves me absolutely cold. I think this is a Bill that is absolutely frightening, not only to the members of this Legislature but to the members of the Alberta public at large. I believe that this Bill if passed will reduce, not increase the safety codes in this province, will place

the lives of Albertans at risk, and is a Bill that should be defeated by all members. There are a number of reasons why I've said that, and I want to refer to some of those reasons.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, in his opening comments the Member for Rocky Mountain House, who is moving the Bill today, said in fact that all stakeholders that were involved in the application of the seven Acts we have currently in force had been consulted, yet the unfortunate thing is that the Department of Labour, that is really sort of in the background and piloting this through, is at sufficient variance with comments made by this member and comments made by the Minister of Labour. I reflect back on a talk given by the Deputy Minister of Labour on Thursday, April 18, for example, to the Building Officials' Association. In fact, at that time the deputy minister said: No, we haven't consulted everybody; we haven't had time. In effect what we're going to do is consult with them after the Act is passed.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's simply not acceptable to this member, and I don't think it should be acceptable to members of this Legislature, because one of the things that's happened, one of the things we have to recognize is that - we're looking at section 71 - this Bill when it's passed will in fact result in the repealing of seven other pieces of legislation.

One of the things that this Bill talks about is regulations. All through the Bill we talk about regulations, and nowhere do we see them. We have to take on faith that those regulations are going to be developed. In fact, the deputy minister at that time said that the future belongs to the industry not to the government. So in effect the purpose of this Bill as I see it is for the government to wash their hands of the responsibility that I believe falls more appropriately on government, and that is to concern themselves with the safety of Albertans, of the workers. Mr. Speaker, I think that this Bill proposes to weaken those safety concerns, and I think it should be opposed.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just wondering when we are going to be . . . [interjections] Perhaps I should at this point adjourn debate and look to beginning again next day.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Having heard the motion to adjourn, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The matter carries.

head:

Royal Assent

12:30

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

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

[The Mace was draped]

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

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

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

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order!

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

HIS HONOUR: Everyone please be seated.

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

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

No.	Title
46	Appropriation Act, 1991
47	Appropriation (Alberta Capital Fund) Act, 1991
48	Appropriation (Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Capital Projects Division) Act, 1991-92.

[The Lieutenant Governor indicated his assent]

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

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise, please.

[The Lieutenant Governor left the Chamber]

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

MR. SPEAKER: Be seated, please.

[At 12:38 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 2:30 p.m.]