

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, June 20, 1991**

2:30 p.m.

Date: 91/06/20

[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:

Presenting Petitions

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present to the Assembly a petition signed by over 1,000 people. It's in addition to a similar petition in the middle of May signed by 400 people urging the government to reinstate grant funding to community-based agencies.

head:

Presenting Reports by

head: **Standing and Special Committees**

MR. CHERRY: Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Private Bills has had certain Bills under consideration and reports as follows.

The committee recommends that the following Bills be proceeded with: Bill Pr. 3, the Lutheran Church-Canada, The Alberta-British Columbia District Corporation Act; Bill Pr. 5, An Act to Amend the Calgary Convention Centre Authority Act; Bill Pr. 8, the Jennifer Leanne Eichmann Adoption Act.

Mr. Speaker, the committee recommends that the following Bills be proceeded with with some amendments: Bill Pr. 4, An Act to Amend an Ordinance to Incorporate Alberta College, and Bill Pr. 7, The Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act.

Mr. Speaker, the committee recommends that the following Bills not be proceeded with: Bill Pr. 1, the Alberta Home Builders Graduate Institute Act, and Bill Pr. 2, the Grande Cache Tourism and Business Development Authority Act.

Mr. Speaker, Bill Pr. 6, the Charmaine L. Toms Legal Articles Act, was withdrawn by the petitioner.

I ask for the concurrence of the Assembly in this report.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, I believe . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I haven't recognized you, hon. member.

Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak against this motion, particularly in relationship to the committee's recommendation that Bill Pr. 2, being the Grande Cache Tourism and Business Development Authority Act, not be proceeded with. Just briefly to that, this is not a unique situation. There are dozens of authorities of this nature in our province. It is a logical and legal response to a demonstrable need in the community. The request was presented by the mayor of the town, supported by a legal adviser and the development authority executive.

Mr. Speaker, the objective of this Bill as detailed is: now that the town has embarked on a very aggressive program of developing business and tourism and improving the economic situation of the town, the town has been approached by develop-

ers who are prepared to do work in the town, the reason that the town has now deemed it expedient to cause an authority to be incorporated which will be focused in its approach and deal solely with business development and tourism in that particular area. I'm paraphrasing from the submission of the mayor and other representatives of the town.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very creative response to the current economic situation in Grande Cache. As we know, this town was developed some 21 years ago, for resource extraction primarily, and now has the mine, a lumber industry, and a jail. The town has suffered greatly in recent years. It does have tremendous tourism potential and opportunity for new momentum here. I also believe that this supports the government's position on local autonomy initiatives in diversification.

The reason for choosing a private Bill: there's no provision to do what they need to do under the MGA. This would create a private nonprofit organization. It would allow the corporation to access funds not normally available to the municipality and to deal with private developers, and the town's assets, Mr. Speaker, would be protected and secured throughout. The personnel would be all appointed. It would be under the control of town council, members of the chamber of commerce, council members, and citizens at large, and they would have a built-in conflict of interest clause in the Bill. Mr. Speaker, the legal advisor said:

We want the town's assets to be secured. We want negotiations and deliberations to go on with developers and other parties who are prepared to spend money . . . we want them dealing with a separate corporate entity.

I think a laudable kind of object.

Mr. Speaker, there are precedents, of course, for this Bill. In cities in our province tourism authorities are operating very well. The alternatives were to have it simply be a department under town council. The mayor's response, however, was that it needed to be at arm's length to access the expertise necessary. Another possibility was under the Business Corporations Act, but I believe it's imperative that we have a nonprofit operation here. A society would not serve, because they could not enter into joint ventures with other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, finally, there was a government task force that the delegation spoke to, that met with Grande Cache. It was a government task force made up of several departments: Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, Tourism, Transportation. The function was to allow the town to have direct access into government. The task force itself suggested at the original meeting the structure of the authority, which would allow them a single entry into what is happening in the town. So we have our own government departments advising this, and I believe it's incumbent on us. The town is taking the initiative here. They're responding to the need. They're in collaboration with government departments. It's a creative response to stabilize the economy and to diversify.

I want to present an amendment, therefore, to the report on private Bills. I ask that it be circulated, Mr. Speaker. This amendment would simply allow Bill Pr. 2 to remain on the Order Paper for further consideration by the Private Bills Committee or by the Legislative Assembly. This would help the town in the sense that if there is to be reconsideration, it would not need to reapply and readvertise and go through the process of making an application for a private Bill, which would incur large costs to the town of Grande Cache, working in opposition to what they're trying to do.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for the support of all Members of the Legislative Assembly on this amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway, speaking to the amendment. The amendment would read "that the report be concurred in with the exception of the recommendation regarding Bill Pr. 2," and the recommendation as moved in the report from Lloydminster was that the matter not be proceeded with.

Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: I think the amendment goes on further to say that the Bill be kept on the record so that if the town of Grande Cache . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: It doesn't say that.

MR. McEACHERN: It doesn't? I'm sorry. I haven't got a copy.

MRS. HEWES: That would be the effect of it.

MR. McEACHERN: Okay. If the amendment leads to that effect, then that is okay by me.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, you now have a copy of the amendment.

MR. McEACHERN: Yes. I'll speak to the amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: This is exactly what it says: "with the exception of the recommendations regarding Pr. 2." The recommendation as brought forward by the vice-chairman of the committee is that it not be proceeded with, period.

2:40

MR. McEACHERN: I certainly concur that this part of the report not be concurred with on the part of the Assembly. This Bill, the Grande Cache Tourism and Business Development Authority Act, is a very excellent Bill. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has outlined a lot of the details to the Assembly so I don't need to reiterate that, but I would like to reiterate a couple of arguments as to why it should at least not be allowed to die at this stage or we should not send them back to the drawing board.

The government likes to talk a lot about economic development in the sense of helping small communities develop their economies. Here's a perfect chance and a perfect situation where a community is trying to take their fate into their own hands and to develop some local resources that they believe they can pull together better by co-operating. I don't understand why the majority on the committee decided that somehow this was unnecessary. Now, it is a fact that the government does have some programs in place to help small businesses and to help local regions and small towns develop their economies. Surely the people of Grande Cache are the best ones to judge whether or not what is being done so far is adequate to the task. Clearly they've decided it's not and that something more comprehensive, something more specific is needed. They have put together a very excellent suggestion here.

I can't help wondering if the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, who purports to support local economic activities in this province, has had a look at this Bill and, if he has, what he finds wrong with it. There is nothing wrong with this Bill even by the admission of the government members on the committee, so I don't understand why they would say that

this is unnecessary. Surely the best people to judge that are the local people in the town of Grande Cache.

So I do hope that the members of the Assembly will support this amendment and not let Bill Pr. 2 die. It is a very excellent Bill. It should at least not be allowed to die. We should not send these people back to square one and say: start over again; we don't like what you did. What they did was excellent. It should be proceeded with. If you're not prepared to proceed with it, at least don't make them start over again. It takes quite a lot of time and effort and money to put together such a comprehensive and very well-thought-out and very excellent piece of legislation. If we can just keep this alive, then this committee or this Assembly later can perhaps decide to proceed with this Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I support the amendment as put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I think we have to back up a bit in the history of the attempts at some economic development within the town of Grande Cache. The town of Grande Cache took it upon itself a couple of years ago to bring on a sort of relatively full-time development and economic officer because they realized some of the potential within their community. Grande Cache is a very, very nice community. Any of you who may not have had the opportunity to visit should visit and see the potential of that community. They've chosen to pursue it aggressively, and I think it's the type of pursuit that all Members of this Legislative Assembly should be supporting.

We talk in terms of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, for example, setting up a task force to look at rural Alberta, to look at the problems. We talk about the decay of rural Alberta, how we can keep rural Alberta alive, how we can keep it vibrant. Here's a situation where a smaller municipality in rural Alberta is making some very, very viable attempts to bring on some new industry, bring on some new economic development potential, and what happens? It is not supported by this very Assembly, at least not at this particular point, or by that committee. Hopefully it will be supported by this Assembly. Hopefully this Assembly will see the wisdom. I think it's recognized substantially by this government that there is a need for revitalization in some of the smaller areas. The alternatives that have been used up to now, I would argue, are not the best, where we talk in terms of trying to relocate people or we talk in terms of decentralizing departments. That may have tremendous impact on families that are already stabilized in centres such as Edmonton.

Here's an opportunity, without causing damage to life-styles, without causing damage to families, to allow a municipality to take an aggressive course of action in their own hands, set up a vehicle which they feel can stimulate economic development, and we have a situation where we have a recommendation coming forward that their attempt not be supported in the sense that Bill Pr. 2 is not being recommended for support by the committee. This amendment, of course, will correct that, and I would urge all members of the House to support the amendment as brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. SPEAKER: Speaking to the amendment, Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would just like to speak to the amendment briefly.

When I look at Bill Pr. 2 as proposed, it says in one of the sections, "The Authority shall have as its objects the promotion of business and tourism in and around the Town." Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Minister of Tourism thinks that that is a good concept and should be supported and I'm sure will be supporting this amendment, because, of course, the community tourism action plan does precisely that: it asks communities to become involved in the development of their own tourism plan, the things they kind of want to do. That's what I understand this Bill basically proposes to do. Similarly, Team Tourism looks at getting individual areas to promote their own tourist facilities and tourism developments, which is mentioned as one of the objects in this Bill.

I know the Minister of Economic Development and Trade would probably want to keep this Bill going, because the minister has said that he would like to see individuals get more involved and have business take a bit of a step back. So I'm sure that particular minister would support the amendment proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar as well.

Mr. Speaker, we have here a case where a small centre in the province has said: "We want to become a little more proactive. We want to become a little more action oriented. We want to become involved more actively in particular things." If we do not support this amendment, then unfortunately what will end up happening is that these people, I'm sure, will first of all be very discouraged, which may in fact have a negative impact. As members have talked about before, if you start talking negatively, you may have a negative impact on the growth of that area, and I would hate to see this Legislative Assembly say to the people of Grande Cache that we're not concerned about what's going on there.

I think we should at least allow this to stay on the books to be considered by the Private Bills Committee at another session when they next meet, whenever that may be, rather than allowing it to fade away. So I would wholeheartedly support the motion by my colleague for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. SPEAKER: Summation.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question. Okay. Thank you.

Speaker's Ruling Separate Votes on Complicated Question

MR. SPEAKER: First, for the absolute clarity of the House, the Chair is going to exercise its authority and break the report down into three areas so that we can go through this, and then we will come to this amendment.

The first of the elements here is that Bill Pr. 6 has been withdrawn. Then the next element is:

The committee recommends that the following Bills be proceeded with: Bill Pr. 3, the Lutheran Church-Canada, The Alberta-British Columbia District Corporation Act; Bill Pr. 5, An Act to Amend the Calgary Convention Centre Authority Act; Bill Pr. 8, the Jennifer Leanne Eichmann Adoption Act.

All of those in favour of the adoption of that recommendation, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The next section:

The committee recommends that the following Bills be proceeded with with some amendments: Bill Pr. 4, An Act to Amend an Ordinance to Incorporate Alberta College, and Bill Pr. 7, The Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act.

Those in favour of those two recommendations, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

Now, this is the element whereby the amendment will be voted on, but the overall motion is:

The committee recommends that the following Bills not be proceeded with: Bill Pr. 1, the Alberta Home Builders Graduate Institute Act, and Bill Pr. 2, the Grande Cache Tourism and Business Development Authority Act.

To this we now have this amendment as submitted by Edmonton-Gold Bar. Those in favour of the amendment, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The matter fails.

2:50

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

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Barrett	Gibeault	Mitchell
Bruseker	Hawkesworth	Mjolsness
Chivers	Hewes	Roberts
Chumir	Laing, M.	Sigurdson
Ewasiuk	Martin	Taylor
Fox	McEachern	Wickman
Gagnon	McInnis	

Against the motion:

Ady	Evans	Moore
Anderson	Fischer	Musgrove
Betkowski	Fjordbotten	Nelson
Bogle	Fowler	Orman
Bradley	Gesell	Paszkowski
Brassard	Gogo	Payne
Calahasen	Horsman	Severtson
Cardinal	Hyland	Sparrow
Cherry	Isley	Speaker, R.
Clegg	Jonson	Stewart
Day	Klein	Tannas
Dinning	Kowalski	Thurber
Drobot	Lund	Weiss
Elliott	Main	West
Elzinga	McClellan	Zaruský

Totals:	For – 20	Against – 45
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[Motion on amendment lost]

3:00

MR. SPEAKER: The motion that is before the House now reads thus:

The committee recommends that the following Bills not be proceeded with: Bill Pr. 1, the Alberta Home Builders Graduate Institute Act, and Bill Pr. 2, the Grande Cache Tourism and Business Development Authority Act.

Additional speakers to that motion?

The Member for Lloydminster, the proposer of the main motion, in summation.

MR. CHERRY: Mr. Speaker, I want to just speak on Bill Pr. 2 for one minute. It is the understanding of the committee that the municipality can incorporate the authority under the provisions of the Business Corporations Act or under part 9 of the Companies Act at this time. Therefore, liabilities of the authority could ultimately be facing the province; hence, all taxpayers.

Thank you.

[Motion carried]

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give notice of my intention, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to move the following motion after question period:

Be it resolved that in recognition of June 15 to 22 being Occupational Health & Safety Week in Alberta and across Canada, the Legislative Assembly extend its congratulations to the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering for their efforts in sponsoring this week which brings important workplace safety issues to public attention.

And be it further resolved that the Speaker convey this motion to the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering.

I have copies of the motion for all members.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

**Bill 53
Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act**

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of the Environment.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 53, the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill consolidates and updates nine different pieces of environmental legislation and provides a consistent framework for environmental protection.

[Leave granted; Bill 53 read a first time]

**Bill 50
Family and Domestic Relations Statutes
Amendment Act, 1991**

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 50, being the Family and Domestic Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 1991.

This Act, Mr. Speaker, addresses the rights of children born outside of marriage, and it provides the legal mechanism for these children to have a legal relationship with their fathers.

[Leave granted; Bill 50 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

In the following order: Edmonton-Avonmore, followed by Calgary-Buffero, then Calgary-McKnight.

Bill 241

Individual's Rights Protection Amendment Act

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 241, Individual's Rights Protection Amendment Act.

It is a Bill that would provide for sexual orientation as a protected category as well as, in relevant sections, political beliefs, family status, source and level of income, and conviction of an offence for which a pardon has been granted. These would become protected categories. It also allows for the commission to initiate its own investigations and to do group investigations.

[Leave granted; Bill 241 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Buffero.

Bill 272

An Act to Amend the Auditor General Act

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 272, being An Act to Amend the Auditor General Act.

This Act would give to the Auditor General power to make money-for-value audits, would expand the jurisdiction of the Auditor General over corporations controlled by the province, and would extend the time of appointment to 10 years and provide for noneligibility for reappointment.

[Leave granted; Bill 272 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-McKnight.

Bill 296

Arts Council Act

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 296, the Arts Council Act.

This Bill will create an Alberta arts council which in addition to fostering the development, study, and enjoyment of all the arts will serve as an effective channel of communication and information between the culture ministry and the arts community.

[Leave granted; Bill 296 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Is there a procedural motion from the government bench with respect to Bill 50?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 50, the Family and Domestic Relations Statutes Amendment Act, be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, I would like to file with the Assembly today the following reports: Foothills Tourism Destination Resort Plan, the Bow/Canmore Corridor Environmental Issues Analysis, and the Bow-Canmore Area Market Demand Study.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House to file a response to Question 228.

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table with the Assembly the 1990-91 annual report of the Alberta Electric Energy Marketing Agency.

Additionally, I'd like to table the annual review, 1989-90, for the Alberta/Canada Energy Resources Research Fund

Lastly, I'd like to table the annual report, 1989-90, for Alberta Energy.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to file with the Assembly the following documents: the Garden Suite Demonstration Project, the report on Affordable Housing for Rural Alberta: A New Approach, and Homesharing: A Housing Alternative for Seniors.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to the Assembly two people from my constituency. They are from the town of Stavely. They are Neil and Elizabeth Ohler. I would ask them to rise in the gallery and receive the normal cordial welcome of the members.

Mr. Speaker, for years veterinarians across the province have been providing care and treatment to injured and orphaned wildlife, and today we formalize that agreement. With us – I hope they're still here, because of the delay today – are Dr. George Long, the president of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association; Dr. Mike Person, the vice-president; and Dr. Hans Flatla, the registrar and a committee member. I would ask them to rise, if they're here, and receive the welcome and the thank you of all the members of this Assembly.

3:10

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 16 students from the LeGoff school located on the Cold Lake First Nations reserve in the constituency of Bonnyville. They're accompanied today by their teacher Mrs. Bushore. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they stand and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, through you and to Members of the Legislative Assembly I would like to introduce a hardworking group of staff from Alberta Environment who have been labouring over the past two years, in some cases on a voluntary basis, to ensure that comprehensive and publicly acceptable environmental legislation is ready for our consideration. Along with project leader Ron Hicks, I would like all these dedicated professionals to stand and be recognized by the Assembly.

head: **Ministerial Statements** **Constitutional Reform**

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I feel it necessary to rise in the Assembly today to take strong exception to a proposal of the Special Joint Committee on the Process for Amending the Constitution of Canada, commonly referred to as the Beaudoin-Edwards committee, which was today released in Ottawa. The committee has proposed an alteration to our current amending formula, an amending formula which, I might add, was first developed and proposed by Alberta in the 1970s. It became part of the Constitution Act of 1982. The proposed change would grant Quebec and Ontario a veto while leaving other provinces without one, thus granting special status to Ontario and Quebec and relegating others, including Alberta, to second-class status.

The current amending process was the product of much debate. In fact, constitutional development was blocked for decades precisely because governments could not come to an agreement on an amending process. The amending process agreed upon in 1981 and entrenched in 1982 represented the culmination of years of difficult discussions. Ten years before that, in 1971, first ministers almost agreed to a formula virtually identical to that which is being proposed by the federal committee. It was known as the Victoria formula. When it was proposed again by former Prime Minister Trudeau in 1976, the Alberta government rejected the Victoria formula proposal on the basis that it would create first- and second-class provinces.

The Alberta Legislature subsequently passed a resolution on November 4 of 1976. The resolution read in part, and I quote:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta . . . reaffirm the fundamental principle of Confederation that all provinces have equal rights within Confederation and hence direct the government that it should not agree to any revised amending formula for the Constitution which could allow any existing rights, proprietary interests, or jurisdiction to be taken away from any province without the specific concurrence of that province.

That resolution remains the position of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta unless otherwise altered by another resolution of this Assembly.

The resolution contained two key principles which remain as important today as they were 15 years ago, when the resolution was passed. First, all provinces have equal constitutional status. Secondly, with respect to the rights, proprietary interests, and jurisdiction of the provinces, neither the federal government nor any other province can determine the constitutional status of another province.

I wish to table today a letter dated April 29, 1991, from Premier Getty to one of the two co-chairman of the federal joint committee concerning the government of Alberta's long-standing views on the amending formula. In his letter the Premier noted two key principles: provincial equality and the protection of proprietary rights must be retained.

Although, as I noted earlier, the 1976 resolution remains the position of the Assembly unless otherwise altered, there are those who may say that in making the statement today and in writing to Mr. Edwards in April, the Premier and I are prejudging the work of the select special committee. Nothing could be further from the truth. I assure the Assembly that in our work to date, while we are open to discussion on the amending formula, few Albertans have expressed the view that they wish to see any province with special status. In fact, the fundamental principle of equality of the provinces was one of the key principles most often expressed by presenters to the committee. What this points to is continuing strong support for the position taken by the Alberta Legislature in 1976. Albertans have been telling us that we must not grant any province special status.

It is important to remember one important point: in order to amend the amending formula, there must be unanimous consent of all Legislatures and Parliament. I can assure the Assembly, the people of Alberta, and our fellow Canadians that the Alberta government will not agree to any change that would make Albertans second-class Canadians. [applause]

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, surprisingly, the minister's not going to get any argument from me on this particular point.

I want to look at the whole process, though. I find it somewhat offensive that at this stage of the constitutional development they are coming forward with such specific proposals as dealing with the amending formula. Surely one of the things that we should have learned from the Meech Lake fiasco is that

even talking about the amending formula is down the way because we have to determine what kind of country we want and what kind of powers are needed. For them to be coming out with a very specific proposal that has very implicit implications I certainly do not agree with. The public certainly has to be involved, and the minister alluded to that. If we're in the process of listening to people, we don't come out with a specific proposal like this and say that we're listening. It's fundamentally wrong, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say that I'm somewhat worried, and I'm sure all members of the Assembly share the same warning, that we may be into rolling the dice again. A number of proposals come forward, then meetings of politicians talking to politicians across the country, and then, all of a sudden, bilateral moves between the federal government and Quebec. That also would be unacceptable. I think we have to move the process. We've suggested things such as a constituent assembly. There may be other ways to involve the public, but that's been the best way I've found so far.

Mr. Speaker, as I say, I think it's appropriate that the minister brought this forward to the Assembly today, and we certainly in this case agree with the minister that this is inappropriate at this time.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of the Environment.

Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Moments ago in this Assembly I had the honour to introduce the Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act. By now many of the features included in Bill 53 are familiar to us all and need not be discussed or elaborated upon here. There will be ample time ahead to debate this Bill as we move through the legislative process. Today, in introducing this Bill, I would rather remind hon. members and Albertans of the four cornerstones upon which this historic legislation rests.

The first cornerstone is the government's belief that the environment is a total system which must be carefully managed to ensure the appropriate ecological relationship between mankind and our physical surroundings. Our world is extraordinarily adaptable but not so adaptable that we can allow reckless disregard for our surroundings.

To protect our environment, the government requires a sound legal framework, the second cornerstone. It has been said that nothing is more indicative of the health and progress of a society than the style and content of its laws. By that yardstick, we believe this Bill meets the test of a society genuinely concerned about our air, land, and water.

3:20

The third cornerstone of this legislation is the basic premise that good laws can only be written with the direct input of the public. I take a great deal of pride in saying that this Bill was not written solely by this government but is a Bill written largely by the people of Alberta, the people for whom we work. Public consultation is not a phrase to which we pay lip service. In the drafting of this Bill, it was a concept as important as the Bill itself.

The fourth and final cornerstone of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is the issue of trust, the trust the people have in their government to listen and the trust that government must have that the judgment of the people is sound. We could not expect the public to give us meaningful input if we were not trusted to listen to what they had to say and to demonstrate that their

views would be incorporated into the Bill. I believe that throughout the long process of drafting this Bill, we have earned the trust of Albertans on environmental matters.

Mr. Speaker, the four cornerstones of this Bill support one another. The government of Alberta is committed to sound environmental protection. To achieve that goal, we need effective legislation; to write effective legislation, we need to hear from the people; and to hear from the people, we must demonstrate our commitment to gain their trust.

From those four principles the legislation is now left to the judgment of the Assembly. To Premier Getty and all my colleagues in government who have supported Alberta Environment through this sometimes frustrating but always rewarding process; to the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane and his legislative review panel, who traveled the province listening to thousands of Albertans; to the men and women of Alberta Environment, who have as much ownership of this Bill as anyone; and finally, to the people of Alberta I wish to express my thanks for the opportunity to be a part of this accomplishment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, déjà vu. I think I heard the same speech a year ago, the same ministerial announcement. I'll have to check back.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the four cornerstones are hard to disagree with, but actions speak louder than words. What we have here is nice sounding rhetoric coming from the minister and a Bill that's tabled again in the Assembly. Looking at some of the things quickly, it's a lot better than what we have; no doubt about that. It could be improved.

Just like the Bill that we had last year, now we're bringing it in at the end of the session. He should have told us. He said weeks and months ahead. Well, that could be months and months and months and months with the way this government moves in terms of the environment. If they are serious about this, let's make a commitment here and now, in this session, that we will debate this particular Bill, and give us a commitment that this is not also going to die on the Order Paper, as the last one did.

I understand that there are some problems in the caucus, so this is probably a compromise: we'll bring it forward again, have a news conference and tell them that we care about the environment, and then let it sit there.

If this minister is serious about the four cornerstones and what a great Bill it is, we will debate it in this session before we adjourn, Mr. Speaker. I say that if that's not the case, then frankly all this is a stalling mechanism without doing anything serious about the environment and bringing in legislation. It can't be both ways. Either we deal with it in this session, or it's a stalling mechanism.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head:

Oral Question Period

Provincial Tax Regime

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'll take a look over there. I guess we'll go to the Deputy Premier. I was nice to him earlier on, so I should give him the first question.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday Statistics Canada released a study that outlined in very clear terms what the Mulroney Conservatives, like the Liberals before them, have done to our country's individual taxpayers: shifted billions and billions of dollars onto the backs of ordinary Canadians and let large, rich corporations

off the hook with a virtual free ride. The study has found that since 1986 personal income tax as a proportion of the economy has, and I quote: risen sharply to the highest level in any year of the study, continuing the upward trend that began in 1978, and corporate tax revenues have remained at relatively low levels. The Alberta Conservatives have an even worse record. Since the Conservatives began their 20-year regime, the amount of corporate income tax has fallen from roughly 40 percent of the total income tax pie to roughly 9 percent. Free enterprise Conservative style. My question to the Deputy Premier is this: how does the Deputy Premier justify this totally unfair taxation system to all working Albertans?

MR. HORSMAN: Corporate taxes are a necessity, obviously. To tax corporations as part of the . . . [Mr. Klein left the Chamber] [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.

MR. HORSMAN: For the benefit of the television viewers, I trust they will know that that uproar was not because of anything I said.

MR. MARTIN: Not yet.

MR. HORSMAN: Not yet; that's right. Nonetheless, the uproar is noted by people who observe Parliaments, and they don't note it with a lot of pleasure.

Nonetheless, to continue my answer, we have maintained a low level of taxation on small corporations in Alberta in order to encourage the growth of small corporations. I think it's important to note that corporate taxes are ultimately passed on to the consumers by way of the additional prices they pay for commodities. That is a fact of life no matter where corporations are taxed. However, the Provincial Treasurer has pointed out, as he did in debate recently on the Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, that certain increases are being levied in this current year's budget. That matter has been well debated during the course of the estimates, the debate on the budget, and on the legislation in question.

MR. MARTIN: Half of 1 percent, Mr. Speaker.

This is a serious matter. The Deputy Premier says that small corporations have had low taxation. Yes, but it's not small and it's not low. In 1987 to '89 there were at least 20 corporations with combined profits of \$1.25 billion that didn't pay one single penny. Since 1986 alone, to contrast that, the Getty Conservatives have raised taxes for individual Albertans by over \$5 billion. I want to again ask the Deputy Premier of the fairness in a system like that.

MR. HORSMAN: Well, the fact of the matter remains that the Alberta personal income tax percentage is the lowest in Canada. There is no general sales tax in Alberta. Alberta maintains the lowest tax regime of any province in Canada, yet we are able, because of our resource revenues and revenues from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund income, to maintain the lowest taxes for individual Albertans as compared to any other province in Canada. That's a record, accomplished in this current year of a balanced budget, for which I am not at all ashamed to answer.

MR. MARTIN: Well, you should be ashamed of what's going on in this province. Just look at all the other things: health

taxes; taxes on this; taxes on that. Here's a list of them, Mr. Speaker. You may not want to call them taxes, but if it quacks like a duck and looks like a duck, it is a duck. Five billion dollars coming from those people while profitable corporations aren't paying a penny.

Conservatives, whether they be federal or provincial, are always blaming our social programs: that's what's causing the problems with our deficits. That's not the case, as is well documented by Stats Canada. My question, to come back to the minister, is simply this: again, how does this government justify this whole corporate welfare system at the same time that we've had cutbacks for seniors, we don't have money for education, we don't have money for health care, and we don't have money for the poor? How do we justify this?

3:30

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am not ashamed of what's going on in Alberta for one minute. I am proud of what's going on in this province. I am proud of the fact that we offer the highest standards of health care, education at the primary, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels. We offer the finest social services safety net to our citizens who have less fortunate life-styles and abilities to earn income. We have the lowest taxes. We have the best economy in the country, if not North America. We have a balanced budget, and we are moving to eliminate the deficit. We have a Heritage Savings Trust Fund with assets which provide us with over \$1.3 billion of income. I'm proud of Alberta, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who says he's ashamed of his province. Shame on him.

MR. MARTIN: No; I'm ashamed of the government. I'm proud of Alberta.

I'd like to designate my second to the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, Mr. Speaker.

Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask a question of the phantom Minister of the Environment about his phantom legislation, but he's flown the coop. I would like to ask the Deputy Premier and the Government House Leader about the two-year history of consultation on this project, starting with the vision statement, which 5,000 people sent in to, followed by draft legislation a year ago, followed by Thanks from Alberta's Environment, followed by the report of the task force review. In fact, if I may, I would like to file a chronology of the lengthy history of this document and ask the Government House Leader if he will confirm the decision of the government caucus to let this legislation sit over, betraying all those thousands of people who put their input front and centre, hoping that this Legislature would deal with it this spring.

MR. HORSMAN: Well, like the Minister of the Environment I'm proud of the many people who have laboured long and hard to put this legislation before the Assembly, and in due course the Minister of the Environment will deal with that legislation.

MR. McINNIS: What's clear, Mr. Speaker, is that after the public consultation process, where most Albertans put their comments on the public record, some members of the Tory caucus held hearings of their own in secret. Some corporations and some special interests think the legislation is too tough, and I believe they've been influential in having it shelved. I would like the Deputy Premier to explain why some people have access to decision-makers in government via closed door meetings with

Tory caucus members while others put their views open in the public record, only to have them ignored.

MR. HORSMAN: I have no idea what the hon. member is talking about.

MR. McINNIS: Well, that may very well be, but we have a situation in Alberta where Alberta's environmental laws have been judged unenforceable, where the fines that are available are peanuts. I mean, \$75,000 to a corporation like Daishowa is nothing. Those penalties need to be increased. I would like to ask the government why special interests and backroom lobbyists can veto legislative reform and ride roughshod over the clear desire of Albertans to have tough new environmental legislation now.

MR. HORSMAN: The hon. member hasn't even looked at the Bill that's just been tabled in the Assembly today. When he does look at the Bill . . .

MR. McEACHERN: Well, it's not going to go anywhere. Why would he need to?

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. HORSMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway is never satisfied with the way his colleagues ask a question, so he has to repeat it. I think he should be an embarrassment to his colleagues on the front bench, because he doesn't think they're doing their job satisfactorily.

The fact of the matter is that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place has made just spurious allegations relative to the issue of . . .

MR. MARTIN: Well, is it coming through or not? Tell us.

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. HORSMAN: Now the Leader of the Opposition is not satisfied with the way his members have asked the question, so he pipes in. Let me answer.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place had better look at the legislation, and he had better see that in this legislation there are indeed very substantially increased fines for those people who endanger or damage the environment of this province. The fact of the matter still remains, whether the hon. member believes it or not, that Alberta has the cleanest water, the cleanest air, and the cleanest land of anywhere in North America and perhaps, indeed, the world. That is something our government is committed to maintaining for ourselves and for future generations of Albertans. That is a commitment. We will live up to that commitment, and this legislation will ensure that that remains the case.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark, on behalf of the Liberal Party.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it is no wonder that this government's minister evaporates at about the time his question on this particular piece of environmental legislation comes up. It's no wonder that this government calls a press conference that doesn't disperse until 2:30 so we can't get this piece of legislation so we can analyze it in time for question period. It's no wonder, because this government is highly embarrassed about this piece of legislation. It comes

without a commitment to debate and deal with it in this session of the Legislature. It comes without the regulations that will determine what its impact will be, and it comes without recognizing many recommendations from its own . . .

Speaker's Ruling

Brevity in Oral Question Period

MR. SPEAKER: Order, hon. member. [interjections] Thank you. Now that you've let off that amount of steam, let's have a question, please.

MR. MITCHELL: Are you a little embarrassed about it, too, Mr. Speaker? I don't blame you.

MR. SPEAKER: Take your place, hon. member. [interjections] Take your place.

Bow Valley is recognized.

MR. MITCHELL: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: That's fine, hon. member. Take your place. [interjections] Take your place, hon. member. [interjections]

MR. MITCHELL: How many preambles does he get? I want to ask that question, Mr. Speaker. I want a point of order if you won't let me ask the question.

Speaker's Ruling

Naming a Member

MR. SPEAKER: Take your place.

MR. MITCHELL: "Please."

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Mr. Mitchell, Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, you are named to the House. Please exit.

MR. TAYLOR: You're the architect of your own problems.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.

MR. TAYLOR: You've got to be one of the biggest pains I've seen.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, Mr. Taylor, you are named to the House. [interjections] Please take your exit.

MR. TAYLOR: Covering your own Environment minister's ass again. Can't he cover it himself?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.

MR. MITCHELL: He can't stay in the House long enough to answer a question.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. [interjections] Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Shame.

Speaker's Ruling

Cries of "Shame"

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. There's no need to call "shame." That's unparliamentary as well.

MR. TAYLOR: You're a bigger joker . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Take your place. Go away, please, for a while.

Bow Valley.

Premier's Trade Mission

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Deputy Premier as a follow-up to the Premier's tour abroad in support of Alberta. If the Deputy Premier has talked to the Premier recently, maybe he could bring us up to date on what his activities are as of today.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Premier today in the United Kingdom attended the Ascot races and had . . . [Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. HORSMAN: He attended Ascot and had an audience with Her Majesty the Queen. Also in attendance were His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Her Majesty the Queen Mother, and Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret. The audience lasted for well in excess of half an hour, and following that, the Premier returned to London, where he is probably still engaged in the dinner engagement which is being hosted by the agent general for Alberta, Mrs. Mary LeMessurier, and attended by prominent members of the British political, financial, and business communities. This is part of the effort that is being undertaken by the Premier to acquaint the United Kingdom leadership with the opportunities that exist in Alberta for trade and investment. It is very much a part of a significant effort to promote this province abroad.

3:40

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Speaker, maybe the Deputy Premier could tell us what the activities of the Premier will be tomorrow. [interjections]

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, the odd thing about this outburst by the opposition parties is that they were clamouring for information a week ago. Now they don't want it. I find that just a little puzzling. Their conduct is very puzzling today, quite frankly.

Tomorrow he will have meetings with the business community and the chief financial advisers to Alberta in the United Kingdom, Morgan Grenfell. Those meetings will last the better part of the day, following which he will have a news conference in the United Kingdom with representatives of the Canadian and other press there. Of course, we are delighted that the *Edmonton Journal* has seen fit to dispatch – at their own expense, of course – a reporter to follow the Premier around so that his activities can be fully and completely reported. That is, in my view, an example that could well be followed by other news media sources so that they will in fact see how important it is that the people of the United Kingdom, a major financial market of the world, know about this province, its opportunity for growth, development, investment, trade, tourism.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Edmonton-Avonmore, please.

Family Support Strategy

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the member responsible for the Premier's council on the family.

This government states that it is committed to families and to community-based agencies which provide support for families. The minister of social services has received numerous letters in regard to the government's decision to change the fee structure to community-based agencies which provide treatment for families in which sexual abuse has occurred, and today I have tabled a petition with in excess of 1,000 signatures which decries the same government policy. To the member responsible for the Premier's council on the family: will he now commit to advocating on behalf of Alberta families who are in distress and petition the minister responsible to provide families with real choices by rescinding his decision to move to a fee-for-service funding structure?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to respond to the member by saying that I myself personally and also the Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families advocates for families in many different areas. I appreciate the suggestion being brought forward. I will take that under advisement and take it up with the minister.

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is also to the member responsible for the Premier's council on the family. It is my understanding that 19 children without status with the Department of Family and Social Services, and their families, who have been receiving treatment at the Group 5: Edmonton Sexual Abuse Treatment Centre, have been put on a waiting list. Therefore, treatment will be delayed and progress to date may well be jeopardized. My question: what commitment will the member responsible for the Premier's council on the family make to ensure that these families will not suffer as a result of delays caused by the government's ill-conceived policy?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the mandate of the Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families is very clear in terms of advising the government on areas that will strengthen Alberta families. When we have specific issues raised like this, while I appreciate the concern that's being brought forward by the member who's raised it, it's really not the mandate to take these specific issues on a daily basis and address them. However, as I stated on the initial question, I will make sure that the minister responsible is aware of the concerns that were brought forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-McKnight.

Long-term Care

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The critical situation in acute care hospitals with staff layoffs and bed closures has now backed up into long-term care. For several weeks now the Liberal caucus has told the government about the crisis in long-term care in centres such as Medicine Hat and Calgary's Carewest. Now we have information from the Dr. Fanning centre in Calgary, where residents and family are pleading with the minister to reinstate staffing and funding cuts. I would like to table a letter from concerned family and patients at the Fanning centre, signed by 70 such Albertans. My questions are to the Minister of Health. Will the minister tell us exactly what she is doing about the situation in long-term care where patients are needing higher levels of care, yet the government by their actions are forcing a reduction in the number of staff?

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have a question on the health system, and I would take the opportunity to indicate to the House that I attended a meeting last night with the new federal minister of health, M. Benoît Bouchard, and I want to assure Albertans and Canadians that as ministers of health, regardless of our partisan politics across Canada, we reaffirmed our commitment unequivocally to the principles embodied in the Canada Health Act and committed further to work to ensure the sustainability and the affordability of our health system into the future.

With respect to the hon. member's question on what are we doing in long-term care, it really speaks to the issue of managing health in the '90s and the most effective way to ensure that we have a system into the future and to ensure that we're using those resources where they are needed most. In the case of the Fanning centre, it is one of several facilities operated by the Carewest board in Calgary and one of over 20 facilities for long-term care operated in Calgary. What we are doing is taking a leadership role in Canada – in fact, many of the provinces discussed the issue with me last night in Toronto – and are matching resources to the needs of patients. That's a very important principle and theme in health. I would remind the hon. member that in long-term care in Calgary, as part of the Alberta health system, we have given substantial increases to ensure that we are meeting the needs of Calgarians and Albertans for their long-term care.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you to the minister for that response. Now, I would like to know, though, if the minister would agree to meet with the patients at the Fanning centre and hear from them directly what their very valid concerns are.

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, it's not a matter of singling out one facility versus another. I meet with facilities across this province, including facilities that have been seriously underfunded for the level and type of patient that they are dealing with, and I will continue to meet with Albertans as we try to ensure that our health dollars are spent where they are needed most and that we are providing the access to health services that all Albertans need.

MR. SPEAKER: Lloydminster.

Korean Volunteer Service Medal

MR. CHERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the last session of the Assembly this Assembly supported Motion 21 unanimously, which was brought forward by the Member for Lethbridge-West, the Minister of Advanced Education, urging the government of Canada to strike a Korean volunteer service medal. I was pleased to learn that on June 17 the federal Minister of Veterans Affairs announced that service medals will be awarded to Korean veterans. My question is to the Deputy Premier, the minister of intergovernmental affairs. Can you, sir, comment on what role the government of Alberta will play in honouring Alberta's Korean veterans now that the federal government has acted in recognition of Canadians who served during this conflict?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I do want to acknowledge the work that was accomplished by this Assembly unanimously in asking the federal government to move on this matter. It's significant to note that the Canadian volunteer service medal for Korea is the only one which has been issued by a Commonwealth country. It is the intention of the government this

coming weekend to dedicate a cenotaph on the Legislature Grounds to the Korean veterans killed in action. I want to make note of the fact that the members of the Korea Veterans Association, including my colleagues the members for Lethbridge-West and Lloydminster as well as our Sergeant-at-Arms, Oscar Lacombe, are in that category. I just want to say on behalf of the government that we are pleased this event is taking place and that this long-overdue recognition is now being accorded to these veterans.

I must say as well that on one of the official visits that I paid to our sister province of Kangwon, Korea, I attended the Canadian war memorial and laid a wreath on behalf of the citizens of Alberta. It was a moving experience that I shall long remember, and I want to pay tribute to those veterans in this manner.

3:50

MR. CHERRY: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister say when these service medals might be awarded; this year perhaps?

MR. HORSMAN: It's my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Veterans Affairs are arranging special ceremonies which will take place on this year's Remembrance Day, November 11, which I believe to be, of course, a very appropriate occasion for that. I think it will add to the significance of those Remembrance Day services, which I'm sure all members of the Assembly attend in their constituencies to recognize the people who have fought and died for our country and for freedom in the world. Therefore, I think it will be a significant new addition to this year's Remembrance Day services.

Worksite Safety

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, my questions today are to the acting acting minister of Occupational Health and Safety, whoever that is. In light of this week being Occupational Health & Safety Week, we should reflect on the state of workplace health and safety in the province. In fact, recent months have seen several occupational health and safety tragedies, including lead poisoning and PCB contamination. The minister promised over two weeks ago to report back to the Assembly about the PCB contamination incident, and he still hasn't done so. Now we have reports of workers being seriously injured at the Daishowa plant through contact with toxic fly ash. I'd like to ask this government: given all these outstanding problems in the occupational health and safety field, when will this government finally show some leadership and insist on a full cleanup of these hazardous worksites across the province?

MR. BRASSARD: I'd be very pleased to take this question under advisement.

MR. GIBEAULT: Well, Mr. Speaker, given the importance of these health and safety issues, can the government at least advise us of when the minister of Occupational Health and Safety will show up in the House to answer some questions about his portfolio?

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-North West.

Immigration Policy

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Career Development and Employ-

ment. This government is well known for its push for a decentralized and fractured Canada by wanting more power for the province itself. The particular issue today that I want to ask the minister about is his recent comments regarding immigration, which is currently a federal not a provincial matter. In the comments yesterday it looks like the minister is promoting targeting immigration from particular backgrounds, as opposed to having, shall we say, a colour-blind policy. I want to go on record that the Liberal opposition has got no tolerance for discrimination, so my question to the minister today is: will the Minister of Career Development and Employment please advise the House whether or not the policy of the government now is to accept immigrants only on the basis of some selected racial heritage that's acceptable?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I hope all hon. members listened to that question very carefully, because it smacked of clear, strong allegations, allegations that are very offensive. I take strong objection to that on behalf of this government. First of all, if the hon. member would refer to section 95 of the Constitution, he would find what's made reference to with regards to immigration.

But I, too, would like to refer to the article that he refers to, because I have it as well. Mr. Speaker while the title may be fostered by the editorial board itself, it does not relate or reflect the accurate statement that I have made. It says that "Alberta should encourage more immigration from Europe compared to the growing influx," so forth and so forth. What I've said there is emphatic and has not made any reference to some 49 percent versus 21 percent from some other areas. I've tried to indicate that there should be more emphasis in one area than the other, particularly because I support the need for foreign offices in Europe similar to the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, and Tokyo. I believe there should be no favouritism, and my goal as minister in this government is to encourage larger numbers for immigration. We are presently negotiating, as I've indicated and advised this Assembly before, with the federal government to broaden those mandates as it relates to immigration.

MR. BRUSEKER: If there is no racial discrimination, then I apologize to the minister, and I'll do that publicly also, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is a concern, I think, that the minister has identified with respect to English as a Second Language. We've talked about that before in the House. I'm wondering if the minister will commit to pursue from the federal government additional funding to promote English as a Second Language training that is in ratio, in proportion to the number of immigrants that we accept here in the province that have a difficulty with English, so that we can get these people into the mainstream to be part of our society.

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I emphatically support and endorse the hon. member's representations and certainly will carry that forward. I believe he speaks with all integrity, and when he made reference to the fact that he would withdraw the previous remark, I thank him for that as well. I want to indicate that for this government and this province, the doors are open to people of all races, creeds, and colours. That always has been the policy and always will be the policy.

MR. SPEAKER: Banff-Cochrane.

Bow Valley Development

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Tourism. The Bow corridor has become the centre of tourism activity and tourism interest by a number of development companies over the past two or three years. I know the Department of Tourism has attempted to assist the municipal district of Bighorn and the town of Canmore with a study on visual impacts and the potential impacts of development in the corridor. I'm wondering whether the minister could divulge to the House the status of these studies.

MR. SPARROW: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The studies are just in their completion stage, and I believe there will be a meeting in Canmore that is being planned for approximately July 10 for public distribution of the study and a news release going out with it at that time.

MR. EVANS: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Am I to understand that the study that is being completed by the Department of Tourism would be a recommendation to the local municipalities rather than something that would be imposed upon those local municipalities by the provincial government?

MR. SPARROW: Yes. It is a study to show the concerns of many citizens, and it is definitely not being imposed on them. It is for the local government to use at their discretion if and when they want to.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Vegreville.

Agricultural Marketing Commissions

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The cabinet has the power to establish farm product commissions that collect levies from producers. Unfortunately, they used that power a couple of years ago to establish the Alberta Canola Growers Commission against the best wishes and best judgment of a large number of canola producers in the province. Now many farmers and farm groups, including the Alberta Wheat Pool, are worried that the government's going to exercise this power again to set up a barley growers commission, thereby giving that commission the opportunity to take money from farmers without permission. I challenge the minister to announce here and now that he will give producers the right to decide by insisting that no more commissions collecting levies from farmers will be established without a majority vote of producers through plebiscite.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, under the Agricultural Products Marketing Act, which was debated and passed by this House, the structure was set up to allow for commissions with refundable-checkoff status. Under that legislation we now have, I believe, five commissions formed. The test whether or not the producers like the commission concept depends upon the amount of refunds requested. If a significant amount of refunds are requested, then a plebiscite is provided for under the legislation. To date it would appear that those that have commission status are satisfied, because none of them have requested refunds to the point of triggering the plebiscite. The barley growers have gone through about two years of intensive communication with producers. All those meetings are supervised by the marketing council, and I'm pleased to say that as of today a press release went out announcing the new Alberta Barley Commission.

4:00

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, that's a travesty. Democracy is not a matter of convenience; it's a basic right of Albertans. Coming at a time when Albertans are demanding an opportunity to have input, they want to have a say. I'd like to ask the minister why he believes that the decision about whether or not a barley commission should be set up is best made by a majority vote of Conservative cabinet ministers sitting around a table in a secret meeting, than by a majority vote of farmers through a plebescite. How can he believe that?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, either the member is not listening or he does not want to hear or maybe even he can't hear. I reviewed the legislative process. It was debated in this House: the structure that is set up for any group to proceed to commission status, the type of support that they have to get from their public meetings. The marketing council supervises most if not all of those meetings. The series of meetings of barley growers of this province conducted showed significant support for a commission. Once it goes through the processes laid out by this House, the final granting of status through order in council is pretty well routine. If, as I have already indicated, a significant number of producers do not wish to have that commission, they simply ask for their money back, and that triggers the plebescite.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

Disabled Persons Facilities

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently a great deal was made by the minister responsible for the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities in terms of improvements in the life-styles of persons with disabilities. There have been a couple of positive actions: the Minister of Labour and the Building Code; the minister of economic development and the Ability Plus program. But at the same time, I must point out that the reductions in certain items within the Aids to Daily Living program are an example of real hardship, and there are a couple of other areas. To the minister responsible for culture. Two years ago in this House I raised the matter of an infrasound system for the hearing impaired in the two auditoriums. It's mentioned in the report. When is the minister going to make a commitment to provide the installation of those infrasound systems so that those with hearing impairment can enjoy those fine facilities like the rest of us?

MR. MAIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. When he asked the question last time, I gave him the answer, which still applies. When the government undertakes to renovate the facilities and to assign money to those facilities, that will be among the first things that will be done. We recognize the need to provide the entertainment and the service to all Albertans, and those things will be accomplished. The commitment has been made in the response the government gave to the committee of the report of the Premier's council on people with disabilities. That commitment has been made, and it still exists.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, that could be a long time coming. In the meanwhile, the minister responsible for the Premier's council shifted out, so I'm going to have to direct this to the minister responsible for transportation. To accompany the changes in the proposed Building Code which will accommodate additional parking within shopping centres and public

places for persons with disabilities, there has to be legislation to ensure enforcement of those parking stalls. When is the minister responsible for transportation bringing forward that piece of legislation to ensure that municipalities can provide the necessary bylaws to enforce those types of parking restrictions?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, that matter should be dealt with in terms of the miscellaneous amendments Act that is currently before the Assembly. If the hon. member would review the legislation, I think that he will find a section in that Act dealing with it.

Aids to Daily Living Program

MS MJOLSNESS: Mr. Speaker, my questions were to the Minister of Education, but I'll have to direct them to the Acting Premier, apparently. This government has seriously blundered in its decision to cut benefits to children with handicaps through the Aids to Daily Living program. It is clear that those affected by the cuts – parents, professionals, and care givers – have not been consulted and that the effects of the cuts have not been properly researched. It is quite clear by some of the statements that have been made by the Minister of Education that this government supports integration, but the cuts to Aids to Daily Living particularly have parents and schools concerned as it relates to the diaper supplies. Given that schools are raising all kinds of concerns about sanitation, increased workload for program aides, and concern for the health and dignity of students with handicaps, can the Acting Premier justify how he can concur with these cuts to the Aids to Daily Living program?

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, there's no question that some of the people on handicapped children's services are served by the AADL program as well and are required to cost share the incontinence supplies along with other Albertans if they can afford those supplies. However, we fully recognize that there may be, as I've indicated in this House on several occasions, special medical, special financial, or special personal circumstances which would see an Albertan needing beyond the limited number or limited dollar amount of supplies that are available under the program. There is an appeal process for that person, and that applies to not just children on handicapped children's services but all other Albertans as well.

MS MJOLSNESS: Mr. Speaker, then, to the Minister of Health. The schools have expressed a number of concerns about the cutbacks to the Aids to Daily Living program as they will affect the children who have handicaps that are attending their schools. I would ask the minister to please go out to the schools and talk to parents and talk to professionals in the schools, take the Minister of Education with her when she goes, and find out what's really going on, because the dignity of these students is at stake. I would ask the minister: does she understand how serious these cuts are, and would she please rescind these cuts, as they are affecting many families?

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated in the House, about 70 percent of Albertans last year used equal to or less than \$400-worth of incontinence supplies. I certainly realize, as I said in my first answer, that there may well be special circumstances applying to an individual. It's not for the Minister of Health to deem what are those special circumstances but rather an appeal tribunal that looks at those circumstances and ensures that if there is a need beyond what is supplied by the

program, that can be accommodated. I think that's the fairest and the most proper way to deal with this very difficult issue but one which I think is the proper way of managing health in the 1990s.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, as I gave notice earlier, I propose to ask for unanimous consent from the House.

Speaking to the urgency of this motion, Mr. Speaker, this is Occupational Health & Safety Week, which ends tomorrow. The theme this year is Excellence: Today's Goal, Tomorrow's Reward. The Canadian Society of Safety Engineering has taken a leading role, and it's most appropriate that the Assembly extend its congratulations to them for their efforts in this regard.

This motion is usually the kind that would come forward from the government benches, but since that didn't happen, I'm pleased to sponsor the motion on behalf of the Official Opposition New Democrat caucus, and I hope we'll have support from all members of the House.

Thank you.

4:10

MR. SPEAKER: Under Standing Order 40, only the mover may make the case of urgency.

There is the request, then, for unanimous consent for the matter to proceed. Those willing to grant unanimous consent, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The motion carries. Edmonton-Mill Woods, speaking to the motion.

Occupational Health & Safety Week

Moved by Mr. Gibeault:

Be it resolved that in recognition of June 15-22 being Occupational Health & Safety Week in Alberta and across Canada, the Legislative Assembly extend its congratulations to the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering for their efforts in sponsoring this week which brings important workplace safety issues to public attention.

And be it further resolved that the Speaker convey this motion to the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering.

MR. GIBEAULT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to be brief, we would like to encourage all members of the House to support this motion. The objectives of Occupational Health & Safety Week include the increasing worker and employer awareness of their rights and responsibilities for health and safety at the worksite, encouraging employers to develop and use health and safety programs, and promoting the practice of healthy and safe habits at work, at home, and during recreational activities.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering has taken a leading role in this regard. This is the sixth annual Occupational Health & Safety Week, and I would encourage all members to join me and pass this motion to extend our congratulations to them.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're pleased to go on record in support of the motion as presented by the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods. The efforts being made by

the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering are very, very important. They not only allow for the focusing or bringing forward of those issues relating to safety to public attention, but more important than that, once those issues are brought forward, there's a responsibility on the part of all of us as legislators within this Assembly and other Assemblies throughout this country to ensure that we deal with those in an appropriate fashion to ensure that those that work, those that are out on worksites, those that have jobs that are more risky than others are afforded the type of protection, the type of health and safety they deserve to preserve their own life-styles and preserve their own health.

In conclusion, we do support the motion.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. minister of Occupational Health and Safety and indeed all colleagues on the government side, we're very pleased to lend support to this particular motion and to congratulate, along with the other members, the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering not only for their efforts in declaring this as a special week but also for their efforts throughout the year in bringing forward ideas and ways in which safety in the workplace can be improved. There's no doubt about it that the greater the awareness and the educational aspect among the public, the greater the safety and health of the individual workers.

I'm pleased that the hon. minister is this week very much engaged in participating in these important events that are taking place with respect to occupational health and safety, and I know that in his term of office he has shown great interest and dedication to these causes and objectives.

We're pleased to join with all hon. members in this particular motion.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, summation.

MR. GIBEAULT: I think I've said everything that needs to be said.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The motion carries, let the record show unanimously. Indeed, the matter will be dealt with as instructed by the Assembly.

Speaker's Ruling Referring to the Absence of a Member

MR. SPEAKER: Earlier today there was an unfortunate occurrence in the House, and the Chair would like to read into the record the reasons for the action of the Chair.

First, all hon. members are very much aware that the Chair does not have the power to compel any member to be present in the Assembly at any time. It is unfortunate that the Minister of the Environment was not able to be present during question period to be able to handle questions, especially in light of the ministerial statement and the introduction of a Bill. However,

the Chair, again, is not able to compel the presence of any member.

Yesterday the Chair invited the Member for Calgary-McKnight to return to the Chamber, but it was an invitation; it was not a compulsion. At that time the member did comply.

Yesterday two members saw fit to forget about *Beauchesne* 481: while speaking, members "must not refer to the presence or absence of specific Members." Yesterday I thought we had sufficient discussion about that matter. It was called to the attention of the House at least twice by the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods and also again the Member for Calgary-McKnight. The Chair mentions this because surely, then, today we need not have gotten involved with members making various comments about the absence of, in this case, the Minister of the Environment, and then later on again Edmonton-Mill Woods made another reference with respect to the minister of Occupational Health and Safety. Perhaps that will be now discontinued, hon. members.

Speaker's Ruling Naming a Member

MR. SPEAKER: When the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark rose to deliver the first question on behalf of the Liberal Party, the member indeed had about three sentences or three strong statements to make about the absence of the minister from the House, and the Chair allowed those two or three comments to be made before having to intervene. It was then that unfortunately the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark did not see fit to take his place, and then to complicate the matter decided to keep on making comments back to the Chair. Reading from *Erskine May* from the Mother of Parliaments, on page 397 – yes, here it goes, hon. members. If members cause it to happen, then that's what occurs. The Chair is also given to understand that some members of the House in recent days have indeed phoned the House of Westminster to make certain that the Speaker here was doing the appropriate things and following in the manner of *Erskine May* and *Beauchesne* and so forth. Page 397:

Procedure When the Speaker Rises.

Whenever the Speaker rises to intervene in a debate, he should be heard in silence, and any Member who is speaking or offering to speak should immediately sit down. Members should not leave their seats while the Speaker is addressing the House. Members who do not maintain silence, or who attempt to address the Speaker, are called to order by the majority of the House with loud cries of 'order' and 'Chair'. A Member who persists in standing after the Speaker has risen and refuses to resume his seat when directed by the Chair to do so may be either directed to withdraw from the House for the remainder of the sitting or named for disregarding the authority of the Chair.

End of quote. It is in that context and what was occurring in the Chamber at that time that the Chair then, after the warnings, named the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark to the House.

Unfortunately, then the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon decided to call out various comments to the Chair, and that member, again doing the interruptions and failing to come to order in the House, was named to the House for the balance of this day as well. While the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon withdrew from the House, once again he left the House shouting words of abuse at the Chair, and this is the third time that that has occurred. The words are offensive to the House, they are offensive to the Chair, and the member has done disservice to himself as a member and as a person.

It's in this particular context that that kind of action was taken by the Chair, and the Chair underlines the fact that the Chair

takes no pleasure whatsoever in having to carry out those kinds of operations.

Point of Order

Absence of Ministers during Question Period

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, sir. I appreciate the information that you provided the House this day, and I appreciate especially the citation that you gave in *Beauchesne* 481 that you cannot refer to the absence of Members of the Legislative Assembly. But I think, Mr. Speaker, that over the course of time, while it's not up to you, sir, to make ministers attend, surely there should be an appreciation of the fact that there are 45 minutes on a daily basis that are given to Oral Question Period, and recently what has happened is that when we've received the list of absences of ministers, of late they've numbered anywhere from six, eight, and at one point 12 ministers. It makes it very difficult to hold the government accountable on a number of occasions when you have that kind of level of absence.

Now, sir, you rightly point out that we can't expect all ministers of the Crown to be here all the time. Obviously, there is government business that must be conducted away from the Legislative Assembly, but surely to goodness, in Alberta where our Legislative sessions are as short as they are, when the opposition only has a limited opportunity to put questions to ministers, you can appreciate the fact that we feel a real sense of frustration when we cannot put questions to the front bench. So while indeed it's quite correct that section 481 prohibits our calling the attention of the Chair and all members and the general public to the absence of ministers, I think it's important to note that we wouldn't have to do it, I think, if there was a little more respect and regard for the process that we're trying to conduct in the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you.

4:20

MR. SPEAKER: On this purported point of order, Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Further to the reference made by the member opposite to *Beauchesne* 481, I think it should be noted that a relatively rare occurrence took place today, and that is that with the private members' private Bills being brought forward, one of those received some fairly extensive debate. It's commonly known that the ministers of this House – there would be the odd time when there would be a number who would be absent, but over the course of a session I think the record shows very clearly that the record of attendance here for question period is exemplary and is something that we are all quite proud of.

However, today, as I said, a rare occurrence took place. Ministers obviously plan and book their days along the line of question period being from 2:30 to 3:30, and then are available sometimes in the House and sometimes immediately after 3:30 for meeting with various groups from around the province who travel great distances to make time set aside to meet with those ministers. So not only was there extensive debate, which is fine – the members opposite then can go on record and be in *Hansard* and send it out to their constituents showing they opposed a certain motion. Those debates, incidentally, on the private Bills are also all in *Hansard*, but if members want to take that additional time, they have to realize there is some adjusting of schedules. Not only was time given for that debate, thereby putting question period back quite a bit; some of the members from the Liberal opposition also took the extended right, which

is theirs, to stand up, even though they'd been fully recorded as opposing that Bill, and caused a ringing of the bells, which extended the question period even further.

I think that should be noted, and the ringing of the bells suggests the level of that particular activity, which is a series of a ding-a-lings.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The final speaker on this purported point of order, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In due respect to the comments by the Member for Red Deer-North, certainly there are situations that occur where it becomes virtually impossible for a minister to be here for a particular reason: because of ill health or because of some other commitment that is beyond what is happening here; in other words, commitments that do have to be honoured, and it does happen within the opposition benches on occasion. But I believe the situation today was totally different.

I can understand the frustration felt by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. It was very, very apparent, in the mind of the Minister of the Environment, that this Bill had been worked on for a long period of time. A great deal of effort had gone into that Bill by a whole lot of people, and a whole lot of preparation, of course, had gone into a line of questions by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, and I'm sure by the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place. For the minister to introduce the Bill and know what's going to happen when he himself is making a ministerial statement, which is going to take time, to demonstrate such little importance to such a major Bill and show such lack of respect for the opportunity that the opposition has, which is very, very limited, and to add injury to insult, to bow and make other questionable gestures on the way out, only added to that frustration.

Mr. Speaker, in fairness, I believe that frustration experienced by the two members of our caucus was initiated by the minister responsible for the Environment, and had he conducted himself differently, I don't believe we would have found ourselves in this particular situation. So all I'm saying in summation is that I would hope that in future those members of cabinet would attempt to honour their obligation a little greater when it comes to attending and fulfilling their responsibility: not only making ministerial statements and introducing Bills but being prepared to answer questions by opposition.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. [interjection] No. The Chair had pointed out that one from each caucus was sufficient. The matter is not a point of order; it's a complaint. I believe all members of the House will take serious consideration with what indeed was said not only by the members representing the three caucuses but also the unusual comment by the Chair with respect to the absence of a particular minister.

Thank you.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Motions for Returns**

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I move that the motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places, with the exception of the following: 261, 263, 311, and 341.

[Motion carried]

Telus Corporation

261. Mr. McEachern moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing documents or studies showing the anticipated cost of the sales of Telus shares
- (1) through the Alberta installment program, and
 - (2) through the Alberta Government Telephones employee purchase plan.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to make a few comments to Motion 261. I understand the minister has proposed an amendment to it, so I will just note that, although I know, of course, that the minister can do it himself.

It was interesting. On first reading the amendment, I thought: well, gee, what's left? In fact, what's left is not so bad, depending on what the minister decides to do with it. So I'll accept his amendment and appreciate whatever information he chooses to give me based on that. Motion 261 with the amendment really amounts to: "that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the anticipated costs of the sales of Telus shares." The rest will all disappear, according to the amendment, I think.

What I would ask the minister when he does that is to consider the cost of the sale of the shares not only in terms of the cost of brokerage fees and those technical kinds of things, you know, in putting together a prospectus and all that sort of stuff, but also the cost of putting off receiving half the price of the shares as well, because the shares were sold on an installment basis.

That's the sort of technical part of what I wanted to say. While I'm on my feet, though, I think I will make a bit of a case for the whole reason for this particular motion for a return along with its companions. There are three other ones that are similar, one of which we will deal with to some extent, I gather, but the other two will not be brought forward at this time. So to just give a little summary of the basic picture around which I put these motions together.

What I wanted to get at with these motions for returns was the actual costs to AGT and the actual picture of what happened. What I wanted to know was: how much has the subsidiary NovAtel cost us over the last few years since it was incorporated? Why and how the Bosch deal had such an effect on what happened with the subsequent intentions of privatizing AGT and the whole shift that we got from AGT being a Crown corporation and NovAtel being a subsidiary of that Crown Corporation to a situation that we're now in where NovAtel is owned by the taxpayers but AGT, which was owned by all of us previously, is now owned by less than 6 percent of the population. Now, I know that the government has 44 percent of the shares, but they don't intend to vote those 44 shares, I gather.

MR. SPEAKER: Forgive me, hon. member, but 4:30 has arrived, and under Standing Order 8(3) we must go to Public Bills and Orders.

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

4:30

**Bill 212
An Act to Amend the Water Resources Act**

MR. SPEAKER: Smoky River.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Basically, this Bill will amend chapter W-5 of the *Revised Statutes of Alberta*. The amendment is intended to establish a system of provincial water management districts under the administration of the minister responsible, with allowances for significant input from local and regional authorities and interests, responsible thereby to local and regional conditions. I think it's important that the basic content of this Bill is to allow for more local autonomy in the final decision-making process of the use of water.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Alberta is a province of diversity. Water management, of course, is no exception. There is a need for greater regional control so that water management decisions can be made by individuals who understand the local conditions and the local needs. Bill 212 establishes provincial water management districts, and each district would be administered by a local board of directors or perhaps an advisory council.

The Bill also establishes a provincial water resource management council and a water management secretariat. It could create a new three-level administrative structure. It is not intended that a new bureaucracy be established. Further review and consultation should be undertaken to minimize excessive costs and administrative steps. Consideration should be given to incorporate existing structures such as regional offices of the Department of the Environment, municipal districts, agricultural societies. Advisory councils within municipalities would certainly be an excellent group to utilize because no one is in better touch with the realities of the local needs than these groups. Consideration should be given to incorporate existing structures that indeed are already there, and in many cases I don't anticipate that a need could arise for new types of organizations to administer the needs.

Bill 212 represents an opportunity to discuss the principle of increased regionalized control over local water management. Again, this would allow for the opportunity to bring government closer to the people. It would allow government closer communication with the people so that we better understand the needs of the local community.

The current Water Resources Act was established in 1931, 60 years ago. Since that time, aside from a few provisional changes made in 1971, the Act has not been updated. This legislation served the province effectively for a long period of time because of limited settlement in the province and limited commercial use of water. The water needs of Alberta today are very different from those in past years, back in the '30s, the '50s, or even the '70s.

The current legislation is outdated and does not properly reflect the diverse water resource needs and conditions in different parts of the province. Some of these varying factors are: river systems; floodplains; lakelands; water quantity – everything from arid regions to swamplands; water quality; irrigation; drainage; domestic use – current and anticipated settlements; commercial use – agricultural, oil and gas, forestry, and so on; recreational use – fishing, boating, tourism, future plans for tourism; environmental considerations – fish and wildlife, erosion, and so on.

These factors differ in different regions of the province. For example, drainage is a major consideration in many parts of the Peace River country but is not a major factor in southern Alberta. As a matter of fact, drainage is a very major need in parts of my constituency, and in other parts it's not a factor at all. So the needs can vary even right at home.

Water resource management districts could be established in seven to 10 resource management areas and could be established on the basis of common regionalized factors. Each district would be administered by a local board of directors. In this way individuals making the decision would be familiar with the local conditions and would draw on the experience of having dealt with similar situations in the past. Water resource management districts could also expedite the water resource planning process. The current process is a lengthy one. Centralized planning often fails to meet the need for quick and insightful decisions. Regional planning commissions and planning authorities with the departments of the Environment and of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife and municipal governments would be consulted by water resource management districts. The current process has already adopted a practice for local input. The department solicits the involvement of local government in water management planning in co-operation with local authorities. Alberta Environment has developed lake authorities. Plans for 20 rural Alberta lakes are now in place. The department also consults planning commissions and local authorities relating to sewage disposal, water supply, groundwater level impacts, and surface water quality.

In some cases the department has gone as far as consulting the public on matters of water management, and one example is the Cold Lake-Beaver River community advisory committee. This committee is an environmental committee which has an interest in environmental matters and provides a forum for dialogue between industry, government, and the public on environmental issues, including water resource management. The trend has been established, but it must be formalized into government policy and legislation.

New legislation must take into consideration the priority use of potable water. As our water resource demands increase, potable water must be located, identified, and reserved for domestic use. A clearer definition of potable water should also be put in place; we have to identify clearly what potable water is. A priority system should be established so that potable water is not used for oil field injection use when saline or potable water of poorer quality is available. However, this system must be flexible and sensitive to local circumstances so that priority water guidelines can be relaxed in areas where a large amount of potable water is available and there is little or no immediate use.

New legislation and water management policy must reflect the growing need to focus on drainage issues. Drainage, of course, is very important in some areas, particularly in northern Alberta where vast tracts of flat land, clay lands, hold the water for long periods of time. A proper drainage system, of course, can assist in proper production techniques and proper production abilities for the agricultural community. Early settlement and agricultural development of southern Alberta has resulted in a well-developed, well-funded irrigation system, and perhaps a similar system can be incorporated into the needs of the drainage of northern Alberta. Certainly a requirement for well-defined funding, long-term funding must be put in place so the municipalities can plan their process years in advance and recognize and advise the local community of what is going to be happening.

In the same way that dry conditions represent the problems for farmers in southern Alberta, farmers in northern Alberta have the same difficulties associated because of excessive water in terms of production of soil conservation. Drainage, of course, is very, very important, properly structured to the needs of proper soil conservation. As northern Alberta continues to play a larger role in the economic development of Alberta, drainage

in an organized manner must become an issue of growing importance in water resource management.

New legislation in water management policy should allow for more lenient surface storage guidelines. Damming, diverting, and direct control of small bodies and flows of water has not been permitted to a great extent in Alberta. These practices are carried out with local consultation and sensitivity to environmental factors. Domestic and economic benefits can result from proactive water management.

Times have changed. Provincial policy must allow for more creative use of our surface water. In many cases we are not pursuing options for surface water use in the areas of commercial development, recreation, and tourism. Water management is a very complex and broad-based area. Almost every aspect of Alberta life is in some way impacted by the water resource. Generally, the results of water management decisions are felt by the residents, commercial activity, and the environment in the immediate area. We need general guidelines so that our water resource throughout the province is protected, and with these guidelines in place, local bodies will be able to manage water resource issues effectively and efficiently. We need to take the decision-making process to the regions where the effect is actually taking place.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley.

4:40

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to stand and speak in favour of Bill 212. I think it's important that we recognize the value of one of our most important resources, which is water, and take care that that resource remains as stable as possible for the next generation to come.

Where the administration of local water resource projects is concerned, Mr. Speaker, I just have one simple comment: regionalizing the decision-making process just makes sense. Of course, there are certain overall decisions that must, for obvious reasons, be made by some centralized agency to ensure that the best interests of our province and of the provinces adjacent to us are served.

Local decisions are only made more complicated and less satisfactory, Mr. Speaker, when administered by officials who are somewhat removed from the immediate situation and perhaps do not have an adequate understanding of all the dynamics involved at the particular site. Such is the case with water management.

Alberta Environment has also acknowledged that the involvement of local and regional governments should be pursued as much as possible and that this involvement is essential to ensuring that all needs are met and that projects are sustainable.

Why not then take one further step by turning these issues of a strictly regional nature over to regional administrators drawn from the population that will be directly affected? The development of regional boards, then, is the next logical step. The validity of this approach is apparent. In addition to providing the opportunity to address the variety of important concerns that my hon. colleague from Smoky River has pointed out, this approach has other real benefits.

Creating a structure whereby a group of informed individuals close to the issue can make the decisions and make recommendations regarding their region would also allow for water management practices to become more sensitive to the unique aspects of a given region, to co-ordinate the variety of interests

important to that region and allow more flexibility in dealing with those interests.

Our province has a great diversity, Mr. Speaker, in terms of water resources and water needs. Geography, topography, surface and groundwater systems, and water demands vary greatly from region to region in Alberta. The dry south, of course, has totally different water needs and priorities than forested areas in the northeast or wet agriculture zones in the centre of the province. I understand from the reports today that we can't really talk about the dry south right now when there are flood reports coming in from such places as Pincher Creek and down in that area. It's welcome news to the farmers in the area, but certainly it's an experience they haven't had for probably 20 years.

Allowing regional boards to make basic water allocation decisions would provide a chance for increased sensitivity, Mr. Speaker, to these divergent needs and interests. For example, some areas of the province have specific concerns on water drainage. Not all regions experience this problem, and those who live in the area best understand the unique challenges and obstacles that drainage problems present. With the standardization of procedures and the guidance provided by Alberta Environment, local board members can use their knowledge of the nature of their zone to make a well-informed, practical, and locally supported decision concerning the drainage or management of water in their particular community.

Mr. Speaker, I cite some examples where this type of a procedure would be well advised. If you look at the drainage in northern Alberta, it's needed in one form, and if you look at the drainage in central Alberta, it's needed in a totally different form. I have seen where sloughs have been drained and consolidated, and depending on how they're done, they can cause far-reaching effects on water table rechargeability. There is a value which I don't think has been fully understood yet by a lot of people outside these areas. There is a value in having potholes and sloughs in fields and in areas to hold the water and allow the water table to recharge. As has been cited different times in this House, our water table in the drier areas of Alberta is probably lower than it's ever been in history. Part of this is due to poor planning, poor management, and centralized decision-making on slough drainage and slough consolidation.

Another area, Mr. Speaker, that is very much localized and should be under local consideration as opposed to centralized planning is the area of water flooding for the oil patch. There are three or four areas in Alberta that are very largely affected by this. One, of course, is in my constituency, the Drayton Valley constituency. There's one in the Peace River and one in east-central Alberta. If these oil companies are allowed to continue drawing off potable water from under the ground, which is not measurable and its effects are not measurable – we do know that in some cases where they have drawn from a potable water source that was being used by agriculture and smaller communities in the area, it has affected the water table as far as five to 10 miles away. This is an imperfect science as yet: to determine how much this does affect the potable water supplies in a particular area. There's a popular theory in my area and particularly in the Drayton Valley constituency that the oil companies would be better advised to use surface water from dams or from rivers to carry out their flooding projects in the area. That way it is measurable, you know where the water is going, you know where it's coming from, and it doesn't disrupt the normal aquifers that are in the area.

The other thing that could happen at the local level, Mr. Speaker, is the administration of beaver dams and trying to

control some of the watersheds provided by beaver dams. In my area, in the Drayton Valley constituency, we've had two hundred-year floods in five years. The first one was in 1986, and what we found when we were looking at the damage done by this flood, where we had around 12 inches of rain in a short period of time, was that there were miles and miles of beaver dams which were flooded out, basically. As one beaver dam at the top end of the circuit went, it forced the next one down to go. Thus when the water hit places like Buck Lake and the Saskatchewan River, there was an immense amount of water coming all at once. When we looked at the damage done to these areas by the flood, we went back, and there were no beaver dams left. They were just cleaned right out for miles and miles and miles. There's a popular theory out in that area now that the flood of last summer that hit some of the same area was a direct result of these beaver dams not being replaced by them, because the water moved off so much quicker and went down the streams and caused much more damage with much less rainfall, probably about half the rainfall.

Decisions to deal with these and other situations of the same kind should be made at the local level. Mr. Speaker, these decisions to handle these types of problems are contingent on the local people understanding the situations that are in the local areas. It's our most precious resource. In some areas it is almost a nonexistent resource. When you talk about our dry areas, whether they're irrigated or not, they face unique problems in the administration of their very precious water resources. In the proper framework it is obvious that these concerns would be best dealt with by those who are familiar with the conditions and problems unique to that region. If you go again out to the really dry areas, if decisions could be made at the local level I think you would find more people putting in smaller dams on runoff creeks and conserving this moisture and building their own series of sloughs and dugouts to contain the water when it does come from the runoff as opposed to letting it go downstream.

Floodplains are another example. Floodplains are currently designated by Lieutenant Governor in Council. Is it not obvious that individuals from the region would have to be consulted extensively to determine the nature and definition of any floodplain? Such areas would be best identified and most consistently managed at the local level.

The current approach does not recognize the co-operation necessary to make a water management plan work. Local people have to be involved not just in the implementation but in the making of decisions as well. This will ensure the best possible level of commitment to both the principles and the practices required to make a plan work. The unique knowledge that residents of an area can bring to the table and can provide about their unique water systems and needs are invaluable in making sure that the most informed decision is made. It just makes sense, Mr. Speaker, to move the decision-making process to the local level.

4:50

A governing body that attempts to address water issues and administer permits must also be able to consider a variety of factors at the same time. Of course, Alberta Environment already balances a number of criteria when making decisions on water allocation. However, a board that consistently deals with one region's issues is far more likely to provide a consistent, co-ordinated approach to the water management of that region as a whole. The degree of detail required and the number of factors that must be considered are also unique to that particular

area in each region. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, these would be digested and administered most effectively by a local board that focuses on local issues on a daily basis.

Prioritization of water needs is an excellent example of where this co-ordination could be put to work to ensure the most effective use of water resources. The current Water Resources Act does standardize the rating of general priorities for water consumption from a given source. However, a regional board would be able to finely tune those priorities to fit the distinct characteristics of the zone. Where local conditions warrant, then the board could call on its knowledge of the water resource specifics to make better decisions concerning relevant projects.

Addressing the situation of soil conservation fits in here as well, Mr. Speaker. As the Member for Smoky River pointed out, soil conservation is currently not a factor in making decisions concerning permits for drainage projects under the Water Resources Act. If soil erosion is a problem in a given area, however, that regional board could implement decision practices and guidelines that would keep that issue relevant. When we talk about slough drainage and the different types of drainage systems that are put in in different areas of the province, in some areas the soil is very susceptible to washing and sloughing off when a lot of water goes down in a hurry. If you have a properly managed drainage system, it still contains the water and lets it seep off slowly, and as I said before, it will recharge the water table.

An underlying benefit, then, is the consistency that locally situated regional boards could provide in planning and administration. As it exists, there is no long-term structure in place to monitor water resource planning on a more constant basis. The current system is somewhat more ad hoc, as projects are reviewed on an individual basis by a removed analyst in a removed office without the co-ordinated consideration of all aspects of water management at the same time. In effect, Mr. Speaker, the review by Alberta Environment upon which projects are approved considers little more than an actual snapshot of the local water situation. Although their resources allow them to make informed decisions, centralized analysts cannot have the integrated awareness of all the needs and demands on a very specific local water system.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, we've had actual incidents of an oil company wishing to put in a water flood area in an area where it was predominantly flowing wells. When the plan was discussed at a local ratepayer meeting, you might call it, it was found that there were a lot of discrepancies that the water resources people were not aware of, that had not been brought forward to their attention. After the meeting the plan was changed and the oil company decided to bring the water from the river as opposed to trying to take it out of the local potable water supply.

A regional board, Mr. Speaker, would find it far easier to maintain a dynamic overall picture of their region, with an awareness of the history of fluctuations in supply and demand of water and other unique conditions relevant to their own zone. This increased sensitivity and consistency can only result in more informed decisions with the long-term results in mind. Because the decisions are made by and in the local community, the water management plans would be a more integral part of the residents' approach to water issues. Surface and groundwater decisions currently appear to be far removed from the farm, the municipality, or the county for which they are made.

In conclusion, there's an underlying issue that seems very obvious, and yet it must be stated and recognized: we cannot alter nor do we want to alter the physical diversity of this province, and we cannot squeeze the tremendous diversity of water management issues into a relatively rigid central administrative structure. We must then fit the structure to the needs. We must return the decision-making of regionally impacted management issues to the people who are directly affected and make those decisions at the point of need. Our system must be adaptable, flexible, and sensitive enough to meet the very specific demands placed on it by a multiplicity of elements. Adjusting the administrative structure to allow more decisions to be made at the regional level would meet those requirements. Mr. Speaker, it just makes sense to have these decisions made at the local level where the people understand what the history is and what the needs are of the local community.

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to offer my support for this Bill and to thank the Member for Smoky River for bringing it forward.

Our caucus believes this Bill has considerable merit. As I understand it, it establishes a system of provincial water management districts to ensure that decisions with respect to surface water and groundwater will reflect local or regional conditions and interests. That is a principle that is, of course, very dear to my heart. We believe this Bill is an excellent idea for areas where there are no irrigation districts, as it would allow local or regional input into water management decisions and also provide a means to protect local water resources. However, I do have two or three questions, for clarification only. Perhaps the Member for Smoky River will answer these, and that would help me.

Mr. Speaker, to me the Bill is not entirely clear on the division of authority where there are irrigation districts. It seems that an irrigation district might either function under the Irrigation Act or under this Act, so there needs to be some clarification there. Also, regarding the water resource management council, for the council to operate initially it's my understanding it must have at least seven members, excluding those from the water resource management districts. Now, depending on how many management districts are constituted, it could result in a large and unwieldy council. I expect the member has taken that into consideration and will have an answer there.

Just a couple of other questions, Mr. Speaker. Section 3 implies that a water resource management district can be identical to an irrigation district. Does this mean, then, that all irrigation districts would be brought under this Act? Will there be, in fact, overlap? Under sections 22 and 24 of the Irrigation Act each irrigation district has its own board of directors, and there is an irrigation council which can "advise each board on the conduct of the affairs of its district" and so on. Will an irrigation district that is identified under (c) function under this Act instead of under the Irrigation Act? That, again, I would appreciate clarification on.

Mr. Speaker, one last comment. We note that the council may "prohibit a course of conduct proposed to be done" by a local board, and I'd like to know if this means that the council will have jurisdiction over irrigation districts that become water

resource management districts. They would thus lose some autonomy in the process they currently have.

With those few questions and comments and a request for clarification of those items, Mr. Speaker, our caucus will support this Bill.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to address a few comments to Bill 212, An Act to Amend the Water Resources Act. On a quick read I think it's a pretty good piece of legislation, and I think the Member for Smoky River has done a pretty good job in preparing and presenting the Bill. I think it's something that all members of the Assembly are keenly aware of; that is, the need to define very carefully what rules and regulations we're going to have in the province of Alberta with respect to the use of a very precious resource, and that is water. It's something that is not only needed by industry in the province, is not only needed by agriculture in the province, but it indeed sustains the life of everything in the province. So it's our most precious resource, and we need to be very diligent in our efforts to preserve it to make sure Albertans now and in the future, into the long-term future, have good, adequate quantities of safe, potable water to sustain their lives and activities.

5:00

I'm not confident the Bill will pass. I hope it will go to a vote, and we'll see how the government feels about the Bill presented by the Member for Smoky River. I do think if this Bill were to pass, the government would be able to display their commitment to maintaining the quality of water in the province of Alberta and improving the decision-making process with respect to the use of that water by doing things like proceeding with Bill 53 on the Order Paper, the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, introduced a first time by the Minister of the Environment today. We believe it's the government's intention to let that Bill die on the Order Paper again. I think that's a shame, because the passage of that Act would be a clear commitment that this government is indeed serious about maintaining the quality of water in the province not just for current generations but for the future as well. That doesn't seem to be the case.

As well, I think a healthy indication of the government's commitment would have been for them to support private member's Bill 202, the Environmental Bill of Rights Act, introduced by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place and debated in this House at the very beginning of the session. That Bill, if passed, would establish in no uncertain terms the right of each and every Albertan now and in the future to have access to safe drinking water. That's a basic right. We should establish as a basic right the right to breathe fresh air and drink fresh water. The government didn't seem inclined to support legislation like that or propose some of its own. So while congratulating the Member for Smoky River for his initiative and acknowledging the wisdom of the comments made by his older companion from Drayton Valley, I think a clear indication . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Older companion?

MR. FOX: Well, one's smart and one's good looking, Mr. Speaker, and they've been arguing for years about who's who there.

Anyway, that to me would have been a . . . Well, they've proposed it, they've spoken on it, but I'm not sure the government really supports this kind of initiative, because I've not seen any indication of that commitment in the form of support for other perhaps more major legislative initiatives in this Assembly, referring again to the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act.

The members propose a process whereby local boards would be established and have input with respect to provincial water management districts. I think there are some positive recommendations there. We have to bear in mind, though, that we don't want to balkanize the system of standards. We have to make sure we do indeed work towards establishing the best standards for water management and conservation that we possibly can, and that would be the standards that are applied by the local authorities and are the guidelines used by the water management districts that are proposed.

All 83 members of this House are keenly aware of the interest Albertans have in maintaining long-term access to safe drinking water, but rural members are perhaps more keenly aware of some of the problems that occur with respect to the management of water. I'd have to say that in the five-plus years I've been a member of this Assembly, the most difficult and controversial disputes between people in the country centre around water. I guess that's been the case since the west was settled. You know, we often see movies where some rich cattle baron will attempt to secure the only creek in the area for his own use and try and drive the squatters or the homesteaders out. It makes for a good story in western sagas. Usually some hero on a white horse comes riding in to set the matter straight. But that's not very . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: *Chinatown*, too, in the modern era.

MR. FOX: That's right. Smilin' Jack Nicholson would know that issue too. But the fact is that the scenario hasn't changed very much. Disputes arise frequently between rural landowners about the use and management of water, and the disputes can be very bitter and long-lived.

I'm sure all rural MLAs have had contact with people who have been fighting with each other for not only years but perhaps generations about draining a slough on one piece of land and the resultant flooding on another piece of land, or the direction of a particular watercourse through more than one piece of property. The issues abound and are very familiar to me as a rural landowner. The first year we moved to the farm, there were very unusual and excessive rains in the summer of 1973, along with a great amount of snowfall in 1974, and the river our farm is located on flooded in the spring of 1974 in a way that it hadn't for decades, Mr. Speaker. In response the Department of the Environment, water resources, undertook to do some stream widening and cleaning of the Vermilion River and some downstream weirs in an effort to move water more quickly through the system to avoid flooding in the spring. However, solutions at one end of the system caused problems for people at the other end.

The problems are enormously complex and need a very thorough and scientific analysis of the impact of drainage systems and water handling plans in different regions so that in attempts to solve problems for some landowners and water users we do not create problems for other people in the same way. I've suggested in the House on previous occasions during debate on other measures that we should ensure that we have a system in place that guarantees downstream users the right to have

input to decisions that are made about watercourses. I trust this is included in this Bill. I'm pleased to have suggested it here a few years ago and that the member agrees with me, because I think it's very important to recognize the rights of Albertans.

As well, I think there's some recognition in the Bill of the rights of people generally in the province of Alberta with respect to water use and management, that you don't necessarily have to live on a particular watercourse or stream or river in the province to claim an interest in it. Indeed, there's been some dispute over the years about decisions made with respect to the Oldman dam. Some of the proponents of the dam feel that the only people who have a right to input, the only people who have a right to have their voices heard are people who either drink water from the Oldman River or its tributaries or will benefit from irrigation or water management projects on that river. Well, I personally think that's a very narrow interpretation, it's unacceptable, and I believe the Bill recognizes that principle in part as well. The water resources in the province, I would suggest, do not belong to anybody in the province of Alberta. They are ours to enjoy and make use of, and it's incumbent on us that we make responsible use of them so future generations have the same opportunities we do.

So it is entirely reasonable to me that people in northern Alberta take an interest in water management projects in southern Alberta, because maybe people who live in the north may move to the south. Maybe people who live in the north enjoy the south. Maybe they find recreational uses for water that other people have industrial uses for. I think the Bill acknowledges the right of all people to take an interest in the resources of the province and to have input. I'm not sure the government has acknowledged that. Certainly we haven't heard any indication of that sort of commitment in debate we've had in this House on projects like the Oldman dam, because the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services in charge of dam building certainly seems to reject the notion that Albertans who disagree with him have any right to input into this whole process.

5:10

I like the section in the Bill here where the member talks about protecting aquifers. It's a serious problem in some areas in the United States, where aquifers have been almost entirely depleted by . . . [interjection] The Member for Lloydminster agrees with something. That's interesting. Maybe I'd better sit down.

There are aquifers in the midwest United States that are almost depleted. It's a situation that causes great alarm among people there, not just farmers or industrial water users but people who wonder what the heck they're going to have to drink in the future if that aquifer's depleted, because it took perhaps centuries to – replenish the aquifer? If it has to be replenished, could it be replenished? In the beginning there was water.

AN HON. MEMBER: Amen, brother, amen.

MR. FOX: Amen. It's a very serious problem, and I hope we can deal with it before it becomes a serious problem in the province of Alberta.

There are some areas in the province where large amounts of water are required for industrial use. I think of the Cold Lake area, the Lloydminster area, areas near major industrial developments; the tar sands, for example, where large amounts of water are used either from surface sources or beneath-the-ground sources. We've got to be very, very diligent in our efforts to ensure that that water is used responsibly and not polluted.

That means that the government has to decide to be vigilant in terms of identifying sources of pollution of our major water-courses in the province and, once identified, going out and getting convictions and fines that are commensurate with the kind of damage done. Again, that's something that has not been done. The member and I had a dispute . . .

MR. PASZKOWSKI: A discussion.

MR. FOX: . . . a discussion – a friendly conversation between the Member for Smoky River and myself – about the Wapiti River in his constituency and whether or not people could catch fish, or if they did catch fish, whether or not they'd want to eat them. There are problems with some rivers in the province, and problems exist for a couple of reasons: industrial pollution is an obvious source in some areas, and pollution from municipal sources is another problem. I think we have to be ever vigilant in our efforts to track down the polluters and make sure that they pay, that they recognize we will not tolerate abuse of our precious resource in the province of Alberta. I'm not talking about fines like \$75,000 to Daishowa that some companies would view merely as the cost of doing business in the province of Alberta. I'm talking about the kinds of fines envisioned by the new Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act that the government doesn't seem to want to proceed with.

So I express my tentative support for this legislative initiative by the Member for Smoky River. I never thought for a minute that I would describe him as one of the more progressive members of the Conservative government caucus.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Why not?

MR. FOX: The Member for Smoky River wonders why not. We'd have to discuss some of his attitudes on other issues. But in terms of my painting him as a progressive member, he certainly is indicating his progressive view of certain issues with respect to this Bill, and I appreciate it. But again I'm a little skeptical, based on experience in this House, about the government's commitment to some of these things, because they've certainly not demonstrated it with respect to their rejection of the environmental Bill of rights proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place and their continued refusal to bring forward debate and pass in this Legislature strong environmental protection and enhancement legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to comment on the Act to Amend the Water Resources Act and compliment the Member for Smoky River. I certainly think there is a need for establishing provincial water management districts.

I'd like to share with you a little bit about the area I represent, in particular the major river there, which is called the Highwood River. Now, by northern standards, when you look at some of the large rivers in the Peace River country, it's merely a creek, but in our area it's a pretty important river. When the ranchers first came to that area, they discovered that for thousands of years the Indians had been using the valley of the Highwood area as an ideal wintering ground. The water was good. It was a tumbling mountain stream and continued to be open in parts throughout the coldest winters. It provided sustenance to the trees, so there was wood and shelter for them.

When those ranchers came, then, they settled in the area of the Highwood River. Of course, for the raising of cattle and horses, water is absolutely vital. Livestock will die within a few days without that important ingredient.

When settlement came to the area, particularly to the south and to the east of the Highwood River along the Little Bow, there came a need for supplementing the water in the Little Bow stream. It's what geographers would call an intermittent stream. When there was rain or spring runoff, there would be water in the streambed, but when there was no rain or when the summer came, the stream would dry up.

Along about the First World War a number of ranchers and farmers in the area along the Little Bow requested the federal government to build a diversion works at High River. About 1917 the completion of the diversion works was effected. Water was diverted through a canal into the Little Bow stream and supplemented the stream flow so that through the dry summer and fall months people in the area to the south and east of High River would have water for their livestock. In the early '60s a number of people began irrigating out of there.

One of the things I like about this Bill of the hon. Member for Smoky River is the management districts. There isn't a management district even to this day along the Little Bow. We now have a project in mind to substantially increase for shorter periods of time the flow and diversion from the Highwood River into the Little Bow to form a reservoir so irrigators there would have a more certain irrigation period. There's not much point in planting a crop with the idea of irrigating it if you only have water up to, let's say, the end of June and then there's no water for July and August. You're better off not to have put on the extra fertilizer and planted the crop if you're not going to be guaranteed water. So naturally people in that area want to increase the certainty of the flow; thus the proposal for the Little Bow River project.

In a few of the dry years in the mid-80s the sharing of the Highwood River with people in the Little Bow got to the point where 70 percent of the flow in the Highwood was diverted down the Little Bow and only 30 percent was to continue in the Highwood and down into the Bow River. As a result, there were tremendous fish kills in the area. The river, which was one of the best trout streams in Alberta, became truly a slimy trickle. One reason was that the sewage from the community of High River was disposed of in the river. Since that time, the Cargill plant coming into place has helped the stream a tremendous amount. With the large amounts of water required by the Cargill plant, they also have a large discharge which is now being piped, along with High River sewage, to Frank Lake, where time and the action of bulrushes and sunlight will purify the water and make it useful. No longer will sewage from High River go down the stream. That problem is now cleared up.

A management district in this area might well address itself to the fact that many of the people who draw water from the Highwood or the Little Bow and use it for irrigation pay no charges. Perhaps it would be a slightly better use of a very limited resource, water, if there was some charge as there is in irrigation districts.

I was interested that the hon. Member for Vegreville commented on the rights of downstream users. That's certainly one of the things that has occasioned a number of questions from me to the Minister of the Environment, asking for his assurance of the protection of the rights of the downstream users.

5:20

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

In addition to the livestock people and the irrigators, and perhaps first and foremost in line of rights, there are number of villages and towns on the Little Bow, including Nanton and Cayley in my district, that use water that has been diverted from the Highwood into the Mosquito Creek/Squaw Coulee line or into the Little Bow. Those communities need it. In addition to that, there are quite a few water co-ops which supply water from the streams to nearby farms and Hutterite colonies. So there is an important need there for water for domestic purposes, for livestock purposes, for purposes of irrigation. But there's also a need to ensure there is a flow downstream. Clearly, then, there's a need for upstream offstream storage or onstream storage to capture the flush that occurs in the spring. One of our colleagues was saying that there's now a flood warning for the south due to the heavy rains. If there are storage areas, they may serve as flood abatement as well as mitigating reservoirs for the low flows in the summertime.

I would now like to defer to my colleague from Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. SPEAKER: Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In participating in the debate on Bill 212, An Act to Amend the Water Resources Act, first I should say that the water that exists in this province is reversed to what's used in that about 80 percent of the water exists where about 20 percent of the water is consumed. So our balance of water in this province is opposite to where the use is. That includes population as well as irrigation.

With the short amount of time left, it's tempting to debate with the Member for Vegreville some of the comments he made about public input or the lack of public input on the Oldman dam issue. Deep down, Mr. Speaker, he really knows that those comments are made tongue in cheek. He's been around long enough to know the extensive history of public input related to that construction site.

Mr. Speaker, as related to the Water Resources Act, it's interesting that the day we hit Bill 212 by the Member for Smoky River is the day the Minister of the Environment introduces environmental legislation in the House replacing – what is it? Some five or six Acts, seven Acts?

AN HON. MEMBER: Nine Acts.

MR. HYLAND: Nine Acts. The one exception, the Act it doesn't cover, is the Water Resources Act. The member has outlined the history of the Act and the date it was introduced. The Minister of the Environment has said several times that there will be a public review of the Water Resources Act, and I think this is a good place to start the public review of the Water Resources Act, in the debate we've had on this Bill this afternoon. As time goes on through the summer, the Water Resources Commission, which I chair, and part of the Department of the Environment will be having detailed public input, touring as we did in the wetlands study, touring probably 15, 16 – somewhere in there – towns, villages, cities in the province of Alberta to indeed get public input on any changes to that Act. We believe strongly on this side of the House about public input, and this is a good way to start it out. These public sessions will continue through the summer and early fall. People can come and sit around the table and have discussions, talk about their problems as they exist with the Act and how they affect them and affect others around them and make reasonable suggestions towards changing the Act.

Mr. Speaker, in view of the hour, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, it's proposed this evening to deal with Government Bills and Orders in second reading, commencing with Bill 36, then 38, 40, 41, and if those matters are completed, to move into Committee of the Whole and deal with certain Bills which remain on the Order Paper other than those associated with the Provincial Treasurer.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:26 p.m.]