

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, September 9, 1993**

**2:30 p.m.**

Date: 93/09/09

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head:

### Prayers

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Our Father, keep us mindful of the special and unique opportunity we have to work for our constituents and our province, and in that work give us strength and wisdom.

Amen.

head:

### Introduction of Visitors

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Seated in the members' gallery today are two visitors to Alberta from our sister province, Kangwon, Korea. They are leaders of a delegation of eight high school lawn tennis athletes visiting the province of Alberta over the next 10 days as part of an international sports exchange. They're holding matches here in Edmonton this week and will be traveling to Calgary next week. The delegation leader is Mr. Nam-Soo Kim, chief of sports for Kangwon-Do, and his assistant, Mr. Jae-Phil Song, and accompanying them is Dr. Yeh Chang. I ask them to rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the hon. Minister of Community Development have visitors to introduce?

MR. MAR: Yes, I do, sir. Mr. Speaker and members of the Assembly, I am also pleased to introduce to you today His Excellency Pacifico Castro, ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to Canada. The ambassador is accompanied by Mr. Villamayor, a minister/counsellor at the embassy, and Mr. Ang, information officer, and Mr. Cui, honorary consul for the Philippines in the city of Edmonton.

His Excellency was appointed ambassador to Canada in June of this year, and this is his first official visit to our province. We're pleased to receive the ambassador at this point in the Philippines history, at a time when democracy is taking hold and economic growth has returned to the republic. This visit is particularly important to our province in light of the very active Filipino community, which numbers over 18,000 in Alberta and actively sponsors cultural and other activities.

I would ask that the ambassador and his party rise in the gallery and receive the recognition and warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

### Presenting Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. deputy leader of the opposition.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of 705 Albertans who are urging the government to open up the adoption legislation in our province.

head:

### Introduction of Bills

#### Bill 5

#### Financial Administration Amendment Act, 1993

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 5, the Financial Administration Amendment Act, 1993. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Gover-

nor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, there are three key provisions in the Bill. One is that the Bill implements a number of the recommendations of the Financial Review Commission as well as the most recent Auditor General's recommendations. Secondly, it raises the province's debt limit pursuant to yesterday's budget speech by some \$2.5 billion, and it provides for a sunset clause for all agencies, boards, and commissions. That means that those agencies, boards, and commissions will come to a stop effective January 1, 1999, unless this Legislature decides to direct or redirect or refocus their activities and continue them in a different form.

[Leave granted; Bill 5 read a first time]

head:

### Tabling Returns and Reports

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the 1992-93 annual report of the Agricultural Development Corporation, and also I'd like to table the report of the Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to file with the Assembly four copies of the Alberta government submission to the producer panel studying and recommending changes to the Western Grain Transportation Act.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table copies of the 1992 annual report of the Workers' Compensation Board.

head:

### Introduction of Special Guests

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. G.B. Adhikari. Mr. Adhikari is the community development co-ordinator for a district of some 30,000 villagers in west Nepal. He is in Alberta participating at the University of Calgary/Nepal health development project, and later this month will be making a presentation to the international public health conference here in Edmonton. He is accompanied today by Mr. Carl Rausch, who is with the community consultation project of Siksika Nation. I'd ask these two gentlemen who are in the member's gallery to stand and receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, one of the great honours that can be bestowed upon a nonnative person in this province is to be adopted by an Indian band, and such has been an honour bestowed on me. Today two members of the band that I am a member of, Mr. Armin Alexis and Mrs. Vera Kootenhayoo, are in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly representatives from local 50, Alberta Liquor Control Board employees' contract negotiating team. These individuals are charged with representing the interests of their membership in contract negotiations with the Alberta Liquor Control Board. It is my pleasure to introduce Ray Gorse, chairman of local 50; Vic Franson, vice-chair of negotiations for local 50; and Larry Bergmann, Mike Jager, Sharon Ward, and Irene Demskie, who are

also members of the negotiating team. I'd ask them to stand and receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

MR. DUNFORD: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly and especially the 48 other new members a very distinguished gentlemen from Lethbridge and a true champion of the legislative process. I'm referring to Mr. John Gogo. Many of you will know him as a colleague; others will have considered him a former adversary. I consider him a mentor and a true friend. John Gogo represented the constituents of Lethbridge-West for almost 20 years, and I would ask John to rise in the Speaker's gallery and receive the traditional greetings of this Assembly.

head:

### Oral Question Period

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

### Financial Management

MR. DECORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Parliamentary tradition gives the Legislature control over public spending. *Beauchesne*, one of the authorities that we rely on, says that elected representatives set the amount of the charge, its objects, its purposes, its conditions, and its qualifications; that is, in a budget. We know that the Treasurer has already implemented what he calls a midcourse correction after a quarterly report with absolutely no debate in this Assembly. We learned in yesterday's budget speech that the Treasurer is setting up a management committee with private-sector membership appointed to oversee government spending. My question to the Treasurer: under what authority, Mr. Treasurer, do you propose to make significant changes to the budget yourself, as you have done, without debate in or approval from this Assembly?

2:40

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, when Premier Klein became the Premier of this province, one of the things we felt was important to do was to go to a group of experts and respected Albertans and ask them for advice on the financial management, do a top-to-bottom review of the province's books, and we did so. Premier Klein appointed the Financial Review Commission, under the chairmanship of Marshall Williams, formerly the chairman of TransAlta Utilities, a well-respected Albertan. They returned on April 5 with simply a first-rate, first-class report which gave us advice as to many of the initiatives that we announced on May 6 and indeed many of those which we reintroduced yesterday in our budget.

One of those ideas that was kicked around during those discussions was to ask for the advice of not just people within this Assembly and not just people within the provincial government. The ideas, the creativity, the innovation, and the brights also exist in large measure in the private sector in this province. Mr. Speaker, in proposing to establish a management board, it is our intention to use that expertise, use that professional wisdom that is found from one corner of this province to the next and ask their help in implementing the four-year plan which we have spelled out. It's under that authority, in seeking that advice and in using that talent for advisory purposes that the government of the day has chosen to call on those experts, those Albertans who have the experience and knowledge to assist us.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I don't think the Treasurer heard my question. I asked for the authority that the Treasurer is using to

allow for him to be making midcourse corrections without debate in this Assembly or allowing for private-sector individuals to assist him in making midcourse corrections. What authority, Mr. Minister, do you have to make those decisions unilaterally without coming back to this Assembly and having debate and approval?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, after presenting a plan of action, an economic strategy, a four-year budget plan, the people of Alberta on June 15 gave us that authority.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, that is arrogance in the extreme.

All of the authorities – our Standing Orders, *Beauchesne*, *Erskine May* – say that this Assembly makes the decisions on the spending of money, not individuals and not you unilaterally. I want to know, Mr. Treasurer, what you intend to do. Show us some authority that allows you to breach the traditions of parliamentary procedure. Show us that authority.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is looking for legal authority, I would refer him to a number of provisions and sections of the Financial Administration Act of the province of Alberta, duly passed by this Legislative Assembly.

### Job Creation

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon members of our caucus and I had the opportunity of meeting some of the representatives of the union that represents the Alberta Liquor Control Board people. You can imagine that the feeling of despair of those individuals and the people that they represent is profound, but so is the feeling of despair of 146,000 other Albertans. During the election, in fact just before the election, the Premier told Albertans that there were going to be some 110,000 new jobs created, but yesterday's budget, Mr. Premier, conveniently ignored the details of that plan. The expectations of Albertans are great. I want you to tell Albertans, Mr. Premier, why you have breached faith with Albertans, why you haven't included in that document we saw yesterday the specific plan for the creation of 110,000 jobs.

MR. KLEIN: First of all, Mr. Speaker, it is not the government that creates the jobs. As a matter of fact, we're trying to get out of the business of creating jobs; that is, government jobs. It is government's role to create the climate for economic growth and prosperity, and that's exactly what we are doing, sir. We are creating the climate for economic growth and prosperity by avoiding the introduction of new taxes, by putting in place a tax reform commission to make our tax regime even more competitive to get new people to come to this province with new dollars and legitimately contribute to the provincial coffers and not do it the simple way the Liberals would like to do it: by raising taxes and introducing a sales tax.

MR. N. TAYLOR: You're a cute cookie.

MR. DECORE: You are a cute cookie, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the overblown statement that 110,000 jobs would be created I think came out of some advertising strategy committee during the Premier's election. I want the Premier to give some advice to the 146,000 Albertans who are unemployed and to the people that are in the seating area here today. What is it that he advises them to do, the people that represent ALCB employees and the 146,000 people who can't get jobs? Where's your plan?

Where's your course of action? When are these people going to get some work?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, indeed a lot of new employment has been created already, especially in the energy sector. As I speak today, there are twice as many rigs in the field as there were at this time last year, employing something like 16,000 additional people. I think that is fairly significant.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, promises and more promises continue to be broken by the Premier. I want the Premier to tell us whether this latest 110,000 figure that's been thrown out is just another philosophical promise. Tell people, Mr. Premier, that you really had no intention of fulfilling that promise.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. Leader of the Opposition wasn't listening to my first answer, and my first answer stands. It is not the government's job to create jobs within government. It is government's responsibility and duty to create the climate for economic growth and prosperity, and that is precisely what we are doing.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

### Grain Transportation

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this year the federal minister of agriculture, the Hon. Charlie Mayer, set up a producer payment panel for acceptance of submissions on possible changes to the Western Grain Transportation Act and to make recommendations on how to make payment of the Crow benefit to the producer. My question is to the minister of agriculture. Can he inform the House of the position the Alberta government took to this panel?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

2:50

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the question is an important one to the agricultural community, because through the process of time I think there has probably never been a more important issue that has been discussed with greater ramifications to the agricultural community. We have achieved a point where we now spend \$64 for a tonne of grain to move it from point A to point B. It actually costs us more to move that grain than it does to produce that grain. That is how far we have moved from the reality of proper movement of grain.

Yes, we have made a representation to the producer panel that is meeting in Edmonton today. It's a very important dialogue that's taking place. We have made six primary recommendations, and if you will bear with me, I'll give a very brief overview of each one of those recommendations. Number one, efficiencies have to be incorporated into the overall proposal. Number two, it should not provide for covering costs of pooling. We oppose any reallocation of the Crow benefit into a safety net program. We propose that the existing federal government does not allow for pooling into the regime. Whatever the costs are, those are what should be paid. The Alberta government objective is to remove all distortions. It should be strictly a user-pay concept. The Alberta government supports the retention of the Crow benefit area. Though the Liberals may make light of this and feel that this isn't important, this is of utmost importance to the agricultural community.

MR. SEVERTSON: Mr. Speaker, my supplemental question. This government has been pressing for years and years for changes to the WGTA. Can the minister advise the House if there's any deadline when this decision is to be made?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is under the federal ministry's jurisdiction. We have two representatives from Alberta on the six-person producer panel: the chairman, Dr. Tyrchniewicz, and Doug Livingston, a producer from the Vermilion area. They are to make a report by the end of November. After that, the minister has indicated that he will enact their recommendations.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

### Provincial Deficit

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For every step forward the government makes – and implementing the recommendations of the FRC is a positive step – there's always a partial step backward which distorts our understanding of the real financial position of the province or excludes the Legislature from the process of fiscal reform. My question is to the Provincial Treasurer. Mr. Treasurer, with a stroke of the pen your department rewrote the Deficit Elimination Act. It said that there are some dollars that are included in the Act and some dollars that are not. It was never the intent of the Act to give the Treasurer the freedom to set the rules so the numbers would always add up regardless of the facts. Mr. Treasurer, how many more loopholes in the Deficit Elimination Act are you going to create?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that when he reads the Financial Administration Act, the amendment that he is speaking of is in that Act and is up for debate in this Legislative Assembly. There is no such thing – I won't even deign the question by choosing to use some of the words that he used.

We have two plans. We have a four-year plan to balance the budget of this province, some \$2.44 billion deficit this year, down by over \$700 million by comparison to last year. We also have a second, longer term plan which was agreed to unanimously by all members, all parties in this Legislative Assembly. That relates to the elimination of the unfunded pension liabilities associated with five government plans plus the teachers' retirement fund. I should just mention those: the universities academic pension plan, the special forces pension plan, the public service pension plan, and the public service management pension plan, as well as the local authorities pension plan. The agreement that was struck by the government with the stakeholders and members of those plans, the employees and the employers, was agreed to and ratified unanimously by this Legislative Assembly, knowing full well that it was a 40- to 70-year plan to eliminate that unfunded liability.

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, there's a loophole you can drive a truck through.

My supplemental is the following: can you assure the House that windfall revenues from asset sales or unexpected revenues will be applied to the debt rather than added to general revenues for a one-year, quick-fix solution to make the deficit look good?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I can give that assurance. In fact the sale of the Alberta Energy Company shares brought to the

taxpayers of this province a profit of some \$273 million. If the hon. member would like to refer to the document which he's seen on May 6, which was repeated again yesterday, the profit from that sale is not applied to more spending. It is applied to reducing the province's debt.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Health Care Premiums

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that health care premiums account for less than 15 percent of our total health care expenditure. My question is to the Minister of Health. Would she consider raising those premiums to account for a more reasonable percentage of the expenditures?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the health care insurance fund is a separate fund of government, and it was intended that it would be applied to basic services, including physicians and allied health services. The member is correct that it does pay for only a small portion of the total health care budget. Hon. members would also be aware that we did increase health care premiums slightly beginning September 1. Again, at the Red Deer roundtable it was suggested that we look at premium structure. I have agreed to look at all advice and recommendations from that roundtable, and we will do that. The portion that is applied to the health care insurance fund is about one-quarter of our health care budget.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, we have 280,000 persons in this province that pay no health care premiums at all. This is outside 208,000 who are on subsidy programs, and this is also outside roughly 150,000 who are on social assistance, who pay no premiums at all. Of these 280,000 people I'm sure that many could afford to pay premiums. I'm wondering if the minister would consider assessing these 280,000 to determine who of these people can afford to pay premiums and assess them with the premium.

Thank you.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Again, Mr. Speaker, at the Red Deer roundtable we did get some advice and recommendations of looking at the premium structure. It is true that when we increased the premiums for the health care insurance fund, we also raised the subsidy level so that people who were unable to or that it would be a hardship on would not pay full premium. The other area of people who are exempt from paying premiums was mentioned more than once I guess in the discussions. Again, we agreed that we would take all of the advice from that roundtable. We will listen very carefully to the advice we receive when my hon. colleague takes 10 further roundtables around this province and also other ministers that will be involved in the roundtable process. We will look at that advice very carefully. We will continue with the commitment of the Premier to consult with Albertans and with affected Albertans on these issues before we make any decisions.

3:00

### Liquor Store Buildings

MR. WHITE: Mr. Speaker, on . . . [some applause] I haven't said anything yet. Come on; hold on here a minute. Give me an opening, will you?

On September 2 the Minister of Municipal Affairs announced that his government would use the open tender process to sell 138 ALCB outlets in our province. Yesterday behind closed doors the cabinet of his government secretly approved the sale of an existing outlet to A & B Sound of Vancouver for \$1.9 million. To the minister responsible for the ALCB: can the minister explain why he is telling Albertans one day that the tender process is open to all, and the very next his government secretly sells one of these outlets?

DR. WEST: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's an amazing question. Since 1990 we have moved out some 21 stores. We were in an evolution of taking out certain ALCB stores as early as that time, and it was ongoing in the rationalization of the retailing business for the ALCB.

Before I go much further, I'd like to table a news release that came out at 2 indicating that the total properties and leases are for tender that will close on September 30 at 2 p.m. That will be going out immediately to all papers in all areas of this province, for all stores, all leases, and all other properties owned and operated by the ALCB. I'll table that right at the present time.

Now, as a follow-up, this specific piece of property was appraised at \$2,035,000. It was put out and brought \$1,950,000, probably the closest we've ever come to appraised value on any piece of property. Yes, it was sold to an operation that's coming in from out of province. It will bring more jobs, more opportunity, and more economy to this province, and it's just the start.

MR. WHITE: A new definition of public process, Mr. Speaker.

To the minister of public works: can the minister tell this House categorically that the other 137 outlets will be tendered publicly or otherwise sold publicly?

MR. THURBER: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I understand the question, but I can't understand why he asked it, because it was just answered by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Macleod.

### Liquor Control Board

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is also to the Minister of Municipal Affairs responsible for the Alberta Liquor Control Board. The minister's announcement regarding the privatization of liquor products has been well received and vastly accepted by the majority of my constituents. The efficiency with which his department has provided the licensing and the tendering information has also been looked upon as very favourable. I as well as a couple of my constituents do share one concern, and that is for the employees of the Alberta Liquor Control Board. There's 1,500 persons who are presently employed at these stores that we would like to see treated fairly. My question is: will the minister assure this Assembly and Albertans that his department will be dealing with and considering these employees?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, indeed this question brings . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: Tears to your eyes.

DR. WEST: . . . the sensitivity of this whole issue to the forefront. I don't think it's something that you should quip off the cuff about. There are 1,500 employees involved.

This afternoon the ALCB management is going out with a package to all the staff of the Alberta Liquor Control Board. As

I stand here now, the process is in place. It will be acknowledging not only a very generous package but the most assistance that we can give to any employee of this government in facilitating their transition from their position with the ALCB to the private sector. It will incorporate such things as were sent to Pat Wocknitz, president of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, on May 7 of this year following their collective agreement. It pointed out that in the event that any permanent positions occupied by employees in the bargaining unit would be reduced or taken out, there would be career transition assistance in the form of résumé preparation, interview skills, job search techniques, how to access informal job markets, how to examine opportunities to establish a business, financial planning. There would be financial assistance in doing that and also a generous package in the transition to the private sector.

MR. COUTTS: My supplemental question, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for that. There'll be two people in the Crowsnest Pass that are very, very relieved at that.

To the minister: with this consideration and this eventual process which he will go through, will the minister be able to guarantee that all stores in those communities that presently have Alberta Liquor Control Board facilities will remain operational until private facilities become available in that particular community, Mr. Speaker?

DR. WEST: That question, of course, we're hearing from areas in Alberta where perhaps there is a Liquor Control Board store that doesn't have the generation of sales that might make a class D licence profitable or feasible. We will maintain the service to a point where we can determine whether there's a class D licence applied for in those locations. During the tendering process, which I just announced went out, we will see if there is interest in that specific store or location and that people are targeting that place in tendering or otherwise to purchase it and apply for a class D licence. Following that, we will ensure in those areas that have been serviced by the ALCB that another mechanism will be sought to continue that service to Albertans in the form of those products.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Negotiations for the current ALCB contract lasted for more than a year, and the contract was finally signed on June 4 of this year. The negotiations took so long because local 50 representatives wanted protection for its members in the event of privatization. They were reassured by government negotiators that there would be absolutely no plans to privatize. In good faith the union and its members ratified the collective agreement based on those assurances. My question to the minister responsible for the ALCB is this: how can this government say that it cares and listens when they tell the employees one thing and three months later do something else?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether that question constitutes an allegation, an innuendo, or what, but at no time – at no time – during the collective bargaining negotiations with local 50 of the AUPE did ALCB negotiators suggest that store closures would not occur as a result of the board's continuing process of privatizing the retail liquor products. In fact, agency stores were established and liquor stores were closed during the process of negotiations.

The union proposed during those negotiations that no contracting out be permitted. This is a clause that they had put in:

In the event the Employer decides to privatize any segment of the bargaining . . . the Employer shall require [that the] new Employer . . . recognize AUPE as the bargaining agent of the Employees affected and require any new Employer to recognize this Collective Agreement with respect to the Employees affected.

Clauses of this nature were directly rejected by the employer during negotiations. The employer negotiators maintained throughout that that it was not their jurisdiction to impose bargaining authority on other employers in the province of Alberta. Let me stress one more time: at no time during the collective bargaining negotiations did anybody suggest that store closures would not occur or that there wouldn't be a continual process of privatization.

3:10

MS LEIBOVICI: My supplemental question is this. Mr. Minister, a large proportion of the affected ALCB workers are part-time employees with longtime service. Will the minister please assure these employees – yes or no – that they will be given fair severance packages?

DR. WEST: In respect to the request I would say: all people who are eligible under the collective agreement. I say "eligible": there may be people out there that have been employed for one month. All people that have been employed more than three months will be eligible for severance conditions.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

### Pension Liability

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Provincial Treasurer. Mr. Treasurer, you stated during your budget speech that you have two plans in place. The first is a long-term plan to eliminate unfunded liabilities in public-sector pension plans. I would like an explanation of how you are planning on eliminating the unfunded pension liabilities.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the question is an important one because it's an important second track to the province getting the financial house in order. After a long period, some two, almost three years of discussions leading to an agreement among and between employers, employees, and the government as it relates to the universities academic pension plan, the special forces pension plan, the public service and public service management pension plans, the local authorities pension plan, and my colleague the Minister of Education having done work with the Alberta Teachers' Association on the teachers' retirement fund, what we have negotiated and what this Assembly has now passed into law through a unanimous vote by all parties in this Assembly today: we have agreed to increase rates of contribution by employees, employers, and the government over the next four years. That will pay for current service costs. As well there has been an agreement that employees, employers, and the government will pay a premium surcharge to take over the unfunded pension liability. That is something that we have agreed to among stakeholders, with the government, with the sanction and the legislative approval of a unanimous vote in this Legislative Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. My supplemental question is: why are the pension liabilities not included in the four-year balanced budget plan controlled by the Deficit Elimination Act?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, there are two plans. They are on two very similar, very parallel tracks but both with distinctly different time frames. One is a four-year plan to eliminate the consolidated deficit of the province of Alberta. A second one was approved by the Leader of the Opposition when he stood in this Assembly and agreed to the Bill, to a 40- to 70-year plan to eliminate the unfunded pension liability of the province of Alberta. Our view and Albertans' view is that now to combine the two, to merge the two plans and put them into one four-year time frame, (a) would violate the agreement, (b) would violate the legislation that we have agreed to in this Assembly but, more importantly, would be incredibly punitive in forcing the government to bring forward further spending cuts of some \$300 million per year. Having shared our approach with the likes of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, with the Auditor General, with the Financial Review Commission, and with the Audit Committee, with their advice we have taken this approach because we believe it is the fair and the right and the up-front and honest way to do this.

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

#### **Advanced Education Funding**

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Advanced Education and Career Development released the background documents for their roundtables last Friday, contending that this process will involve all Albertans in setting a new direction for adult education. However, at a July meeting with postsecondary education leaders held behind closed doors, the minister suggested that it would not be unreasonable if they had to slash 15 percent from their budgets over the next three years. My question to the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development is this: why bother with the roundtables if the decisions have already been made?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member overlooks a very important factor. Although we have entered into a process of public consultation in an effort to bring the public and the stakeholders into playing a part in setting a new direction and restructuring of our postsecondary system, he needs to remember that we still have a budget to prepare for the forthcoming year. The direction that was set for the meeting that took place in July was centred around having input come from the stakeholders in the system to assist us in a manner that we could perhaps have their input in preparation of our budget for the forthcoming year.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister admit that the roundtables are nothing other than a public relations exercise to legitimize cuts already decided upon?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, by no means would I admit that. In fact, I'll categorically deny that that is the case. We've set in process a consultation process in this province to bring the stakeholders in. We readily admit that we have an access problem in our system. We know that it's not going to get better unless we do some innovative things. We're sure that there are some answers out there in addition to what we might have. Certainly we do not have a hidden agenda, which the opposition continually keeps seeking for. They've accused us of having secret reports. We have no secret reports. If there are any reports you want, call. We'll send them over to you. We have no hidden agenda. We're

going to let the process do its work, and we're going to hear what the people of Alberta have to say, including the stakeholders.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul if there's time.

#### **Child Welfare**

MRS. GORDON: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Family and Social Services. The minister has stated previously that he wants to make parents and extended families more responsible and accountable for cases involving child protection. Would the minister update this House on the progress to date in this regard?

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, when the Children's Advocate's report was released, I indicated to this Assembly that I would move forward with a short- and a long-term plan. The short-term plan is that I have instructed my department to work closely with Justice and also make sure that we put in a process that will make the families more responsible and accountable. This could be in a number of ways. One is that we like to keep the families together at home. The support services are necessary, but it may mean that the family has to sign a contract to live up to their part of the agreement. So that is one part of the short-term plan.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What is the minister doing with other departments and with legislation to enforce this direction?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, part of the long-term plan, of course, is to look at the Child Welfare Act as it is presently. We are working very closely with the Department of Justice. Whatever new plans we want to move forward with may require legislative changes, and I want to make sure that happens.

I'd like to also advise this Assembly that as a government we are spending over \$250 million in the child welfare area. In fact, this year's budget we've increased by \$28 million in the high-needs area.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

#### **Dutch Elm Disease**

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Dutch elm disease has become a major problem in many parts of Canada. The city of Winnipeg alone is spending over \$1.7 million annually in control efforts. If the disease spreads to this province, the cost to municipalities and to this government would be enormous. The way to go is prevention. My question today is to the minister responsible for Environmental Protection. Will the minister assure this House that there will be no charge in the future for firewood at Alberta campgrounds in order to discourage visitors from bringing firewood from outside of this province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

3:20

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly won't confirm to this House that there will not ever be a charge for firewood in

the province of Alberta, but I do appreciate the hon. member's concerns about Dutch elm disease.

Now, I think the hon. member and members of this House should know that the elm tree itself is not an indigenous species to Alberta. It's not a native species. The trees do exist in some of our larger urban centres. However, our campgrounds, of course, are quite some distance away from those urban centres. The disease is caused by a bark beetle that gets under the bark of an elm tree. It's something that we would of course watch for. In fact, we have a program now at our borders, specifically with Saskatchewan and Montana, where the disease is in some numbers, to try to encourage people if they do happen to bring elm trees or elm logs into the province to drop those logs off so that we would not spread that disease in the province of Alberta. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, if you look at Montana, if you look at Saskatchewan, these trees, which are hardwood trees, are not used for firewood in either of these jurisdictions. Firewood, generally speaking, is softwood trees, coniferous trees.

MR. LANGEVIN: My supplemental question, Mr. Speaker, is to the minister responsible for tourism. Would the minister use tourism pamphlets or leaflets to promote the awareness of Dutch elm disease and to tell visitors to this province that there is free firewood at all Alberta campgrounds?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, we will follow through in terms of promoting and providing awareness to the citizens of Alberta about ensuring that in fact there is not an importation of wood into the province that could lead to Dutch elm disease. That is certainly a message that we will be providing by way of warnings at all of the tourism offices and services throughout the province of Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning if there is time.

#### **Road Paving Program**

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities. I have received many calls from constituents in such places as Garden Creek, Trout Lake, and northern communities where the roads are atrocious. I know that primary and secondary roads are important to all Albertans. My question to the minister: since the budget indicates that 20 percent must be cut, could the minister indicate how he intends to build or pave roads, which are crucial to all Albertans?

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, that's a timely question, a very timely question. Yes, it's true that we will be reducing our budget by some 20 percent, but Albertans are very fortunate, because had they elected that group over there, the Liberals, they would have reduced it by \$800 million, which would have removed all of the funding of transportation forever.

Mr. Speaker, if I could get back to the question, I intend to develop a partnership with local governments, with people in the industry by cost sharing. If the local governments can put up the 20 percent, we can have as many roads paved and built next year as we had this year.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I realize that there are some considerable problems in dealing with budgetary

procedures and money that could come forward for developing these roads. My question is to the minister again. Could he indicate what criteria he uses to formulate his priority list for Alberta roads?

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, the criteria are quite simple. Number one would be safety: the safety of the travellers, the safety of people. But we do go further than that. We look to local governments for their input. We look to industry. We consider traffic counts. We even consider input from MLAs. We look at connector links, and yes, we look at all aspects of public involvement to pick our priorities. Hopefully in the course of the next few years we can come up with all the priorities being done as the hon. member wishes to have done.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

#### **Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped**

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to hurry it to get it in. Last week the Minister of Family and Social Services cited a news release from the Canadian Paraplegic Association. The minister incorrectly stated that the association was in support of the government's welfare reforms. Knowing that the minister would want to clear up this misinformation, I will file copies of the Canadian Paraplegic Association news release as well as a letter that the association has sent to the minister to reinforce their true position. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Will the minister now correct his statement and tell the Assembly that the association is in fact concerned that the reforms have been made too quickly and that they suggest that the savings could have been realized without reducing benefit levels?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I do have the copy of the original letter here and also the second letter. There is still general support by this association for the three-year welfare strategy moved forward by this department. They agree also that people on AISH are able to be trained and able to work if they are interested. I did get a copy of that letter. It does say in there that they still have the general support.

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, in fact the exact statement from the CPA reads that they do not have the general support for the entire program.

The Canadian Paraplegic Association has also expressed concerns that the reforms were implemented without first conducting "an exhaustive review of the A.I.S.H. Program." Will the review of the AISH program now be done? Will the minister commit to doing a thorough review at this time?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what kind of question that is. That's exactly what we're doing. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

The time for question period has expired. The Chair would like to congratulate the House for dealing with, I believe, 15 questions yesterday. We made 14 today: not quite as good, a reduction. We got a little more relaxed, but there are still pretty good accomplishments being made in this area.

head:

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

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I request the unanimous consent of the Assembly to waive Standing Order 8(2) in order to deal with two items of government business.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader has moved the waiving of Standing Order 8(2). All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

head:

### Government Motions

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader and the House leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition have achieved a far-reaching accord as to the manner in which the business of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta is conducted. I therefore request the unanimous consent of this Assembly to waive Standing Order 38(1)(a) and (b) in order to move two motions.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the request of the hon. Government House Leader that Standing Order 38(1)(a) and (b) be waived for the purposes of introducing a motion, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

### Parliamentary Reform

12. Moved by Mr. Kowalski:

Be it resolved that

- (a) the *Standing Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta* denoted as being effective January 1, 1984, be repealed in their entirety as of September 13, 1993, and
- (b) in substitution therefor the *Standing Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta* denoted as being effective September 13, 1993, and annexed hereto shall come into force on September 13, 1993.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated a little earlier, the accord that has been reached between the House leaders marks an historic event in this Assembly. I am pleased to table with the Assembly copies of the agreement. There are three sections to the agreement. One is new Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Alberta effective September 13, 1993. A second is a memorandum of agreement signed between the House leader of the government of Alberta and the House leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition dated September 9, 1993. The third is an item that we would want to deal with in a few minutes from now. It's a special motion dealing with the creation of a select special committee on parliamentary reform of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

3:30

In December of 1992, when Premier Klein was elected the new Premier of the province of Alberta, he set in motion a process for change, a very determined process for change. Mr. Speaker, that determination on his part as the leader of the government to, in fact, see change in the functioning of this Assembly came coincidentally with the views of a number of individuals in this Assembly who had had the privilege of being in this Assembly for a great number of years and in fact from time to time had thought the Assembly could function in a different way. The leadership shown by the Premier in this manner came again in line, in a

parallel course, with the positions taken by the opposition leader in the province of Alberta, the leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, who was also talking about, as were members of his caucus, the need for reform of the parliament.

Mr. Speaker, it should not come as a surprise to anyone that for years parliamentarians in this province, parliamentarians across the country of Canada have heard comments from citizens, not only in this province but citizens in Canada. They view the operations of the Canadian House of Commons, and they say: look, is there a better way? Is it okay to have these leaders who are elected across the country come and then work in acrimony rather than work in a positive way to deal with the business that the public expects us to deal with?

As a result of these philosophic desires by our leaders, the leader of the government of Alberta and the leader of the loyal opposition, meetings were held between these two gentlemen shortly after the election of June 15, 1993, and advice and guidance were provided to both of their House leaders. Over the last several months the House leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and I have had a lengthy number of discussions and a lengthy number of meetings. Almost on a daily basis after our discussions were held, there were consultations with our leaders and our caucuses, and as of today, Mr. Speaker, we have reached agreement with respect to some very far-reaching changes for this Assembly, changes which I believe will enhance dramatically the role of all members of this Assembly and in particular the role of all private members of this Assembly. The purpose and the whole basis for all of the changes are in fact to make sure that the business that we conduct in this Assembly is of the highest degree of integrity for the people of Alberta, the people whom we are servants of.

There are numerous, numerous changes. In fact, there are upwards of 70 to 80 changes. When one recognizes that a discussion was held with respect to the Standing Orders of this Assembly – and the Standing Orders of this Assembly contain pages and pages and pages of specifics. Virtually in every one of these 60 pages there is a change that has been made to the Standing Orders. To my knowledge and in consultation with individuals who served in this parliament in years gone by and with former Table officers and current Table officers, the advice provided not only to myself but to the House leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition was that in fact to their knowledge never, ever in the history of this parliament have there been such far-reaching changes effected to the Standing Orders of this parliament. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, there are arrangements made to see a higher level of integrity effective in this parliament in terms of the day-to-day business and to in fact evoke other changes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I can only provide a highlight of some of these changes in the brief comments that I want to make this afternoon, and then I certainly would welcome participation. I would hope for participation by the House leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, a person that I've grown, in fact, to respect over the last number of months in terms of the professionalism that has been dealt with in these particular discussions, and I do say it on the basis of professionalism. Our discussions always were without acrimony and always were without suspicion – well, after the first several meetings.

Just to highlight some of the changes. Number 1, perhaps the most important change that will come about is a change facilitating free votes in this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, in the memorandum of agreement there is a statement, point 8, that says:

With respect to the issue of "free votes", the parties hereto will encourage open debate and participation in the proceedings of the



Legislative Assembly and will work towards facilitating more "free votes" in the Legislative Assembly in the following ways:

- (a) where the order of business of the Assembly consists of private members' business ("private members' days") that business shall be conducted free of whips.

That means that on the two days that will form private members' days under the new schedule, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, if this motion is agreed to, starting on Monday, in essence free votes will be the norm. Free votes will occur on almost a daily basis, and to the surprise of those who would say that they would never, ever see such a system come into this Assembly, they should stay tuned, because now all members will have to arrive determined in what their position is. In fact, they will have to even read the motions and read the private Bills and be prepared to be accounted now on the basis of what is contained.

Secondly, for the guidance of the House leaders in dealing with their respective caucuses, Mr. Speaker, confidence votes – and we will identify confidence votes with respect to government-initiated Bills, legislation, or motions, and in essence we will accept the definition that a confidence vote shall include

- (i) "money" Bills;
- (ii) the Address in Reply to the Throne Speech;
- (iii) explicit motions moving non-confidence in the Government;
- (iv) explicit motions of censure against the Government;
- (v) any measure which the Government declares to be a matter of confidence; and,
- (vi) the motion to approve the fiscal policies of the Government.

It allows under the definitions that we agreed to, in fact, to have a government-sponsored Bill defeated in this Assembly and not cause the downfall of the government. Now, there are occasions where this may very well come up, and in searching my mind to find an example of prime significance and importance in recent years that might be an illustration of this kind of event might very well have been the situation dealing with legislated seat belts. It was a government-sponsored Bill. If the government, because of the terminologies and nomenclature of the day, had lost that Bill, then the argument would have been made that the government had been defeated. Well, Mr. Speaker, in the future we will have the flexibility of determining that even a government-sponsored and government-initiated Bill might in fact go down to defeat and not cause the defeat of the government. It would be in terms of a certain definition. That is far-reaching and I think will have profound impact and profound effect.

Secondly, considerably more attention will be provided in the future with respect to private members' Bills than ever before in the past. By the agreement that we've reached here now, motions will become of less significance and less importance and private members' Bills will become of increasing significance and increasing importance. Added with that, all members' motions that are on the Order Paper will be dealt with and voted upon within 60 minutes of their introduction. We'll no longer have a situation where motions may stay on the Order Paper for four years and come back and then be adjourned. Now, starting Tuesday, the first motion that will come to the floor will be dealt with within 60 minutes of it being introduced, Mr. Speaker.

A similar procedure will be followed with private members' Bills. Private members' Bills will be introduced. A hundred and twenty minutes will be provided to them in second reading, and at the conclusion of the 120 minutes of second reading that Bill will be voted on. If it is defeated, it falls off the Order Paper. If it is approved, agreed to by the members of this Assembly, then it will go into the next stage, committee, and if it's agreed then, it will go into a third reading stage. There's provision here for the first time for private members to actually see their Bills made into law in the province of Alberta. That's quite remarkable. In most

jurisdictions of British parliamentary mode, Mr. Speaker, it would not happen.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, beginning next week on Tuesdays and Wednesdays following question period there'll be provision for six private members' statements of two minutes' duration each. Three will come from the government caucus, and three will come from the opposition caucus. Mr. Speaker will call at the conclusion of question period for individuals, three on Tuesdays and three on Wednesdays, to stand up and give a two-minute statement, which is a statement that hon. members may make on any conceivable subject that they would want. We would sincerely hope that they would be matters dealing with the policies and the issues of the day rather than disagreement or displeasure with the personality of a particular minister, et cetera, and that sort of thing.

Mr. Speaker, we will go into a new system of dealing with estimates. There is now a provision for the opposition party to designate five government departments for special consideration in a subcommittee of estimates, and it will be incumbent upon the Leader of the Opposition, the House leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition to provide to the government within a day of the tabling of the government estimates a listing of five designated departments. They will spend four hours in in-depth determination and assessment of those estimates outside of this Assembly, and then a report will be brought back into the Assembly, when the Committee of the Whole will deal with that. It will provide for in-depth study. There will be a special committee created for each of these subcommittees. It will be composed of six government members and four opposition members, and in fact it could very well be a different committee created for each of the five committee reviews.

### 3:40

Mr. Speaker, to encourage more members to participate, the length of the normal speech limit will be reduced from 30 minutes to 20 minutes, except of course for the privileges accorded under Standing Orders to the leaders of the two parties.

We have put into the memorandum of agreement and we will deal with an amendment to the Legislative Assembly Act that will basically say that there will be twice-yearly sessions of the Legislative Assembly of the parliament of Alberta. The current Legislative Assembly Act says that there shall be at least one sitting of the Legislature of the province of Alberta on an annual basis. Henceforth, we will be dealing with two sittings of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Alberta on an annual basis. The first will have to begin prior to February 15 of a given year, and the second will have to begin by October 21 of a given year.

Mr. Speaker, question period will be expanded by five minutes per day, to 50 minutes, and the Leader of the Opposition will be granted three questions and two supplementary questions to each. All private members will have a question and two supplementaries. That is a 50 percent increase to the number of questions that the Leader of the Opposition could deal with today. Effective Monday under these new rules the Leader of the Opposition will now have three questions and all members will now have a question plus two supplementaries henceforth.

Mr. Speaker, we're also going to ensure that the process of change continues, and following this debate and this discussion with this one, we will move with a second item, and that is a motion dealing with a select special standing committee on parliamentary reform, which will be governed by having to deal with three items and be given time frames to deal with those three items. First of all, they'll be looking at the application of the sub

judice rule in the Legislature proceedings; secondly, the feasibility of minority reports; and thirdly, the role and the function of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm very, very proud and I'm extremely appreciative of the confidence provided to the Government House Leader by his Premier, and I'm also very, very pleased with the support of the members of the government caucus with respect to these changes. I want to echo again the procedure taken by the Leader of her Majesty's Loyal Opposition in terms of delegating authority to the House leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, and I also want to acknowledge very much the good offices and the advice provided by yourself, sir, and also your predecessor, the hon. Dr. Carter, who was involved in some of the discussions, the early part. I particularly want to say thank you to Dr. McNeil for his advice and guidance for the several weeks and to Mr. Work, who in the last number of days provided yeoman service and worked all last weekend, in fact, laboriously in front of his little typing machine to make sure that the words were correct.

Now, there are a large number of other changes that are effected as well. Some have already been speculated upon in the media: changes such as the reformed week, a week that in fact would sit four days in the Legislature rather than five days. The number of hours that the Legislature will be sitting within that four days will be greater than the current number of hours we sit within five days. Essentially what we will do, starting Monday, is be here at 1:30 in the afternoon. Mondays and Thursdays will become government days; Tuesdays and Wednesdays will become private members' days. We will sit from 1:30 in the afternoon to 5:30 on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday and then the evenings of Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday starting at 8 o'clock to whatever the normal adjournment hour is, which, if it's like tonight, will be 12 o'clock, as all members know, because that is the Bill we're dealing with. We'll be here until midnight tonight. It might be 10 o'clock or 10:30 or 12 o'clock, depending on the normal nature of the business.

Mr. Speaker, in a nutshell that's the overview. I'm just really, really proud of being able to be in this position today and to say on behalf of my leader thank you very much for the confidence provided to your House leader to in fact effect this. Again to repeat – and I don't mean to be redundant, but I want to be sincere about this – to the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition for delegating authority to his House leader for the effects taken in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. DECORE: Thank you, sir. Mr. Speaker, I want to start with an anecdote that exemplifies or sets out how profound these changes are. During the course of the preparation on our side, looking and determining what changes should be proceeded with, the negotiations had gone a considerable length and I needed some help in determining how this might work in a Legislature, in a legislative setting. I had met at a parliamentary conference a Speaker of a Canadian Legislature that I was particularly impressed with. He happened to be a Liberal, but that's an aside. I asked the now former Speaker to comment on what he saw happening with private members' Bills being given the right to have free votes and free votes on every one of those Bills, how it would progress through the Legislature. Then I started to talk about free votes that the government would be bringing forward. That former Speaker said: this is so profound. He couldn't answer the question. There was no precedent for what I was asking, and he couldn't give me an answer. The Deputy Premier

is right; this is an historic day in Alberta. This is a big change in the role of an MLA in this Assembly.

I think the other anecdote that needs to be told is that when the Premier and I were about to start riding in the Klondike Days parade this year in Edmonton, the Premier came over to me and said, "What do you think about such and such?" I said, "What do you think about such and such?" We agreed to have a meeting, and that meeting allowed for the very quick progression of this whole issue of parliamentary reform to have been completed. I congratulate the Premier for that.

Mr. Speaker, in the last Assembly the co-operation – and I think I speak correctly on behalf of the then Leader of the Opposition – that we had from the then Premier was not nearly as good as we have seen the co-operation to this moment, and I'm thankful for that.

The role of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, is to be a critic, a critic of initiatives or Bills or motions that the government undertakes that we think are wrong. Critics in the sense that if there's something that can be done better, we're here to provide that better initiative. We're also here to participate together to ensure that Albertans are well served, and I think this process of reform, this package of reform is a good example of how we have been able to work together, and Albertans are going to be well served by this reform package.

Mr. Speaker, just a few issues that I would like to highlight, as did the Deputy Premier. First of all, I want to thank the Deputy Premier for his involvement and for his stick-to-itiveness. He did provide and allow this to be a top priority, and from our vantage point, insofar as his involvement, it was handled in a first-class way. I would also like to congratulate our House leader, Mr. Mitchell, who participated with the Deputy Premier in putting this package together. I know that many, many hours and nights have been put into the completion of this package that we see before us, and I congratulate both of them for that.

Mr. Speaker, now some of the details, some of the smaller details. One is that there will be fixed dates for sessions of this Assembly. You have no idea what a waste of human resources we had in Alberta when members of the opposition, people that worked in the Legislature for us and for the government, people that worked in government, people that were associated with this Legislative Assembly didn't know when the Assembly was going to start. They couldn't plan their family holidays; they couldn't plan their lives. I think that was a terrible waste of human energy and resource. We now have that fixed.

3:50

In this reform package we have extended the times for this Legislature to sit; that is, even though Friday will not be a legislative day, the actual hours of involvement in this Assembly have been extended. More work will be done. Fridays will allow members of this Assembly to go into their constituencies and talk to their constituents about issues that come up, free votes, to have that interaction and that rapport that will allow them to come back and properly represent their constituencies. That's critical in an environment where people are very cynical of politics and politicians: an environment of cynicism that has people saying that politicians don't consult with their constituents, don't come and talk about the issues of the day, don't seek their advice. This will now be allowed to happen in the Friday scenario.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the free vote issue is the highlight of this reform package. To have a member of this Assembly come and to have that reeve or that councillor or that insurance agent or that doctor, to have that talent, that experience wasted by simply being a trained seal I think was a great tragedy

and is a great tragedy for Canadian politics. This is going to see a cleanup of that, I think, very archaic process. We've got some way to go on this. Because this is so profound, I think we'll make some mistakes. I think there may have to be some redefinition of how the government gets through this, but at least we've made that tremendous step to get this process going. For an MLA to be able to come forward and to take a matter, a concern from his or her constituency and say, "Here is something that's a problem, and here's a way to solve the problem, and here's the Bill or the motion to do it," and to have an actual vote on that is profound, and we need to have Albertans understand how profound that is. So private members' Bills and motions, to see votes taken on these initiatives is going to make this Assembly a lot more exciting. To see free votes from the government side, to perhaps actually see the day, Mr. Deputy Premier, when one of your Bills does fail in this Assembly will be a highlight of this Assembly.

It does happen in England. It does happen in other Assemblies. When I was doing some research on this issue, our offices phoned the Clerk of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Representatives in the United States and asked how often it was that members of an opposite side would vote for an initiative on the other side. The Clerks of both Assemblies told us that it happens so often that they don't keep track. That's the kind of initiative that we have to see take place in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the other important reform, at least as far as the opposition is concerned, is the change to the review of the budget. The budget process that we have in place at this moment is ineffective. It is archaic. It doesn't allow for the kind of review, the thorough review that should take place on a budget. There are many councillors and trustees and reeves and former mayors that are in this Assembly that know that they have to go through zero-based budgeting every year when they have to involve themselves in a budget process. To have seen, to have experienced, to have participated in the kind of review that we have had in this Assembly, where it's simply speechifying at each other, has not been serving Albertans well. In order to get to the root of the matter, in order to see where fat and inefficiency exist, we have to be able to question and probe and have governments produce the evidence that programs are working and objectives have been met. The four hours that we're going to be allowed to cross-examine, to put questions to ministers and to deputy ministers in subcommittee will allow us to do that kind of probing.

Mr. Speaker, I remember the first time that I stood in this Assembly in Committee of the Whole and started to ask questions. The minister that I was asking questions to simply wasn't able to answer the questions, and it's understood that the minister doesn't have all of the facts and matters that he or she should have. This now allows for deputy ministers or subordinates to assist the minister so as to allow the probing, the in-depth information to be provided and to have Albertans satisfied that their money is being well spent. We are able to identify five departments, and as at this date I have sent to the Clerk of this Assembly our list of the five ministries that we intend to review thoroughly.

Mr. Speaker, I wish more could have been included in this package. I wish we could have solved sub judice and minority reports, but I am satisfied that the committee has been set up with timetables that call for the reporting back. I think that's the most interesting of the provisions in this matter of the committee of this Legislature: they must come back with the report within a certain date. We will see further reforms hopefully take place in this Assembly.

My last comments are these. There is still much that can be done in this Assembly on reform. We still must resolve the issue of the public accounts review. We are going to look in on that.

That matter is an issue of priority. That is a matter that requires immediate attention so that members on this side and on the government side are able to probe the accounts of the government, the accounts of departments to ensure that moneys have been well spent and spent according to the directive and directions of this Assembly.

We need to examine recall. There is cynicism, and I think the way of removing that cynicism is to debate, discuss, and put in a Bill that allows for the constituents to pull a member out if the member hasn't performed in the way that that member should have performed.

Our party is not satisfied with the standing committees that have been set up in this Assembly: standing committees that have only Conservatives sitting on those committees, committees that are drawing financial resources from the taxpayers of Alberta. We think taxpayers should have committees that are real committees, committees that are all-party committees, committees that have teeth, committees that are able to take a problem and craft some change or resolution or amendment to a Bill to be sent back into this Legislature for action. Those are issues for the future, but I'm hopeful, Mr. Speaker, that because of the action, the initiative, the outlook that the Premier has shown and the involvement of the Deputy Premier, we may well solve these issues soon for this Assembly and for the people of Alberta.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for the very nice lunch he bought while we went through some of the points contained in the document we see today. I would like to add my congratulations and my thanks to the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, the House leader for the Official Opposition, and of course to our own House leader, the hon. Deputy Premier. Thank you so very, very much. It's a fine document and, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, a very good start.

Mr. Speaker, my comments are going to be very brief today. I think all the points have been touched upon, and basically I'm very pleased with the progress that has been made.

You know, going into the election, there were some expectations on the part of the Alberta public that significant changes would be made to the legislative process. One of the things that I think we both agreed on as one of the fundamental principles was the principle of free votes in this Legislature. I think the Alberta public was saying to legislators, "We want to see how you're standing up to represent our concerns, how we think you should act on our behalf and not what you think is right for us, and how you're going to represent our interests in this Legislature." This reform gives all members ample opportunity to express the views of their constituents in a true democratic process.

4:00

Another point that I would like to make, Mr. Speaker – and I guess this was the point that I really stressed, and it was sort of the deal maker for the government side – was that Friday. That Friday, sir, was very, very special to me and I think to my colleagues, especially those living in the rural areas, because if there's one thing I said during the campaign, it's that we've got to get out from under the dome. You know, the more time we spend here, the more susceptible we become to that insidious disease called dome syndrome: we start to think that unless it's happening here, it's not happening at all. It's only when you get out from under the dome, amongst your constituents, that you understand

that there is another reality. So I think it's very important that this day be set aside so the members can be with their constituents. This is not a day off. I would like to stress that: this is not a day off. This is a day for members to be with their constituents. I'm so very, very happy that we were able to come to an agreement on that very special day.

As the hon. Leader of the Opposition pointed out, there's more work to be done. We have a process now in place, the select special committee on parliamentary reform, to conduct an ongoing review of legislative procedures and to bring in a report on some of the specifics on specific dates. I think that's the way a lot of business is going to be done in the future: dates will be set, time lines will be established, and they will have to be met.

The one point that the hon. Leader of the Opposition made relative to the standing policy committees – we had this discussion, and I think we had a good discussion, and I would have to say that under the current process, the way these committees were established, it has to be pointed out that these are not committees of the Legislature. These are committees of cabinet, and these committees report to cabinet. By the very nature of the British parliamentary system, any committee that reports to cabinet has to abide by the secrecy of cabinet. That is one of the fundamental principles enshrined in the British parliamentary system. Now, we have set up a process whereby the standing policy committees conduct their meetings in public and where members of the Official Opposition can make representation, I guess, if they want, along with other members of the public. But the way it stands right now, Mr. Speaker, I have to reiterate that these are not committees of the Legislature but committees of cabinet and therefore have to operate in the manner in which they are now operating.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, it's a good start. Again, my thanks to all those involved: certainly the two House leaders and all the staff and your office, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so very, very much. I think the winners in this will be the Alberta public.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to join this debate and express my pleasure at being part of a process which, I think, has wrought fundamental, important, and very, very positive change to the legislative process in this province.

I would like to begin by recognizing the role of the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in initiating this process. I would like to recognize in particular the role within our caucus of our leader, the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, who for the longest time has had what I would describe as a burning vision for legislative reform, for opening up the process, for making this place work better, a burning vision which, I think, took him some time to develop within his caucus the same kind of intensity. I will say that almost as soon as he began sitting in this Legislature, he began to express a desire to change the manner in which it worked to make it more effective. More recently, as we began this process of specific discussions, he was there every step of the way to nurture those discussions, to enhance that vision in my mind and in others' minds to make certain that we stayed on track. So where we are today is in large part his responsibility, and I wanted to recognize that, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of the Government House Leader and say that I, too, respect his work, his conduct. I have come to know him differently than I had known him in the past. So it is with a good deal of pleasure, and I must say that I have some humility in saying this: thanks to him as well for

working the way that we have worked together. I have truly enjoyed it, and I have felt very, very satisfied and found this process to be very, very gratifying, in fact. While we have done many things in this Legislature – many members here and I over a number of years have certainly participated in many initiatives and many debates – this is an accomplishment which I feel particularly strongly about.

I would like to summarize by saying that these reforms accomplish three things. They will, first, allow MLAs to work more effectively outside the Legislature. After being in this Legislature for seven years and having sat through at least two of the longest legislative sessions in the history of this Legislature, it has become very apparent to me that after three and a half or four months of five days a week locked in this building, in this place, it becomes increasingly difficult, one, to maintain a perspective and, two, to remain in the kind of contact which each of us wants to remain in with our constituents.

I want to underline that a four-day sitting per week is not taking a day off, quite the contrary, Mr. Speaker. What it underlines is that we will simply work differently on that fifth day than we have been able to work before. There are those who say that we could use Saturdays and Sundays to contact our constituents. I think that there isn't one member in this Legislature who has been here for any period of time who doesn't work most Saturdays and Sundays keeping in touch with their constituents. However, Fridays provide a different kind of opportunity because people are doing different things. They are accessible in different ways. They meet in different ways. Therefore, Friday gives us as legislators, as Members of the Legislative Assembly another opportunity to reach people, to meet with people in a way that you simply can't always do on Saturdays and Sundays when they have other distractions and different things to do; that's our constituents, not so much us.

I would like to say that the second thing that these reforms do is allow MLAs to work more effectively inside the Legislature. I have had the honour and sometimes the frustration of having been a back-bench member of this Legislature for seven years. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, as I know you know because you have in the past been there, in two parliaments in fact, that there are certain frustrations, a sense that you can't influence debate, you can't influence policy, you can't reflect and represent the desires of your constituents in the way that you might and in fact truly do want to do. I will say that these reforms, if they do anything – and they do many things – focus on the influence, the impact, and the role of the private member in this Legislature. In fact, as the Government House Leader was listing all the things that these particular reforms do, it started me thinking, perhaps half in jest, that now the Premier may have a different kind of problem: he may have all of these frontbenchers clamouring to get to the back bench, where they'll have real influence, and he'll have to beg the backbenchers to come and be cabinet ministers. Wouldn't that be a turn of events that would truly make this place different than any Legislature across this country?

I want to emphasize a certain point in that context. Populist politics is a thought, a word, a description of politics that most politicians will use. Most politicians will describe themselves as being populist. It is seen as being something intrinsically good, that somehow populist politics means bringing politics back to individual citizens, opening up the process for them, but all too often, in fact almost always, politicians who use that description use it incorrectly. They think that to be a populist politician only requires being a nice person: shaking hands, being affable, listening, returning your phone calls. Perhaps all of those things are important, but true populist politics, Mr. Speaker, means restructuring the institutions of government so that there is greater

accessibility, greater accountability so that the electorate, the people of a society like Albertans, feel that they are not distanced from their government institutions. Until politicians begin to restructure government institutions in order to achieve those things, then they are not truly populist, and they can never claim the positive implications of what populist politics means. Well, today, Mr. Speaker, if we are to pass these reforms – and I hope and I believe we will – then there will be 83 truly populist politicians in this Legislature. That is something about which each and every one of us, I believe, can be extremely proud.

#### 4:10

There have been speakers before me who have listed the changes. They have emphasized them very well. I would like to make simply a couple of points in that regard. First of all, I would like to underline how significant the changes with respect to free votes in fact are. Free votes was one of the most difficult features of our discussions. I won't call them negotiations because I don't really believe that they were negotiations. They were discussions to find out how we could define these reforms and implement them in an effective way. Free votes were so difficult because of course every vote in this Legislature is officially a free vote, and it is only by convention and by practice that that freedom is somehow constrained through party discipline and so on. So to begin to confront that practice in some way officially when it's not official is very, very difficult to do. We were able to consider and ultimately implement in our agreement several initiatives that I think will truly facilitate the freedom of otherwise officially and only officially free votes in this Legislature. Those initiatives have been described, but they are significant. That there should be no Whips on private members' day is truly a breakthrough. That there should be a concerted effort on the part of this government and its House leader to define what is a confidence vote and to define what isn't a confidence vote is truly a breakthrough, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say that as a private member I am also particularly pleased with our ability now to have votes on private Bills, on private motions and, in fact, to have the possibility that private Bills could go through each stage from second reading to committee to third reading and become law. If I have felt frustrated, Mr. Speaker, it is because I as a private member could only comment on somebody else's Bill and in very, very, very rare circumstances could I even ever hope to amend that Bill. Now I will have the force of my own Bill. It will be considered in the proper, full consideration of this Legislature, and win or lose on those votes, I will at least have had the courtesy provided me by the other members of this Legislature to take the consideration to vote on an idea that is mine, that I have generated because I have been speaking to Albertans, and more importantly because I have been speaking to and listening to the constituents of Edmonton-McClung. This is a very, very powerful mechanism and a very important moment for me in this Legislature.

I would also like to give credit to the government that they haven't just waited for this moment to begin reforms. In fact, I have felt and sensed a real spirit of reform throughout these discussions, and some initiatives have already been undertaken. The election of the Speaker, the election of the Deputy Speaker and the Chairman of Committees, I think, is a strong indicator of the government's commitment to reform. For that I congratulate them, and I appreciate it. Already a commitment has been made to setting up an all-party committee on freedom of information, on which we have been allowed to have two members of the five-member committee and on which Liberal opposition members will participate fully in a public hearings process. I believe that is a

breakthrough, and it didn't have to wait for a formal agreement. Again I congratulate the government on that, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to put this process into a context. This hasn't been something that has simply been the subject of discussions between the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition and between the two House leaders. Those discussions were simply the formalization or the culmination of a long debate, a public debate initiated both by government members and by members of our party and, I will say, by members of that other party which is no longer represented here. This is the culmination of a public debate that we participated in through a paper which we wrote entitled *Mandate for Change*, which identified a series of detailed legislative reforms. It was part of a public debate, I think, that was a very integral part of our election campaign and the government's election campaign. These reforms haven't been pulled out of an ivory tower; they haven't been pulled out of a vacuum. They have been based upon a long and detailed and intense process of communication, of discussion, of listening to the people of this province. It is that process, I think, Mr. Speaker, in particular, that legitimizes these reforms in a way that they could never be legitimized in any other way.

I would like to say that the work doesn't stop here, that each of us in this Legislature has to commit ourselves to making these rule changes work and work effectively. I will say that for our part, Mr. Speaker, we have to be much better in the way that we write our questions, our written questions, so that that process can be more streamlined, because I know that that has been a legitimate frustration on the part of government, who has wanted to answer those questions and has sometimes found it difficult because of the manner in which we have written them. We have a process that will be structured amongst our Whips so that we can streamline that. We have to work to make those rules work.

I also want to say that we have to work to make free votes work. We as members of this Legislature simply cannot promote in any way the cynicism that can be generated when a private member might vote against his front bench or against his leader, and we cannot therefore single that out in some cynical way, saying that that's a split in the caucus or that that's a weakening of the leadership of that caucus or of that government or of the opposition. We will ruin, Mr. Speaker, our ability to make free votes work if we as members promote the cynicism that can be easily flamed around members standing up and voting in a way that they feel they must vote, particularly when they find that they have to vote in a way that is different from the way being suggested, shall I say, by their party structure. So we all have to work very hard.

There are many other reforms that we have to promote, that we have to work on. It doesn't stop here. The Leader of the Opposition listed a number of them. I won't reiterate them. Simply, I would like to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot stop here, that while we have begun a remarkable process of change, a remarkable process of bringing this Legislature back to the people in this province, that process cannot end now, if it can ever end. I believe it probably can never, ever end.

I would like to close by saying a special thanks to my caucus members who were supportive each step of the way, who lent very, very strong advice, gave credible insights, credible input into this process which I could then take to the discussion, which our leader could take to the discussions. I will say that they have been extremely supportive along this process, as I am sure the members of the Conservative caucus have been as well, and I will say that we would never have been able to achieve what we have achieved without their support and without their input.

I will finish by saying my thanks to you, Mr. Speaker, as well, for supervising and participating in this process as you have, and my specific thanks to the Clerk and to the Parliamentary Counsel, who have truly toiled in a very, very credible, very, very effective way to make this possible today.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

MR. CLEGG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I feel like I'm speaking after all the real officials around here: the Premier of the province of Alberta, the Government House Leader, and the Official Opposition leader, and I want to congratulate all of those people for their remarks today.

4:20

I feel that I have to say a few words because I am so excited about this new agreement that people have worked very hard to get. This agreement probably affects me as much as anybody in the province. As many of you know, my home is 360 miles from here. You know what it's like to try and get an airplane on a Friday afternoon: they don't fly till 7 o'clock. So I am here, and I get home at midnight because I'm 70 miles from an airport. You can see the frustration I've faced since 1986. Many people can get out of here at 1 o'clock and catch a 1:15 plane or maybe drive a hundred miles. So unless we had Thursday nights off, it would not have been of much benefit to me because the flights are not available to me, and if I have to drive even close to the speed limit, it still takes me six hours of driving time home. So I'm very excited about this.

I'm very excited because I can spend more time with my constituents, the constituents that elected me in the June 15 election. Just the last couple of days I've been and am every day, I might add, in contact with my secretary: "Can you attend a school board or a municipal council meeting?" I say: "Well, no, I'm sorry; I can't. You'll have to wait till we get out of session," because as many of you know, municipalities, school boards, hospital boards have a five-day working week. Certainly it's going to give me more time to hear what my constituents think. We as a government have and will continue to listen to the people of Alberta, but if we're not in our constituency, then we're going to have a hard time listening to those people. So I look forward to these changes, and I say sincerely, the same with the opposition members. Although we can always question why you voted Liberal or why you voted NDP, the people of Alberta have spoken. I think that as backbenchers on both sides of the House, we will certainly feel more part of the whole operation within this House, and I look forward to the change.

Again, thank you, hon. Government House Leader and Official Opposition House Leader, for the time and the dedication that you put forward on our behalf for Albertans. We are not working less. Let me tell Albertans that we are going to be busier than we have ever been before because we are going to be spending more time in this House.

Thanks again.

MR. SPEAKER: Deputy leader of the opposition.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, want to participate in the debate to express my gratitude to those major players who brought about the changes that we have before us today.

I think I can allow myself a little bit of history here. I came to this House in 1986 with a background of municipal government,

as did many other members of the House and will continue to do so from municipalities, from school boards, and so on, and I've always, I hope, expressed myself and participated in debates indicating my honest and deep respect for this Legislative Assembly and for the parliamentary procedures of this Assembly, the references to Standing Orders, to *Beauchesne*, to *Erskine May*. I have always attempted in my debates to respect those. My view in government work is that the rules are there to enable us; they're not there to inhibit or confound us. These rules of decades, of centuries have been developed over years of experience. They're there to make the process fair and to make it just and to make it balanced. They are not there to inhibit or confound.

When I first came here in 1986, there were very few of us in the opposition. In fact, you don't ever run to be a member of the opposition; you run to be the government. It isn't an easy role to play, but it's a very important one, and I believe the rules that we've changed today will go a long way to freeing up all members of this Assembly, not just members of the opposition but all members of the Assembly, to function more effectively.

I have to express, Mr. Speaker, that as a new member in 1986 I had a great deal of help from a number of members who had been here before. One of them was present today; he was then the Member for Lethbridge-West, Mr. John Gogo. Mr. Gogo gave an immense amount of support to me and to members of my caucus – I'm sure my colleagues would agree – in helping us to understand the processes of the House, not just by reading them but to understand how they would help us to function. Mr. Gogo, Mr. Ray Speaker, Mr. Walter Buck were all very helpful to these fledgling members who came here in 1986.

Mr. Speaker, times have changed. Our communications technology has changed very dramatically. We are all linked from here to our constituency offices and from there to many other parts of our constituencies in the province. We are covered in our activities here in this House by television and by media from a variety of sources. It's obvious to me, from the response to what the public sees of the processes of this parliament and of other parliaments in this country, that it's time that the rules should be made to adjust to the reality of the '90s. The opportunities have been at our fingertips for a long time, and I'm grateful that Premier Klein and his government have seized the opportunity – I think that's the right term – to get action out of thoughts that have been around for months or years.

There's no question that the public needs and wants more information. The public needs and wants more opportunities for participation. They do not want empty consultations that are simply put there as window dressing. The public wants real consultation. The public wants freedom of information, and I'm thankful that we've gone a long way in this House to bringing that to a conclusion. Mr. Speaker, the public is displaying restlessness and cynicism and anger right across this country with the way governments function. I think the ultimate was the referendum last fall. When that occurred, I think our public rose up in anger and said: "No more. We've had it with you people. We don't agree with what you're doing." They spoke out in great numbers. They participated in that discussion, and they told us that we had to not only do something different but that we had to do it differently. That public statement I think shook a lot of parliaments across this country.

Now we see a kind of uprising and a wish for reform, and throughout the country we see governments talking about exactly what we are doing here today. This is not unique. Perhaps we are the initiators of a great mobility in changing the rules in parliament and changing how governments conduct their business right across the country. It is obvious we have to reform the processes.

There is no question in my mind, Mr. Speaker, that the public wants a far more collegial operation in government than they have been treated to in the past. They elected all of us; they want to see all of us participate. They want to see the opinions of every member of this House and other Houses taken into active consideration. They want to see respect for all members, because if we do not respect the opinions of opposition or back-bench members, we do not respect their constituencies. They want to see their representatives not locked into party structures. They're tired of that. They're tired of seeing us stand and speak in lockstep. They want to see us represent their thinking as well as the thinking of the party. They want to see free votes. I don't believe that we in this House and the public in general all really understand yet the consequences of the moves that we're making today in that direction, because they will be very dramatic. The public wants far more accountability. They want more openness and accessibility to their representatives.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal caucus took some strong initiatives in this regard and have ever since I've been in this House. The government, it seems to me, was caught up for some years in its own agenda and perhaps lost sight of the real objective. Our initiatives at first met some resistance. They met indifference perhaps is a better term. In some cases our initiatives for reform met scorn and suspicion, but, Mr. Speaker, you can't stand still. If you're not moving ahead, then you must be slipping back. I'm thankful that members from all sides of the House have acknowledged this through the steps we are taking today.

4:30

One of my major concerns was with the budget process. If I can be permitted an anecdote, when I first was in this House in '86 and we had a budget before us, I can recall making comments and asking questions and making the statement that I was appalled at the paucity of information that was given to us. I was expected to ask questions and to vote on a budget, and I had little or no information as to why certain amounts were required and were before us. When I spoke to what I considered to be a very flawed process, one that was gravely lacking, the then Deputy Premier stood and said: well, surely the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar must know that it doesn't matter one wit what she says; not one cipher and not one program will be changed in any way. Mr. Speaker, I was absolutely crushed by that, because I truly believed, and I believe my colleagues today believe, that we are elected to participate actively in making those decisions. How can I vote? How can I with conscience vote on a budget when I do not have the information before me? That Deputy Premier was clear and unequivocal in his response to me: not one thing you say matters. I was crushed, and I guess I resolved then that this is not the way I was going to operate in this House. This is not the way I believe this House was designed to operate.

Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary procedures that we have put forward from the Liberal caucus are in a document called *Mandate for Change*. I hope members on all sides of the House have read it or will read it. It was done with sincerity. I believe it is a document that has excellent ideas in it. They are not partisan in the sense of belonging to this party. They are simply changes in process that we believe will make us a far more effective document. Many of them, I'm grateful to say, have been incorporated in what we have seen today. The notion of private members' Bills coming to a vote, the notion of free votes, fixed dates, the election of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, and the Chairman of Committees I think are steps in exactly the right direction. These are things we have been advocating for months and years.

Mr. Speaker, the public has made their thoughts known about freedom of information. The public I believe will participate in our discussions, as our members will participate, and hopefully we will have a Bill before the House in the spring that in fact reflects their desires and will serve us well over time.

I'm also glad that the reform committee will be reconstituted to address further steps and that they will have an opportunity to study and hopefully press for other changes that are going to be very, very necessary in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, finally, I want to express my gratitude to the Premier, to the Deputy Premier, to the Leader of the Opposition, and to our House leader for the work they have put into these very major changes. I'm hopeful that this step we're taking today is one of many that will ensure not just good government for Albertans but balanced government for Albertans. I am committed to working with these new reforms and to pursuing further reform in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Labour.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief because colleagues on both sides of the House have eloquently stated my sentiments on what we've seen happen here today. I do want to give some acknowledgement and first say that I concur absolutely with the acknowledgement given already to the Premier, to the Leader of the Opposition, and to the House leaders for their work on this. I think what's happened here today is so significant. We need to recognize the force, certainly on this side of the House, that has carried us over to this particular moment. Shakespeare said that "there is a tide in the affairs of men" – he used the word "men"; I'm using it in the generic sense – if taken at its ebb leads on to victory. What has happened over the years, certainly since 1986, since I've been here, is that many of us have wanted to see these things. We've spoken for them, we've talked about free votes, we've wanted to see this type of progress, but the right tide just didn't seem to be there. There seemed to be other currents pulling in different directions, and that co-ordinated gravitational pull I guess just wasn't happening.

I feel a significant part of putting us over that edge we needed to get over needs to be acknowledged, and that's by the members of this caucus. I appreciate the hon. House leader opposite mentioning their caucus, but especially our new members, our newly elected members. When they arrived the day after the election and as I began talking to them, I sensed there was a force there, a force that was saying they were not going to be complacent, they were not going to be lackadaisical, that they had important things to do and were not going to accept the status quo but wanted to truly be able to represent their members. I think it's fair to say, those of us who were here from '86 and '89 or before that, that the embers were smouldering for these types of changes, but our MLAs fanned those embers into a flame and literally torched our House leader and Premier into action. I want to acknowledge that. In our caucus we do not have backbenchers; we never have. I've had the joy of sitting in any one of these three rows: in the third row, the second row, and fortunately or unfortunately, now this row here. I can tell you that in our caucus it is everybody's responsibility to speak with all the force they have on all issues they're concerned with. We have officially recognized private members; we have no backbenchers. I want to acknowledge specifically our private members, who really fanned the coals and lit the fire and got this thing over the top. That should be acknowledged today. Thank you to them.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to make a few comments on the motion today to deal with changing the Standing Orders. The commitment of a number of individuals has been recognized, and I, too, would like to add my congratulations to the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, for his long-standing commitment to the need. He and I entered this legislative Chamber at the same time and swarmed through the piles of rules and so on and wondered if in fact they were working to our and Albertans' best interests. I'm pleased also the hon. Premier, the Member for Calgary-Elbow, has taken up the challenge. The meeting has occurred, they delegated the responsibility to the two respective House leaders, who then sat down and, from everything I've heard, worked together on a very amicable basis. I think that's a real credit to those four individuals in particular.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I guess I'd like to say I think that's the way the Legislature Chamber should work. I think that kind of recognition, first of all, of a problem and agreement to tackle the problem and then a commitment to come up with a resolution or at least – I don't think anyone is saying this is all of the answer, but at least a working towards a solution of the answer. So today I am very pleased that this motion is before us, because I see in it a new attitude, a new openness, a new spirit – call it what you will – towards making our legislative system work better.

Mr. Speaker, in part I guess one of the things I find most exciting about this is not just the amendments to the Standing Orders we have before us today but also a commitment from the government and of course support from the Official Opposition to support the concept of investigating and researching and developing more changes to make our system work better.

4:40

The proposal that a select special committee on parliamentary reform be created I think is in itself a significant step for the future. I recall having had the opportunity to work with a couple of members from the government side on the Electoral Boundaries Committee, Mr. Speaker, and that committee process worked very, very amicably while we were out and about traveling around the province and gathering information. There's no reason why we can't have more committees working together in developing good resolutions for this Legislature.

The fact that we've got free votes in here – I believe both the Premier and the Deputy Premier made reference to the need for free votes. All of us, every single person who runs for this position and those of us who then ultimately win and get the privilege of serving our constituents in this House, are here for the same reason, I believe, Mr. Speaker, and that's to make things better for Albertans, whether in our own constituency or in other constituencies.

I guess the exciting thing I see is that these changes that are proposed and the commitment to working towards future changes support the continued change to make our government work better. In a sense I think we've thrown down a challenge to ourselves on both sides of the House, because this isn't just about parliamentary reform, it isn't just what we do in this Chamber, but it's also what we do in being advocates, in being representatives, in being Ombudsmen for our constituents to the bureaucracy to make government work better, to make the system work better for the people we have the privilege of representing. It doesn't matter whether you're on that side of the House or on this side of the House. Thousands upon thousands of Albertans voted for members on that side, but they also voted for members on this side. I think Albertans, when they see the proposed changes and the commitment to working towards more changes, are going to

say to themselves this evening, when they see it on the six o'clock news, that now they know their voice is going to be heard and listened to in this Legislature. That, Mr. Speaker, is really the exciting thing about all of this.

Mr. Speaker, the frustration of new members. We have an interesting opportunity. We have 49 new members in this Legislature this time around. I recall having a chat on Friday last week with one of the members on the government side, and he expressed his frustration to me about the way the system hasn't worked as well as it can and should. I recall that frustration as well in 1989 when I was first elected to this Chamber, and I look forward to the time when we can change things. I look forward to the time when I can go to a minister and say, "Look, the STEP, for example, the summer temporary employment program . . ." I've had the situation where people say: "Gee, I need two or three students to come and help work at a swimming pool in my constituency. Can you help us get an extra position or two, because it really will be in the best interests of all the people who live in the area." What I see now, the way this is going to work or the way I hope it will work, is that I'll be able to go to that minister and say, "Here's what is necessary, here's what's really needed, because the people in my constituency that voted for me, and even those that didn't vote for me, say we need this support." I am there. It's my task to be their advocate, to come forward to government. Now I see a commitment that government is going to start listening and responding to our constituents whom we are representing.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think the future is not just in the changes we see, but it's also in the commitment I see from the government side and the commitment from the Official Opposition side to support future changes, because we are all here to make the political system work better.

Mr. Speaker, we started on a high note the very first day we were in this Legislature by following through a procedure with the secret ballot election of the Speaker, yourself, the Deputy Speaker, and so on, and I think that was a good step along the path of changing the way the legislative system works.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to supporting this motion. I look forward to future changes, and I look forward to the new openness and the new spirit that we have with 49 new members, a new attitude in government. I think the time will be, in the not too distant future, when people speak of politicians with respect and not with disdain, because we are here to represent the people that we serve in our constituencies.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury.

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In rising to support this motion, I'd like to compliment this Assembly for the spirit of co-operation that has existed right from the very start. I think we've come an awful long way and we've got a long way to go, but I think we will get there in a co-operative manner like we have arrived at this point.

There's no question, Mr. Speaker, that we're in a time of change. We're reminded of that almost every day. But your introduction of the members in this Assembly, your introduction of the member for a constituency as opposed to from a constituency, is a constant reminder that we're here to represent. We're here to represent our constituents in the very best possible way we can. Question period gives us an opportunity to do that, albeit it's limited to some degree.

I'd like to speak just briefly to the six statements we're going to be allowed to make on behalf of our constituents. This theory or philosophy was first introduced about three years ago by my



colleague from Innisfail. I think it's a good one. I think it's going to give each of us an opportunity to stand up and speak to an issue in our constituency that perhaps may not be able to be aired any other way.

Certainly the question period has been expanded not only in length but in scope. The Leader of the Opposition now has three main questions. This will give us an opportunity to cover a broader range of topics. There are many other changes that we've referred to today. Many other speakers have referred to them, and I'm not going to dwell on them except to say that this change of focus for private members' days, this change from a preoccupation with motions as opposed to Bills, is very significant. I think that's going to be very impactful on what we do and how we do it.

Mr. Speaker, I happen to believe that I live in the best part of the best province in the best country in the world. I believe these changes are going to help me better represent that area. This is what our Premier had in mind when he suggested that we make changes in our government in the way we do things. I ask all the members to support this motion.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By my estimation I think I am the shortest serving returning member of this Assembly, and I want to offer an opinion from that unique perspective. I can tell you, sir, that in the short time I've been in this Assembly, I've been struck by and impressed with the qualifications and the experience and the commitment that all members bring to their job. It seems to me the one time I find it most evident is typically on private members' business. I see individual members coming and talking about issues that are important to them as individual Albertans, issues that are important to their constituents and aren't addressed in any other fashion.

I guess when I see private members' motions and Bills dropping off the Order Paper and never coming to a vote, one of the things I'm always left with and I'm simply struck with is what a waste of talent. What an incredible resource the people of Alberta have in this Chamber on all sides that has never been fully utilized. The thing that I think I take the greatest satisfaction from in the work that's been done by the House leaders is the fact that we recognize the role of the private member, and in effect we're giving the private member a stake in the business of this Legislature that's never happened before.

I think it's been alluded to before, what we might call the quiet revolt of the backbenchers, and there's no question that's a reality. I think we have to recognize that any kind of parliamentary reform that's as comprehensive as that which we deal with now involves taking away power from parties and leaders and starting to restore a degree of power to individual backbenchers. That's a fairly radical proposition. It's evident simply from the fact that all members who have come in here as first-time members after this most recent election have experienced frustration and bewilderment and a sense of impotence at seeing what a marginal role private members are accorded and have traditionally been accorded. That's going to be turned on its head, and I expect, Mr. Speaker, that there are going to be legislators and voters right across this country that are going to be watching closely to see if we're able to take the next step. We've made some of the institutional changes or are about to make the institutional changes. The real challenge then will be to see if individual members embrace that opportunity and make the most of it.

4:50

Mr. Speaker, I was extremely disappointed in the last session that the select special committee charged with the responsibility

to look at legislative reform – the members no doubt laboured mightily but produced nothing come the dissolution of the last House. I should say that I had the good fortune of serving with a number of colleagues in the Liberal caucus on a small committee that started, I think, in October of 1992 to look at crafting a comprehensive package of reform that could be then submitted to the select special committee in the last session. I'm pleased, I'm absolutely delighted to see that in the proposal, in the package that's now introduced and put before us to deal with and vote on, many, many of those changes that we talked about in our caucus now are the subject of agreement on both sides.

I want to touch on some of them specifically, and I don't do this to suggest presumptuously that those ideas are owned or have been invented on this side of the House. I think that's foolish and unrealistic, as has been pointed out by previous speakers. There are members on both sides of the House that have experienced frustration and looked for better ways. But I'm proud that in Mandate for Change what we were able to do was recognize that change, to be effective in terms of a parliamentary system, has to be comprehensive. You can't do it ad hoc; you can't do it piecemeal. If it's going to work, it's going to be part of a package. We've got a lot of the key elements. We don't have all of them, and because I think we have an opposition responsibility to point out some other things to be done, I'm going to talk about those.

I want to just identify briefly those things that are consistent with the Mandate for Change paper that has been mentioned before. I'd just say parenthetically – we might go back further. I think one of the reasons I was induced to run as a member of this party, sir, in the spring of 1992 was the fact that the Leader of the Opposition now had produced an essay called Alberta's Biggest Problem: The System Itself. When I read that some two years ago, there were things in there that certainly made sense to me, made sense to my friends and people who to that point had been frustrated with the system. So I see we're at a point now somewhere on the continuum, and I want to give some special recognition to that essay produced by the Leader of the Official Opposition some two years ago, because I see us now at a point of implementing many of those initiatives and many of those ideas.

The notion of fixed sittings is something that I think Albertans and certainly businesspeople recognize as just putting the business of the Legislature on a businesslike foundation. A pretty simple proposition, and I think a huge step forward. That was item 10 in Mandate for Change.

The idea of free votes is important, but I just stress what has already been indicated: free votes doesn't mean anything. It's worthless, and it will never work unless individual members on both sides of this Assembly make it work. In some cases it may take some act of courage, because I think what it will mean is that when individual members, private members, go back to their constituencies for a town hall meeting and their constituents line up and say, "Mr. or Mrs. X, you voted for or against this proposition; why did you do it?" the member no longer will be able to say, "My party Whip or my party leader made me do it." We as individual members have lost what may have been a convenient excuse in the past. It's now going to be a question of saying, "I voted for the proposition because I thought it was sound, and these are the reasons," or "I opposed it, and the reason I opposed it is because I thought it was a lousy idea; we couldn't afford it," or whatever. The responsibility now is back on us as individual members. I think it will make for some interesting exchange when we go back to our constituencies to report and to be held accountable for things we did or didn't do in the last session.

Free votes had been item 5 in Mandate for Change. The sub judice rule had been item 14 in Mandate for Change, and I just make this suggestion to those members who will be dealing with this on the committee. In a number of Legislatures that also respect the parliamentary tradition, what you find is a convention and a practice that it's not simply the commencement of a legal action that invokes the rule and then shuts down an opposition request. In fact, you'd have to get to the stage where there has been an entry for trial, a much more advanced stage, before the sub judice rule could be invoked. That makes sense to me, and I commend it to members of the committee.

In terms of minority reports, sir, that had been recommendation 16 in Mandate for Change. I think if members look at Standing Order 65(2), it's clear that unlike many other Legislatures that also are part of the British parliamentary tradition, there's an express prohibition against minority reports. It was a surprise to me when I saw that, because I understand in many other jurisdictions it's a common practice for minority reports to be submitted. I think it's important that that opportunity be given. When Albertans receive a report from a committee, if there's a serious and a thoughtful dissent, I think all Albertans are entitled to that information. It's another reason why we have to open things up in spirit and commitment, through attitude change, not just through changes to Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker, one concern I have is that if one looks at the resolution sub (2), there's a reference to making the Assembly more effective "within the context of our parliamentary system and traditions." The concern is that that may be taken in a very expansive and liberal way, as I would urge members of the committee to so view it, but we've also seen and heard in this Legislature, in my short time here, members say, "Well, this idea, free votes, somehow is in opposition to what parliamentary tradition is about." I think we have to recognize also that freedom of information has often been suggested by members in this Assembly over the last decade. Well, this is something that somehow doesn't fit within the parliamentary tradition. If you want information, you go to your individual member and he'll get the information. I think we can be creative. Other jurisdictions following British parliamentary law have. Their systems have flourished and been made stronger because of it, and I think the same thing will apply in this jurisdiction.

I am delighted to see there are strict deadlines for reporting back by that committee to this Assembly and this Chamber, because I think that will avoid the situation we'd run into in the last session with a committee that received reports and talked, certainly, within the committee, but we didn't see the fruit of that effort.

With respect to private members' statements, I think it is useful and it is important for the reasons that have already been mentioned. This was recommendation 8 in Mandate for Change.

I'd just say, sir, also to those members who will be on the committee reviewing the Standing Orders that when we prepared Mandate for Change we had the opportunity to talk to speakers, we had the opportunity to talk to legislators right across the country to try and pick up on innovative things they had done. One of the things I learned as a rookie member of this Legislative Assembly was that our Standing Orders are markedly deficient. We probably have overall a fairly weak set of rules to govern our business here. Getting back to what I said initially, I think that with the kind of talent we have in this Chamber, the rules ought to facilitate, ought to augment, ought to enhance the talent people bring to the Chamber and not obstruct, interfere, hinder, or make our process less open and as a consequence less productive.

5:00

I think the proposal for votes on private members' Bills and motions is a tremendous idea. As we said in recommendation 7 from Mandate for Change, and I quote, "good ideas can come from either side of the Legislature." I think that's apparent, and I think we will see that. I expect – and I hope I'm not daydreaming when I say this – that with the adoption of these reforms we're going to see an unleashing of an enormous amount of energy and talent that but for these reforms would have been underutilized and dormant.

Mr. Speaker, I'm excited about Standing Order 15(1) and the proposed change. One of the reasons is that for the first time we will bring our Standing Orders into accordance and congruence with the parliamentary practice in virtually every other parliamentary jurisdiction. In the spring I had some firsthand experience finding that Standing Order 15 in existing and past rules provided that one could take issue with a question of what somebody was doing in their constituency duties and in their constituency responsibilities that had nothing to do with their parliamentary responsibilities. So I'm glad to see we've cleaned that up, we've clarified it. We've made it clear that breaches of privilege relate specifically and exclusively to what members do or don't do as members of a parliamentary body and not what they do or don't do in their constituency offices. I applaud that initiative.

I think that the proposed Standing Order 34, imposing deadlines for written questions and motions for returns, is an important step forward. This had been recommendation 15 in Mandate for Change, and I'm delighted to see that.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed Standing Order 56 and the reference to subcommittees of Committee of Supply is important. We had recommended in Mandate for Change, recommendation 4 in the budgetary reform package, that we have to improve public input. This doesn't go as far as I'd like it to, but I think it's an important step forward and should be supported on that basis.

Finally, Mr. Speaker – I know others wish to speak – I think what we wish to do is simply point out that there are a number of other things we identified in Mandate for Change that aren't in this package; for example, trying to clean up the appointment process. If we really want to restore public confidence in this Chamber and what we do, there's no better place to start than cleaning up the appointment of individual Albertans to boards and tribunals. We can still do a better job in terms of our conflicts legislation. The right of recall, as suggested by my leader, I still think there's room for. Fixed terms, protection for complainants, fixed terms for by-elections. I don't want to see other Albertans go through what residents in Calgary-Buffalo did. They went for six months, a half year, without representation in this Chamber. At the same time NovAtel was being dealt with and a budget and a host of other things, they had no representation, no vote here. That shouldn't be allowed to happen.

With those comments, sir, I now move we put the question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair has received notice that other members still wish to participate.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be very brief. As a new member, I felt I would like to congratulate the people that worked on this. I was elected to evidence change in this House, and I'm glad to see we're going to have change. I'm encouraged and pleased by what I see happening. I'll mention

just two briefly, the first one being free votes. I feel I can better represent my constituency and my constituents through these free votes, and I intend to utilize the votes to do exactly that. The second one is Friday being a nonsitting day. My constituency is 600 kilometres one way from here. It takes about a five-and-a-half hour drive, or shorter if you drive a little quicker, and it's just about as long on the airplane because of poor airline connections. So this will give me a chance to be in my constituency and meet with my constituents. I think those two things are particularly important, especially the second one, the nonsitting days Friday for us people who come from far away.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to speak too long because the Member for Redwater on our side still wants to speak, and I'm sure on that side there may be some.

MR. KOWALSKI: We have to vote on it.

MR. WICKMAN: We have a bit of time, Mr. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the one danger, the one pitfall in the whole negotiated package that has been brought forward is the possible perception that every weekend is going to be a long weekend for MLAs. Now, it has been spelt out very clearly that that is not the case. What it's going to mean is that MLAs are going to be watched and are going to be expected to be in their constituency offices on Fridays because it will become symbolic that Friday is constituency day for MLAs, which is good. I agree with the comments made earlier by the Premier that sometimes it's good to get out from under the dome.

I think those of us with civic experience or that have been involved in civic politics – and a good number of us have – recognize or appreciate the importance of playing a meaningful role as an elected representative, being part of every decision, adding input, and that input meaning something, not simply sitting back knowing you're doomed bringing forward an amendment, bringing forward a motion, bringing forward a Bill, whatever the case may be. So that becomes very, very important to me.

When we look at many of the concepts in here, the one concept of the first step toward free votes – let's put it that way – we have to recognize there has been a change in the mood of Canadians and Albertans. That change really started to occur during the GST debate. If there was ever one issue that spelled out more clearly from the electorate point of view that they demanded free votes, that they expected free votes – because their constituents placed them there for that particular purpose, and we are headed in that direction.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other areas that I think are very meaningful: the opportunity to reform the budget process, which is extremely important; the opportunity to at least vote on some motions and some Bills. This is a step in the right direction. There's a great deal more to go. If it doesn't happen within this Legislative Assembly, it will happen because the electorate will demand that those changes occur.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude my remarks.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: The question having been called, all those in favour of this motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Let the record show that this historic accord has been adopted unanimously by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I wish to make available to all members of the Assembly an additional copy of Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly. They have an annotation saying "Annotated (Unofficial) Version." These particular documents have underlined changes to go hand in hand with the ones that were made available prior to the proceedings to make it easier for all members to follow through the changes.

Mr. Speaker, the additional item we would like to deal with today is something we've already talked about, and that is the select special committee on parliamentary reform.

### Parliamentary Reform Committee

13. Moved by Mr. Kowalski:

Be it resolved that

- (1) A select special committee on parliamentary reform of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be established to review and report to the Legislative Assembly on its deliberations and present recommendations on
  - (a) the application of the sub judice rule in proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta by November 1, 1993,
  - (b) the feasibility of minority reports of committees and subcommittees of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta by November 15, 1993, and
  - (c) the role and mandate of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts by December 1, 1993.
- (2) The select special committee shall consider the current functioning status of the Assembly and review ways of making it more responsive to the needs and values of the citizens of Alberta and elected members within the context of our parliamentary system and traditions.
- (3) The select special committee shall table its reports in the Assembly if it is then sitting or by depositing a copy with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and forwarding a copy to each member if the Assembly is adjourned.
- (4) The select special committee on parliamentary reform shall consist of the following members: Hon. Stanley S. Schumacher, Speaker; Hon. Stockwell Day, chairman; Hon. Halvar Jonson; Mr. Roy Brassard; Mrs. Bonnie Laing; Mr. Clint Dunford; Mr. Gary Friedel; Mr. Grant Mitchell; Mrs. Bettie Hewes; Mr. Frank Bruseker; and Mr. Adam Germain.
- (5) Reasonable disbursements by the committee for staff assistance, equipment and supplies, public information needs, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid subject to the approval of the chairman.
- (6) In carrying out its responsibilities, the committee may utilize the services of the staff employed by the Legislative Assembly.
- (7) The chairman and members of the committee shall be paid in accordance with the schedule of category A committees provided in Members' Services Committee Order 10/89.

5:10

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, we have had discussion with respect to the select special committee on parliamentary reform, and those comments that have been made have been very, very

important. I would move that the Assembly now deal with this particular resolution.

MR. SPEAKER: Just for the purpose of the record, is it the intention to have the Speaker act as chair, or the Hon. Stockwell Day?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the intent would be to have the Hon. Stockwell Day act as chairman in recognition of the nonpartisan role of the Speaker. The hon. members of the Assembly did not want to put the hon. Mr. Speaker in a position of conflict should he have to serve as the chairman of the committee and then have to perhaps even cast a deciding vote. In recognition of the new spirit and the nonpartisanship of the honourable gentleman who currently serves as the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the view is that Mr. Speaker would be there as an *ex officio* member of the committee. I understand that in parliamentary tradition the term "*ex officio*" is not used in dealing with the Speaker, but it's intended to have the Speaker in the committee so the Speaker is there front and centre understanding what the context is of future parliamentary reform, and we did not ever want to be in a situation having the Speaker feeling left out of the process. The Speaker, in our view, is very dear to all members of this Assembly. He is viewed in a nonpartisan role, and we want to protect the integrity in that regard. Having Mr. Speaker as a chairman would have taken something away from the distinction accorded to the Chair.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Speaking in support of this motion, I'll only take a couple of minutes. In this year of love and affection spreading across the House, at times I find it a bit nauseating. Nevertheless, I think it is probably a step in the right direction, because the parliamentary process has been overhauled in much of the western world. Because we had a one-party government essentially from the 1940s, we got left in a backwater.

The fact of the matter is that the back bench – and this is something that maybe didn't come up clearly enough in the debate, and I want to pass it on in instructions to the new committee. It is not the opposition versus the government. It is the cabinet versus general membership. It's not for nothing that the U.S. devised a system, for instance, that the cabinet is entirely separated from the legislative. What's happened here quite often, and I've seen it happen through the years – I'm maybe a little older than most – is that the legislators have been taken on and bought out by cabinet. That's due to secretarial positions, salaries paid for offices outside the cabinet. So the backbenchers who at one time found themselves in a common cause with the rest of the MLAs now quite often feel they're a part of the extension of the cabinet. For those of you that have studied the parliamentary system, as I mentioned, the cabinet is often separated from the legislative branch. If I would pass any instructions on to the new committee, it's to see that that continues.

One of the things that bothers me, Mr. Speaker, and at the chance of making a few people a bit chagrined over there, I'm going to throw this out: maybe chairmen of committees outside the cabinet should not get paid anything. In other words, your ability to do a good job as a chairman in the work ahead should be what causes you to be recognized by the cabinet or the government of the day and brought into the cabinet. Because when you're paid, you're being bought. It doesn't matter which committee you are, when you're being paid, you're an extension of the cabinet arm. The parliamentary system doesn't work if the legislative branch is tied in with the executive too tightly.

Lastly, if I may, I could pass on to the committee that the Greeks invented the idea of a parliamentary democracy. It's nice to say that we should all be kind and friendly and sit around a round table, but any of you that have a large family know that if there's no noise going on, there's usually mischief afoot. The public would like to see a little bit of fighting going back and forth now and again, because the Greeks argued that friction created heat, heat created light, and light gave you the reason by which the public was able to determine solutions. So I'm just voicing a word of caution. It's so easy here in the west to get into a one-party concept, one happy group, but one-party concepts, particularly tied in with the cabinet . . . As prior governments had done, starting in the 1970s – it wasn't that way until about 1974 – the back bench kept getting tied in with the administrative side. Today – and this is why I think this is so tremendous – the Whip is going to be taken off private members' Bills. That is a small step in the direction of a parliamentary democracy, to where you have legislators thinking for themselves rather than whether or not they're going to make it into the cabinet or whether they're going to be appointed as a parliamentary assistant or whether they're going to be a secretary or whether you're going to get a new car with two tassels instead of one on the rearview mirror. All those things are areas that shouldn't be in the legislator's mind. You should be thinking only of the job.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion moved by the hon. Government House Leader with respect to the establishment of a select special committee on parliamentary reform will please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Just to allow the hon. Minister of Education to sit down, the Chair paused, but before leaving this area it's the opinion of the Chair that all Members of the Legislative Assembly are to be congratulated for their actions today because each and every one of you have been crucial to the achieving of these great reforms. It would have taken only one of you to say no at any particular stage to bring the whole process to a halt, so you are all a major part of what has been accomplished today.

The Chair also hopes that the little waves that have been set in motion as a result of the dropping of these pebbles will have a good effect. I think all of us could be surprised as time goes on. I'm sure that the spirit that's been demonstrated here today will ensure the proper implementation of these changes in the rules, because these are major changes. As a personal experience, the Chair's first experience with rule changes was in 1969 in another place, and those changes had to be imposed by closure, which really didn't get all members off on the right foot. Here we have unanimous consent.

I, too, want to pay tribute to the Clerk, the Clerk Assistant, and Parliamentary Counsel, particularly Parliamentary Counsel, who worked so diligently over the past week. This has been pretty well accomplished over the past week. I know there were previous discussions, but a great deal of work has been accomplished. I have to say that you never know what's crucial. Many things have been mentioned. Food has also been mentioned in relation to a

certain lunch that took place. All I have to say is that I think there's great potency to jujubes.

I want to say thank you again for the work you've all accomplished here today. Thank you.

**5:20**

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, in view of the time – and I do this with some degree of trepidation because it is private members' day, although there is unanimous consent to go forward with

the motions – we have two alternatives: reverting back to private members' day or recognizing that this has been a rather historic day and a rather historic accomplishment. All members might wish to congratulate one another. On that basis, I would move that we do now rise. We will be reconvening this evening at 8 o'clock, and when we do, we'll be dealing with interim supply Bills with the Provincial Treasurer.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:23 p.m.]

