

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, April 24, 2001**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 01/04/24

[The Speaker in the chair]

THE SPEAKER: Please be seated.

head: **Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

Mrs. Tarchuk moved that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois E. Hole, CM, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank you, Your Honour, for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate April 23: Mr. Coutts]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to offer my comments on the Speech from the Throne. I found it a very interesting document, and I would like to relate it this evening to the campaign run by the government party in the past election.

We looked very carefully, of course, during the election at what the government party, the Progressive Conservative Party, was saying in the election, and it was very difficult to discern a clear and coherent program that was being offered to Albertans. To my knowledge the government party never issued a comprehensive platform document, and they certainly never issued any kind of clear policy plans. This is contradicted in the Speech from the Throne, which says: "Albertans already know what the plan is. It's the plan they voted for." I submit, Mr. Speaker, that Albertans did not know the specific policies and programs that the government intended to use to run the province of Alberta over the next four years.

So the closest thing we could come up with in the throne speech of the government's vision was

a vision of low taxes, no provincial debt, a strong economy, new jobs for our young people, sound infrastructure, good health care and education systems, stable agricultural communities, safe streets, and reliable social programs.

Well, that's all fine and dandy, Mr. Speaker. That's all fine and dandy. Even the New Democrats could support that kind of vague, feel-good program. But, as they say, the devil is in the details. If the government didn't want to give exact details about its plan in the election campaign, I have to ask myself: is there a real mandate here for the few specific policies that are mentioned?

Now, there are a few specific issues in the speech, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I need to take issue with the proposal to streamline "the approval process to bring new generation projects onstream." I've made the point before that the EUB has been turned into a toothless tiger by the policy of this government. I suspect that the government is about to gut further the ability of the EUB to protect environmental and consumer interests. It seems that the next victim of the government's disastrous deregulation scheme is going to be green power and the environment. When deregulation was begun, one of the arguments for it was that it would open up access to the market for producers of alternative power. As it turns out, the prices have been driven up so much that producers and consumers are forced to switch to the cheapest form of energy, which is of course coal.

Second, the government has made a major announcement

regarding MRIs in the public sector. Normally one would expect a party to put these kinds of plans out in front of the public for scrutiny and debate. Not this government. So while the new public MRIs are welcome and in fact overdue, we're still stuck with a policy that gives a \$3.2 million bailout of public dollars to private, for-profit providers. This is a government, Mr. Speaker, squarely in the middle of being in business. Although the government says that this bailout is only a onetime deal, I have absolutely no faith that this is the case. At every turn the government has made it priority number one to cut the private sector in on Alberta's health care system.

Thirdly, I would like to make some comments regarding the government's plan to offer protection to consumers for rising home-heating costs. Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that there's a bill on the Order Paper dealing with this and which was in fact already passed at second reading, so I won't try to delve too much into the details of that. I just want to make a few short comments.

We in the New Democrat caucus have put forward many times a way to protect consumers from rising home-heating costs by adjusting royalties to a slightly higher level to fund the cap. In that way you're not using general revenue to protect consumers. The government, by funding its program from general revenue, is letting the oil and gas industry off the hook. Now, remember that for every \$1 in additional royalties the government collects from higher natural gas prices, the industry collects three additional dollars in windfall profits. In my view, it's only fair to expect industry to participate in protecting the consumers from higher prices.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about what's not in the speech. We could talk about what the government ignored in the election campaign and what they have again ignored in the Speech from the Throne. First of all, rising tuition fees get absolutely no mention in this speech, even though they are one of the most difficult problems faced by youth and Alberta families today. Within the space of 10 years Alberta has gone from the third lowest tuition fees to the third highest, and there's no end in sight. How can this government be serious about building a successful economy for the future when the doors to education are being closed to many promising young people?

The throne speech also does not address the shameful state of our social assistance rates nor, might I add, does today's budget speech. We are currently competing with the Maritime provinces for the distinction of having the lowest social assistance rates anywhere in Canada. I was listening the other day to the comments made by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, who stressed the importance of family in the 21st century, and I couldn't agree with him more. One way that we can build healthy families is by increasing assistance to those who need it the most.

I know that one of the major issues the hon. Minister for Children's Services is dealing with is the increasing number of children in the care of her department. By far the biggest reason that those numbers are increasing is that the parents of these children are unable to provide the necessary care. By boosting those social assistance rates, we can provide a solid foundation for the children and their families. The minister said today, Mr. Speaker, that the number of children in care has gone up to a very high level, and I would see very clearly a direct correlation between the number of children in care and the level of poverty in this province, which is absolutely shameful. One in five Albertans lives at or below the poverty level, and Edmonton is amongst the highest.

The minister over there might be interested to know, Mr. Speaker, that Alberta municipalities just a year ago released a comprehensive report dealing with poverty levels in families in communities, over 21 communities in the province of Alberta, and found that between

15 and 23 percent of families in various communities lived at or below the poverty line. Those are facts that any member of this House can research and find out for themselves. There's no question that under this government the rich are getting richer and that even the middle class is doing very well as long as oil and gas prices remain high. As long as the economy based on energy remains booming, this government can look good when it comes to the high-income and even middle-income Albertans, but I tell you there are many, many thousands of Alberta families that are worse off than they were before. They're paying higher rents, and their income has not gone up.

Now, take the social assistance rates, Mr. Speaker. They were cut dramatically a number of years ago, and there has not been one attempt by this government to restore even an iota of the level of support, notwithstanding the fact that food prices have gone up, notwithstanding the fact that rents have skyrocketed in a number of Alberta communities. This government has turned its back on those people. They're not on the government's radar screen at all. There's a very significant number of people in that boat. As I said, up to 20 percent of Albertans are in that boat. I would challenge members opposite to come up with their own reliable estimates of the extent of poverty in this province. I've made the offer before, in my maiden speech, that they could come and I would take them on a tour of my constituency, and they could see it firsthand. There's plenty of it out there, and there's plenty of it in Small Town, Alberta, too. It's just a little bit less visible than it is in the big cities.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to make a short speech this evening. I want to indicate that while it was difficult to find a clear direction in the government's election program, it is also difficult to find a clear direction from the government in the Speech from the Throne. It is an abbreviated, feel-good document that has no specific concrete proposals to better the lives of Alberta families, and I think that the government could do much better.

Thank you very much.

8:10

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

MR. LUKASZUK: Thank you for the opportunity to speak in the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker. It is truly an honour and privilege for me to be here today, elected by Edmonton-Castle Downs in a fair and open process, endowed with the duty to bring forward concerns of my constituents, and empowered with the means to take effective action on these issues.

I have the utmost respect for the democratic process and take my duty to listen, to become informed, and to take action always in the interests of Albertans very seriously. My respect comes in part from experiences I had when I was younger, growing up in Poland. There I witnessed how self-interest, closed-door deal-making, and absence of a mechanism to hear the people's concerns could lead to many dark and dangerous results, ranging from denial of educational and economic opportunities to denial of basic human rights.

As I understand it, I am the first Polish-born person ever elected to a provincial or federal level of government in Canadian history. I hope this allows me to make a unique contribution to this Chamber in many ways, but especially I hope that one of those ways is to serve constituents as a reminder of how important democracy is and how important people's voices are in this democratic process. It's a privilege not to be taken lightly.

Before I address some of the points from the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say thank you to a number of groups and individuals for the contributions that they have made in the past months and years. First, thank you to everyone who helped me get

elected in Edmonton-Castle Downs. I feel especially privileged to be here today because I know how hard-fought the campaign was. There were a number of excellent candidates, and I want everyone to know that their efforts were appreciated. Also, I want to thank all of the constituents who voted. Whether you voted for me or not, your participation in the electoral process strengthened the community simply by being aware and taking the responsibility. I would encourage all constituents, no matter what political stripe, to be comfortable in approaching me with whatever concerns they may have over the next few years.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I think gratitude is owed both to the hon. Premier for providing this province with clear vision and strong leadership and to the hon. Lieutenant Governor for the grace and dignity that she has brought to her office.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few moments to introduce my fellow members of this Legislature to the constituency of Edmonton-Castle Downs. The first thing to note about my constituency is that it is mostly a residential area. As a result of this, Edmonton-Castle Downs has a strong sense of community spirit.

A large number of the people that compose the residential population are directly or indirectly employed by the Canadian armed forces. One of the most striking landmarks adjacent to my constituency is the Griesbach military base. This base has served the Canadian military for many years. Over the next five years, however, this base will be shutting down step by step and be turned into more residential space. It is estimated that homes for over 2,300 families will be made from this space, a very exciting development that will bring the need for more schools and infrastructure but will also strengthen the community with new homes and neighbours.

Another noticeable aspect of Edmonton-Castle Downs is the rich ethnic diversity. So many nations are represented within the constituency—Arabic, Italian, Ukrainian, Polish—amongst the many varied religious buildings that have been built. Edmonton-Castle Downs, Mr. Speaker, can soon boast being the home of the largest Buddhist temple in Canada. This diversity results in a strong community spirit, making Edmonton-Castle Downs a shining model of the society and the harmony that we have in Canada.

Now that I have acquainted my fellow members with the Edmonton-Castle Downs constituency, I would like to address some points of the throne speech directly. I want to draw on some of the aspects of the speech that relate directly to my constituency and others that address concerns of all Albertans that I consider especially important issues to maintain prosperity and a high quality of life for future generations of Albertans.

First, allow me to address education. The throne speech indicated that education continues to be a top priority for this government and that Albertans need and deserve a lifelong learning system that provides the best possible start in the early grades. I could not agree more. To give every child a fair chance at pursuing their potential is surely the most important duty any person or any government could pursue. Surely if we do not care enough for our children, we have to re-evaluate our values and visions for the future. As well, looking after our children is an investment. Studies have shown time and time again that when people are well cared for at the early stages in their lives, they have greater opportunity to become hardworking, contributing members of our community. Mr. Speaker, they will demand less time and resources of justice, education, and health care in the future.

One way in which Edmonton-Castle Downs would be well served to create better opportunities for its young people is through the establishment of a new high school. As I mentioned, Castle Downs is enriched with a growing residential population that promises to grow only larger in the next few years with the conversion of CFB

Griesbach. I am pleased to see that funding is going to such effective targets, programs in general classroom size reduction and early literacy initiatives, the \$60 million program begun in 1998 to provide better opportunities for young people to achieve basic literacy.

Yet even with these very positive and effective programs, the government needs to keep the basics of education important, and having access to a high school when there is a looming demand is key to keeping with the basics. It will be a top priority of mine and I hope of this government to help get a high school in Castle Downs over the next few years.

Education is important to bring up children right, but it is not the only area that this provincial government can and should become involved in. I strongly believe in the role of Alberta Children's Services programs and the impact they have in breaking cycles of family violence and shielding children from the effects of abuse, violence, and poverty, that prevent some children from becoming strong, sound individuals. I am encouraged that the budget for Children's Services has increased nearly 9 percent over the last year to allow for a greater number and more comprehensive programs. I believe firmly that this is an area that the government must continue to support in its mission to provide for a fair and strong future.

The throne speech also proclaims that Alberta values a caring society, where those who are vulnerable receive the support they need. Sadly, seniors very often end up being the most vulnerable members of our society. Often they are subject to a fixed income when costs such as energy increase dramatically, causing them to have income difficulties. Often they are merely neglected after committing their lives to being hardworking employees, mothers, and fathers. Seniors deserve our attention and protection through whatever means may be available to the government.

One of these means is to find a way to provide affordable housing. I am pleased with some of the initiatives that have been taken in this direction over the past few years. Seventeen projects were selected last year to receive funding for supportive housing units or modifications to existing projects to accommodate the aging in place of low- and moderate-income seniors as part of the seniors' supportive housing initiative program. As a result, 630 new supportive housing units will be available to Albertans. I know this is a step in the right direction, but I also know from many seniors I have met in my constituency that more is needed.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I trust that my background as an educator combined with the strong support of the constituents that I have will allow me to positively contribute to the future and strength of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

8:20

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

MR. VANDERMEER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pride and honour that I rise today to deliver my maiden speech as the new MLA for Edmonton-Manning. I'd like to start by congratulating the new and returning MLAs to the Legislature. I would also like to thank the great people of Edmonton-Manning for giving me their support. There are just under 40,000 dynamic people living in the constituency, so there is a lot of work to be done.

I would also like to thank the volunteers of northeast Edmonton who helped me throughout the campaign and up until the election on March 12, 2001. From the beginning of the campaign I had a large number of volunteers who worked very hard. There were dozens of junior and senior high students who were very curious about government and the election process and looking for ways to help.

It was great to have the excitement of the youth in the office. You could feel it as soon as you walked in the door. I would like to thank those students for making the election more enjoyable and for working so hard on the election. I would especially like to thank my wife, who not only worked on the campaign but kept our businesses and our household running as well.

Mr. Speaker, I know the constituency of Edmonton-Manning very well. I was raised in Edmonton-Manning, and I still live in Edmonton-Manning. I was raised in Belvedere. Later as a teenager my family moved to Steele Heights, and after Trish and I were married in 1985, we moved to Horse Hills, all in Edmonton-Manning. Our first home was a mobile home, 564 square feet of luxury living. We paid \$250 a month rent and \$6 for the phone, which was a phone still on a party line. I said to Trish: "We should live here five years. Think of the money we could save." We almost made the five years.

In 1987 we started Vandermeer Construction, and in 1988 my first son, William, was born. In 1989 our daughter, Charlene, was born. We were quickly growing out of our humble home, and it was time to build our home. I was going to say our first house, but in a sentimental way it may just be our last home. Kind of boring you say, living in one area all your life. Not really. Edmonton-Manning is a great place to live.

Edmonton-Manning is located in the northeast corner of the city. Our little pocket in the north is very diverse. Along with the dynamics of Edmonton-Manning district is the farm community on the outskirts of the city. I have the challenge and the pleasure of meeting the needs of both rural and urban issues. I am honoured to represent the small farming community in Edmonton-Manning. During the campaign I enjoyed talking to farmers and listening to their concerns. One of the biggest issues facing farmers not only in north Edmonton but in all Alberta is promoting the idea of value-added products for the farming industry. There are rich farmland and market gardens that would benefit from a shift toward value-added products. We need to work with the federal government to give farmers the flexibility to create more value-added products.

I believe the race for MLA in Edmonton-Manning was very close, as it was a reflection of the diversity in the area. I look forward to proving to the constituents that they made the right choice to create a better future. People in Edmonton-Manning are excited about Alberta's success and look forward to thinking in a new direction.

I feel this government must reflect on the past as today is budget day. Many provinces have natural resources and a growing economy. The difference in Alberta is that we have had a courageous government, a strong-willed populace, and a natural leader who have all worked very hard to make Alberta the best province in Canada. We streamlined funding for services and restrained ourselves from squandering our fortunes. Now the rewards seem endless. Our past success was due to the simplicity of this government's direction.

I believe in a less-intrusive government. The people of Alberta are a responsible people and don't want a government looking over their shoulder, telling them what they can and what they cannot do on every minute situation dealing with their personal lives.

We must remember our roots in these prosperous times. Even though we are in the middle of an incredible economic upswing, we still need to exercise a safe level of fiscal restraint. We must also be on guard from interest groups. Rewarding people who sacrificed in the government services is necessary; however, as a government we must decide which groups want money from those who need money. Taking care of those less fortunate should take precedence. For example, the assured income for the severely handicapped is an income support program for adults who have permanent impairment that substantially limits their ability to earn a living and who have

few resources. This program is offered through Alberta Human Resources and Employment, and I believe it should receive more funding. I'm glad to hear in the budget speech today that there will be more funding for this program.

With Alberta's strong economy we need to look beyond the issues of the day and solve other problems that do not get much attention. Complacency is a dangerous thing. Alberta's surpluses will not necessarily last forever. We must focus our attention on paying off the debt and lowering taxes as much and as soon as possible. These actions directly benefit our constituents.

Too much government spending may eventually worry Albertans. The government of Alberta and Albertans have invested years of hard work that could be undone by losing our perspective and allowing government to expand into another unmanageable, ineffective bureaucracy. Sustainability is a word we hear a lot lately. We know that economies go up and down, and knowing that, we need to make sure that our programs are indeed sustainable in good times and in bad.

I agree with this government's goal to reduce taxes in Alberta. There is one more Alberta tax that should be dealt with: health care premiums. Health care premiums, in my opinion, are a tax that is a huge load on Albertans. If we can afford it, and I think we can – we say that taxes are going down. This is the first tax we should eliminate altogether because it is simply the right thing to do. It also reminds us of past governments, who were always looking for new ways to tax and create new revenue. We are not like that anymore, nor should we ever be like that again.

I share concerns regarding the education system with the constituents of Edmonton-Manning. Increasing funding should improve the condition of schools and resources for teachers and students. We need to learn to work together to make sure that we see results in excellent and well-educated students. We need to continue the tradition of staying the course of the mid-1990s. We must maintain fiscal responsibility and a positive vision for the future. We need to be compassionate and disciplined with Alberta's surplus, fair and understanding toward different views and perspectives, as well as honest and accountable to our constituents.

I am confident that this government will earn the respect of many more constituents of Edmonton-Manning very soon. I will show them my passion to this government and especially my dedication to Edmonton-Manning, to their concerns and issues. There is a great deal of work to be done, and I look forward to the future of Alberta.

One thing that I'd like to share with you too. I told you a brief history of the beginning of my life with Trish and our marriage. Two years ago we were also blessed with Samuel, our youngest boy. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

8:30

head: **Government Bills and Orders**

Second Reading

Bill 3

Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2001

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to move second reading of Bill 3, the Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2001.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

This act strengthens our ability to protect and manage provincial fish resources and is consistent with promoting the Alberta advantage in sustainable natural resources. This amendment act brings with it changes that deal with administrative and technical issues that have arisen since the Fisheries (Alberta) Act was proclaimed into force in November of 1997.

The existing act does not have provisions to license and regulate fish derbies and tournaments. The Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2001, will establish those provisions, Mr. Speaker. The derbies and tournaments can potentially reduce the health of our fish population, and they can lower the available harvest of traditional recreational anglers. Regulating derbies and tournaments of course will lower their impact on the overall fish resources of our lakes.

The Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2001, will also establish provisions and operating standards for guides and anglers.

Changes to the act will also allow us to appropriately regulate game fish that are held in aquariums or other contained waters. These changes, Mr. Speaker, will require game fish from all sources to be kept only in licensed and approved facilities.

In addition to focusing on sustainable resource management, a number of revisions to the act are in support of Alberta's commitment to enforcing these laws. Anyone who does not pay a fine under the Fisheries (Alberta) Act or the Wildlife Act will be suspended from sportfishing until the fine is paid up. This new authority will allow items used in the offence against the act to be seized by the fisheries officers.

This amendment also aligns this act with the federal Fisheries Act. An amendment will create a clear exemption to protect employees who, while performing their duties, are in violation of the act. Conservation officers use these authorities when enforcing the Fisheries Act. Through this amendment, Mr. Speaker, these new authorities will be incorporated into the Fisheries (Alberta) Act.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to speak.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I listened with interest to the hon. minister's introduction to Bill 3, the Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act. The first thought that occurred was the discussion I had last night with the 161st Scout troop from Forest Heights. They were questioning me on the role of an MLA and the new government, and I told them that the government had grown so large, the cabinet had expanded to 24 portfolios. I said that the only thing that is not there is a minister of fisheries. I believe, after listening to the hon. minister's comments, that this must certainly be part of his portfolio, minister of fisheries.

Now, we have rules here, and the highlights of this bill concerning competitive fishing tournaments and derbies will be brought in under regulations. We also see here, Mr. Speaker, that a person convicted of an offence under this act will have his or her fishing and hunting licence revoked until the fine is paid. The hon. minister talked about penalties, and if not in this bill, I wonder if this is not the appropriate time to deal with the whole issue of poaching in Alberta. There are certainly cases where freshwater fish in the lakes here are winding up in commercial establishments, restaurants. [interjection]

Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister assures me and other members of this House that this has been dealt with, and I am very pleased to hear about that because it should be fair for everyone. If the product is coming, for instance, from fish farms, well, then that's fine, but what sort of controls are there in place to ensure that is exactly what is going on whenever the product comes to market?

There are some changes to definitions of types of fish and the

rules for keeping fish in captivity here, and this appears to be developing as pay-for-what-you-catch private commercial fishing opportunities. I hope I never see the day in this fine province where individuals can buy or lease the fishing rights along either side of a stream or river. I certainly think that would be the wrong message to send, particularly for those who enjoy the sport of fly-fishing. In committee I believe I will have some comments regarding that.

I have questions regarding the definitions in this bill, Mr. Speaker. Hopefully we can get a clarification on what will be defined as a fish-handling facility, particularly whenever this concerns fish-farming. What exactly is a fish-handling facility? What are the anticipated differences between fish and game fish? I'm assuming this is all going to be explained, and hopefully it will deal with fish-farming. The definition of sport fishing: now, I'm curious about that. Also, will fishing with a bow and arrow or spear be allowed in all lakes, and how will this be monitored? Will sport fishing guides be regulated by the Alberta Professional Outfitters Society? Will all the tournaments and derbies require a licence, or will certain ones be exempt? As I understand, there are different derbies and different tournaments in the north end of the province and in the south, in the foothills. We all know the importance of the bull trout not only to the sport fisherman but also to the Liberal caucus. That is a very, very important fish in the ongoing history of our caucus.

8:40

In closing, I have one final query for the minister, and I look forward in due course, Mr. Speaker, to his answers. What does the minister anticipate the fees will be for a tournament licence?

With those comments on Bill 3 at this stage in second reading, Mr. Speaker, I will await in due course the response from the minister and I will cede the floor to one of my colleagues.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to speak briefly on Bill 3, the Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2001. The truth is that I did try and contact the great white fisherperson in our family, which is my father, to find out whether he had any knowledge of what was being proposed in this bill, because I'm sure he does. He seems to belong to every club, the trout fishing club and all of them. But I didn't get back to him, so I guess I'll have to rise and speak to this again in Committee of the Whole once I hear back from him.

This strikes me as a very reasonable bill. It seems to be addressing problems that have been raised over a long period of time, both on the sportfisher side of things and somewhat on the environmental side.

Now, the part that I was interested in was whether the minister has addressed the recommendations from the Auditor General's '99-2000 report on the fish management system. Obviously, there has been some back-and-forth around fish stocking management. The AG report also reviewed this in '93-94 and has been watching it for some time. There is a specific recommendation in here about "regional and area Action Plans used in the planning process" not being completed on a consistent basis. "There are 17 areas covering the Province for which Action Plans are prepared by the Department's Natural Resources Service." He goes into quite a bit of detail about what's happening. Essentially these plans are "to recover collapsed and vulnerable populations and to sustain stable . . . ones." That's a quote directly from the Auditor General's report. So the department is able to prioritize the activities to make sure that it is helping collapsed fisheries to recover and being able to keep the viable ones viable.

I'm wondering what the minister has done, seeing as this bill is

about fish management – is anything that the Auditor General has brought up repeatedly being addressed through this bill? It's a little hard to tell because once again – you know, I'm beginning to think that if I had a magic wand, the word I'd remove would be "regulation," because I see far too much of it appearing in proposed legislation from this government. Everything gets referred to and defined in the regulations, and the regulations are established by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which is really the cabinet, which really means that the good decisions, the ones that people really need to know about and would probably like some input on, are all decided behind closed doors.

Once again in this bill, as I looked through it, there are a number of things that are being defined in the regulations, including what a competitive fishing event is, competitive fishing event participant, fish handling facility, which again is part of what I was addressing with the Auditor General's concerns. Then the bill goes into adding some different kinds of fish that weren't covered by the act previously.

Essentially we have a bill that is trying to put in rules around competitive fishing events – fishing derbies is what I would have known them as – deal somewhat with how people that are convicted of an offence under the act are actually dealt with, change these definitions, additional types of fish that are added in, and rules for keeping fish in captivity, which is where my primary source of interest was, what the department had done to address the requests and concerns brought forward by the Auditor General. I'm sure that the minister can address those for me when he speaks again on this bill.

As I say, I haven't heard back from the great white fisherperson, but I'm sure I will. As far as I'm concerned, at this point I have no problem supporting this bill. I know there are others who may well wish to speak to it at a later date, so at this point I would like to adjourn debate.

Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 4

Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2001

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased tonight to move second reading of Bill 4, the Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2001.

This bill will increase compensation to landowners or occupants facing damages. This is for areas of their property not covered by leases to energy companies or included in the right-of-entry orders. This bill will increase the amount of compensation that can be dealt with by the board for damages, raising it from \$5,000 to \$25,000. Surface rights legislation is administered by the Surface Rights Board. This is a quicker and more efficient channel for dealing with compensation than the court system. Currently section 33(2)(b), the amount of compensation claimed by the occupant concerning damages, cannot exceed \$5,000.

Mr. Speaker, this limit has been in place since 1983, and it is generally outdated. The amount is too low to effectively deal with damage claims at this time. Unless the limit is raised to \$25,000, landowners must apply to the courts, a process which can be expensive and time-consuming for everyone. By proposing an increase in the compensation, this bill will reduce the time spent or court expenses of an owner or occupant in recovering damages and

allow an owner or occupant to receive full value for damages.

Let me just take a moment to tell you how compensation arrangements are made at this time. Should negotiations between the landowner or occupant and the operator for a surface lease fail, the operator may apply to the Surface Rights Board for a right-of-entry order. Once the right-of-entry order is issued, a compensation hearing is scheduled to determine the amount of compensation the landowner or occupant is entitled to. The landowner receives annual rent or a onetime payment for leasing the land. Additional compensation is rewarded if land not included in the surface rights lease or right-of-entry order is damaged as a result of the energy company's operations.

There are three ways that section 33 of the act provides compensation for damages. Damage to land off the right of entry: a good example is contamination off the right of entry. Trespassing by energy company employees on land not covered by the lease. Another is the loss of livestock and the owner's time and expenses in recovering livestock; for example, if the energy company leaves a gate open.

By increasing the compensation amount and allowing the Surface Rights Board to continue administering compensation, landowners and occupants can receive full value for damages in a quick and affordable manner.

Thank you.

8:50

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just have a few brief comments this evening on the Surface Rights Amendment Act, Bill 4. It looks like it's quite similar to what was proposed by my colleague from Lethbridge-East, the hon. Dr. Nicol, in the last session, and it's certainly, I think, necessary.

The minister recently concluded his comments and said that it's 1983, I believe, and \$5,000 went a lot further in 1983 than it does now. This is quite a logical step, I believe, from \$5,000 to \$25,000, as the maximum level of appeals for surface rights compensation claims. The Surface Rights Board is certainly going to have its work cut out for it in the future as our urban communities grow larger and grow closer to producing oil and gas fields. It is necessary for the government to have legislation that's reflective of this, and I believe this document goes in that direction. At this time I generally am supportive of this legislation, but the mediation process, as I understand it, between the affected landowners – the Surface Rights Board is in the middle, and the oil companies or the petroleum companies are on the other side.

I represent a constituency certainly that would not be nearly as affected by this issue as some colleagues from other centres across the province, but there are people in the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar who own land, and they are affected by this. They've had problems in the past. I don't know if this is specifically going to be able to address their problems. Their problems were to deal with water, contamination of surface water, and also air and noise pollution from the activities on the leases themselves, but that's to be dealt with in another statute.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I think I would be in support of this bill, but I will have to wait and hear back from some officials of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Landmen.

At this time again, Mr. Speaker, I will cede the floor to one of my colleagues. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks very much. I am glad to be able to speak in second reading to Bill 4, the Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2001. Once again a fairly straightforward bill, very simple, very short – I think it's a whole two pages long – and obviously something that's been negotiated and coming for a long time.

As my colleague made note, in fact the first time we saw this issue raised was in Bill 229 in 1999, brought forward by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East. So interesting how all the good Liberal ideas end up getting taken, but my compliments to the government side for indeed flattering the Liberal caucus by implementing the bill ideas that we do indeed bring forward, almost an identical reading of the bill.

If the landowner and the company that wants to do exploration or drilling or whatever can't come to an agreement on the amount of compensation, then they end up going to the Surface Rights Board, and obviously the amount of money that was in the legislation previously just doesn't hold up in this day and age. I mean, \$5,000 is the existing amount of money, and that just doesn't go very far in 2001. I don't know if that's a good comment on how expensive litigation is getting or not, but certainly it seems reasonable for damage or water contamination and various other issues that are being raised that \$25,000 is a more appropriate amount of money to empower the board to be administering.

One issue that's been raised with me is not so much around surface rights. Well, no. It is, because it's around noise, and it's around damage from almost an earthquake effect. Some of folks are buying acreages in these small developments on the edge of cities and smaller centres, and they start up these little acreage communities. Then you end up with a drilling rig pulling in across the road. They don't get a lot of warning. There's not a lot of time where they get given any notice that this is about to happen. So if you did know it was going to happen, you could maybe arrange to be taking your holidays while the particular work is being done so it wouldn't be so troublesome to you. But they're also complaining about that sort of shaking affect that you get when somebody is not too far away and moving large amounts of dirt around and drilling into the ground.

AN HON. MEMBER: Vibrations.

MS BLAKEMAN: Vibrations, thank you.

It does affect you. I think if any of us have ever had any kind of construction done nearby to where our homes are, you certainly feel it. It comes right up through the foundation and starts shaking the dishes that are on the walls and in the cupboards, and there can certainly be damage from it, never mind the sort of nuisance factor. I'm not sure if this sort of thing is covered under what the board can look at or compensate for, but maybe it should be. I know that issue has been raised with me. I've been asked to bring it forward. I've brought it forward.

I know there are a lot of new members in the House with us, and I think it's important that it be outlined that being in opposition doesn't mean that we automatically oppose everything. If we've had enough time to have a reasonable look at the bill, to be able to contact some stakeholders and get some feedback and it appears to be a reasonable thing that has been a long time in coming, we're not going to oppose a bill. We're going to speak briefly to it. Certainly in second reading we're speaking to the principle of the bill, and I have no problem supporting the principle of what this bill is putting forward. However, I do realize that there are others who may well wish to speak to this on another day. So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that we adjourn debate on second reading of Bill 4.

Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

9:00

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: For the benefit of the new members, this is called Committee of the Whole, and I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order. It's the informal session part of the Legislature. People are able to remove their jackets and indeed are able to move around and visit quietly with others, so there's no need for long-distance conversations. We have the convention that only one person is standing and speaking at a time. Although you can move around, if you wish to speak to any of the issues before the committee, whether it be in Committee of the Whole or in Committee of Supply, you are obliged to speak only in your place. That's where you can speak from and be recognized. So if somebody is moving around, they hopefully are moving purposely from the place where they had just been sitting to another place where they'll wish to sit.

Bill 1

Natural Gas Price Protection Act

THE CHAIRMAN: We would call upon, then, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar first of all to offer any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to Bill 1.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At this time I am anxious to enter into the discussion at committee on the Natural Gas Price Protection Act, that, I believe, as I said earlier in second reading, is largely symbolic, is unnecessary. But a person has to take a bad thing and try to make the best of it. Hopefully, at some point we're going to get the opportunity to make amendments to this bill.

Certainly if we look at the existing Natural Gas Rebates Act, that came into play in 1974, Mr. Chairman, if hon. members were to read that bill, they would certainly agree that this bill is not necessary and that it is a public relations exercise. There are so many things that are in the old legislation that are not in this legislation. Anytime that legislation comes forward – and we look at supplementary estimates. We see that there is, I believe, \$403 million or \$406 million in here that is to be spent on gas rebates. That is a substantial amount of money. There are mentions of the definition of industrial raw material in this bill that we have to examine very, very closely, particularly whenever you think of ethane and its value to the petrochemical industry in this province.

You look at price protection. Naturally it is an interference in the free-market system whenever you talk about price protection. We have to examine this very, very closely, Mr. Chairman. However, when you look at this legislation as it exists, this slogan piece, this public relations exercise, we're discussing rebates to vendors, yet we are not going to have a definition of what a vendor is or is not. In this case a vendor could turn out to be a natural gas electrical generating station.

At this time I would have to question: is it in the best interests of the taxpayers of this province to subsidize a natural gas fired generating station? How are the coal-fired generating stations to feel about this? We know there is a certain economic advantage. Also, how do people who are concerned about conservation feel about this, Mr. Chairman? I think it is very, very important that the whole idea of who a vendor is is made clear. Certainly in section 3 there is no discussion of a definition of a vendor.

Now, who is going to be eligible for the gas rebates? This is very interesting. What sort of control is going to be on the money? How will we know it's to be going where it was programmed to go? The calculations of rebate payments, the applications for rebate pay-

ments, the point at which rebate payments are made: these are all vital questions whenever we're considering spending millions and millions and millions of dollars.

People in the province of Alberta are of the impression that these are just short-term rebates, but when you look at the gas supply in this province, perhaps citizens are right whenever they conclude that there is no shortage of natural gas. My question to all members of the Assembly is: if gas is so plentiful, why are the Americans currently spending \$75 million on an engineering study to bring gas from Alaska down through Alberta to Chicago and to distribution points south of Chicago and throughout the continental United States? It makes sense, if there is so much gas in Alberta, to develop it here and save the billions and billions of dollars that these pipelines are going to cost to build. But no. They seem very determined to get at that gas, because they realize that in the western sedimentary basin the supply is not endless. We obviously have to be concerned.

In America the weather conditions are the reverse of this province and our country, Canada. Natural gas is used to generate electricity, and in America in the summertime air conditioners run more often than our heating systems in the winter here. The idea that it's not a heating season and the price of natural gas is going to go down to levels of 18 months ago – I don't believe that is possible, particularly this summer. There are rivers that are used to develop hydropower. They have very low levels, unfortunately, so the natural gas price is going to stay high.

Mr. Chairman, I realize we're debating Bill 1, not the supplementary estimates, but we are talking in the budget of spending a very modest sum, whenever we compare it to previous rebates, of a little over \$100 million in natural gas rebates. The whole idea in section 4 of who is going to be eligible for these rebates has to be clear. It can't be left to the regulations in section 7.

9:10

Now, the civil remedies in section 6. I note that there is no dollar amount for an offence or a penalty. In the legislation that I prefer, the existing legislation, there is a figure, and it is \$10,000, Mr. Chairman.

If we're going to look at power generation – and this is where I'm afraid we're going with this – what kind of subsidies are we going to wind up paying with this bill? Obviously, unless it is fixed, unless the repairmen come along with amendments, there is going to be the potential here for unlimited subsidies. Now, power generation comes to mind, as I said earlier. Mr. Chairman, who is going to decide the degree of sheltering if it is necessary? We look at this: the minister. The minister is going to do this behind closed doors.

If this natural gas rebate is to be used for feedstock or a fuel source for power generation, there are many studies that indicate that gas-fired plants are better for the environment, but we have to have a detailed comparison of the economies of existing gas- and coal-fired plants. This is very complicated because of the differences in ownership – some of them are public; some of them are private – the differences in accounting procedures, the age of the plants, the mechanical condition of them, the load factors of the plants, and there are many, many other factors including location.

Now, I really don't think it's fair. For instance, there is, I believe, a 275-megawatt gas-fired generating station being built on the outskirts of Calgary. It's gas-fired. It may even be larger than 275 megawatts. It's owned by a large American corporation. If this bill, this slogan bill, this public relations exercise which has nothing to do with the consumers of the province, were to be lining the pockets of the developers of this at the expense of Alberta consumers, I would be very, very disappointed. But, hopefully, it will be not necessary to provide rebates.

I have my problems with this electricity scheme that has been developed. I have problems with losing control of an essential natural resource like natural gas, that I think has gone on in this province. Earlier I discussed this, Mr. Chairman, and during this term I intend to discuss this at length. When we look at this bill and the improvements that can be made to this, I think it's time to get started.

Now, Mr. Chairman, it was novel for me to read *Hansard* from past legislative debates. It astonished me that when the hon. member Mr. Farran introduced the Natural Gas Rebates Act, the Premier of the day, Mr. Lougheed, participated actively in the debate. I would encourage all hon. members of this Assembly, if they want a quick lesson in the history of this province, to review that discussion that occurred in *Hansard*. It's remarkable, and it's not that long ago. I think all members need to have a look at this.

Mr. Farran provided all members of the House with a draft copy of the regulations, and I know that I'm not going to get a draft copy of the regulations of this bill or any other bill from this government. Now, maybe they're going to surprise me, Mr. Chairman, and do that, but this hon. member Mr. Farran back in 1974, so that all members of the Assembly could understand the regulations, so they could have a better understanding of the technicalities of the application of the rebate bill, introduced the regulations and circulated them with the members before they were debated in the Assembly, as I understand it.

Now, I don't have a problem with the objectives of gas shielding, as it's called. The objectives of the system would be to shelter the residents and commercial establishments from the effects of significant gas price increases.

Of course, we can say that this is a North American phenomenon. But we can look at the Alaskans and what is not only going on in Alaska but in the U.S. Senate. I've heard an argument put forward that: oh, goodness, we can't protect the resource for Albertans because of NAFTA. Well, that doesn't seem to be bothering the state legislators in Alaska. It doesn't seem to be of any concern to the U.S. Senators. A number of them have cosponsored a bill. It is very interesting. This bill is to protect the energy and security of the United States and decrease America's dependency on foreign oil sources. Well, guess who that foreign oil source is? It's Alberta. Collectively it's Canada, but it's Alberta.

Now, getting back to Bill 1 here, Mr. Chairman, should we be sheltering industry from the escalating price of natural gas? Small industry is landlocked in Alberta, it stands to reason. But they've been forced to compete at disadvantages as compared with industries in central Canada and the continental United States, and naturally they should have the benefit of the resource here.

I don't believe this bill is the long-term solution to this. Now that the horse has escaped from the barn, our economic position is not what it used to be when the Natural Gas Rebates Act was discussed and debated in 1974. We suddenly find ourselves with a diminishing supply of a product, natural gas, which we rely on. I find it unfortunate that this has occurred, because we're going to have to have a very public discussion on how much further we're going to allow the resources of this province to be shipped out unprocessed.

In conclusion, I would remind all hon. members again of the *Calgary Herald* editorial from May 4, 1974. They discussed that instead of the rebate plan, this bill could easily be called the gas price protection plan. That is essentially what this bill is. So when you think that this is the flagship piece of legislation from this government, I have to caution the consumers of the province and I have to caution all hon. members of the Assembly: we cannot accept this bill in this form. It is a blank cheque. It's like giving the government a credit card with unlimited spending: here; go for it. Anything could happen here.

Policies must be designed to produce maximum returns to Albertans, and this doesn't do it. I don't believe this is the right way to do it. I don't understand why the last legislation was allowed to lapse in regulation. It was certainly needed this winter. The concept of gas rebate programs is not bad.

9:20

We all understand that natural gas prices are strongly influenced by supply and demand, but this is beyond reason, Mr. Chairman. You know, the consensus forecast is that natural gas prices in Alberta – we discussed this before – are going to remain quite high. We look at the take-away capacity and the opening of the new pipelines. The situation, if anything, may get worse, and this blank cheque is not the long-term answer.

So I think we're going to have to try to improve it. It's the only thing we can do, and the first thing is to find out the whole concept of what a vendor is going to be. Is a vendor going to be someone who is going to be generating electricity with this natural gas? We also have to find out if a vendor will be someone that is going to be using natural gas for other industrial purposes: a fertilizer plant, gas used for fuel or for hydrogen generation or for other purposes connected with the upgrading of bitumen. These are very, very important. The volume of gas could be huge, and the rebates to these outfits could cripple the Treasury.

Gas used as compressor fuel. Hopefully we're not going to be subsidizing the fuel gas for a compressor that is rocketing our natural resources, including the unprocessed gas to Chicago. This could possibly happen, and there are no answers in this. Now, perhaps hon. members across the Assembly are going to allay my fears here, but somehow I doubt it.

Gas used for municipal floods in connection with the secondary recovery of crude oil. We have to look at this, but at this time I hear the bell. My time, Mr. Chairman, has run out.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, yes it has.

MR. MacDONALD: I'm looking forward to pursuing debate again in committee on this slogan bill.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On Bill 1 I've consulted a number of esteemed economists and businesspeople. There are some serious concerns with its implementation. It looks very much like it's a system that will disrupt completely the market signals that can be successfully achieved in a workable market for natural gas. Rather than allowing price and supply and demand to determine the consumption of gas, the risk with Bill 1 is that through a mismanaged rebate system the true price of gas will never be known to consumers.

Gas is unlike electricity in that it does function well as a commodity. Electricity does not function as a commodity, as we are seeing in the electricity deregulation business, but gas has characteristics that allow it to be a more successful commodity. Gas, for example, is storable. It can be stockpiled, unlike electricity, so that at times of low price stockpiles can be built up, and at times of high price those stockpiles can be released and the price brought down. Electricity, of course, doesn't function that way.

There are also many reasonable substitutes for gas. In households, for example, gas is primarily used for heat. Of course, you can simply turn down the heat and wear a sweater. You can switch from gas to coal or to wood heating, as some people are doing in their

homes, so there's a substitution there. On the other hand, of course electricity is much more difficult to substitute for. You cannot power a microwave without electricity. You can't power a computer or a cash register without electricity. Electricity does not respond to market signals, so it's not a commodity, while gas is more of a commodity. Another difference, of course, is that with natural gas there are large numbers of wholesale suppliers, which is necessary for a successful market. In electricity there are not, and there's no sign of that developing in Alberta.

One of my concerns with this bill is that it in fact violates all the rules of the free market, which is a bit ironical coming from a free-market government. It is a double standard, and as a result, of course, we're going to get into yet another mess, kind of the flip side of the mess we're in with electricity deregulation, which should not be turned over to the free market.

At the same time, of course, I recognize that the fluctuations of a free market can drive the price of natural gas up to punishing levels, so I am not in principle opposed to some kind of transitional sheltering for consumers of natural gas. I'm not reassured on that account in Bill 1 because there are, in fact, no time constraints in Bill 1. This bill goes on and on indefinitely in contrast to the bill that is in place that was introduced 25 years ago, which laid out a time limit to its applicability. This, without any time limits, clearly is not intended as a transition but could become a permanent and a kind of addictive program which could have a profoundly negative impact on our Treasury.

I would also point out, as my colleague has pointed out, that this bill is unnecessary. There's a bill on the books now that does everything this bill does and indeed more. It does it well and presumably is the authority under which the current rebates have been provided. So this bill seems very odd as a flagship bill, being really redundant, unnecessary.

I'm also concerned that it emasculates the Legislature. Literally half of this bill is regulations. There's almost no substance to the bill that the Legislature is being asked to approve. All the substance will be in the regulations, which will not be debated in the Legislature. As a result, that removes a substantial and important power from the Legislative Assembly.

Finally, I would express my concern that the bill risks discouraging responsible conservation of an important resource by disrupting market signals. If the rebates are tied, for example, to consumption – the more you consume, the higher your rebate – then there is a risk, especially if it's a permanent kind of rebate or a long-standing rebate, that people won't bother conserving because their price will be subsidized. That, of course, is a dangerous precedent to set.

I would say that it may well be that the intent of this bill is good. I'm not opposed to transitional sheltering for Albertans as they face higher natural gas prices. I'm also not opposed to the idea of sharing Alberta's wealth from its natural resources with all its citizens. If this bill were to achieve that, it might be commendable. But I am very concerned that the execution of this intent is very poorly presented in this bill and that indeed, as I've said, the bill is unnecessary because there's an existing piece of legislation on the books.

With those comments, Mr. Chairman, I would like to move that we adjourn debate on Bill 1 in Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

9:30

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. STEVENS: Yes. Thank you. I move that the committee rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wainwright.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on Bill 1.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in this report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

head: **Government Motions**

MR. STEVENS: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek the unanimous consent of the Assembly to withdraw the sessional adjournment motion brought before the House earlier today under oral notices and substitute in its place the following motion:

Be it resolved that when the Assembly adjourns to recess each sitting of the First Session of the 25th Legislature, it shall stand adjourned until a time and date as determined by the Speaker after consultation with the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: We'll just take a moment, hon. Deputy Government House Leader, to distribute these to both sides.

[Unanimous consent granted]

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to seek the unanimous consent of the Assembly once again, in this case to waive Standing Order 38(1)(a) regarding one day's notice to allow for the consideration of the sessional adjournment motion just brought before the House by oral notice.

[Unanimous consent granted]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a few comments regarding this motion. The first one. I'm interested in the fact that the previous motion as it was circulated in the Assembly this afternoon used the word "current" sitting of the First Session. It read: "Be it resolved that when the Assembly adjourns to recess the current sitting of the First Session of the 25th Legislature." I will stop there. This motion states, "Be it resolved that when the Assembly adjourns to recess each sitting of the First Session of the 25th Legislature." I have a bit of a problem with that. I would prefer to see the word "current" used instead of "each" sitting.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Deputy Government House Leader, if you would do us the honour of moving the motion. We've asked for permission, but we need to now move it. Then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar can continue with his comments.

MR. STEVENS: I'd be pleased to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Adjournment of Session

16. Stevens moved:

Be it resolved that when the Assembly adjourns to recess each sitting of the First Session of the 25th Legislature, it shall stand adjourned until a time and date as determined by the Speaker after consultation with the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm disappointed that this motion is going to be for "each sitting of the First Session of the 25th Legislature." In the past I can recall where we at one point had a special sitting to deal with the whole issue of Quebec and the unity issue and the issue of Quebec within the Confederation of Canada, and each member of the Assembly had an opportunity to express their views. That was sort of a special sitting of the 24th Legislature.

I don't agree certainly with the word "each" in this specific motion, because I think it should be just the current sitting of the Legislative Assembly. The motion we have now for the adjournment of the spring session should not follow through to the fall or any other sittings of this First Session of the 25th Legislature that may be necessary.

So I'm disappointed in the wording of this, and I'm also disappointed with the speed with which this motion has been presented to the Assembly. The election is over. We've just received the budget. There are billions and billions of dollars. It's going to take time to scrutinize this. I know the legislative agenda is light. I see, you know, the slogan bill, Bill 1. This is a light, light legislative agenda,

but we have issues to be discussed here. I can only question: where's the fire? What's the reason for the hurry?

With those few comments and particularly the caution about the wording of this motion – I would have much preferred to have seen the word "current" in there instead of "each" sitting. I'm very disappointed in this motion, but that's life. You can't always get what you want, as the Rolling Stones would say. With that I will cede the floor to anyone else who has comments regarding this motion.

Thank you.

9:40

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am very disappointed in the nature and the intent of this motion. It's my first day in debate here, and I'm already finding myself debating a request by the government to facilitate adjournment of the session. It's only the fifth day of the session. A large number of members have not had a chance to speak at all, and I think it's very disappointing that the government is in such a hurry to hustle along and facilitate adjournment. I think it also reflects poorly on the state of democracy in this province that we're in such a hurry to rush through with the debates.

So with those comments I would just really strongly register my concern that this is disappointing, and I'm sure my constituents would share that concern.

[Motion carried]

[At 9:43 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]