

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, November 27, 2001**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 01/11/27

head: Government Bills and Orders

head: Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: I'll call the committee to order. Would the committee agree to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: Introduction of Guests

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MR. HORNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure this evening to introduce to you and through you to the members of the House a great group of kids that are with us tonight from St. Albert. They are with the 2nd St. Albert Cub group. They are seated in the members' gallery. With them this evening we have group leaders Mr. Larry Wright, Mr. Jim Green, Ms Wendy Radcliff, and Mr. Grant Chaney as well as parent helpers Mr. Bill Crockett, Mr. Leo Vilks, Mr. Ron Nadolski, and Mr. Neil Gamble. I would ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

THE CHAIRMAN: For the benefit of those that are in the gallery, this is the informal part of the Legislature; thus members can quietly move about. Indeed, if you're following your map of where the members are, you'll soon find that someone with a beard in fact turns out to be a lady and that they're not in their right place, so please be aware of that. We're allowed to take off our jackets and to have coffee or juice in the Chamber. So it is relaxed, and we don't have a limit to the number of times that members can get up and speak on a topic.

Bill 28 Agricultural Operation Practices Amendment Act, 2001

THE CHAIRMAN: We've already dealt with seven amendments. Are there any comments, questions, or additional amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have an additional amendment, and I'll just ask that it be distributed now.

THE CHAIRMAN: To the pages, I would just remind you, please, when you're doing the handouts, hand them out first to the people who are actually sitting here, and then you can go and drop them off at the desks that aren't currently occupied.

Hon. member, I think you may commence your deliberations on amendment A8, if you'd move it and explain it.

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I will move that Bill 28, Agricultural Operations Practices Amendment Act, 2001, be amended as follows: section 5 is amended (a) in the proposed section 34 by striking out "\$10,000" and substituting "\$20,000"; (b) in the proposed section 35, (i) in subsection (1) by striking out "\$5,000" and substituting "\$10,000", and (ii) in

subsection (2) by striking out "\$10,000" and substituting "\$20,000"; (c) in the proposed section 36, (i) in subsection (1) by striking out "\$5,000" and substituting "\$10,000", and (ii) in subsection (2) by striking out "\$10,000" and substituting "\$20,000." Mr. Chairman, these amendments would simply double the fines in all respects. There are some very serious matters here that these fines apply to: the obstruction or delay of an inspector, producing false records, expanding an operation without approval, and misapplication of manure.

Mr. Chairman, it's well known that only politicians are allowed to misapply manure, and anyone else should be fined heavily. So with that, I'll take my place.

[Motion on amendment A8 lost]

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

MR. MASON: I have one additional amendment, which I'll distribute now. I tried to renumber it as section 6, but they wouldn't let me.

THE CHAIRMAN: This amendment will be known as amendment A9. We'd invite the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands to move this.

MR. MASON: I move that Bill 28, Agricultural Operation Practices Amendment Act, 2001, be amended as follows: section 5 is amended in the proposed section 20(1)(b)(iii) by striking out "a reasonable opportunity" and substituting "at least 20 working days." Mr. Chairman, this is just to provide greater certainty for people who may be affected by this operation, whether the people are proponents or people who may be affected by such an application. So it makes a great deal of sense, from our point of view, to substitute a clear number of days instead of "a reasonable opportunity," which is subject to such wide interpretation as to produce potentially unsatisfactory results.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Motion on amendment A9 lost]

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

DR. TAFT: Yes. Thank you. On the bill?

THE CHAIRMAN: We're on the bill, yes.

DR. TAFT: Okay. Thank you very much. I have not spoken to the bill yet, Mr. Chairman, and I appreciate the opportunity. I've put some effort into researching this bill. I've spoken to a number of people around the province, I've spoken to people within my constituency, and I've consulted with people in our caucus including in particular the leader, whose opinion I take very seriously on this, and I've done a fair bit of reading, not as much as I would like to. I have tried to make as informed an opinion as I can. Among the people around the province whom I've spoken to are included a number of farmers, one of whom is currently a county councillor and another who was a former county councillor, people who have been very involved in agriculture their entire lives and have been very successful at it, people who I would say are probably from the heartland of the Tory party.

MR. MacDONALD: No.

8:10

DR. TAFT: I talk to everybody.

I thought I would organize my comments into the pros and the cons as I see them with this piece of legislation, and there are a number of both. Clearly, one of the benefits of the legislation is that it will bring a standard process to an industry that has suffered from helter-skelter regulation and a lack of consistency. There's no question that a provincewide process laid out involving the NRCB and so on will make the rules clear for everybody, and I think there's a lot to be said for that. It also brings with it standards and regulations that I'm told are in many ways very strong standards. They're clear. They definitely improve the current situation in terms of environmental protection. Issues around water contamination, soil contamination, smells, and so on are covered under these regulations, and I'm told that they are regulations that are commendable, that they are quite strong and quite clear.

I'm also conscious that this is a piece of legislation that will facilitate the development of an industry in this province, and of course there are pros and cons to that. Among the benefits to it, I think, is providing a solid market for Alberta grain growers. Barley growers, growers of feed grains throughout the province will have a steady market and in many cases a very well-paying market. My information is that Lethbridge and the Lethbridge area consistently deliver the highest prices in North America for barley growers, and that's a real benefit for local farmers. If they want to be selling their grain at a premium price, this piece of legislation creates an industry that will give them an opportunity to do so, so there is some benefit to grain growers on that basis.

There is also the possibility, if there are plants developed under this legislation, of job creation in rural areas of the province. A significant intensive pork operation might employ, you know, a few dozen people, perhaps. These would be often in areas where a dozen or two or three jobs are hard to come by. So to the extent that they provide a labour market for people in some of the more remote rural areas of Alberta, I think that's commendable as well.

So those are the pros that I see, the benefits that I see with this piece of legislation.

The list of negatives that has been raised with me is also substantial. It's certainly substantial enough to make this a genuine dilemma in terms of voting. Obviously there are concerns about the environment. If we proceed with the development of, for example, a hog industry in this province on the scale that has been discussed, where we may be looking at 10 million or 12 million or 13 million hogs produced annually in Alberta, that is an enormous change to Alberta and to the environment of Alberta. I'm told that one hog produces waste equivalent to perhaps seven human beings, so if we're looking at 10 million hogs or 13 million hogs, we are looking at the equivalent impact, in terms of human waste, of several Los Angeleses or several Chicagos. I'm not convinced for a moment that most people in Alberta appreciate that this industry is developing to this scale or will soon be developing to this scale.

If that amount of waste were to be developed through human habitation in an urban development, there would be major waste treatment plants developed like the kind that we already see in Edmonton and Calgary. In the case of intensive livestock operations, or confined feeding operations, we will see a much lower level of waste handling. It's certainly by agricultural standards a good level, but given the intensity of the development, they are standards that are not up to what we would expect if these were urban developments.

When we think about the impact of, say, the equivalent to a human population in Alberta of 50 million or 60 million or 70

million people and we add on top of that the potential development of coal-fired power plants for export of electricity to the United States and we add to that the enormous environmental impact of the oil sands developments in northeastern Alberta, I am concerned that we risk turning Alberta into, in some sense, a sewer for North America. That's how some people have put it to me. In fact, last night I was talking to a constituent about this very issue, and he said: my gosh, I just spent the last two months driving around this beautiful province of ours, going all around and admiring it, and as I went around, I became more and more concerned that we were going to be losing this province, that we were going to be losing it to massive industrial developments and massive agricultural developments. So I'm not convinced at all that most Albertans realize the impact that this legislation could have on the natural environment of Alberta.

The issues environmentally cover the groundwater, and there is immediate concern of surface water contamination. Even in cases in Alberta now there have been real expressions of worry from local residents around these intensive operations that surface water may be contaminated. There are longer term issues around groundwater, although I also understand that so far in the whole development of the Feedlot Alley in the Lethbridge area there has been no evidence, I'm told, of groundwater contamination. So that probably can be managed.

I did, however, speak this morning to a county councillor whose county sits on a major, major aquifer that's about 55 feet below the surface, and he's very concerned that if drilling occurs and manure is pumped underground at the 30-foot level, it could seep into the aquifer and contaminate a massive area of Alberta. So there are both groundwater and surface water concerns.

There are soil concerns. As this manure is spread in intensive concentrations, it brings nitrogen levels up in the soil.

That can be accommodated through crop rotations, but it also leaves elements that will remain in the soil, elements like copper and selenium, which will gradually accumulate in the soil and reduce the productivity of the soil. We do risk having these operations going for 10 or 12 or 15 years, at which point the surrounding farmlands will begin to see their productivity seriously depleted because of the continual application of heavy manure. So those are some of the concerns.

Of course everybody's familiar with the air contamination from these facilities, the odours that arise. They're often well managed; nonetheless, they do become problems. Again, people including farmers that I've been speaking to in the last few days have spoken about how from time to time it can be genuinely unpleasant to be within even several miles of these facilities, depending on humidity and temperature and wind conditions. So there is a host of environmental concerns.

Related to those are health concerns. There are questions about health effects of living within close proximity to these facilities, whether there are respiratory effects from the fumes and the odours. There are also concerns about consuming the meat that is raised in these operations, meat that comes from animals that are often fed significant amounts of antibiotics. There are, as we probably all know, risks of antibiotics getting passed through to human beings. There are also risks of antibiotic-resistant diseases developing. I am told that the majority of antibiotics in North America are actually consumed not by human beings but by animals.

Of course, the use of antibiotics is a direct correlation to the operation of these kinds of facilities. That also links to the question of the treatment of the animals themselves. Those people who are sensitive or concerned about the humane treatment of animals really often are raising serious, serious questions about the confinement of the animals, the poultry and the pork especially, in these particular operations.

8:20

Then there's the whole question of economic issues. As I mentioned earlier, there are benefits from job creation. There are benefits from strong prices paid to farmers for their feed grain, but other people have been quick to point out to me the economic drawbacks of these facilities. Because they're agricultural facilities, although they may be multimillion dollar operations with what looks to all of us like factories, they are in fact not considered industrial for tax purposes or other purposes. They're considered agricultural. As a result, they pay virtually no taxes. So we could have a major offshore company investing million of dollars in a plant buying up a quarter section of land and paying perhaps a grand total of a few hundred dollars in taxes to the local municipality. Clearly, this could lead to a net loss to the municipality as the wear and tear on the roads occurs, the wear and tear on the local infrastructure, quite possibly a decrease in property values, and as a result, a diminishing of the local tax base. So the economic impact of these facilities on a local economy is mixed at best, and that's exactly the feedback I've got from everybody I've spoken to, including people with a lot of experience on this. If these operations were considered as industrial operations, which I believe they should be, then it would be a completely different approach. Frankly, when we're talking about 10,000 or 20,000 or 50,000 hogs, for example, in one operation, this is an industrial operation. This is not a family farm operation.

There's also the question of labour laws and labour force. Although these are in effect factories, the workers, as I understand it, will not be treated as industrial workers. They will be treated as if they were no different than farm family people working on a farm. To the best of my knowledge, that's what the labour situation will be. I have heard even from people who, I would say, are decidedly not sympathetic to industrial labour organizations that this is a real concern for them. There are safety issues, there are fairness issues, and labour forces should be treated as industrial labour forces, not as agricultural workers.

Beyond that set of concerns, there is the philosophical question here that needs to be put to all of us about local control and our ability as individuals and as communities to shape the area in which we live and to choose how we want to live and what will occur around us to the maximum extent possible. I think that philosophically most Albertans would agree with that. So when I see a piece of legislation that turns over the decision-making on this kind of an issue to the NRCB, for which there are no appeals to decisions, I really worry about local input.

Earlier in the day or yesterday the minister of education had a nice phrase. He talked about the need for local people to have local solutions to local issues. I would really like to see that approach taken here. We need ultimately to give people the right to determine their local community and the local environment in which they live. This piece of legislation will allow them input, but we all know that input can be marginal, can be superficial, can be manipulated. So input on its own is not enough. I think the local communities need ultimately to have an appeal and a veto on these kinds of developments.

There's one other concern that's come to my attention, again raised by people who undoubtedly have historically supported this government, and that's the issue of setbacks. The point was made to me earlier today that a farmer on a quarter section or a section of land, whose house is on one side of that property, could be half a mile from the other side of his property, but the setback for one of these intensive operations going in nearby, next door, is not measured from the farmer's property line; it's measured from the farmer's buildings. So you could have a confined feeding operation

of tens of thousands of hogs built right on the property line of a farmer who has no desire whatsoever for that development to be there yet has no real authority to deny it. In the longer term what happens then is that the value of that farmer's land is depleted. His ability to use it in ways in which he or she would freely like to use it is constrained because he then needs to respect the laws that define the space around this intensive operation. So there are very, very serious questions about the setback regulations here.

So as I wade through this issue and listen to the advice on both sides, I've tried to pay attention to the issue of providing a strong market for the grain growers in Alberta, yet I've listened to these very same farmers tell me: you know, at some point I can't sell my barley anymore to these operations because 100,000 tons of corn a month are being trucked into Alberta from the U.S., so it's not a really great benefit to me.

As I listen to these farmers and city dwellers talk about their concerns with the environment, with the long-term future of Alberta and the risk that Alberta could become a kind of wasteland for North America, and as I consider the issues of the economic depletion, I realize that this kind of development could lead towards bankruptcy, not prosperity. So in the end I have concluded that as much as the standards of this legislation are an improvement over what we have today, it's not enough. As a result, I will be opposing this legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. leader of the third party.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate this opportunity to make some observations on Bill 28 in this debate during the committee stage. It's a very important piece of legislation. It's the result of work done by our colleague the MLA from Leduc. I appreciate the work he has done along with other members of his committee, so what I say by no means reflects on the personal commitment and the effort that the hon. Member for Leduc has put into the public hearings and the consultations that he has undertaken, from which, ostensibly, this bill has resulted.

There are concerns about this bill that the New Democrat opposition has tried to clearly put before this House, and it has sought amendments to the bill to make it more palatable, more acceptable. All of those amendments made to this point in time have been voted down. I'm not surprised about it given the overwhelming majority that the government caucus enjoys here. Nevertheless, I think the points made need to be reiterated and expanded upon, the points which led us in the first place to propose changes in the act by way of amendments which we were convinced would help improve this piece of legislation, which, as I said during its second reading, has some positive side to it.

8:30

Albertans living in the rural areas, farming communities do need some positive actions and policies that will strengthen their agricultural economy, their rural communities, so in principle we should do everything we can to make sure that Alberta's farmers, particularly Alberta's family farmers and family farms, have an opportunity not only to remain viable but to grow. Lots of Albertans take great pride in family farming. It's a part of our history. It's a part of our history that we take a great deal of pride in. There's nothing in my concerns that leads to questioning the very principles and the fundamental commitments that we have to making sure we strengthen our rural communities and strengthen the likelihood of family farms sustaining themselves and going into the future.

But there are serious concerns. I mentioned earlier in my remarks

during second reading of the bill that the bill is absolutely silent about whether or not these ILOs or CFOs are industrial operations, first and foremost large industrial business operations, or if they are agricultural operations. In fact, it underlines, it reiterates the commitment of the government to the fact that these operations will be treated as agricultural operations, therefore they will not be subject to Alberta's labour standards code or, a point that I was unable to make last time around, to the provisions of WCB coverage for people who work in these ILOs. When I look at the report and recommendations of the Sustainable Management of the Livestock Industry in Alberta committee, the Klapstein report, it refers to this as industry.

If in fact the livestock sector is a cornerstone of Alberta's agricultural industry and not of agricultural activities as farming activity, then why is it that there's no attention paid to whether or not these operations that will be covered by this act, particularly large ones, not family operations but large ones, will indeed be reclassified as industrial operations and as such will be subject to the same requirements with respect to the observance of labour laws and labour standards and WCB coverage that our other industrial operations in this province are subject to? The reports about accidents of when people get killed in these operations is well known, yet there's a very serious omission in this bill with respect to addressing those very concerns.

We hear a great deal of talk about leveling the playing field. Well, here we are not doing that. We are bypassing the very question. Why is it that we should subject some of the industries in this province to the labour laws and standards of this province, diluted as they are, and to WCB coverage requirements and on the other hand, at the same time, what we consider a growing industry in this province, these intensive livestock operations, industrial livestock operations we want to exempt from the same requirements, thereby creating uneven conditions for investors, entrepreneurs, and capital as such? That makes no sense to me. That's unreasonable. It should be unacceptable, particularly when it's coming from a government which committed to creating what they call level playing fields. Well, this particular legislation seems to create a clearly unlevel . . .

DR. TAFT: Their level playing field is covered in manure.

DR. PANNU: A level playing field covered in manure. Well said.

We thought up till this point that, by and large, it was just my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Highlands and I who were so strongly concerned about some of the flaws of this act. I'm very pleased to hear the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview eloquently presenting several arguments which show why this bill is not ready to be proceeded with to the next stage at this time. It needs to be mended, it needs to be fixed, it needs to be changed, and I hope we will take our time and do that rather than having to deal with the aftermath of all kinds of problems: environmental problems, potential health problems, the economic issues, the labour-related issues, the taxation issues, and the WCB coverage of Albertans.

Essentially, farm boys from rural areas will be working in these ILOs, and why is it that our rural counterparts, these young boys and perhaps girls, who will work in these ILOs should be denied the coverage and the protection and the security and safety that we associate with industrial workplaces in this province? There are laws in this province which address the issues of health and safety at the workplace, but there's nothing here to suggest, to promise that this workplace, the ILOs and the CFOs, will also be covered under the health and safety laws of this province. I think that's regrettable,

deeply regrettable. We are in fact discriminating against our rural workers who will become workers in the ILOs by denying them coverage which we think is a normal expectation in a civilized society for workers to have; that is, to be covered under health and safety regulations.

The counties and municipal district councils have expressed concern on another account which is economic in a sense. They say they are subjected now to centralized decision-making, that this bill takes away from these councils and these local governments the right to zone, the right to permit, the right to site, the right to make decisions about siting, about permitting, and about zoning the areas and lands under their jurisdiction. That's been taken away from them and centralized in Edmonton, yet this bill if passed will oblige the same local governments to pay part of the cost that will be involved in the approval process, in the permitting process that they will have no control over. So they are saying: why is it that we should be burdened with the additional costs of implementing this bill if it becomes law, yet we also have to lose the power, the authority, the democratic control for whether or not we want these farm operations, these big industrial livestock operations to be sited and permitted in our localities?

8:40

Another point, Mr. Chairman, that has to be made again and again until someone is listening and does listen is the issue of the potential environmental risks involved with this. One of the foremost authorities on water pollution, on environmental pollution works right here in this city in one of the best universities in the country, one of the best scientists in the world, Professor David Schindler. He went public just a few days ago expressing his grave concern about what this act might unleash and lead to if we don't address the threat that it poses to the environment, particularly the quality of water, the contamination of soil. He does warn us, so we won't be able to say that no one told us this. He said: look, you are creating serious potential hazards insofar as the health of Albertans who'll be living around the areas where ILOs will be established. He talks about Walkerton in Ontario. The Ontario government was just as smug and as insensitive to the potential dangers that the operations in other environmental-related activities posed to the health of Ontario citizens.

So why is it that we are not even willing to learn and simply give the arguments which have nothing to do with really sustaining the family farm or sustaining the economic well-being of our rural areas but primarily seem to be designed to promote large-scale, industrial-sized livestock operations in the province? Thus everything else has to be sacrificed on the altar of enabling, permitting, and encouraging large-scale investment regardless of where it comes from, regardless of how long it stays here and whether or not it creates permanent jobs, permanent economic growth that benefits all residents of rural areas.

It's a one-sided piece of legislation which seems to be designed to encourage, I guess, capital, not necessarily from within Alberta or from within Canada, wherever it comes from, to come here and feel welcome and in so doing risk the health, the working environment, and loss of taxes, all of these things together. If we put all of these things together, the potential costs of allowing this bill to go through and the benefits that may accrue from it to some rural Albertans, I wonder if the balance really would suggest that we need to proceed with it.

A couple of other points, Mr. Chairman. Organic farming in this province is growing as an agricultural activity. Organic farming is growing, and lots of Albertans are concerned about the health

consequences of the kind of meat we produce through these industrial operations. I think my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview drew attention to the concern about the excessive use of antibiotics. Lots of Albertans who are in growing numbers switching to consuming organically produced vegetables, meats, and dairy products are asking those questions. What chances do they have to take to consume these products? They're concerned about it. They think that the industrially produced agricultural products, particularly meats from these confined feeding operations with thousands and thousands of animals stacked together one over the other and fed antibiotics to keep them healthy and hungry at the same time, hormones and what have you – this kind of production is not good for our own health. We are concerned. The minister of health would concur with me that we shouldn't be producing those kinds of foods and encouraging other Albertans, Canadians, and others to be consuming foods which might potentially produce certain health crises, certain health problems because the health care system is expensive. Why do we want to create more health problems? Why do we take the risk of creating more health problems through the production of these agricultural products and then complain that we can't economically afford the health system we have?

These things seem to work at cross-purposes. The health minister doesn't want to speak on what the minister of agriculture might be promoting, and the minister of agriculture doesn't want to pay much attention to what are the causes of growing health problems and therefore health costs. So I suggest that the Assembly seriously address these concerns before it proceeds further with this bill.

With these comments, Mr. Chairman, I will close and let my colleague take the floor.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have listened with interest to the last couple of speakers, to their remarks regarding Bill 28. I, too, have some concerns about this bill that I certainly would like to get on the record this evening at this stage. I certainly can understand why it is necessary to regulate such operations or such practices. Certainly there's not one member of this Assembly that wants to turn our entire agricultural economic sector into 21st century sharecropping, but I would caution all hon. members about going ahead with this bill.

Earlier this afternoon I asked an hon. member from across the way about the consultation process that had been initiated by the hon. Member for Leduc and two other colleagues of this Assembly, specifically if they had traveled or studied the hog industry in and around Brandon, Manitoba. There has been a lot of development there certainly since 1998. In 1997 we closed a major hog slaughtering facility in this city, and the enterprise, I believe McCain Foods or an associate corporation, got well over 10 percent of the money to develop their plant in Brandon from various levels of government. Certainly that, as far as I know, is not the practice that is going to occur in this province. I didn't think that was fair, but certainly there are other reasons than government money that attracted this facility to southern Manitoba. Of course, one of those is feed grains. Not only are feed grains accessible, but the price is right, as it was explained to me. And labour is available. There is a willing pool of labour to work in the slaughtering facility and on the farms surrounding it that are going to produce all the hogs.

8:50

Now earlier, in 1996, there was a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm about the future of the industry in this province, Mr.

Chairman. Surrounding the city, if you were to go to Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, there is certainly the capability for feed grain there. You go to the district of Redwater. There were plans for quite a large, extensive hog operation in an arc starting in the northwest and going around to the northeast of this city. That did not come to pass, but perhaps it will with this bill. I don't know if it is in the long-term interests of the province to have these huge factory farms.

This gets back to my question about what sort of analysis was done, because Manitoba is essentially five years ahead of us. What sort of analysis has been done on the Manitoba operations by this committee? I can recognize the fact that this is an issue. Many people are frustrated. If the consultation process didn't get to Manitoba, did the committee at least look at the Virginias? There are also ILOs there, and in North and South Carolina there are huge operations. If the committee had a good, careful look at exactly what has occurred there – also, I can't help but think about Taiwan. It used to be the island of Formosa, Mr. Chairman. You know, the Taiwan Sugar Corporation has expressed an interest in establishing a foothold in Alberta. I'm interested to know from any of the hon. members: what sort of practices are allowed in Taiwan? Are they strict? What sort of limitations are put on extensive livestock operations in Taiwan? We can go through this issue, and of course we think of Holland. We think of some of the European countries and the regulations they have. In fact, a lot of farmers want to leave the Low Countries, as they're affectionately described, and come to Canada particularly to farm in Ontario, western Canada, Prince Edward Island because we don't have the same regulations.

Now, when we recognize that this legislation is attempting to meet a need, that's fine. Mr. Chairman, I was driving out towards Alliance. Alliance – and many people may not know this – is a town and it's a fine town. The people were looking into the future whenever they planted all the beautiful trees in Alliance. I was out there recently and pulled into the cafe, and this very issue came up. I sat quietly and listened to the discussion. The discussion centred around the fact that the people in the cafe – and I had not heard this before – had felt let down by their government. I asked why. They felt that the provincial government had a highway 2 mentality. I asked again: what is a highway 2 mentality? They said: well, the government is concerned about development in a 50-kilometre zone east of highway 2 and a 50-kilometre zone west of highway 2 between Edmonton and Calgary, and they're forgetting about the rest of us.

Now, this may be a recognition of that oversight, and this may be the need that's trying to be met: to develop other parts of the province and other industries in other parts of the province. Now, Mr. Chairman, we can certainly see, for instance, that towards Alliance and out that way, as the oil and the gas reservoirs are depleted, for an industry to move and locate there is a sound policy, but I don't know if an ILO is that sound a policy. I'm just not convinced. Do the risks outweigh the benefits?

We can only think of the town of Brooks. Of course, there's a large meat packing industry, American owned, in that town, and there have been some consequences from this industry. There are problems recruiting and retaining staff. There are issues around housing. There are issues around schools. Many people, as I understand it, commute from Calgary because there is a shortage of housing, and that's a long commute, a very long commute. If you go south, Mr. Chairman, to another meat packing facility about a 40-minute drive south of Calgary, you have the same problem. So when we create these massive farms, are we perhaps creating the same problems that have been experienced in Brooks and to the south of Calgary in High River? Perhaps all this has been studied

and analyzed and my concerns don't have merit, but I believe they do.

In relation to the comments that were given earlier by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, I would like at this time, Mr. Chairman, to remind all members of the Assembly that it's hardly 18 months ago when there was a tragic double fatality in an Alberta workplace that was not covered by WCB, as I understand it. The two individuals were working for a company – I believe it was called the Drain Doctor, and I may stand corrected – and they left Calgary and went out somewhere within an hour's drive of Calgary to unclog a drain on a huge farm. The breathing apparatus was not used in the job, and unfortunately these two individuals lost their lives. There was no WCB coverage, as I understand it, not because this was a company that wasn't covered, but it was their location. It was on some sort of corporate farm. It is my view that if an individual is collecting pay, whether it be in a gas plant, whether it be in a bank, whether it be in this Legislative Assembly, or whether it be on a farm, if they're collecting a cheque, they should be covered by WCB. That is not the rule in this province, and I think it's about time we deal with that issue, long before we deal with this bill.

9:00

Now, Mr. Chairman, many members talked about the accumulation of waste with these enterprises. I would like to share a couple of facts with all hon. members, and that is that the average hog produces three times as much waste as a human does in a single day and also that from birth to market a hog produces one cubic metre of waste. How is this going to be handled? I was assured that there were going to be no leaks in the holding lagoons, that this would never happen. I hope, for the sake of our environment, that it does not.

I spoke earlier about the Dutch government and the regulations in the Low Countries, and I don't think there needs to be anything further said about that.

In conclusion, I would like to ask if, in the studies and the consultation process that has occurred, there has been any consideration taken regarding property tax reductions in areas around ILOs. [interjection] Now, I hear from across the way that properties will increase in value. This would be very interesting, and of course one way of indicating this would be to check in West Virginia or perhaps check in a municipality anywhere around Brandon, Manitoba, to see how they're dealing with this, because there certainly are consequences to intensive livestock operations. Mr. Chairman, I understand there are individuals in this Assembly who have constant contact with municipal officials in Brandon, so that's going to make all our jobs that much easier. They will be that much easier. This is an important piece of legislation, and to consider that an intensive livestock operation will change the entire community if it's permitted, we can't take this legislation lightly.

Under this legislation the municipalities will still only be able to designate discretionary and accepted-use provisions for intensive livestock operations. Now, the NRCB is going to be the final authority on approval of an ILO or a factory farm. I don't know if in the spirit of this government that's precisely what they want to do. I can understand where they want to get rid of the highway 2 mentality and have economic development all over the province. I can understand that, but I can't understand where this legislation will benefit Albertans 10 and 20 years down the road. I just don't think it's the right way to go.

Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 28 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

THE CHAIRMAN: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:05 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

For the motion:

Abbott	Dunford	Lukaszuk
Ady	Fischer	Magnus
Amery	Friedel	Marz
Boutilier	Goudreau	Maskell
Broda	Graham	McClellan
Calahasen	Graydon	McClelland
Cao	Horner	Oberg
Carlson	Hutton	Rathgeber
Cenaiko	Jablonski	Strang
Coutts	Johnson	VanderBurg
DeLong	Jonson	Vandermeer
Doerksen	Knight	Yankowsky
Ducharme	Lord	Zwozdesky

Against the motion:

MacDonald	Pannu	Taft
Mason		

Totals:	For – 39	Against – 4
---------	----------	-------------

[Motion to report Bill 28 carried]

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that the committee now rise and report Bill 28.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

9:20

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration and reports Bill 28 with amendments. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

head: Government Bills and Orders
head: Third Reading

Bill 22
Builders' Lien Amendment Act, 2001

MR. DUCHARME: Mr. Speaker, it is both an honour and a privilege to move third reading of Bill 22, Builders' Lien Amendment Act, 2001.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a third time]

Bill 23
Regulated Accounting Profession
Amendment Act, 2001

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

MR. LORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Regulated Accounting Profession Act, or RAPA, brought the governing legislation for three accounting organizations under one statute and replaced the Chartered Accountants Act, the Certified Management Accountants Act, and the Certified General Accountants Act. Since RAPA was proclaimed, a few amendments were identified to fine-tune the legislation by clarifying its wording and updating its provisions and references. I wish to acknowledge the collaborative work of the accounting organizations – the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Alberta, the society of Certified Management Accountants of Alberta, and the Certified General Accountants Association of Alberta – together with Alberta Human Resources and Employment in developing these amendments.

With that said, it's a pleasure for me to move third reading of Bill 23, the Regulated Accounting Profession Amendment Act, 2001, and I hope this Assembly will support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Bill 23, the Regulated Accounting Profession Amendment Act, which the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has described, is certainly a piece of legislation that the Official Opposition at this time is quite willing to support. Many organizations have expressed their support for this legislation.

I would at this time like to remind members of this Assembly that this legislation is considered by some to be just a change that is housekeeping in nature but that it is a bill that demonstrates to all members of this Assembly that perhaps we need to take a closer scrutiny of all legislation that comes before the Assembly. I refer in this case to the original Regulated Accounting Profession Act, which originally passed, but of course we're back sooner than later to make some improvements to it. Some would consider this to be little more than corrections of drafting errors, but one has to be diligent, I believe.

With those few remarks at this time, Mr. Speaker, I again would like to say that we are fully supportive of this initiative. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a third time]

head: Government Bills and Orders
head: Committee of the Whole
(continued)

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 30
Appropriation (Supplementary Supply)
Act, 2001 (No. 2)

THE CHAIRMAN: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm happy to respond to Bill 30 in committee tonight. We have a few comments in addition to those ones that I shared with the Assembly on Thursday past, when we had estimates before us.

We didn't get through the estimates in one afternoon, which is quite a common practice because there's so much money requested in them, Mr. Chairman. We only got through three out of a possible five departments in terms of the questions and comments that we had, because there is never enough time allocated for the money that's requested at those times. We find the same thing when we see the bill as it comes before us, Bill 30, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2001 (No. 2). A lot of money is asked for. A lot of it is asked for because this government in most cases has an inability to plan and forecast properly. There are some exceptions to that. One of those would be the requests for fires, because that's one of the areas where you can never actually forecast what the demand is going to be. However, as we've said many other times in this Assembly, it would be quite fair and reasonable to put aside a contingency fund based on a five-year rolling average of what those kinds of costs are so that when they did come back for supplementary estimates, it would be minor in nature and not substantive, as we see.

I do find, Mr. Chairman, that when I read through the second-quarter fiscal update released on November 21, 2001, that we were given, there are a few things that actually are quite hard to swallow when we take a look at how the government is pitching this new need for money and the manner in which they account for what it is they need. For instance, on page 1, where they talk about the 2001-02 forecast, they list the highlights. Under the highlights they talk about implementing "corrective actions to maintain a balanced budget." What they don't put in here is that in terms of corrective actions, what they're actually talking about is cutting 21 direct, on-the-ground programs that enhance children's lives in this province, that enhance their lives not just in terms of providing extras or trips or new clothes or skateboards. We're talking about taking kids off the street, off drugs, out of abusive families, giving them a network of social support. Those were the kinds of programs that were cut.

We've seen the Minister of Children's Services state day after day in question period that those programs closest to the children weren't cut, Mr. Chairman, but in fact in this city we know of 21 programs that we firmly believe were programs that were closest to the children and which directly affected them and made a huge difference in the quality of their lives, in fact perhaps even in terms of their having lives and certainly in terms of giving them any kind of a hand up, that this government so commonly says that it likes to give to people. Those were not hand-up programs that they cut. Those were very necessary and integral support services. That's

what this government means when they say implementing corrective action.

9:30

They state in the next highlight that in their corrective actions were deferred infrastructure projects, many projects that have been put off for years because of the kinds of restraints, which become critical in terms of sustainability and that this government doesn't talk about. Also lapses in energy assistance programs, energy assistance programs that we wouldn't have needed in the first place if this government didn't totally foul up energy restructuring here at the beginning of the year. It looks like we're taking a look at higher prices and all kinds of ongoing problems there over this next winter. And a freeze on hiring, Mr. Chairman, with the exception of Crown prosecutors. In some of these areas of hiring, particularly social workers, there is a desperate need in this province, not just a minor need but a desperate need.

You know, the problem is that the government doesn't use judgment when they do these things. They do these across-the-board cuts, which sometimes means that programs that are very necessary are not sustainable. That brings up the key problem of how this government decides. Everything for them is dollars and cents. It's money in, money out. If you're not getting as much money in, you just arbitrarily cut, but that isn't really the role of government, Mr. Chairman. The role of government is to provide for those basic needs of the people that the people have decided the government should provide. That means not only a universal health care system in this province but some universality of education. We're starting to see a huge erosion in that regard, particularly in terms of tuition fees.

So we end up getting a two-tiered health care system. We end up getting a two-tiered education system. We see the huge increase in private schools. Many parents send their kids to private schools now because they want them to be associating only with children who have parents of like minds, those who have a high focus on academic scholarship. Well, the problem with that is that you ghettoize those left in the public system. We see that happening.

Tuition fees too. This government says that, well, you can get a student loan. It's true that you can, but first of all you need to know how to access the student loan program. You need to be earning below a specific amount of money, and many middle-income families these days just can't afford to have their children access those systems. They're making a little bit too much money, but they can't afford to send their child to university with paid tuition, so it forces the children either to not go or to leave home for some period of time and then apply for a student loan. So where is the promotion of family values in that kind of system, Mr. Chairman? I say that's a totally skewed kind of perspective for them to take.

The last part of this, the second bullet, in terms of corrective actions, is the discretionary spending. You know, discretionary spending to me means potato chips, not potatoes, Mr. Chairman. Now, we've seen a lot of potatoes go by the wayside in the last week, with potentially more on the cutting block in the near future if we see a continued decline in energy prices. The kind of destabilizing of our economy wasn't even necessary in the first place had this government ever taken our good idea of essentially bomb-proofing this government by putting in a stabilization fund, and they wouldn't be in the kind of problem they are in right now. That fund would be well funded, given the surpluses we've had in the last few years, and the government would be able to access that fund to flatten out the revenue stream and stop us from having the kinds of peaks and valleys that we've seen in prior times. This government I believe felt that the good times were going to roll forever and

didn't foresee, weren't able to forecast the kinds of falls in energy prices we've had now and therefore were very shortsighted in their planning. They still can't seem to get a handle on this, which is a real deficit from their perspective. We hope they start to listen to some of the people who are advising them in terms of finding ways to level out the revenue stream, because what they're doing is really not too bright.

Speaking of the revenue stream, I want to speak for just a moment to what they do with the surpluses they book forward to pay off the debt in the future. I'm seeing if I can find this. Oh, here we go: accumulated debt, including cash set aside for future debt repayment, is forecasted to decline. Well, tell me, Mr. Chairman, what is the justification for setting cash aside for future debt repayment rather than an ongoing set-aside of the existing revenue stream when we're in these kinds of cost reductions? It's a real problem. This is, I think, only because the Premier wants to see the debt paid off by the 2005 anniversary, and that's his ticket out of this particular job. That's the big thing he wants to have done before he retires, the debt paid off, but at what cost?

There's a huge cost of him doing that when we don't have these huge surpluses we've seen in the last little while, so he needs to show some leadership in this area in terms of putting people first in this province rather than putting his own agenda first. If oil prices skyrocket back up to where they have been before, if gas prices increase to where they have been before, then fine; let him go ahead with his accelerated debt repayment plan and nobody is the worse for that having happened. But in this kind of situation that we find ourselves in right now, people do get hurt by what he's doing. He needs to really show some leadership and statesmanlike behaviour in terms of saying: "You know what? The debt can wait." We need to feed families, we need to provide support for families, and we need to ensure that our children are educated adequately to a level so that they can compete in the global marketplace. We need to ensure that those kinds of pillars of our society are put in place, are well funded, and are maintained before he takes a look at the other options.

So what he's doing now I believe is very shortsighted and is definitely a problem from the perspective of funding core programs and thinking about what the core service of government really is, which is not to balance the budget. It is to properly provide for people in the province within the dollars they have available to them. That ends up in a balanced budget, Mr. Chairman, but the filter that you use to make the decisions on where the money goes, how it's spent, and how it's accounted for is quite different.

Speaking of how the money is accounted for brings to mind the question the Finance minister responded to today. She needs to get a little bit of an update from her technical people on the accounting side, because she either didn't understand the question or she was particularly leading the people of the province down a path that is absolutely incorrect in terms of talking about how revenues are booked and used to pay forward and pay back debts. It has been the policy of this government to accrue revenues, to account for revenues on an accrual basis, which means that anything meant to be earned in this fiscal year-end is counted in this year regardless of when it's received. That's fine. Those are generally accepted accounting practices, and that's a good way to operate. But for the rest of the cash flow in the province they operate on a cash basis regardless of whether it's actually received within the 12 months that it was booked in or not, and that is wrong, Mr. Chairman. If it's an accrual basis for one system, it's an accrual basis for every system. There are a couple of accountants in here who know that to be true, and we would certainly appreciate it if they could stand up and speak to that issue or at least privately take the Minister of Finance aside

and ensure that she understands that if they're going to play fast and loose with the books of this province, then at least she doesn't state otherwise on the record in question period.

9:40

So, Mr. Chairman, many concerns. I am completely in disagreement with the way they allocate their economic cushions and in most cases with how they take their corrective actions. I'm completely in disagreement with what they term to be highlights of this particular budget, which I think are anything but highlights. They show very poorly on this government and they show very poorly in terms of how the government reports. Not just the Official Opposition think this. We have seen many, many reports over the years from the Auditor General on this, not the least of which was the 2000-2001 report, where we see the Auditor General taking no less than five pages for serious concerns about the manner in which this government talks about accounting issues and inadequate progress on how the money is spent. Those include Health and Wellness, where they talk about risks, that costs escalate but results don't improve. So what that means is poor management, plain and simple. There is no excuse for it. You should get at least the same benefit out of the dollars you're spending, at least that if not better.

In these days of continuous improvement as a base level for industry to perform, costs escalating when results don't improve is simply not acceptable. It isn't acceptable in industry. It isn't acceptable in government. He states where the Department of Health and Wellness "continually spends more money on our health system without knowing the value of that extra spending." How can that be? They are clearly not doing their job. He goes on to talk about that in some detail, not the least of which, Mr. Chairman, is talking about findings and recommendations from three years ago that still apply today.

This is a government that tries to tell the people of this province that they know what they are doing, but the Auditor General still states for Health and Wellness, which is the biggest dollar fund in this province, that they can't figure out what they are doing still, after three years. After three years of having assistance from the Auditor General, it is a real shame. So that's a problem.

He states that "progress is unsatisfactory," and that his office "will continue to recommend ways to improve the management of health resources since that is our job." He'll "continue to report on our performance in terms of whether our recommendations are implemented," which haven't been so far, Mr. Chairman. He also says that "the challenge is to get senior people to invest time, effort, and personal commitment in resolving the issues outstanding since restructuring of the health system began."

Now, you know that leadership starts at the top, Mr. Chairman. The Auditor General is stating here that the problems come with senior people, and I agree with him. That's where the problems come. That's where they need to start addressing them, and they're just not doing it. [interjection] Well, that's right. My colleague from Edmonton-Riverview makes a very good point.

The Auditor General goes on to talk about the ministry business plans. Serious problems with those since the beginning of time, when they first implemented them, which I think, Mr. Chairman, was when I was first elected, in 1993.

It's one thing for them to name these things and to say that they're going to do them. It's quite another thing for them to actually do them, and they haven't. The Auditor General previously recommended that the costs of core businesses be reported. It's hard to believe that they talk about costing for businesses and they have business plans, but they don't actually do it. So that's a problem.

He states that "approximately one third of ministries did not adequately link costs to . . . core businesses." Well, what are they reporting them for? They're wasting everybody's time, Mr. Chairman, not the least of which is the time of all those civil servants who are churning out these documents and churning out these numbers without ever linking the cost to the core businesses. So that's a problem that needs to be addressed.

Performance measures and targets. Again, we've been talking about this since '93. The Auditor General "previously recommended the performance measures and targets in business plans be improved." They state that the quality of measures has improved, but few ministries disclosed the external factors that affect performance. You know, that's directly linked to the motion we brought in this afternoon in the Chamber, Mr. Chairman, that this government voted down because they do not want to be accountable. So that's a problem.

The Auditor General talks about recommending that "best practices in business planning be stated," once again a very common practice in industry, the very industry that this government prides itself on following and recommending, but not a practice that this government wants to implement.

So all in all, Mr. Chairman, a very shoddy performance by the government at this stage. It's very disappointing, no surprise to me, but very disappointing. We hope they can do better when they bring in what will likely be another fiscal update before the end of this year comes, and more supplementary estimates. Not likely that they'll be able to get it right yet, but let's hope they don't do it on the backs of children.

[The clauses of Bill 30 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

THE CHAIRMAN: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee rise and report Bill 30.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration and reports Bill 30. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

head: Government Bills and Orders
head: Third Reading

(continued)

Bill 28
Agricultural Operation Practices
Amendment Act, 2001

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development on behalf of the hon. Member for Leduc.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I would move third reading of Bill 28, the Agricultural Operation Practices Amendment Act, 2001, on behalf of the Member for Leduc.

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

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to speak briefly about this bill. Much has been made about difficulties in siting industrial livestock operations in different parts of the province. Much has been made about the conflicts which can exist. Much has been made by the government about the need for it to step in and ensure that things are done more rationally where local jurisdictions have failed in the task. Much has been made by a number of people about the advantages of having parts in this bill that deal with consistent regulations and so on for environment and for siting. Those are some of the parts of the bill that people have supported, but I don't think these things really capture the underlying motivation for the bill or the essence of the bill.

9:50

What we have here is a tool which the government plans to use in order to facilitate larger scale, including some potentially very large-scale, operations which may in fact have a significant amount of foreign ownership. As the Premier said – and I attended his news conference in which he talked about increasing the number of hogs in Alberta from around 2 million to around 12 million, a 10 million increase. So what I see and what we see in the third party here, in the New Democrat opposition, is that this bill is a tool to override local opposition, to regulate it, to be sure, but primarily to ensure that large-scale operations, including those on the scale of the proposed Taiwan Sugar plant, can be sited in this province whether or not the people of this province agree. They can increase the pig population to the point where it is four times the population of the province, and you don't have to go farther than southern Manitoba, but you can go into the Carolinas in the United States and you can see all kinds of situations in which this particular policy has been followed. It doesn't matter which party it is, Mr. Speaker, it's not a good policy. Certainly there are very, very serious problems as a result.

So the province's vision in agriculture is one which will squeeze out the small producer and the family farm, and we heard some comments earlier from the Minister of Infrastructure expressing that concern. We're going to industrialize agriculture, and we're going to intensify agriculture. There will be great consequences not just for the environment of this province, Mr. Speaker, but there will be great social implications as well, because the small producer who owns his or her own land will be driven out of business and will become an employee working for a wage for some big foreign company. That is the future that this government has in mind for many Albertans with this bill.

I want to just come back, Mr. Speaker, to the question of what consequences might exist for the environment of this province as a result of this. Don't forget that this comes on top of the same policy that's gone on for many, many years in this province with respect to the oil and gas industry, where its rights have been put ahead of the

rights of the ordinary citizens of this province, and then the forestry industry, and now they're going to do the same thing. Foreign-controlled, industrial-level, intensive agriculture is the vision that this province has for its people.

We're going to have a very serious problem with pig manure. I know we'll hear some tittering from the backbenchers over there, but we did some calculations, and I referred to them in an earlier comment. If there are 12 million hogs in this province, we break it down that about 1 million of them would be dry sows. They will produce between 11.3 and 15.9 litres of manure per pig per day times 365 days times 1 million dry sows: 5 billion litres of pig manure. We're assuming that there would be 2 million nursing sows which would produce 7.3 billion litres of pig manure, that there would be 3 million starter pigs for 2.2 billion litres of pig manure, that there would be 3 million grower pigs for 5.8 billion litres of pig manure, and that there would be 3 million finisher pigs for 12 billion litres. A grand total, Mr. Speaker, every year in this province, if this government has its way, of 32.3 billion litres of pig manure, and if it was spread evenly over the province, our calculations are that we would all be ankle deep in the stuff. Now, it may be somewhat higher in rural areas, and we're hoping it will be somewhat less in urban areas, but clearly that exceeds any practical measure of containment and treatment and disposal. We think this is a very, very serious problem.

Now the Minister of Infrastructure, when he spoke today, talked a little bit about his ideas. Certainly he argued very strongly that there's a very small chance of contamination of groundwater by this process. You know, he was the minister of agriculture and he may know better than I about that, but there are certainly cases of contamination of groundwater which we have looked at in other jurisdictions, so it is not impossible. On the other hand, there are plenty of examples of contamination of surface water by these huge containment ponds. There aren't adequate regulations around those containment ponds. They kill fish, they contaminate with bacteria, and they contaminate with chemicals. They are a real threat to the environment of this province.

Now, I want to come . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: What do you think of pig shit?

MR. MASON: Well, I don't know if that would be a parliamentary term or not. I was tempted to make use of it, but I prefer thinking of these lagoons maybe in terms of having not a song for the province but a provincial ballet, and we might call it Swine Lake, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps one of the members opposite can propose a private member's bill to establish a provincial ballet.

Mr. Speaker, the Tory vision for agriculture in this province is one that will contaminate the environment, drive small producers out of business, and create an odour that will waft from one end of the province to the other. I urge hon. members to vote against this bill. Hold your noses now or hold your noses for evermore.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a third time]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's been a very interesting day, ranging from an official song to an official ballet, potentially. Who knows?

That having been said, I would move that the Assembly stand adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; at 9:58 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]