

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, February 14, 1995**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 95/02/14

[The Speaker in the Chair]

head:

Prayers

THE SPEAKER: If hon. members could just bear with us. Some people we're expecting in the gallery, the Sohal family, have apparently not arrived. I think they're en route.

Would members please remain standing after the prayer.

Let us pray.

Father, on this day of a new beginning, we ask for Your guidance in the responsibility we have undertaken and Your help in fulfilling our duties.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly may we faithfully serve all Albertans and, in serving them, serve You.

Amen.

As is our custom, we pay tribute on our first day to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met. With our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of the families who shared the burdens of public office and public service. This afternoon I would like to welcome members of the Sohal and Roper families who are present in the Speaker's gallery.

Dr. Elmer Ernest Roper

June 4, 1893, to November 12, 1994

On November 12, 1994, Dr. Elmer Ernest Roper passed away at the age of 101. Dr. Roper was first elected to the Assembly in a by-election in 1942, representing the constituency of Edmonton. He was re-elected in the general elections of 1944, '48, and '52 and served until 1955. Dr. Roper was leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in Alberta for 13 years. From 1943 to 1955 Elmer Roper served as a member on the following select standing committees: private Bills; agriculture, colonization, immigration and education; railways, telephones, and irrigation; and municipal law. From 1944 to '55 he served as a member of the select standing committee on public accounts.

Dr. Harry B. Sohal

December 10, 1946, to November 15, 1994

Our colleague Dr. Harry Sohal passed away suddenly on November 15, 1994. Dr. Sohal represented the constituency of Calgary-McCall for the Progressive Conservative Party. He was first elected in the general election of June 15, 1993, and served until the time of his death. Dr. Sohal was a member of the standing policy committee on financial planning and vice-chair of the Legislative Offices Committee.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember these persons as you have known them.

Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them.

Amen.

Please be seated.

The Chair will now recognize the hon. the Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can think of no sadder task for an Assembly than to mourn the passing of one of its members. As I look at the empty place once filled by our friend and hon. colleague Harry Sohal, I still find it hard to believe that he is really gone.

It seems like only yesterday he was being sworn in as the proud new MLA for Calgary-McCall. Harry Sohal was a good MLA and a fine human being. The more I think about his life, the more convinced I am today that in paying tribute we should focus not on the fact that Harry has died but on the fact that he lived.

Harry Sohal's was a life that spanned oceans and countries and cultures. Like so many Albertans and Canadians Harry was an immigrant. In 1971 he came to Canada from India to pursue the study of history at the universities of Windsor and of Waterloo. He became president of the University of Waterloo's international student association. He was involved with the welfare of east Asian and other southeast Asian communities in Canada. He helped with the Punjabi Cultural Association in Calgary from its inception. He was a businessman and consultant and an active member of the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta for 17 years.

Mr. Speaker, Harry Sohal was a man with a passionate interest in life. He was determined to work with others in building a better future. Writing about death, Dylan Thomas once urged us to "Rage, rage against the dying of the light," and certainly when someone goes in a sudden, untimely way, it's tempting to be angry. But I think Harry would prefer instead that his death fill us with a sense of urgency to get things done and to live this life as fully as we can while we can. For it's only when we truly understand how short life is that we can fully engage ourselves in living it. That's a valuable lesson. Dr. Harry Sohal, on behalf of all Albertans thank you for teaching it to us.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to join the Premier in recognizing the loss that Harry Sohal's death represents to this Legislature and to each of us, each member of the Legislature, and I believe to all Albertans. I believe that all Albertans have lost a true friend in Harry Sohal.

Harry was a kind and gentle individual who expressed it seemed, every time he rose in this Legislature, a belief one way or another in the equality of all people and in equality for all people. Mercifully, I might say, he wasn't one of the most vociferous members of this Legislature, but each time he rose to speak, he demonstrated a true thoughtfulness, a great consideration, a great grasp of the issues, and something that I think was particularly important, a true grace and dignity that he portrayed within these walls each and every time he rose to make a point.

1:40

The Premier has pointed out that Mr. Sohal, Harry, was an immigrant, and I think he demonstrated to so many of us the contribution that immigrants have made to this province at every level of activity and life in this province. Harry Sohal truly contributed. He brought much from his culture, from his other country. He brought it here. He made a contribution. He was committed to this country and this life here, and I think that we all recognize and respect him for that contribution.

So often we don't know our colleagues as well as we might. We have known in this Legislature Harry Sohal for far too short a time. There is one story that was brought to my attention that I would like to mention because it captures so well the nature of Harry Sohal. Harry became aware of the death of a person in a family in this province, of somebody that he didn't know particularly well but was concerned about. He was traveling shortly after that death to India, where the family member's family resided, and he went out of his way to find that family and to bring his condolences to that family and to represent Albertans and Alberta on our behalf to them. It was a small gesture

perhaps, but it was the kind of gesture that we knew Harry Sohal only so well capable of making, and again it said a great deal about the nature of Harry Sohal.

He was committed to his constituents. He was committed to serving the people of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, he will be missed by all Albertans. He will be missed by the members of this Legislature. He will be missed by the members of my caucus.

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

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I find myself very fortunate to have had the opportunity to know the late Harry Sohal. Immediately after I got to know the man, I developed for him a great sense of admiration and respect. I think that Harry will serve for all of us as an example. He was a hardworking person. He was truly dedicated. He was concerned. He was honest. He was committed. He was always concerned for his fellow Albertans, for the people he represented in his constituency, and for all of us whom he worked with. I think that his loss is a great loss to all Albertans, especially to us in the Legislature, because he had a lot of contributions to make yet. But destiny and fate have decided otherwise, and today we have to accept the fact that he's not a member of our Legislature. I'm sure that he's looking over us, and he will guide us.

I will always remember the day that we went to Calgary to his funeral. As I walked up the aisle to pay my last respects, I put my hand on his hands, which I usually do when I lose a close friend, and I said: goodbye, my friend. Then I said: God, remember that You brought Harry into this world, and now as You take him away, please give him the eternal rest, the reward that he deserves, because he was Your servant. Today I say: Harry, we salute you, and we thank you for the lesson that you have left in life for us.

THE SPEAKER: Sergeant-at-Arms, would you march off the colours of Alberta, please.

Would you all rise, please.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms and Associate Sergeant-at-Arms removed the Alberta flag that was draped over Dr. Sohal's desk and marched it out of the Chamber]

THE SPEAKER: Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege to introduce and welcome members and friends of the Elmer Roper and Harry Sohal families, and I'll just take time to read their names. I'll ask that you rise as well, please, as I call out your name. We have Patricia McCoy, Ron Roper, Lee Barber, Bradley Barber, Jillian Barber, Kendra Barber, Ravinder Dhaliwal, Renu Dhaliwal, Vikren Dhaliwal, Rajen Dhaliwal, Sunita Kumar, Devinder Grewal, and Karla Eagles. I'd ask that you rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present petitions from various groups in and about the Lethbridge area

representing at my count 190 citizens urging the Legislature of Alberta to mandate the right of access to fully funded kindergarten programming to a minimum of 400 hours per child per school year.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to table a petition. There are 384 signatories to this petition from all of the northwest quadrant of Calgary as opposed to just the Calgary-North West constituency. They, too, are requesting "a minimum of 400 hours of Early Childhood Services" and no user fees for such a program.

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would beg your leave also to present a petition signed by 330 residents primarily of the Edmonton area. The petition calls on the government of Alberta to ensure 400 hours of kindergarten for every child in this province who is eligible without any user fees.

Thank you.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to present also a petition signed by 249 residents out of my buddy constituency of Whitecourt-St. Anne. They also are calling on the Legislative Assembly to ensure that there will be a 400-hour, fully funded kindergarten program in the province.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd also like to submit a petition with 261 names from the people of Lethbridge and area asking that the government of Alberta fully fund 400 hours of early childhood services for young children of Alberta.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also stand and seek leave to introduce a petition signed by some 342 Calgarians urging the provincial government

to ensure all Alberta school boards provide the opportunity for each eligible child to receive a minimum of 400 hours of Early Childhood Services instruction per year.

Thank you.

head: **Notices of Motions**

1:50

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice of a motion pursuant to Standing Order 40 which I would like to raise at the end of question period. This motion would request that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta send congratulations – it won't be very far – to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, who has been awarded the Woman of the Year award by the Edmonton Business & Professional Women's Club and the *Edmonton Sun*. [applause]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 30, which the House will recall is the emergency standing order, I will rise at the appropriate time in today's agenda and I give notice now that I will rise to

ask this Legislature to adjourn its regular debate and to debate as an emergency issue the issue of the provincial government taxation of private utilities in Alberta.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) I'm giving notice that tomorrow I will be moving that written questions and motions for returns appearing on tomorrow's Order Paper stand and retain their places.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to give oral notice under Standing Order 40 that after question period today I will ask for unanimous agreement for the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly congratulate Kevin Martin and his team on winning the Alberta provincial men's curling championship at the Avonair Curling Club on Sunday, February 12, 1995.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I would move that unanimous consent be granted to waive Standing Order 38(1)(d).

THE SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. Government House Leader, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I move, then, that we waive Standing Order 38(1)(d).

[Motion carried]

Bill 201
Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act, 1995

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 201, which is standing on the Order Paper in my name, entitled the Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act, 1995.

[Leave granted; Bill 201 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table with the Assembly today the annual report of the Alberta Dental Association for the year ended June 30, 1994, and the annual report of the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses for the year ended September 30, 1994. Copies will be distributed to all members.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, I am filing four copies of the three-year business plans for the 17 regional health authorities.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By the way, can you hear me okay way back there? [interjections] Thank you.

It gives me great pleasure to table in the House today the final report of the Professional Sport Policy Committee, and I would also like to indicate that the report has been referred to the committee chaired by the MLA for Lacombe-Stettler, the Lottery Review Committee, for its consideration.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today on behalf of the Fort McMurray Catholic schools to table what I believe to be the world's largest report, and that is a document signed by 1,200 handprints of school children in Fort McMurray and another 1,200 parents, a banner some four feet by 20 feet urging and delivering a message to this Assembly and to the Premier to restore 400 hours of kindergarten funding in Alberta.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table four copies of the Liberal caucus's Speech to the Throne, which I had the privilege and pleasure to deliver last night at the McKay Avenue school. This outlines a strong, substantive agenda for this legislative session unlike that which was found in the government's Speech from the Throne.

THE SPEAKER: Pursuant to the Legislative Assembly Act I table with the Assembly the following Members' Services orders: 5/94, being administrative services amendment order (No. 1), and 6/94, being transportation amendment order (No. 2).

Hon. members, I also table with the Assembly the report of the Ethics Commissioner dated December 14, 1994. This report is with respect to the investigation relating to alleged benefit received by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne. Copies of the Ethics Commissioner's report were distributed to members on December 15, 1994.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table copies of the Alberta Liberal caucus's 2020 Vision to eliminate Alberta's debt. This plan in very detailed fashion lays out a program for eliminating the debt of this province over a 24-year period, a sufficient period of time on the one hand to be responsible, to have it paid off expeditiously, but on the other hand to allow the flexibility for government to support education, health care . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjection] Order. Order, hon. member.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm privileged today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two groups. I believe they're both in the public gallery. The first is on behalf of my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly. It's a group of 39 visitors with their leader, Mike Sawchuk, who are here from Club 55 of the Newton district of Edmonton. I understand they're in the public gallery. I'd ask them to receive the warm welcome of this House.

The second group, Mr. Speaker, if I may, is a group of representatives of the SALT group and other seniors who are here in the public gallery today to watch the proceedings of the House. They are Phylis Matousek, Grace Diederichs, Walter Derksen, Jack Grant, Clare Botsford, Irene Payne, and I believe Desmond Achilles is here. I wonder if they would rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

2:00

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce a resident of the lovely constituency of Edmonton-

Avonmore, Maureen McCarthy, who joins us today as part of her fulfillment of the practicum placement aspect of the human ecology course that she's taking at the University of Alberta. She believes in education for all levels, including adult learning. I'd ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to Members of this Legislative Assembly two constituents of Calgary-North Hill. One is an outstanding example of our fine Alberta youth who is currently studying pre-med at the University of Western Ontario and is here for an interview at the U of A to get into our medical school. The other is a lady who has worked with me for six years and frankly goes to the nth degree to make sure that all constituent concerns are answered fully and works in my constituency office of course. I would ask Graham Campbell and Cathy Caldwell to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise in the Assembly and introduce to you and to all members present a constituent who is also very active in the Seniors Action and Liaison Team. Mr. Con Duemler has been active with that group. In the past he's been an accountant. He is a tax preparation specialist. One of the activities he's been involved with has led to proving that taxes for seniors in Alberta are higher than in other provinces. In particular, he made reference to the health tax in that calculation. He is in the public gallery, and I would ask him to stand and receive the welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are three other constituents of Edmonton-Glenora present today in the public gallery, and I would like to welcome them and introduce them through you to all members. They are Mr. Jonathan Zottl, Mr. Kim Cassady, and Mrs. Pat Cassady. I would ask them to please rise and be welcomed by this Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

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

Health Care System

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a recent guest column in the newspaper the Minister of Health made a startling statement: "What you perceive as chaos are in fact the requisite activities involved in managing change." Well, while the chaos may be acceptable to the Minister of Health and it may even be acceptable to the Premier, it is not acceptable to 70 percent of Albertans who have clearly stated that they are concerned profoundly with what is happening to their health care system. My question is to the Premier. Given the consequences to people, not to customers but to people, can the Premier tell us why he has allowed chaos to be part of his health care restructuring plan?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there is no chaos. Sir, there's no chaos. Yes, when you undergo fundamental and dramatic change such as this government has initiated, there are going to be some

bumps and grinds along the way. To take 200 various health board facilities, health jurisdictions and to bring those into 17, to change the nature of health care from institutional care to more community-based health is a phenomenal undertaking, and it's not going to go perfectly. That's why the Minister of Health has set up committees to monitor the situation. That's why she has strengthened the ability of the health facilities review board to monitor what is going on in the field of health, and that is why in our Speech from the Throne, the real important one, we put so much emphasis on health.

MR. MITCHELL: Bumping and grinding may be acceptable in some pursuits, Mr. Speaker; it's hardly something we like to see as an integral part of our health care system.

Only half the Premier's proposed health care cuts have been implemented so far. We have 350 million more dollars to go. Can the Premier tell us how this health care system of his is going to handle double the cuts, double the chaos by the end of next year?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I take issue with the hon. member's assertion that there will be double the chaos. You can't double nothing. There is no chaos out there. We're going through a very difficult program, a very difficult program that involves fundamental change to a system that must have appealed to the hon. Leader of the Opposition because it was a system that incurred costs of 219 percent increases over 13 years when the population only went up 5 percent and the cost of living only went up 83 percent. That's the kind of bureaucracy the socialists over there like to live with. It appeals to them, and that's why they don't want change.

MR. MITCHELL: And a good portion of that 219 percent came while this Premier sat in the Legislature and supervised the runaway expenditures.

If building chaos into the health care system isn't enough, what would the Minister of Health have to do before the Premier would remove her from this portfolio and take it over himself?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm telling you that the Minister of Health is held in tremendously high esteem throughout this province. The hon. member is a remarkable individual, and had the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar not been named Woman of the Year, I would have nominated this hon. member for sure.

Privatization

MR. MITCHELL: It seems, Mr. Speaker, that one minute the Premier is ready to bring in Bill 57 to privatize everything under the sun; the next minute he says that it is so flawed that it will never see the light of day. Undaunted, the Minister of Labour says that he will privatize whatever he wants to privatize by backdoor regulation and without public debate in the Legislature. Why is the Premier prepared to allow the Minister of Labour to privatize government services by regulation and to avoid open, public debate in this Legislature?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, to say that this is somewhat coming in through the back door is absolutely nonsense. I would ask the hon. member to look at this plan. It's called A Better Way: A Plan for Securing Alberta's Future, February 24, 1994. When it talks about the three-year spending targets and the three-year business plan for the Department of Labour – I refer to item 6 in this document – it simply says:

The continued pursuit of the 3rd option through the development of Delegated Regulatory Organizations . . . where appropriate (i.e. industry funded and operated regulatory bodies accountable to the Minister). Possibilities during the plan period include Boilers and Pressure Vessels, Pensions, Professions and Occupations and certain aspects of Occupational Health and Safety.

Now, further to that clear direction set out in the business plan, Mr. Speaker, a document was produced, a widely circulated document for public discussion, to achieve precisely what the minister has set out in the business plan. If the hon. member would like some details relative to where we're heading, I would ask the hon. minister to supplement my answer.

2:10

MR. DAY: Well, the Premier again has demonstrated his grasp of knowing very clearly what is happening in each department or ministry, which I appreciate. I would like to go further to ask the Leader of the Opposition, who claims to be a person who speaks truth, to please file the statement which he quoted, attributed to me that I will privatize whatever I want to by any backdoor process. He says that that's a direct quote. I would like him to file that in the Assembly, please.

MR. MITCHELL: It's quite frightening, Mr. Speaker. I guess the Premier thinks he can write something down anywhere and that suffices for Legislature debate.

Will the Premier please tell us in the Legislature which specific services will be privatized and what fees will be levied upon the customers of Alberta, as he so inappropriately calls them, without any public debate in this Legislature?

MR. KLEIN: The hon. member is invited to take part in the discussion. Here's the discussion paper, Mr. Speaker, and in this paper there are numerous suggestions and opportunities to have various occupations and professions police themselves, various regulatory agencies police themselves and certainly with some degree of accountability to the government and to the public. I would ask, again, the hon. minister to supplement.

MR. DAY: Well, as the Premier has very clearly pointed out, the business plans show clearly that any discussion in terms of a particular delegated regulatory organization has to and will involve the Legislature, any parties wanting such a delegation, and the public. So it's all there for full discussion, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MITCHELL: The Minister of Labour can say what he wants, but the proof is in the pudding. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that they privatized, among other things, registries, and they didn't bring it to the Legislature for one single second.

Will the Premier, not his henchman, make a commitment to Albertans that no delegated administrative organization and no privatization initiatives will take place without coming before the Legislative Assembly for debate?

MR. KLEIN: No, I won't make that commitment, Mr. Speaker. Why should I make that commitment? My gosh, if every time we had to make a decision, a good, sound government decision – and these people will never know what it's like to make a government decision, because they will never be there. [interjections] Well, I mean, a few of them have already left. I don't even know if there'll be enough of them around, you know, to even form an opposition.

Mr. Speaker, had we had a full-blown debate, we would not see today the highly successful private registries, free enterprise, where, yes, people are now actually treated like customers instead of numbers. We wouldn't see that kind of good public service being offered today if we subjected it to the filibustering and the nonsense of the Liberal opposition.

Professions and Occupations

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I have with me today the government's action plan to regulate, in fact, deregulate professions and occupations through a delegated administrative organization. This is Bill 57 by any other name except that it won't be debated in the Legislature. This is a classic example of what the Minister of Labour meant when he said that if he can't have Bill 57, then he will privatize whatever he wants to privatize by regulation without proper public debate. DAOs are not DOA. Under what authority does the Premier believe that he can privatize his government's responsibilities for professions and occupations arbitrarily and unilaterally?

MR. KLEIN: First of all, Mr. Speaker, it is not arbitrarily and unilaterally, because there is a lot of discussion with the various professions and occupations involved. We see the former leader of the Liberal Party, a lawyer, very, very much a part of a law society that is a self-policing body. We see it relative to chartered accountants. We see it relative to the medical profession. So there is nothing new or startling or secret about any of this, absolutely nothing at all.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, Little Lord Fauntleroy is off to an inauspicious start, from walking behind the bagpipes at McKay school to tripping over his very first statements today, a very bad start. The authority here, to continue: a discussion document which is in the hands of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Law Society, chartered accountants, a process that was talked about in the published document, February 24, 1994, a year ago, saying very clearly, as the Premier has already quoted in one place and I will quote in another, the proposal that "The Professions and Occupations Division will, with the exception of a small policy/audit unit, be devolved into a DRO." It talks about the boiler and pressure vessels. The Leader of the Opposition has not even read the business plans that he's criticising.

MR. MITCHELL: What right does the Premier of this province think he has to privatize professional and occupational standards, which among other things, Mr. Speaker, protect the security and the safety of the people in this province, those he calls customers, without any public debate?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition is sharing the same document as I am. Perhaps he would like to read the document, and perhaps he would like to provide some constructive comments relative to this particular document. That's what it is. It is draft 2. It is a discussion paper only to make sure that when we do it or if we do it, it is done right.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the document is very clear: "intended to solicit public input." It's right there. He didn't even read it. Didn't even read it.

MR. MITCHELL: If the Premier would like some constructive input, Mr. Speaker, I'll just send across to him the paper that we've done analyzing what's wrong with Bill 57. He might find it interesting reading.

Mr. Speaker, how many other privatization DAO plans are circulating out there that the Premier isn't telling the people of Alberta about and that will never be raised in this Legislature for public debate?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition to go back and read all of the business plans, and he will get a very good idea as to the direction this government is heading in all areas, not just in the area of deregulation but certainly in all areas. It is not a secret that we're deregulating as much as we possibly can, because we said as a government, as a political statement, and as a campaign promise that we were going to get out of the business of being in business as much as we possibly could.

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

2:20

Water Management

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister of Environmental Protection. A number of my constituents, especially those in the agriculture industry, are concerned that the government will be imposing a water tax for the water they use. My question to the minister: will there be a water tax?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's probably important to understand where this came from and what is going on. Back in '91 the Water Resources Commission held a number of hearings and workshops throughout the province taking input on water management and the current legislation. There was a commitment made at that time that the information would be put together and that there would be a second round of hearings. That is now occurring. I think it's pretty well complete as far as the public meetings are concerned. It was chaired by the hon. Member for Dunvegan. The whole issue about a water tax came up in the first round in Red Deer. I can assure the hon. member and his constituents that this government has no intention of putting in a water tax. As I say, that was simply an idea that came out of that workshop.

I know that a lot of people feel that they are paying for water today. That is not the case. They are paying for the infrastructure and the treating of water, and there is no intention of changing that.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister tell this Assembly whether there'll be a limit of two acre-feet on the water that Albertans use for household or related purposes?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that probably there is some confusion on this whole thing right now. The two acre-feet was a number that was proposed in the draft, the discussion paper that's currently out there, that in fact if you were

going to be using more than two acre-feet, you would have to have a licence. It is purely a document out for discussion. There have been no decisions made. We will be asking the committee that is reporting to me to have their report in by the end of May. We will then develop legislation that we hope to introduce in the fall. We'll allow that to sit out and reintroduce it in the spring of '96. So there is lots of opportunity for comments relative to the whole issue of licensing.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental to the same minister: is the minister considering licensing the amount of water a person uses?

MR. LUND: Once again I must emphasize that the discussion is out there. This minister has not promoted anything. We are simply taking input. I think it's very important to note that within the draft that is being discussed, there is the ability for regions to be treated differently. The idea of licensing only what a person needs is one that has been tossed out there. We haven't made any decisions. We are continuing to take input.

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

Seniors' Health Care

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the Blue Cross program provided seniors they receive help paying for a variety of – and I quote – health care costs such as prescription drugs, ambulances, hospital benefits, psychological services, and home nursing care. The business plan calls for Blue Cross programs for seniors to be cut by \$60 million when seniors have already been forced to swallow \$15 million of that through a punitive 50 percent increase in drug costs. The document also says, and I quote: the remaining savings will be achieved through a variety of administrative and program changes yet to be decided. My question is to the Minister of Health. What is the minister going to cut to save the remaining \$45 million?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, contrary to the opposition, the Minister of Health does not only have to think in terms of cuts but of being able to change and save money through efficiencies. I want to remind the hon. member of an occasion that happens in this province that will be occurring again in May called the Great Drug Round-up, where literally tonnes of dead drugs are picked up and disposed of. I think we could achieve great savings if we could learn from that exercise, and I'm certainly pursuing that. I think that a lot of work has to be done in how prescribing is done, and we're looking at some initiatives with the Pharmaceutical Association to ensure that the dollars we are spending in that drug program, which are much appreciated by seniors and other Blue Cross holders, are spent in the most efficient way and not wastefully.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, the drug costs are happening. My question was: what else are we going to do? Where is that \$45 million coming from?

My supplementary, Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of Health: what is the minister going to do about ambulance charges where seniors must now pay up front and the ambulance charges are up to 50 percent higher than the amount Blue Cross reimburses them?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member has examples of where seniors are all being asked to pay up front, I would like to see those, because I don't think that's common in the province. I do know that there are some instances where ambulance companies have asked for this.

Mr. Speaker, there are ambulance rates that are set and agreed upon. I would certainly hope that seniors are not being asked to pay up front before they are taken by ambulance.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately they are. The minister need only look to the member sitting behind her, for example.

Mr. Speaker, since Blue Cross also covers home nursing care, will the minister, then, guarantee to this House and to seniors that they'll continue to have access to home nursing care without added costs?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, home care for medical services is not charged for in this province. It is not contemplated being charged for in this province.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Municipal Taxation

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The community association presidents of Calgary-East have expressed their concern about a proposal that would give municipalities the right to tax licensed facilities located within nonprofit organizations. These clubs are open only to members and their guests and do not compete on the open market with commercial establishments. Revenues generated from pub liquor sales are used to support community programs and services. While this government has stated that fiscal difficulties are the result of a spending problem and not from a revenue problem, why has this government given municipalities new taxing powers?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Basically under the new Municipal Government Act we haven't given any additional powers to the municipalities for taxing. They could have assessed and taxed these facilities all along, and some areas of the province chose not to assess them and not to tax them. When the focus was brought forward that there were changes to the new Municipal Government Act, some areas decided that maybe they should assess these properties and certainly, then, tax them. In fact in the new Municipal Government Act, there is more flexibility in the assessment and taxation of these portions of a facility whereby they can prorate them on not only the amount of time that they're open, but they can also prorate them on the portion of that facility that's being used for these particular functions.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As many community halls are situated on city-owned or leased land, can the minister advise the House how municipalities can tax their own properties?

MR. THURBER: Certainly, Mr. Speaker. If a group, a municipality, a community hall, or any form of local government does lend out or rent out a part of a facility which they own on

their own property for a commercial enterprise or a for-profit procedure to take place there, certainly they can assess and tax these facilities.

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

2:30 Kindergarten Programs

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year this government cut kindergarten funding from 400 hours to 200 hours. The Premier recently announced that next year's funding will be up: 240 hours. It doesn't matter how the Premier wants to spin it. The fact is that this government has done the opposite of what governments all across the industrialized world have done. This government has cut funding to kindergarten while other governments are increasing funding to early childhood services. My question to the Premier is: why is the Premier saying that rallies and petitions are an effective way of communicating with the federal government when he and his government have not listened to the tens of thousands of people who have called for full funding of kindergarten in this province?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, we do indeed listen to people, the tens of thousands of people who have told us to get our financial house in order, to eliminate the deficit, to put in a schedule for the orderly pay-down of the debt, to restructure and make more efficient health and educational services, to provide social safety nets for those who truly need help in society, and really to provide opportunities for those people who want to get off the welfare rolls, to have work experience programs and job retraining programs and skills upgrading programs. I guess I have to wonder, and again I'll wonder out loud. Maybe the hon. member would like to share his views and his thoughts and his ideas. What I'm wondering: does this hon. member think kindergarten should be an integral part of the school system?

MR. HENRY: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Albertans did not tell this Premier to balance the budget on the backs of five year olds.

I'd like to know why this government is telling parents to go to their local school board . . .

I would like to know why this government is telling parents to go to school boards for full funding, when this Premier made the cutbacks to education, when this Premier made the decision, and he has the power to reverse that decision, not school boards.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that this hon. member stands up in this Legislative Assembly and says that kindergarten should be an integral part of the school system, yet he wants it funded entirely differently; right? We do not now as a government fund 100 percent of education out of provincial taxpayers' dollars; we spend about 60 percent. Sixty percent. But he wants 100 percent funding for kindergarten at the expense of funding for grades 1 through 12.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker, if this Premier would include kindergarten children in a funding framework . . .

I'd like to know what research plan this Premier has in effect so that he can measure the impact of his cuts on students entering grade 1, or is he going to do what he did last year and pull the research from thin air?

MR. JONSON: Well, a very important part of our overall plan for education is the development of an accountability system, an

accountability framework in this province. The hon. members across the way do not seem to want to have adequate measures out there, to have the education system responding and showing that it can perform. They do not seem to want this degree of accountability. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that we are pursuing an across-the-board, comprehensive accountability system for the education system of this province despite the fact they don't like it.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont.

Public Service Layoffs

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yet more public-sector job cuts numbering in the hundreds have been announced. Civil servants from every corner of the province are having their lives greatly impacted. Those in Edmonton, a city with a fragile economy . . . [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Hon. members, order please.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those from Edmonton, a city with a fragile economy, are hardest hit. To the hon. Minister of Labour: why are Edmonton civil servants being targeted for layoff?

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's good to finally see an MLA from the city of Edmonton who speaks for the people of Edmonton.

There has always been a large percentage of public servants in Edmonton since it is the capital city and a lot of the administration has flowed from here. As a matter of fact, about 54 percent of the public service historically has come from Edmonton. When you look at restructuring across the province, it should be expected that if there are to be layoffs, those layoffs would be represented proportionately. In fact, that is what has happened. With about 54 percent of public servants here in Edmonton, approximately that percentage have in fact been among those who have been laid off. There has not been a disproportionate number. I do appreciate the member raising the question, however.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What retraining, if any, is planned for those workers that are being laid off to get them back into the work force? [interjections]

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the opposition members who don't care about Edmonton were shouting so loud I couldn't hear the question. Could I have it repeated, please?

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you. What retraining, if any, is planned for those laid off workers to get them back into the work force?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, for those who do accept the provisions that are there, even while they're still employed in the public service, there is opportunity for public servants to have available

to them prospects in terms of retraining, counseling, career seeking, job finding. In fact, those types of provisions are made for them to access even while they're still employed. If they've received their layoff notices, those types of provisions are available to them.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Do laid off workers have priority for rehire?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, they do, in keeping with this government's perspective, realizing that when restructuring happens and people lose their jobs, it's a very difficult time for them, and we need to do as much as we can for individuals to help them move through what is a very challenging transition. So because of that, should public servants decide not to take the separation package immediately and leave the public service, if they stay on, then there is provision for them to be the first to be able to access any opportunities within the public service that might arise. As you know, we are in a hiring freeze. But even within that, people leave positions through attrition. So when that type of opening comes up for an extended period, those public servants are able to have the first opportunity to apply for those positions.

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

Provincial Tax Regime

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a Provincial Treasurer who protests: don't tax the rich. We have a Premier that looks to Wall Street and Bay Street for approval, yet on Main Street here in our Alberta Albertans are being hit by user fee after user fee after user fee. This government in the past two years has raised \$157 million in new taxes from 64 separate user fees. That's \$125 for every taxpayer in this province. I'd like to table a listing of these 64 new user fees and the increases. My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier explain why he claims time and time again that his government has not increased taxes when in fact there have been increases in 64 separate user fees? Make no mistake: medical care premiums are taxes.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, quite simply these adjustments are to bring the user fees in line with the cost of providing the services.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How can the Premier permit his Treasurer to champion the cause of the wealthy when this Treasurer is creating a regressive and unfair tax regime whose burden falls on those with low incomes, seniors, and those that are most vulnerable?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would really take issue with that. Again I would say that user fees have been brought in line with the cost of providing the services. I would remind the hon. member that a recent study by the Fraser Institute and its like organization in the United States found this province to be the most financially well managed of all 10 provinces and 34 states that were polled by 15 percentage points; in other words, we have the lowest corporate tax rate, we have the lowest personal income tax rate, and we have no sales tax. As a matter of fact, we're

going to be introducing legislation if, God forbid, these guys ever got into power and tried to introduce one.

2:40

DR. PERCY: First Bay Street and Wall Street, now Fraser Street, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Premier make a commitment to Albertans that he will accept friendly Liberal amendments to Bill 1 so that new and increased user fees will be debated in the Legislature rather than passed by order in council behind closed doors?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this hon. member has been in the Legislature long enough to know that he can introduce an amendment anytime he wants, and the amendment will be debated, just as the Bill will be debated.

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

Grain Marketing

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] Different location, same person.

Mr. Speaker, rail cars loaded with flour are arriving into Alberta from the U.S. every week. This market could be filled by the farmers in my constituency. With Canadian farmers unable to sell directly to the U.S. market, could the minister of agriculture explain to the House how this flour is arriving in Alberta on a weekly basis?

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, the same hard-hitting questions, as well, from the hon. member. The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has identified a true problem and a true issue. On this particular one I can only speculate because the flour milling industry is a private enterprise in Alberta, as it is in Canada. It is possible that the flour milling industry has tendered the use of that flour and the American producer may have submitted a lower tender. The unfortunate part of all of this, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the individual Canadian producer is not allowed to compete in this tendering process. The unfortunate part of this is also, as a result of some recent developments, that we the Alberta producers now have to market our grain through the Wheat Board and ultimately through an end-user certificate. The Americans, on the other hand, can simply market their product into Canada totally, totally uncompetitively.

DR. L. TAYLOR: As the minister has correctly identified, millers are forced to buy their product from the Canadian Wheat Board at noncompetitive prices instead of from private sources. Will the minister agree to withdraw the monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board in Alberta?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has really, really hit upon a very important point in agriculture in western Canada. The department of agriculture, the Alberta government, has brought forward a proposal for restructuring the Wheat Board. The proposal basically would restructure the Wheat Board so that it meets the needs of the continental market as well as the needs of the offshore market. It's our feeling that if indeed we were able to restructure the Wheat Board so that it met the two different needs – and they are two completely different needs – we

would achieve what is needed here to satisfy the needs of our millers and to satisfy the needs of our producers as well.

DR. L. TAYLOR: One of the increasingly important statements out of the department of agriculture deals with the value added. What steps will the minister take to encourage the production of flour milling in Alberta, which is true value added to an Alberta product?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Obviously, this is one of the major components of our agricultural three-year plan: the whole area of value added, the whole area of taking the product to its final form. That's where the opportunities are, Mr. Speaker, and this is certainly the direction that we would like to take as well. So that's why we've formulated the proposal to restructure the Wheat Board, because the way the structure exists today, there will never be the opportunity to enhance the value added, that is so critical to the advancement of our industry in the future.

Fort McMurray Education Funding

MR. GERMAIN: Mr. Speaker, some of the Premier's customers, as he calls them, are five-year-old children in Fort McMurray, Alberta. Because their schools are closing as a result of funding cuts, they'll have to spend an hour and a half on the bus going to school, when their parents, also customers of the Premier, are paying to the government school taxes 30 percent greater than the provincial average. So my question to the Premier on behalf of his customers is: will he direct the Minister of Education to increase transition funding to the Fort McMurray school districts so that they don't have to close up the six schools this year?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to explain something about the Fort McMurray area. It is through this government that that area has become as prosperous as it has: through this government's commitment to the development of the oil sands, to provide the tremendous infrastructure that exists there, to take it from virtually nothing some 30 years ago to the beautiful, thriving city it is today. This hon. member had absolutely nothing to do with that.

Now, relative to the schools, I'll turn that over to the hon. minister.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, in Fort McMurray the public school board has been looking at the need to close some schools and to better utilize their space in that particular school jurisdiction for a number of years, as the hon. member across the way well knows. This search for the better utilization of buildings is ongoing. I hope that they can also down the way reach some understanding for the accommodation of growth with the Catholic school system there for a better, effective, and efficient use of the school facilities up there.

The other thing that I would like to add, Mr. Speaker, is that in consideration of the special circumstances relative to distance in Fort McMurray, transition funding was provided. I'm sorry the hon. member did not choose to pose the question to me. I could have given that answer sometime ago.

MR. GERMAIN: Gee, you know, Mr. Speaker, listening to the Premier, I always thought it was the private sector that created jobs, not the government.

My supplemental is also directed to the Premier. In the interest of fairness, will you direct that the school authorities, the Minister

of Education remit to Fort McMurray the tax excess over the provincial average this year, not next year, as you plan to do in the future?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I don't think I need to direct the minister to do anything because the minister is right on track in making financing for education fair and equitable for all students in this province.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, if I might supplement the Hon. Premier's answer. You know, the sheer hypocrisy of this particular stance being taken . . . [interjection] That's not parliamentary? My apologies then. The sheer inconsistency in the position of hon. members across the way – they've advocated that a solution and approach be taken to equity funding which provides fair and equitable funding all across this province, which focuses funding on the students so that there's an equal amount of resources per student available across this province. Now they want to make special deals for a particular area which has, yes, a very high per pupil assessment. We have to share that if we're going to have an equitable system of funding.

2:50

MR. GERMAIN: Well, in the interest of equity then, Mr. Speaker, my question will be addressed to the Minister of Education. Mr. Minister, since there will be displaced students in Fort McMurray as a result of these school closures, will you at least increase the transportation grant to equal the actual costs of transporting these students long distances to the school they're going to have to go to?

MR. JONSON: The transportation grant, which has been worked out very carefully this year through the ongoing development and finalization of a funding framework for the province, does recognize the distances the students must be transported. If there is an increase in distances even within an urban area, that is accounted for in the formula, Mr. Speaker.

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

School Councils

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recent meetings to address the roles and responsibilities position paper have identified a specific concern that's not been clarified in the document. The issue is liability. My question is to the Minister of Education. Can a school council be held legally responsible for the educational decisions they may make?

MR. JONSON: The hon. member certainly identifies an area of response in consultation in the province, which has been very, very extensive and is ongoing and coming to its conclusion. Certainly, one of the key questions that has been raised by parents as they look towards being more meaningfully involved in education is the question of liability. Mr. Speaker, this question of liability as we are proposing it would be something that would be covered under the school board's or the school jurisdiction's overall protection plan, just as are staff members, just as are the members of the board. That is certainly an important item that we have to follow up and develop the details of.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister tell me what steps a school council should take to protect itself if in the area of conduct and discipline, which is outlined in roles and responsibilities, students fail to comply with the school council's standards?

MR. JONSON: Any program that is developed in this area has to be comprehensive in nature. In other words, as I said earlier, we would have to make sure, so the parents involved would be very secure in their new role, that all avenues of possible liability were covered. As I've said before, Mr. Speaker, the projection in terms of how this would operate is that it would come under the auspices of whatever insurance is in place for the total jurisdiction in which a school council would be operating.

MRS. BURGNER: Mr. Speaker, my final supplemental is: by what process will boards be held accountable for the conduct of their school councils?

MR. JONSON: The consultation process is still under way, and we have a great deal of information to compile to make final decisions with respect to policy and regulations and as to what the different fits will be as far as the responsibilities of school boards and school councils. However, Mr. Speaker, the important thing here is that the relative responsibilities will be defined so that it is clear, when a decision is made, who is ultimately responsible for it. I suppose in those very, very rare cases where there is an issue – because people in this area work in a very careful and devoted manner – it would be provided for.

head: **Members' Statements**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

Jail Privatization

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the fall of 1994 the government tabled Bill 50, the Corrections Amendment Act, that would have allowed the privatization of jail services including the incarceration aspect of jails. While it's true that that Bill did not pass, another Bill, Bill 41, which was entitled Government Organization Act, did pass. Under section 9 of that Act the Attorney General could delegate the incarceration of prisoners to a private for-profit company. No such company currently exists in Alberta or in fact in Canada. Therefore, if the minister proceeds with the privatization action of prisons and hires one of the American firms currently in business to provide this service, the net effect will be Alberta taxpayer dollars serving to profit an American company.

Because the constituency of Calgary-North West has four corrections facilities within its boundaries, I held a town hall meeting last fall and invited the public to attend. Over 150 Calgarians took advantage of that opportunity and expressed their concerns. Despite being invited, however, neither the Justice minister nor a designate from his department was in attendance. The official reason given at that time was that the concept of jail privatization was under study and that following the completion of the study a decision would be made. It is my understanding that the study has in fact been concluded and is in the hands of the Minister of Justice.

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

When I spoke to Bill 50 in the fall, the concern I addressed in the Bill was safety: safety for the public, safety for the corrections officers, and safety for the inmates. It is incumbent upon the Minister of Justice to make public both the report that he now has and his decision regarding jail privatization either in total or as a pilot project. There are many Albertans, in particular many of my constituents, who want the answer to this important question.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Dr. Harry Sohal

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One advantage of members' statements is that the member can choose to speak on whatever topic. I had originally planned to talk about VLTs, but while the family of Harry Sohal is still here in the Speaker's gallery, I am going to switch. I want to talk to you directly, if I may, about Harry Sohal and the relationship that I and many of my colleagues had with Harry.

This gentle man sat on our benches, and he was part of our caucus. He was an extremely intelligent but serious person. Time after time when we as colleagues began to discuss or enter into exchanges, when the heat got higher and higher, ultimately it was Harry in his quiet and gentle and incisive way who would make a simple statement, and then I and my colleagues would have to look at each other and recognize that, yes, where Harry was wanting to take us was the proper way to go.

We've heard speakers this afternoon talk about how he emigrated from India. I think the fantastic example of his life to every Canadian should be the tremendous opportunity that exists. My understanding is that Harry went to Iraq by freighter, that he then hitchhiked to Frankfurt, Germany, and from Frankfurt he managed to get over to Britain and then to Canada and then finally, thank heaven, here to Alberta. I use his example when I go to Citizenship Court as often as I can.

Harry Sohal is to me the absolute epitome of the opportunity and the love that is existing in this land, and I want to thank you people for giving Harry to us. [applause]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

Fort McMurray Education Funding

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to dwell today in my private member's statement on the serious issue that is facing education in Fort McMurray, and I don't want to dwell on it in a confrontational way. I recognize that members on both sides of the House have had difficulty with educational questions. They dominated much of our earlier debate today. In fact, Mr. Speaker, you will recall that on behalf of the kindergarten children of the Fort McMurray Catholic school district I filed with this Assembly a large banner indicating their concern. In the words of that banner, which I was not, because of House protocol, able to unfurl, there is a slogan that says: Our Future is in Your Hands. Those 1,200 children have put their hands down on that banner, and they've traced the outline of their hands on the banner.

3:00

Now, what is the problem facing education in Fort McMurray? First of all, we in Fort McMurray took an 8 percent cut in funding this year, as did many other school boards around the province, but the point is that Fort McMurray had the highest

costs per student from a practical point of view of the school boards that took that 8 percent cut.

There are some other difficulties that are presenting themselves in Fort McMurray, and I want the House to be aware of them. First of all, the mill rate for educational funding in Fort McMurray, which is going to this government now, is 15 mills. The provincial average is only 11 mills. So we are taking a four mill differential this year yet experiencing tremendous cuts.

Now, the minister earlier spoke about funding for transportation, but what he did not grasp and with respect he does not yet appreciate is that it is costing more to bus the students in Fort McMurray than the grant will allow. So even when the minister says that the grants will increase if there is additional funding, it is not being achieved. I will urge in the course of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, for all members of this Assembly to show the students and children of Fort McMurray a little more fairness.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Points of order is the next item. The hon. Member for Calgary-North West has risen on a point of order. You have a citation for us.

Point of Order

Questions outside Ministerial Responsibility

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The citation is *Beauchesne* 409(12), 410(10), and 410(14). I rose during the question put forward by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat regarding a question he put to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, I think the title is, asking that the provincial minister opt out of the Canadian Wheat Board. First of all, under *Beauchesne* 410(10) it says:

The subject matter of questions must be within the collective responsibility of the Government or the individual responsibilities of Ministers.

Clearly, this minister has not any control over the Canadian Wheat Board.

Secondly, I would like to draw to the members' attention Motion 501, that is on the Order Paper today, from the member from down south someplace who has put forward that same motion. *Beauchesne* 409(12) says, "Questions should not anticipate a debate scheduled for the day," which in fact is up today. So the question put forward by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat obviously should have been ruled out of order.

MR. N. TAYLOR: What's the reference?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'm referring to his comments and quite directly . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Through the Chair.

MR. DAY: . . . through the Chair. First of all, Mr. Speaker, it is obviously within the purview of a minister to address issues that relate even to their federal counterpart. That is clearly within their jurisdiction. I appreciate what the member has said about the motion that's, we think, before us today, but that is in somewhat of anticipation, because we will be looking for unanimous consent to allow in fact that motion to go ahead for debate. That has not been granted by the Assembly yet. We'll also be asking for unanimous consent for the Bill of the opposition leader to go ahead. We do think that's going to happen, but I think the member is wrongly presuming and anticipating that that is going to be given, and therefore it would not be out of order for that member to ask that particular question.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. members. The hon. Member for Calgary-North West has risen on a point of order that basically is that the Canadian Wheat Board is not within the jurisdiction of the province. Citing *Beauchesne* 409(6), "A question must be within the administrative competence of the Government." However, all members would be reminded that the Chair took the question to be about the provincial government's approach to the government of Canada on the Wheat Board. If it was not, then the Chair would remind the hon. member of the rule under *Beauchesne* 409(6).

We now have before us a Standing Order 40 by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Before the hon. leader begins, the numbers should change, a Standing Order 30. The Chair apologizes.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

head: **Request for Emergency Debate**
Utility Income Tax Rebate

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I understand the procedure before us in the Assembly, it is now my opportunity to make a case for the urgency of a debate concerning a rebate of the provincial income taxes that are charged to our utility companies for the purposes of collecting tax for the province of Alberta and whether or not this is an urgent issue that should disrupt the orderly process of the House. I will restrict my comments to that issue of urgency. But before I do that, and to set the stage for that urgency, I have to travel back through time a little bit to remind the members of the Assembly of the situation that exists in the province of Alberta and contrast it very, very briefly with the situation that exists elsewhere throughout the Dominion of Canada.

Throughout the Dominion of Canada most of the utility companies providing electricity, for example, are owned by the state. As a result, because they are state owned, they are taxed neither at the federal level nor at the provincial level. In the province of Alberta we have a different mix, Mr. Speaker, and in this province we have private utility companies that provide utilities through a regulated monopoly. As a result of them being private, they are subject to taxes. They are not taxed but for 15 percent at the federal level, and they are taxed fully at the provincial level. Prior to 1990 utility companies in Alberta were not taxed at all by the province of Alberta.

So the question today is: is it now, today, urgent that this issue be reviewed and debated in this Legislative Assembly? I thank the Speaker for giving me that very brief opportunity to remind the Members of the Legislative Assembly that what we are talking about is a tax that was imposed in 1990 by the government of Alberta on the utility companies in this province.

So what are the points of urgency that would allow the Speaker to rule that this is indeed an urgent matter to be debated and call for the question on that issue? The first matter that we have is that the Premier is fond of saying that there is an Alberta advantage that exists in this province. Regretfully, charging tax on utility users, some of them who are in fact considering the opportunity to come to Alberta and take advantage of what the province has to offer, may express concern about the fact that their utility bills in this province are at least, as a result of the provincial tax component, 6 percent higher, and the gross number that we are talking about is approximately \$100 million. That strikes me, Mr. Speaker, that that is an economic disadvantage, and it is urgent that it be dealt with at this time.

The next issue that we have is that there have been increasing comments in recent weeks, some of them coming from Members of this Legislative Assembly, some of them coming from members

of this Assembly sitting on the other side, the government side of the House, that there is starting to be a feeling of alienation between northern Alberta and southern Alberta in this province, a feeling expressed that there is a disproportionate concern about issues affecting southern Alberta as opposed to northern Alberta. I'm moving along. I've seen your hand signals. I want to point out that those kinds of comments should be nipped in the bud, and that is why this is an urgent issue today. Utility rates which are higher in northern Alberta than in southern Alberta and which are exacerbated by the tax make that issue urgent.

Finally and of some considerable importance is that there is a federal budget to be laid in the House of Parliament in Ottawa some time before the end of February. One of the mandates of the Official Opposition in this province has been to take it on itself to remind the federal Liberal government that utility companies are not taxed across Canada and to urge them not to tax Alberta utility companies. But the problem we have is we have lost the high road. We have lost the mountain upon which to deliver that message.

3:10

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, in light of the point that we all recognize today, the Chair has listened with interest to the debate, but the hon. Member for Fort McMurray is reminded that we're talking about the urgency. We assume that he has completed the urgent part of his message.

MR. GERMAIN: So because of that, Mr. Speaker, I suggest to this Assembly that it would be very useful that we now have an emergency debate and indicate the willingness of this province to rebate the provincial tax on utility companies if the federal government does not tax it.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, in response to the arguments of urgency, which I don't think I actually heard, the position I understand from the hon. member is that five years ago a tax change was made in the province of Alberta as it pertained to a rebate to our utility companies. He made a couple of other comments as it pertained to the Alberta advantage, and let me assure hon. members that Alberta has some of the lowest utility rates in all of Canada. In fact, if you look at the position of the province of Alberta, in particular the government tax portion, and compare it to other provinces across the country, you will clearly see that we are well below the other provinces, if not on even par.

Now, he did talk about the position of the federal government, and I would hope that the brothers and sisters of the members in the opposition have clearly had the message that prejudicial taxation against the province of Alberta is not acceptable. I hope they've sent that message.

Mr. Speaker, clearly this issue was dealt with five years ago in our Legislature, so I don't believe it is a matter of urgency. However, I hope the message from the Liberals opposite is going clearly down to Ottawa, as we on this side of the House have clearly sent it to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, and my counterpart in Ottawa.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: We're going to look at the issue of Standing Order 30 as presented by the hon. Member for Fort McMurray. In order for the Chair to put to the Assembly a question under Standing Order 30, the motion must relate to a matter requiring "immediate and urgent consideration." An emergency is required under our Standing Order 30(7)(a).

As the motion by the hon. Member for Fort McMurray relates to something that was done in fact in 1990, I do not find it is urgent and pressing. Furthermore, there will be an opportunity for all hon. members and for the hon. member in particular to raise the issue during debate on the Speech from the Throne and when the budget is presented, which, the Chair is given to understand, will be within approximately one week. Short of that debate, the Chair does not find an urgent need to debate this item today.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**
Woman of the Year Award

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Now we have Standing Order 40, and thank you for your patience. I call on the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to the urgency of the motion pursuant to Standing Order 40 which I presented earlier in the Legislature today. This motion would call for the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to congratulate the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, who has been awarded the Woman of the Year award by the Edmonton Business & Professional Women's Club and the *Edmonton Sun*. The importance of this award and of our recognizing it I believe speaks for itself. The urgency comes down to two points. One is that this is the first time since the award has been committed to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, shall we say – it will be awarded on Thursday – the first time since that, that we have been sitting, so it's our first opportunity to recognize the member. It's urgent also because the award will be presented to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar this Thursday evening, just two days from now.

[The Speaker in the Chair]

I would therefore ask that the Members of the Legislative Assembly give unanimous consent to allow members of this Assembly to speak to the motion recognizing the tremendous achievement of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar in being awarded the Woman of the Year award by the Edmonton Business & Professional Women's Club and the *Edmonton Sun*.

THE SPEAKER: Does the Assembly consent to allowing the hon. Leader of the Opposition to move his motion under Standing Order 40?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed?

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Moved by Mr. Mitchell:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta send congratulations to Bettie Hewes, MLA for Edmonton-Gold Bar, who has been awarded Woman of the Year by the Edmonton Business & Professional Women's Club and the *Edmonton Sun*. Bettie Hewes will receive her award this Thursday, February 16, and she is the first politician ever to receive this honour.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Members of the Legislative Assembly for giving us unanimous consent to recognize a member amongst us who is distinguished in many ways and who has had her distinction recognized so

appropriately by the Edmonton Business & Professional Women's Club and the *Edmonton Sun*.

I'd like to say a few words about the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I have known her in this Legislature for nine years, and I have known her many years prior to that. I have the pleasure, the privilege, the honour to have worked with her over these nine years on many, many very important projects, very challenging issues, and I have seen her in action. I have seen her impact, her effect, her commitment, and the contribution that she has made within this Legislature and outside it to the people of this province.

This is the seventh year for the award which the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has been awarded. It is sponsored, as I have said, by the Edmonton Business & Professional Women's Club and the *Edmonton Sun*. No one – no one – Mr. Speaker, can argue that this award is a fitting tribute to a woman who means so much not just to the Liberal caucus but to this Legislature and to our province. Her life's accomplishments stand as a perfect example to Albertans that it is possible to combine a dedication to family, to one's community, and to a career with satisfying and immensely successful results, not success that would be defined by her in personal terms at all but success in what she has achieved for others.

The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar's contribution to public service alone would merit an award. Before serving a 10-year stint as an Edmonton alderman, she worked as executive director of the Canadian Mental Health Association, steering the association through important social action leading to changes in legislation, treatment, and community programs. From there, she joined the Edmonton Social Planning Council, helping to develop needed programs. The fact that many of these programs are still in place is a testimony to the member's visionary talents. Programs such as the women's emergency shelter and the Society for the Retired and Semi-Retired are two such examples.

Her venture into provincial politics has been just as dedicated. As a three-term MLA the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has worked tirelessly on behalf of her constituents and constituency, which she affectionately calls beautiful downtown Gold Bar. Her sense of service extends well beyond the boundaries of Gold Bar. She has been a fierce protector and an advocate for vulnerable Albertans. Her continued fight to enshrine the United Nations convention on the rights of the child in Alberta is extremely well known.

As a feminist the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has patiently and consistently tried to educate this House on the many issues that affect Alberta women. Her arguments are always delivered in a no-nonsense, logical way, pointing out reasonable solutions. In fact, the member's style in this House is always reasoned, respectful, and most important of all thoughtful. I would say that sometimes when she draws one of the less experienced MLAs into her office for a bit of advice, those descriptions might waver somewhat.

Last fall our caucus and our party asked the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to play a most difficult role: to act as the interim leader. That it was a unanimous request from her caucus speaks volumes for her reputation and integrity. She served us well, and we all benefited from her steady hand.

On top of all these public accomplishments we cannot ignore the ones that the member is perhaps most proud of: her family. Betty has managed to nurture and effect in the most significant of ways the rearing of four children into successful adulthood and now acts as the loving and doting grandmother to 13 grandchildren.

3:20

In an interview with the *Edmonton Sun* she stated that her hero, as many of us know, is Emily Murphy. Betty expressed concern that perhaps Emily Murphy would be disappointed with the progress women have made, that we have not used Emily Murphy's initiative in the best possible ways. Well, I say to this Assembly and I say to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar that if Emily Murphy were to be looking down today – and I expect that she is – she would not be disappointed in the accomplishments of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. This member has not only taken the initiative first laid out by the likes of Emily Murphy, but she ran with them. In Emily Murphy's day women were just starting to venture, somewhat apprehensively, into the public sphere. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar through her selfless dedication to public service and to her family has helped advance women to another stage of equality. She is an inspirational and enthusiastic role model, as many of the women in this Legislative Assembly and elsewhere in this province will attest. Her efforts show Alberta women that families and political life cannot only be successfully combined; they can be performed with integrity, honesty, and always with humour.

We are all very proud. The Edmonton Business & Professional Women's Club could not have chosen a more appropriate or deserving candidate for this most prestigious award.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, it's a rare occasion that I would presume to speak on behalf of my colleagues, but I do honestly sense on this occasion that they would sympathize and agree with the comments which I'll make. I will not prolong the comments, because knowing the humility of the member opposite in true form, I know this is somewhat uncomfortable for her, but I know she also recognizes that this is a process that certainly is acceptable and in fact warranted.

The comments have already been made about her outstanding service to governments on various levels: to her city, to her province, to her country, her considerable attainment and abilities in business and also addressing social issues, and I think most importantly – and I know that she would agree with this because we've talked about it on occasion – her commitment to her family as wife, as mother, and as grandmother. Thirteen grandchildren: that is an administrative accomplishment right there, and she certainly handles it with grace.

I'd also say, Mr. Speaker, that the member being honoured today is one of those people with whom you can have the most vigorous of disagreements over the most crucial and central issues of life and yet still know that there is a mutual respect for one another as people. That also is a rare accomplishment, to be able to carry oneself that way, and this member does that.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned the word "feminist." I have always seen the member opposite as a whole person, certainly speaking to women's issues with vigour and with her whole heart, to all issues, and I've seen her in that light always.

I'd like to just close with two thoughts. I was thinking: what could I say that would be the most sincere of compliments and yet not be flattery, for flattery is only superficial? I will say, maybe with half a smile but with the most sincerity in my heart, on behalf of all my colleagues thank you for not succumbing to the pressure to run for the leadership of that party. I know what it is to face this woman in debate one on one, and it's not something I cherish or look forward to. It's because of her commitment of heart.

Also, I will close by saying that I've never fully understood why in provincial Legislatures the term "honourable" goes before

the names of members of an Executive Council and not to all members. Maybe we can look to a change in that in years to come. But in all sincerity, openness, and honesty I can honestly say congratulations, hon. Mrs. Hewes.

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

MR. DECORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a woman in this House whose smile alone is enough to melt down the strongest of opponents, and we've all seen it happen, including today. Just watch the flash of those teeth. But when you add intelligence and wit, compassion and tenacity you have a formidable political leader. The Edmonton community will soon honour such a formidable political leader as its Woman of the Year. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has made her mark, and because of her Edmonton and Alberta are better off for it.

I first met the hon. member in 1974, when we were first elected as aldermen to Edmonton city council. Strangely, our paths had never crossed until that moment. Council agendas at that time, in the heady days of the development of Edmonton and Alberta, were two feet high, and as a puppy alderman I thought it was my duty to become an expert on everything. But every time a social issue arose, I listened to Councillor Hewes and I was in awe. She understood those issues better than I did, and she had answers that nobody else had. Mr. Speaker, I learned to defer to her expertise and to her strength.

I remember one issue she started to develop and solve. All of us as politicians like to start seeding something and working at it to a successful conclusion. She asked in the council chambers very early in our political careers how many women there were in the management of the city of Edmonton. The commission board responded a week later and said that there were 26 women in 750 positions of management. Needless to say, the tides started to turn from that moment, and she was successful. She has been a remarkable advocate for women.

I also remember when she wondered about becoming chair of the CNR, the Canadian National Railway. In the end, the greatest part of the decision, the greatest input that was used to make her mind up was whether or not it would be good for women in the future, and of course it would be and it was.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has not been timid in providing leadership on a great number of topics and matters. As a businesswoman she knows more than most Albertans about how to turn a profit: a profit in Saudi Arabia, in England, and in Alberta. She led our party for five months in a strong, polished, dignified, and energetic way.

There are so many things I could say about Edmonton's Woman of the Year, but I can choose no better a note than to say that if men and women in this Assembly or anywhere in Alberta need a role model, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is that model.

THE SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question on the Standing Order 40 motion by the hon. Leader of the Opposition?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE SPEAKER: All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Let the record show the motion carries unanimously. [applause]

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont.

Provincial Men's Curling Championship

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent to congratulate the Kevin Martin team on their victory at the provincial men's curling championship.

THE SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree with permitting the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont to propose this motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont.

Moved by Mr. Yankowsky:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly congratulate Kevin Martin and his team on winning the Alberta provincial men's curling championship at the Avonair Curling Club on February 12, 1995.

3:30

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend is one that curlers across the province will not soon forget. Edmonton hosted the finest curlers Alberta has to offer, and fans at the Avonair club certainly were not disappointed. Despite the high calibre of teams this past week, Kevin Martin was able to go through the entire tournament undefeated, an incredible nine straight wins. He did this despite the pressure of not only curling in his hometown but curling at the club where he has worked as an ice maker for many years.

The championship game is one that will be talked about among curling fans for years to come. Down one point in the 10th end, Martin made a double-raise takeout with his first stone to score two points and win the championship 5 to 4 over Ed Lukowich, the defending provincial champion and former Brier and world champion.

This will be Kevin Martin's third trip to the Brier since 1991, and I think that we as legislators should acknowledge this outstanding feat. I would ask that all members of this Assembly join me in congratulating the entire Martin team – Kevin Martin, skip; Kevin Park, third; James Pahl, second; and Don Bartlett, lead – on their victory. We wish them the best as they represent Alberta in Halifax next month.

Thank you.

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Alberta Liberal caucus to extend our congratulations as well to the Kevin Martin rink along with Don Bartlett, James Pahl, and Kevin Park on winning the Alberta men's provincial curling championship held here in Edmonton on February 12 at the Avonair Curling Club, as enunciated by my colleague opposite. This particular round, so to speak, was such a cliff-hanger that I found myself watching it replayed time and time again. Many of us in this House are curling enthusiasts or former curlers, and we all know how difficult a double-raise takeout can be. To advance from the front of the house through the 12-foot, through the 8-

foot, through the 4-foot, and land virtually on the button is one of those shots, Mr. Speaker, that will be talked about in curling bonspiels probably for the next couple of decades, just like Kurt's quad was in figure skating circles. So we certainly join in that accolade raised by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont.

I also want to congratulate the opposing team, Ed Lukowich and his teammates, for having provided such an exciting challenge, for just like action in this House, there needs to be some opposition to make the sparks fly, and this certainly did occur a couple of days ago. So congratulations to them.

Finally, I just want to add that both of these teams, Mr. Speaker, are yet another example of the proud product that comes about from a nicely rounded and balanced quality of life in this province such as we see provided through the infrastructure programs and activities as conveyed by the once semiautonomous Alberta Sport Council. I congratulate them for having a role in this over the many years; the game of curling, that is.

Once again, on behalf of all members of the Alberta Liberal caucus we join with members opposite in congratulating Kevin Martin and his teammates on this provincial win, and we extend them the very best of luck as they go on to the Brier in Halifax next month. Go get 'em, guys. We're with you all the way, and we'll be watching. Especially, Mr. Speaker, let us congratulate the first-time participant at a Brier, Mr. James Pahl from the Kevin Martin rink. Good luck to you, James, and good luck to all of you.

THE SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question on the motion proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE SPEAKER: All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Let the record show that the motion carries unanimously.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, so that Motion 501 may proceed, I would now move and ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 38(1)(a).

THE SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. Government House Leader, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

Grain Marketing

501. Moved by Mr. Hierath:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly request the government to request the federal government to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act so that producers of wheat and barley will have the option to market their grain on the North American continent either through the Canadian

Wheat Board or by private export and that this option be extended by November 1, 1995. If the aforementioned time line is not met, the government of Alberta is urged to conduct a provincewide plebiscite for the producers of wheat and barley.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

MR. HIERATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to rise and address this Assembly with my arguments in favour of voluntary marketing in North America for wheat and barley producers. This is an issue that has long been a priority of many wheat and barley growers in Alberta and western Canada. It has also been a priority of mine since I was elected as a member of the Assembly, of this government. I was one of the frustrated farmers that longed for a more free enterprise system of marketing before I came to sit in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the motion that I am sponsoring here today recognizes two things. First, the Canadian Wheat Board Act is a piece of federal legislation, and any amendments to this Act will likely have to come from the government in Ottawa. The second aspect my motion recognizes is that this change that tens of thousands of producers demand from Ottawa is not likely to come in the near future if at all during the tenure of the federal Liberal government. That is why my motion calls for a provincewide plebiscite to be put to producers of wheat and barley so that they may erase any doubt on the part of the federal agriculture minister and his cabinet colleagues as to where the majority of farmers stand on this issue.

The monopolistic system of grain handling and transportation and, most importantly, marketing that has existed for the last 60 years has failed the farmers of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. I cannot say that the system has failed grain producers during all of those 60 years, because that is not necessarily true. If you look back in history and the evolution of the board, you can see that the board came to be under very difficult circumstances. The first temporary board came about during the First World War as a war measure to ensure Canadian food supply and price ceilings for consumers. It also had the goal of allowing Canadian producers the means to compete with the European markets and with the British grain marketing monopoly. The board was disbanded after World War I after several consecutive drastic conditions in the Great Depression led to the establishment of the Canadian Wheat Board as a voluntary marketing agent.

Mr. Speaker, in 1943 membership in the Canadian Wheat Board became mandatory for all wheat producers in western Canada. Barley was added to the Canadian Wheat Board jurisdiction in 1949. As our hon. Premier has proclaimed on many occasions: that was then, and this is now. A socialistic marketing board that arose during the rages of the Second World War and the dire economic conditions of the Depression in modern history has no place in a world of today where a relatively healthy international economy has not been significantly threatened by a global war in many years.

On top of that is the fact that we are moving into a new era of free market international trade, relationships characterized by GATT and NAFTA. The Canadian Wheat Board served its purpose, but the majority of producers under its grasp recognize that the board is about as obsolete as an eight-track tape deck. At the same time, there are also those who feel that their best interests are being served by the board, and I can respect that. For this reason I am not calling for an abolition of the Canadian

Wheat Board but rather that producers be extended the option of selling their grain privately on the North American continent. This scenario is commonly referred to as continental marketing. I want to make it clear that the position that I am advocating does leave the board intact for the purposes of overseas marketing.

My goal today is the goal of wheat and barley producers: the marketing of grain has to be more profitable. Under the current system there are lucrative profits to be made by everybody but the farmer. The grain industry in western Canada encompasses two major railroads, all the grain companies, the terminals and elevators, the transportation system, and the seaway. It should be noted that most of the employees of this system are high-wage union labour. This industry has been very well organized over the years to establish a system in which all of the players can profit under; all except the farmer, that is.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, farmers have never had an opportunity to vote on the subject of the state-controlled system of the Canadian Wheat Board. Wheat and barley producers have always been told that the marketing system was there to protect them from being taken advantage of, to hedge against price instability, to better access foreign markets. The stark reality is that farmers are essentially on welfare in the form of a bureaucratic web of safety nets and subsidies while the rest of the components of the monopoly are prospering from the very grain that farmers produce. The railroads are making money. The grain handlers, the longshoremen, the floor sweepers are making money. The terminal operators and the seaways are making money. Due to regulations and established fee schedules everyone is making money from the grain commodities; that is, everyone but the farmer that actually grows the darn stuff. A farmer doesn't sell his wheat or barley; he merely delivers it to the government; that is, the federal government. When the government by means of the Canadian Wheat Board turns around and markets the grain, they pay everyone else in the system before the farmer is paid. Such is the way of a socialistic monopoly.

There is a great misconception that the Canadian Wheat Board is a marketing system for farmers, when in reality it is a supply management system for the federal government and other components of the erroneous bureaucracy. The federal government literally owns the wheat and barley when it is still in the farmers' bins. Allow me to illustrate. Our minister of agriculture here in Alberta is constantly advocating value-added agrifood processing right here in the province, and rightfully so. Value-added production creates jobs for Albertans, something that we are eagerly pursuing with the Alberta advantage and various other government incentives. But a farmer that operates his own small pasta flour plant in our province is forced to sell his own wheat to the board and buy it back at a higher price before he can grind his own wheat into pasta flour. We are not being consistent in our goals and promises when we allow this to happen. That is why there are very few flour mills in Alberta. It is too much of an expense and a burden to operate a flour mill through the Wheat Board system, and as a result value-added economic opportunities are missed.

Other examples of Canadian Wheat Board hinderance to economic growth in Alberta. For one thing, there are higher costs in being forced to ship and clean grain in Vancouver where unionized labour costs are higher than in Alberta and, in general, costs of living are higher, as are real estate prices. Another problem is that under the Wheat Board Act the grain is shipped from the prairies and must be cleaned at the seaports on the west coast or the east coast. Why do we have to have this, Mr.

Speaker? The grain could certainly be cleaned at the elevators here in this province. Not only would this again provide jobs for Albertans, but it would reduce the volume of grain that is shipped on the railroads and the backlog that so often occurs at the seaport.

The refuse from the grain that is separated when cleaning is called dockage, and that dockage can be sold to livestock producers as feed. Here again the dockage can be sold as a profit rather than an expense to farmers. Instead, members of this Assembly should know, often the dockage goes to the port of Churchill in Manitoba. By the way, that terminal is only open 16 weeks of the entire year, when the bay is not completely frozen over. What do they do with the dockage in Churchill? They burn it. How could this sort of thing be allowed to happen when the government should be doing everything possible to allow wheat and barley producers every opportunity to earn profits? Unfortunately, this is the way that the bureaucrats within the Wheat Board system run things.

So what can we do? Of course, the Canadian Wheat Board Act is federal legislation, but we must request Ottawa to make the necessary amendments so that farmers who desire the opportunities presented by a continental market are free to pursue them. However, what the Alberta government can do is make it perfectly clear to the federal government how the majority of Alberta wheat and barley growers feel about the compulsory nature of the board. As it stands now, the federal agriculture minister can sit back and say: "Well, there's no clear consensus. There are many voices on one side of the issue and some on the other." Mr. Speaker, I know that this is not true. Yes, there are those who favour the status quo, and I'm convinced that a plebiscite would prove to the federal minister in black and white that the proponents of continental marketing are a decided majority in Alberta. As well, I feel that a plebiscite in Alberta would be won by proponents of a dual marketing of wheat and barley, while a prairie plebiscite, when and if it were conducted by the federal government, could very well be defeated by farmers in Manitoba and especially in Saskatchewan. We need to take charge of our own destiny in Alberta before it is decided for us. That is the value of an Alberta plebiscite on a matter that we have no jurisdiction on. I hope that this value is not lost upon members of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the manner in which the Canadian Wheat Board operates must surely shock the conscience of members of this Conservative government who advocate deregulation, free enterprise, self-sufficiency on a daily basis. Another example under the Western Grain Transportation Act: the eastern business interests insist that the Thunder Bay grain terminals be used even though the grain shipped through west coast ports fetches more money for western farmers. The federal government through the WGTA is able to keep the volume of exports via the St. Lawrence Seaway high, although it costs on average an extra \$57 a tonne to ship through that port rather than shipping through Vancouver. This is money that is subtracted from producer profits. As I said before, the producers divvy up whatever is left from their final payment. Again, it is the producer who is last to be paid in the system. The handling and transportation charges to move one bushel of wheat through Thunder Bay and the St. Lawrence Seaway currently cost \$2.06 on the average. Conversely, wheat moving through Vancouver costs only \$1.56. If we had a deregulated system, Alberta farmers would gain 50 cents a bushel or, to put it another way, 25 percent more profits just by having a choice of which port to use. The regulations of the Canadian

Wheat Board Act have not allowed for any transportation costs comparison within the system.

When the Canadian Wheat Board shifts money from one grade of wheat to cover a shortfall in a lower grade of wheat, we have to change something. What we have is a redistribution of wealth by price pooling and forced handling and marketing. These are basic components of central planning and a socialistic economy. How can a free market, democratic country allow this to continue? How can we not do everything in our power to facilitate the removal of these oppressive federal regulations?

I know that Alberta's minister of agriculture has been very active in lobbying the federal government to reinstate the continental wheat and barley market in the North American continent. I applaud him for that. A plebiscite put before Alberta producers can only serve to bolster this argument 100 percent, assuming that the advocates of dual marketing would win the plebiscite. There is ample evidence that they would. In fact, all of the affected commodity groups want this plebiscite, and they feel that the supporters of the dual marketing system would win the plebiscite. The western Wheat Growers Association, the Alberta winter wheat growers association, the Alberta Barley Commission, and the Western Barley Growers have been lobbying for years to have the choice of a continental market for wheat and barley. Mr. Speaker, I feel very strongly that they deserve to get it.

In summary, our government has continually pursued deregulation for the benefit of the province's economic well-being. The majority of wheat and barley growers are asking the government to show some leadership in removing them from the costly regulatory system that they have been forced into. Those who prefer the Canadian Wheat Board system for marketing in North America can still participate in it, but those who do not, deserve this choice. That is why I ask all members of this Assembly to support my motion: so that Alberta wheat and barley producers can choose their own destiny.

Thank you.

3:50

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Motion 501. I have to start off by commending the sponsor of this motion on the descriptions he's given on how the Wheat Board works, how it was put in place, some of the impacts of the kind of marketing structure that we have because of that Wheat Board. I think farmers in Alberta and across western Canada are in a position where it's time that this kind of marketing structure was reviewed, but the implications we have to look at in terms of the process that's put together by this motion raises some question as to whether or not we're actually progressing in a manner that deals with the kind of issues that we want to look at from the context of the role the Alberta government should be playing in this kind of decision.

The process of marketing grains - wheat and barley - through the Wheat Board in western Canada is basically controlled both by the Wheat Board and by the Canadian Grain Commission. They set a lot of the processes in place: the grading standards, the methods of dealing with the issues that are involved in basically the marketing margin. The motion needs to be much broader in the sense that it has to deal with a review of the Canadian Grain Commission and the role that it plays as well as the Canadian Wheat Board. It also needs to look at the aspects of the dual market that the sponsor of this motion has proposed.

I've been involved in this debate over the last couple of years very heavily, looking at it from the perspectives of different farm organizations, different groups across the province. It's interest-

ing to note that as you talk to different groups, they perceive different roles for the Wheat Board, all the way from some groups who want it to stay the way it is to groups who want to see it disappear completely. The sponsor of this motion is kind of picking a middle ground dealing with the continental market, allowing the Wheat Board to still deal with the international market. But let's not fool the farmers in Alberta. We cannot have the Canadian Wheat Board the way it stands today and the continental market. Those two situations cannot exist.

The member sponsoring the Bill described the situation of a farmer wanting to sell grain to his own pasta flour mill. If all we had was the continental market, the farmer could take his own grain to the U.S., put it through his own mill. But if the Canadian Wheat Board stayed the same way, he couldn't process that in his mill in Alberta. So in essence just by creating a continental market, what we're doing is driving the value-added industry out of the province. What we need to do is modify this so that the value-added industry is retained in the province so that we have a situation where the Canadian Wheat Board loses the control of marketing domestically as well as into the international market. The sponsor of the motion has not mentioned any change in the domestic marketing restrictions that exist for the Wheat Board. So what we have to deal with here is a better definition of the impact of this whole process on the agriculture sector, all the way from no Wheat Board to the Wheat Board the way it exists and all of the continuum that's in the middle.

This is one of the issues that comes up in terms of the process that this motion recommends to this Legislature and to the government of Alberta. It's telling them to go to the federal government and ask for change. If that change is not forthcoming by November 1, then they're to call a plebiscite. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that in order to get a true feeling of what the farmers of Alberta want in connection with the relationship between marketing grain and the Canadian Wheat Board, that plebiscite should be held first.

What we should do is provide a set of options within a plebiscite, from the status quo to a total free market with options in the middle and allow people to prioritize it, to do a preferential ballot, to do some kind of a ranking of those options such that when that is counted, we know what the majority of farmers in this province want. We know then that we can go to the federal government and say: "The farmers of Alberta have spoken. The farmers of Alberta have told us that this is the kind of grain marketing system they want." Right now, Mr. Speaker, we're dealing with groups that are coming to elected representatives and saying: "This is what we want. This is what our group feels is the best. This is the way we need to deal with it." Another group comes along and says: "This is what we want. This is what we feel is best." I ask the sponsor of this motion: how can we judge the relative weights of all of those different groups that are coming without having a plebiscite, without giving those producers a chance to be counted on a one-by-one basis?

Mr. Speaker, we also look at situations within the framework of this motion, and even though the Canadian Wheat Board is a marketing board set up by federal legislation, de facto it creates a marketing board within the province of Alberta with all the rights to control marketing. What we have, then, essentially is that by recognition the government of Alberta has given to the Canadian Wheat Board that right to market. The Marketing of Agricultural Products Act requires the Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council to conduct votes on plans for the establishment or termination of boards, plans, or commissions.

This is section 10(d) in the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act. Now, de facto we have allowed the Canadian Wheat Board to become part of our marketing board structure within the province of Alberta, and by that I think it's only right to the producers that we give them the right to call on section 10(d) and have a plebiscite before we recommend or before we enact any other kind of a change.

The point I'd like to bring out now, Mr. Speaker, is that in the context of this motion I would like to propose an amendment to this motion. I would like to amend Motion 501 by striking out and that this option be extended by November 1, 1995. If the aforementioned time line is not met, the government of Alberta is urged to conduct . . .

That would be stricken out, and after "private export" add "provided that," and after "wheat and barley" at the end add the phrase "approves this plan."

If these changes are made, basically what it'll do is put in place a structure where our plebiscite is taken first. This is then consistent with our Marketing of Agricultural Products Act. It makes it consistent with the commitment that the government of Alberta keeps talking about when they want to say that they're going to consult with their consumers, their customers. The minister has on numerous occasions said that he wants to consult with the farmers. He wants to get the view of the farmers before he proceeds with action. This basically, then, would allow the minister to act within the framework of his own Marketing of Agricultural Products Act and provide farmers with that view.

Mr. Speaker, if most of the members have copies of the amendment now, I'd just like to suggest that what we're doing here is not really altering the end result. We're altering the process that we get to that end result. I'm a strong believer in the market system. I'm a strong believer that we need to have options for farmers, but those options only have to be provided when we have a system that is desired by all of the producers. This is the reason that I would like to have the amendment acted upon and the motion read so that we do the plebiscite before we pressure the federal government.

4:00

Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of other points on this motion that need to be brought out in terms of action that needs to be dealt with by the province. We keep hearing on numerous occasions about the benefits of value added. This motion and the amendment, by putting it in the correct order, will bring us in line with the idea that value added can be created in the province even if the federal government doesn't respond. If we get a plebiscite from the producers in the province that says they want to see a change, then what we will have is an option for the minister to act under the auspices granted to him by the Agricultural Product Marketing Act and also some precedent that was created during the establishment of federal marketing boards for other commodities like dairy and poultry, where enabling legislation had to be generated within each province to transfer the constitutional right to control marketing and commerce within the provincial boundaries from the provincial government to the federal government. All of the other marketing boards have enabling legislation. The Canadian Wheat Board doesn't because of the time frame, the War Measures Act. That was all the basis of this marketing board.

The minister, in essence, can take the initiative because there is no real enabling legislation. We've seen other provinces deal with this kind of issue from the perspective of the dairy marketing boards, where they just opt out. If we want to really promote value added in our province, if the farmers give us the signal through a plebiscite that they want to deal with a system that

provides an opportunity for value added within our own province, then the minister needs to take the precedent that's been created by the courts and opt out of the Canadian Wheat Board for sales within the province. This would allow the farmer the member was talking about to put his own grain through his flour mill and make pasta if he wanted to. It would allow them the freedom to market directly to other secondary users in the province.

So these kinds of options can be looked at, but I feel we need to look at the aspect of what it is that the producers want, Mr. Speaker, and that's why I've asked for the motion to be amended to have the plebiscite first and then action by the government after.

Thank you.

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

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to participate today in the debate of Motion 501, which if passed would communicate to the federal government that there are a great many wheat and barley producers in Alberta who are demanding the option of innovative marketing on the North American continent. I would like to state from the outset that I'm willing to lend my support to this motion as addressed and not as amended.

I agree with the Member for Lethbridge-East that this is not the answer to everything that is wrong with our present grain system and marketing system. We have the Western Grain Transportation Act. We've got the Grain Commission. We've got the Canadian Wheat Board and a number of issues that tie to the whole aspect of marketing our agricultural products. But what the motion from the Member for Taber-Warner is directed at is one specific issue, and that is the dual marketing of continental wheat and barley on the continent.

I guess we could stand here and discuss all afternoon the pros and cons of a controlled monopoly having exclusive jurisdiction over the marketing of grain. My colleague and the mover of this motion spent much of his energy just doing that, and I think he did a commendable job. He presented the very arguments that I've heard throughout the coffee shops, the grain elevators, and the kitchen tables in rural Alberta for a number of years. Thousands of producers agree with him that a more lucrative market and greater profit can be realized through a free market system of grain selling. They also recognize that while the Canadian Wheat Board is dependable in terms of providing farmers with a guaranteed price, it is essentially a form of agricultural socialism that perpetuates the dependency on the Canadian Wheat Board. However, there are also many who feel the Canadian Wheat Board does a fine job in selling their products in North America and overseas by acting as a single-desk agency. That is why this motion should be supported by all members of the Assembly.

It's ingenious that it does not seek to disband the Canadian Wheat Board but to give each individual producer in western Canada a choice to decide where he or she wants to sell their grain, through the Canadian Wheat Board or the private system. In other words, this is an issue about more than just efficiency or the lack thereof of the Wheat Board in obtaining suitable prices for Canadian farmers. This motion represents the importance of allowing the individual to choose the manner in which he will market his grain. This is about deregulation, pure and simple.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the debate is on an issue that is certainly nothing new. I've heard advocates of the Canadian Wheat Board monopoly argue that if you allow continental marketing, you'll destroy the price pooling system that is

so basic to the board's mandate. This is one of the most common arguments against free continental marketing. They say that you can't have one group of farmers playing with one set of rules and another group playing by a different set of rules. To this I would like to offer some history to counter the argument about destroying the Canadian Wheat Board.

At one time grain producers of wheat, barley, and oats were only allowed to sell their grain to the Canadian Wheat Board. The board could not control the sale of grain from farm to farm, so they changed the regulation to allow farm to farm sales, but the grain companies could only buy their grain through the Canadian Wheat Board, and interprovincial grain shipments were prohibited except through the Canadian Wheat Board. Then, I believe in the '60s or '70s, a change was made to allow dual marketing of feed grades of wheat, barley, and oats, called the nonboard grains. A cry went out that allowing dual marketing in Canada would destroy the Canadian Wheat Board. Well, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Wheat Board is still here and is still operating, but the producers are now allowed to choose between the nonboard market in Canada and the Canadian Wheat Board. I can speak from personal experience that nine out of the 10 years that I have been selling my own products, I have done better in the free market system, the nonboard market system, than I did through the Canadian Wheat Board system.

In 1989 the Canadian Wheat Board announced that oats would no longer be under the jurisdiction and control of the Wheat Board. Mr. Speaker, I've not had one contact saying that this was a disaster, that the oat producers weren't looked after, or the demise of the Canadian Wheat Board because of that act.

The last example leads quite nicely into my next point, one on behalf of the private market system. Of course, many of those members of this Assembly who have an agriculture background know what I'm alluding to: canola. In the early '70s producers were granted a plebiscite on whether or not to incorporate canola under the Canadian Wheat Board. That vote was decided in favour of those who did not want to be subject to the board's marketing monopoly. Now, in the two decades or so that have passed, the private system has served those producers well. Of all the grain commodities in the province of Alberta canola has shown the greatest increase in volume and the best price increase over that period of time. In fact, you could look at barley and wheat production, and their prices are about the same as they were 20 years ago. So I believe it is a proven that the private sector can operate for the betterment of our producers.

Mr. Speaker, I also have heard arguments against dual marketing in agriculture circuits. There are those that say that dual continental marketing is good for the grain producers in southern Alberta simply because of the proximity to the U.S. border. They will tell you that as you travel north in Alberta, you'll hear less and less calls for instituting a dual continental marketing system. These arguments I question because as I go north – I live in central Alberta – I've yet to hear one person who is against marketing our grains through the dual marketing system. [interjection] I hear the Member for Dunvegan saying that I'm too far south, but I'd like to mention my own experience in that aspect.

4:10

Under the nonboard system I've had the privilege of achieving a higher market by shipping my grain to Vancouver Island, so I'm sure the people in the Peace River country will have the ability to market their grain too. To these arguments I offer the following. First, as I've said, they must refer to farmers. Secondly, if they do not wish to access the U.S. market in an area as far north as

the Peace River country, the net effect of southern Alberta farmers shipping the bulk of their grain south of the border would only serve to lessen the increased demand for those clients or producers within Alberta. This is basic economics that not even the forces of socialistic monopolies are immune to. If farmers in southern Alberta take their products elsewhere, those that choose to stay within the present system are likely to benefit from the simple supply economics. In fact, the very principles that guide the mandate of the Canadian Wheat Board are completely contrary to the principles of free trade that the world economy is increasingly embracing.

Once the North American free trade agreement and the general agreement on tariffs and trade come fully into effect, the Canadian Wheat Board may find itself very outdated by our trading partners in other nations. The reality is that the free market is more conducive to the present and future realities of the international trade climate that are presented by NAFTA and GATT. The time to act on this is now, before the Canadian wheat and barley producers are left behind.

Deregulation is being embraced, Mr. Speaker, because it's recognized for its ability to harness the natural economic advantages of regions and people. That sounds familiar: the harnessing of natural economic advantages for regions and people. It should. It sounds an awful lot like the Alberta advantage that the members of our government have been using as a guiding principle in our efforts to promote economic prosperity in this province. By logical extension we as a government must pursue all avenues possible to promote the deregulation of one of the oldest industries in Alberta, the agriculture industry.

Unfortunately, making changes to the Canadian Wheat Board is not under Alberta's control, so we find ourselves in a bit of a conundrum in our quest. However, we owe it to Alberta's wheat and barley producers to do everything in our power on their behalf. While we can't make amendments to the Canadian Wheat Board Act, we can turn up the heat and really put the pressure on the federal government to make necessary amendments that would allow for the freedom to choose on the part of the producers. That is why the motion seeks the initial step of requesting that the federal government act and act promptly. If they do not, we'll put this question to a plebiscite for Alberta wheat and barley producers. Again, it is an effort to do everything possible from our standpoint as a provincial government.

It is for these reasons that I urge all members to support the motion as presented by the Member for Taber-Warner calling for dual continental marketing of wheat and barley.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to say a word or two on this. Like a lot of things that come to the Legislature, sometimes they are not too parliamentary.

Really, there are two questions here. One is a plebiscite and the other is whether we should have marketing boards exist or not and marketing outside the board. I noticed that everybody promptly gets up and starts indulging in the argument about whether we should have a marketing board or not. Well, the whole question here, I think, is whether you have a plebiscite; in other words, whether you check with the farmers or the marketers themselves. Of course, you get this broad brush at times that it's socialistic. Well, one of the rather intriguing things is that there's

no group. Most right-wing groups, be it doctors, lawyers, engineers, or anything else . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Oilmen.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Oilmen, exactly.

. . . get together and control price. As a matter of fact, there's a group of gas companies that decide what they're going to sell gas for or shut in wells. If the price isn't right, they don't. So the grouping of marketers is a good, solid free enterprise system of operating, and to holler that it's socialist is - I don't know what. It seems it shows the paucity of the argument and the lack of thinking that you've put into it if that's the only argument you can make.

If labour unions have the right to organize, and if the automobile companies have the right to shut in production towards the end of the year so they're not putting too many pickups out on the road, and if doctors have a right to organize and try to negotiate their fees, surely farmers have a right to organize. Now, that's all we're talking about here. If you want to raise an onboard product, as the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake just said, there are all kinds of products that are not controlled if you want a free market. If you get your jollies out of sort of zipping close to that Chicago market and seeing how close you can get to the Hong Kong bid just to see whether you're alive or not, you can raise canola, you can raise hay, you can raise peas, you can raise registered seed. There's almost an infinite number of things that a farmer can do if he really is going to get his kick out of life by trying to play the free market. But there is wheat and barley that the farmers out of their wisdom in the past have put into controlled markets because they saw only too well what the Chicago grain board and a few others did to pricing and what private cartels did to pricing. Cargill has a budget that makes even this government look like a small . . .

Point of Order Clarification

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Dunvegan rising on a point of order.

MR. CLEGG: It's probably not a point of order as much as clarification. I understand that the Member for Lethbridge-East made an amendment to this motion. I was going to get up when the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake was talking, but obviously I can't see any connection with what the Member for Redwater is saying to the amendment to this motion. Is this free, or is it just for the amendment?

MR. N. TAYLOR: I'm used to observing the member's points, usually on his head, but this one I think he hasn't read. It very clearly tries to clarify the motion to say that it is going for a plebiscite. It requests the federal government to amend for the producers of wheat and barley provided that a provincewide plebiscite for the producers of wheat and barley approves this plan. That's what I'm trying to get this topic back to, not how good private marketing is. That will take place during the plebiscite.

Debate Continued

MR. N. TAYLOR: Right now the operative words here are to hold the plebiscite, and I'll agree with that. I think that's worth clarifying. But we've got people dashing all over here trying to fight whether or not they're going to kill the board. Well, that can be done when the plebiscite's put on.

The point of the matter is that any marketer should have the right to decide on how they market, so if we want to know how the farmers want to market grain and barley, surely to God we can ask them, Mr. Speaker. Sure to fate we can ask the marketers themselves, because every other group has a right to sit there and vote on whatever they're doing. That's all that's at issue here. To have these people put their tails back and go charging out the gate down to the other end of the pasture screaming about the free market has nothing to do with it. All we're asking about is a plebiscite. Then they can get their tails up and go out and talk. It gives you the impression that they're afraid they will not win a plebiscite, so what they're trying to do is stampede this government – and sometimes they're easily stampeded – into trying to declare a free market and then trying to change it back the other way.

4:20

Mr. Speaker, all I'm saying is that I support strongly the amendment that calls for a plebiscite. It allows the producers to decide what they want to do. This is what we should be after, not arguing a bunch of extraneous material as to whether or not it is socialistic or whether or not it should pass or shouldn't pass.

I might remind the members from Taber-Warner and Innisfail-Sylvan Lake – as a matter of fact, their idea of Canada is what they can see from the top of a tall building in Lethbridge on a clear day – that there was sort of a funny looking plebiscite, if you want to call it, on the election of advisory board members where all the members ran on a ticket of whether they were for the marketing board or against it. Those that were against the marketing board lost their shirts. As a matter of fact, they looked like Liberals in the 1980s. They had not much chance at all. So I don't know where all this support is coming from. In the new century it's going to be a new order.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just saying let's get back to the question of whether farmers have a right to decide how they market themselves, not have this government trying to stampede and change it ahead of it.

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

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to support the amendment to the motion. I think it's a good amendment and well thought out. As well, I'd like to talk generally about the amendment and the motion and point out to the member opposite in particular and other members of his group that really the Canadian Wheat Board is in fact an outdated, socialist bureaucracy. It was established in 1943, and in my own way I hope that makes it fairly clear what I think of the Canadian Wheat Board. It may have served consumers well at one time and may have even served producers well at one time, but there are many people, many producers who are calling for a break in this monopoly, and it is time for the federal government to listen.

Just to make the operation of the Wheat Board perfectly clear, because I'm sure city members opposite don't understand how it works, the Canadian Wheat Board is the sole buyer and seller of wheat and barley produced in western Canada – that's an important point, western Canada – or the designated area and sold outside of Canada. It is also the sole buyer of wheat and barley products destined for human consumption and industrial use in Canada. It is a single-desk monopoly. If you grow wheat or barley in western Canada, you must sell it through the Wheat Board. You have no choice.

The Canadian Wheat Board was successful in the past because it was a single-desk selling agency, and many of our customers were single-desk selling agents as well. For instance, the old Soviet Union, China, and so on, all were single-desk buying agencies. But the Soviet Union, for instance, as we all know, no longer exists as such. So what we have is a number of smaller entities that are now buying grain themselves, no longer a single-desk agency, and the nongovernment buyers in these countries tend to be buying the grain. So they're nongovernment, they're not single desk, and it's competitive. The old socialist countries are changing their method of doing things, yet we have with the federal Liberal Party a group that refuses to change their socialist mentality and socialist way of selling grain.

There is no evidence that the Canadian Wheat Board's mandate continues to be valid or desirable. In fact, evidence is overwhelmingly against the monopoly of the board and the single-desk agency. In fact, if I could use the cattle business as an example, which has never been a single-desk selling agent or buying agent and hopefully never will, if anybody wants to come to my cattle market, you can come there and you have really one of the last bastions of free enterprise. You have a producer's cattle coming in. You have maybe 20 buyers sitting around a ring, all bidding against each other. I can tell you that it gets hot and heavy on many occasions. We have video sales, for instance, which transport the market to various parts of North America, so you can sit in South Dakota and bid on cattle in my market. The competition aspect is there, and that is what we need for grain, wheat, and barley as well. Not only is there evidence from the cattle industry, which is having the highest prices in the history of the business at this present time, but there is evidence on the grain side that very few producers who are outside the board's compulsory jurisdiction choose to market their grain through the board.

Now, this is the important point that I made earlier, and I'll refer to it. There is significant production of wheat and barley in the regions of Ontario and Quebec. They are not part of the Wheat Board. I'm sure most of the members opposite did not know that. If the Canadian Wheat Board is so beneficial to these producers, why are they not running to join the market? Why are they not running to join the board? The producers in Ontario and Quebec want absolutely nothing to do with the Canadian Wheat Board. In fact, if we take durum wheat as an example, right now in Canada the Canadian producers of durum wheat in the west – only the west – are getting approximately \$3.80 a bushel. You can take your durum to the U.S. and get \$7 U.S. a bushel. Now, in Canadian dollars after the next federal budget that'll probably be equivalent to \$14 Canadian. I'm not sure. But you have a situation where you can take your grain across the border and over double your money.

Now, why does the federal government restrict this to western producers? It is another discrimination against the west really. That's all it is. The history of the west has been really an attempt to overthrow the shackles put upon us by eastern Canada, and this is another example of where we need to do exactly that. If the Wheat Board is good for the west, it's also good for the producers in Ontario and Quebec, Mr. Speaker, and we all know that won't happen because the producers there don't want it.

MR. DOERKSEN: What about the FLQ?

DR. L. TAYLOR: Actually, I think the federal government's using some of those people as consultants now, like Mr. Rose.

The second piece of evidence that the board lacks the efficiency and profit potential of private exporting to the United States and Mexico comes in the form of the continental barley market. We had, Mr. Speaker, a continental barley market in effect for six weeks during 1993. During that six weeks a million tonnes were exported to the U.S., not through the Wheat Board but by private farmers, private producers taking their grain across the border. One million tonnes in six weeks. Through the whole year the Canadian Wheat Board only exported 173,000 tonnes. In a year the Wheat Board exported 173,000; in six weeks with the free market, a million tonnes. I think once again that's very clear evidence that we must move to an open marketing system.

Many individual farmers as well as producer groups in the U.S. have argued that we should not have this Canadian Wheat Board as it is a subsidy to the system.

I can see that my time unfortunately has drawn to a close, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Unfortunately, the time allotted to this order of business has concluded, and we must now move to the next order.

head: **Government Motions**
Standing Orders Amendment

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I would move that unanimous consent be granted to waive Standing Order 38(1)(a) in order to move a motion amending the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. Government House Leader, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, this is a very lengthy motion, and as copies have been distributed to all members and as there has been consultation with both House leaders and yourself, do you still require that the motion be read in full?

4:30

THE SPEAKER: Do the hon. members agree to the hon. Government House Leader dispensing with the reading of this motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader may dispense.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Standing Orders of the Assembly be amended as per the document appearing on members' desks.*

[Motion carried]

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, in addition, I'd like to table four copies of a memorandum of understanding signed by the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader, and by yourself. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Opposition House Leader for the many hours of consultation and discussion which we were able to have regarding these changes, being clear about

where we disagreed and moving on to the areas in which we could agree. I thank him for that participation.

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

Moved by Mr. Brassard:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable Gordon Towers, 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 Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Olds-Didsbury.

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a honour and a privilege for me to move acceptance of the Speech from the Throne which has opened our Third Session of the 23rd Legislature. I thank His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for presenting this Assembly with an overview of his government's upcoming 1995-1996 activities on behalf of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, whom he represents so capably.

If my father were alive, he would have celebrated his 100th birthday yesterday. I only mention that, Mr. Speaker, because I know that were he alive, he'd be extremely proud to be a part of what is happening in Alberta today. You see, the message that His Honour left with this Assembly yesterday epitomized that pioneering spirit which encouraged my father and his brother to homestead in Alberta some 80-odd years ago. It is the people of Alberta that make this province such a wonderful place to live and raise families. These people foster the prosperity that comes with risk and hard work and a sense of values that encourage free enterprise. Finally, accompanying those values is the overall sense of responsibility that enables Albertans to preserve what is truly unique in the industrial world today: a clean environment; strong, healthy communities; and a future for our children and grandchildren that is the most promising in the free world today. People, prosperity, and preservation. Yes, my father would have been proud to be standing here today, as I am.

This past year has been a year of change in the way we do things in this province, and change comes hard to all of us, particularly those of us who somehow thought we wouldn't be affected. We've seen our school boards reduced in numbers, from over 180 to 57. In the future our schools will be funded on a more equitable basis than ever before. From now on students attending Westbrook, a small but highly effective rural school in my constituency, will receive the same per student funding as some of the largest urban schools elsewhere in the province. School advisory councils will be replaced with more functional and meaningful school councils, thus ensuring parents and students of an educational system more responsive to the community it serves than ever before. A closer and more meaningful relationship will be established between parents, teachers, and the principal. Curriculum integrity and consistency will be assured through more direct school, parent, superintendent, and department access. The net beneficiary, Mr. Speaker, is the student, and that is exactly as it should be.

Adult education, too, has responded to community needs by allowing colleges and technical institutions to offer applied degree programs which combine formal instruction and work experience.

*See sessional paper 610/95.

Institutions such as the Olds College, located in my constituency, have already implemented a collaboration between their curriculum development and private industry. A co-operative agreement between the college and Green Leaf resulted in the composting of all the agricultural waste on the college site. Last year alone over 3,500 metric tonnes of bagged potting soil were shipped from the college, Mr. Speaker. A forage centre was established with a local private developer. A prototypical composting centre has been jointly funded by the college, advanced education, the department of the environment, and Procter & Gamble to design a composting system that could have practical application for every city and town in Alberta.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker, because there are literally dozens of such collaborations taking place in this one college alone, and I'm certain the same sort of thing is happening all over the province in postsecondary educational institutes. We're developing new and innovative ways of training our students for the world that they are going to enter upon graduation. What better way to do that than involve the private sector in the instructional process?

Of course, education isn't the only area where exciting change is taking place. Health care is being revamped. Our hospital boards have been restructured into 17 regional health zones and, much like the educational system, are designed to be far more responsive to the needs of those they serve. Hospitals will become health care centres in the truest sense of the word by being as concerned about wellness as sickness. Decisions affecting the health services of people in the community will be made in that community. Discussions regarding the best use of facilities will continue to be made by boards operating within that community. Community health nurse practitioners will provide primary health services. There will be greater collaboration and co-operation in all aspects of health delivery than ever before, Mr. Speaker, and it will all take place on a community basis. In fact, much of the service delivery will take place in the community rather than in the institution, providing a seamless continuum of care throughout. To ensure that it does, the role of the Health Facilities Review Committee has been restructured to monitor and respond to any concerns which may arise.

I mentioned earlier that this has been a year of change. Our Premier has referred to this process as being similar to renovating a home. Regardless of how badly renovations are needed, they may still be upsetting to some and an inconvenience to others. The most encouraging factor of it all is that you know you will have a better house to live in when you are finished.

We all recognize that change in the way we do things in this province is long overdue. In fact, that is being acknowledged by provinces right across our nation. There is a recognized need to get our house in order both socially and fiscally, and I thank God that we have the leadership and the resolve to accomplish what needs to be done. A fellow by the name of David Starr Jordan once said that wisdom is knowing what to do next, skill is knowing how to do it, and virtue is doing it. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd say that those three adjectives describe our Premier pretty well; wouldn't you?

We've been fortunate this past year because we've been blessed with better than average revenue, which has certainly made our task of balancing the budget a bit easier. It is imperative now that we capitalize not only on the momentum that has been established but the resolve that every Albertan has shown to arrive at this point. His Honour outlined the need to continue to grow if we hope to compete in the emerging global marketplace. We already have strong economic growth. Our employment figures have

increased significantly in the past year, but we must continue to focus on creating a climate conducive to private-sector growth. Alberta is being recognized around the world as a province that is moving forward under good, sound leadership and philosophy.

4:40

There is an Alberta advantage, Mr. Speaker, and the Alberta Economic Development Authority will capitalize on the momentum that it is creating. We already export such a significant percentage of our products that it is imperative that we capitalize on a relationship with our neighbours to the south, and we must also make certain that our own provincial borders do not unnecessarily frustrate the free flow of goods and services across our nation.

As a government we have successfully gotten out of the business of being in business. The next step is equally important: to make industry more responsible for their own affairs and to hold them accountable for the results. Government regulations and red tape have only served to frustrate and delay industry in the past. We must do everything possible to remove such hindrances without compromising the quality of service being served by those businesses. This, coupled with the lowest income tax and corporate tax in Canada and a legislated commitment to avoid a sales tax unless the people of Alberta decide otherwise by referendum, can only further enhance that Alberta advantage that I referred to moments ago.

There have been other issues that have arisen over this past year that will impact significantly on future development. Our lottery rate revenue has taken on unprecedented stature, so much so that this government is in the process of asking Albertans what they feel should be done not only with the revenue but the industry itself. Much of the current revenue already goes into community projects, performing and visual arts, and other similar benefits to the community at large. A significant amount will be applied to our general revenue as well, and there has already been a recognition for and a commitment to more accountability for the funds generated. There is a social consequence to be considered as well, Mr. Speaker, so it will now be up to all Albertans to determine the best way to deal with both the positive and negative side of this lottery windfall.

Quite aside from the people and the opportunities to be found in Alberta, I can't think of a greater place to live. Anyone who has skied in the mountains or ridden horseback across a prairie field at sunset has never failed to come away in absolute awe of the majesty and splendour they portray, but Alberta is not simply a collection of mountains and prairie lands. It is made up of communities and clean air and water and good, sound land planning, which ensure a quality of life only dreamed of in other parts of the world, a fact we all too often take for granted right here in Alberta.

One of the things we generally take for granted is water, something we never miss till we don't have it. Then it's a crisis indeed. We all recognize that there is a finite amount of water, even though it doesn't always seem that way. With ever increasing urban sprawl and continued development of our rural communities it is imperative that we have a plan in place to protect and preserve this most precious natural resource. It's not enough simply to monitor the 1,800 test water wells that we have across our province. Each of us must take a greater responsibility for management of our water requirements. The discussions that are being held across our province should not only help to raise our awareness of this valuable resource but also give us a pretty clear

understanding of how it should best be managed into the future in the best interests of everyone.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the people of Alberta can be rightfully proud of their province, because I know that down deep they have never lost that pioneering spirit, a spirit that enables them to capitalize on individual responsibility, self-reliance, a good, solid work ethic, and, above all, a care and concern for their fellowmen. That's what brought my father and his brother to Alberta 80 years ago, and that's what will continue to draw people just like them for many years to come. That is why I am so very proud to be standing before you today to move acceptance of the Speech from the Throne. I only wish my father could be here too.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise today to second the motion of the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury. I commend the Lieutenant Governor on his presentation of the Speech from the Throne.

I would like to begin today by telling you, Mr. Speaker, that I am truly honoured to be involved with this government and to have the opportunity to represent the constituents of Calgary-East. The Speech from the Throne expressed what I am sure my constituents wanted to hear: that while many milestones have been reached, we are sticking to our mandate to ensure that Alberta and all Albertans may prosper well into the future. When this government came to power, my constituents were concerned about Alberta's economic situation. They were concerned about the kind of Alberta they would be leaving for their children, and they trusted this government to act responsibly and come up with some real Alberta-made solutions.

Just over a year and a half ago now this government was given the directive from Albertans to take innovative measures and make a genuine difference to the province. Now, Mr. Speaker, 20 months later, we can see tangible results from our efforts. Not only is our deficit decreasing and our four-year spending plan on track, but our economy and our national and international profile are continuing to grow. There are not many people who haven't heard about the Alberta advantage, advantages accruing from the country's lowest income tax and corporate tax rates. We must not forget Alberta is the only province without a provincial sales tax. Our work force is one of the youngest and most educated, and our environment is the cleanest.

This message is reaching even more people than this government had ever hoped. It is difficult to count the number of times the hon. Premier's vision of this province of Alberta has been held up as an example of fiscal responsibility. Other jurisdictions are watching intently as Alberta gets its fiscal house in order. In saying that, I do not want to imply that our journey has not involved some significant sacrifice. It has not been easy, but Albertans know that to do it right, we cannot stop now. Some important decisions about the future of this province are yet to be made, and there is still some real work to be done to restructure our programs for the benefit of the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, an incredible amount of work has already been done to ensure that Albertans are getting the most value out of their tax dollars. Efforts are being made to get our resources directly to the people where they can be of the most benefit. The government is also doing its utmost to see that a positive economic environment is created so that business can lead the way to a stronger Alberta. It is really very exciting to see the transfor-

mation occurring in Alberta and to know that this government is carrying out a mandate it created and continues to be strongly supported by the people of Alberta. Perhaps even more encouraging is the spirit of my constituents, the constituents of Calgary-East, and a great number of Albertans who are willing to make short-term sacrifices for the long-term benefit of the entire province.

The Speech from the Throne referred to the importance of "people, prosperity, and preservation." These core concerns make it obvious to me that this government is continuing to listen and be responsive to Albertans. This government's greatest commitment is its commitment to the people. It knows that health and education are Alberta's two greatest concerns, and as such this government is intent on making sure that these programs deliver their utmost to the people this government is privileged to serve. Mr. Speaker, work is continuing in the restructuring of both of these areas, because these services are just as important to you as they are to the future of all Albertans. Likewise, as prosperity is one of the major concerns of my constituents, it is good to see that is also one of the three core concerns of this government. It is understood that the private sector is key to Alberta's ability to compete nationally and internationally. This government has taken and is continuing to take the appropriate steps to allow business to thrive independently and to lead this province toward greater economic successes. Furthermore, preservation embodies more than environmental and community concerns. To me and to my constituents, preservation relates back to one of the fundamental reasons why this government was elected in the first place: to ensure that we will be able to pass on a better Alberta for our children and our grandchildren.

4:50

The Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, also referred to another part of our journey, a part that only three or four years ago seemed a world away. Now that this province is so close to balancing its budget, Albertans and this government have some very important decisions to make about paying down the debt and reinvesting their earnings gained by practising fiscal responsibility. I believe that consultation like the heritage trust fund review, the review on new directions for Alberta Lotteries, the recent 1-800 Talking with Albertans access line, the water management legislation review, the continuing consultation on health and education, and many others demonstrate this government's commitment to making its decisions together with the people of this province.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would again like to give my support for the direction of this government as presented to us in the Speech from the Throne. I'm pleased to see that this government will continue with its program as it seeks to create a secure and prosperous Alberta. While Alberta has already undergone many changes, many decisions have yet to be made. We have already begun to see positive results, and by sticking to our mandate, we will see many more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to rise in support of the motion for the acceptance of the Speech from the Throne, and I want to say that I appreciate the Lieutenant Governor's reading of this particular speech. I want to extend congratulations to the Premier and to his government for their vision and their strength in this time of crisis. I want to extend

congratulations to my colleague from Olds-Didsbury and also to my colleague from Calgary-East for their excellent expression of the key elements of the speech.

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, my involvement in this Legislative Assembly came from a very simple need, and that need was that I wanted to be part of a system in Alberta that would not only express but would put into action those expressions on the need for fiscal responsibility. I believe that in the Speech from the Throne as expressed yesterday by the Lieutenant Governor, once again we have the full commitment of this particular government toward fiscal responsibility. I would like to note some of the phrases, then, in the speech and in particular the phrase that the government's four-year spending plan remains on track. So as a rookie MLA from the southern part of the province, somewhat conservative, I guess, in not only geography but certainly from upbringing . . .

MR. ZWOZDESKY: But a good one.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you.

. . . it is very, very important to me that this government continue to move in a direction that I am so willingly and so able to support. I was particularly struck by the continuation of the phrases that we use, which I think concentrates us on the real emphasis that this government places as it goes about its governing, and that is, "people, prosperity, and preservation."

I'm particularly happy to read in the Speech from the Throne that the Order Paper for our deliberations within this session will be

- to implement the government's business plans,
- to streamline and deregulate government, and
- to develop the climate for businesses to create wealth and jobs for Albertans.

That is again, sir, part of the reason why I feel that I am here representing those constituents from Lethbridge-West.

Part of my interest, of course, in the exercise of government is how we are able to move the decision-making from a central authority, which I tend to oppose by philosophy, down into a community situation. I think time after time this government has shown and is showing its willingness to divest itself of a centralized decision-making system into a regional decision-making and, again to quote, to enhance community services.

I've been quoted publicly as being interested in a reform of the health care system, that we ought to be finding more gatekeepers

than just physicians for the system. So I was really pleased, then, to read about "authorizing community nurse practitioners to provide primary health services."

Last week I had the pleasure of attending a forum at the University of Lethbridge. The reason for this particular forum was the opportunity for students to express their strong disagreement to what seemed to be happening or about to happen in terms of the federal situation in funding for students. We join those students in that disagreement, and I believe we are making it known to the students of this province that we will be there to assist them financially in their postsecondary efforts. I applaud the government for providing that in the Speech from the Throne.

There was a phrase under the section on prosperity that I want to quote directly, and that is:

The government will complete its ongoing review of every provincial regulation to revise or remove the ones that impede business unduly. It will work with the federal government in areas such as the promotion of international trade and commerce and the elimination of the overlap in federal and provincial regulations and services. It will strive to minimize tax impediments to business at all levels of government.

I know, sir, that based on provisions like that within a Speech from the Throne, particularly the Lethbridge chamber of commerce, an organization that I belonged to for many, many years and continue to support, will feel very, very happy with this particular government when they are aware, then, of those sorts of commitments.

When you come from a part of the province that has the diversity of southwestern Alberta, it is not hard at all to want to be in a preservation mode in terms of the vast diversity that we have not only in our people, not only in our communities, but in our tremendous environment that we enjoy in that particular area. I particularly applaud the government's commitment to have Albertans place great value on keeping neighbourhoods safe, air and water clean, and people involved in the life of our communities.

So I'm very, very happy and pleased to be able to participate today. I would of course encourage all the Members of the Legislative Assembly, when it comes time for the question to be called, that they do in fact support the Speech from the Throne.

5:00

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, given the hour and in consultation with the Opposition House Leader, in order to help us be well prepared to hear the opposition response to the Speech from the Throne, I would now move that we do adjourn to reconvene at 8 o'clock tonight.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:01 p.m.]

