

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, November 26, 1990 2:30 p.m.**

Date: 90/11/26

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Prayers

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

We, Thine unworthy servants here gathered together in Thy name, do humbly beseech Thee to send down Thy heavenly wisdom from above to direct and guide us in all our considerations.

Amen.

Would you please remain standing.

Since the House last sat, there have been a number of deaths which we now would memorialize.

The first is the Hon. Frank Lynch-Staunton, who died on September 25 of this year. He served from 1979 to 1985 as the Queen's representative in the Alberta Legislature. The Hon. Frank Lynch-Staunton was Alberta's 11th Lieutenant Governor. His family is present here in the Speaker's gallery this day.

Mr. Adolph Olaf Fimrite passed away on July 18, 1990. He represented the constituency of Spirit River. He was first elected to Alberta's Legislature in the 1952 general election. He was re-elected in 1955, 1959, 1963, and in 1967 and served the Legislature and the people of that constituency until 1971.

We also remember Mr. Allison Ira Fluker, who passed away October 16. Mr. Fluker represented the constituency of St. Paul. He was first elected to Alberta's Legislature in the 1971 general election. He was re-elected in the 1975 election and served this province and his constituency until 1979. Members of his family are present in the Speaker's gallery as well.

We also remember Clifford Lawrence Doan, who passed away November 24. He represented the constituency of Innisfail and was first elected to Alberta's Legislature in the 1971 general election. He was re-elected in the 1975 election and served until 1979.

We also memorialize one of our sitting members, Gordon Samuel Dales Wright, who passed away on October 18. He represented the constituency of Edmonton-Strathcona and was first elected to the Legislature in 1986 and re-elected in the 1989 general election. Members of his family are present in the Speaker's gallery.

I ask hon. members to join in a moment of silent prayer.

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

Amen.

Pray be seated. Order in the House, please.

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, my condolences to all the families of the deceased. All these people mentioned by the Speaker served with dignity and served our community and our province well.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take just a couple of moments, though, to talk about my colleague Gordon Wright. October 18 was a very sad day. I think it was a sad day for all Alberta residents, certainly a sad day for the residents of Edmonton, for the voters of Edmonton-Strathcona, and – I think I'm speaking for everybody – for all members of the Legislature regardless of which political party they represent. Certainly it was a very sad day for us in the Official Opposition and for all members of our

party. As you know, that was the day our colleague Gordon Wright passed away.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, in this day and age there is often a great deal of cynicism and disillusionment with politicians, some of it I expect legitimate, other perhaps not. But I would say that while there may be an overall cynicism with the Canadian and the Alberta public about public life and perhaps politics in general – and I hope that will turn around – I think if you look at specific politicians there is not that cynicism. If I may say so about my colleague, there was not any cynicism about Gordon Wright the politician. The words I've heard to describe him both while he was alive, which is important to know, and also since he's passed are words such as integrity, decency, compassion, caring, honest, dedicated, and competent. Of course, all this was mentioned along with his tremendous sense of humour. The day Gordon came to tell me about the fact that he had pancreatic cancer, that sense of humour was still there. All of us who knew Gordon know that he was a physical fitness buff, still playing rugger and riding his bicycle; we all remember that contest with him racing the buses and the cars. The first thing he said to me was, "Well, Ray, I've found out that clean living isn't everything." So even at that point he had that sense of humour.

If I may, just from a partisan view, say that Gordon Wright's life really is the history of our party; it is the history of the NDP. He was involved when the NDP was formed in the early '50s. For many of you who are not aware of it, he ran against Grant Notley for leader in 1968 and lost by 27 votes. To show the kind of man he was, he immediately turned around and was the president of the party, serving very closely with Grant over a number of years. When I was the provincial secretary of the party, he was the treasurer, and that's always an interesting challenge when it comes to our party, Mr. Speaker. After that he had an interest also in federal politics and was a federal vice-president.

I think it says everything about the man in terms of his dedication and stick-to-itiveness that before he was elected in Edmonton-Strathcona, he ran five times and was defeated. Some of us, at least on this side, know how that feels and to have to go back and do it five times I think shows a lot about the man. As you mentioned, he was elected in '86 and re-elected in '89. So I guess what I'm saying is that he is really the history of the NDP in this province.

Knowing Gordon Wright as all of us here did, I'm sure if he's watching up above, Mr. Speaker, he would be bemused by the tributes that have come in since his death. I want to say to him, if I may, that you, Gordon Wright, deserve all these tributes. In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I say to Gordon through his family: Gordon Wright, rest easy; you'll always be entrenched in our hearts; we already miss you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:40

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Advanced Education.

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I say at the outset, on behalf of the government, how indebted we are, sir, to you to adopt a policy of recognizing hon. members who have served this House both as elected members and as, in this case, the Lieutenant Governor.

Mr. Speaker, I had the honour and privilege of having served with four of the hon. gentlemen you have mentioned: the Hon. Frank Lynch-Staunton; Mick Fluker, the Member for St. Paul;

the hon. Cliff Doan, the one and only Mr. Doan, the Member for Innisfail; and of course Mr. Gordon Wright.

Mr. Speaker, they all brought something very unique to this Assembly, and each of them in their way, in my view and in the government's view I'm sure, expressed on behalf of their constituents some very true feelings about not only the needs of Alberta but how their constituency fitted into the province as a whole.

In particular, however, the late Gordon Wright, because he served so recently, was of some special interest to me as a member. I would simply sum up my impressions of the hon. gentleman really this way. He had served, as hon. members know, as a Crown prosecutor for the Attorney General's department. Whether that was a precursor of Crown prosecutors not being paid enough and seeking public office, I don't know, but it was obviously bad judgment if one looked at the rate of pay he received when he was elected.

Mr. Speaker, as you well know and I well know as Deputy Speaker in this House, Mr. Wright was that gentleman who perhaps didn't always challenge the rules, but there was perhaps never a better student of the rules of this Assembly than those voiced by Gordon Wright. Above all, he had, in my view, a great love for tradition. He had great respect for the principles of democracy and certainly had to be and will continue to be known as an outstanding parliamentarian. But in the final analysis, Mr. Speaker, if I were to sum up the views that I have of the hon. late Member for Edmonton-Strathcona: Gordon Wright was indeed a gentlemen's gentleman.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I'd first like to start by acknowledging the families that are here this afternoon. We feel for those families', we mourn for those families. We mourn the death of Alberta leaders.

I had the privilege when I was the mayor of the city of Edmonton of often dealing with the former Lieutenant Governor of our province. I have never met a man who I thought was more suited for that job, more comfortable in that job, as happy as a person could be in that job, than our former Lieutenant Governor. We from the Liberal Party mourn his death.

I had the privilege of knowing Gordon Wright as a lawyer before I came into this Assembly and developed great respect for him, watching him in action in the courts of Alberta. He was a man who had integrity in that courtroom, who had aggressiveness in that courtroom, and usually things went his way. I got to know Mr. Wright even better when I came into this Assembly, and it was there that I saw that he was a man who really was true to his convictions. He stated his mind. He often would take a side that would be with you even though you happened to be of a different political persuasion on some issues. I think it's true that we could say of Gordon Wright that he was an honourable gentleman. My colleagues in the Liberal caucus will miss Gordon Wright.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Would you all please rise.

Sergeant-at-Arms, march off the flag of Alberta, please.

(The Sergeant-at-Arms removed the flag of Alberta from Mr. Wright's desk and left the Chamber]

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

Members wishing to get in on question period, please signify.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, I table today a petition signed by 1,259 Alberta taxpayers from the Hinton-Cadomin area of the riding of West Yellowhead in regards to a horribly depleting Highway 40 between Hinton and Cadomin.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

head: **Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees**

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to present the final report of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 52, the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act is required to report to the Legislative Assembly at this time. This will serve as an interim report to inform the Legislative Assembly that the committee is presently undergoing its deliberations and expects to deliver a final report in the spring.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 40 I will move after question period the following motion:

That the Legislative Assembly direct the Provincial Treasurer to present supplementary estimates of expenditure to cover the special warrants issued since the last sitting and the anticipated expenditures to the end of the fiscal year.

Thank you.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Government House Leader I give oral notice of the following motion:

Be it resolved that the report and recommendations contained therein presented to the Assembly on November 26, 1990, by the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, appointed pursuant to Motion 14 passed by this Assembly on August 15, 1989, be now received and concurred in.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.

The Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It is my intention to move the following motion today under the provisions of Standing Order 30.

Be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Assembly be adjourned this afternoon to discuss the urgency of need for the government to introduce in this sitting of the Assembly a revised budget for the current fiscal year which reports accurately any changes in its forecasted revenue and which reflects changes in expenditure plans to meet the needs of our hospitals, schools, and postsecondary education, social services system, agricultural producers, and other Albertans and institutions whose needs are not being met by the budget set down in March 1990.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice pursuant to Standing Order 30 that after the daily routine tomorrow, November 27, 1990, I'll request leave to move to

adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly in order to discuss the need for an immediate resolution of the critical conditions at the Royal Alexandra hospital.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

2:50 head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table a fact sheet put out today by the Alberta Hospital Association outlining its 1991 \$55 million shortfall.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file with the Legislative Assembly a response by the New Democrats to the Hyndman report on universal health care in the province, a report that we're entitling Somewhere over the Rainbow.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members, I'm pleased to table pursuant to statute the annual report of the office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

I am further pleased to table pursuant to statute the Members' Services orders passed since the spring adjournment.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Clover Bar.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 43 grade 6 students from the James Mowat school in the Clover Bar constituency. The students are accompanied by teachers and parents Deanna Dahl, Ted Fellows, Mrs. Boyko, and Mr. Kozak. Our guests are seated in the members' and public galleries. I would ask them to rise, and I would ask that the members of the Assembly extend their traditional warm welcome.

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 23 children from Mill Creek elementary school. They are accompanied by their teacher Mary Aldridge and by parent Michelle Michalowski. I would ask that they please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a hard-working, long-serving alderman from the city of Calgary, Alderman Barb Scott. She sits on the Calgary District Hospital Group, is chairman of the Calgary FCSS, and has recently agreed to sit on the minister's advisory committee for review of the FCSS here in the province. Alderman Scott is seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask her to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

Social Assistance Policy

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, it's with a great deal of pleasure that I rise today on behalf of Premier Getty and the government of the province of Alberta to announce the introduction of supports for independence, Alberta's new income support program.

When I accepted this portfolio, Mr. Speaker, I made a personal commitment to listen, and by listening I have heard what Albertans want for their province's social programs. These

reforms, the most substantial to date, are the product of many voices: clients, staff, advocacy and community groups, my colleagues in caucus and cabinet, and members of the general public.

Supports for independence has been developed with careful thought and foresight. It is not a quick fix, Mr. Speaker. Supports for independence will replace the present social allowance program, which has experienced a great deal of strain trying to meet the changing needs of Albertans. This reform is part of this government's ongoing commitment to refining its social programs so that they remain effective and efficient.

This last year has seen some of the most progressive, proactive, and responsible social initiatives found in any province in Canada today, and they lay a strong foundation of support systems which are dynamic and designed to increase the options and opportunities available to Alberta families. Supports for independence joins with reforms to Alberta's day care system, announced earlier this year, and the very recent reforms to Alberta's foster care system. We have introduced these reforms because we know that strong families and a strong province are one and the same, Mr. Speaker. It's for these reasons that proactive social policies are essential to all Albertans. When Albertans need help, we must respond with supports suited for the 1990s, supports suited for the times and able to provide economic stability and promote personal independence.

Mr. Speaker, supports for independence is a bold step forward in providing a more equitable, active, and simpler support system for Albertans in need. It will be introduced in stages over a three-year period and will see an overall funding increase of \$61 million in the first year alone. A significant portion of this amount will be offset by savings resulting from an anticipated decrease in caseloads as the new services and benefits support clients through their transition to independence. In addition, cost savings will result from the introduction of a fairer distribution of funds previously allocated to supplementary benefits.

Some of the features of the program are as follows: an increased emphasis on fairness, equity, and simplicity; an expanded standards benefit package; a new focus on assisting clients in accessing resources already available to help them gain employment skills and better training. Finally, there will be a clearer expectation of clients to prepare for self-sufficiency if they are able.

Mr. Speaker, supports for independence will offer assistance through one of four subprograms, depending on the level and nature of need and ability to achieve independence. The assured support program will provide assured financial support for Albertans who are unable to work. The transitional support program will help those temporarily out of the job market because of health problems or because they are caring for a young child or other dependant. The supplement to earnings program will provide financial assistance to clients who are not able to make ends meet even though they are working. The employment and training support program, which will probably involve more than one-third of all clients, will provide financial assistance and additional supports for those working towards independence. Clients will be given more freedom and more responsibility in how they use their standard benefits.

Supports for independence will continue to be income-, asset-, and needs-tested. Our priority will always be to ensure that Albertans have the financial support they need to ensure the essentials of life, but if people can work, then income support cannot be considered a way of life, and we cannot condone any abuse of the system.

In trying to achieve a balance in those responsibilities we have allocated new staff resources to the program. There will be a 13 percent increase in frontline staff as 55 workers are immediately added to employment and client support services to help clients in their efforts to obtain employment or upgrade skills. In addition, 35 new staff positions have been directed to the family relations program to ensure that parents uphold their responsibility to contribute to their children's care. Finally, the fraud and error investigations program has been supplemented with 32 new staff positions, ensuring that backlogged investigations are completed and fraud and error are prevented.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to be in a position today to announce that there will be an immediate increase in food benefits, which clients will receive in their January cheques, released December 19. Food benefits vary depending on the number of people in a family, but the average increase will be 7.6 percent. Shelter benefits for the vast majority of clients will increase as of February 1, 1991, by an average of approximately 5 percent. Some clients living at home will see a decrease to reflect the equivalent cost of having another person in the home rather than the rate of commercial shelter.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I'm also announcing that in the unfortunate event that the goods and services tax becomes law, any GST credits will be fully exempted.

Mr. Speaker, many clients I've spoken to say that the stigma of asking for assistance is easily as damaging as their financial hardship. They don't want to be on welfare. They don't want to have to depend on someone else to feed their families and pay their bills. They don't want their children growing up knowing only dependence. What they want is to be self-reliant, self-sufficient, and self-supporting. I believe this must be addressed if we are to ensure increased opportunity for lower income Albertans to achieve full economic participation in our society. Money alone is not enough for lower income Albertans. They need supports which will help them gain long-term security through employment and increased opportunities so that future generations of Albertans can grow up independent of government support. This new program provides those needed supports, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

3:00

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, finally we hear about the long-awaited program that was supposed to be here last session. In reply to it, the minister had better not pat himself on the back too much, because he talks about listening. In terms of the day care policy – and he quotes that in this ministerial statement – he's the only minister I know of who has both the independent day care people and the nonprofit day care people united. They're united totally against his program. The point they make is that yes, there were a lot of meetings, but if you talk to them, there wasn't a lot of listening, because that program would have been very different if he was listening to the people in the day care program.

I would also like to comment on some of the initiatives. I recognize that in a ministerial statement it would necessarily be vague, but whenever I hear code words from Conservatives, I do get a little nervous. "A bold step forward in providing a more equitable, active, and simpler support system for Albertans in need": "simpler" to Conservatives usually is knocking more people off and putting them below the poverty level. I'll wait and watch with bated breath on that one.

Then they go on to say that

a significant portion of this amount will be offset by savings resulting from an anticipated decrease in caseloads as the new services and benefits support clients.

Fair enough. I hope it works, Mr. Speaker, because nobody's stood up longer and harder than us on this side trying to do something for people on welfare to maintain their dignity and get them off. I also worry what this means. It's easy to have less caseloads if you push more and more people off.

In terms of job training I want to watch and make sure this is meaningful job training, not some of things we've had in the past, so people on welfare can get meaningful employment, not be off welfare for six months and then back on because of some types of training that we've had in the past. We'll give the minister the benefit of the doubt, Mr. Speaker, but we'll watch that.

I have some questions about what he means when he says that 35 new staff positions have been directed to the family relations program to ensure that parents uphold their responsibility to contribute to their children's care.

I'd really be interested to find out what he means there. I'm also curious about how

some clients living at home will see a decrease to reflect the equivalent cost of having another person in the home rather than the rate of commercial shelter.

I'd be very interested in those in the future.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I'm glad that finally, since 1981, we have some increase in food and shelter, but not nearly enough.

head: Oral Question Period

Conflict of Interest Guidelines

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, it's probably a surprise to everybody, but my question is to the Premier. Since we sat in the House some five months ago, it is clear to me as a practising politician traveling around the province that there is more and more cynicism and disillusionment about public life. Make no mistake about it; that feeling is very clearly out there with the public. There's a perception that politicians cannot be trusted and that they're only in this business for their own benefit. As a result of that, I'm disappointed in the Premier in the last few days, and I would suggest that because of the revelations – and I'll come to that – this cynicism will be increased with the public. That's what's disappointing. Albertans have learned that the Premier has been speculating and profiting in an industry over which he and his government exert great control. They heard their Premier's response: so what; I've done nothing illegal. Mr. Speaker, that's not the point. I'm not denying that there's nothing illegal here in a technical sense, but the moral tone is the important thing. My question to the Premier is this: does the Premier really believe that it's acceptable that he as the top person in government can make decisions affecting the oil and gas industry and also profit from those decisions at the same time? Does he really believe this is acceptable?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I think I'd agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition in terms of the cynicism that we see not just in Alberta, in Canada, in the United States, perhaps throughout the world generally with elected people within public office, and I think it is too bad. I think it is a wave perhaps that is going through and that it will correct itself, because my knowledge of people in public life is that I haven't found any, at least not in this Legislature, in my experience who have been dishonest or have in any way taken advantage of their position.

However, I would like to correct the Leader of the Opposition's comments about the fact that I've been speculating in oil and gas. I appreciate the fact that some members of the Legislature have waited to hear what I had to say about the matter, and I'd like to do that at this time, Mr. Speaker. Sometime during 1979 and '85, when I was a private citizen, I did acquire a small interest in several oil wells. When I became Premier and a member of the Legislature, I immediately disclosed those interests as required, and they have been public knowledge for some five years, I guess. Most members of the Legislature may have known it, but it was there and it was public.

The funds from those wells go into a blind trust, and the individual who manages the blind trust at some point made a decision to drill two wells, a small interest from my blind trust, two dry holes. Therefore, there certainly wasn't any profit involved; it was all loss. Nevertheless, that was a decision without my participation, without my input in any way, to drill two dry holes. Now, he was aware of the fact that if an interest in land is acquired, then of course I must file it, which I did. He provided me with the description of the lands, which I immediately filed, and they are also in the public domain and have been fully disclosed and on a voluntary basis.

So, Mr. Speaker, while I have been Premier, I've not been involved at all in speculating in oil and gas, and all of it has been public, and all of it has been the way our rules ask that we do it. So it's been disappointing to have an inference drawn that leads to a different perception, and I'm pleased to be able to tell the hon. members the facts.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. When you put something in a blind trust, you don't know that there was drilling. That's what a blind trust means: it's blind. How can the Premier say now that he knows there were two holes drilled if he had a blind trust to begin with?

MR. GETTY: That's exactly what I tried to explain, Mr. Speaker. I didn't participate in any way in the decision or the investment, but the individual who manages the blind trust does know that it is a requirement of our code of ethics if lands are acquired. Therefore, he sent me a list of the lands so that I could file them, table them with the Clerk. Those are the facts of the matter.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, clearly then the Premier is not following a blind trust. A blind trust indicates that you do not know what the land is, and it said in here that Mr. McLaren tells the Premier after he's invested in oil and gas. Now, how can that be a blind trust? Would the Premier be more specific on that?

3:10

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've gone through it twice, but I'll go over it again. The decision was made by the trustee. The trustee invested some dollars, lost them, I gather, resulting in two dry holes. However, he does know that when a member acquires an interest in lands, that must be disclosed. He sent me a list of the lands that the interest was earned in, and I immediately filed those for public disclosure.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to continue with the Premier in my second set of questions, because I didn't really get an answer to the first part of the question that I asked, so I'll enlarge on that.

Speaker's Ruling Restrictions on Oral Questions

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, there are some difficulties involved. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition and other members would also look in *Beauchesne*. There are some references: 408(1)(c), 409(3), 412. I'm sure other people can look at them while you carry on with your question, please.

Conflict of Interest Guidelines (continued)

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, my second set of questions I'd like to direct back to the Premier. It has to do with a code of ethics; it has to do with acceptable political behaviour. I've said, and I make this clearly, that the Premier investing in an oil industry, knowing that he had that money there, and at the same time making decisions, while not technically illegal – I agree with him – is certainly not morally right. It's not the type of a message that we want to send to the people of Alberta. I want to ask the Premier again: does he really believe that this is the type of message the public will accept? Is this not the wrong message that he's sending to the people of Alberta?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition made several comments and a question. I want to draw his attention to the fact that we have a code of ethics and we have conflict of interest rules in this province, this Legislature, and that I followed them completely.

At the same time, I have asked for a report on conflict of interest rules from three very respected Albertans. I have told the House that there will be legislation in the spring from that report. It's a very exhaustive 254 page report. It is being assessed so that we can bring legislation in in the spring to make sure that on a constant basis we are having as good conflict of interest/code of ethics rules as at all possible. I'll also be reviewing as Premier any rules that I may wish to set out for cabinet ministers, which would obviously be separate from but in addition to the rules that conflict of interest legislation might carry.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm not talking about the legal/illegal aspects of it; I'm talking about the moral tone set by this government. Under this legislation that we have, it would almost be impossible to do anything illegal.

The Premier had his mortgage held by MIC Holdings Inc., a company whose board of directors has included key people in the Principal Group, North West Trust, Churchill Corporation, and the Pocklington gang: all good Conservatives, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Premier – not to get into the legal or illegal part of it; I'm talking about the moral tone set by this Premier – doesn't the Premier see that the perception of a conflict of interest is there when he's handing out millions of dollars as a government to these people at the same time they're holding his mortgage? Doesn't he see anything wrong with that?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, of course I don't and we don't hand out millions of dollars.

Can I be clear to the House, since it's been raised, about what is a private matter, I guess? It is a mortgage which my wife and I held on our property on Westbrook Drive. It was obtained from a small Alberta company. Now, it could have been obtained from the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. It could have been obtained from the Royal Bank, a trust company, or others. I think there's absolutely nothing wrong when

the company was in the business of making mortgages, was expanding into residential mortgages, advised me of that, and my wife and I, because it's a joint matter, obtained, at the going interest rate, a mortgage. That company has since gone out of the residential mortgage business. That mortgage has passed now to the Royal Bank of Canada. Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, it was strictly dealing with a company on an arm's-length basis at full going commercial circumstances.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: wake up and smell the roses. We're talking about perceptions of the public and what they see their Premier doing. That's what's wrong about this. It should be clear to this Premier now that people have lost confidence. There are two examples; there may be more.

I want to ask a serious question to the Premier. I think he has to, as I said the other day, make a career choice. Either he wants to be Premier or he wants to dabble in the oil and gas industry. He can't have it both ways. My question to the Premier is: which is it going to be? Is he going to continue business as usual and try to be the Premier and set that moral tone, or is he going to divest himself and work full-time as a Premier and bring in . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Thank you. Let's get to it.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'm very disappointed in the hon. leader's position. I've explained to him exactly the way the circumstances were, and I think any fair-minded person would understand that they were completely aboveboard and done the way both the conflict of interest and the code of ethics rules dictate. So I wonder why he is taking the position he is.

Might I also say that it is true that all of us as members of the Legislature sometimes are involved in things that influence ourselves or our families. It's clear that every member of this Legislature who might be a farmer or a rancher is involved in voting on the dollars that go either for farm fuel rebates or hail and crop dollars.

MR. TAYLOR: Racehorses.

MR. GETTY: Student loans: I think I have a son who's obtained a student loan. Racehorses: that has been raised before by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon. It is true that the Alberta Racing Commission tries to generate ownership of Alberta-bred horses through an incentive program. Those things are there, and it's the way that government touches on everybody's lives. If it's done in a way that it is not preferential to anybody, I think it's always taken for granted in this Legislature, I know, that in these matters where it is made available to all people in Alberta, then it is accepted that you're able to participate in the votes.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, before I start, as one who values health highly, I'm delighted to see that the Premier is looking well, and it would appear that he has overcome his illness. Nice to see you back.

My questions are to the Premier. Recent revelations have indicated that the so-called small company that the Premier referred to is a company that normally dealt with commercial mortgage lending and not private residential mortgage lending. The revelations have also indicated that the officers of this so-called small Alberta company are individuals who have benefited

rather generously, either directly or indirectly, through their involvements with this government. My first question to the Premier is this: would the Premier identify the individuals that he dealt with in securing this unique, special mortgage from this small Alberta company?

Speaker's Ruling Restrictions on Oral Questions

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. That question is clearly not in order. [interjections] It's clearly not in order.

3:20

Hon. members are as responsible for reading *Beauchesne* and Standing Orders and *Erskine May* as the Speaker is. References were given earlier with respect to legal aspects of questions raised. In the first series of questions the Premier volunteered certain information, but question period is designed to talk about government policies and so forth – [interjections] just a moment, hon. members, without interruption – general matters of policy which may relate to the government as a whole which may relate to the individual responsibilities of a member.

Now, if you think question period is going to turn into a witch hunt about specifics about any certain member in this House, about their financial dealings, I think that perhaps you need to think again about what this parliamentary process is about. I'm sure that the member, now going to his first supplementary question, will try to phrase his questions accordingly.

Conflict of Interest Guidelines (continued)

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

My second question to the Premier is this: given that it is a conflict of interest for members of this Assembly, for MLAs, to deal with the Treasury Branch to secure a private mortgage for their residence for fear that they may somehow influence the Treasury Branch, does the Premier not think it improper for him to deal with individuals who have been so closely intertwined with him in a friendship way and intertwined with his party and intertwined with the financial going-ons of this province? Is that proper?

MR. GETTY: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I don't know quite what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry is trying to get at. My wife and I were able to obtain a mortgage at the going interest rates and paid the mortgage until the company went out of that business. We've since changed the mortgage to a different financial institution, in this case the Royal Bank. I don't see any problems with that process at all.

MR. DECORE: It is a matter of record in this Assembly and now a matter of record from the revelations that have been brought forward in these most recent news reports that the pals of the Premier and the pals of the cabinet and the pals of this government have benefited extremely generously, have been treated generously by this government. I want to know, Mr. Speaker, from the Premier: is he prepared to allow this kind of activity to keep going on?

MR. GETTY: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, that is not a matter of fact. That is not so. That does not happen. As a matter of fact, people come to me sometimes and say, "Would you raise certain matters about the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, what benefits he or his family get because of the federal government?" or things like that, when the Liberals were

in power. I refuse to get into that kind of thing. I refuse to try and bring politics down to that. Yet now we have the very person I defended trying to do the very thing himself.

I would say this, Mr. Speaker. He refers to revelations. I'd like to tell the House of one revelation. The Toronto *Globe and Mail* sent a fellow from Toronto who went to my house in Stettler and then tried to read documents or things through the window on tables and desks in my house. When he's talking about revelations, I find that a remarkable way to go about doing that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Member for Clover Bar, followed by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Municipal Annexation

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and it's related to the annexation applications back and forth between the city of Fort Saskatchewan and the county of Strathcona. The media and public relations, the emotional and political posturing that's occurring in these municipalities on these annexations is intensifying. An early decision on the annexation applications is advisable so that the municipalities may repair the damage which the present adversarial annexation process inflicts. When will the minister take the recommendations that have been made by the Local Authorities Board to the cabinet for ratification, a final decision?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's question, and I know there's certainly a concern between the two municipalities with regards to their future. Up to the present time what I have done is, first of all, study the report. Secondly, I had the opportunity prior to that period of meeting with both the reeve and council of the county of Strathcona and the mayor and the council of Fort Saskatchewan. So I have their input. At this point in time what I'd like to do is meet with the respective MLAs and have their input with regards to that annexation, and then following that I'll put together a recommendation that I will take to my cabinet colleagues. It is my hope, Mr. Speaker, that within the next two-week period or shortly thereafter I can make a recommendation to cabinet and have this matter made public at that time.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Clover Bar.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister assure the members of this Assembly and municipalities who may be engaged in annexations in the future that he will move expeditiously to bring into being a restructured annexation process? The present process is confrontational.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, many of the municipalities have indicated that they would like to have more of a participation prior to the hearings of the Local Authorities Board. A recommendation has come from the Municipal Statutes Review Committee. That is being reviewed by all of the municipalities across the province, and I would think that after reflection on that, either into the spring Legislature of '91 or '92, we would look at some type of an amended, improved, or changed process with regards to annexations.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View.

Conflict of Interest Guidelines

(continued)

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the Premier since taking office has had a mortgage on his personal residence with MIC Holdings. Amongst the individuals running MIC have been Gary Campbell, legal adviser to the Principal Group during its regulatory troubles, now Tory party fund raiser; Robert Lloyd, lawyer for Peter . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member. [interjection] Hon. member, hon. member. [interjections] I'm glad hon. members have the ability to be able to read my mind. [interjections] Order in the whole House.

I look forward to the rest of your question, that I'm sure you're going to craft with great care.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just mentioning that one of the principals was Mr. Robert Lloyd, a lawyer for Peter Pocklington, who was able to get loans and loan guarantees from this government for Gainers and, of course, a gentleman who cochaired the Premier's campaign for his party leadership, was key in the Churchill group, which got \$14 million of Heritage Savings Trust Fund money via Vencap Equities. To the Premier: given that the government negotiated with Mr. Lloyd on the Gainers loans and loan guarantees and that Mr. Lloyd was also intimately involved with MIC Holdings, will the Premier now use this occasion to assure the Legislature that he'll release the master agreement between the Alberta government and Gainers in order to restore public confidence in these negotiations so that they can see for themselves whether the public interest was . . .

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

MR. GETTY: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I was not involved in any way in negotiating with Mr. Lloyd and the Gainers matter at all. I wasn't involved in that matter. As far as some documents the hon. member is talking about, I'd ask the Provincial Treasurer to respond to him. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that after the recess, since July 5, the opposition is still desperate for questions.

Let me say that most members know that the master agreement is the focus of a significant set of litigation between the former owner of Gainers and this government wherein the government is attempting to recover assets advanced to the company which may or may not have been advanced to the shareholder. Mr. Speaker, you know full well, as does the opposition I think, that when these matters are before the court, they become privileged, because of course things which may be said, even in the most innocent of fashions, could well prejudice our case, which is now proceeding on six different fronts in various courts here in the province of Alberta. The master agreement is in fact at the heart of this litigation process.

3:30

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, in 1985 the Premier received a memo from the Provincial Treasurer itemizing problems with the effectively insolvent AIC and FIC companies in the Principal empire. There's never been a satisfactory

disclosure from the Premier explaining why his office did not take action for over a year and a half after receiving that memo. To the Premier: given that key people who lobbied him on behalf of the Principal Group of Companies were also intimately involved with MIC Holdings, a company that loaned the Premier money on his home, how does the Premier respond to the perception that he failed to act promptly to shut down AIC and FIC because of these personal financial relationships?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is really reaching, isn't he? Could I only say that the whole matter of FIC and AIC has been dealt with in this Legislature in great detail by myself and other members of cabinet, in a government position statement, in one of the most exhaustive inquiries in the history of Alberta and then a response to it.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Advanced Education Funding

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education, although given past tendencies it may be the Provincial Treasurer who ultimately will answer the questions. The question relates to the accessibility crisis at universities, particularly with respect to the U of C, which has turned away some 869 qualified students this year; the University of Lethbridge, which already reached its capacity, and the University of Alberta, which has had a registration increase of 30 percent since 1979 but a teaching staff increase of only 4 percent in the same period, all due to consistent, chronic lack of funding by this government. My question to the minister is this: is he prepared during this fall sitting, in this crisis, to provide the Alberta universities with an updated budget so that they don't have to turn away hundreds and maybe thousands of qualified students from their doors?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I think that Albertans could indeed be very proud that we have some 57,000 students in our four universities. That's an indication of the value Albertans put on university training. I make no apologies for the success of our institutions. Our institutions, of course, set the admission policies as to who may and who may not have access to the institution. Although we don't claim to have the funds that some people would wish to have, I think we've put in place adequate provisions whereby the postsecondary system remains one of the highest funded in the country per capita.

MS BARRETT: Platitudes, Mr. Speaker. They've given away \$330 million in special warrants since the House last sat, and he says that they don't have the money.

Mr. Speaker, will this minister or the Provincial Treasurer explain to Albertans why it is that they've got money for their corporate buddies, sometimes in the course of an hour or two, but they're going to continue to underfund the investment in Alberta's future, underfund the universities?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important to have on the record that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands objects to the \$50 million-odd provided to the nurses of Alberta, because that formed a part of that special warrant. I would point out to the hon. member, and the hon. member may not like to hear it, that we have perhaps the most successful postsecondary system in the country, consisting of some 28

institutions. If the hon. member has some alternative to finding funds, then I would recommend that the hon. member make those suggestions.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Conflict of Interest Guidelines (continued)

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has referred to the report of the conflict of interest review panel commissioned by his government, and I'd just like to quote from page 32 of that document.

If a minister or MLA can, by exercising a power of office, affect a private interest of the minister or MLA, there is a potential conflict between that interest and the public duty of the minister or MLA

Further, it goes on.

There is a greater danger that the public will lose confidence, not only in the integrity of that minister or MLA, but in the integrity of elected officials generally.

My question is to the Premier. Since that review panel report gives very clear and concise guidelines as to the conduct that we should be able to expect of ministers of the Crown, will the Premier now release to this House full details of his oil and gas operations

— not just the dry holes, Mr. Premier — the parties who ran these operations, the terms of his financial participation, and who the other participants are so that Albertans have the air cleared for them? If there's no conflict, let's clear the air.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I find it strange that the hon. member would raise it after this information has been public for five years.

MRS. HEWES: Well, that's a pretty disappointing answer. That is not full disclosure. The disclosure that has been made doesn't give us the information we need, Mr. Speaker.

My second question, again to the Premier: does the Premier intend to continue in this course of action, to engage in oil and gas operations, or is he prepared to make a commitment here and now that he'll discontinue at least until there is comprehensive conflict of interest legislation before us?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would just review *Hansard* or recall my answers today, I have not been investing personally in these matters while I've been Premier. That one I acquired while I was not in government, and it was disclosed five years ago.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Highwood, followed by Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Teachers' Retirement Fund

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Education. In the past week or so the Alberta Teachers' Association has been holding meetings throughout the province, and I had the privilege of attending one of them last week, to demonstrate concern and to inform the membership about the ability of the Teachers' Retirement Fund to meet its financial commitments. My question, then, is: is the minister prepared to sit down with the Teachers' Retirement Fund and ATA officials and listen to their concerns?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I most definitely am. I have been meeting with teachers and with the ATA, as all of our colleagues have been over the last few weeks. I must commend the association on its constructive and positive approach to addressing this issue, and I know that all members will be interested in receiving submissions from the ATA.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary question, again to the Minister of Education: when will the minister take action to eliminate these concerns and to put the TRF on a sound financial footing?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I am working closely with all of my colleagues in cabinet and caucus to review all public-sector pension plans including the Teachers' Retirement Fund. There certainly is room to move. Even the teachers in their submissions have acknowledged that contributions to the fund should be increased from the current level. The contributions and the matter of benefits will be reviewed in co-operation with teachers, and it's my hope that changes to the legislation will be brought forward in the spring session in 1991.

Alberta-Pacific Project

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the hon. the Premier. On the day that he announced the Alberta-Pacific project, the Premier was asked by a local resident why he hadn't consulted with them prior to making the announcement. His reply was: I have no time for complainers and whiners like you. Well, it turns out a lot of people have concerns over that project and other forestry projects as well, which is why the EIA review board recommended against licensing the project. In view of the fact that the government has now manipulated the process to allow the cabinet to make a decision about this project, I wonder if the Premier would explain what gives him and his colleagues the right as politicians to set aside the findings of the EIA review board and to make a political decision which may result in 60 million litres a day of effluent in the Athabasca River?

MR. GETTY: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to correct the hon. member because his report of my answer to a question in Athabasca or Lac La Biche – I'm not sure where we were at the time – is absolutely false. Your report is absolutely false.

In terms of Al-Pac, I would like the House to know that if and when a decision is made, it will be announced.

3:40

MR. McINNIS: Well, unfortunately for the Premier, we have electronic recordings of these things, and his words are very well recorded.

My question is not about the timing of the announcement; it's about what gives the cabinet rather than the EIA review board the right to make a political decision over the question of some 60 million litres of effluent being dumped in the river. What gives them the right to make a political decision in cabinet?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the hon. member knows that in the British parliamentary system, the democracy that we live under, a government is elected, and it's elected people who make decisions.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon.

Farm Foreclosures

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard how the privileged get mortgages. I want to talk about how the farmers with mortgages are handled. This is to the Provincial Treasurer. On Saturday, November 3, the Member for Little Bow and the two ministers of Agriculture culminated a tour of southern Alberta, galloping into Vauxhall to tell 300 farmers that provincial help was on the way, maybe even by the middle of November. However, only one week later the Treasury Branch, an agency of the government, sent in its minions to the Schopman farm at Vauxhall while the Schopmans were away on the weekend and carted away their machinery, grain, and livestock, followed by foreclosing on the farm and family home another four days later. My question to the Provincial Treasurer is . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. TAYLOR: Shame on the Provincial Treasurer.

Anyhow, the question is in view of the fact that the annual report of the Treasury Branches says in its mission statement: the ATB is required as a Crown Agency, to function without operational subsidization, and carry out activities that are in harmony with overall Government policies and objectives.

I then ask the Provincial Treasurer how he can equate that statement and the rather mean-minded thing that his agency did to these people.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's always difficult, of course, for any government or for any lending agency to deal with the economic swings which certain economies go through. Right now I think the agricultural economy has experienced a difficult swing, and of course this government has moved in a significant, unprecedented, and massive way to assist the farming industry. We've heard already today references to the Alberta farm fuel distribution allowance, to the very successful \$2 billion farm credit stabilization program. I'm sure that my colleagues the ministers of Agriculture could go on to recite a more comprehensive and broad policy of government response to the needs of the farming sector. That's on the record. It's been debated here already, and all members of the farming community know that this government responded at those times.

It's very difficult to pick up a comparison of one example, which is not fully understood by even the member who raises the question, and certainly not by me who is expected to respond to it, to say in a very narrow way what it is and what the Treasury Branch did in this particular case. We have a policy with respect to Treasury Branches, Mr. Speaker, wherein we keep the broad policy mandate and provide to the managers of the Treasury Branches responsibility for administering that mandate and very carefully stick to a policy that in terms of commercial transactions we're not involved with or influenced by those kinds of decisions. That's been our policy; that's how we operate. To pick one narrow case is, in fact, inappropriate.

But I can say with respect to the Treasury Branch itself that more small businessmen and more farmers have confirmed that the presence of the Treasury Branch has saved them than any other financial institution in this province over the past four- to five-year period, allowing more time to make payments, conscious of the impact with respect to guarantees . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, sir. Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for stopping that deluge.

I go on to ask the Treasurer: if he's not operating this department in harmony with overall government policy, did he not agree with the Minister of Municipal Affairs – and this farm lies within a disaster area – when the minister said 10 days ago that we shouldn't be foreclosing on farms in the disaster area? Who is running the foreclosures? You or him?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the member, despite his large and loud protestations, probably doesn't understand the way in which policy is formed, never having been in government, of course, and never having to take responsibility for a broad policy. Let me say that what the Minister of Municipal Affairs, representing his constituency as the MLA, said may in fact turn out to be government policy very soon, but we have to go through a process to ensure that a broad, evenhanded approach is applied, that in fact the policy is warranted, that in fact the delivery of the target is there. We prefer to focus in, to target where necessary, to respond in a humanist way. That's been the history and the policy of this government in agriculture. We have moved in to assist in all areas of requirements, and we'll continue to do just that. I'm sure the member's commitment will be very . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Vegreville, followed by Calgary-Glenmore if there's time.

Bovine Tuberculosis

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. The news that some 23 elk from the Begg ranch near Rocky Mountain House are infected with tuberculosis is of great concern to cattle producers in the province of Alberta who have spent years and millions of dollars trying to eradicate this very serious disease from our province. It is also of great concern to naturalists and environmentalists in the province of Alberta, who warned this government about the problems that expansion of commercial elk ranching in the province would cause. Now, hopefully the minister has moved beyond blaming this unfortunate situation on the media and the opposition and started to accept his responsibility in this regard. I'd like to ask him what his blueprint for action is to make sure that this serious problem is dealt with in a way that doesn't seriously impinge the future of the cattle industry in the province of Alberta.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I should point out that this disease problem is being dealt with in a very capable and able way by Agriculture Canada, who have the sole responsibility for dealing with these types of diseases. I think a check by the hon. member with Agriculture Canada would give him any details with respect to actions taken, other herds under quarantine. I also think a little investigation on the part of my so-called ag critic would lead him to conclude that Agriculture Canada is dealing with this issue in exactly the same way they did the last time, which wasn't that long ago, when the same disease appeared in a cattle herd in Alberta.

MR. FOX: Well, I'm convinced Agriculture Canada is doing its job. It's this minister that I'm concerned about, who isn't doing his job.

The Bill that they rushed through this Legislature legalizing the sale of elk meat awaits proclamation. I'd like the minister

to stand in his place, announce to Albertans that he's going to suspend proclamation of that Bill pending a full environmental assessment with full public hearings on the impact of this industry on domestic cattle herds and on wild populations of elk in the province of Alberta, a suggestion that they rejected out of hand six months ago.

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired. Might we have unanimous consent to allow the minister to complete his reply?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and all other members are aware that Bill 31 was fully debated in this Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Under closure.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order. Thank you, hon. minister. Hon. minister, sorry. [interjections] Hon. members, the minister will be allowed to continue, but if shouting continues, it'll be the end of question period.

MR. ISLEY: It passed the required number of readings. The regulations are currently approaching their final stage, and I have no doubt that once those regulations are finalized, the required OC will proceed, implementing those regulations and proclaiming Bill 31.

Point of Order
Restrictions on Oral Questions

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Glengarry on a point of order.

MR. DECORE: I cite 403,409(5), 409(3). Mr. Speaker, I could only assume that you didn't hear the full content of the preamble that I set out. I thought I was very careful in attempting to establish that the small company that the Premier is confessing, agreeing to having dealt with is in fact made up of directors, officers who have benefited substantially from government largesse. These people have been involved in the Principal Group fiasco, the Gainers fiasco, the Picture Butte hog processing fiasco, and the infusion into Churchill of some \$14 million.

3:50

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how much more involvement people need before you can ask them questions about how government policy is affected. The government has clearly given advantage to the pals of the Premier, the cabinet, and the Progressive Conservative Party, and I think it highly, completely in order for me to find out, for our party to find out, for this Assembly to find out who those people were that the Premier dealt with. Were they people that will continue to get advantage from this government?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. The Chair will indeed go back and look at the various references which were rattled off to see if, indeed, they were germane to the point. But with respect to the question being taken away from the hon. member earlier in question period, and I have the complete text . . .

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order in the press gallery, please. No movement while Mr. Speaker is standing. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: While I have the complete text here, the concern had been raised by the Chair to some earlier questions, and references have been given in terms of other citations in *Beauchesne* as to the difficulty of asking questions which zero in on any member's individual interests. Again, question period is directed at the ministerial responsibilities and broad general policies. In this case the Chair removed the member's opportunity to ask that particular question.

Again, the Chair would also like to refer all hon. members to *Beauchesne* 409(7) which reads:

A question must adhere to the priorities of the House, in terms of inferences, imputing motives or casting aspersions upon persons within the House or out of it.

That needs to be taken to heart, and also, hon. member, perhaps you'd like to refer to *Beauchesne* 412:

A question may not be asked of a Minister in another capacity, such as being responsible for a province, or part of a province, or as spokesman for a [particular] racial or religious group.

So there are areas and references here which relate to *Beauchesne*, also in terms of our own Standing Orders, and *Erskine May*.

Orders of the Day. Ah, forgive me. We have other items – the first day it's tough to keep all these things together, isn't it? – under Standing Order 30 and Standing Order 40. The first one that will be dealt with is Standing Order 30. The request comes from the Leader of the Opposition.

head: Request for Emergency Debate

Provincial Budget Projections

MR. MARTIN: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to the urgency of having a debate under Standing Order 30 because I believe we have some urgent problems in this province at this particular time. It has to do with financial stability. I would suggest to you that the budget we passed last spring has no resemblance at all to the actual financial situation we find the province in right now. For example, we know that \$330 million has gone through a special warrant, adding to the deficit. We were told that behind closed doors, which was again inappropriate: for the Treasurer to be talking to Conservative members about the financial state of the province and not coming here to the Assembly to talk about it, unacceptable. We were told that the debt servicing now has gone up from \$965 million to \$1.2 billion. We're told also that oops, he just made a small mistake in 1989-90 and our deficit will not be \$1.5 billion revised to \$1.7 billion but probably will be \$23 billion. Tack on that the fact that Mr. Mulroney made it clear that he has no intention of paying \$250 million on the stabilization plan. Based on what's happening in the gulf crisis, Mr. Speaker, I suggest there is an urgency here to have some sort of new budget or at least a debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Forgive me, hon. member, for just a moment. I don't mean to interrupt, but perhaps hon. members in all parts of the House would be good enough to keep their conversations down to a dull uproar. If not, would they be good enough to leave the Chamber. Thank you, hon. backbenchers.

Hon. leader, please.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again to the urgency, the point that I'm saying is that our budget makes no sense at all in terms of the revenues; it makes no sense at all in terms of what we were guessing at in terms of the price of oil. We should have a revised statement. Even if I accept the fact that he can't make a definitive statement on what's going to happen to the price of oil to March 31 . . . I also know that the gas prices are low. So what I'm suggesting is that I think it's urgent. Especially in view of the fact that the Premier behind closed doors was telling Conservative members what was happening, it should surely be urgent that we have that sort of debate here in the Legislature.

I point out at the same time that we have this problem with the financial statements in terms of the revenues. We do have a crisis – and I say "crisis", Mr. Speaker – in our hospital and medical care areas. We're having bed closings, layoffs, waiting lists. We're having schools that are facing difficulties, postsecondary institutions complaining. We have a farm crisis. In other words, we're in a mess. I think we should have this debate here. I think it's urgent. I can't think of anything more urgent than getting an update in terms of where we stand with our finances in this province and what's happening right now.

Thank you.

MR. DECORE: I rise in support of the hon. leader's motion. The motion is to have a new budget brought forward. Mr. Speaker, the evidence is clear that the minister of finance and his colleagues have now issued some 26 special warrants totaling \$326 million. The budget isn't even cold after having been dealt with before the government and the minister of finance are issuing these special warrants.

The budget was predicated on 83-cent Canadian money pegged to the American dollar. Our money has been hovering between 85 and 87 cents. The budget was predicated on \$21 U.S. a barrel oil. It's now clearly over and above that. Revenues, I think, have to be adjusted significantly. It's clear that the GST has now become a very real factor and needs to be adjusted, and we have to know exactly what the situation is. Albertans are entitled to know what the fiscal situation of their province is. The best indicator for that is to see exactly what the budget *is* all about. To have it changed, modified when it's not even cold requires it to be redone.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not in any way surprised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition wanting to set aside the regular business of the House and deal with what he perceives, and as well the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, as a special situation. I think the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry put it quite right. We last visited this House on July 5. I don't believe it's all that long ago that hon. members were here. I can recall vividly in the daily question period hon. members raising various questions about not being long enough in terms of 25 days to debate the estimates.

However, Mr. Speaker, the issue is the matter of urgency. Little could the government foresee, for example, what the settlement with the nurses would be. My recollection is that that settlement was in excess of some \$50 million in this fiscal year alone. One only has to read the special warrants which have been published by the government. Each one had a very specific reason it couldn't be dealt with, because the Legislature was not sitting in any other way except by the special warrant. Sure oil prices are wildly fluctuating. I suppose that's a reasonable term.

What the outcome of that might be I'm sure the Treasurer and others would say is anybody's guess.

4:00

Mr. Speaker, I would simply close by saying that I sense no need, I see no need, and surely there's no requirement for a need to set aside the business of this House to discuss a matter which in the view of the government frankly is not urgent. It's a matter of a budget that was put in place to see Albertans through a 12-month period, and for that reason I would oppose the adoption of section 30 of Standing Orders. We should get on with the business of the House, which today is to deal with the natural resources conservation board.

MR. SPEAKER: The proper notice was given with respect to Standing Order 30, and the Chair appreciates that. The Chair finds it an interesting proposal to come forward at this time under Standing Order 30. Indeed, the matter of budget matters is a long-term planning consideration for government. The long-term planning process has already commenced with respect to the next budget year, and as has been pointed out, discussion took place at some length with respect to the budget for the fiscal year in which we are now operating. There was ample opportunity for discussion of that particular budget, and indeed while salient points have been made with respect to some economic changes which have taken place . . . [interjection] Hon. member, please. If you have an allegation or some other motion to bring forward, I'm sure the Chair will be willing to entertain it. But with regard to where we are at the moment, these processes have been in place and to the knowledge of the Chair as of this morning the government was able to meet the payment of all its bills as of this day.

Indeed when it comes to future question periods, I'm sure there's sufficient time involved for members in all parts of the House to be able to bring forward their concerns with regard to perhaps such issues as special warrants or the present level of additional planning that needs to take place by the Provincial Treasurer and by the government as a whole. So in the opinion of the Chair, this matter at this time fails the test of urgency.

The Chair would also point out that, as mentioned to the House by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, notice was received today but not in sufficient time with regard to another Standing Order 30 request, which will be dealt with tomorrow.

head: Motions under Standing Order 40

MR. SPEAKER: Standing Order 40 request, Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

Special Warrants

Mr. Decore:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly direct the Provincial Treasurer to present supplementary estimates of expenditure to cover the special warrants issued since the last sitting and the anticipated expenditures to the end of the fiscal year.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I must say that I'm disappointed that we're not allowed to proceed with the debate on re-establishing the proper revenues and expenditures of this government. I've made my argument and stand by it and ask for the forum's unanimous consent in proceeding. [interjection]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. Under Standing Order 40, those willing to give unanimous consent to proceed, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. WICKMAN: The ayes have it.

MR. SPEAKER: The matter fails.
Hon. member, thanks for your advice.

Orders of the Day

[On motion, the Assembly resolved itself into Committee of the Whole]

head: Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. The Committee of the Whole will please come to order.

Bill 52

Natural Resources Conservation Board Act

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm advised that when Bill 52 was last before the Assembly on June 26, the committee was engaged in discussing the amendment of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Chairman, thank you. I have some copies of the amendment, which I think we should perhaps distribute.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We were on number 1.

MR. McINNIS: Amendment 1, yes. I wonder if I could ask the pages to distribute copies so that members know what we're talking about. The wording of this amendment varies ever so slightly as to form from the text that was tabled on June 26, because this amendment is in fact amending a government amendment which has already passed through the committee. By way of reference, members can follow all this if you have the government amendment dated June 26, 1990. You'll be receiving a copy of amendment 1 dated November 26, 1990. Those two documents together explain the substance of the amendment that's before the committee today.

It's a fairly simple one. The amendment provides a sense of purpose for the Natural Resources Conservation Board Act. It gives it a mission in life. It gives it a clear sense of what it's trying to achieve. Perhaps by way of arguing on behalf of the amendment, I could explain some of the deficiencies in the current wording put forward by the government, offer a few examples to make the point, and then proceed from there to explain the reason why these words should be substituted in place of the ones put forward by the government.

The entire Bill 52 is reflected within section 2 of the Act, because section 2 is the purpose of the Act, the purpose put forward. In fact, as it now reads, the purpose of the Act is "to provide an impartial process for the review of projects that will or may affect the natural resources of Alberta" in order to determine that in the board's opinion the projects are in the public interest "having regard to the social, economic and environmental effects of the projects." All the other pieces of the legislation are machinery to try to bring this purpose into being, so I think we're dealing with a pretty crucial aspect of the Bill and one that definitely deserves the deliberation of the committee. I hope that by the time this discussion is through, the majority of the committee will be convinced that the wording should be changed to give it a sense of purpose which it sadly lacks at the moment.

I have previously criticized this legislation as being bureaucratic in outlook. I think that's perhaps a reflection of the people who drafted it, according to the minister Vern Millard, George Govier, Gerry DeSorcy, and Dr. Barry Mellon, bureaucrats all – good ones but nonetheless bureaucrats. Bureaucrats have this in common: if you scratch a bureaucrat, they will always say their mission in life is simply to please their political masters. After all, that's how bureaucrats justify the power they wield in our society. It's not that they deserve to wield power in their own right but rather that they do it on behalf of somebody else. They function as the agents of their political masters. I really believe that's the key . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Is that what you think of all the civil servants that work for this government?

MR. McINNIS: I think the member may be making a point that I am generalizing, and I believe I am, but for a good reason. Because at bottom, who is accountable to the electors for the policies of the government? It's not the official or the bureaucrat who makes a decision or signs a letter or even signs a cheque for that matter. The person who is accountable ultimately is the elected politician. My point is simply that people in the bureaucracy do things in the name of and on behalf of Her Majesty's government, which from time to time is elected.

4:10

Now, the existing language in section 2 is bureaucratic in the sense that it doesn't really commit to anything at all. It provides that fluidity which allows officials to please their political masters in whatever way that may be required. The language now puts together a broad range of factors – social factors, economic factors, environmental effects – in a cauldron labeled "the public interest." Now, no one can know at the outset what the precise combination of these factors might be in this pot that is labeled "the public interest," but I suggest that the interplay between these economic, social, and environmental factors is in fact the substance of politics, politics pure and simple. It's in the political system that these factors are blended together and something comes out which is deemed to be in the public interest. The public interest is in fact political language from day one. So I suggest we're talking about politics writ large with this legislation the way it is.

I'm hoping we can convince this government to change that, to put another set of language which will make clear what it is we want these officials and these persons sitting on the natural resources conservation board to do, because if we look at the purpose of this Act in the context of the rest of it, we see that politics creeps in here on more than one occasion. For example,

with perhaps one minor exception it is the political element in government which triggers this legislation in the first place. That's how projects get before the board. Section 4 lists the various types of projects that are reviewable, and when you go down the list, there's really only half of one that's automatic. One half of the forest industry, that dealing with pulp and paper mills, is automatic, but the rest of it is triggered by a decision by a member of cabinet, a politician. The Minister of the Environment has to call for an environmental impact assessment in order to have this process under way, in order to have the NRCB commence a review of a project. Within the rest of them, they're either subject to the trigger of an EIA or subject to further regulation to be determined again by the politicians sitting in cabinet. I'm referring to the water management projects where we are told there will be a limit of 25 feet in height. Above that projects will be reviewed and projects that have a flow in excess of 500 cubic feet per second will be reviewed, but again those are regulations to be determined by cabinet. Then you get down to (e), "any other type of project prescribed in the regulations," or (f), "specific projects prescribed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council." Again, the triggers are all political.

Then we go to the other end, what happens when the process comes out. Well, it says under section 9 that the board can only approve a project "with the prior authorization of the Lieutenant Governor in Council." So the cabinet has to authorize a project before the NRCB can authorize it, and only then subject to terms and conditions as may be determined by cabinet. So the input to the process is largely political, and the outcome of the process is largely predetermined politically inasmuch as the cabinet has to authorize an approval and inasmuch as the cabinet can set the terms and conditions which will be the context for that approval. You have political control coming in, political control coming out. So it's no wonder that the minister described this legislation as having been the result of "a great deal of interest and a great deal of debate within the government caucus." I'm quoting from Hansard, page 1740. No doubt the ladies and gentlemen of the government caucus would be much interested in this legislation, because the subject matter appears to be politics, Mr. Chairman. Politics, politics, politics. Well, what we have to do is try to depoliticize the purposes of this legislation, and that's the substance of the amendment before the committee right now.

Now, in assessing this legislation, I took a good look at the Energy Resources Conservation Board, because many times it's been stated that the ERCB is a model for this NRCB which is before us today. I believe the minister made that point in his previous remarks. I also noted in an earlier draft of this legislation, which I tabled in the Assembly, that there was constant reference to the source of different sections being the ERCB Act. In fact, if you look at the ERCB Act, section 2, just as in the NRCB, details the purposes of the Act. Again, you cannot find a clear statement of policy in there, a policy that the ERCB is to follow. Rather, they're in the position of making judgments and balancing all kinds of factors in the public interest, dealing with energy reserves and markets, with conservation, with pollution, with safety, with timely and useful dissemination of information. Somehow the ERCB has to try to balance all these balls that are in the air and come up with a decision.

Well, how does the ERCB work in practice? If this is a model, perhaps we should examine how the purposes of the ERCB are served and how that relates to decisions in the environmental field. I spent some time recently reviewing the

findings of the ERCB in the Caroline-Beaver Lake gas development applications published in August of 1990. This was a hearing into an application by Shell Canada to build a new sour gas plant near Caroline. There was, it turns out, a rival proposal put forward by Husky, which also wished to expand a sour gas facility that was presently under their operation and control in order to process the same natural gas from the Caroline gas field. So you have two competing proposals.

The ERCB held public hearings into the project and came out with a decision. Their decision favoured Shell. Well, I think their findings are quite interesting when you look at how the environment is treated by an agency like the ERCB, when we're asked to approve an agency very similar in structure, philosophy, and format to deal with environmental questions on the nonenergy range of projects. The first thing the ERCB determined is that

the Husky proposal does, however, represent a reduction in regional sulphur emissions. The Board can only comment that it is concerned about regional deposition levels under any development scenario, and will continue to work with Alberta Environment in the development of regional depositional standards.

The potential advantage of the Husky proposal with respect to regional sulphur emissions is further demonstrated by estimating lifetime SO_2 emissions under various scenarios. Under the Shell proposal, a total of some 212 000 t of SO_2 would be emitted over the duration of the projects from the combined emissions of the proposed Shell Caroline and existing Husky Ram River gas plants. This compares to an emission level of about 115 000 t of SO_2 under the Husky proposal, or a difference of some 97,000 t. The actual environmental impact of such a reduction is unknown, but is likely to be positive.

Well, Mr. Chairman, you bet it's positive. The ERCB found after their hearings that the Husky proposal was superior to the extent of 97,000 tonnes of SO_2 , but the ERCB went ahead and approved the Shell project anyway, being prepared to sacrifice the environment to the extent of 97,000 additional tonnes of SO_2 in the environment. It goes on in the case of carbon dioxide to point out that the Husky plant would emit . . . I'm quoting on the subject of carbon dioxide:

This would result in the amount of CO_2 produced from fuel gas combustion at Husky's plant being less than 20 per cent of the amount estimated by Shell for its proposed plant.

So you have 80 percent less carbon dioxide coming out of the Husky plant.

Still, despite the evidence and the findings on the part of the ERCB that that one was clearly superior from an environmental point of view, they nonetheless went ahead and approved the Shell gas plant at Caroline. Why? Because the ERCB feels, in its balancing of factors in the public interest, that the economic benefit of capital expenditure on the Shell project outweighs the environmental cost. Now, if that's the type of decision we're going to get from this legislation – one that says yes, we know the environmental cost is too high; yes, there are alternatives which are better from the environmental point of view, but we're going to go ahead and license the worst project from an environmental point of view anyway – we've got a problem, Mr. Chairman. I think this Assembly had better find a way to fix it, and we'd better do it now.

4:20

I wrote to my colleague in this House the hon. Minister of the Environment expressing my concern over this matter. He sent a letter back to me dated October 23. I'd like to quote a paragraph from it.

The ERCB Decision Report has now been issued and it documents the criteria used by the ERCB to evaluate each project. It

is clear from its report that the ERCB examined the two proposals from a variety of perspectives before deciding that the Shell proposal was in the public interest. The ERCB considered a great deal of environmental information and I would encourage you to examine its decision report to see how it has addressed all of the environmental aspects of the two projects.

Well, I did that, Mr. Chairman. It ignored the environmental aspects of the two projects and said in essence that for economic reasons we're going to go ahead with Shell. I submit that there is absolutely every reason to believe that this legislation of the NRCB will operate in that selfsame manner. That board will, if they believe their political masters want it that way, make a decision which just ignores the environment for the sake of something that might be an economic benefit in the eye of some person, whether it's a member of this Assembly or some other person, who makes an appearance before them.

Another example: the Trochu tire incinerator, which has sailed through the ERCB. There are a great many concerns having to do with air pollution out of that project, where you take Alberta's waste tire stock and run it through an incineration scheme to produce a small amount of electric power rather than recycle it, as is proposed by various businesspeople in the province of Alberta. The ERCB somehow feels that the small power generators Act allows them to approve that incinerator irrespective of the fact that recycling is more benign from the environmental point of view. In fact, they never considered recycling as an alternative even though the small power generators Act excludes projects involving fossil fuels. Well, last time I checked, tires these days are made almost entirely from fossil fuels, so I'm sure somebody's got things confused there somewhere. My point is that the environmental imperative played little or no role in the decision on the Trochu tire incinerator.

If the ERCB is our model, then I suggest we have a problem, and the problem is perhaps adequately demonstrated by the Minister of the Environment's letter to me in which he states: look at the ERCB report to find how it all came out in the wash. Because what has happened now is that Alberta Environment has been reduced to a supplicant in the process: they have to appear before the ERCB and make representation and try to convince this body in their wisdom that they should take environmental questions seriously and they should use those issues as determining factors in deciding the fate of a project. So the success of Alberta Environment in protecting the environment, in doing their mandate, will be dependent on their ability to lobby an agency of government rather than things they can do and are mandated to do by this Legislative Assembly by the legislation we pass. I submit that that's wrong. I think it's wrong to put Alberta Environment and the Minister of the Environment, who must answer to this Assembly for the state of the environment of the province, in a position where he or she has no control over that directly other than to go to the ERCB or the NRCB and attempt to lobby them politically in a skilled advocacy way to see the light and to do things from a proper environmental perspective.

I think we've seen over the past several years that reason and logic and skilled advocacy are not necessarily enough to influence a decision of the government. I personally attended a great many meetings where Albertans have passionately argued their concern over the way northern forestry is developing. I've personally tabled thousands of signatures on petitions urging the government to have a look at what it's doing in the north. I know there have been countless letters to ministers and meetings and so forth, all of which have resulted in absolutely no change whatsoever. So in this process, reason and logic and 65 cents

will get you a cup of coffee, but that's about it some days. I think that's essentially the situation we're in. You have a lot of Albertans who feel that the government may be paying too little regard to the environment, they may be moving ahead too quickly with certain decision-making on the environment, they're not listening to the right people, they're not really taking to heart our future when they're considering present-day economic benefits, and the government responds politically with this legislation, the NRCB.

I think the response, judging by the present wording of section 2, is inadequate at the very best. I cite as an example the five pulp projects which have been approved in the province of Alberta without any public hearings at all. I'm talking about Weldwood, Daishowa, Millar Western, Alberta Newsprint, and Alberta Energy or Slave Lake Pulp, as they're called – those five approved without any public hearings at all; the forestry management agreements and the lack of an appropriate forum for environmental concerns over timber harvesting policy, logging policy and procedures in the province of Alberta; certificates of variance which are issued to permit holders under the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act, and letters of permission which accomplish the same thing without ever being made public; and laws which are unenforceable: those are the background items.

This NRCB is, according to this year's throne speech, the centrepiece item on how that concern of the public is to be addressed. But the approach is inadequate, because just as there was really no political will on the part of the government to deal with these problems as they arose, referring to the list I just mentioned, I don't believe there is any political will to deal with this matter at the present time. I think that lack of will is reflected in the wording that's before us today.

I would like to quote, very briefly, from a letter that was sent to the Member for Banff-Cochrane in his capacity as the Chair of the panel on the proposed Alberta environmental protection and enhancement Act. The Environmental Resource Centre has said to him that

the problem with trying to create an independent decision-making body is that if there is no political will to protect the environment, a more independent tribunal will not necessarily result in greater environmental protection. The concern is that board members may be political appointees, regardless of the party in power, and will reflect the views of the government creating the board.

Hear, hear, I say. I think they've diagnosed the problem quite correctly. If the government doesn't have the will to protect the environment, then creating an independent tribunal isn't going to suddenly generate the political will, unless we in this Assembly give them a mandate, a very clear mandate, to make a determination on the basis on whether a project is environmentally benign or not. I think that's the question that has to be answered with respect to each and every major project that comes forward, whether it's proposed by the government or in co-operation with the government or private sector or a municipality, whatever. That question has to be answered before we go ahead. I feel the same about relicensing existing facilities, and I feel the same about government programs and policies which also have an environmental impact.

As my colleague representing Vegreville so ably put it today with the Minister of Agriculture, a government program such as elk ranching can have an environmental impact in the province. There is the potential that that impact has already been made, although my colleague hopes, and I hope with him, that it's not too late for us to assess what we're doing and to try and take remedial measures.

So what is missing from section 2? Well it has no heart. It's just dry, bureaucratic language. It has no central mission. I believe I'm not the only person to have made this criticism. I receive correspondence. I read articles that have been published in the province. I've seen this concern expressed by the Environmental Law Centre, which is a project of the Alberta Law Foundation. A very respected and certainly politically independent body has noted that problem. I see that Trout Canada has noted that problem. I've received correspondence from the Red Deer River Naturalists and a fairly large number of others who have made the point that there is a lack of clarity of purpose to this legislation.

Now, how many others feel that way? Well, I don't know because the input hasn't gotten far beyond the government caucus in the drafting of this legislation. Some of us had a little bit of an opportunity to make input for a short period of time when a draft of the legislation was leaked, but I believe the Minister of Energy when he says that it was really the government caucus that threw this legislation together. Well, I submit that perhaps if the government caucus were to listen to others about what needs to be done now, I think they would see very clearly that this legislation needs to be beefed up in the sense that the environment has to be put in there and has to be put in there in a way that is unambiguous. I guess that's the real thrust of this amendment. It says that the reviews done by the NRCB have to be done in public. Well, I think that's a pretty straightforward proposition. There are apparently those in the Assembly, in the Liberal Party, who disagree with that, but I don't really know why, because when a project is being reviewed for a public licence, a licence of public convenience . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Where's the Liberal Party?

4:30

MR. McINNIS: Well, the member would perhaps like to refresh his memory by reading what he said in *Hansard* on June 26 in criticizing this amendment: the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark saying that a review should not always be conducted in public. My own feeling is that a review has to be a public review or it's not worthy of the name.

With the assistance of independent expertise: well, I think that's very, very important, because the proponents of these projects always claim that they're state of the art, that it's the best pollution control available, that it's well within the limits of the environment to absorb. I can almost recite it like an incantation because that's what we hear from Al-Pac and all the pulp mills and Procter & Gamble and all the rest of them. Nobody ever says, "Well, approve my project and I'll wreck your environment for you." Somebody has to sort of tear apart the claims and the counterclaims, go through the number-crunching, fiddle through the several hundreds of pages of evidence, and determine what it all means to the public. That's the function of independent expertise:

to determine whether the projects and activities are compatible with maintaining and preserving the natural ecological diversity of the Province.

Now, I think that's vitally important, especially in the forestry area, which is a major thrust of Bill 52, in that the future health of our forests depends vitally on ecological diversity, on diversity of species, on diversity of sites, and that question of biological diversity or natural ecological diversity has to be written into our legislation to give it a sense of purpose. You can't find that in the Forests Act, you can't really find it anywhere in legislation,

but it's absolutely vital to the question of our environmental health.

Finally, "to perpetuate or restore the integrity of functional ecosystems." You know, this relates to the fact that we need to take an ecosystem approach to the decisions we make on the environment, because we are a part of the environment. Now, I was reading the other night a new book by Barry Commoner. It's called *Making Peace with the Planet*. He makes the point that human beings perform a dual role or that we have a double life, if you like. Occasionally we go out into the wilderness and experience nature the way it is, but most of the time we're insulated from nature by our vehicles, by our homes, by our heating systems. Now, sure enough, that's a pretty good thing, when the weather gets as cold as it's going to get this winter, that we have insulation and things that keep us from the elements. Nonetheless, we are both a part of the natural world at the same time that we put ourselves apart from it. At the same time that we erect barriers, we are nonetheless a part of functional ecosystems. If we don't protect functional ecosystems, if we allow our species to die off, if we allow our ecosystems to be compromised and destroyed, then surely, as day follows night, we will be exterminated along with it. Now, none of us in this Assembly wants that, so that's the reason I think we have to put that into this legislation, this important environmental legislation which comes forward from the government at a very crucial time in our province's history.

So I plead with members of the committee: give this board a mandate that it can live with; give it some teeth; give it some direction. Then we'll have something that we can be proud of.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

MR. EVANS: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I've had an interesting duty and responsibility since the beginning of October to travel the province on behalf of this government and the Minister of the Environment to give Albertans an opportunity to give their comments about the proposed environmental protection and enhancement Act. This Act, of course, as all members in this Assembly will realize, does reference the natural resources conservation board.

Quite frankly, as this process has continued, all of the members of the panel have become increasingly aware of the companion nature of the draft environmental protection and enhancement Act and this natural resources conservation board legislation, and the importance of ensuring that both pieces of legislation are consistent, are in tune with each other so that they move forward as one package. I believe our Premier has recognized this as well when he recently made an announcement, after discussions with our Minister of Energy, that the implementation of the natural resources conservation board legislation would be within the umbrella of the Department of the Environment. I think that recognition was evident quite some time ago, but I was pleased when I heard the Premier make that announcement.

Clearly, the point of the NRCB legislation is to ensure that the environmental impact assessment process, which is set out anew in the environmental protection and enhancement Act, provides the greatest opportunity for Albertans to input into major projects in this province, major nonenergy projects, and to utilize the model that we have through the Energy Resources Conservation Board, which falls within the responsibilities of our Minister of Energy. As we have heard throughout our discussions, throughout our public meetings in the province, that

model of the Energy Resources Conservation Board has worked particularly well. There have been comments, however, that the environmental impacts of energy projects could be beefed up, that the review through the ERCB could be a bit more focused, and some have said much more focused, on environmental consequences.

I do not want to presuppose what the recommendations will be from the review panel that I chair. Those recommendations are in the process of being created today. We as a committee will be working together to hopefully reach consensus on those major recommendations and present those recommendations to the Minister of the Environment. We did, Mr. Chairman, have a deadline of December 21, but we found that with the amount of interest that the environmental draft legislation has garnered in the province and with the number of submissions that we are receiving in writing, to do justice to those representations, it's literally impossible for us to have our comments and our recommendations by December 21. Accordingly, the minister has approved an extension to the first part of January – in fact, January 4 – and we have collaterally improved, in my view, our timing for receipt of written presentations to the end of November.

Now, that gives us a little more time to integrate all of the comments that we have had, both on the umbrella legislation itself and on the natural resources conservation board legislation, into one package and to have those comments available to the minister. Although I would like all of my colleagues to know that I will be asking for the opportunity, once we've had more time in the committee to formalize our recommendations, to discuss some of those recommendations in this House, I would just like to remind all of those in the Assembly that the terms of reference of our panel are to report directly to the minister. The minister then has the opportunity to review those recommendations and make that report public in a timely manner. However, just as I am confident that that process will take place, I'm confident, through discussions with the minister, that he is anxious for the broad recommendations of the review panel, vis-a-vis the natural resources conservation board legislation, to be made available to this House, such that we hope we will be able to assist the Minister of Energy in carrying this important legislation forward, assist the Minister of the Environment, who is going to be responsible for implementation of the legislation, and to ensure that all Albertans do have that opportunity, through their elected officials, to have an opportunity to debate this important issue.

4:40

I would, however, like to make just a few comments on some broad major themes that have come to us on the review panel again and again. Probably the first, if I was going to prioritize things, would be relative to the purposes section of the legislation. Clearly, the purpose of this legislation must identify the needs, the wants, and the aspirations of Albertans today. In my respectful opinion, I believe that Albertans in general wish the purposes section to make it clear that public involvement, the public interest, will be acknowledged, will be respected and that, just as clearly, the impact on the environment, as that term is defined in the environmental protection and enhancement Act, is identified.

I think, Mr. Chairman, that it cannot be left without saying that the definition of "environment" under the environmental protection and enhancement legislation is very broad. It's intended to be very broad. It's intended to include a reference to ecosystems and to ensure that not just part of our world,

other than the world of human health directly, which of course is the responsibility of our Department of Health, but every aspect of the world we live in today is covered and included in that definition of environment. I think that the definition of "environment" in the environmental protection and enhancement Act legislation has been structured to meet that broad requirement, and certainly the people that we have spoken to, who have made their comments known to us both in writing and verbally, have been very supportive of that definition. I would therefore like to suggest to our Minister of Energy that the definition that is incorporated in the environmental protection and enhancement draft legislation be incorporated into the natural resources conservation board legislation so that there is clearly a reference point for the board and that clearly that reference point is as broad as possible to allow that very important board to take into account all aspects of the world we see around us.

I would also like to commend to the minister specific reference to section 8 of the proposed Act dealing with the matter of hearings and dealing with the matter of directly affected persons. We've had considerable discussion on that issue of who is a directly affected person. There is no definition in the proposed legislation. However, we have heard in our travels around the province that there must be some kind of a definition of "directly affected." We've heard broad and narrow definitions. However, the issue of who is directly affected must be identified in some way, shape, or form such that the board itself is not the sole determinant of that matter. We have had comments that in the umbrella legislation, the environmental protection and enhancement Act legislation, there must be a definition of "directly affected," and I would commend the minister to consider a direct integration of that definition with the environmental protection and enhancement Act and the changes that we see coming in that legislation as a result of this review.

I know there are others who do wish to speak, and as I say, I want it to be clear, Mr. Chairman, that I do wish to get back on the list once we've had more opportunity for the panel to focus on our recommendations. However, just in closing, I would like to make the point that has been made to us on a number of occasions, and that's with respect to the regulatory process. Regulations are, of course, extremely important in both the umbrella legislation, the environmental protection and enhancement Act, and in the Natural Resources Conservation Board Act. It's important as well that we have a regulatory process that extends to the NRCB. However, the desire of Albertans to have input into the decision-making and to be able to critically analyze decisions on the basis of definitions, on the basis of formulas that are set out in the Act rather than susceptible to regulation, cannot be downplayed. I would ask the minister to carefully review that regulatory power such that it is clear in both pieces of legislation that rules of practice will be in the regulations but that clearly the laws themselves, upon which the regulations are formed, are the driving force.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I had next on my list the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, but I understand that he has no objection to the Minister of Energy coming in at this point. Then he'd be followed by Edmonton-Kingsway, after Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Hon. Minister of Energy.

MR. ORMAN: I appreciate that, Mr. Chairman, and I'd like to acknowledge the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark for giving me this opportunity to respond.

Mr. Chairman, I've heard with interest the debates on the amendment and the particular reference to section 2 in the Bill, and I would say that sections 1 and 2 are obviously the areas where there was the greatest amount of focus in the debate. In my discussions with the public interest groups and various proponents and other people who are interested in this legislation, I would say that this area, this discussion, received the most focus. I should say that through the summer I had the opportunity to meet with a number of groups. I met with the Environmental Law Centre, the Pembina Institute, the environmental research centre, and, on a couple of occasions, the Environmental Resource Centre. I would say that those discussions were very helpful to me in focusing some of this discussion.

The comments that have been made today, in particular the comments made by the Member for Banff-Cochrane, given his insight with regard to his involvement in his hearings with the new environmental legislation, certainly bring to mind that there are some areas that could be addressed in the way of an amendment. I am going to listen to the balance of the debate this afternoon and am certainly open-minded to discussion with regard to those amendments.

4:50

There's one area that I might say, Mr. Chairman, that I was lobbied on by my caucus. I don't recall any lobbying on behalf of the New Democrats on this particular issue. Let me say that I considered those discussions, particularly from the Edmonton area. In consultation with the Premier, I'd like to announce this afternoon that the location for the natural resources conservation board will be the city of Edmonton.

MR. DAY: What about Red Deer?

MR. ORMAN: We did consider Red Deer, Mr. Chairman. I can say that we also considered Lethbridge, but we felt that because our thrust with regard to natural resources development in the province was in northern Alberta, it made abundant sense to locate this organization in Edmonton.

Let me add one qualification, Mr. Chairman. We have also made the decision that in the short term, in the incubation stage of the natural resources conservation board, that once we have appointed our chairman and our other board members, we will be having them locate within the offices of the Energy Resources Conservation Board for a short period of time, yet to be determined, so that they can become familiar with this prestigious and well-respected board's operations, so they can get a flavour for how this type of operation runs, so they can learn from the wealth of experience that is housed within the Energy Resources Conservation Board, and certainly learn and get advice on ways in which they could set up their structure once they return to Edmonton and, on a permanent basis, locate in this fine city. You don't know how that pains me, as an MLA from Calgary, to say that, Mr. Chairman, but I guess politics is the art of compromise, and all of our caucus support this decision. As I indicated, putting aside partisan views as to where we are located in the province, it does make sense to be located in north-central Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, there has been some valuable input that we have received over the course of the summer, and certainly some of the debate today in my mind will result in some further amendments. I know that we have proposed some amendments, but I can assure hon. members that we will be returning to this Assembly with a further package of amendments that incor-

porates some of the discussion we've heard today and some of the discussion we've heard throughout the summer. I'm sure there may be other recommendations that do come forward, other debate, and let me assure the members that I am open to it and we will proceed in this manner in the very near future.

I should also say that the composition of the board has not been determined at this particular time. We are open to recommendations. We have received a vast number of recommendations from all corners of this province as to suitable candidates to be considered for the makeup of that board. I know that both sides of the House, Mr. Chairman, want to be sure that the members who serve on this board have the highest degree of integrity, have a great deal of capability, have a great deal of common sense – I believe that's going to be a very important quality – and certainly are able to put together an organization such as the natural resources conservation board, the infrastructure for that board, along the same lines and develop the same respect and esteem held for the ERCB. So we certainly will be working with them over the course of the coming months to do what we can to facilitate that end.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to congratulate the minister on announcing the decision to place the NRCB in Edmonton, and I would like to reassure him in his trepidation that it might appear to be a political compromise. It is, of course, not a political compromise at all, but Edmonton is in fact absolutely the right place for the NRCB to be located.

I would like to address this issue briefly. The New Democrat proposal has some merit. It has a number of things in it which recommend it as certainly a better definition of the purpose of this Act than the definition of purpose contained in section 2 of the government's proposed Act. I had to smile when I read this definition, the first amendment by the New Democrats to this Bill, because clearly there has been some care and some attention given this amendment, and rightly so, because the New Democrats must be scrambling to try and justify in their own minds how it is that they could ever have supported this Bill in principle in the first place, as they did with respect to second reading.

I can only question: which principle in this Bill is it that they in fact would be supporting? Would they be supporting the principle that says that government will define what projects will be reviewed or will not be reviewed, more importantly, by this particular natural resources conservation board? Or were they supporting the principle that it did not specify properly how the proceedings of this board should be held in public? It has never specified anywhere, to our knowledge, that these proceedings as a right, as a matter of course, should be in public.

MR. McEACHERN: Are we talking about the principle, or are we talking about the amendment?

MR. McINNIS: You should read the *Hansard*, Grant.

MR. MITCHELL: I know they're a little sensitive about this.

Or did they support the principle which neglects to point out in this Act that there should be room for public input to the scoping process of an environmental impact assessment? Or did they support the principle which points out that there will be no notice of public hearings, their time and so on, as has been

neglected by this Act? Or did they support the principle which neglected to put into this Act a clear delineation of the guidelines for a proper environmental impact assessment? Or did they support the principle that saw to it that forestry management agreements would be excluded from the mandate of the natural resources conservation board? Did they support the principle that the NRCB should duplicate the efforts of the ERCB rather than simply having one environmental review board of that nature in this province and not two?

It is very interesting that this New Democratic Party would have supported this Bill in principle at all, but that's exactly what they did, Mr. Chairman, as opposed to the Liberal caucus, who voted against this in principle because we had serious concerns about each and every one of these points that I have just made. Therefore, it is not a surprise that the New Democrats would have scrambled and scurried to try to make and to manipulate this bad Act into something that would resemble those things which they seem to talk about but don't seem to vote for.

Having said that, I want to point out that there are some points in this amendment worthy of support. First of all, I think it is important that the purpose of this Bill focus on something of the nature captured by the words "maintaining and preserving," and the words that are used, of course, are "natural ecological diversity." If that means the environment, then that would be good. But I think we could be even more specific. I think one of the purposes of this Bill must be to protect the environment. I think a second purpose of this Bill must be to conserve the elements of the environment, to be precise in that way. I think we need to specify in the purpose that this board would be directed to control pollution in this province and, finally, that it would be directed to ensure environmental conservation specifically – not exclusively but specifically – in the exploration, the processing, the development, and the transportation of energy resources and energy.

Mr. Chairman, I know that terms like "natural ecological diversity" or "perpetuate or restore the integrity of functional ecosystems" are useful terms to explore in their meaning, and I'm reluctant to say and I won't say that they are the wrong terms or that they could be improved on and need to be improved on. The problem that these particular terms suffer is a problem that I think most people acknowledge in any of these terms: what is sustainable development; what is ecological diversity in this province? I mean, you could maintain natural ecological diversity in one sense, I guess, by identifying only one small region representing each of 17 ecological regions, but that's not necessarily the ecological diversity of this province. That might be 17 museums which somehow reflected what was once the ecological diversity of this province.

5:00

It is very, very difficult to define these terms, and that's why I think we need to do two things: to put an emphasis on terms which we know something about, which are more definable, not perfectly definable – that is, terms such as "conservation," "protection," "control pollution," those kinds of terms. It is also important that we acknowledge that any definition, such as "natural ecological diversity," as it would be applied to a province and a society like Alberta's, or any use of words such as "restore the integrity of functional ecosystems," as that would apply to Alberta, or "sustainable development" or "wise management" or "adverse effect" are evolving definitions. They require input from the public of Alberta because they are not empirically provable but in a sense they conjure up the necessity of making

a judgment, the necessity of making a pejorative statement about how we want our environment, our society, to develop.

I believe it is important that we create a forum to debate those kinds of definitions so that as a society Albertans can begin to see what is at stake in these definitions and can assist in the evolution and the development of how those definitions will be applied to Alberta. That's why, Mr. Chairman, I will be presenting a motion to the Legislature this session which calls for a hearings process, which calls for a debate in this Legislature of those kinds of definitions as one step in beginning to elevate this environmental debate above the technical to a very important second level. That level is perhaps the most important level in one sense, and that is: what kind of society do we want? It's very, very difficult to make definitive pronouncements from on high about how that's defined, because these terms address exactly the issue that Albertans must assist in a debate about, which defines now and will continue to evolve the definitions of words like "ecological diversity."

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. McEACHERN: I can't help wondering if the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark is in favour of the amendment or not. I suppose I could say the same thing about the other two members that spoke.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark went to great length to tell us that he wasn't in favour of the Bill. Where was he last spring when we were fighting hard in this Assembly to make sure that this Bill was held over till fall so that it would give some input time to all the people of Alberta? The government even set up a committee that went around and did some hearings in the province, to their credit. The minister has stood up and indicated that he was willing to hear some possible amendments and some changes of direction of the Bill, or at least some fleshing out of some of the details of the Bill. So we on this side are prepared to work hard to make this a better Bill, and I'm going to go into that amendment in great detail. But I think it's rather sloppy of the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark to just get up and complain that we voted for the principle of the Bill and then offer nothing in the way of amendments or to even say that this amendment is adequate or inadequate. He just talked a lot of circles and said he wanted to hold some more public hearings, basically so he can put off taking a position for the rest of his life, I think, or at least for the rest of his life until the next election.

I wanted, however, to deal with a few of the points raised by the Member for Banff-Cochrane and the minister before getting into the finer details which make me recommend this amendment to this Assembly and particularly to the Minister of Energy, who is the one, I gather, who will make the decision about which amendments are accepted and which are not. The review panel chaired by the Member for Banff-Cochrane I understand held some public hearings. I wonder if he'd like to tell us what happened up in Grande Prairie. I heard there were some rather interesting and exciting things happening there. I guess some people wonder if this government really is listening, and I was wondering that, too, as the two members spoke. I got the idea from the Member for Banff-Cochrane that he was listening, and I guess I was going to say that the test of whether or not the government was listening to him and his committee is still to come. I feel somewhat encouraged by the Minister of Energy indicating that indeed some changes might be made. I would have preferred it had both members spoken a little more specifically to this amendment, which is what this debate today is supposed to be about, and had told us which parts of it they

would accept or which part of it they liked and didn't like and that sort of thing.

I guess that's the direction I want to go with my comments. I want to be fairly specific about some of the words that are used in this amendment and why we have chosen them to replace the words in section 2(b) on page 3 of the Bill. I think many of the members here today haven't really got into the details of this yet, and perhaps now would be a good time. If you look at page 3, section 2(b) – and you have to acknowledge that section 2(a) talks about

an impartial process for the review of projects that . . . may affect the natural resources of Alberta.

So 2(b) says about the review, then,

to provide for those reviews to be conducted having regard to the social, economic and environmental effects of the projects.

We find that too general and too loose. I mean, it's important to raise those points, I guess, in absence of anything stronger, but the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place has put forward an amendment which puts some very specific and important words to the people of Alberta in their idea about how the environment of this province should be protected, and I will take this expression apart point by point.

The whole amendment that was put forward to replace 2(b) says, "to provide for those reviews to be conducted in public." That's the first point I wanted to make, that the substitute words point to the need for the reviews to be made in public. There is nothing in section 2(b) that says that has to happen, so the review process mentioned there could be done by anybody, anywhere, behind closed doors, or it could include some people and not others, and so on. Whereas when we say "conducted in public," we do mean that any citizen that wants to can go to those hearings.

Mr. Chairman, I would point out that that's extremely important, given that this government has gone ahead with many pulp mill projects in the north, some five projects. I won't rename them because the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place just did, but Daishowa was one classic example, I think. Daishowa held some reviews, all right, and a number of meetings with officials and so on and put out a lot of documents, but there was not a public hearing that anybody could come to and make their presentations or hear the information in a way that was adequate to the task at hand. The only one of the pulp mills that had that kind of a public hearing was the first Al-Pac hearings, and they were excellent. It was interesting to note that even though the government stacked the panel with people who were in favour of the project, by the time all the information was in and that public hearing was done, the members on the panel themselves agreed that there were certain fundamental investigations about the environmental effects of the pulp mill that would have to be made before the project should go ahead. So that just shows you the incredible value, then, of public hearings.

Now, the wording in the Bill talks about impartial hearings. The word "impartial" is a much used word that sometimes has rather strange meanings. Most of us know that he who pays the piper calls the tune, so when people are hired to do impartial inquiries, I think you really have to make sure that the people who are hired for these impartial inquiries really are impartial. I would have to say that Jaakko Pöyry, for example, was a very poor choice on the part of the government to assess the first phase of the Al-Pac hearings and the results of that hearing. So the word "impartial" really has to mean something, and people have to take it seriously if it's to have any meaning whatsoever. One way to assure that is to make sure that the hearings are

public and that anybody who wants to can challenge the impartiality of the people chosen to do those public hearings.

5:10

Other words in the amendment that are very, very key words – and I'll just read part of it again: "to provide for . . . reviews to be conducted in public," which part I've dealt with now – are "with the assistance of independent expertise." You need independent experts. Now, I've already mentioned that sometimes we don't get independent experts. Sometimes we just get bureaucrats from the department doing a job they are paid to do and told what results to find. We need to do better than that. One way to assure we do better than that is to hire experts that the world recognizes as experts, that the environmental movement recognizes as experts so that the public that comes before the hearings can see and hear and understand quite easily that they are, in fact, experts in their field and that they have a certain amount of scientific integrity.

It's fairly well accepted right now that the prestige of politicians is at a somewhat low ebb in this society, and it is probably fair to say that scientists right now by and large are held in higher regard by the public. So it seems to me that it's most opportune at this time to acknowledge that fact and to accept that if you're going to have any public hearings, you have to have some scientific experts who are neutral as to the project that's being proposed, who are able to judge and tell the people at the inquiries and at the public hearings what the true scientific facts are, as much as is known, because of course we all know that many of the effects are not known until years afterwards, and to some extent people are having to anticipate and analyze and project with the best scientific information available. It is absolutely essential, then, that we get these independent experts to sit in on the hearings and make sure that the information given and the information being used for the debates and to help make the decisions is impeccable and the best possible available and not biased a priori either for or against the project.

Now, these independent experts, of course, are to help determine whether the projects and activities are compatible with maintaining and preserving the natural ecological diversity of the Province.

So the experts we need, of course, are ones that know about the ecology of the province, about the diversity of the province, and I guess what this does is allow a certain amount of flexibility. If, for example, we were talking about destroying some particular kind of grasslands that are very common in Alberta for some particular project and that project were valuable enough and we had lots of grasslands of that type, then one would be able to say, "Well, okay, we won't be destroying a whole ecology here that is the last one." On the other hand, if we are going to destroy an ecology or an environment that is the last of its type and is unique in kind for the province of Alberta or maybe the world, then you would really have no choice but to not go ahead with the project. So I think this expression talking about independent experts to help "determine whether the projects and activities are compatible with maintaining or preserving the natural ecological diversity of the Province" is an excellent way to put that. Those words should be adopted by the minister and put directly into the Bill.

The amendment also goes on to say not only "preserving the natural ecological diversity of the Province of Alberta," but "in order to perpetuate or restore the integrity of functional ecosystems." That opens up, Mr. Chairman, the chance that if you were analyzing a potential new project or even just the

effects of some project that was already under way, as perhaps this natural resources conservation board could do, they could check whether or not it would be possible to reverse some of the ecological damages already done in the commissioning and development of the new projects.

Of course, here you would have to consider seriously who would pay for any damages. If you could specify which companies had done it, then they should have to pay for it, but in some cases, if it's a thing that has evolved over a period of time and the particular problem is a general one, the government may have to step in and get involved and the project may change in its nature and be somewhat different. I guess one could think of a case where that's sort of already happened: in the coal industry in this province, for example, where certain companies, you know, stripped the overburden and took out the coal and then dumped back the overburden, in some cases, but didn't bother doing anything with it in years gone by. In more recent years the government has insisted that they contour that land, reseed it, and reclaim that land for nature, so to speak. I think that's the kind of direction – that this wording would help the natural resources conservation board see to it that that was considered. It would be a very positive effect, then, in using this wording as opposed to the wording that is presently in section 2 of the Bill.

If you sum it up by putting all those words together into the amendment, which you've all now seen and read, the effect of that is to give the natural resources conservation board a clearer purpose and sense of direction and responsibility. That, I assume, is going to be handled by the Minister of the Environment, and I think the government might like to clarify that point. I believe the Minister of Energy is the one conducting the Bill through the Assembly, but I believe there was a statement by the government recently that said that the Minister of the Environment would be the one to oversee this Bill. I guess that gets back to what the Member for Banff-Cochrane said, that they want to make sure it's compatible with the environmental protection legislation that is pending.

The choice of words is not accidental. The Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place went through the wording of this thing very, very carefully and chose certain key words. I've just been through them point by point, and I think what they do is not only give the natural resources conservation board a certain sense of direction and purpose, but they make it clear that the information used in those public hearings has to be scientifically determined, that it is scientists who will decide what the ecological effects of the project are, independent-minded, the best scientific people you can get to analyze and explain what the effects will be. And that information will have to be made public; the debate that leads to a decision about whether the project will go ahead or not is all made public so that people are working with the best possible information. Finally, if the hearings really are held in public in the right way, then of course we'll have to listen to what the people of Alberta want in the final analysis, and they will be making an informed decision.

The wording of the present 2(b) on page 3 really allows a rather sloppy approach to the whole business. You can hold a few reviews. By whom? Where? Nobody really needs to know. The cabinet can sort of say: "Well, hold on; I wonder what the effect will be on the social climate of the province. I wonder what the effect will be on the environment. I wonder what the effect will be on the economy. Well, gee, by golly, I think it's a good idea; let's do it." Really, literally, if you leave the wording as it is, cabinet could make decisions on a not much more

sophisticated basis than that kind of a, "Well, let's think a little bit about this, scratch our heads, and make a decision."

5:20

That is not good enough, Mr. Chairman. We are here talking about the ecology of the province of Alberta, and it is important to the people of this province. Everybody now knows and understands, since we've traveled into space and have had some pictures looking back, that the Earth is a valuable little jewel in a very stark and cold universe. Just because the life cycle of the sun is some 10 billion years and we're now halfway through that, meaning that in another 5 billion years from now the sun is going to expand and engulf the Earth and all this will be scorched and dead at the end of that time, that doesn't mean we need to continue with the kind of headlong plunder and exploitation of the Earth's resources that we've been doing. If we intend to pass on to future generations a wonderful kind of home and haven that we and the other plants and animals of the Earth have experienced, then we're going to have to reverse some directions that we've been taking, very seriously.

If the amendments like this one and others are not accepted by the minister, if he just pushes ahead as the Bill presently stands, the fear I have is that we will have a repeat of the kinds of things that happened with the Environment Council of Alberta. The Tory government, when it came into power in 1971, inherited from the Social Credit government an Environment Council of Alberta which had quite wide powers to hold public hearings, to do investigations, to look at the environmental effects of any project they wished. After a few years the Tory government could not stand the embarrassment of having somebody tell them that something was wrong without them having asked for that information, so they gutted the Environment Council of Alberta and made it subservient to the cabinet, and said, "You will only investigate exactly what we tell you to investigate." I see the basic attitude behind the natural resources conservation Bill as it now stands to be somewhat similar, to say that these reviews will be held, but it doesn't say who is going to hold them, it doesn't put any teeth into them, it doesn't specify that they've got to be public, and it doesn't specify that we need to have technical experts, et cetera: the points that I have just been making.

If this government is going to survive past the next election, then it needs to get in tune with Albertans who are saying that they want to be heard, that they want a government that listens. So the government is going to have to be prepared to be embarrassed sometimes when some of the information comes out about the kind of things that have been done in the past. I think of most of the pulp mill giveaways as an example. They should be embarrassed about that, the fact that there have not been proper public hearings. If the government is going to change its ways, then now and here is a crucial point where it can change its ways.

The Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place pointed out that we do not need another ERCB. The ERCB has its place and does its job and sometimes doesn't pay enough attention to the environment, as he listed in a number of examples. I think most of us know that and know that in the past we have not paid enough attention to the environment. Coal and oil are both heavy polluters. We probably should be moving more to natural gas. The ERCB can play a role there. But here we're not looking for a development approach; at least I hope the government is not. What we're looking for is a natural resources conservation board that will be strong on protecting the environment. So I hope it is the intention of the government to

set up a watchdog, and if that watchdog is going to be any good or have any teeth, it has to have some changes of wording along the line of that suggested by this amendment.

One of the expressions in the amendment talks about the preservation of ecosystems, and I think of forestry, an area where we've gone terribly wrong. I know the government bought an election recently with all its forestry development promises and the jobs that that was to create, but they could not turn around and do that again. The people of Alberta will not put up with that kind of approach. I just ask you to stop and think about this: the difference between an old growth forest in terms of the number of species of plants and animals you would find in any given small square patch of an old growth forest compared to what you would find in a forest that has been cultivated and the trees planted; the whole thing had been stripped at one time and then the new plantation put in place. If you think there wouldn't be much difference, I remember David Suzuki asking that we all just stop and think for a minute: if you were standing in the middle of a wheat field, how rich would that area around you be in terms of plant and animal life? The fact of the matter is that it would be worse than most deserts, the number of plants and animals in that system.

We've taken a large part of the prairies and turned them into wheat farms and oat farms and canola farms, et cetera, and raised a few cattle, but we do not need to take our forests, necessarily anyway, and sort of start mining them, which is really what you're doing with agriculture unless you're very, very careful. Some people do practise agriculture in a way that keeps the soil fertile, and it can be done. On the other hand, we tend to force them into the kind of situation that in order to survive, they have to use pesticides and herbicides and mine the soil. Most farmers don't really want to do that, but they get forced into an economic bind that means that's the only way they can survive. If we start farming our forests in that same way, I think we will be much poorer, and certainly we would not come anywhere near meeting the expectations of the United Nations resolution that calls for countries to preserve some 12 percent of their natural ecosystems. I think they've identified some 17 in Alberta. We certainly should be looking at moving in that direction much more rapidly than the government is at present.

Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that rather than the minister just telling us he is open to suggestion, when he stood up, he should have spoken more specifically to this amendment and said: "Yes, I like some of that wording. I like the terminology you're using. I like the public hearings it refers to. I like the idea that the experts would be independent, the best scientific minds available, that the decision would be made after a lot of public input and public discussion based on good scientific information." I think the minister should have committed himself at this stage to supporting this amendment. I certainly do, and I think the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place is to be congratulated on pulling in an amendment that addresses some of the very fundamental problems of this Bill. I urge all members of the House to support this amendment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I move the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain Bills. The committee reports progress on the following Bill; i.e., number 52. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the report, do the members concur?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.
Government House Leader.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I would move that when members reassemble this evening, they do so in Committee of the Whole.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Motion carries.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:29 p.m.]