

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, March 31, 1994**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 94/03/31

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: Prayers

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

We give thanks to God for the rich heritage of this province as found in our people.

We pray that native-born Albertans and those who have come from other places may continue to work together to preserve and enlarge the precious heritage called Alberta.

Amen.

head: Presenting Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce a petition today signed by 132 Albertans from Sherwood Park, Strathcona county, the city of Edmonton, and other surrounding areas requesting that the government "maintain the Grey Nuns Hospital in Mill Woods as a Full-Service, Active Hospital" to continue to serve Edmonton and surrounding area.

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

MR. BRASSARD: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present a petition on behalf of 279 senior members of the Evergreen club of Olds requesting the government to revisit the question of threshold.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present a petition with 623 names on it from people throughout Alberta who support keeping the Grey Nuns hospital open as an active care hospital.

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would beg your leave to present a petition on behalf of residents of Calgary and Cochrane. Very briefly, the petition speaks to the issue of student aid and asks the government to reconsider proposals regarding the student aid program.

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

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg your leave to present a petition signed by 534 Albertans supporting in principle an adolescent treatment camp but opposing the location of this camp to be built on the shores of Fork Lake because the lake is overdeveloped at this time.

head: Reading and Receiving Petitions

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I presented on March 22 regarding censorship of literature in our schools be read and received.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to call upon the government to resist calls to remove specific books, or types of literature, from Alberta Education curriculum.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I presented to the House on March 17 regarding the restructuring of the education system and the cuts to education be now read and received.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta not to implement the plan to restructure the educational system in Alberta, as proposed by the Minister of Education.

We also request the Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that every Albertan will have the opportunity for input and involvement in the future plans to restructure the educational system in Alberta.

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I tabled in this Legislature on March 22 regarding the government's cuts to education funding be now read and received.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta not to implement the plan to restructure the educational system in Alberta, as proposed by the Minister of Education, specifically, the superintendents of school boards being appointed by the Minister of Education and the taking away the right of school boards to assess municipal taxes.

We also request the Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that every Albertan will have the opportunity for input and involvement in future plans to restructure the educational system in Alberta.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I tabled in this House on March 22 regarding education and advanced education now be read and received.

CLERK:

We petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to keep its promises, as outlined in the recent election campaign, in support of education and advanced education.

head: Introduction of Bills

Bill 18 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 18, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill honours my personal commitment and the commitment of this government made to Albertans during the recent election campaign that our government would do what no other government in the history of this province has done, and that is to give Albertans the right to information held by the

government and to ensure that the personal privacy of individual Albertans is protected.

Mr. Speaker, we wish to extend our sincere thanks to the all-party panel chaired by our colleague the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House. Consultations with Albertans have allowed us to prepare a Bill that reflects the needs, desires, and goals of the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is an example of our government's commitment to provide open, accessible, and responsible government to the people of Alberta.

Thank you.

[Leave granted; Bill 18 read a first time]

Bill 19 School Amendment Act, 1994

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 19, the School Amendment Act, 1994. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments being introduced today will ensure adequate funding for all school jurisdictions, resolve fiscal disparities among jurisdictions, enhance the role of school and parents in education decision-making, and lower administrative costs. The amendments will allow all Alberta students access to a quality education at a cost taxpayers can afford and will honour the constitutional guarantees with respect to separate schools.

[Leave granted; Bill 19 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

Bill 20 Regional Health Authorities Act

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 20, the Regional Health Authorities Act.

This Bill will allow the formation of health regions and regional health authorities to govern them. It will also allow the establishment of community health councils. The health system is presently governed by numerous boards and agencies responsible for specific isolated sectors in the health system. This Bill allows government to proceed on the necessary restructuring of the health system based upon community-based planning and a more coordinated and integrated health delivery system. This Bill will be proclaimed as needed as we go through this time of transition.

[Leave granted; Bill 20 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: First reading is approved, and it marks the occasion of the hon. member's birthday today.

The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: Just checking, Mr. Speaker, and indeed we are on time. I now move that this be moved onto the government Order Paper.

[Motion carried]

head: Tabling Returns and Reports 1:40

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file with the House today a copy of a letter dated today from the government of Alberta to Canadian ministers responsible for internal trade, and

it has to do with the meetings to be held next week in Halifax and a request by the government of Alberta to ensure that all the meetings be held in public with representatives of the media invited to attend.

head: Introduction of Guests

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery is a vibrant reminder to all members of this Chamber that there is a life outside the Assembly. Her voice was well known to all members of the 22nd Legislature and by the magic of radio is known all across Alberta today. I wish to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the former MLA for Edmonton-Highlands and Opposition House Leader, Miss Pam Barrett.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member for Calgary-Varsity.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce some people from rural Alberta and some people from urban Alberta, actually something symbolic of this party. Firstly, I would ask supporters in the riding of Vegreville-Viking and strong supporters of the hon. member to my left Lynette and Marie Stelmach to rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

Also, I would like to introduce a young member of the Calgary-Varsity constituency who actually works for Calgary-Varsity constituency, took a 5 percent reduction voluntarily on the 1st of January, 1994, and is a tremendous contributor to the constituency: Mr. Quynn Phillips.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Vegreville-Viking.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to the Members of this Legislative Assembly a dedicated, locally elected official from the county of Beaver: Mr. Bill Sears. He is seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome from the House.

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

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly eight hardworking Albertans who are seated in the visitors' gallery. They have chosen to be here today in support of the petition that I presented earlier. They are Mr. Jack Toner, Mr. Robert Krewenchuk, Bill and Maria Stevenson, Dianne Nykipilo, Roy and Joyce Ruptash, and Betty Wackenhut. I would like them to rise and receive the traditional welcome from the Assembly.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly two people who have been untiring in their desire to have the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act move ahead and in fact be introduced today. I'd like to introduce Mr. Brian Edy and Mr. Jason Kenney. I'm not sure where Jason is. He was in the members' gallery with Mr. Edy. Temporarily absent, I guess. They are both executive members of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Association. If the Assembly would give them a warm welcome.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to introduce to you and through you to other members of the

Assembly the McDonald family of Edmonton-Gold Bar. This family has been very active in our community and like many other families are taking advantage of the spring break to visit the Legislature and better understand what we do here. I think they should be commended for it, along with many others. They're sitting in the public gallery. I'd ask them to stand and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly two of my constituents: Chris McGillivray, who is a school trustee from the separate school jurisdiction of the city of Fort Saskatchewan, and Joan Luchkow, who is here in two capacities, a hardworking constituent but also supporting the petition that the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul presented. Please extend a warm welcome to them.

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to add two introductions to those already given by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, my colleague Paul Langevin. They are Lise Skrundz from St. Albert and Juliette Langevin, who are here visiting. They are, of course, the daughter and wife of the hon. member, although at first glance I took them to be sisters here. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome. Avec beaucoup de plaisir je vous dis bienvenue.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly a gentleman who takes great interest in the affairs of our province, a gentleman who is active in the Edmonton-Glengarry constituency. I would ask that Mr. Jim Toner stand and receive the welcome of this Assembly.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions this afternoon. First, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two Edmonton-Mill Woods constituents: Gwen Germain, who is a U of A student working toward a master's degree, and her fiancé, Gerald Mowatt, a teacher/counselor at Ross Sheppard high school. It's a matter of interest to the Assembly that Gwen is the sister of the golden-tongued Liberal MLA for Fort McMurray, Adam Germain. They're in the public gallery, and I would ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly three students from the University of Alberta: Karen Wichuk, vice-president external of the students' union, and costudents Maura Kearney and Elliott McGinnis. With your permission I'd ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure and privilege to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a very special guest. Valerie Saric is visiting Alberta from British Columbia and has decided to take in today's question period. Valerie is seated in the public gallery, and I would ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly some Sherwood Park residents. I think these individuals are fans of mine, but I know for certain that they're fans of the Member for St. Albert and include Marlene Herbert, the hon. Member for St. Albert's sister, her daughter Jennifer, son Stephen, and friend Piers Macdonald. I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce today Jim Moore, who is an art teacher with the Edmonton public school system. He's in the Legislative Assembly today, very interested in the proceedings of this Assembly. He's with his fellow U of A graduate Kim Rogers, and I would ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: Ministerial Statements

1:50 Freedom of Information Legislation

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, it's my honour, my privilege, and certainly my pleasure to be able today to deliver a few words relative to our Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Also it's significant I think, more maybe by coincidence than by planning, that we have the opportunity as a government to designate the week of April 11 to 17 as Information Rights Week in Alberta.

During the past year, since the introduction of Bill 61 in April of '93, the government has listened to Albertans. We've received submissions from thousands of Albertans as individuals and through stakeholder groups. It's clear from the written submissions and the oral presentations made to the information panel and through MLAs that Albertans are keenly interested in both sides of this issue. Albertans are concerned about access to information held by the government but also protection of personal information about themselves. I believe that Bill 18 responds to these concerns.

Bill 18 and the Alberta Information Rights Week are representative of the strengthening of the link between Albertans and their government. Alberta Information Rights Week is a celebration of democracy, for the quality of a democracy depends on the participation of individuals in their government. The foundation of a healthy, open democracy depends on Albertans exercising their inherent democratic rights and responsibilities.

On a national scale Information Rights Week is being promoted by the Canadian Library Association and in Alberta by the library association and more particularly by the Freedom of Information and Privacy Association. Throughout the week local libraries are being encouraged to sponsor events related to information policy issues and telecommunication policy issues. The week will serve as a forum for discussion and improvement of communication among Albertans.

It provides a timely opportunity for discussion of Bill 18 as well. This Bill is obviously very important to Albertans. Bill 18 is a solid example of the government's commitment to openness and full disclosure, and as has been said many times since June 15, the books are open.

The introduction of Bill 18 today is the culmination of a great deal of preliminary activity. I feel compelled with your permission to give a brief history outlining the process and commitment that preceded the introduction of this Bill. I'll begin with the introduction of Bill 61 on April 26, 1993. That Bill was one of the major commitments made by our Premier in the early days of

his term. Bill 61 was accompanied by a discussion guide, which was distributed widely. Over 5,000 copies were released to stakeholders, community groups, and interested Albertans. The goal of Bill 61 was to foster discussion throughout Alberta on what people would like to see in legislation promoting and protecting information rights.

In August the Premier introduced Bill 1, encouraging all Albertans to bring forward their views on the important legislation through an all-party panel formed to gather and incorporate public input. From September to November the panel held hearings throughout the province. They listened to Albertans, analyzed what was said, and unanimously issued a comprehensive report of their findings. The fact that the report was unanimous is interesting in itself. It shows the strength of our public consultation process. From that report and from written submissions received in response to the discussion guide, Bill 18 reflects the desire of Albertans to strike a balance between freedom of information and protection of personal information. The balance will serve Albertans well and will safeguard and strengthen their rights.

Bill 18 incorporates some very significant provisions and some elements which are unique to this Alberta legislation. I'll outline a few of the elements. Critical to the administration of the Act will be the creation of the office of the commissioner. The commissioner can make orders which are binding on the government, its boards, and agencies. The commissioner will also provide advice to information gatherers on their obligations under the Act.

Within the Bill is a provision that the Act will apply to existing information as well as that collected from the time any Act or information has been gathered. To ensure effectiveness, the Act will be reviewed after three years. A public interest override is included in the Act for disclosing information where disclosure is in the public interest. A directory of public bodies will be available and will include the locations of personal information banks.

This Act will mean that access to information will be entrenched in legislation as a right and is concrete evidence that this government is fulfilling its commitment to full disclosure of information and the protection of privacy. It reflects the extensive involvement of Albertans in the process. It reflects the wishes of Albertans for a free exchange of information on issues and decisions of importance to them. I would encourage all Albertans to expand their contribution by taking part in Information Rights Week.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 18 is the product of many voices. These voices of Albertans have led to strong, comprehensive freedom of information legislation tabled in the House today.

Thank you and thank all Albertans.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on what the minister has referred to and spoken to as Information Rights Week. The essence of most of what the minister has talked about is the new Bill that's coming forward on freedom of information. It's almost beyond belief that a democratic government in our country could exist, could do business without allowing its citizens the opportunity to share information, to give them information, to provide them information, but that, in fact, is what has happened in Alberta until today.

The minister went back with a little bit of history, but I think it's important that Albertans know a little more history, know that in 1989 the Liberal caucus presented for the first time freedom of information legislation and then presented it for the next five consecutive years, asking the government to take action. I'm sure the minister will remember his Premier of the day standing in this Assembly two years ago and saying that freedom of information

wasn't needed, that members of the Assembly need only come to this Assembly and either put forward a written question or an oral question for information. We of course know that that almost never works.

There was considerable scorn in the criticisms, observations made by members of the government on our initiative to get freedom of information for Albertans. All Albertans have to be reminded of that. Mr. Speaker, it has always been a puzzle to me why not one minister, including our present Premier, stood and challenged the then Premier and said, "No. This isn't good enough. It isn't good enough to say that a freedom of information of Bill is not needed."

We now become one of the, I guess, last places in North America that will have freedom of information legislation, and I congratulate the Premier for that initiative. I think the Liberal caucus can take considerable pride in knowing that they forced this issue, that they helped make this issue public. [interjections] I notice the minister of transportation yelling no. He didn't stand up and say anything when his Premier said that we didn't need freedom of information. Mr. Speaker, if we had had freedom of information, there would not have been a NovAtel and a MagCan and the many other scandals that befell Alberta. Thank goodness we're getting it today.

2:00

World Health Day

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, World Health Day will be celebrated on April 7, 1994. In countries around the world the importance of health and healthy environments will be the focus of campaigns and initiatives. The theme of World Health Day this year is "oral health for a healthy life."

In addition, the World Health Organization and the Canadian Society for International Health have designated April 1994 to March 1995 as oral health year and April as oral health month. World Health Day is the starting point for a year-long effort by health professionals to provide information and encourage discussion about oral health. Indeed the enormous improvement in oral health in industrialized countries is one of the major health success stories of this century.

To keep this success story on track, Alberta health units, the dental health services branch of Alberta Health, and the Alberta Dental Association will be co-ordinating a number of community activities relating to World Health Day. In addition to celebrating achievements in the field of oral health, World Health Day provides us with an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to ensuring that health remains a priority of this Assembly and of all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, as Alberta's Health minister, I call on all members of this Assembly to become involved in World Health Day activities on April 7. As we restructure our health system in Alberta to better reflect the health priorities of Albertans, our duty as the elected representatives of Albertans will be to help shape a province of healthy Albertans living in a healthy Alberta.

Thank you.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I note with great interest the last line of the minister's statement on World Health Day, where the minister says, "Our duty as the elected representatives of Albertans will be to help shape a province of healthy Albertans living in a healthy Alberta," the focus of course being on oral health. Well, I don't share enthusiasm on this matter insofar as the government's actions are concerned, because I don't see our duty being fulfilled because of the actions by the government.

I can't see how we can celebrate when dental care is being cut back for seniors extensively, I can't see how we can celebrate

when we see that support services for oral health in the schools is being cut back, and I don't see how we can celebrate when we see that a dental school that provides assistance to low-income families and to northerners is being gutted and taken out completely. I would urge the minister and the government to reset their priorities to really provide for a healthy Alberta and one focused on oral health.

Thank you, sir.

head: Statement by the Speaker
Console Operator Farewell

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members, before we commence this afternoon's question period, I'd like to draw your attention to a gentleman seated in the Speaker's gallery whom I'm sure you'll all recognize. He is Mr. Doug Jeneroux, our console operator. Mr. Jeneroux has served this Legislature for over 12 years with *Hansard*. During this time he has logged approximately 5,000 hours of audio services in this House and in committee meetings. I'm sure all hon. members may understand that that may be one reason why Mr. Jeneroux has elected to pursue private business interests, and today is his last day at the controls. I ask all hon. members to join me in recognizing Doug's outstanding service to the Assembly and wishing him every success in the future. [applause]

head: Oral Question Period
Advanced Education Tuition Fees

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday students in Calgary burned Conservative election promises that dealt with advanced education. The white paper that the minister of advanced education released yesterday portrays that tuition will rise over 30 percent for students in postsecondary institutions. This will put Alberta at the highest level of tuition costs of any province in Canada. My first question is to the minister responsible. Why, Mr. Minister, have you ignored the petitions and the pleas of students all over Alberta in not consulting with them and properly addressing in their best interests the issue of tuition?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I have to take issue with some of the preamble of the hon. leader across the way when he speaks about election promises. Let's be clear that during 1993-94 the tuition fee policy stayed in place. There's a commitment that it will stay in place in the fall of 1994-95. Surely when someone is asked the question, "Will we ever, ever touch tuition fees as long as we ever live?" I don't think anyone would ever have said that that's not possible. Let's be clear that we have kept an election commitment.

For two years there has been no movement, and now we have moved into a public consultation process that took place last year. During that time, there were many who came forward and said that the tuition fee policy needed to be revisited and that it needed to be reviewed. So we have incorporated it into the draft white paper in a manner that it will be debated. In that draft white paper there are quotations from a couple of reports that have been done across Canada that recommended some level that they thought was fair for students to pay.

We have two groups who can pay tuition fees: the student and the taxpayers of the province. Our endeavour is to find out what's fair for the student to pay, what's fair for the taxpayer to pay. It's in that draft white paper. Frankly, I'm looking forward to the input that will come as we move forward to discuss and debate the issue in the draft white paper.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier broke his promises to seniors, and now he's breaking his promises to students.

With tuition higher than any other place in Canada, Mr. Premier, why are you forcing Alberta students to seek their education in postsecondary institutions outside of this province?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, relative to the preamble, I have broken my promise to absolutely no one. With respect to seniors, I said that there would be no change to senior programs until there has been full and complete consultation. That consultation is taking place as I speak, as the minister crisscrosses the province holding five or six or seven meetings a day, in some cases, with senior groups throughout this province.

With respect to education, Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the tuition fees now paid by university students in this province are the second lowest of any jurisdiction in this country or certainly are among the lowest of any jurisdiction in this country.

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. minister just pointed out, he has put out a white paper to stimulate debate. He has put some thought, some notions down on paper based on what he has heard through the public consultation process, and he is saying now to the students: "Is this right for you? Is there some room for adjustment? Help us find the solutions and work with us."

Mr. Speaker, I suspect that some people were burning their Tory cards. They were probably Liberals, you know, who bought them to vote for me in the leadership. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor for a final supplemental. [interjections] Order. [interjections] Order.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's knowledge about tuition levels across the country is as bad as his knowledge about seniors.

Isn't it true, Mr. Premier, that by boosting tuition costs and making it more difficult for students to get loans, it is really part of your plan to deny Alberta students access to postsecondary institutions?

2:10

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, that statement is absolutely utter nonsense. Had he been listening to the minister, the student fees will remain intact this year, next year, but at some time there's going to have to be some adjustment. What the minister is saying to the students and the university administrators is: "What is fair? What is right? Work with us." I would ask the hon. minister to supplement.

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I think we need to be clear that what we're endeavouring to do with the consultations and the white paper is to bring forward a restructured long-term postsecondary education system in this province. We're not dealing with a budget; we're dealing with the long term. So we're reviewing that in the context of what tuition fees may move to over how many years into the future. Out of that we'll gain that direction, and we'll put it in place.

The students will have an opportunity to sit down with the administration and negotiate based on a three-year plan that the institution will be asked to bring forward. Students will know, after they've negotiated with the institution. Government will not be part of it; they'll be out of it. Students and the institution can negotiate that. However, there will remain a cap that the institutions cannot puncture. That will be the protection the students can rely on.

Catholic School System

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, Catholic school supporters are worried that the Premier and his government are blackmailing Catholic school supporters into accepting the tax grab that the Premier is doing on the Catholic school system. The Premier refuses to give legal opinions on this matter. We now know that Catholics have gone to their lawyers and that this matter is ready for the courts. This is going to cost the taxpayers of Alberta money and the school boards money. Mr. Premier, will you agree, so we can save tax dollars, to have these issues referred to a Court of Appeal in our province on a reference to decide them quickly and once and for all?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I don't know if I'm going to do that right now. It's an interesting suggestion. I'll discuss it with the Minister of Justice.

MR. DECORE: Well, I think the Premier should know that there is also the opportunity to go to the federal cabinet.

Will the Premier tell us when this decision on a reference will be taken and given to Catholics so that there isn't continued anguish in that community?

MR. KLEIN: I take exception to the comment that there is anguish in that community. As a matter of fact, there are many, many Catholic school districts in this province, Mr. Speaker, who like very, very much what we are doing. Thus far, at least to my knowledge – and the hon. Justice minister might wish to supplement – there has not yet been a legal challenge. The legislation has simply been tabled today. Let's see first of all if there is a legal challenge before we make any decision as to what course of action we might take.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Premier, admit that you're rushing this matter through simply to get this on the tax rolls by June 1 in all the municipalities in Alberta. That's your plan; isn't it?

MR. KLEIN: No. Mr. Speaker, it's obvious the hon. leader of the Liberal Party does not understand. He does not understand. But I'll make it quite clear what our plan is. You know what our plan is? Our plan is to restructure the fundamental administration of education in this province to achieve efficiencies, to achieve cost savings, to get more dollars into the classroom, to create fiscal equity, and to balance our budget. I'll remind the Liberal opposition once again that the one last thing they want us to do is to balance the budget, because once again . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.

Senior Citizens' Programs

MR. DECORE: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the Premier's plan for seniors, where he will savagely attack seniors, attack them on housing, attack on health, attack on home care and other issues. Seniors are furious. The Premier is sending his minister around to do a little damage control, flying around Alberta, but that isn't working either, Mr. Premier, because the minister is getting thrown out of the meetings with seniors. My first question . . . [interjections] Read the papers.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order. [interjections] Order. It's time to get question period back on an even keel.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Premier, admit to Albertans that your plan for seniors has been a colossal failure, and admit that you're going to get this cleaned up fast.

MR. KLEIN: Yes, we are going to address the situation in as expedient a manner as we possibly can. No, Mr. Speaker, this is not a colossal mess at all. This is a meaningful exercise.

This is the first I've heard about our minister, who is dedicating a great number of hours each and every day to consult with seniors, being thrown out of a meeting. As a matter of fact, I am hearing precisely the opposite. I am hearing that after meetings in Grande Prairie and meetings in Coronation the seniors are coming up and kissing him and hugging him.

MR. DECORE: Those are either his relatives or your relatives, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Premier, I think it's time that you gave seniors some specifics. Where are the changes going to happen in this botched plan of yours for seniors?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that in many cases they are his relatives or descendants of his relatives, because one of the meetings where the minister was received with absolutely open arms, where everyone went away with a wonderful feeling was in Tofield. A wonderful feeling. He should check on this particular meeting the minister had. This process is going along quite well, and if the Liberals stay out of the process, it will go along even better.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Premier, will you abandon your plans to deregulate and commercialize seniors' accommodation and relieve the anguish they're feeling on that issue?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, that is absolute utter nonsense. I will have the hon. minister elaborate on what really are the facts relative to this situation.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, in our three-year plan in Municipal Affairs in no way have we indicated commercialization of senior lodging in the province. I want to reiterate, as I had once before in this Assembly, that there is no privatization model of the existing senior facilities in this province. There are some 23,000 units, 15,000 senior apartments, manors, and fourplexes along with some 8,000 lodge beds in this province. We are starting this year along with the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services to bring forth capital project renovations of the existing lodges to ensure that standards are kept in those areas. We are working with all of the housing authorities and lodge boards across this province to ensure good management of these lodgings.

Once again I want to reiterate: every day that you seed fear mongering like you have, you affect seniors in this province. I have never said in this Assembly or anyplace else that we were commercializing and selling the existing senior lodging in this province.

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

2:20

Interprovincial Trade

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you. My questions are all for the Deputy Premier. In my constituency concerns are being expressed about the movement of goods and services between Alberta and other provinces, in particular Alberta and B.C. and Alberta and Saskatchewan for some reason. As the ministers responsible for

internal trade are meeting next week in Halifax, could the Deputy Premier advise Albertans as to what Alberta's agenda is?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, we essentially have four objectives. The first is that the negotiations continue to be comprehensive, that the final agreement cover all goods and services and enhance the mobility of labour and investment throughout this country. The second is that we have a rules-based agreement; in other words, that the primary rule be one of nondiscrimination in which each government would treat other Canadians as they would treat their own residents and businesses. Included in that is a very important point that we'll be stressing in the case of the federal government: that there will be no favouritism to one region of Canada. The third is that the private sector and citizens have direct access to the dispute settlement process, and the fourth is that Canadians are kept fully informed about the negotiations. Earlier in the session today I tabled a letter calling on the ministers across the country to agree that the meetings be held in public with invitations to the media.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Yes. Are other provinces in Canada as committed to reducing trade barriers within the country as Alberta is, or are they more interested in protecting their own self-interests?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, it is extremely important that we have a comprehensive trade arrangement throughout this country, one in which all Canadians are equally treated in this country of Canada. One way of making sure that happens is to have our negotiations and our discussions next week in public so that the citizens of this country can see exactly what the positions are of all the provinces, including the federal government, on this matter. We know that, regretfully, as recently as several weeks ago our neighbour to the west in fact initiated policies which will discriminate against other citizens of this country, not only citizens of Alberta but other citizens of this country, in working and participating in contracts in that particular province. We believe that Canadians are equal across this country and that there should be equity and equality.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Will the trade disputes mechanism that has been advocated by Alberta provide an opportunity for businesses to ask for a resolution of difficulties or a resolution of problems that occur between us and other provinces?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, we believe that not only should governments have access to a disputes resolution mechanism, but we also believe it's fundamental that citizens and businesses in this country have access to a disputes resolution mechanism. Some provinces in this country do not advocate that citizens and businesses should have access to a disputes resolution mechanism. We find that a bit strange considering that in the North American free trade agreement a citizen and a business in either Mexico, Canada, or America can have access to the international disputes mechanism. It's extremely important that citizens and businesses do have such an opportunity.

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

Textbook Disposal

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Premier claims that school boards waste money. Well, I've got news for him. It's his government that's the big money-waster in this province.

Thousands of textbooks, brand-new textbooks like this have been thrown into dumpsters by the Department of Education. I want to ask the Minister of Education: why is he throwing brand-spanking-new text books into dumpsters?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I think it should be clear, first of all, that the Learning Resources Distribution Centre is a multimillion dollar operation which effectively provides for the distribution of learning materials to the schools of this province. With respect to the disposal of books and other materials which do over a period of years go out of date, there is a very orderly and methodical process. First of all, books are offered for the use of the schools as supplementary materials or materials for their libraries at reduced prices. Secondly, these books are offered to organizations and community groups who might in some way be able to utilize them effectively. Thirdly, they are offered for recycling. We endeavour to obtain an outlet so we can take the paper-based materials for recycling. Only after those steps are followed are the materials disposed of.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker, 1985 is not out of date for language arts, believe me.

Mr. Speaker, the deputy minister received a letter two years ago from the Auditor General telling him to clean up this mess. I want the minister to tell us who in his department is responsible for this obscene waste of money and what he's going to do to hold them accountable.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, in terms of the Auditor General's messages that have come to me as Minister of Education, the hon. member across the way knows full well that we have accepted the current directions that I as minister have received with respect to tightening up our whole reporting mechanism in terms of the expenditure of grants and so forth across this province. We're acting on that, and we certainly are taking the recommendations of the Auditor General to heart.

However, I would like to reiterate that in terms of the disposal of materials which accumulate over a period of time when you're running a multimillion-dollar operation which has thousands and thousands and thousands of different items for the benefit of the schools of this province, there does come a time when these items accumulate, are not any longer in use in the schools. If I take his representation, it's an item that's nine years old. If the item has gone out of date, it would be eligible to be distributed to other sources.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker, his deputy minister received a letter over two years ago from the Auditor General.

I'd like to know if the minister would provide us with a specific list of the nonprofit literacy organizations and overseas development organizations that were offered these books free of charge. Will you table that in the House?

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker, certainly I will look into that. As I said before, that is one step in a very orderly process in terms of disposing of these materials.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Vegreville-Viking.

Regional Health Authorities

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Health. I understand that a Lloydminster

regional health district has been formed. I'd like to know: is this part of the provincial regionalization plan?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, it is a part of the plan in both provinces. As members would know, Lloydminster is a unique community in that it serves residents both in Alberta and in Saskatchewan, as it sits directly on the border between the two provinces. It has always operated in a climate of interprovincial co-operation, interprovincial legislation, and interprovincial agreements and joint policies. So this new district will continue that process.

As you know, Saskatchewan has formed a number of health districts, and as you also are aware, Alberta will be setting up regional health authorities. We've had the enabling legislation introduced today. So what has happened in Lloydminster, for the member's information, is that there are five current programs that have been incorporated into an organizational unit and registered as a corporation in both Alberta and Saskatchewan.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When will this board take over the management and delivery of services?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, this will be a gradual process with these boards as contracts are negotiated with the various providers, with the existing boards, and in the short term there will be no change in the way we fund or the way we deliver. They will be consulting with their communities, and they will develop this program.

2:30

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you. How will this fit with regionalization in Alberta?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I think it will fit very well. Saskatchewan has moved to regional authorities, and we are. I was very encouraged when I read the press release from Lloydminster. If I might just quote briefly, it stated that

it is expected that in consideration of the health trends in both Alberta and Saskatchewan, the Board will focus on service orientation that places the needs of the consumer as the priority by provision of the most appropriate program at the most appropriate place at the most appropriate time.

I certainly believe that the new board has the correct focus.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Education Restructuring

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Education announced the formation of MLA education teams to consult once again with Albertans. It sounds like a make-work project for 14 Tory backbenchers at great expense to the taxpayers. Now, to the Minister of Education: are these teams supposed to sell the changes he has already announced?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I must respond to the erroneous implications in the preamble. Perhaps it is the Liberals' vision of how or under what conditions they would only be able to serve on a task force in a worthwhile activity. As I indicated in estimates debate last night, the people working on these

important task forces are not receiving remuneration. That should be clear.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, as a government we have set in our business plan definite directions for the beneficial restructuring of education in this province. Once a general direction is set, then there are a number of policy issues that follow from that, and this consultation process that we're launching through our task forces, our implementation teams is going to achieve the smooth and effective implementation of the directions that we have set.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, is the minister saying that these people will not be traveling at taxpayers' expense? Will they travel in a government plane? Will they solicit by phone? What are they going to do?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across the way well knows that in the context of the operations of government and of this Assembly when we're talking about remuneration, there is the implication that there is a daily stipend or a wage being paid to MLAs, and that is not the case. With respect to reimbursement for reasonable expenses, certainly that would be provided. The hon. member across the way is being very hypocritical if he's implying that he wouldn't expect the same type of support if he was on such a committee.

MR. SPEAKER: "Hypocritical," hon. minister?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that remark. My apologies. I would like to substitute "inconsistent."

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: It's hypothetical to say the least. I wasn't asked, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to ask the minister: what about a time line? How much time does this committee have to do their thing, their sales pitch?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in estimates debate the evening last, we have provided a news release. We have provided a point-by-point statement of terms of reference, which I think the hon. member might have by now, but if he would request it, I would certainly provide it to him. With respect to each of the particular activities that are involved, there is a time line outlined in that release.

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

Ethanol

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism and Deputy Premier. The province is presently subsidizing ethanol from Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the U.S. through a tax break of 9 cents a litre. Why would we be subsidizing this ethanol when Alberta should be developing an industry here, Mr. Minister?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, about seven years ago, in 1987, when amendments were made to the Fuel Tax Act, there was a statement and an amendment made to the Act at that time that in essence what the province wanted to do was to in fact encourage conservation activities and the wise uses of natural resources within the province of Alberta. One of the policy statements made at that time was that there would be a 9 percent provincial fuel assistance program for ethanol. There was no ethanol development in the province of Alberta at that time, but the purpose of the incentive at that time was for conservation activities. Since that

time there has been an interest in the development of an ethanol industry in the province of Alberta. It's an industry that this government believes very strongly in as an alternative fuel base in the province of Alberta. When changes were made two years ago by the then minister of agriculture, he indicated that that 9 cents per litre could be used as an incentive for the development of an ethanol industry in the province of Alberta, not simply for conservation purposes.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister then tell us what progress has been made in the establishing of an industry here in Alberta for the ethanol?

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, there has certainly been a lot of interest with respect to this matter. We've also made it very clear that the government of Alberta would not be in the business of providing incentives - loans, grants, and the like - to the development of such an industry in this province of Alberta. We have made it very clear that the provisions found in the Fuel Tax Act could be used for such an activity. There has been some work done in terms of research. There have been a number of consultations with entrepreneurs who are interested in the province of Alberta. We also have Mohawk now operating some pilot projects throughout the province of Alberta. We see greater utilization in both the southern part and the northern part of the province of Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging Facility

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has finally opened a much needed MRI facility in the Calgary Bow Valley hospital. It would of course be absolutely incomprehensible for any government to spend \$1 million to set up such a facility in a hospital that it might be closing in a few short months. This would be very much like the government's left hand not really knowing what its right hand is doing. My question is to the Premier. Could the Premier tell us whether or not this particular initiative signals that he, as he said last week he's going to anyway, has finally made a decision about which hospitals are going to remain open and which hospitals are going to remain closed and whether the Bow Valley is now going to remain open?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the opening, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung says, of a much needed facility, this MRI unit at Bow Valley centre, there has been a planning process going on for something like 18 months. As I explained in the House earlier, those recommendations will be considered by the minister in due course, and I'm sure that a statement will be made at that particular time. An MRI unit can be used virtually anywhere, so the unit itself will not go to waste. It will be utilized in one form or another.

2:40

MR. MITCHELL: The unit won't go waste, Mr. Speaker, but does the Premier not understand that the million dollars that it took to install it in the Bow Valley is going to be lost when they turn around and spend another million dollars to put it into some other hospital which the Premier may at his discretion decide to leave open?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, in committee last night I explained that I was completely at a loss to understand how the hon. member could hear information over a period of time and not understand it. Being at a loss last night, it took me 10 minutes to explain why I was at a loss. I'll try and be briefer.

Mr. Speaker, the MRI unit in Calgary was planned a year and half ago. The decision to place the MRI unit in the Calgary General was made by an advisory group; they recommended to the minister that this should be the site. Yes, it was a very positive opening of an MRI, which is state of the art, that can replace other diagnostic tools, that is not invasive to people. I would remind the hon. member that however we restructure health programs in this province, health services must continue to be delivered. The federal minister was very impressed to hear that when that opens and comes onstream next week, we will have in Alberta more capacity for MRI diagnostics per capita than any province in Canada.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, the one thing that's certain, Mr. Speaker, is that the minister is generally at a loss. Is the minister at a loss when she sits by without any kind of co-ordinated health care plan in this province and lets hospitals make unilateral decisions now which may bear no kind of reasonable regional sense and which will be very, very costly to fix in the future?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is referring to the MRI placement at the Calgary General as a unilateral hospital decision, I've just explained it was not. That was advised to us by an independent review that looked at all of the sites for MRI in Calgary one and a half years ago, made a recommendation. The approval was given on May 9 of 1993. The \$2 million from lottery funding was agreed upon, which goes to support health capital items of high cost in this province. Public works assisted at that time. As of yesterday, through a very, very positive happening in Calgary, state-of-the-art MRI is available for all of the people in Calgary and southern Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Three Hills-Airdrie.

Advanced Education Restructuring

MS HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development released a draft white paper on adult learning entitled *An Agenda for Change*. I would like the minister to clarify his goal that states that his department will consider changes to labour relations legislation for postsecondary institutions. Does this mean he plans to eliminate tenure as we know it at our postsecondary educational institutions?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, the word "tenure" doesn't exist in legislation, but it does exist in practice. Tenure has evolved as a mechanism to ensure academic freedom and expression; in other words, the right to speak and write without fear of repercussion or dismissal. Academic freedom is an essential part of our postsecondary education system, and, frankly, the government supports that. In today's world, though, tenure has evolved in such a way that some faculty can be guaranteed a position regardless of the circumstances that may unfold in a particular institution. So the draft white paper puts on the table for discussion a mechanism that will allow our institutions to offer tenure as a means to protect academic freedom but not as a means of ensuring protection for employment.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MS HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does this mean, then, that if an institution decides, after restructuring and reorganizing their programs to meet the challenges ahead, that some faculty need to be dismissed because of financial restructuring or redundancy, they can be?

MR. ADY: Well, Mr. Speaker, yes. I believe that's a good assessment of what we're proposing. We have given institutions in this province a huge challenge: we are asking them to take a reduction in their base grants; we're asking them to restructure and improve access and maintain quality. To meet these challenges, we have to give them the tools to manage. Many postsecondary collective agreements place inappropriate barriers to termination of employment for reasons of fiscal stringency or redundancy. Legislative changes would aim at allowing institutions to respond to changing economic circumstances.

MS HALEY: Could the minister tell us: what are the next steps in moving towards implementing this policy?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, we know that it's an item in the draft white paper, and we're sending copies of that draft white paper to all interested Albertans. Seven thousand copies are being sent out to all of those who have been involved in the first phase of our public consultation process. In the document there's a pullout reply form to obtain people's views. There will be two major roundtables take place in May where that issue will be debated, and from that we'll move forward with direction on it.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Rural Hotels

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier continues to undermine rural Alberta. His policies on liquor sales are pushing rural hotels into bankruptcy. These hotels contribute greatly to their community: they create jobs and bring much needed tax dollars to the economy. To the Premier: why did the Premier fail to show up at a scheduled meeting with northern Alberta hotel owners without even a call to cancel the meeting?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, if I have done that, then I apologize. I will certainly check with my scheduling people and find out what went awry, if anything did.

MR. BRACKO: You did.

My supplemental is to the Premier. Since 85 percent of rural hotels are financed by the Alberta Treasury Branches, what are the projected losses for default in hotel loans?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that is hardly a supplementary, sir.

MR. SPEAKER: It's not supplemental. The hon. Premier is absolutely right.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Wage Rollbacks

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table four copies of a document from a J.E. Dixon to the managers and nonbargaining unit employees that was sent out today. My preamble is that non-union staff found out today, at about the same time as the chamber of commerce, that they will be receiving

5 percent less starting tomorrow. In the government's press release it states that employees were consulted prior to these decisions being made. My questions are to the Premier. How can the Premier justify telling the chamber of commerce before telling his own non-union staff that they will be receiving 5 percent less tomorrow?

MR. WICKMAN: It's just April Fools', Karen.

MR. KLEIN: No, no, it wasn't on April Fools' Day. As a matter of fact, everyone was informed that as of April 1 this indeed would happen. This has come about as the result of good, meaningful negotiations.

MS LEIBOVICI: They were informed today that tomorrow they're going to receive 5 percent less.

My supplemental is to the Premier. Will the Premier table the method of consultation and detailed analysis of the consultations with the employees that took place?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, they have their representatives. It's been known for all time. I don't know if the hon. member has been reading the newspapers or listening at all. Or has she been sleeping over there? We said that as of April 1 all the public service employees non-union would be affected by a 5 percent rollback. There was some negotiation. There was some meaningful negotiation, because the agreement was reached that part of it would be taken in an actual rollback of salary and part of it would be taken in days off without pay.

2:50

MS LEIBOVICI: This is non-union staff. There are no negotiations with them.

My third question is: has the government looked at the financial implication of wrongful dismissal actions that your actions may well precipitate?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I'm sure that if any of those actions are taken, Mr. Speaker, there are mechanisms to deal with those particular circumstances, and the mechanism that is normally used is the courts.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Paddle River Dam

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier said that the Paddle River dam inquiry would be just that: a full and complete and independent inquiry. According to the letter tabled by the Minister of Justice yesterday, the Saskatchewan Justice minister will do nothing more than read court documents, some of which were written by the government, saying that we've done nothing wrong. Troubled Tories worried about this inquiry can now rest easy and enjoy the Easter weekend comfortable in the knowledge that the Paddle River probe is nothing more than a harmless diversion. To the Minister of Justice: whose idea was it to water down this investigation into this obscene government conduct?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I always thought that that hon. member was honourable and wouldn't bring that crap to the Assembly.* This letter very, very explicitly says: all documents court related. The whole investigation relates to the justice's comments that there was fraudulent or deceitful activities. Those

*See p. 1048, left col, para. 9, line 2

have a criminal connotation. It's an independent inquiry into whether any behaviour that is in any of the documents that anybody can put forward – and if there are any documents that weren't put forward in the court case, I'd ask the hon. member to bring them forward. From that, Saskatchewan will make the determination if there's criminal activity, and in fact they will head the investigation of that criminal activity. As I mentioned when I tabled the letter, there are untold amounts of paper that have been brought forward in this court case. This court case has gone through days and days of public disclosure. There's nothing more to look at other than the criminal element, if in fact there is one. If there is, action will be taken.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You can't find fraud just from reading papers.

My question to the Minister of Justice is: why didn't you give the Minister of Justice of Saskatchewan real powers to investigate?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, if you read the letter in its entirety, all of the court documents have been provided. It also says that if there's any other information or access that you need, to contact the Alberta authorities and it will be provided. This investigation will be as broad as the Minister of Justice in Saskatchewan requires to get to the bottom of whether there was any criminal activity.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental, also to the Minister of Justice: since the letter does in fact refer to the possibility of a criminal investigation, how do you expect the Minister of Justice in Saskatchewan to carry out this task when you can't or don't or won't give him the names of the suspects for which there's possible criminal investigation?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I'm very surprised that someone with legal training and a person that has been through the court system would not recognize that every person that has been involved in the Opron affair, in the sense of getting contracts or giving information, has been through discovery, examinations. All of that is delineated in those documentations. If in fact there's any question that they aren't, the letter very specifically says that the minister from Saskatchewan can contact Alberta for any further information and in fact all information that's available.

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

Social Assistance

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The cities of Edmonton and Calgary have described in tragic detail the picture of devastation caused by the cuts to social assistance. We were all encouraged when the Premier and the Minister of Family and Social Services met with some single mothers who are struggling to survive on assistance. The Premier not only agreed to review the cuts, but he also said: yes, people are being hurt; there's no doubt about it, and they ought not to be. My questions are to the Premier. Having acknowledged that the system fails these Albertans, what has the Premier done to correct it?

MR. KLEIN: No, Mr. Speaker, we are not acknowledging that the system fails Albertans; we're saying that the system will make it better for Albertans. The reforms that have been explained by the hon. Minister of Family and Social Services obviously are to

get people off the welfare rolls, back into the work force through job experiences, through job retraining and skills upgrading. The minister has always said that if there are people who fall through the cracks, if there are people who need our help and are not getting that help, then let us know about these people, and we will see what we can humanly do to make sure that their needs are met.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, the system is failing.

Perhaps the Premier could answer: what could be more high needs than a single mother considering giving up her children or, even worse, considering suicide, as the city of Edmonton's report revealed to you, sir?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I really take exception to that particular statement, because as I understand it, the minister and his officials asked for that particular report from the city of Edmonton. I stand to be corrected, but I was told by the minister that they would not release that report to the department.

MRS. HEWES: No, not correct, Mr. Speaker. The report was released, and we all have copies of it, Premier. [interjection] Yes, indeed. Everyone has copies of that report.

Mr. Speaker, my last question is: would the Premier tell us why his government has never held and is refusing to hold public hearings on the consequences of cuts to social assistance?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there certainly has been consultation with various caregiving groups.

I stand corrected. Indeed, the report has been released, but when the minister and his officials asked for details and the names of the specific people, the city refused to give those names.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs wishes to augment.

DR. WEST: In the question they were alluding to the fact of the massive cuts. I just wanted to say that I'm responsible for delivering an unconditional FCSS grant, and we just topped it up at \$1.9 million, plus left it at the same level as it was last year. That grant has two options in which the city could still designate it and collect the Canada assistance program that goes with it. The moneys that like the city of Edmonton here says it's cut – now has \$500 million out of the hon. minister of social services plus FCSS that has stayed totally intact. So I fail to realize where the massive cuts have come in social assistance. Perhaps some of the agencies should better target their programs to the needs that people are seeing on the street today.

head: Members' Statements

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Three Hills-Airdrie.

Linden Seniors' Residence

MS HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity today to tell the Assembly about a seniors' lodge that has just been built in my constituency. The Linden Benevolent Society started this project approximately seven years ago. As was the tradition of the day, they asked the government for money, apparently more than once. For whatever reason they were turned down. A lesser group probably would have quit at that point, but this group decided that this building needed to be done. They had an option to go out and borrow money, and they chose not to do that. Instead, they came up with a very novel approach. They went to prospective renters and to families of prospective renters

for this lodge and convinced them to invest \$41,000 each, interest free, in their future security and comfort. They needed 12 such investors, and they found them. The lodge is now open, and suites are being rented. The medical needs will be met by home care. Food service and maintenance are both contracted out.

3:00

The village of Linden is a very small community that wanted to ensure that their residents didn't have to leave the area when they no longer wished or no longer were able to live on their own. What this little village has accomplished is nothing less than showing all of us once again what Alberta was all about before the money days when government tried to do all things for all people. They are living proof of the old adage that where there's a will there's a way. Whenever I need a reminder, Mr. Speaker, that deficit reduction doesn't have to be viewed as a crisis but rather as an opportunity, all I have to do is drive through my constituency, and they make darn sure I know why I was elected.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

School Board Amalgamation

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to take a couple of minutes of the House's time to talk about something that I think both sides of the House seem to agree on but that I find as I'm going out through the rural areas of the province a great deal of concern about. That's the amalgamation of the school boards. I think the public certainly backs up the idea, but they are very concerned that they're going to be left out of the decision-making process of what area, what school board they're going to be shoved into. In other words, they're very afraid of a shotgun wedding that they may not approve of or, even worse, an arranged wedding that they had nothing to say about.

It's easy to understand, Mr. Speaker. Historically, our country was settled by people, whether they were Calvinists, Quakers, Catholics, or whatever, who wanted control of their schools. They've seen school control move away as far as their religious philosophy is concerned, and I think they're willing to buy that, but they're very worried now that they're going to get shoved into one area or another that they don't particularly like. I've run quite often into school supporters that feel they have been left out, and I would like to suggest to the government, and both sides of the House could work on it, that there could be some sort of a way – let's say that 10 or 15 percent of the voters in a school district wanted to have a referendum as to which school district they would join, they'd be able to do that. That would be putting participatory democracy out there. It would be helping the government, helping the opposition, because I don't think either side of the House is brilliant enough to be able to decide what school district should go where.

I do think, though, that the public out there, who are used to running their own schools, should have a say, if there's enough of them involved, whether they join one division or another division. Right now the decisions seem to be being made by bureaucrats in here, and I think it comes back and reflects on politicians. It's something we should be doing rather than the bureaucracy.

Thank you.

Service Industry

MR. COUTTS: Mr. Speaker, the service industry is the largest and fastest growing sector of the Alberta economy. The dedicated men, women, and young people that work in this service sector make up a significant portion of our economic well-being. In

February of this year 178,700 Albertans were employed in the service industry; that's more than any other sector of the province and the economy and 600 more than there were in January. I am pleased to acknowledge the continuing prosperity of this subtle yet healthy part of our economy.

The kinds of Albertans that work in the service industry are many and varied, and their backgrounds and their personal situations are equally diverse in nature. There's the part-time waitress who needs some extra cash to make ends meet while studying her way through the University of Lethbridge. There's the pizza delivery boy from Medicine Hat who is saving up enough money so that he can travel to Europe with members of his high school band. There's the middle-aged man who has made a career for himself as a supervising manager in a major Edmonton hotel, and there's the mother of three who simply loves to sell clothing and deal with the people in a boutique in Grande Prairie.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few of the anecdotal examples of the thousands upon thousands of Albertans who work very hard in the service industry. They ought not to be patronized or demeaned with the classification of hamburger flipper or handkerchief folder. Perhaps they are anonymous, for they are not doctors or lawyers or politicians; however, some of them may be doctors or lawyers someday, and they are working in an industry because they like the atmosphere and because they simply need a starting point to get them an income to begin. Yes, some may even make a worthwhile and satisfied living or be part of a small business.

Regardless of why they work in that field, Mr. Speaker, employees in the service industry are an important part of our society, even if we don't always recognize their efforts. They are being productive, paying their fair share in taxes, and most importantly I daresay that the rest of the province would cease to function without them. My wish is that all members of this Assembly will take this opportunity to salute the employees in the service industry and perhaps develop the newfound appreciation for hamburger flippers and handkerchief folders for the example and the dedication of service that they provide.

Thank you.

head: Projected Government Business

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In anticipation of the question – and I know the Opposition House Leader would like me to move right on to this, so I will. Government business for the week beginning Monday, April 11, in the afternoon in Government Bills and Orders, we'll find ourselves in third reading, consideration of Bills 3 and 4, and if there's time, we'll go to Committee of the Whole as per the Order Paper and Standing Order 9. That'll apply each time that we're able to move to Committee of the Whole, where there is time, be it in the afternoon or the evening sessions, following Committee of Supply.

On the note of Committee of Supply, in the evening on Monday we will be in the Department of Justice and Attorney General. On Tuesday afternoon, in Committee of the Whole. On Tuesday evening in Committee of Supply we will do the estimates of the Provincial Treasurer, and if there's time, second readings. On Wednesday, April 13, in the evening Committee of Supply will be the Department of Community Development. On Thursday, April 14, Committee of Supply, the Department of Environmental Protection.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair has notice of two points of order but, before dealing with them, will deal with the points of order that were raised yesterday.

Point of Order Reflections on the Judiciary

MR. SPEAKER: Yesterday, March 30, 1994, the hon. Government House Leader raised a point of order with respect to a question asked by the Member for Edmonton-Norwood. In his preamble to a question about the Workers' Compensation Board, the hon. member opened with a reference to a court decision. It was not clear at first whether the reference was to the Court of Queen's Bench decision in the Opron Construction case or a reference to a Court of Appeal decision with respect to the Workers' Compensation Board.

The hon. Government House Leader's point of order was twofold: first, that the preamble to the question reflected on the judiciary and, second, that it was unrelated to the question. If, as appears to be the case from the submission of the Opposition House Leader on the point of order, the hon. member's opening sentence was a reference to the Opron decision and not the Court of Appeal decision, then his characterization was accurate. That decision, however, had absolutely nothing to do with the Workers' Compensation Board, nor did it have anything to do with the member's question. The decision in Opron did not of course relate to the responsibilities of the Minister of Labour, to whom the member's question was directed.

The Chair has expressed concern to members on numerous occasions about preambles. Yesterday's question by the Member for Edmonton-Norwood demonstrates the mischief that can occur when members use preambles which are irrelevant to the question and serve only to be inflammatory. The Chair would remind all hon. members to exercise restraint and care in crafting preambles so that they are succinct and relevant to the question.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

MR. SPEAKER: The second point of order was raised by the hon. Opposition House Leader with respect to comments made by the Premier in response to his question about hospital boards in Calgary. The Premier used the word "dishonest," which the Opposition House Leader submitted was unparliamentary under paragraph 489 of *Beauchesne*. Of course the hon. Government House Leader submitted that the word had been ruled parliamentary in paragraph 490 of *Beauchesne*.

As hon. members are aware and as is indicated in paragraph 486(1) of *Beauchesne*, whether a term is unparliamentary or not depends on the context and manner in which it is used. In this instance the Chair notes that the term was used during a rather heated exchange. Further, the Chair does not believe the Premier was making a direct allegation against the Opposition House Leader so as to make it unparliamentary.

The Chair would remind all hon. members that there are certain words which regardless of the context have a tendency to inflame matters.

The hon. the Premier.

3:10

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I realize that it is indeed unparliamentary to use the word "dishonest." I would like to apologize to the Legislature, to the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, and withdraw that remark, sir.

Thank you.

Point of Order Point of Order During Member's Absence

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood, if you are rising to discuss further the point of order that the Chair has dealt with . . .

MR. BENIUK: I would like a clarification. Is it the policy of this House, of the Chair, that the member who is called on a point of order will not be present when the point of order is being discussed regarding him? I had stepped out of the House in case the news media had any questions on the WCB. I just want to know what the situation is in this case.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair has no knowledge of what the point of order is about when the matter is raised. If it actually involves the hon. member, if there's information that's required, I suppose the Chair would defer, but yesterday the matter was argued, and the Chair doesn't see how the hon. member's presence in the House would have changed the Chair's decision.

Point of Order Brevity

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point of order came this afternoon in question period when the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat was asking a lengthy question to the Deputy Premier, who then favoured us with a lengthy response bordering on a member's statement and moving almost over to the corridor of a full-blown speech. My point of order is under *Beauchesne* 409 and 410, which again remind the members of the Assembly that questions and answers are supposed to be short. They are supposed to be short answers. In addition, 410 indicates that the question should be relevant and should not be calling for an opinion. In this particular case, the Deputy Premier was asked about how other provinces were dealing with interprovincial trade issues in other provinces.

As a result, Mr. Speaker – and I recognize that this is an awkward point of order to take, because our procedures here delay the argument of these points of order and allow members opposite to ramble on in their answers – what that does is cut precious seconds out of the question period, and again today it left people with questions waiting to be asked stranded on the deck, as it were. Now, I recognize that there's a convention that they may be interested in appearing at later this week, but that still does not give the Deputy Premier the opportunity, in my view, to insulate and fireproof the Premier from dealing with serious issues that affect Albertans and serious questions that are of effect to Albertans.

I recognize that this point of order is hard to advance after the horse has already left the barn, Mr. Speaker, but I would urge the House's attention to that issue.

MR. SPEAKER: Without getting argumentative, the Chair would also agree that it's rather hard to advance when a person looks at the time taken by that question, which was not as long as many other questions this afternoon.

On the question of opinion, the question was: what was the position of other provinces on this? The Chair feels that the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, having been involved in negotiations with provinces over the last several months, certainly would not be giving an opinion. He would be giving his recollection of what other provinces had said.

Speaking about time encroaching on the question period, hon. members of the opposition caucus might consider whether this practice of applauding every hon. member who gets recognized for a question might not be taking some time that could otherwise be used for the question period. The Chair recognizes that that was a very nice thing to do at the beginning of this Legislature when most members were new. It's good for the morale, but now that we're well into the Second Session, we might consider how that

affects the time. The Chair is quite sure that if this type of encouragement were taken out of the question period, we probably would have got to another question.

**Point of Order
Relevance**

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point of order: I'll cite *Beauchesne* 459(1), the item on relevance. I had asked a series of questions of the Premier, expressing to him my gratitude for meeting with a group of people on assistance to verify for himself, which he subsequently did, the effects of the cuts that have been made to social assistance, to income security. The Minister of Municipal Affairs rose and spoke to another issue: the matter of FCSS.

My questions had to do with income security. The government clearly constitutionally has a legal requirement to provide income security in the manner of food, clothing, and shelter to people who require it. The entitlements have been reduced in this regard – the shelter allowance, school fees, transportation fees – and a city of Edmonton report detailed these, giving a number of examples that I drew to the Premier's attention. The Premier subsequently indicated that the report had been received by members but that the city had not been forthcoming with information about the individuals. I submit to you that there are a number of concerns about individuals who complain being identified, Mr. Speaker, either retribution against the complainant or against the workers, who can be disciplined because they have perhaps been too compassionate, and they are required to obey the very punitive rules of the department.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs then made his comments about family and community support services. Now, this is a totally different program. It is not available. The legislation requires that it not go for assistance; it is not intended as income security for people. It does go to organizations who make a great deal of use of volunteers in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest to you that the intervention of the minister shows the paucity of his understanding of what the FCSS program is all about. I knew at the time instinctively that it was a serious mistake to transfer this very unique and useful preventive program to his jurisdiction. I submit that the minister was out of line in making his comments, that they have nothing to do with my questions to the Premier.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, the Chair is not going to challenge what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has pointed out. Getting close to the end of a rather hectic question period, perhaps the Chair should have noticed this straying from import of the original question and will try to do better next time.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Committee of Supply

3:20

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd call the committee to order.

head: Main Estimates 1994-95

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

MR. CHAIRMAN: To start off this afternoon's discussions and debates with his comments, we'll call on the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Certainly I'm pleased to rise to address some of the questions that perhaps we weren't able to answer when we ran out of time at the last presentation. So if you'll bear with me, I would like to take a little of the time allocated here today to try and answer the questions that remained unanswered as a result of the last session.

I would, too, like to recognize some members of my staff who've taken time from their busy activities to be part of this process, and I appreciate that certainly. Thank you for coming.

Again, the hon. members asked a number of excellent questions in the last appearance, and I'd like to address as many of them as you will allow me to address, Mr. Chairman. First, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East had a number of questions that I'd like to respond to. His first question dealt with the consultative process that was hosted last November and December by the standing policy committee on agriculture and rural development. The hon. member questioned the statistic viability of using the views expressed by 900 industry stakeholders who took part in the consultations and whose responses are outlined in the document *Getting Down to Business*. I'd like to point out that the responses by these stakeholders represent part of a larger, extensive, two-year process in which Alberta farmers, other members of the agricultural industry, and the agriculture ministry staff worked together to determine their vision in the future of agriculture and the food industry in Alberta.

The Creating Tomorrow consultative process began back in early 1992, and over the two-year period an estimated 3,500 people in the agricultural industry were directly involved in the consultations. An undetermined number of Albertans read and reacted to the media reports on the various meetings, conferences, speeches, and interviews on this important topic. No part of the agricultural industry was excluded, nor did any part choose not to participate. Input from all sources was used in developing the department business plan in addition to observations that the stakeholders outlined in *Getting Down to Business*.

The process isn't completed even now. As a further follow-up a series of focus groups were held across Alberta this month. In this process 180 participants at these meetings were randomly selected to represent all sizes of farms and all types of farming operations in this province. Each group was asked to comment on the direction of the industry, specifically regarding the area of safety nets and farm income support. This information is now being reviewed, and it will be written up for public distribution in the very near future. In addition, although our three-year business plan has been completed, it's also a living document that can be updated yearly as significant events occur that may indeed have input into the final process.

I'd also like to point out that in the Creating Tomorrow process part of the groups that were involved were the agrifood task force and the ag forum, and the representatives from these groups represent large farm organizations. So it's not just a few people that attended the meetings; there were also industry representatives that represented a much larger group of people as well. So indeed we feel that there was a true representation of agriculture and every form of agriculture. Mr. Chairman, we're particularly proud of our public consultative process. It's allowed everyone within the agricultural community an opportunity to help set out our policies. In fact, the consultations have been the most comprehensive yet seen in all of Canada. With that in mind, I'd be interested in knowing the basis of the hon. member's discussions and questions.

The second question that was raised by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East inquired about the fluctuation of our budget between the years '94 and '96. The major reduction occurs in

1994-95 because we're starting to reduce provincial support programs in favour of a whole-farm support type of federal/provincial program. They're being reworked, and we're now in the process of developing it into a whole-farm program. In '95-96 we hope to have a more broad-based income stabilization support program. Therefore, extra funds are being added back to the budget in '95-96 to make sure that the programs offer effective support to all farmers, not just selective commodity type of farmers. Adjustment funding is also maintained in '95-96 to allow for the transition of some of the commodities from existing price support programs to income-based program. We do not expect any further adjustment funding to be required in the year '96-97.

Mr. Chairman, the hon. member also asked why we didn't choose to get out of the gross revenue insurance program, or GRIP, as we know it now. The move toward a whole-farm safety net is being made in a careful and planned way. In order to put in place an all-encompassing whole-farm safety net, all provincial governments, the federal government, and the stakeholders will have to agree to a new national program. This process will take some time.

As well, commodity groups are at various stages of examining existing national programs such as GRIP and the national tripartite stabilization program. These programs must be wound down over a period of time with agreement from all participating bodies. The whole-farm income safety net will be put in place to accommodate commodities as they are moved out of the current national agreements which govern them. The Alberta government is committed to a whole-farm income safety net design which is production neutral and allows producers to respond to the market signals.

GRIP has given Alberta grain farmers much needed support and stability over the last three years. The Alberta government has made a concerted effort to ensure that the grain sector received adequate support during the last few difficult years. Support to the grain sector will continue over the next few years during the transition to a whole-farm program. Further, GRIP will undergo a legislative review at the end of its first five years of operation in the year 1995. At this time the direction of safety nets will have been formulated, and a sound, rational decision on GRIP can be made by all parties.

Saskatchewan grain producers face a much more serious cash flow problem compared to our producers as a result of their government's decision to withdraw from GRIP. We just met earlier in the week with all the provincial governments and the national government. Saskatchewan have almost caught themselves in a crisis situation because they've moved out of the program and they don't know where they're going and they don't know what they're going to do. They're almost in a panic situation because the process has not been thought through. We're not going to catch ourselves in that scenario.

As a final note regarding GRIP, the program has to a large extent been an effective risk management tool for Alberta producers. I'm proud of our Alberta farmers, and I believe in their integrity and commitment to agriculture. We have seen no widespread evidence of abuse of GRIP. In 1993 production reached record levels for Alberta farmers. This demonstrated the ability of our farmers to produce a crop to the best of their ability, hardly a case of farming GRIP.

The fourth question was regarding the field service sector. Mr. Chairman, the hon. member asked about the criteria that was used to decide where specialists would be located throughout the province. He also expressed concern that the furthest south pulse specialist is located at Olds. We looked at where to locate our

specialists. We placed them according to production patterns in the province. However, it must be kept in mind that there are not enough staff available to ensure that each area of specialization is represented in each and every office in the province. Specialists in two or three offices will work together to ensure that all key areas of specialization are covered. Specialists will be available to work with farmers in more than one district. All agronomists will be expected to be knowledgeable about the crops grown in those districts. In addition to their specialization, they'll also be expected to acquire a particularly high knowledge of information in areas such as cereals, oilseeds, and pulses.

3:30

In response to the hon. member's specific concern about pulse crop specialists, the special crops specialist in Lethbridge will have detailed knowledge on pulses as well as other specialty crops. In addition, agronomists will be located in communities at Taber, Medicine Hat, and Brooks and will also be expected to be knowledgeable on the production of pulse crops.

The fifth question. In a related question the hon. member wondered if replacing generalists with specialists is our way of giving some people a hidden raise. If you refer to program 4, field services, you'll note a significant reduction in the budget for 4.2, regional advisory services, allowing for some increase in capital spending to update the district office equipment. There was a reduction of \$2.37 million in spending from '93-94 to '94-95, hardly a scenario that's going to allow for an increase in spending. Therefore, we've reduced spending in a most significant manner. Although there'll be no budget reductions in many other areas of the department over the next three years, there are no plans for a further reduction in district and regional offices in the business plan.

District staff are being asked to take training and move into an area of specialization. They're being asked to do a different job than they've done in the past. Regional specialists are being redeployed to district offices that are already at the agrologist 3 level. These staff will receive no pay increases in the process. District staff who specialize will move from agrologist 2 to agrologist 3 when their training skills warrant the move. This will not be automatic. Over the next three or four years district staff will successfully become specialists and will be reclassified from agrologist 2 to agrologist 3. I should also add that all staff are being asked to take a 5 percent pay reduction in '94-95 and no increase for each of the next two years.

Mr. Chairman, the hon. member also asked about the agricultural ministry decision, as he said, to develop an information network. I respectfully submit that the hon. member has misunderstood the intention of what it is that we are setting out to do. As the ministry invests in the information networks, our intent is not so much to develop the networks but rather to provide access to them. We do not intend to own the network but to facilitate it. It is important that the latest technology be exploited to allow the ministry to partner with the private sector and provide timely information to farmers and to processors. We're committed to exploiting information technology to provide all Albertans with the necessary environment and services to develop a world-class agricultural and food industry.

Our electronic infrastructure needs to be enhanced so that we can take advantage of the existing or yet to be developed information networks that are in the process of being developed. I'm pleased to be able to share with the hon. member that the agricultural ministry has gained access to the Internet network, just as he suggested. Because the agricultural ministry staff now have access to the network, members of the agricultural and food industry will

be able to benefit from the diverse array of information the network offers.

Mr. Chairman, the hon. Member for Leduc also asked a number of excellent questions that I'd like to respond to at this time. First of all, I'd like to answer his question about the Farmers' Advocate. The Farmers' Advocate position in Alberta serves two primary functions. The first is to investigate and solve problems amongst the province's producers and to act as a mediator in disputes. The second is to act in an advisory capacity and to publish brochures on a wide range of topics of importance to the agricultural and food industry in this province. In 1992 the Farmers' Advocate also assumed administrative responsibility for the Farm Implement Act. The consolidation of administration resulted in a reduction of full-time employees, from eight to presently five. However, our usual high level of service to rural Albertans has been maintained. The position of the Farmers' Advocate is currently vacant. However, I expect a new Farmers' Advocate will be in position in the very near future. According to the 1992 annual report of the Farmers' Advocate, a total of 437 case files were reviewed by the Farmers' Advocate and 4,300 phone inquiries from all parts of the province were responded to. Such statistics are available in the annual report, which I have a copy of here and which is available.

Mr. Chairman, the hon. member also had a number of questions regarding the Alberta Food Processing Development Centre in Leduc. His questions were similar to those that were presented to me in the House in question period last Thursday, and I'd like to expand my answers offered at that time. The hon. member's first question dealt with the future marketing of the centre and its use by industry. No expensive marketing campaign currently exists to promote the centre, but it would be very wrong to say that we do not have a clear mandate to promote the facility and that we are lacking initiative. Marketing this centre is a departmentwide responsibility. It's not up to the centre staff alone. However, the most effective promotion arises from the professional relationships developed between the centre's scientists and the industry's personnel. Additional promoting of marketing occurs when department staff speak at or attend major industry functions, when they travel to other jurisdictions, or when they meet with members of the industry on matters not directly related to the centre's activities. When the centre opened in 1984, the concept was new to the industry and has taken some time to become firmly established. In recent months we've seen dramatic increases in the use of this facility, both in terms of technology and development and pilot plant use.

Mr. Chairman, in response to the hon. member's comments regarding value-added products and technology transfer, I would like to say that he's right. Adding value to our raw commodities is a subject that I feel very strongly about. The centre has a mandate to help the industry adopt new technology and develop new products. Clearly, this is happening because of a well-focused technology transfer plan and our dedicated Food Processing Development Centre staff.

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

In response to the hon. member's question about the number of scientists versus the number of technologists, I'd like to point out that there are 14 positions at the centre. Eleven of those positions are staffed by scientists or scientist-managers with one or more technical degrees. In addition, they possess considerable industry experience in meats, dairy, bakery, microbiology, packaging intrusion, and food engineering. Two technologists with industry experience and one administrative secretary complete the complement of staff. As you can see, Mr. Chairman, the centre's staff

has a very strong scientific component that is industry and product development oriented. The staff is well equipped to pursue the goals of product development and technological transfer.

Mr. Chairman, the hon. member also asked about fees charged at the centre and the cost recovery. The fees charged by the centre were established by regulation in the Department of Agriculture Act and must be adhered to by the centre staff and the clients. These range from \$75 per day for benchtop development work to \$500 per day for interim production in the pilot plant. Revenue at the centre rose from a low of \$3,150 in '86-87 to \$28,400 in '92-93, and in the current fiscal year use of the centre has increased dramatically and will be reflected by projected revenues of \$75,000. That's more than double the highest previous year, and this trend will continue into the next year. The current fee structure is under review and hopefully will be modified to reflect industry conditions and the growing demand of the centre's services.

Mr. Chairman, there may be some confusion regarding the member's question about the cereal chemist's position. Dr. Janet Panford from the Brooks horticultural centre worked at the Leduc centre for a period of months. She was covering for one staff member who was on educational leave at the time. In this new budget the centre received approval to proceed with the development of a cereal chemist position. No money was set aside until the '94-95 business plan was approved. Currently a position description has been developed and approved. An advertisement for the position appeared in *The Bulletin*.

3:40

I'd now like to turn to the questions that were raised by the hon. Member for Redwater. He raised a good question relating to the reduction in income support for '93-94 and '94-95. On a physical year basis it appears that we've reduced our spending by \$44 million. However, it should be noted that a significant amount of the funding earmarked for income support for '95-96 is in fact for the '94 tax year. Most of the funding reduction is a result of the wind down of the Crow benefit offset program and the stabilization program in '94. However, we plan to ease the transition from commodity support to a whole farm income support stabilization process for livestock effective the '94 tax year. It's very likely that the total level of income support for '94 will be similar, if not higher, relative to '93.

I'd like to respond to the hon. member's comments about duplication of agricultural research in Alberta and his call for the ministry to leave research to our universities, colleges, and private enterprise. Mr. Chairman, the benefits of agriculture and food research accrue to producers, processors, and consumers throughout this whole province. The government of Alberta has a unique and important role to play in agriculture and food research. Research and technology transfer have been indispensable components of agriculture progress in Alberta and in Canada since the 1800s. In Alberta research has significantly contributed to a \$10 billion agrifood industry that directly employs one in every three Albertans. [Mr. Paszkowski's speaking time expired] Do you want me to finish answering the questions, or how do you want to handle it?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I can ask. Can we have unanimous consent to let the hon. minister finish? Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed, if any? Okay.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: In recent years the crucial nature of agricultural research has been emphasized in the Creating Tomorrow process, a business plan, public consultations, seizing opportunities. Alberta's new economic development strategy also emphasizes the vital importance of agriculture research. I can't stress that enough. In our budget we actually increase our funding for agriculture, and that's because of the input that the farmers gave us and because of the input that our caucus has given as well. Because this is of vital importance to the progressive development of the industry.

The majority of agriculture and food research in the province is performed by organizations outside of the government of Alberta. These include the universities and colleges, the private sector, and the federal research stations. My colleague Ed Stelmach, chairman of the Alberta research institute, has fully examined the institute's role in co-ordinating agricultural research in the province. His remarks are available from the March 16 *Hansard*, and he may choose to make some comments here today.

The agricultural ministry's research efforts complement and facilitate the work performed by other organizations, and that's our intention, and that's the way that we plan on continuing. They do not duplicate them. In particular, the institute has strengthened co-operation amongst organizations that perform agriculture and food research. As well, opportunities for joint efforts among researchers from different organizations have been expanded through institute programs. Strong provincial participation and leadership are necessary to ensure that future research will continue and focus on opportunities available in Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank the hon. members for the excellent questions that were raised at the past session, and I'm looking forward to the questions that will be raised here today and will endeavour to answer them here. If we're not able to answer them today, if we don't have enough time or we don't have the proper information at the time, we'll see to it that all the questions do get answered.

Thank you very much.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to start by just adding a couple of comments on the responses that I received from the minister concerning the questions that I asked on the 16th of March. I think at that time I recognized that the consultation process that the minister had gone through in getting information about the changes that the agriculture sector wanted were among the best that the government had undertaken in any of their departments. The Creating Tomorrow process that resulted in the report that was circulated to the farmers and the interest groups in Alberta was among the best that was done. The responses that they gave in *Breaking New Ground* were then sent out and many of the people in the province took the chance to respond to the draft. The government incorporated suggestions from there. I hope the minister didn't take my comments last time to mean that I was criticizing the process. It was the best that's been done by any of the departments.

The question that I raised was when they got to the Getting Down To Business part – this is the response that was achieved from the meetings held in the fall of 1993. This was an open process. There was no attempt made to guarantee that there was a stratified sample of the people at the meetings. They were open meetings. It was people who had an interest in coming. They were allowed to come in, fill out the questionnaire. All I was saying when I questioned this was that it represents the view of the

people who attended the meetings, not a cross section, not a statistically significant sample of the people in the agriculture sector, and I was just asking the minister to interpret the results on that basis. As a statistician I had trouble if they were going to interpret this to be a direct representation of the sector. That's all I'd like to say in clarification, that it's a representation of the people who were there, not of the whole sector, and I hope the minister uses it in that way.

Similarly, they are now undertaking the process, the roundtables that he's talked about in the past two or three weeks. Here they are inviting people on a stratified basis from the sector. This is good. This is the way it should be done. This is the way that reliable results can be achieved. I commend the minister on that process. I had a chance to meet some of the people at the process that was going on in Leduc. I agree that this is the way to do it: take stratified samples. Then some degree of statistical reliability can be achieved when you interpret the results. I just wanted the minister to have my response to his comments. It's a matter of how those data are interpreted.

His response in terms of the comments on GRIP. I did not imply that the farmers of Alberta were doing anything illegal in terms of my phrase, quote, farming GRIP. What I was implying was that farmers were making very rational decisions on their cropping patterns, which given today's prices, given today's market were being distorted by the GRIP program. The GRIP program was causing the problem, not the farmers. I wasn't implying farmers were doing anything illegal in the way they were making their decisions or the way they were using the process.

The 15-year moving average prices that were being used as criteria for payout in GRIP were not reflective in some cases and for some products in terms of today's market. We've seen this winter the implications of some of that in the sense that the 15-year average price in durum was lower than what the last two or three years' prices were, and a lot of farmers moved out of durum over the last couple of years. We now have a shortage in durum because the price that was being supported by GRIP wasn't reflective and wasn't an incentive for producers to move into that, and we're now having problems with getting enough durum of any quality, never mind the highest qualities that we need in Alberta.

So this is just the comment that I was making. It wasn't an implication of the illegal activities of any of the farmers. I think the farmers are doing a good job, and they just had bad signals and in many cases were being forced into using those signals by the financial institutions.

The other comment in the answers that the minister gave in terms of the location of the specialists. It's my understanding that almost 30 percent of the pulses right now are raised in the southern part of the province, and . . .

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Sixteen.

DR. NICOL: It's 16. Even with four specialists in the province in that area one of them probably should have been there because of the irrigation opportunities. It's a totally different aspect and a totally different concept of the specialization that's needed to represent those products in the south. So, you know, out of the four specialists in that area one of them should have been designated to increase their knowledge as it relates to the irrigation part of the pulse crops. The minister has given us some information on that, and I think they're now pretty well set, so we'll just pass on that. He has my comments.

The other one that I'd like to just follow up on a little more is: he made comments that the specialists are going to be knowledgeable in all the other areas so that they can serve the farmers in

their community. Effectively what the minister is saying is that these specialists are going to be generalists, because agriculture now is so complex that you cannot be a specialist in livestock and crops and irrigation and marketing and production. Specialization is a necessity to get the best information out to the producers, to the processors, to other people involved in the sector, and I would challenge that if the minister expects, quote, the specialists to have a knowledge in every area that's relevant to agriculture in their geographic location, they are generalists; they're not specialists.

3:50

What I'd like to do is move on to a couple of other issues that have come up in terms of my review of the budget. First of all, I'd like to commend the minister on his comments in terms of the shift to research that's going on in the sector. He covered a little bit about the relationship between the public dollar and the private dollar in the research function. The idea that I'd like to have him expand a little more on is some of the partnerships that he's developing. I recognize that there have been some going on allowing the commodity associations or the commissions to get involved in prioritizing research. I think this is a very good idea. I understand there's some co-operative research funded by the commissions, by the Alberta government, and also by the federal government at some of their research stations. Would the minister give a direction on how this is going, the focus that's going to be taken, and if he sees the supervision of this research moving more and more into the commodity associations, the commissions, and that, in terms of determining where funding is directed.

The other issue that we talked about a little bit the other day but I'd like to expand on a little more is information transfer. Basically, what we're seeing here is a lot of competition with the emerging private sector, and this brings out some type of caution, I guess, in terms of cutting out the private sector. The minister has talked about a lot of the aspects of the department that are going to be evaluated for cost recovery and whether or not some of the costs of the services can be claimed back from the users. I commend the minister on his statements in the business plan where he was talking about trying to collect money back when there's a direct economic benefit to the person who gets that service. I think this is a good process. This is a good criteria. In terms of information this is much more difficult to measure the direct economic benefit from, and I would suggest that maybe in these areas cost recovery is a little more difficult to achieve unless you're getting directly into marketing kind of information.

I'd like to just expand a little bit on the marketing aspect of it. As these specialists are put in place, some of these specialists across the province are now going to be, quote, marketing specialists. What we're going to find is that these people now are going to be giving out information, giving out advice to farmers in direct competition with a lot of the private-sector marketing agencies that are out there. As these specialists accumulate or attract a clientele, it's going to make it much more difficult for a lot of the private-sector marketing firms that are out there right now to maintain their foothold in the industry. The business plan suggested that a fee for service would be phased in for some of these marketing specialists, for some of the information that's collected. I would suggest to the minister that it might be more equitable to the private-sector firms if they were to cold turkey it. You're either fee for service or you're not. In the sense that if you have a private firm out there now who is making a living giving marketing advice or giving other advice to the farm sector and all of a sudden they're going to have specialists there representing Alberta agriculture, a farmer who acts rationally will go to the free or the lower cost alternative as long as the specialists are

equally well trained. I would hope that the minister is making sure that his specialists are, quote, specialists.

What you're going to find is that for the period that the cost recovery is phased in, this is going to be a very critical time for the private firms that are out there. We're always going to go to where we can get equal information at a lower cost, and we're going to have some of these clients of private industry firms now going to the specialists that are provided by the government, and these private industry firms are going to be driven out of the market. Then four years from now when the cost for the government specialists becomes the same as the private-sector firms, the private-sector firms will be gone because they couldn't compete in the meantime. So I would just ask that the minister consult with his department and consult possibly with some of these specialists that are out there doing information provision for the ag sector now and try and work out some kind of an equitable basis where it won't infringe on their market which they have developed over the past four, five, 10 years, however long they've been in business. This seems to be an issue that needs to have some clarification.

There was one other part. In terms of the budget you're focusing on basically commercial agriculture. There was a comment made in the business plan which I caught after March 16, our last chance to ask questions. It basically was that the client of the department is going to be that part of the sector which can help to achieve the department's goals. In other words, I interpreted it to be that part of the agriculture sector which can contribute toward the value added and the commercialization and the economic future of agriculture. I recognize that this is the economic future of our sector. It's these people who can participate and can participate fully. I would just like to ask the minister where in his budget and how in his budget he plans to deal with the fringe groups of the agriculture sector. I think a lot of that group is going to have to be dealt with in the context of facilitating either expansion into the commercial sector or exit out of the sector. Where in his budget is he going to deal with these kinds of transition programs for the relevant groups that are being caught and being left out of the negotiation or out of the emphasis of the main part of his program?

Continuing on with the cost-recovery aspect a little bit, you spoke in the business plan and in your budget about an increase in cost recovery from the grazing leases. Here we're going to have to look at the implication that this has on the control of leased land. I would suggest that as lessees begin to pay more of the total cost that's associated with it, they'll also want to have more control over it. They'll want their control to more reflect the same as if they were leasing land from the neighbour. They would like to have that same level of control. How is the minister going to deal with the issues of multiple use? These are public lands, after all, and we have to look at the aspects of recreation, vacation, and just basic getting out there and enjoying these lands by other people in the province, because they are public lands. There's a commitment on behalf of our governments to keep these land bases in the public domain, and the public should have some access to them. So I would ask for some clarification in terms of cost recovery and its trade-off relative to the position of access by, quote, noncontract users.

The next thing that just in a general way I'd like to deal with is the policy focus. I go through the budget and I see three or four different places where there are line items that deal with policy secretariats, policy formulation, policy committees. I was wondering if the minister had thought of in any way combining these into a centralized policy group that would focus on the aspects of policy from a broader context rather than fracturing it

into a small number of independent groups. If the minister could just elaborate a little on how these groups work together and how they deal with overlap issues instead of separate issues.

4:00

The final general area that I'd like to address right now is the aspect of the termination of the Crow offset and how it is now being taken out of the budget. This is tied in with the review of the grain transportation Act and the effectiveness that it's had for Alberta producers. Before the decision to terminate this program was made, was there a discussion with the producers in terms of how this could affect some of the value-added industries? In question period today we heard a question by one of the members dealing with the role that ethanol might play as a future value-added industry for Alberta. The minister of economic development responded in connection with the 9-cent gas tax equivalent subsidy that was going to be allowed for ethanol. Under the offers for participation that were sent out to interested parties dealing with ethanol, there was also I think a 3-cent-per-litre equivalent eligibility from the Crow offset. Is that now going to disappear out of the ethanol program, or is that going to be substituted by some other mechanism? As the Crow offset is removed from the grain producers, it's not going to be eligible for the feeding sector. Is it also going to disappear for the individuals interested in pursuing the possibility of ethanol production? Because it was one of the possible subsidies that was listed on that offer to participate by the government that they were dealing with.

There was another issue that came up on the Crow offset, and this caused some concerns. I've had a number of phone calls in the last week in connection with it. The dual process of terminating the Crow offset: there was one process for commercial feeders who bought their cattle and bought their grain, and another process for feeders who had their own cattle and their own grain that they were feeding, basically their own grain that they were feeding. The termination date for one of them was March 31, today, and with the other one we're allowed to have two months' inventory of grain eligible. There was a lot of concern by the first group, the group that had to terminate on March 31. Their cattle are now halfway through the gain period, probably another 60 to 90 days of feeding before they would be marketable, yet the direction they're getting from the minister's staff deals with the issue that – well, in order to measure the amount of grain that they've consumed by March 31, you've got to take them down to a scale, weigh them, and bring them back so that we can judge the gain and the eligibility. This seems to cause a little bit of unnecessary harassment, not necessarily harassment but extra burden on those cattle and the producers as they participate.

So I'll step down at this time and allow other people to participate.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Macleod. [interjection] Sorry, Mr. Minister. Sorry about that.

The hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Macleod, in view of he's bigger.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In view of the fact that the minister would like to speak, then I'll limit my comments to one particular area that requires some attention from the department of agriculture, although it's not basically in an agricultural area.

The problem has to do with a small area in the Crowsnest Pass. In that particular area, although they don't have a lot of grain and

feed, they certainly have a problem with weed control. The problem stems from some of the sources coming through from the British Columbia boundary, through their natural trading area such as Highway 3, through the CPR lines, and of course the rivers. Of course, our famous west winds also add to the spread of the seeds in the spring and the summer.

Again, while the Crowsnest Pass is not agriculturally based, the areas around the Crowsnest Pass to the north and to the east are agriculturally based. This corridor acts somewhat like a barrel of a gun, firing a constant stream of restricted and noxious weeds through to the rest of the province in those ways that I had mentioned. The result, of course, with the growing of the weeds, is the large amounts of dollars being spent by our municipalities, improvement districts, and our government to do our best to control these weeds.

The weeds that are in question are unique in that they're prevalent in that area now because of many years of not having enough control. The serious threat is by the knapweed and blueweed at this point in time. It would seem that we need to have a bigger concentration on how we can stop and diffuse these weeds. Although some of it has been successfully eradicated in the corridor over the last 15 years, that success is basically due to public awareness and co-operative programs combined with joint funding between the MD of Pincher Creek, the MD of Crowsnest, improvement district No. 6, and resource companies such as the provincial government, of which agriculture and forestry and lands and environment are also involved. Reinfestation from adjacent areas in B.C. requires continued reinspection and control of the small patches also. Many of the local groups who are concerned about the environment and tourism and wildlife feel that there's a direct concern for control in these areas.

Other weeds that are present – I've mentioned the knapweed and the blueweed – are toadflax, scentless camomile, leafy spurge, and ox-eye daisies, also species that are disrupting the natural balance of the area. These species do not distribute just to wildlife habitat and if left unchecked will eventually destroy the range for bighorn sheep and elk as well as livestock in parts of the prairie.

Control and eradication of the knapweeds and other serious weeds are required in an intensive campaign to prevent the summer seed production's dispersal in the late summer. In some areas we must reinspect and control these seedlings over the winter. Even though the MDs and the improvement districts and Alberta agriculture and public lands contribute, my main problem is that there just doesn't seem to be enough dollars to go around to look after the problem. Even though they have a \$27,000 budget, which, I might add, is supplemented over a third by companies such as Nova, Canadian Pacific railroad, tourism groups, youth, and concerned citizens, every year because of the amount of weeds we have, the budget runs out and we're unable to finish the job, so to speak. If we continue to not finish the job, in future years we're going to be faced with a major problem of how we are going to eradicate all these weeds, and I believe that in the long run, then, we will look at spending more money than we are annually right now.

One thing I failed to mention when it came to spreading some of the weeds is that it's also done by recreation vehicles that come into the area and spend the weekend, and then they're transported into cities and towns adjacent, on the prairie, and eventually sometimes even make it into Saskatchewan. So if we can solve it at the source, it won't spread to the rest of our province.

4:10

There's one other solution that has been looked at by the MD of Pincher Creek, and that's the solution of biological control of

blueweed. Although chemical and manual control are used, they're time consuming and they're expensive. Biocontrol should prove effective after some more testing, and it would be my hope that Alberta agriculture would continue to look at that low cost alternative.

Given the current trends in environmental protection, biocontrol could also be positive from a public relations standpoint. Biocontrol would not only be limited, but insects could migrate across the neighbours' fence lines to increase the area controlled. Biological control could be less impeded by such factors as low brush cover, vegetation, proximity to water courses, livestock presence, and rough terrain. Currently the federal government is participating in some initiatives to help eliminate blueweed through biocontrol methods. So it's my hope . . . The minister says to be short.

So I'll ask the department on behalf of the MD of Pincher Creek, the MD of Crowsnest Pass, ID No. 6, Nova, and the CPR if we can work together with those municipal districts to see if we can eradicate it at the source, because I think that's the important thing, that we get rid of our weed problem at the source so it doesn't spread throughout our beautiful province. The only way we can do that, Mr. Minister, is if we can look at allocating some more funds to our present budgets, and I would appreciate it if you would give that some consideration.

Thank you, sir.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll try to roll along too. The minister answered some of my questions but not all of them. I had asked when a full-time Farmers' Advocate would be named, and he said very soon, but I didn't think that was good enough. I was just wondering if he wanted to try to narrow the time frame down a little bit.

Sorry, Mr. Chairman. I dropped something on the floor. I was not genuflecting in front of the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

The other thing, Mr. Minister, that you may not be aware of is that we're having quite a debate with the Energy minister on the abandonment of orphaned wells, and we need your help. An orphaned well, Mr. Chairman, is a well where whomever drilled it has moved off, disappeared, and they can't collect off him. The government is putting a Bill through whereby the government can come in and plug the bottom of the hole itself, get it in shape and so on, generally at taxpayers' expense, which in turn will be paid for by a levy against all the oil companies. But, Mr. Minister, they are not going to reclaim the surface.

As you know, somebody that they can't locate has probably not been paying any rent to the surface owner for a number of years; otherwise, it wouldn't be an orphaned well. If he was paying rent, maybe we'd know about it. Well, the government is coming along now and going to abandon the bottom of the hole and then leave the surface unreclaimed. So the surface owner then has to go on and go after the government and so on and so forth. I think that's a dirty trick, and I would like to see the minister and his department put some heat on the Minister of Energy and say: "Look, if you're moving in the bulldozers and equipment anyhow to reclaim the hole, why not reclaim the surface? Give it back to the farmer." Otherwise, you've got a source of weeds, old steel tanks, pump jacks, everything still hanging around there maybe for years, maybe forever. I think the minister should talk to the Minister of Energy and say, "Look, pass this opposition amendment which says that once you go in there and reclaim the hole, you also reclaim the surface." That's all there is to it.

The other area – I might have missed it, Mr. Minister, but I still don't understand why we have an Alberta Grain Commission. I think it could be abolished. I think we're paying a quarter of a million dollars a year there. That is a waste of time and money. It could be abolished. I'd be interested in why the minister would think it cannot be abolished.

The other area I would be interested in the minister commenting on is veterinarian services, particularly in northern Alberta. Isn't it about time we considered privatizing that? The government has supplies, office space, lab space, and mileage for veterinarians. We may still be able to pay the mileage, but I don't see why we don't get out of VSI, Veterinary Services, by selling, on a competitive bid maybe, back to the veterinarians their office space, what they need.

The other thing too, Mr. Chairman, I may not have heard is why the Dairy Control Board is not restructured to fit into the marketing council. Do we really need the Dairy Control Board as distinct and separate from the marketing council?

Now, ethanol has always been one of my pets. I know that one of the members brought it up today. It might have been Whitecourt-Ste. Anne; I can't remember. I think we're again missing a wonderful opportunity, and once again I would ask the minister to talk to the Minister of Energy and co-operatively put forward in the House a Bill that would mandate the use of 10 percent ethanol at the pump. It would be good for farmers in two ways: first of all, it would be using grain, and the free enterprise market would supply it; secondly, it would be at the pump. See, most fuel that farmers use they don't buy at the pump. I'm getting a hell of a lot of noise from behind me. Hey, members. Mr. Chairman, would you jump on my own caucus there for a minute?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. N. TAYLOR: All right.

If there was a mandated use of ethanol, it would not impinge against the farmer; it would help him, because the farmers do not buy the fuel they use in their fields from the pump. They buy it bulk, and we'd only be talking about pump. I think it's long past the time when the environmentalists, the energy people, and the agriculture minister should co-operate in that government and put out a Bill mandating the use of ethanol. Let free enterprise decide where it comes from. Whether we import it, make it ourselves, or start up a still in the basement, it doesn't matter.

Hunting still bothers me. Vote 7.0.5 has been reduced 32 percent, from \$1.7 million to \$1.1 million, the way I read it. I still do not buy the minister's explanation that we can't let farmers hunt or shoot the wildlife that is damaging their property. Actually, if the wildlife is in large enough amounts to damage their crops, there are enough so that they can be pared down. Obviously they're not a rare bird or a rare animal if they're damaging the crops; they're in plentiful supply. So why not issue farmers hunting licences that are restricted to their own property?

Now, I know this'll drive a lot of the city slickers ape because they still figure that they should be able to whip out through the country in their four-wheel drives, when they're not driving on the lawns, and try to bump off a few of God's little critters that are wandering around. The thought that the farmer might be eating them himself or shooting them to try to protect his haystacks or his crop makes them go ape because they figure that, after all, God has put the farmer out there to feed these animals for the city guy to shoot when he has weekends off. I don't agree with that.

4:20

The wildlife damage thing has been cut down. Why pay taxpayers' money to control wildlife when a farmer will be quite

tickled to do it himself? Just allow him or her to shoot on their own property only where those environmentalists say there's a surplus of those animals or birds that are causing damage. He'd still have to get a permit. He wouldn't be allowed to go out and shoot the only Bambi that's in the whole township. I mean, if you're in an area like I live in, for instance, where you get more deer looking in your window than you do sparrows, you can see why it's all right to bump off one now and again and save the taxpayer a lot of expense. I don't know if that was funny or not.

Okay. Number four, 4-H. This kind of puzzled me. I can't find in the votes, Mr. Minister, where we cut, but we've cut 4-H. I know that because I can hear the screams, and they have been writing me letters. I could see that, and I was quite willing to defend that the government said they had to cut somewhere, but then all of a sudden the other day – and I've lost the clipping; I'm sorry – I saw where the lottery funds had voted something like \$3 million to \$5 million for leadership courses in rural Alberta.

MR. WICKMAN: That was for Barrhead.

MR. N. TAYLOR: For Barrhead? Oh, no, no. The only leadership course Barrhead has had in the last year was my tour there last week.

I wanted to mention that we're putting money in the lottery funds for 4-H . . . [interjections] Look, I'm loaded for bear. I don't want to be distracted by any squirrels here now. [interjections] Don't laugh so hard.

Why cut the funding for 4-H and then vote money over here in the lotteries for leadership? I mean, the 4-H are the best group. They teach our young people leadership and put together the leadership that we have going out there, so I don't see cutting them and then on the other hand voting extra money for leadership.

I have another small item here: phone charges. Now, I brought this up to the minister the other day, but obviously I didn't explain it well enough because he said that AGT is actually free enterprise. Well, long-distance charges are free enterprise – that's competitive; you can compete anywhere – but laying the phone lines into the farmer is not. As you know, our Legislature a few years ago voted that the farmer would put up about \$400 or \$500, and the taxpayer would, and they would lay a phone line into the farm. [interjection] That's right. They did that. It was a good program. It worked out.

What most of us don't know, unless you're an engineer or a technician, is that nearly always they laid in two lines, because it's very easy to just lay two lines into a farmhouse. If you're already getting paid a thousand dollars to lay in one, you might as well run the other copper line along. It's very cheap. Wire, as you know, is cheap; maybe 20 bucks' worth of wire is all to connect it up. Now, because farmers want to connect up faxes and machines and that, AGT is going back and charging them \$500, \$600 dollars for the second line, the same price they paid for the first line. But the point is that two lines were put in at government expense in the first place. So I think they're ripping off a lot of our rural farmers. The farmer can't do anything about it because that's the only company allowed to lay in, yet the government has already paid for them to lay in two lines. So all the farmer should have to pay is the \$30 or \$35 connecting it up, not \$500 or \$600. I think the minister should instruct somebody in his department to go check with AGT and say, "Hey, you know, you're taking a little bit of licence here, charging for him to hook up that second line when the second line was already into the buildings and laid into the buildings at taxpayers' expense."

Whipping along, I'm still not sure – I know you made a very stout defence of ag research. Maybe you're right, but I still think it would be worth the minister's money and this government's money to have a third party investigate the whole field of agriculture research, because asking your own department whether agriculture research – first of all, everybody agrees that ag research is important. It's good. I mean, it's nice to know there's good research on food. My argument is that I doubt whether in this day and age retaining your own research staff contributes to the overall knowledge. That's why I think it would be worth while to hire a consultant that has no axe to grind to see just whether or not the research turned out by our own people here is worth what we're paying for it compared to what is already coming out of the private sector and the university sectors. I think it would be worth while having an independent study. You mention now how wonderful it is, but let's face it: I've run research staffs, but it's been in oil and other areas, and asking my own research staff whether they are worth what they're being paid is really not a very smart idea, because they're bound to come back and say what wonderful things they've discovered and how important they are. I think you need a third-party evaluation to really see whether we need the tremendous amount of money that we spend in the Alberta government on agriculture and whether it couldn't be replaced by the private sector and our universities and colleges.

The Crow offset. I'm not going to argue with the government on getting rid of the Crow offset, although I think they're maybe not doing it as well as they should, because it appears to me that some feeders will get an advantage over farmers. In other words, there's about a two-month lag in there. Rather than getting into that, I would like to see this government really get aggressive again on paying the farmer the western grain transportation rate, because I think as long as we keep fooling around and taking our time here, the federal government's going to keep chipping away at it 8 or 10 or 12 percent a year. I think I detect a feeling out there – because even such an old curmudgeon like myself, who has always been for paying the railroads, I'm ready to change to your side of the question and pay the farmer. I think also in the department of agriculture in Ottawa, with its minister from Saskatchewan who was very, very familiar how important the Crow rate was, we have a friend there. I think now is the time to strike, and I think there's a united front that could be made by all the western Premiers and western governments, along with the federal minister of agriculture, to get the Crow paid to the farmer on a long-term bond. I think that in all the years I've been associated with agriculture and as agriculture critic, I've never seen a time more ripe for everybody to agree on it. Because we all realize that if we sit there fighting and arguing whether it should go to the railroads or to the farmer, we're going to lose it, number one.

Number two, it used to be that we were a single-crop country; everybody was just wheat. Now we all realize we can get into so many other areas and diversify. I think the time is ripe, and if I may offer advice from the Liberal side of the House and knowing the federal Liberals, I think this would be a time to move. I would certainly encourage the minister to go after it, because I think it's there to do that.

The next area: rural development. I notice, reading the new ADC financial report, that they mention community bonds and going ahead there. They seem to be further ahead than what I've heard in this Legislature. I wonder if the minister could tell me whether they had picked out the three or four areas they're talking about as an experimental area and whether they were going to go for 60, 80, or 90 percent. ADC gives the impression, when you

read the report put out by the president – I forget his name. He used to be the . . . [interjection] Yeah, that's right. When I read the ADC – and maybe I didn't read it right either – they give me the impression that it's just there. They're going to do it right away. They look as if it's going ahead. The minister shakes his head that you haven't picked out the four areas. I'd sure like to offer my constituency as one area, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman, because after all, they wouldn't want to make it look like it was a government initiative. They'd want it someplace in northeast Alberta, and I'll offer my constituency. I've already offered my constituency to the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne to experiment in highway building, and he seems to be taking the bait.

The last one was the plebiscite on barley marketing, the continental market. I think there again we could push for that, and we should get a plebiscite under way.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4:30

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Roper.

MR. CHADI: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I watched and listened to the hon. minister speak about agriculture. He speaks from the heart when he speaks because he feels so strongly about it, and rightfully so. I think the hon. minister's heart and soul is in his department, and Albertans can be proud of that fact. But there are some things that I'd like to correct the hon. minister on, and that is that there are members on this side of the House who have their heart and soul in agriculture too. Not everybody is from a big city like either Edmonton or Calgary and doesn't understand the issues, because we do. Some of us on this side of the House understand the issues, maybe not to the degree that the hon. minister does, and that's why we're here asking the questions, hon. minister.

Mr. Chairman, I would hope that the hon. minister would allow me to ask some of these questions and give me some of his patience in answering them, because it's been some time since I've been associated with the agricultural industry. Years and years ago I grew up in a little town, and I'll tell you, when it's 80 degrees above and you're out there stacking hay, it ain't a job that I'd want to do again, particularly with those little round bales. I mean, that was the biggest chore ever. The person that invented those big round bales, though, that guy was a saint, because it sure took the work away from the young kids growing up on a farm. It was truly hardship.

Allow me to start my questioning with program 1, departmental support services. I'm going to start by saying that with all other programs within the department, it seems to me that in the major estimates book, the 1994-95, we actually see a description on the left-hand side of the page when you open up the book. When I look at program 1, I don't see that, and I don't see it in other departments either, Mr. Chairman. I'm wondering if the minister wouldn't take this to heart and next time around give us a description of some of the elements that are in this estimates book. Because when you look at things like, for example, the Farmers' Advocate, the Surface Rights/Land Compensation Board, finance and human resources, internal audit, et cetera, et cetera, I would have liked very much to be able to look at the opposite page and say to myself: that's just a one-liner or a two-liner to indicate exactly what this is.

Now, it isn't difficult to understand what the Farmers' Advocate is. We know that, and the Surface Rights/Land Compensation board; we take for granted that we know it. The internal audit.

Now, I can imagine what the internal audit would be, but again a description, a one-liner, would certainly make an awful lot of sense in this area, in Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, especially in this day and age because times have changed so much from what we used to know. I mean, we have computers now. We're talking about research administration and systems development and human resource transition. You tell a farmer all about those three things that I've just mentioned, and I tell you, you've lost him. And here I am, elected as his MLA, and I'm confused. So that's why I'm asking the hon. minister to perhaps maybe give us that one-liner.

With regard to the Farmers' Advocate on 1.0.4, my information about the Farmers' Advocate is, one, that it's an excellent idea. I think – and correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Chairman – the Farmers' Advocate acts as an ombudsman. The problems that have come forth the Ombudsman or the Farmers' Advocate's office has handled in a decent way, but we're spending \$399,000 this year, anticipated expenditures. When we go back to 1992-93 and see that it was \$528,000, it seems to be up and down, because last year we were budgeting \$424,000, then we went and actually, it looks like, perhaps expended \$374,000, and then this year we're going back up to \$399,000. My question would be: how is it that we've come up with the figure of \$399,000? Is it because we are trying to cut back a little bit? I notice it went up, but we've cut back considerably since 1992, but then up from 1993-94. So in the spirit of perhaps deficit reduction and cost cutting, I'm wondering where that took place within this subprogram.

Also within the Farmers' Advocate I'm concerned about who is the Farmers' Advocate. I understand that perhaps maybe there is a vacancy within that office and the Farmers' Advocate has not been chosen. Or are we looking for a Farmers' Advocate? Are we still searching for someone, Mr. Chairman? If indeed we are searching for that someone within that subprogram, are we going to utilize the Public Service Commissioner? The Premier has indicated time and time and time again that for any appointments to major boards – I would imagine this would be one of those major-type boards – we would go through the Public Service Commissioner and have the Public Service Commissioner shortlist and actually come out with a satisfactory candidate. Now, I would hope that that's what we're going to do. My understanding is that we're now working with maybe some assistants that are running the Farmers' Advocate office.

My next question within this subprogram is: when we talk about the Farmers' Advocate, are we talking about more than one office here? Are we talking about something in southern Alberta and something in northern Alberta, or is it managed out of the capital city of Edmonton? Can we get some information in that respect? And how much staff do we have in that office? Mr. Chairman, the minister has indicated on one hand, so I guess I've got my answer there.

The question about whether or not the Public Service Commissioner would be included in this selection process is of vital importance, and let it be shown on record that the hon. minister is nodding, approving that that is indeed the case.

Another question would be within the Farmers' Advocate area. I'm wondering if the advocate would actually get involved in things like financial problems that a farmer or somebody in the agricultural industry would have. I'm thinking of many, many occasions when Farm Credit starts to move in or one of the major banks or ADC moves in. Whenever they come in there, would the Farmers' Advocate act as an ombudsman to try to mediate? Is that part of the role, or has it been considered? If it has been, it's probably not a bad idea, because I know that many times a mediator would actually go a long way to resolving these prob-

lems, because lenders certainly don't want to take back property. Lenders want to see the entity succeed, and mediation does play a vital role. I would hope that if the Farmers' Advocate isn't doing that now, perhaps there may be an expansion within that department, just on a trial basis if it isn't working now, to see how it does work, because it is really important, Mr. Chairman.

4:40

The area of standing policy committee on agriculture and rural development is not really a large expenditure. It's an expenditure, or an anticipated one, of \$92,000 this year. Again, comparable to last year of \$62,000, we've increased by \$30,000. The part that raises my curiosity is the fact that in 1993-94, last year, we had estimates of \$112,000, but we only expended \$62,000, and this year we're saying we're going to jump that by \$30,000. Then also looking back at 1992-93 in the estimates book, Mr. Chairman, it was at \$19,000. So there's a considerable difference here, and I'm wondering what the role of this committee really is. Again, on the opposite side of the page from where it's listed on page 39 of the estimates, on page 38, where normally we would see some descriptions, it would be nice to have that one-liner and be able to look at that and say: "Oh, yes. That's what the standing policy committee on agriculture and rural development does. It's not a bad idea – or a good idea, or it ought not to be there at all." So an explanation of the role of this committee would be nice to have.

Also, I'd like to know who is on this committee, Mr. Chairman. How many is it comprised of? I suppose my next question would be: were the people that sit on this committee chosen by the Public Service Commissioner? I mean, did we actually go through that route? If not – and it was done quite some time ago because it would appear to me that even back in 1992-93 this committee was in place. There may have been changes in membership on this committee, but if those changes are taking place now, is it possible that we would now include that as well for the Public Service Commissioner in shortlisting these different candidates to sit on these boards?

Also, I'd like to know about the remuneration that is paid to people that are on the standing policy committee on agriculture and rural development. It seems to me that the \$30,000 increase in expenditures this year would mean that we're either putting on more staff or doing extra work, and if these committee members are doing extra work, then they're certainly entitled to be paid for it. If that's the case, I'd kind of like to know how much it is that we're actually paying them, if it's the standard remuneration or not.

The area of 1.0.6, finance and human resources. In this area here we're spending \$2.986 million, and I don't understand at all what finance and human resources is for \$3 million worth of expenditures. When you look, we also have an area that is called human resource transition, and we're spending \$4.1 million there as well. Are the two related, and is there some kind of duplication in there? If there is, is there a way that we can tighten it up? I'd like to reiterate the fact that if we had some kind of a one-liner on the page opposite, we would have a clearer understanding of what this is, and it would perhaps alleviate some of this questioning that goes on.

With regard to 1.0.7, internal audit, I look through the estimates book, Mr. Chairman, and right throughout the estimates book there is nowhere, except for the Department of Justice, that I see that they have included an internal audit. The internal audit sits similar to what the expenditures were last year, in the amount of \$184,000. I'd like to know why is it that Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has an internal audit procedure, yet most other

departments – I think all other departments with the exception of Justice – don't have that. I'm wondering if the Auditor General is the one who does the internal audit for the department. The internal audit, of course, indicates that it's done internally, meaning that perhaps we have somebody on the payroll already that is doing an internal audit. So do we have, like, a CA, an auditor, or somebody that is on our payroll or on staff consuming the \$184,000 expenditure? Or is it something that we're getting externally? Are we calling somebody to come in and do an audit on Agriculture, Food and Rural Development? If that's the case, then I would be more inclined to say that perhaps maybe the Auditor General has a greater role to play within Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. If we do indeed have an internal person, somebody within the department itself who is an auditor, then I question why we're actually paying somebody on the inside. Maybe we ought to consider going to the private sector to get some auditing done.

I think, Mr. Chairman, it just wouldn't be out of line at all if the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development consulted with the Minister of Municipal Affairs on privatization and considered having the minister privatize the internal audit. It could go a step further actually: look into the Minister of Justice's department and consider doing the same thing there. I mean, that internal audit in the Justice department is probably the same amount of money. Maybe we can kill two birds with one stone.

Within departmental support services I see information services. This is an area that is within most departments. Information services in this department is expending \$2.6 million, thereabouts. The interesting part is that we've got a dedicated revenue of \$176,000. Now, the \$176,000 dedicated revenues, I'm wondering, comes from where? Is there something that we're doing globally within government, selling certain information services that brings in \$176,000 to agriculture? I'd like to know how the number of \$176,000 was actually picked. Was it a formula that was used and applied and that's why we ended up with \$176,000 in terms of dedicated revenue anticipated for this year? Last year it was \$50,000 in dedicated revenue. So again I would suspect that perhaps maybe the \$50,000 is some number that we could have just picked and said, "Okay; we're going to dedicate \$50,000 towards agriculture this year in information services." Dedicated revenue of \$176,000 doesn't seem to be a number that you would just say, "Well, we're going to send \$176,000 over to agriculture." So there's got to be a formula, and I'm wondering if the minister wouldn't enlighten us on that part of it.

Another area that concerns me somewhat is the expenditure of capital, Mr. Chairman. We're anticipating expenditures of \$568,000. Now, every single department that we've spoke to in estimates here has seen capital expenditures, some of them minor in nature. Some in this department are minor in nature. When you look at the Farmers' Advocate subprogram, we're talking \$3,000 in that department. Well, that can't be an awful big expenditure. This is either going to be some desks or it's going to be a computer or it's going to be a plant for the office. Who knows what? I'm wondering if we couldn't again consider tightening this up.

Now, I know full well there just isn't an inventory amongst all departments whereby we can itemize what surplus equipment each department has, but it's crucial that we do that. We've got to consider now tightening up the system. And it's there. I know that within our own offices and within my own small group of companies – and it's nowhere near even a drop in the bucket compared to the government – I don't even know what I've got anymore when it comes to surplus equipment. So how on earth is the government going to know it? Unless we bite the bullet and

just say: "We're going to do it. We're going to itemize in every single department that we've got." Because some of that stuff will get obsolete in no time at all. We heard earlier today in question period, Mr. Chairman, that some books printed in 1985 are now going in the dumpster because they're obsolete. You see, that's the very reason that we have to move on this thing and move quickly, because this stuff changes dramatically and rapidly.

4:50

When we look at expenditures of \$3,000 in Farmers' Advocate and I see \$2,000 in Surface Rights/Land Compensation Board – God, I don't think we have to expend those funds. We've got them in different departments. So call up Health and say, "Give me a piece of that equipment you have there, and let's move it into the surface rights board." [Mr. Chadi's speaking time expired] That wasn't 20 minutes; was it?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In light of the fact that it's Thursday afternoon, I will be very brief with my comments. I would thank the minister again for his forthrightness in the answers that he gave. There's one area that he and I have a large difference of opinion on, and that of course is the food processing plant in Leduc. The question I asked on March 24 was intended to spur some focus and attention on that facility because I'm convinced today it is not achieving its maximum use. After listening to the minister this afternoon, I'm a little discouraged that in fact I wasn't able to sway him with my puffball question on the matter, but I will attempt one more time to have him look at that facility.

The fact is that we have a \$10 million facility in Leduc, and I would suggest one more time that it has never fulfilled its mandate or its potential. Now, the minister has a report in his possession that will clearly indicate the reasons why that has happened. He spent some time here this afternoon indicating that the individuals that work in that facility are fully qualified and somewhat quasi scientists that should be able to maximize the facility itself. I think the minister should revisit that, and I would ask him to do so. I believe he will find that there are two individuals in that facility today that are considered to be scientists. The rest, with due respect, are technicians. The technicians cannot quite capture what we have to capture out of that facility.

I think it's important when we look at that facility to capture the mind-set of the government of the day, and that is to not waste the taxpayers' dollar and capture the full potential. So I would ask the minister if he would revisit that, ask his department to clearly look at whether there are funds to hire more scientists to maximize the use of that facility. If that is not in the books, I would ask that he look very closely at a partnership with the ARC and attempt to fold those two into one another more so. If that can't happen, we know that there are many agrifood businesses in this province that certainly are always looking at a research aspect. I would suggest that we have to very aggressively promote partnerships in that. That would capture some of the business plan goals and objectives, and it would fit into the mission statement as well.

I have to take the minister to look at the revenues. It did not sit well with me, and I may have missed the first figure. It's been open 10 years. We cannot lose sight of that. It's had ample time to make a move in the right direction. The first couple of years I believe the revenues were around \$3,000. The minister indicated that the revenues are to be \$28,000 this year and projected to be \$76,000 next year. I would have to be quite direct with the

minister and indicate that \$76,000 is a number picked out of the air. There is nothing to date to indicate that it will be achieved. I have spoken in the past about the three clients that are presently using it. I would challenge the minister to have a serious look at those clients, determine how many hours they've spent there and if he would in his usual forthright way submit the invoices of the hours spent and charged against that facility. I think he'll find there's a considerable deficiency there.

I certainly encourage partnerships. These are partnerships, but they have to be more in the line of a full cost recovery. The facility is not fulfilling its mandate. We have to, as the minister has said time and time again, capture that value added. This facility is a classic facility to do such, and I think we owe it to the taxpayers to certainly attempt to capture that very potential.

There was one other area that I just wanted to briefly stop on, and I didn't hear the minister's response. I perhaps did not articulate it as well as I should have the last time. The department presently provides lab services. As I attempted to describe, it was analysis of food content and it was to facilitate the labeling of foods. Now, all other provinces, as I understand it, have that completed by private industry. There are individuals in this province that certainly are capable of dealing with that particular aspect. I would ask the minister to have a look at that again. When we are looking at attempting to create jobs, there's potential here, and I think it's very important that we not deprive private enterprise of business opportunities.

The minister answered my questions on the Farmers' Advocate. He indicated that it was designed really to investigate and solve problems, also to do some mediation. He indicated that it published brochures. I would ask the minister, as I did in the first estimates, to look very closely at duplication. We can find many marketing and many information services there, and now we see the advocate is also in that particular situation. I do believe sincerely that there is room for amalgamation there. As he knows, I'm one of the few from this side of the House that has many farmers in my constituency. Their perception is that we have a fair load of people there for what is actually achieved. I don't bring that or manufacture that myself. If the perception is there with them, I'm certainly not going to argue with the rural folks. They do bring a fair bit of intelligence to that discussion.

He also indicated that there were five employees presently involved in the Farmers' Advocate. I'm not suggesting this be abolished or abandoned, but I think we have to review all programs. The figures that he quoted, 437 case files by five employees, broke down to me to be 80 files per year, or one case every four days. I know some are far more complicated than others, as I have many files in my constituency office. Some take hours. Some take days. Some take months. Some take 10 minutes. When we look at the number of phone calls coming in, my arithmetic quickly told me that was about 10 per day for the five people that are in there. So I look for some efficiency there. Perhaps I have to visit the office to get a real good feel for it. Maybe I'm oversimplifying it when I look at it. It is a concern to me.

I would mention one other aspect before I close, and it was brought to me by farmers that have visited my constituency office. They felt that they are experiencing a very large predator control, particularly in the form of coyotes. They feel that they are also handicapped by the fact that they cannot use the methods they once did because of the regulations as far as shooting from roads and the likes of that. So I would ask the minister when we look at predator control if there's a new method or a new innovation we can apply to that.

So with that and in light of the fact that we would all like to get out of here and enjoy a weekend or 10 days away from the House, I'll turn it over to the minister to close debate.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. Member for Leduc.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Well, thank you very much. Certainly I appreciate the questions that were raised today, and I want to thank them again for their attendance and for their ongoing assistance throughout the year in working with agriculture and in helping to develop agriculture. I think we've got a very, very excellent, proficient group, one that's made agriculture the number one industry in this province. It's through the efforts of these kinds of people and working together that we're going to maintain agriculture as number one in the province and in all of Canada. So again thank you.

I'll try and answer a few questions. I don't think I'll get through them all today. With your concurrence I'll answer a few, and then we'll see to it that the balance of the questions are answered and that you've gotten the answers to them.

Regarding the Leduc facility, hon. Member for Leduc, there are six different companies that are working there now on 25 projects, resulting in 39 new products. I think that's fairly significant. That's working very, very well.

As far as the Farmers' Advocate is concerned, remember we amalgamated the Farmers' Advocate and the implement Act. So we now have not only the Farmers' Advocate looking after what he used to do; he is also looking after the duties of the implement Act as well. So there are two different groups that are working together now with the same people. So we have a fairly heavy workload for those people. As a matter of fact, they're running quite a bit behind at this time. I don't know if we'll be able to maintain only five because there is a very heavy load there. Cases that the Farmers' Advocate deals with are not situations that you can resolve by picking up a phone in many, many cases, so fairly detailed.

5:00

To the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East on our consultative process. I think it's important that we understand just how we did the process. Though we only talked to 900 farmers, we also met with the agrifood forum and the agrifood task force, and in those cases they have representatives on their organizations that represent larger organizations. What we did was keep the roundtables that we did with the farmers separate from those that we did with the groups, but lo and behold, when we analyzed the two, we found out that they were identical. So in essence it's a fairly accurate assessment of the province's needs throughout the province and throughout the industry. It's far greater than just the 900 farmers that were talked to.

How do we work together with industry? We work together with farm groups, for example, in research where we have on-farm demonstrations, and actually the farmers themselves are conducting some of that. We're involved with it as well. We have our resource people working with them. We work with the Alberta Food Processors Association in development of new products. So we liaise with them. We act as facilitators in that role. We have the ongoing process of trying to act more of the facilitator than the actual researcher itself, and we feel that by working together with the industry, the industry benefits from it as well as being part of the process. To my mind that's the way to go. We're going to

keep doing that, and we're going to continue to grow in that particular area.

The partnerships. The Leduc facility, for example, is a partnership arrangement. Alberta Food Processors, Stanislaw Sandblasters, and SARDA in the north are all groups that are really the ultimate of where we're working in partnerships with the agriculture industry.

As far as the pulse crops are concerned, I think I'd mentioned that 16 percent of the pulse crops are grown in region 1. We have a crop specialist in Lethbridge that basically will be looking after that as well.

As far as specialists are concerned, we've identified various groupings of specialists. It's not just one person that's going to be specializing in a whole bunch of activities, and we had a very accurate process, because when a client comes to a DA's office, they're registered as to what their concerns are. Through the process of time we're able to identify which offices have the greatest number of concerns. We can identify very closely what the needs of the various offices or regions are. So we're able to fulfill that, and going back throughout the whole province, we can identify what most of the concerns are as well. Is it in dairy? Is it in beef? Is it in pulse crops? Is it in grain? Is it in forages? We're able to do that and give it a very accurate assessment so we're able to put the specialists into the proper places and provide the specialized service that's really needed in that individual area. I'm very pleased with the way that process, I anticipate, is going to work and is starting off. The farming community has said yes, that's what we really want, and we're working in conjunction with the farming community.

At this stage, Mr. Chairman, I would like the question posed.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

Agreed to:

Program 1 – Departmental Support Services	
Total Operating Expenditure	\$15,254,000
Total Capital Investment	\$568,000
Program 2 – Planning and Development	
Total Operating Expenditure	\$15,762,000
Total Capital Investment	\$313,000
Program 3 – Support for Production, Processing and Marketing	
Total Operating Expenditure	\$29,811,000
Total Capital Investment	\$991,000
Program 4 – Field Services	
Total Operating Expenditure	\$30,750,000
Total Capital Investment	\$520,000
Program 5 – Farm Income Support	
Total Operating Expenditure	\$101,686,000
Total Capital Investment	\$5,000
Program 6 – Agricultural Research Assistance	
Total Operating Expenditure	\$1,800,000
Program 7 – Agriculture Insurance and Lending Assistance	
Total Operating Expenditure	\$158,079,000
Summary	
Total Operating Expenditure	\$353,142,000

Total Capital Investment	\$2,397,000
Department Total	\$355,539,000

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Mr. Chairman, I move that the vote be reported.

[Motion carried]

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee rise and report progress and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

MR. CLEGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1995, for the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development: Operating Expenditure, \$353,142,000; Capital Investment, \$2,397,000. Total for the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, \$355,539,000.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in this report?

5:10

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon during question period I used the word "crap" in my response to one of the questions, and I would like to withdraw that.* I appreciate the integrity of the member who was asking the question, and that was inappropriate.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to first of all wish everyone a very happy Easter, and I hope you enjoy the Easter break.

Mr. Speaker, I move that we call it 5:30 and that the Assembly now adjourn pursuant to Government Motion 16, passed by this Assembly on Monday, March 28, 1994.

[At 5:12 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday, April 11, at 1:30 p.m.]

*See p. 1032, right col., para 12, line 2