

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Wednesday, April 19th, 1972

(The House met at 2:30 pm.)

PRAYERS

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair.)

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES

MR. ASHTON:

Mr. Speaker, it has been brought to my attention that pursuant to rule 82, subsection two of the standing orders, the report on private bills should have been made prior to the introduction of the private bills in this Assembly on the 18th of April, 1972. Accordingly, I beg leave of the Assembly to make the report at this time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. ASHTON:

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the petition of Alfred Baum, Fred Drysdale, William Hoag, Donald Hawkes, and Brian Tink, for an act to incorporate the Grande Prairie Racing Association, and with respect to the petition of The Historical Society of Alberta for an act to amend the act to incorporate the Historical Society of Alberta, and with respect to the petition of Sister Juliette Larose, Sister Ellen Brunt, Sister Rachel Maynard, and Sister Laura Murphy for an act to incorporate The Sisters of Charity of Providence of Calgary, and with respect to the petition of Les Soeurs de Charite de la Providence des Territoires du Nord Ouest for an act to amend an ordinance to incorporate Les Soeurs de Charite de la Providence des Territoires du Nord Ouest, and with respect to the petition of the Society of Industrial Accountants of Alberta for an act being The Society of Industrial Accountants of Alberta Act 1972, and with respect to the petition of Canadian Junior College for an act to amend an act to incorporate Canadian Junior College, and with respect to the petition of Thelma Thompson Baxter for an act to provide for an Extension of Time for Commencing an Action Beyond the Period Allowed by The Limitation of Actions Act, and with respect to the petition of Ralph A. Siebring, Douglas Clarke, R. J. Barrett, J. C. Givens, Isalah Melech, Peter Huising, and Mrs. Greta Bennett for an act to incorporate the Institute of Accredited Public Accountants of Alberta, the chairman finds that the rules of the Assembly, with respect of payment of fees and advertising in local newspapers and the Alberta Gazette have been complied with.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. BATHURST:

Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the hon. members of this Legislative Assembly, 28

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Grade IX students from the Mundare School, accompanied with their teachers Mr. Shupenia, Mr. Ferrence, Mr. Gargus, and Mr. Batiuk. Would the students, along with their teachers, rise and be recognized.

FILING RETURNS AND TABLING REPORTS

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, several days ago while in Committee of the Whole reviewing the estimates of the Department of the Environment, I was asked to table for the hon. members' perusal, literature that was being distributed by my department in connection with the environment, as well as copies of all the news releases released during the last seven months. My department has prepared a package in this regard, one for each member of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, in the Oral Question Period some days ago, I was asked to table the feasibility study for a basic steel industry in Alberta and I hereby do so. During the same question period, Mr. Speaker, I was asked to table the regulations governing auctioneers and auction sale companies. I hereby do so.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

McIntyre Porcupine Mines

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Industry. Would the hon. minister bring this Assembly up to date on the current situation regarding McIntyre Porcupine Mines Ltd., and that company's coal operations at Smoky River?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, I think there has been some tying in and some misquoting of what I had stated in the House in answer to the hon. Member for Calgary North Hill's question pertaining to the loss that was stated in the paper, of McIntyre Porcupine's operation in Grande Cache. And I stated the situation was serious. I think any public company that shows a loss of \$7 million in an operation - the situation is serious. I repeat, it was serious. They are renegotiating, I understand, in order to improve their position with the Japanese.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is the hon. minister aware that Mr. J.K. Godin, president of McIntyre Porcupine Mines Ltd., has apparently rejected the minister's recent statement to this Legislature to the effect that the coal operations are unquestionably in serious trouble?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, I am aware, because I've been in direct conversation with Mr. Godin, the president of McIntyre Porcupine in Toronto, and I advised him that there was never any statement in this House that the coal mines were going to close or that it was in danger of closing, or that I was suggesting that the coal mines were closing. I said that there are serious problems, and there are serious problems because they are associated, and I went on to explain, because of the interest that the provincial government has

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in the transportation system that was built up through the Grande Cache area into Grande Prairie, of a railroad that had some \$131 million involved in it -- provincial monies -- and of which we were facing something like a \$7.5 billion debt per year on the capital charges of that money invested. And that the revenues derived from the ARR, strangely or directly at this time, were dependant for the major part upon the loadings from Grande Cache. And because of the seriousness of the loss in the McIntyre Porcupine Mine there was very little hope that we could re-negotiate a contract with them in order to recover these losses, and this is what we were alluding to.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. Is the minister aware how much McIntyre Porcupine Mines Ltd., have deficit-budgeted for this particular project?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, I am not.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Did McIntyre Porcupine Mines Ltd., request the government to send a team of accountants, engineers and research men to Grande Cache?

MR. PEACOCK:

They did not, Mr. Speaker, and to inform the House of what I stated, once again, that in order to make the ARR viable, we had sent out engineers, accountants and marketing people, to determine what further development we could do along the ARR right of way in order to make the line viable.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Has McIntyre Porcupine Mines Ltd. applied to the provincial government, either formally or informally for any kind of assistance?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, they have not.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary...

MR. SPEAKER:

I would suggest that this should be the last supplementary on this point.

MR. WILSON:

Is the government's stated desire to see a steel company operating in Alberta in any way connected to the current situation with McIntyre Porcupine Mines Ltd?

[No answer]

Royalty Hearings

MR. HENDERSON:

Mr. Speaker, may I address a question to the hon. Minister of Mines and Minerals? I wonder if the minister could advise the House,

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in view of the statement by the Premier in the House last Friday and the report he tabled, whether it's still the government's intention to proceed with hearings on the royalty issue?

MR. DICKIE:

Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View.

Conditions at Port Saskatchewan Jail

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the hon. Attorney General. Can the Attorney General advise the House if he plans an investigation of the charges by the Ombudsman that excessive force has been used in several instances at the Port Saskatchewan jail?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, we don't plan to hold an investigation. We do have information about that, both in the Ombudsman's report and in statements by the warden. I must say, any excessive use of force in either one of two ways, by way of mistreatment of the prisoner or by imposing a punishment that is not authorized under the act or the regulations, is something I take a very serious view of and something that we will do our utmost to ensure does not occur.

MR. NOTLEY:

Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the hon. Attorney General advise the House if anyone is to be replaced or reprimanded at the Port Saskatchewan jail as a result of the Ombudsman's charges?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I suggest that question be made an Order for Return, or put on the Order Paper, because it would involve my making inquiries of the personnel of the correctional institutes.

MR. NOTLEY:

Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the hon. Attorney General advise the House whether the government has any other indications of irregularities at any of the other penal institutions in Alberta?

MR. LEITCH:

I wonder if the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, could be a little more specific when he uses the word 'irregularities'?

MR. NOTLEY:

Perhaps rather than saying 'irregularities', 'over-stepping authority' and the charges of excess force, as suggested by the Ombudsman regarding Port Saskatchewan.

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of any others.

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Ombudsman

MR. NOTLEY:

One final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, either to the hon. Attorney General or to the government House Leader. Does the government plan to do anything about the request by the Ombudsman for a ruling on the Philipzyk case last year?

DR. HORNER:

Consideration is being given to that matter.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the hon. Deputy Premier. Has the government given consideration to extending the term of office of the Ombudsman?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, when the decision is made in regard to that, the House will be the first to know.

School Board Taxes

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question. There are two departments involved, and either hon. minister could answer it, either the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs or the hon. Minister of Education. Are the hon. ministers aware of the charges by some Alberta municipal elected officials that certain school boards have embarked upon a policy of overtaxing in order to provide a surplus for their 1973 through 1975 budgets? They claim this is being brought about because of their distrust of the present provincial government. My question to the hon. minister, is the government concerned, and is the government considering a policy that would disallow any portion of a school board's budget which provides for a surplus that could be used to cover future budgets?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, certainly, I have had no direct submissions on that point. I think the hon. gentleman opposite, in all fairness, should give particulars regarding what particular suggestions he is making, what school boards, where the statements appeared and who made them. When I have those statements, when I know the source; then I will consider them, but not before.

MR. DIXON:

For the hon. minister's benefit I will be glad to give him the information. One of the officials is the Mayor of the City of Calgary, who said this as recently as yesterday. The school board is the Calgary Public School Board.

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I have received no direct communications from the Mayor of the City of Calgary.

Ombudsman (cont)

MR. BUCKWELL:

Mr. Speaker, a question to the hon. Deputy Premier, a supplementary actually, to the hiring of the Ombudsman. Do I

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understand you to say that when that decision is made, you will let the House know?

DR. HORNER:

I said I would make the House aware of our decision, and, of course, the primary decision in relation to the hiring of the Ombudsman is the Legislature's.

MR. COOPER:

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. Minister of Industry. Has the government been informed that the Canadian National Railways has applied for permission to discontinue the Edmonton-Vermilion-North Battleford rail-liner service?

MR. PEACOCK:

I am not aware of it, Mr. Speaker.

MR. COOPER:

This is a fact, alright. Will the government present a submission at the hearing when it is called?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, we will take that under advisement from our department. I haven't had any input from it yet, but we will certainly advise the hon. member.

The Canadian Wildlife Act

MR. SORENSON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. This question is in regard to The Canadian Wildlife Act, which gives more power to protect wildlife in co-operation with the provinces. There is an item in today's paper concerning this.

In your government to government negotiations with the federal government, I assume that you have been fully informed on the proposed Canadian Wildlife Act and would you briefly explain its contents? Just briefly.

MR. GETTY:

I wonder Mr. Speaker, if they have any other acts they would like explained at the same time. Really, Mr. Speaker, this falls within the responsibility of the Minister of Lands and Forests. Perhaps he might want to assist the hon. member in his understanding of federal acts and I refer it to him if he would like to do so.

DR. WARRACK:

Yes, Mr. Speaker. How much time do you have?

MR. SORENSON:

Just briefly.

DR. WARRACK:

The Canadian Wildlife Act that is under consideration by the federal government, and if you read the article closely in today's Edmonton Journal you will note that it was not introduced yesterday, even though the news release suggested that it would be. However, I

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do expect that it will be introduced either today or tomorrow. And its effort as I understand it, and from our consultations with the federal government, is that it is a clarification of responsibilities in the wildlife area including research and including habitat management. The concern that we have here is that their outlines in terms of the wildlife habitat management might involve some land administration within the province, and these are the areas, Mr. Speaker that we have in particular, in making representations. The point that we are at in these consultations is that when The Wildlife Act is tabled, we will immediately get a copy and that has not as yet occurred. We are actually poised in order to make our reaction on the basis of precisely what is in that act. But it has not been read a first time in the House of Commons unless it is done so today.

MR. SORENSON:

A supplementary question, hon. minister. Would you try and secure copies for all hon. members so that they might be fully informed?

DR. WARRACK:

Well, we all have MP's. The hon. Jack Davis is going to send me a copy. I would suggest that you write a letter today to your MP and get that information, and perhaps all other members of the House as well.

Dr. Craig Case

MR. NOTLEY:

I would like to direct this question, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Attorney General. Since Mr. Justice Primrose ordered the Crown to return Dr. John David Craig's files and commented that the Crown had been on a "fishing expedition", does the Attorney General plan an investigation to prevent a recurrence of these "fishing expeditions"?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe the hon. member has accurately quoted, at least the story I read of Mr. Justice Primrose's decision, because as I recall it he required them to return some files. And I may say to the hon. member that is a judicial opinion expressed in the course of litigation between the Crown and the citizen, and that matter is still before the courts. As I have said a number of times earlier, both in and out of this House, I think it most inappropriate for members of the government to comment on matters that are before the courts while they are before the courts.

MR. NOTLEY:

A supplementary question to the hon. Attorney General. In view of the importance of preserving the confidentiality of files, especially those related to the doctor-patient relationship, does the government plan any procedures to make sure that files are not seized in future cases?

MR. LEITCH:

I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I didn't catch the last few words of the question.

MR. NOTLEY:

Does the government plan any procedures to ensure that files are not seized as in the Dr. John David Craig case?

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MR. LEITCH:

Well, the hon. member certainly can't be faulted for giving up. Mr. Speaker, as that involves a discussion over what should be done, it is inevitable that any discussion on that topic would tie in with what happened in this particular case, and as I have said again and again I think it is quite improper to discuss that while it is still before the courts.

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Would the hon. Attorney General agree that it is not fair to submit files that are not involved in the offence in any way because of their confidential nature? This is a point that many people in Alberta are concerned about.

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, that involves a hypothetical discussion unless we relate it to this case. And whether the files that were taken were necessary in this particular case involves a discussion of the case. Now I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it's quite improper during the question period to get into a hypothetical debate on that principle. You can't debate the question that has been raised by the hon. members opposite without discussing this particular case and without discussing why it was done and why it shouldn't have been done.

Crop Damage by Migratory Birds

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the hon. Minister of Lands and Forests. I would like to know (1) if he has done a final assessment on how well the lure crop program worked out in the Beaver Hill area and the Grande Prairie area and (2) what fiscal involvement is there by the local municipalities?

DR. WARRACK:

Mr. Speaker, the final results are not in, in terms of the lure crop program. It's on an experimental basis and will be continuing on an experimental basis into the coming year as well as this year. However the indications are that it does have some positive impact in the control of duck damage and we're beefing up that assessment and the program to the extent that we can, and incidently this is also involved in the crop depredation question, that I believe the hon. Member for Wainwright asked about a week or so ago, in terms of the federal government's involvement in the migratory bird field and damage thereto, that we are working on right now. And it looks like there is going to be something on the order of a half participation offered by the federal government in terms of duck damage and the program carrying forward the lure crop effort to prevent that damage.

DR. BUCK:

A supplementary. Will there be any requests from the local municipalities to be involved in it as far as dollars and cents go?

DR. WARRACK

I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I overlooked that part of your question. That's not the thinking at the moment.

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Flowers on the Table

MR. BUCKWELL:

Mr. Speaker, this might seem like a frivolous question to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. But, sir, would it be possible to have a plant on the centre of the table with a little less stature? I hate to hide behind the bushes, or have you hide behind the bushes, and in assessing your mood on whether to buy or sell it's quite important at this time.

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member is now asking questions that are under your purview. I noticed that the plant has gradually slid down the table. Perhaps if it moves a little bit further it will remove the problem.

Matthews Report

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the hon. Attorney General. Some days ago the Dr. Matthews Report was released and the hon. Attorney General at the time said he would like to have a few days to go over the report and to see whether the report was as accurate as Dr. Matthews claims. I was wondering if he had any further comment on the report today?

MR. LEITCH:

One of the things, Mr. Speaker, that I was particularly interested in obtaining is the information relating to charges against people for intoxication, because this report deals with the period up to 1969. Although I'm speaking from memory at the moment, my memory is that in 1969 there was introduced a different system within the province for the handling of people for intoxication. I believe, from the preliminary work we've done, that that would materially reduce the statistics that were referred to in the Matthews Report. Now it takes us a little time to dig out of our files the statistics dealing with that type of offence and to relate those statistics to the figures used in the Matthews Report. That was one area we are looking into. I haven't got those figures back yet, but I think they would be very material in assessing the significance of that report. One other thing we are doing is doing some checking on the method of compiling statistics by the DVS, because the report was based on statistics obtained from the DVS. We have learned in the past, that is prior to the Matthews Report coming out, and also obtained some additional information since then, indicating that the other provinces, at least some of the other provinces in Canada, were not submitting the same kind of information or as detailed statistics as Alberta was submitting during the period dealt with by the report. So these are only two of the areas in which we are now gathering information. We haven't completed the gathering of that information, so beyond saying what I've said now I can't be more definite.

Foster Homes Report

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development? Has the Foster Home Report yet been filed with the government?

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MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, is the hon. member referring to the report being done by Judge Catonio? To my knowledge the answer no. I am almost 100% certain of that, but if it has come in very recently I'll check into it and so inform the House.

Medicare

DP. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the hon. Minister Without Portfolio, Miss Hunley, and my question is this. Is it the government's policy to maintain the Alberta Medicare Commission in a deficit position constantly, or is there going to be some change in this policy?

MISS HUNLEY:

Mr. Speaker, we haven't actually taken it under review. It has been in a deficit position and at this point in time it would require a study to determine how to get it out of that position, which is not a simple matter. I don't have a solution at this moment. I would be interested in receiving some suggestions as to how it could be obtained though.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. I don't know whether it should be directed to the hon. Minister Without Portfolio or the hon. Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. When the Medicare program started in Alberta the federal government indicated that they would back away from the plan, or at least not put as much money into the plan as they had previously, and I wonder if the government has had any indication from the federal government whether it is their intention to do away with their share of the program?

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, it may be that the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development will want to add to this but the federal government had been presenting proposals to all of the provinces along the lines now of restricting the amount of growth that they would be prepared to accept under the financing of health programs, and then working into a gradual phase-out of the program themselves and the federal government's participation. Those, I might say, have been accepted with a great deal of dissatisfaction by all provinces which in no way wish to have the federal government come in with a program; have it start to take off at a tremendously accelerating cost and then put a lid on the share of those costs that they are going to accept and, therefore, have the provinces accept a greater and greater amount of these rapidly escalating costs. So the whole matter is really in a state of negotiation among all the provinces and the federal government, and I might say it appears that there is such a lack of acceptance that they will now explore other methods of handling the rapidly escalating health costs in Canada.

MR. DIXON:

One last supplementary question to the hon. minister. I know the minister is concerned with the shared-cost programs. Would this be one of the priorities of this government that they get a deal where they would actually be operating their own Medicare program without any federal strings attached?

MR. GETTY:

Yes, on a policy basis that would be acceptable if we were certain that we had the fiscal capacity, the taxing power and the tax equivalents to handle the program.

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The Alberta Opportunity Fund

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Industry. Because of the importance of the regulations regarding Bill 50, The Alberta Opportunity Fund, is it the hon. minister's intention to table the proposed regulations in the House prior to the House getting into committee study?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, we will certainly table the regulations as soon as they are completed.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. In light of some of the reaction to the bill to date, and in light of the importance of the regulations, does the hon. minister not feel it would make it much easier for the members to look at the bill itself and the regulations in light of what the government is trying to do in this area?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, we appreciate what the hon. member is saying and we will certainly try to have the regulations.

The School Board Act

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the hon. Minister of Education. Is some thought being given to amending The School Act making it possible for school boards to engage principals who are non-teachers?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, not at this time. But it is possible that in the months ahead we may well look at that alternative.

Department of Public Works

DR. PAPROSKI:

A question to the hon. Minister of Labour. I have had a considerable number of phone calls regarding layoffs in the painting department of the Department of Public Works. I wonder if the hon. minister would make a comment as to whether he is looking into this area or has he looked into this area and whether this is uniform across the province?

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, this is not uniform throughout the province. This is a seasonal phenomenon and close to it may be my colleague, the hon. Minister of Public Works, who would like to comment further.

DR. BACKUS:

Mr. Speaker, it is a seasonal thing. There were quite a number of layoffs in the paint department. There have, however, been some re-engagements of wage earners in that department, and with the summer build-up of work it is anticipated that there will be further employment offered.

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MR. SPEAKER:

The time hasn't run out and there are two hon. members who appear to have questions. The hon. Member for Calgary North Hill and the hon. Member for Calgary McCall.

MR. FARFAN:

Mr. Speaker, I'd be prepared to hold my question until tomorrow.

Calgary Fires

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, a question for the hon. Attorney General. The question is, are you aware, sir, of the major fire in Calgary this morning where one fireman's life was lost, and one or two more firemen were hospitalized? Are you aware of that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

What is the question?

MR. HO LEM:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. In view of the seriousness of the series of fires occurring in the Calgary area, in which arson has been suspected, what is your department doing to help apprehend this professional torch-lighter in the Calgary area?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I'm astonished at the hon. member's assumptions in the question that there is a professional arsonist operating in Calgary. I assume, Mr. Speaker, that the members of the Calgary Police Force are investigating this. My experience with that force has been that they are perfectly capable of investigating these matters, and my department would be prepared to give them all the help at our command should they call on us for it, but I have received no such request to date.

MR. HO LEM:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Does your department keep a complete record of all convicted arsonists as well as suspected arsonists in Alberta, and indeed in Canada?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I'd have to check before I could answer that question.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I move that you do now leave the Chair and the Assembly resolve itself into Committee of Supply for consideration of the Estimates.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Government House Leader has moved that the Speaker do now leave the Chair, and that the Committee resolve itself into Committee of Supply for consideration of the Estimates. Do you all agree?

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HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair at 3:07 p.m.]

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COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

[Mr. Diachuk in the Chair]

Department of Municipal Affairs

The following was agreed to without debate:

Appropriation No. 2101 Minister's Office \$ 41,290

Appropriation No. 2102 General Administration

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to take a couple of moments to explain for the hon. members, what is contained in this budget. You know the Department of Municipal Affairs is generally a service department providing very essential and basic services to municipal levels of government throughout the province. And of course, in its liaison with the municipal levels of government, it is very close to the individual person and deals with a number of things that affect our citizens in a very individual manner. I'm thinking of such things as the administering of The Planning Act and its regulations, matters relating to assessment and taxation, matters relating to housing; which is becoming more important all the time; and the administration of such programs as the Homeowner's Tax Discount Plan, etc.

I think the hon. members can see from looking at the budget and comparing the percentage changes from the actual forecasts for the year just past, that in the main this is a hold-the-line budget for this year, Mr. Speaker. Insofar as number of staff are concerned, and dollars for the provision of various services, generally the only increases are those due to increases which have been awarded members of the Civil Service, insofar as salaries are concerned, or increases due to natural growth increments. So, with the exception of the task force work, there really isn't any provision for new programs other than our substantial assistance to the senior citizens of the province.

Insofar as the matter of providing services, Mr. Speaker, there is something that I think I should mention which was of particular interest to me, and that was the fact that the Alberta Department of Municipal Affairs has been providing assessment services to the Northwest Territories, and last year carried out assessments in the towns of Fort Simpson, Port Smith, Hay River, Inuvik, and Pine Point. I am aware also, Mr. Speaker, that the Alberta Housing Corporation has provided some advisory services to the Territories, and I am aware of the number of activities carried on by the private sector. It seems to me, although this budget takes into consideration the fact that we are proposing to drop assessment services to those areas, that perhaps we should be taking a new approach and that is make those areas a part of the Province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, because of what is happening in the field of energy resource development and transportation on the North American continent at this time, it seems to me that there is a great deal of logic in extending the existing northern Alberta boundary from its present location up to the northern limit of our country. I am thinking that the entire area lying between an extension of Alberta's

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eastern boundary and the Yukon-Northwest Territories boundary, logically some day probably belongs in the Province of Alberta. I am putting this proposition in the form of a question, because I am wondering if it has occurred to the hon. members what an exciting prospect there is there in making the entire area, from the 49th parallel right up through the Greater Slave Lake region and the Mackenzie Delta the energy and resource corridor and political entity on the North American continent. I think the potential there and the logic of carrying out such a move makes a great deal of sense. So the only pitch I am making at this time is that rather than dropping services to that part of Canada, we should probably be looking at increasing them.

There have been some moves towards reorganization within the department since last fall, Mr. Speaker, and you will notice that the appropriations covering the Public Utilities Board have been transferred to the Minister of Telephones and Utilities, and the Emergency Measures Organization has been transferred to the Executive Council. Appropriations that have been transferred into the department include, from Treasury, the Municipal Assistance Grants Program as well as the Homeowner's Tax Discount. From the Executive Council, we have inherited the Task Force on Urbanization and the Future, as well as the Provincial-Municipal Task Force on Financing. There is a new vote, as I mentioned before, dealing with senior citizen assistance with respect to property taxation.

Last, but not least, Mr. Speaker, the hon. members will notice that the department is again picking up a deficit -- the operating deficit -- which includes substantial grants of the Alberta Housing Corporation. It is my opinion that this is rapidly developing into one of our government's most active and important agencies and deserves a period of careful assessment during the coming year. We have recently finalized the formation of a more active and enlarged Board of Directors, and it is my hope that that will result in significant improvements in the programs of the corporation.

Insofar as the thrusts and directions of the Department of Municipal Affairs is concerned, I would say that the following points are important: that we maintain a satisfactory level of services, insofar as the available dollars are concerned, and I think that we have managed to do that. We're keeping our planning programs going and our assessment programs going, the inspection services and the administration of the ID's in special areas. So the essential services are being carried on within this very limited budget. There are also some moves to try and encourage and strengthen matters relating to local autonomy and as I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, in this House, we are looking forward to next year as being the year of reform, insofar as the important matters dealing with provincial-municipal fiscal arrangements are concerned, especially as they relate to property tax, and we hope through the ongoing work of the Task Force on Urbanization and the Future to start formulating some programs to bring to this Legislature which will effectively deal with the problems involved in urbanization. So the two task forces, I think, deserve special attention at this time.

The part of the budget that does show an increase that is a little above the average of the rest of the votes, Mr. Chairman, is that dealing with the municipal assistance grants program. I wish it could have been larger, but it couldn't. However, it has reached the highest amount it has ever been, and I think that a 10.5% increase will be of significant assistance to our municipalities this year.

Just in closing, and with remarks relating to the question of budgeting, I think our budget preparations relating to the Alberta Housing Corporation and the programs it undertakes, have left us with the impression that perhaps, if the provincial government is going to enter the field of program budgeting, that this might, in all logic, be a good agency to commence that program with. It's my hope that

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after the pressure of the session has eased somewhat that the corporation and its directors would be able to look at that possibility in consultation with our Provincial Treasurer. So those are the basic guidelines, and the premise on which I ask the Legislature to approve the votes in the Department of Municipal Affairs.

MR. HO LEM:

First of all, I'd like to commend and thank the hon. minister for being so brief and concise in his introductory remarks, and I hope that in the questions that are to follow that he will be equally as brief and concise. I feel that if all departments and other ministers had done so in the same manner, I feel that we would be a lot further ahead at this point in time.

Now, Mr. Chairman, in speaking to the estimates of the Department of Municipal Affairs, I would like to make some general comments about the department. Perhaps I should say, first of all, Mr. Chairman, that a budget of a department is the most important policy statement that the government will make about it all year, for the most articulate, enthusiastic words in all this world are utterly meaningless unless the government is prepared to allocate the necessary resources to bring these commitments about.

Mr. Chairman, this government promised that it would give the municipalities the financial resources to keep their own houses in order. Over the years the Social Credit party developed a great number of programs of local assistance of which the star piece of legislation was the Municipal Assistance Grant. Last year, as everyone knows, the government found it necessary to temporarily alter the base of this grant from one-third of the royalties in the previous year to a flat rate of \$38 million. This was a difficult thing for the government to do, not only because of the public uproar, which was initiated by some members of the municipal councils as well as members of the then opposition party, but it was difficult because the Municipal Assistance Grant was a source of great pride both to the province and to the municipalities. I recall that when this issue was being debated, the present Premier flatly stated that limiting the grant was clearly at odds with his own guidepost. The implication to me at the time was that he would never have done such a thing.

Well now, Mr. Chairman, in a very conservative way he has improved things a little this year, at least on the surface. The grant now goes up \$4 million, but that barely covers the increase in the cost of living caused by the natural inflationary trends being experienced by all governments in Canada. It certainly comes nowhere near meeting the needs of centres such as Calgary and Edmonton. Both our major cities in Alberta are now facing a real financial crunch, which is far more serious than the one being faced by the province because our revenue resources are fixed and limited.

I wonder, either the cabinet Metropolitan Affairs Committee didn't bother considering this matter, or they didn't press their case very effectively, because the government found a lot more money to help the farmers -- and I don't wish to criticize this plan, in fact I endorse it -- but what really concerns me is the little they did for the cities and the municipalities. But there is something even more serious and more basic, and I am very pleased to hear the hon. minister mention that the traditional function of the Department of Municipal Affairs has been an administrative function; it is not a programmed department.

I then wonder why we have taken under this department, programs such as the Homeowner's Tax Discount and the Municipal Grant and the Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation. These have been accounted for in other departments in previous years.

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In the last few years there has been a change coming about, prodded by ministers such as Mr. Colborne and Mr. Strom. The government was, indeed, beginning to give a future orientation to the department, rather than being concerned with just the past and the present. I feel that some very imaginative and important things were happening in the department. For instance, the Human Resources Research Council was applying a lot of its talents to urbanization and population shifts throughout the province. The Task Force on Urbanization and the Future was bringing together people from all walks of life to sit down together, elected and appointed people, to discuss the various problems, and to mull over the challenges of the changing pattern of life, and then suggest practical ways in which these challenges might be met.

The Alberta Provincial Municipal Fiscal Commission was beginning to look at the division of responsibilities among the provincial and municipal governments. They were looking at the division of revenue sources to meet those responsibilities. But Mr. Chairman, in the last few months all of these things have been changed. I suppose it is a government's prerogative to change these; but I don't believe it is a government's responsibility and prerogative to deprive the municipal governments, and particularly the councils of our cities, of the provincial participation in urban research which those programs represented.

Mr. Chairman, I am deeply concerned, and so are most of the thinking municipal leaders in the province, that this government has been erasing so many things without replacing them with practical alternates. The commission was replaced with a task force, but our task force has very little provision for professional research work, and that kind of professionalism is very much needed today. To me it would be far better to erase the personal expenses of the members of the task force and apply this money to hire competent research staff.

We must realize that this is a very complicated age in which we live. You can't say with any degree of accuracy that "my strength is the strength of ten because my heart is pure". Good intentions are needed, of course, but good intentions alone are not enough, nor can there be delay after delay by referring things to an endless stream of committees for evaluation.

What the people of Alberta want today is action. We need a department and a minister which are given the status within the government hierarchy to do the job that needs to be done. We need employees in the department who are competent, who understand the complex problems of transportation, the environment, education, recreation, protection and all these other things which municipalities are so concerned about today. The present departmental staff is fine, but they are so overworked they have no opportunity to sit back and think of where they are going, why they are going there, what they are going to do when they get there. The changing of the three agencies I mentioned earlier is a serious lapse of responsibility by the minister and by the government, and it is serious not only because of its immediate, but more importantly, because of its long range implications.

For instance, how is a department supposed to respond to Edmonton's recent concern for the form of government for the Edmonton metropolitan region? How are they supposed to respond in any sensible sort of way when they have been stripped of these three agencies which would have been of great assistance to them in this area? How is a department supposed to evaluate the recommendations of the Farran Task Force and recommend methods of implementation when the staff and particularly the senior staff are so hard-pressed by work at the present time, and where so very little research capabilities are within the department. There are some very able people there, of course, but the government has decided to reverse the trend and send them back to administrating, to make sure that all

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the "i's" are dotted in the committee minutes, and all the pennies are accounted for in the financial statements. These are necessary functions, of course, but I mentioned there are more important things that these senior people can be doing.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I don't see any new direction in these estimates, unless you call retreat a new direction. There could have been more money allocated to The Municipal Assistance Act. There should have been true consultation rather than a private announcement in setting the amount of the grant. There has to be a higher status accorded to the department within the government hierarchy. And there must be more money allocated for the municipal research in this day and age. I would like to offer some more questions and comments as we take each separate vote.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Mr. Ludwig.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Chairman, I have a few comments to make concerning this department, and in particular, with regard to The Communal Properties Act. I first of all would like to point out that, when hon. members criticize certain legislation as being poor or being inadequate, you have to look at their own record. It is easy to criticize. When they were in the House and they had all the instant solutions and all the remedies for all the problems that existed in the province ever, until now, that they can show whether they did propose any amendments or any arguments against what is here now. And so it ill behooves a minister to get up and say well, it is a poor act. I can say this, that maybe it wasn't the best act in the world; it was declared *intra vires* by a decision of the courts. It worked. It worked because there was a responsible government in charge and they interpreted the word 'may' as something that is an obligation because otherwise the act was useless without the implementation of the board to hear applications by Hutterites. I think that where this act got into trouble immediately when the Conservatives got into office is that we got, I would like to say, a very irresponsible minister, and in attempting to fend off questions concerning this matter, he got up and usurped the powers of the Legislature by saying that the act was suspended. I don't think that anything like this has ever happened in any Legislature in Canada. At least the minister ought not to be permitted to get away with this kind of a display of arrogance that he has the power to suspend any legislation; it's worse than that. And he says, "Well the act isn't good, it doesn't make it obligatory." So we have to watch from now on that in any legislation we have we must make it obligatory to provide for a minister who may be irresponsible, as has been demonstrated so clearly by the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

I think that this talk about people being placed before politics was clearly demonstrated by the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. I don't think that he can talk himself out of this situation. The Hutterites are people of this province -- even though I'm not sure that I'm happy with the legislation -- the legislation was properly passed by the previous Legislature and if a minister wants to stand up and criticize it because he knows more than the previous people did, then he should know enough with all the battery of professional help in the front line to amend the act or to repeal it. We're not dealing with a kindergarten kind of a situation where excuses are going to solve the problem. If you think it's no good, and you know why it isn't good -- then repeal it, if you have the courage of your convictions; but don't try to hide and criticize and say, "well, it's the previous legislation", because sooner or later hon. minister you are going to have to stand on your own feet and face the consequences of your actions. You cannot go on forever and ever saying the act isn't good. You're in government now. If the act isn't good take it

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off. I say that you people don't know what to do with it and you're going to be talking and acting irresponsibly as you have till now.

Now if my criticism seems a bit severe I think that the circumstances call for it. There has never been in this House or in parliament or in any legislature a more flagrant contempt for the rights of people to make application for the purchase of land, as set out under section 16 of The Communal Properties Act as there has been in here. I'm of the opinion that the blame cannot rest with the hon. minister alone. He certainly must have had some concurrence of his ill-considered action from the rest of the government. I think it's a black mark against the Conservative government, who in the early stages of their administration, have done something that I think is not irrevocable but it certainly is unpardonable. I'm surprised that the hon. minister treats this lightly and he can laugh about it, when he has actually trampled on the rights of people in this province. So I think that their attitude and their talk, all over the province, people before politics, has been amply demonstrated to be politics before people. I'm certainly surprised that not only did the hon. minister make a mistake, but he insists on sticking to it. Perhaps he feels he can't back out now. I think it's incumbent on the hon. minister to stand up and state that perhaps he made a serious mistake. He has not got any such power to usurp the rights of the previous Legislature. This act is in force but he stated, and I don't know who advised him, that the act is in abeyance. He has no authority, no power to state that any legislation, important or otherwise, can be in abeyance because of the wishes of the minister. No minister, or cabinet, or executive council, can suspend any legislation unless there is legislation authorizing them to do so.

I think that, once more to get back to the section which says that the government may appoint a board, I think that, once again I'd like to stress that a responsible government would treat that as obligatory, otherwise the act is of no effect. But the minister says, "Well it's a poor act, I don't have to do it; I'm big enough to tell the Hutterites that they have no legislation now and they are hung up until we are good and ready to do something about it."

Mr. Chairman, I would like to advise the hon. minister to make a decision during this session to correct this injustice, otherwise, in my opinion, he's entitled to the most serious public condemnation for his behaviour.

MR. FARFAN:

Mr. Chairman, I won't bother to reply to the former minister without responsibility. I am addressing my remarks to the hon. Member for Calgary McCall, whom I assume is the municipal critic on the other side.

He first of all began, and I have to endorse his opening remarks, with some compliments directed towards the minister. The hon. minister served on City Council for several years, with the hon. Member for Calgary McCall and at least two of us on this side of the House and has a vast experience of the difficulties and problems of local government.

He obviously has the confidence of local government officials throughout the province, because they have said on many occasions in the press that he always lends a sympathetic ear to their problems. He started off by telling you that this was largely a hold-the-line budget, because the new thrusts in this department were scheduled for 1973. He told you that the thrusts were largely in Appropriation 2103; this is a preliminary planning for them, and in 2105.

The hon. Member for Calgary McCall referred to the winding up of previous commissions -- or the winding down of previous commissions -- examining the problems of urban areas. While, of course, Mr.

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Chairman, there have been endless studies into the problems of local government -- endless studies, very few of which have resulted in action. Under the last government there was an extensive study called the SCOAT Report which resulted in no action whatsoever. None of its recommendations were followed by the previous government. There have been royal commissions, research studies from one end of Canada to the other into the problems of the dwindling populations in small towns and the growing size of the 12 major metropolitan cities. Their problems are largely similar, right across the country.

So in my opinion, and I believe in the opinion of the government, no more research is really necessary into the size of the problem. What we are looking for now is a solution. And very few of these reports have recommended solutions that have been practical enough for any government to implement. The former government set up a royal commission under Judge Lucien Maynard to examine the division of responsibilities and revenues between the two levels of government within the province. Judge Lucien Maynard is a very nice gentleman, a former cabinet minister of the Social Credit government, but a gentleman who has no particular expertise in local government or its problems.

The concept of a royal commission, of course, is that somebody sits on a throne in isolated splendour in a court house and listens to bodies reading briefs. It usually results in the publication of a glamorous document that gathers dust on shelves in government offices. They very, very rarely end up in new legislation by any government.

Now the concept of a task force is a little different. In the task force the idea is that we take off our coats; we sit down around a table and we discuss problems and solutions -- possible options -- with the people who are directly involved. There is no way of sluffing off the answer with statistics or generalities because the conclusion results directly in policy.

This is the way our task force on provincial-municipal relations is conducting itself. It is not wasting large sums of money on high priced consultant help, because this has all been done before and is in the government archives. It's working on practical solutions which will be applied next year.

On this task force there are members who have many years of municipal experience. It's perhaps significant that on this side of the House there are so many former local government officials, and perhaps it was the action of the last government in arbitrarily freezing the municipal assistance grants at \$38 million without previous consultation, and without any hope of relaxation in the future, to cause such a revolt by local government officials. The ones on the task force: Mr. Cliff Doan, who is a former reeve of many years in the Municipal District of Red Deer, the hon. Member for Innisfail; there is Dr. McCrimmon, the former mayor of Ponoka; there is Rusty Zander, also a former reeve and a member of the rural municipalities executive, from Drayton Valley; and there is John Ratiuk who has vast experience in local government affairs and school board affairs in the County of Lamont. So between us we have a good many years of looking at the problem from the local government's side of the fence. What we have to learn is to look at it also from the provincial side of the fence. But we will be coming up with solutions. They may not satisfy everyone -- I doubt if they will -- but they will be hard recommendations for the Cabinet for policies to be introduced in 1973.

We have available to us, of course, the preliminary studies done at great cost by the Human Resources Research Council. We find their samplings of passing value, but really not all that practical when attuned to dollars and cents policies. We have available to us, many preliminary studies by the Task Force on Urbanization and the Future.

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This particular task force, incidentally, was repeating the same sort of research that was being done by the Human Resources Research Council into why small towns have dwindling populations, what constitutes a growth centre, and so on. The same sort of research that has gone on for years and years. They were both doing it and they were looking from the outside in towards the problems of big urban areas. Some of the local government officials who were on the directorate of that task force took exception to the task, to the repetitious research and were actually withholding their share of the payment of expenses because they thought it was a waste of time. So now this Task Force on Urbanization and the Future has been redirected towards doing work which will be really valuable to the urban areas.

Well so much for task forces; we have a big problem before us, we have a big task, we have to deliver our reports by the end of November -- the longer we spend up here in session in Edmonton, the less time we've got to apply to this very big job -- but we'll do it.

So far, of course, we haven't spent much money, our total budget is some \$50 thousand as compared with the \$250 thousand budget approved for Judge Maynard's Royal Commission by the last government. Of that \$50 thousand, I don't think we've spent \$3 thousand so far.

The next point that was raised by the hon. Member for Calgary McCall concerned the Municipal Assistance Act Grant. Here the big resentment of the municipalities was that the freeze of \$38 million which was reneging on the previous commitment of an unconditional grant amounting to 1/3 of the revenue from oil royalties, was imposed without consultation. They understood that conditions had changed. It was pointed out that the revenue from the sale of oil leases had declined drastically, and the government of that day was compelled to change the ground rules. But they changed them in such a way that it really upset local government officials, because there was no consultation, no bargaining, no listening to the other side of the story.

The same situation prevailed, of course, when the present government took over. A very similar one. In fact, the revenue from the sale of oil leases has declined even more drastically in the last year. But on this occasion the problem was discussed around a table at three or four different meetings with the people involved. I had two meetings myself with the AUMA and the Rural Municipalities Association. By and large the figure that was arrived at was a compromise figure to which the majority of everyone concerned, agreed. It was a compromise that was reached with the consent of the majority of the people involved. All the rural areas and about 60% of the cities. So this was the big difference, that the 10 1/2% increase from \$38 million to \$42 million was done in an honest spirit of co-operation between the provincial government and the local government.

This, I think, is really a summary of answers to the questions posed by the hon. Member for Calgary McCall. I think everyone on this side of the House recognizes that property tax is overburdened, that it shouldn't carry such a large portion of the cost of Human Resource programs. And this government was elected on a promise to do something about this during its period of office. But it's not going to do anything in a rash manner. It's going to do everything in a methodical, calculated way after having worked out all the angles and all the problems. That will be done next year. You fellows over there seem to expect that we're going to put everything right in five months -- everything that you messed up in 36 years -- it's not fair to take that approach.

MR. CLARK:

Promises, promises.

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MR. FARRAN:

There will be no hasty legislation from this side of the House.

AN HON. MEMBER:

What happened to the 'now'?

MR. MINIELY:

That 'now' was elected!

MR. FARRAN:

Well 'now' means, of course 'now elected' and over the next two years, but certainly 'now' is a better word than 'never'. That seemed to be your approach.

MR. CLARK:

Ha -- 'now' means 'no'.

MR. FARRAN:

As I say, I won't bother to answer the rhetoric from the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View. He's been over this about five times already, and he hasn't even stayed in his seat to listen to the answer from the minister.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Chairman, in rising to make just a few comments, might I say with regard to my friend who just finished his comments on the Tory Task Force on removal of the education costs from property, this is the best defense I have heard for some time. For a report that is going to be kept secret, that isn't going to be made public, that is going to cost more than \$50,000, it is quite a bit of foot work. He also commented on the chairman of the Royal Commission, and he was right, it was the judge, Mr. Maynard, who formerly was the Attorney General of the province, who was a member of the former government -- that is true. For some reason, the hon. member forgot to mention or perhaps chose not to mention that one of the other members of the committee was Mr. Ross Ellis, who was a coalition member of the Legislature, who sat in the opposition, and who has had considerable municipal experience. Perhaps also, the hon. member chose not to mention that the third person on the commission was the former president of the Alberta Rural Municipalities Association, several years ago. So when we comment about the makeup of the Royal Commission as opposed to the makeup of the Task Force, which isn't going to make its information public, which is going to spend public funds and then give the recommendations to Cabinet and the people across the province really won't know whether all the work that the hon. member says he is going to do and will do, whether it will be acted upon or won't be acted upon, I think it is rather interesting commentary on open government. It won't even be a public report.

The hon. member spent some time talking about the way in which the present government deals with municipalities. I would like to suggest, for just a moment or two, that there might be two examples that we might look at in this particular area. One is the decision to increase the unconditional grant from \$38 million up to \$42 million. The other is the Task Force on Urbanization and the Future. It seems to me that one might also include the recent announcement made by the Premier as far as the royalty situation is concerned in the province. The government's approach seems to be to come out and make a very, very dire announcement that we are not going to increase our initial grants, that we are going to phase out the Task Force on

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Urbanization. The announcement, Monday I think, the Premier made with regard to royalties was the same kind of dire announcement. Then the government is getting quite adept at coming along a little while later on, and saying "but you know folks, it isn't quite as bad as we first said. For example, we aren't going to hold the unconditional grant to \$38 million, but we are going to increase it to about \$42 million."

If we look at the Task Force on Urbanization and the Future, when the announcement was first made, it was stated that one of the reasons the Task Force on Urbanization was being folded up and not carrying on was because it was too costly. Yet, if we look in the estimates for last year, there is an estimate of \$150,000 in the estimates. Then a little while later on the government has come around and has taken a step back from this dire situation and says, we are going to go ahead with it. But we are going to go ahead with it this year on a little different basis. For this Task Force on Urbanization which was too expensive -- the \$150,000 last year which was too expensive -- we are going to put \$200,000 in the estimates this year. We are going to change the rules of the game somewhat. We are going to let the directors of the city know -- the directors of the task force know -- that we don't want to do it this way. There was no consultation there. The mayors got a call from the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs by telephone saying we are doing this. What could the mayor say about it?

Then on the matter of the director of the task force, the government said to the municipalities, we think there should well be a change in this area, and we suggest that you pick this person. What are the mayors going to say? They reluctantly go along with it. What choice do they have? The odd thing is that, for a government that phased out the Task Force on Urbanization because it was too expensive, the approach you are now taking according to the hon. minister, is going to cost \$200,000 this year, and you are not going to have the input of \$40,000 from the cities.

The hon. Member for Calgary North is right. One of the municipal authorities in the province has chosen to object to the way in which the task force is operating. I suspect that that would likely be the great city he lives in and I live fairly close to -- Calgary. Yet I do recall the meetings that were held with the ten cities that were involved, and after considerable discussion the mayor of that city -- the same mayor as today -- did agree to go along with the set-up of the task force, the directors, and so on. And I think the record will check out that Mayor Sykes didn't attend very many meetings of the directors of the task force. Be that as it may, it's the government's right to make these kind of decisions. No member can object to that.

But I do think that an interesting pattern has developed here, that the government comes along and says it's going to phase out the task force, and a while later it comes back and kind of reverses its field. It kind of conditions people for something awful, and then it doesn't go quite as far as it indicated it would. The same thing is true on the matter of the unconditional grants. Initially the government announced that there wasn't going to be any increase in the unconditional grants, and I can appreciate the hon. Member for Calgary North Hill -- who is a heck of a fine fellow -- getting up and defending the Minister of Municipal Affairs, now, because the day the minister made the announcement, I think if you will check the Calgary Herald, there was some comment in the paper from a certain member from Calgary saying, "Well, you know when there's a green minister," and so on and so forth, you can expect some of these kind of things to happen, and so forth. So I can see why he is defending the minister today, and if I, like he, sat over there and got myself involved in that kind of a situation, I'd likely kind of try and be weaving through the grass also.

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Now, the last matter that I want to touch upon, Mr. Speaker, deals with the question of assessment and is somewhat related to the SCOAT Report. The SCOAT Report, it's true, very few, if any of the recommendations were dealt with. And certainly the whole question of assessment is a difficult question, and if the hon. Member, Mr. Farran, and his task force and the minister can straighten out the problems in the field of assessment, this will not only be a service to this province, it will be all across Canada. This matter of assessment in relation to land, buildings, in the relationship between equalized assessment and actual value and so on -- I can see there are many problems here and there are going to continue to be problems in this particular area.

Mr. Chairman, concluding my remarks in this particular field. I would urgently ask the minister and the government to reconsider its position on the matter of the recommendations of the Task Force on Provincial-Municipal Finances being made public. I think it's very, very important that the recommendations from this committee are made public, because we all know the hon. Member for Calgary North well enough, that he wouldn't want even one person across this province to suggest that his task force gave the government the kind of report that they wanted. And I don't think he and his committee will do this. But it does seem to me that if we're going to have the kind of communication and consultation between municipalities that the member talked about, if people across the province are going to have the opportunity to look at the alternatives that the member said they are viewing, then it does seem to me reasonable that at least the bare recommendations should be made public.

I would ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the chairman of the task force and other members of the task force to seriously reconsider this idea of not making public the recommendations of the task force. Because over a year ago when the Royal Commission was established, it was done with close consultation between the municipalities and the government of that particular time. And it's fair to say that certainly some municipalities had rather high expectations for the recommendations of this particular committee. If those realizations are to be lived with, or if the aspirations of the Conservative party and the planks in the election platform are going to be lived with, then certainly it's incumbent, I think, upon the government to make the recommendations of the report public. I really make that an urgent plea. I should acknowledge the hon. Member, Mr. King, who really was to speak next, Mr. Chairman, but was gracious in letting me get up next. I have a commitment that I have to leave for shortly, but if the minister cares to respond to some of my comments, I expect this might be an appropriate time.

MR. KING:

I assume that the minister is keeping all of his comments till the end of his appropriation.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Very well.

MR. KING:

I would like to make two general comments, Mr. Chairman, about the operations of the Department of Municipal Affairs, but first, unlike my more congenial companion for Calgary North Hill, who has a natural aversion to controversy, I would like to take complete exception to the remarks that were made by the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View, an argument which I think was totally specious, and either based on a clear and complete ignorance of the law which I find hard to credit; or else based on a facile ability to forget that not too long ago he sat on this side of the House as a member of the government which was charged with drafting,

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implementing and administering the law. We have been through this a number of times before. I think the hon. members on this side of the House have suffered in silence admirably, and I, at least, have reached the point where I would like to make a comment.

We are discussing the constructions of the words 'may' and 'shall', and I won't go into the question of the interpretation of them, because I am confident the hon. member opposite, in spite of what he may say in the Legislature, fully understands their meaning. -- You think not -- I would like to repeat a point I raised earlier in the House, which many hon. members laughed at at the time -- and I meant it very seriously -- some time ago, some years ago, while I was enjoying a quiet evening of reading the Revised Statutes of Alberta, I came across an index of acts which were in force in the province, but not in effect. One of them was The Act to Provide for the Realization of the Social Credit of Alberta, in which act there is contained this section, Section 4(1):

"There is hereby constituted a board to be known as the Social Credit Board, which shall consist of such members, not exceeding five, as the Lieutenant Governor may, from time to time, determine. The Lieutenant Governor in Council shall appoint the members of the board, and shall designate one of the members of the board to be the chairman thereof. Any vacancy which occurs in the membership of the board shall be filled by the Lieutenant Governor in Council."

The hon. member opposite was, for some years, a minister of the Crown in a government which had that piece of legislation on the books and which did not, in spite of the use of the word 'shall' feel it was necessary or desirable to appoint The Social Credit Realization Board. For him to have experienced that term of office on the government, to have accepted as a member of the government the decision that they would not appoint a Social Credit Realization Board, in spite of the strict instruction of the act that they do so, seems to me to be extremely inconsistent, to say the least, with his brief, and in my view, ill-considered, remarks to the Legislature this afternoon.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to pass on to things which I hope will be of more value to the Legislature.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. KING:

I felt sure it would be of more value to the hon. members opposite than a recitation of their previous sins.

In talking about the rationalization of the decision-making process at the local level, one of the things I think should be considered is an extension of the boundaries of local government, or of the powers of local government, so that they are consistent on a regional, rather than on a strictly municipal, base. I think the experience of Edmonton and Calgary, particularly, and the possible future experience of other smaller cities and indeed, the towns in Alberta, clearly indicate that in terms of the nature of our society, the local level of government has got to be able to operate, not only in the immediate area of its concern and its population, but in terms of at least some portion of its social and economic hinterland.

I think one of the alternatives which might be considered by the provincial administration is a county concept, such as is implemented in some of the American states, where towns, villages, or indeed cities, are subservient in some respects to the county government, which can have control over a number of the municipalities within its

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border, and can, therefore, rationalize the growth between different population centres and population centres of different sizes.

Another thing which I think should be carefully considered and certainly, I wouldn't attempt to determine at this point what might be the outcome of a consideration of the question of transfer payments from the provincial government to any local level of government. The very real possibility exists that transfer payments from the provincial government to a local level of government may at some point in the future, and may indeed even now, be as difficult for the local level of government to live with, as are equalization payments between the provinces difficult for this province to live with at the present time. I think that some of the arguments that have been made nationally against regional economic incentives for equalization payments to areas rather than individuals should be considered in terms of the development of this province and in terms of the grants that are made by the province to local levels of government or alternately, to individuals in the province wherever they may live.

One of the things which I personally believe is important in this regard, is that as much as possible, and in all departments, not simply the Department of Municipal Affairs, there should be a getting away from the idea of conditional grants in any situation. I think that any declaration that the decision making process must devolve downward, if it is to be realistically considered, and if indeed it is seriously held by people who make that declaration, must be based on the belief that the devolution of power downward takes with it the responsibility for accepting the consequences of the decisions which are made at the local level. And I personally would favour, if transfer payments are necessary, unconditional transfer payments given according to certain very general, universally applied criteria which would be at the sole discretion of the local level of government, whether a municipality or a regional government, to disburse as they saw best fit for their own particular needs.

I would like to make some comments about particular programs of the Department of Municipal Affairs, but I will make them as we come to the appropriation.

MR. MOORE:

Mr. Chairman...

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Chairman.....

MR. CHAIRMAN:

I wonder if just before the minister responds we give you a chance Mr. Ludwig. Mr. Moore please ... In other words, second last.

MR. MOORE:

Mr. Chairman, first I would like to note the excellent speeches from both sides of the House. I would like to ask a question of the minister. I presume we will be moving into the votes very shortly and I have a question that pertains to two or three of the votes, and could I have your permission to ask them at this time?

MR. CHAIRMAN:

If it is general discussion, you can ask them, but if you would hold them then we can just deal with them when.....

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MR. MOORE:

It relates to several votes.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Go ahead if it is more general.

MR. MOORE:

In relation to vote. 2116 and 2118, the Field Services Branch and Special Areas Board, my understanding is that from the taxation revenues that are derived in those areas, there is a fee levied by the Department of Municipal Affairs in respect to each land title. And I am wondering what percentage of that total vote is derived from taxation within those areas, if any in that figure. And if so, I am wondering if the hon. Provincial Treasurer would consider another year inserting that information into the budget so that we might determine to what degree if any, there is a subsidization of administration in improvement districts and special areas.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Mr. French.

MR. FRENCH:

Mr. Chairman let me ask if the hon. minister is going to answer that question in respect to Special Areas?

MR. CHAIRMAN:

He is taking them down.

MR. FRENCH:

Oh. I want to refer the hon. member to the budget address on page 52, and in the column for the refund of the previous year's expenditure, which shows Administration of Districts and Special Areas, a certain sum, there is a recovery, with respect to the Special Areas -- I am speaking only of the Special Areas now. The revenues that are derived from the Special Areas went into a Special Areas Trust Fund, and it is true that there is an item in our budget today for the administration expenses, but there is also recovery to the department which shows up on page 52. Now to the hon. minister I would like to ask a supplementary question to the question that has been asked.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Go ahead, Mr. French.

MR. FRENCH:

Yes, I just want to be sure he's listening. In view of the fact that the vote 2116 for next year is \$507,020 and vote 2118 is \$340,475, which makes a total of \$847,495 and yet your equivalent recovery shows \$1,260,000 and I'm wondering why the discrepancy between these figures.

MR. NOTLEY:

Just a point of order, does the hon. minister want to answer that question before ..

MR. CHAIRMAN:

He's taking them all.

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MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Chairman, just a few general observations about the Department of Municipal Affairs estimates. I don't think that any of us should be overly concerned if the Legislature takes a good deal of time in considering these estimates, because the relationship between this level of government and the municipalities in the province is, I submit, one of the most important questions that we have to consider in the Legislature.

I have a number of general points that I want to raise. Starting first of all with the comments the hon. minister made about The Senior Citizens Shelter Act. During the budget speech I observed that the act as it is presently proposed will be a windfall for the rich. During the discussion in the budget we heard a great deal about 'we don't want to impose a means test'. I think, Mr. Chairman, perhaps a few comments should be made about this whole means test argument. There's a reasonable argument against the means test when talking about services which should be equally available to everyone, but paid on the basis of people's ability to pay. So when it comes to general programs, whether it be Medicare or family allowance or what have you, I personally reject the concept of a means test.

But when we're talking about tax relief, Mr. Chairman, with the greatest respect, I think we're talking about something entirely different. When we're talking about taxation, by its very basis, if we are going to have taxation that is related to the ability-to-pay concept, we are talking about selectivity, and so therefore we have an indirect means test. I don't think there should be any apologies about that. Therefore the sweeping proposal that this government intends to implement at this session of the Legislature that the 30 mills will be removed for all people over 65 years, in my judgment, is completely wrong.

We have an interesting comparison with the Province of Manitoba, because at this session of the Manitoba Legislature the government has introduced a new scheme where for every \$1,000 of taxable income an individual can deduct 1% of their taxable income from \$140 maximum figure. This \$140 is the maximum that will be paid out. It's possible under an agreement with the federal government which will administer the provincial credit plan in conjunction with the Manitoba income tax plan. Now the point in the Manitoba scheme that I think is worth noting, Mr. Chairman, is that as a person's income goes up, their tax credit goes down. So that a person who has an income of \$15,000 or \$20,000 would get at most \$50.00, but a person with no taxable income whatsoever would get the maximum figure of \$140.00. In short, Mr. Chairman, this is a form of municipal education tax property relief which is consistent with the ability to pay proposition. Because we've heard, as I've said before, so much about the means test proposition. Frankly, I think when we're talking about tax relief, we in fact have to have some form of means test if we're going to preserve 'the ability to pay' principle.

The question of the ceiling on municipal grants of \$42 million has already been raised. But let me just observe here, that had it not been for the decision last year to restrict the grants at \$38 million and the decision of this government not to lift this ceiling, municipalities would have received some \$57 million this year. Last year when the former government imposed the freeze I opposed it. I think that ceilings should have been lifted and as the hon. Member for Calgary McCall pointed out in his comments, the local levels of government in this province are facing very serious financial problems, problems which, in my judgment, aren't going to be remedied by a \$4 million increase.

MR. FARRAN:

I just want to question some information here.

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MR. CHAIRMAN:

It's up to Mr. Notley.

MR. FARRAN:

I believe the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview is under a misapprehension. The Municipal Assistance Act grants are based on the royalties of the previous year, so they are based on the royalties as shown in the public accounts for the year ending March 31, 1971. One third of that would not be \$57 million.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Carry on Mr. Notley.

MR. NOTLEY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps Mr. Farran and I can argue about that in the public accounts as to just what the figure would be. The point I think must be made, Mr. Chairman, is that during the election campaign many of our local government officials were led to believe that the ceiling would be raised -- unfortunately it hasn't been -- and I think that's a mistake.

A few observations about the projected change in the Task Force on Urbanization. Mr. Chairman, the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury has already discussed this in part. I think that to a large extent I agree with the comments that he makes, but I note that we are going to be farming out much of the research work to private consulting groups who will, no doubt, carry on standard research techniques. One of the things that I found most encouraging about the Task Force on Urbanization was an effort on the part of the director of that task force and the consultants working with him, to involve as broad a range of people as possible. But I am afraid that if we simply farm out many of these projects to outside consultants we will be getting away from citizen participation. Mr. Chairman, that in my view would be a very retrogressive step.

I also want to say something about The Communal Properties Act and the failure of the government to reappoint the Communal Properties Board -- or to appoint a board under the provisions of that act. The hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands took some time to point out that because the former government had not appointed a board to administer The Social Credit Act, somehow this justified the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs not appointing a board under the provision of The Communal Properties Act. Frankly I think there is a very important difference here, Mr. Chairman. The Social Credit Act, with all due respect to my friends on this side of the House, is hardly terribly relevant these days. On the other hand the Communal Properties Act does very directly relate to the rights of individual Albertans, and to exercise what we consider to be basic human rights in our province. Consequently I think that it is a totally specious argument to suggest because one board wasn't appointed that, somehow, it justifies not appointing a board in this case.

During the many times in the Question Period that this matter has been raised, we have had a number of responses from the hon. minister. But I must say that I had some sympathy for the position of the government in the first place because, frankly, I think that the time has long since past when The Communal Properties Act should be repealed -- pure and simple. I also, when these questions were first raised, was at least led to believe that there had been some pretty thorough and proper consultation with the Hutterite communities in this province, and that if they were prepared, if you like, to put their civil liberties in a state of limbo for two or three or six or eight months, that this was their decision, then fine, I would have to swallow a number of large qualms from the civil liberties point of view -- but if it was their decision I would buy it.

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Unfortunately yesterday I raised a supplementary question -- I want to read into the record, Mr. Chairman -- this is a question to the hon. minister:

"Mr. Speaker, a question to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. He mentioned he had consultation with the Hutterite Brethren. Could he advise the House who he consulted with? Did he consult with all the colonies in Alberta or representatives of them, and who these representatives were?"

Answer from the hon. minister:

"Mr. Speaker, I talked by letter, by phone, and in person with a variety of solicitors who were acting for various colonies, also with some real estate agents. There were also two Brethren in my office. It was several months ago and I would have to check my appointment book to get their names and what colony they represent."

Well, Mr. Chairman, there is a great difference between the kind of consultation that I felt had taken place and consultation with a few real estate agents, a variety of solicitors, and two of the Brethren who had met with the minister in his office. Mr. Chairman, I think this is a very important point, because the hon. minister's failure to appoint a board has, in effect, barred the Hutterian Brethren from exercising even the limited right that they had under what I consider to be a thoroughly bad act. Now in the absence of a repeal of The Communal Properties Act, it seems to me that the government's position on this is extremely weak and, frankly, I am disturbed -- I want to underline how disturbed I am -- that this so-called consultation was at best, pretty superficial.

Mr. Chairman, a comment or two on the matter I raised a few days ago concerning housing in the community of Fort Vermilion in Northern Alberta. The hon. minister suggested in his reply, and I can appreciate a political jab now and again, that the reason I raised this is because I've been looking over my clipping file and finally got up to date to February 24th. I want to assure the hon. minister that it's more up to date than that. But the questions I raised are all listed in the minutes of the February 19th meeting of the Fort Vermilion Community Action Committee. I'm not going to read these minutes into the record, but the questions that I posed in the Legislature came from the minutes of that particular meeting.

As a consequence of the questions asked, Mrs. Ferguson, one of the members of the Community Action Committee, resigned. She has written some observations about the housing project in Fort Vermilion which, with the permission of the House, I would like to read into the record. I quote from Mrs. Ferguson's comments:

"The high cost (and she is talking about the facilities, the units) is not justified by the quality of material being used in the public housing units. As one local man who worked on the first six, in their early construction said, (she quotes from him) 'they are about like I'd build a good granary!' As well, the lack of fixtures and a basement would seem to indicate a far lower cost for the houses. The outer shell is of a plywood material, treated on the outside with weatherproofing, and there is no extra sheathing or siding. The worst features of the houses being built, representing a disregard by the expert planners of the Alberta Housing Commission and CMHC for local building and living conditions, are the four-foot high cement footings, and the use of propane fuel rather than oil. How are the floors of these houses to be kept warm? It will be impossible to provide four-foot high banking in the winter. And old age pensioners (she goes on) for whom four single storey cottages have been built, are expected to climb up and down four feet of stairs which will be icy in the winter. At least these

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cottages should have been built at ground level. Propane is not the cheapest or the most reliable fuel for this climate. When the temperature drops to 50 below it turns to jelly and the fire goes out. As well, respiratory tract diseases are widespread among the families who live in these units, and gas is often a contributing factor in forms of bronchitis and asthma. Yet without asking the advice of local people and without calling for public tenders for the contract to supply fuel to the units, the Alberta Housing Corporation went ahead and installed propane furnace sets."

She goes on to say, "Mr. McColl of the Alberta Housing Corporation was quoted in the Edmonton Journal as having reasons for some of the criticisms I have made of the project. I find his excuses ridiculous. For example he cites the requirements that the contractor hire as many local people as possible as the reason for not calling tenders. In fact," she says, "the contractor has let all the work by sub-contract to the local builders who would have bid on the contract and built the houses at a lower cost had they been given the chance to do so. As far as I know, none of the evicted men were able to get jobs on the project, although they had signed up through the Metis Association to work on the building of the houses, and the contractor did nothing to alleviate the problem of joblessness among the welfare recipients in the area."

And finally in a letter that Mrs. Ferguson sent to me -- and I would also like to quote from this letter because I think there are some points here that we have to take a very close look at. She is talking about the installation that the hon. minister referred to as water and sewer in the community of Fort Vermilion. I quote from her letter:

"The very expensive and so far almost useless installation of a water system in a hamlet. In the past four winters, the cost of digging up frozen lines and repairing the system has been so high, that to date only a handful of homes actually have this service. Municipal Affairs engineers failed to listen to local advice based on the experience of the realities of this climate. In my own case I have been waiting for running water for so long, I am beginning to feel underprivileged," and so on.

Mr. Chairman, the point I want to make relates back to a comment that the hon. minister made about the Alberta Housing Corporation. If in fact there is going to be a reassessment, I think we have to take a pretty close examination at what has gone on in Fort Vermilion and determine whether or not the allegations made by Mrs. Ferguson are correct. Because I think that too often government bodies, whether the Alberta Housing Corporation or any other level of government, tend to ignore the advice of local people. We all know, as members of the Legislature in travelling around the province, that evidence has come to our knowledge where too often decisions have been made by so-called experts who haven't taken the time to check with the often very practical advice they can gain from local people. I am not raising this issue to attempt to embarrass the hon. minister or attempt to discredit the Alberta Housing Corporation, but I do think it raises a very basic question of where local consultative committees come in, what their advice will be, how we are going to reorganize our governmental structure, at least as it relates to this department, so that we can make use more effectively in the future, of advice from local committees.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, just some concluding observations about the problems of mobile homeowners. I have a number of young people in my constituency who live in mobile homes. They have come to me and brought their problems -- problems which quite frankly I didn't realize existed. I think it is encouraging that the government is

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introducing legislation at this time that will make it possible for local municipalities to acquire lands to set up mobile home parks. I would like to compliment them for it, and when we get to that legislation we can discuss it in a more detailed way.

One thing that concerns me is the depreciation schedule set out to determine the computation of the licence fee on a trailer. The depreciation schedule is over an extended period of time. It is very slow depreciation, to put it mildly. As a consequence, it seems to me -- and again I am no expert in this field -- but it seems to me that the actual market value of the trailer is going to disappear long before the depreciation period ends, and that it might be better that we have a shorter period of time in our depreciation schedule in computing the licence fee for trailers in this province. I would like to suggest to the hon. minister that the department seriously consider whether it would not be useful to re-examine that schedule and perhaps reducing the period of time.

All in all then, Mr. Chairman, I would just like to conclude my remarks by saying that it seems to me, as we look into the future, that it is important that we view the local level of government, not as a subservient level of government that we can treat any way we like in this provincial Legislature, but increasingly I think we have to view the role of local level of government as one of partnership with the provincial level. I believe that as we examine the greater area of jurisdiction that is increasingly falling into the sway of local levels of government, it is perhaps important that we recognize this fact. I, for one, would argue that in any effort to redesign our constitution in Canada, that we have to take a pretty close look at perhaps recognizing the rights of municipalities to exist on their own.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Chairman, I thought when I spoke previously on The Communal Properties Act that I had made my position quite clear, but in view of the remarks from the hon. members, I would like to add a couple of comments. I appreciate the remarks of the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview in touching on the fact that we are dealing with people's rights -- people's rights which are provided by legislation. That is one principle I have made my position clear on. I believe that most hon. members here will agree that that is an important principle and we don't need any Bill of Rights to tell us that that is so. The act is quite clear on that -- (Section 16) -- as to the right to apply for leave to purchase land before the board. As I've mentioned earlier, it is an indication of a serious breach of responsibility when a minister can stand up in the House and say, "I subscribe and always fought for the fact that the Legislature is supreme." There isn't a member in the House who disagrees with the principle that the Legislature is supreme when it passes an act, no one inside the House or outside the House, unless it's ultra vires can override that act. But that is exactly what happened. I'm sure the hon. minister will not stand up in the House and say the Legislature is not supreme. He'll agree that the Legislature is supreme. Every elected member subscribes to that. Some will not say it for reasons best known to themselves. But I think that what has happened here -- and I wish to emphasize it -- is that the minister comes here and says the legislation is there; we said before, that it wasn't good, we don't know what to do with it, the Legislature is supreme, but I'm above the Legislature, we're elected now and we're the government now; we're going to ignore the rights of the Hutterites or anybody else who comes under The Communal Properties Act. We'll suspend this law. We'll keep it in abeyance until I'm good and ready to do something about it. I think that this is a very flagrant offence on the part of the minister to take that kind of a position. I think that if this happened in parliament, that Diefenbaker would be screaming "resign" quite justifiably. You can't say that "I'm superior to the Legislature," and I think that what the

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hon. minister has to do now -- it's incumbent on him -- is to set out specifically what power, what authority has he got to suspend an act of Legislature. I'm saying that he and all of them put together couldn't do it. He violated a very important law that people fought for. I've never agreed to have a minister say that he's above the Legislature. I don't think anybody over on the other side has. But this is exactly what happened. You can argue and you can beat around the bush. You can point your finger at what the government did or did not do in the past, and try to detract from the fact that the hon. minister made an unpardonable error, and try to justify his action when it's a mistake. It's a serious mistake -- a mistake on one of the most important principles before us -- that the Legislature is supreme, no minister, no government, no set of ministers put together can override that. I'm going to stick to that principle. I wouldn't mind if the hon. Member, Mr. King, would get up and say that he also agrees that the Legislature is supreme, but according to his argument the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs is more supreme. And that's about the short and long of the whole thing. I think the hon. minister ought to stand up, admit his mistake, withdraw from the position, and let's do the right thing by the people of this province.

MR. HINMAN:

Mr. Chairman, my qualifications to speak on municipal affairs are pretty small. I did hold the position of the hon. minister at one time, and I can boast that the fewest mistakes ever made were made during my regime, the reason being that it was so short.

I'm always a little confused. Just when I begin to think the hon. Member for Calgary North Hill is very smart because he agrees with me, he goes veering off somewhere. What I have to say is not going to be long. But I think sometimes we're confused in the House with the idea that somebody can very quickly solve all our problems. There are no greater problems today than those facing municipal governments, and there is no department in this government with a bigger job and one in which there will be more conflicts than that held by my hon. friend, the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The chief reason is that the changes come so rapidly and so unexpectedly and so unplanned that perpetually municipalities are facing very new problems. When it comes to the qualifications of those who try to solve these problems, long ago I discovered that it's usually a handicap to bring in the people with the most background, except on certain terms. As a business consultant, probably, in my experience, we dealt most frequently with businesses which were not thriving very well. The last person that we should have listened to was the fellow who was running it. Now maybe that's true with our municipalities. If they have faults, if they are failing, maybe we ought not to listen too much to those who were running them, except to call them as witnesses to get the facts from them; to get their ideas, and to evaluate these.

I think one of the great weaknesses of task forces and commissions has been that so frequently they are given no criteria in the terms of reference. We give them a problem, but nobody says, "we want this evaluated in these terms." Many of the failures of the commissions can be traced to the fact that they did not, in their original study, set up some criteria, by which they were going to be judged.

The hon. Member for Calgary North Hill pointed out that the shelves are full of reports by commissions, by able men, that are gathering dust. My experience was, in all the commissions that we ever appointed while I was in government, you could have written in two pages all the recommendations that government ever took seriously. This does not mean they were not good. But I think sometimes it meant that we just didn't have the political courage to

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do some of the things which were very evident, and which were pointed out by these commissions.

The political implications are always there, and we are not going to solve a lot of them, until maybe some time when we do have people who would rather be right than in power.

The next thing is, the failure of governments to review the commission findings, and to set up permissive legislation. Many times we could have gained a very great deal by the reports of commissions had we said, "alright, we will let somebody try it." Let somebody choose to try it, not force them to try it. And if we had done some of these things, I think we would have had some answers to these problems.

I am going to turn for a minute to the hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands, the very able young man who is still confused that knowledge and wisdom are the same thing. I notice that he has learned the rules of the House and has become quite an authority; now he is reviewing the statutes and will soon be an authority on that. Therefore, he thinks, perhaps he has gained some new wisdom. Actually wisdom always comes from those who may not have read the bible. He proposes, for instance, that there be regional governments. Well, we have tried regional governments. Toronto had a go at it, Winnipeg had a go at it. He talks about county governments, which are in a sense over local governments. That is true; Salt Lake City tried it; Chicago tried it; Minneapolis tried it. These are not particularly new things. But his concept that maybe it is time for the county government, seems to be a good one.

In this province, if we were to separate the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Youth -- and I could go on -- if each one went its merry way, what a turmoil we would have. Yet that is just what we do in municipal governments. Anything that the hospital board does reflects on all the people of the city or county; anything the school board does. Why we don't get this archaic system up to date is more than I can understand.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. HINMAN:

There are ways to do it. I would suggest the first way is to ask some city if it wants to try a county government. If we set up some criteria, the first important thing is to elect a body of managers, if you want to call them that, for a period long enough to do something; everybody elected for five years. Another important thing, it seems to me, is to have some of them at least, elected at large, at least the mayor. Then turn over to them the total management of all those affairs of government which are municipal.

If you do that, your councillors become full-time employees just as the ministers in our government. They are able to set up departments; they are able to get the kind of help you must get. They will make some mistakes, and all the help won't be perfect, but at least they will get down to the business of government. So I suggest it is about time we pass some permissive legislation to try a county form of government in a city. When you want to go outside the city, it is about time, I think, for what you might call rural-urban counties, where a town with that area which trades there, which comes there for all its recreation and perhaps all its church services, for all its other services; can have a government made up of people elected at large, if you like, for a period long enough for them to work out the best interest of that area. This again I suggest could

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be permissive. If some area wants to try it, let them and then we will all know if it works or not. It doesn't have to go on forever.

Now the weakness of our current system is the dependence of municipal governments; and I mean by that, school boards and hospital boards; on central governments for revenue. As long as they depend on central governments, they have to follow pretty closely the direction they are going to get from central governments, and it will not always be wise. I am very happy that the new government is taking a pretty strong stand on that in provincial-federal relationships. I think it is just as important that we get it in municipal-provincial relationships. Now I would suggest that revenue has become the important thing. I do not envy the task force its job in trying to determine a way of raising revenue by some other source than property tax to replace the 30 mills of the total education tax. I quite agree that there is no longer a very close relationship between the service and property. I quite agree that we need to devise a tax system whereby everybody who has a voice, by that I mean a vote on municipal affairs, also contributes and knows that he is contributing. How to do it is quite another matter. I think eventually we are going to go to some taxes that can best and only be collected by the province. But the province's role ought to be collection only. The municipalities ought to be able to get together and say if it is going to be sales tax, this is the sum we want you to collect for us. We will pay you to do it, the money is ours, we will devise the formula by which you return it, and then we will spend it.

Now if a great portion of that responsibility is local, you are going to get the most responsible local government. Under the systems which have grown up under the former government, the former government here, and which have grown up in other provinces; although you have to admit Alberta gave a lot of leadership; there is no longer any encouragement for local government to seek economies, to say to its people, "Maybe you need a little less service." I submit that with computers today, we could, in advance tell our people what every new service would cost in terms of property tax, or sales tax, or any other tax you want to suggest. And that having told them, a school board would very quickly, or a municipal council would very quickly, determine whether the people wanted it badly enough to pay the price. We will always be subject to the experts, and I am not being critical of experts. If you give a young man a responsibility, he can always see ways that he could improve things. The question is, do the people want the improvements which he suggests at the price which they are going to cost. And so, I am for one, saying that when and if we do make other forms of municipal government possible, that as far as possible we load right on to that administrative body, the responsibility for collecting its own revenue.

Now I have done a lot of figuring from time to time and I think I can establish that when any revenue comes to the province and then goes back under a set of rules, that about 15 per cent of it gets into administration, and policing, to see that those who get the revenue do what they need to do. It doesn't cost that much to collect it, it wouldn't cost very much to give it back. The point is that we must not try to police a set of regulations imposed on these governments.

I am not going to go very much further except to say perhaps, there is a time now for some citizens task forces in cities, perhaps volunteers if you like who make some studies. But it is high time if you don't have municipal ombudsmen, at least we do have a man responsible once a month, or once a week if you like, to be in some office where citizens can come and sit down and present briefs and discuss them with the government. I am going to finish now with just one reference in respect to my friend from the Highlands. He has pointed out that this government's greatest failure was not

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implementing the Social Credit Board Act, and I wonder now, since nobody can prove the contrary, that if we had had that board, and if we had chosen wise people that we wouldn't still be on the other side of the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Mr. Taylor.

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Chairman, I want to say a few words in connection with the Department of Municipal Affairs too. I would like to start with the matter of the Hutterian Brethren. I feel that the entire action of the government was started from an application in the Drumheller riding. Last summer the Hand Hills Hutterian colony applied for a colony in the long established community of Verdant Valley. At that time I, on behalf of the people of the area, contacted the chairman of the Communal Property Board and asked him if he felt there was any reasonable chance of the application being approved and he said in his own view that there wasn't, that the MD of Starland was too small, but however people should send in their recommendations or objections in order that he could consider them. I advised the people of the area exactly what the chairman told me and some 200 people, I believe, sent in their objections and some number, I suppose, their approval. The MD of Starland certainly objected very strenuously, unanimously. The City Council of Drumheller objected unanimously and when the new government was elected I felt that the new government, with a new minister in Municipal Affairs, should have some of the background and I went to the trouble of writing out a memo for the hon. Minister, Mr. Russell setting out my views on the subject. The hon. minister was good enough to say that they would be considered.

Well, I was amazed one morning to get a telephone call from the Drumheller area saying that the application had been approved. I was amazed, because first of all I thought it was a round about way for the MLA to get the information, and secondly I was amazed that it had been approved. So I contacted the hon. minister by telephone and was advised that the Communal Property Board had recommended the application. I couldn't understand this. The hon. minister also said that the entire Cabinet had been supplied with the information and had made a very thorough study of the entire file.

I contacted the chairman of the Communal Property Board and asked him if he had indeed recommended this particular application and he said yes. I asked him how come, when he had told me that he couldn't approve another application in the MD of Starland and of course I accused him of being two-faced and so on. We had things rather hot and heavy. The people of the area were very much concerned and expected me to be their spokesman and I assumed that responsibility and outlined again by telephone and by memo to both the hon. Premier and the hon. minister why I thought the Order-in-Council was ill conceived and in error and requested that the Order-in-Council be rescinded. This was within a day or two days after the Order-in-Council had been passed. The vast majority of the people in the area approved this action and wanted the Order-in-Council rescinded. The hon. Premier advised me that he was leaving it up to the minister and the minister advised me that he would look into the matter and take it back to Cabinet. Well, the Order-in-Council was not rescinded. Instead of rescinding the Order-in-Council the chairman of the Communal Property Board was fired and there was a freeze put on all applications.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I didn't oppose then and I don't oppose now the discharging or the firing of the chairman of the Communal Property Board. I don't think any government can tolerate a civil servant who is going to be two-faced. And I said this to his face so

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I have no hesitation to say in here - I think the hon. minister did his duty by discharging the man from being the chairman of the board.

However, I believe that the government blundered badly in dealing with this first application. I say the government blundered badly, and apparently on the recommendation of the hon. minister, for a number of reasons. In the first place it broke faith with the word of a civil servant who was responsible to that government and did exactly what that civil servant promised the municipality that wouldn't be done.

I refer to a letter from the chairman of the Communal Property Board that was sent to the secretary-treasurer of the MD of Starland just a few months earlier, as a matter of fact in February, 1971, because there had already been one application approved in that municipality and it is, as the hon. members know, a small municipal area. And in writing the letter the chairman of the Board said this:

"It is perhaps unfortunate that so many farmers have been deprived of the opportunity to arrange satisfactory sale of their land, but so far as the writer is concerned, there will be no more colonies in the Municipal District of Starland No. 47."

Now this is a commitment by the chairman of a board and if the chairman made an error certainly the government has the right to deal with that chairman. But I suggest that the people should not be punished because a high civil servant made an error. And this is exactly what did happen. The government refused to rescind the Order-in-Council, although I believe the government realized it had made an error, but it refused to rescind the Order-in-Council. That meant that the people of the Verdant Valley area will continue to suffer the consequences of that decision for a number of years to come. And the consequences are affecting the lives of men and women and boys and girls.

The school matter in the MD of Starland is a serious item and should there be another Hutterian colony established in that municipality it will be utterly impossible to carry on a public school system within the present framework. Now this is not my view, this is the view of the school board and the municipal council -- utterly impossible -- or in other words, we are setting out a framework that we didn't check far enough into to see how it would affect, not only the people in that long established district, but the people in the rest of the municipality. And what is the situation now? The Hutterian Brethren will be able to establish their school and have their children attend the school within their own colony. What about the people whose grandfathers, whose ancestors established the district, whose children and grandchildren are now raising children in the area; what happens to their children. They are going to have to be bussed somewhere else. There is nothing -- no longer enough to keep the district open -- and I say it affected this one particular district, but another application will affect every ratepayer and every boy and girl in that entire municipality.

No wonder the municipal council said to me when they held up this letter, "Can we believe government officials any more? Can we believe government officials?" They said, "Will there be a third colony; will there be a fourth?" I just couldn't answer, I just don't know. I said as far as I am concerned there won't be but I haven't got the authority to say there will not be a third or a fourth.

Well, here we have responsible people in a municipal district being told one thing by a high government official and the government doing the other thing. What happened after this? Instead of rescinding the Order-in-Council and getting things back where a new government could well say, "We're going to review the entire Communal

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Property Act. We are going to take a look at it right from the beginning." No, instead of doing that they made what I consider a blunder and a bad mistake and then they froze -- or nullified -- or made The Communal Property Act inoperative.

I have to say that I disagree to some degree with some of the hon. members on this side of the House, I don't know about the other side, in connection with the freezing of applications. In my opinion it should have been done before the government made an error, not after it made an error.

And then there is another point I'd like to say about freezing too. I don't know of any legal authority that permits a minister to say, "We won't do this", something that is required in an act. When I was a minister of the Crown, my solicitor and the Attorney General's department always advised me, this is what it says in the legislation, and this is what you must do. You have no choice in it -- this is the law -- this is the command of the Legislature, and it is put in an act.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway tries to change the subject by saying, what about the board and The Social Credit Realization Act? Well it just happens that they are not comparable as already two members have pointed out, but even if they were, I happened to be in the Legislature when The Social Credit Realization Act was made inoperative. And it wasn't done by a Cabinet decision. The Premier came and stood before the Legislature and said, that the government no longer wished to carry out the conditions, or the clauses of The Social Credit Realization Act. The Legislature applauded, I don't think there was a single member or a married member in the whole Legislature that didn't applaud at that time. Even Social Credit members felt that the work of the Social Credit Board, as it was happening at that time, should cease. Now maybe the thing to do would have been to have repealed the act but that wasn't done. But the Legislature, the highest court in the land, agreed with the decision not to appoint a board and to make the act inoperative.

Now, it is a little different with The Communal Properties Act. It was the Cabinet that decided that it would make the act inoperative.

I've never been a supporter of the Hutterian Brethren going into established communities. The Hutterian Brethren know this -- I've sat, I've visited them, and I like them -- they are fine people, but I don't think they have the right to go in and break up long established community areas. And I have suggested time and time again to them, why don't you go to the north, the same as many of the returned men had to go to the north, the same as the sons of many of our farmers have to go to the north? I've said, you've got a set-up where you can clear, where you can get land where nobody is going to get angry and there are not going to be protest meetings, and so on. "Oh no", one of the reverend gentlemen said to me, "We don't want to go to the north. We want to go in established areas, where there are good roads, where there is electricity, and where it is close to a market." That is what they want to do.

Well, Mr. Chairman, when people say this is competition and free enterprise -- it isn't competition and free enterprise. By their very mode of living, they are able to amass large sums of money which the average son of a farmer just can't amass. And the farmer's sons can't buy the land at two and three times the value as do the Hutterian Brethren. I once offered my life for the freedom of religion in this country -- I'd do it tomorrow if there was another war that challenged same. The Hutterian Brethren have full right to practise their religion, they have full rights as Canadian citizens, but I suggest that the rights of other people in long established communities, their economic rights have to be considered too, and

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weighed. And I think we can be fair to the Hutterian Brethren and still be fair to the people in these areas who also want to live.

The Drumheller City Council, you may say, opposed the application in Verdant Valley 100%, or unanimously, and the Mayor and the Council did it, not because they didn't want freedom of religion, not because they didn't respect the Hutterian Brethren, but because of economic conditions. The establishment of that colony will affect almost every business place in Morrin and in the City of Drumheller. When you have a number of farm families -- say there are five farm families -- that means you have five cars, it means you have five television sets, it means you have five radios, it means you have -- how many dresses does the wife of every man get? Ten or 15 dresses?

MR. HENDERSON:

A hundred!

AN HON. MEMBER:

Mine gets one!

MR. TAYLOR:

A hundred, well, I don't know! But whatever number they get, just the economic situation -- the Hutterian Brethren -- they have one truck -- they don't have any cars -- they don't have any televisions -- they don't have any extra dresses for their wives, they don't take their wives to the football games or to a nice restaurant for dinner before...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Who takes their wife to football games?

MR. TAYLOR:

No they don't -- they don't compete -- I don't, but if I had one I would.

I am just trying to say that I want to emphasize that I would fight for the rights of the Hutterian Brethren. I have told my people this even at highly inflamed protest meetings. But I also want to fight for the rights of those who are established in areas and they have rights too. You can't always give the minority rights over the majority. And I am glad to see a committee set up to study this.

That brings me to the last point that I want to make in connection with this particular item. Freezing an act for a short time, I think is questionable, although in this particular case I supported it. I thought it should have been done before the government made the blunder, but it was done after. I think you have to then say how long is this freezing going to be kept in effect? Is it fair to the man who now wants to sell his land in an area where there is probably no protest? Is it fair to the Hutterian Brethren who now have too many people in a particular colony and want to expand. The Hutterian Brethren don't know what to do. They don't know now whether they can go into the north and buy land or not. I think, in fairness to the human rights of the Hutterian Brethren and the rest of the people, the government should set up some temporary measure in which applications can be considered -- considered, and either refused or accepted. But there should be some avenue pending the report coming in from the Legislative Committee to deal with applications, particularly applications that may have some urgency. I don't think this is asking the government too much, or asking the government to go too far, namely to set up some temporary avenue in

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which the matter of Hutterian Brethren applications may be considered.

I think that is all I have to say in connection with the Hutterian Brethren. I would suggest that the hon. members don't clap too loud because I have an awful lot more material and I might just change my mind.

I would like to say one or two more words now about one or two more items in the estimates. In connection with The Senior Citizens' Shelter Act and the Renters' Assistance. I was rather delighted to a large degree, when this action was taken, particularly as it gives a little help to many people who are short of money, who don't know where the money is coming from to pay their bills, and so on. I have already expressed my views in connection with the wealthy people who happen to be over 65. I agree with the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview that this is simply not right when people with estates of \$100,000 are being relieved of property taxes, and then we are collecting that extra amount from other people who are raising families, who have far less money than the person we are trying to help. It is a case of taking from the "have nots" and giving to the "haves". That is my view and I don't agree with a means test either, particularly a means test that leaves too many worthy cases on the wrong side of the ledger, such as means tests we have seen in this country before. I think it is possible, however, to work out a means test, or whatever you want to call it, in which there is some semblance of fairness, some consideration given to the ability to pay, as well as something over which we have no control such as the age we happen to be. That isn't the criteria at all. A man who is 75, who has a very high estate -- say a half a million dollar estate -- why should he be relieved? Why should he be relieved simply because he happened to be born 20 years before many of the other people who are still working? Well, I am not going to argue that further, but I suggest to the government that this principle is not sound and that this principle is undoing a lot of the good that you intended to do by giving some assistance to senior citizens who properly should be relieved of the tax.

The next item -- the Renter's Assistance -- worries me a great deal. In the first place, as has been mentioned in this House before, I am not sure at all that the senior citizen in most cases is going to get the benefit of this particular legislation. I have seen what has happened when benefits were given to people before and the landlords may say, "here is our chance." A senior citizen of Edmonton said to me the other day, "I'm getting an increase in my rent," and I said, "How come?" And she said, "Well, the landlord came to me and he said 'the government is now giving you some extra money so you can pay extra rent.' " And she said, "Well, that's nice, if that's the way it is. I didn't think this was the reason the government was giving the senior citizens some extra money, so that landlords could increase the rent." It may leave the renter in exactly the same position, or maybe a little worse.

Unless we have some device or some control to make sure that unscrupulous landlords aren't going to take advantage of this to the detriment of our senior citizens, then it may well backfire and not do the good that the hon. Provincial Treasurer and the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs and the government wants it to do. I commend them for wanting to help these people. Many of our senior citizens need help and I would like to think that they are going to get the help and that it's not going into the pocket of somebody else through an indirect route.

There's another thing about this vote that bothers me, too. It says it is not applicable to residents of senior citizens' lodges or nursing homes. I wonder why that decision was made. I can't follow that decision. When senior citizens decide to go into a senior citizens' lodge, they undertake to pay the rent, just the same as

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they undertake to pay the rent when they go into an apartment building. As a matter of fact, Mr. Chairman, I know a couple who left the senior citizens' lodge -- this was before this idea came in and they didn't do it with any ulterior purpose -- because they could get public housing cheaper than what they were paying in the senior citizens' lodge. Now, what's the situation? They will now be able to secure some public assistance, when they need it less than the people in the senior citizens' lodge. What sense does that make? How can we justify saying to those who happen to live in lodges that it doesn't matter what rent you pay, we're not going to give you any assistance? Surely, they are entitled to some assistance, the same as any other senior citizen, if this is going to be universal. And the same applies to the nursing homes. Let me deal with the senior citizens again for a moment. If there's a deficit in operations of the senior citizens' lodges, it isn't the government that picks it up. It's the people of those municipalities in that area. I have attended a lot of meetings, and maybe many of the members here have, too, undoubtedly they have, and I have yet to hear any taxpayer object if the money was being properly used in a senior citizens' lodge to pay the half a mill or the one mill to make up the deficit, because they do recognize the importance of helping our senior citizens. But the government doesn't pick up the deficit. I can't see the difference why a person who lives in a senior citizens' lodge should be denied the same benefit that's given to a senior citizen who lives in an apartment building across the street and who may be paying less than the person in the senior citizens' lodge.

Now, let's come to nursing homes. In this case, the government does make a contribution. But each guest or patient pays too. They pay their -- what is it? -- \$2.50 a day to go in the home. Well, \$2.50 a day is probably \$70 or \$75 a month. This may compare favourably with people in apartments or it may not. But the point is, if this is for senior citizens, why isn't it just as applicable to those in nursing homes who are beyond the age of 65 as it is to those who are in apartment buildings and who happen to be beyond the age of 65? I suggest, Mr. Chairman...

MR. FAHRAN:

Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. We haven't yet seen the bill for The Senior Citizens' Shelter Act, and the hon. Member for Drumheller is debating unknown detail that is completely speculative. Isn't the time for that debate when the bill is introduced?

MR. TAYLOR:

What was the point of order, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Go ahead, repeat it.

MR. FAHRAN:

Sorry, I'll say it again. I don't believe that the government has yet introduced The Senior Citizens' Shelter Act, either for first reading or second reading...

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Chairman, I think if the hon. member just checked the estimates and looked at 2111...

MR. FAHRAN:

Yes, it may be on the description of the estimates, but you are debating detail which goes far beyond this.

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MR. TAYLOR:

I was just discussing policy of the Department of Municipal Affairs. I have every right to do that. That is not a point of order, at all. I have made my point, Mr. Chairman. He raises a point of order after I am all through, anyhow. If there was a point of order it should have been done long ago. I haven't got that much breath to waste.

I want to reiterate once again, and summarize what I was saying. If this is such a wonderful thing for senior citizens, then it should be applicable to all senior citizens. If they want no means test, then let us have no means test. We don't agree with this -- let us not say 'means test' -- a means test is going to keep the benefits for those who need it, and not those who have big estates. If we are going to do that, let us do it. Let us not say to those who happen to live in lodges and nursing homes, "you are going to have a means test, but nobody else is." That is what we are doing today. They are penalized because they live in a lodge; they are penalized because they live in a nursing home. This just isn't right. I would like to hear the explanation for the thinking of the government in working out a program like that.

There is one other thing about it, too, that I think this whole program was worked out without careful thought and enough planning. What is the situation going to be five years down the road, ten years down the road? Did the government realize that this is going to bring more and more people within this ambit? It may well be that the old age pension will be applicable at the age of 60, a few years from now. I remember when it was 70; it is now 65. The tendency is to come down. Did the government work out a table to see what this is going to involve when the age is lowered? I think this is pretty important; otherwise they may well be shouldering a future government with a policy and a program that just can't be carried out.

These are the main points and there are several others that can be discussed when we get to the particular estimates. But I did want to make those particular points on the estimates at this time.

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Chairman, would you be in favour of a means test before admittance to a senior citizens' lodge? Is this what you are saying, that you want means tests for senior citizens' lodges?

MR. TAYLOR:

Do I have to make my speech all over again so the hon. member can understand? I just don't want the hon. Member for Calgary North Hill going home without a clear understanding of what I am saying. All I am saying, Mr. Chairman, is that a person is in a lodge -- let me make it even simpler. I wish I had a blackboard here -- Let us say Harry and Mary are in a lodge. Harry is 68 and Mary is 64. They are married; and they are in the lodge. They get no assistance under Vote No. 2111 under The Senior Citizens Shelter Act, although they are senior citizens. Let us make Mary 65 to make it a little simpler, although they are both under the terms of reference according to the hon. Miss Hunley so it wouldn't matter, but let us give her another year -- 65. OK, they get nothing under No. 2111; they are barred. You set the means test, not me, not the Foundation. Suzie and Tom, who are age 68 and age 66, live in an apartment building across the way, and pay \$5 less than Harry and Mary. They get assistance under No. 2111. Does the hon. member follow me?

MR. ASHTON:

Mr. Chairman, I have a couple of comments, the reason I have only a couple of comments is that I have absolute confidence in the

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hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, and I think he is doing an excellent job.

I would like to congratulate the hon. Member for Cardston, when he was discussing local government and some proposed new forms. I believe this is the first time that we have had much imagination shown in this Assembly for many years. To the hon. Member for Cardston I say, "Welcome back".

We have a situation in the County of Strathcona area, which includes Sherwood Park, that is exactly the type of thing that the hon. Member for Cardston was talking about. And I would like to say that I am just delighted that the new Minister of Municipal Affairs has had the courage and imagination to allow this situation to operate without forcing it to disintegrate and Sherwood Park incorporating.

But really what concerns me most, and why I wanted to rise now, is that, you know one of the things I try to instill in my children -- I have six young children -- is respect for the courts, legislature and so on -- and I must confess that after hearing some of the things today, in my house Hansard will be censored. If my children read some of the suggestions from the hon. members opposite, that the word 'may' means 'shall' when we are talking about appointing the Communal Properties Board, they just wouldn't believe it. They would have no respect at all for this Assembly.

I will conclude with that. I am really disappointed, and I was most disappointed with my colleague from Calgary Mountain View. He belongs to the same profession I do, and I was really disappointed that he would interpret the word 'may' as 'shall'.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Mr. Wilson.

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Chairman, I have a series of questions for the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs which I would like to receive the answers to some time during the debate on the estimates for his department. First of all, could he advise us what his targets are in number of units for 1972-73 in construction for senior citizens' housing, for student housing, for experimental low-cost housing, for public housing, and for half-way housing, plus the number of units actually built in '71-72 in the same categories.

MR. RUSSELL:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can do that. I have the detailed budget and statistical reports for the Alberta Housing Corporation, but I thought we were going to go through the department vote by vote and deal with the Alberta Housing Corporation under vote 2123. I've been trying to take notes under 'general remarks' and answer hon. members' questions and comments, and I'd prefer to answer detailed questions when we get to the vote if that is agreeable.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Do you agree with that Mr. Wilson?

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Chairman, I thought that the minister might appreciate getting warning so that he would have the information available. Under the heading of philosophy, I would like the minister to answer in his comments whether or not he subscribes to the philosophy that industry and commerce in our province have an obligation and

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responsibility to help provide for the costs of education. I would also like him to advise if it is the government policy to try and limit the size of Edmonton and Calgary. I would like him to advise how many direct loans were made by the Alberta Housing Corporation in 1971, and the average size of those loans for new housing. How many loans were made under the 'new life for old neighbourhoods' program, and....

MR. RUSSELL:

With due respect, I thought we had just agreed that detailed questions like that would be answered when we got to the vote. I can answer them but we are dealing with general remarks under 'general administration' and I can't even write as fast as you are asking them.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

I wonder, Mr. Wilson, if you can keep your inquiry to your interest in the philosophy, and leave the specifics to the different votes when we come to them.

MR. WILSON:

Alright, Mr. Chairman, but it is not my intent to slow up the processing of the estimates for this Department. I thought if the minister had all of my questions now, that he could tell us when we got to the specific votes. I am not asking for the answers now, it is only a matter of warning, but if you want me to wait until we get to specific votes and he doesn't have.....

DR. WARRACK:

Give him the written questions.

MR. WILSON:

Well, Mr. Chairman, on that comment from the hon. Minister of Lands and Forests, I would like to know your ruling, sir. Is this a proper time to be asking questions?

MR. CHAIRMAN:

I think it was agreed that when you ask specific questions -- it was pretty well agreed by both sides -- you hold them to the votes. Now how the minister is going to face them would be quite acceptable to us and would be his concern then. OK? Very well.

MR. WILSON:

Alright.

What is the government's policy on senior citizens' housing, particularly in regard to cottage development versus high-rise? In relation to the Calgary Mobile Homeowners Association letter sent to all members of the Legislature, I would like to know when we can expect provision for an appeal of the assessment or licence fee imposed on mobile homeowners? On what economic life of a mobile home will you be basing your depreciation schedule and will penalties for non-payment of taxes stop short of jailing offenders?

I would like to know if the government is seriously considering or investigating the merits of subsidizing interest rates to enable more lower income families to qualify and purchase their own homes?

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I would like to know what the government is proposing in regard to uniform building standards in Alberta and here I'm thinking of excessive specifications in some areas.

I would like to know the government's policies regarding changes in the operation of the regional planning commissions.

I would like to have the government's position on record in the area of private enterprise involvement in all phases of housing and land development.

And, Mr. Chairman, I think I should advise all hon. members I have a vested interest in the answer to the last question.

MR. DIXON:

I wonder if I could direct a question to the hon. minister which is more on policy and I wouldn't know which vote to ask it under. But further to my question earlier today in the House, I wonder if the hon. minister is now in position to answer my previous question as to whether he's going to change the legislation which would allow school boards to send out their tax notice which would make them a lot closer and more responsible to the people that are being charged for the school costs?

MR. RUSSELL:

Yes, Mr. Chairman, it's my intention to introduce permissive legislation of that type.

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

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[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. DIACHUK:

Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered certain estimates, reports very little progress and begs leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER:

Having heard the report and the request for leave to sit again, do you all agree?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:

It being now half past five, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 2:30 o'clock.

[The House rose at 5:27 pm.]