

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Tuesday, March 12, 1974

[The House met at 2:30 o'clock.]

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 15 The Alberta Housing Amendment Act, 1974

MR. KING:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill being Bill No. 15, The Alberta Housing Amendment Act, 1974.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. 15 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill No. 24 The Social Development Amendment Act, 1974

MR. ASHTON:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill being The Social Development Amendment Act, 1974. This bill implements the arrangements made with the federal government with regard to the distribution of family allowance funds in the province of Alberta.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. 24 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill No. 27 The Agriculture Statutes Amendment Act, 1974

MR. FLOKER:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill being The Agriculture Statutes Amendment Act, 1974.

Mr. Speaker, this is an omnibus bill with three acts being amended under one heading. Number one is The Artificial Insemination of Domestic Animals Act. This proposed amendment will make it possible to regulate banks where people can store semen. Number two is The Dairymen's Act. This change is recommended by the Attorney General's office to clarify the minister's authority to make regulations, particularly those which are already in force in relation to approval of producers' premises. Number three is The Feeder Associations Guarantee Act. This is a housekeeping amendment requested by the Attorney General's department.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. 27 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill No. 28 The School Amendment Act, 1974

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill being Bill No. 28, The School Amendment Act, 1974. This bill amends about ten sections of The School Act. Among them it will provide for expansion of the franchise for those who vote for school trustees in the forthcoming fall elections.

It will require boards to give notice to the government of the opening and closing dates of their school systems and vacation periods. It will also require, in respect to bylaws which a board proposes to pass regarding honoraria, that those bylaws would require three readings two weeks apart.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. 28 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill No. 29 The School Election Amendment Act, 1974

DR. PAPROSKI:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill No. 29, being The School Election Amendment Act, 1974.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will allow more voters to participate in school trustee elections and will enable the minister to stimulate interest regarding the increased importance of school trustees in line with local autonomy decision on educational subjects by requiring a vote or referendum.

Concluding, Mr. Speaker, this bill is in line with the government's emphasis on local autonomy and expansion of the democratic process.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. 29 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill No. 30 The Wildlife Amendment Act, 1974

Bill No. 33 The Provincial Parks Act, 1974

DR. WARRACK:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce two very important acts to the Legislature. The first of these two acts is The Wildlife Amendment Act, 1974. The amendments proposed in this act, Mr. Speaker, involve two principles. The first of these important principles is to clarify the wildlife enforcement procedures as needed in the present Wildlife Act. And the second set of amendments, Mr. Speaker, deals with the difficult problem of county and municipality shooting by-laws.

The second important bill I wish to introduce, Mr. Speaker, is The Provincial Parks Act, 1974. This is a new act, Mr. Speaker, and it reflects the parks position paper tabled in this House in May of 1973 and will reflect those policy dimensions. In addition, it will provide the bench mark for the future expansion and upgrading of provincial parks in Alberta.

[Leave being granted, Bills No. 30 and 33 were introduced and read a first time.]

Bill No. 31 The Alberta Art Foundation Amendment Act, 1974

MR. GHITTER:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill No. 31, The Alberta Art Foundation Amendment Act. The basic principle of this bill, Mr. Speaker, is to expand the objects of the Alberta Art Foundation which was created by this Legislature during the 1972 session.

It is proposed that the foundation, in order to assist and encourage struggling artists resident in the Province of Alberta, may recommend to the Provincial Treasurer the guarantee of the repayment of the artists' loans and the Provincial Treasurer would be allowed to guarantee such loans up to the sum of \$1 million, Mr. Speaker.

This is a first in Canada, Mr. Speaker, as it is the first provincial government to enter ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Order please. We are crowding the limits on the introduction of bills.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. 31 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill No. 32 The Alberta Energy Company Act

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being Bill No. 32, The Alberta Energy Company Act.

This important bill, Mr. Speaker, provides a legislative framework for the Alberta Energy Company which was described to the members of the House in a position paper during the fall session. We believe that this bill and this company will play a major role in the future opportunities for Albertans to participate in resources of the province.

MR. SPEAKER:

Possibly the hon. minister might debate the merits of the bill on another occasion.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. 32 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill No. 34 The Municipal Election Amendment Act, 1974

MR. EATIUK:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being The Municipal Election Amendment Act, 1974.

The purpose of this bill, Mr. Speaker, is to remove some of the inequities in the existing legislation, also to provide some uniformity with The School Elections Act insofar as making the voter qualifications uniform. Also, there would be uniformity with elections in both urban and rural municipalities.

[Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member's introduction was without any fault but it seemed to evoke some debate anyway.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. 34 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill No. 35 The Common Parties Contracts and Conveyances Act

MR. McCRAE:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being Bill No. 35, The Common Parties Contracts and Conveyances Act.

The purposes of this bill, sir, are to validate and make enforceable certain joint covenants in which there is a common promisor and a common promisee, and also to validate conveyances in which there is a common grantor and a common grantee. Thank you.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. 35 was introduced and read a first time.]

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask unanimous leave of the House at this time to move in one motion seven of the bills just introduced onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:

I take it the House has given the hon. Government House Leader leave to introduce a motion according to which Bills No. 15, 24, 27, 29, 31, 34 and 35 are to be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[The motion was carried.]

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly, a group of young ladies and gentlemen from Grade 5 of the Grace Martin School in Mill Woods, the booming area of the City of Edmonton. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Miller and Mr. Bowen, as well as a parent, Mrs. Heaps. May I ask them to rise and be recognized by this Assembly.

MR. JAMISON:

Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce to you and to the members of this Assembly the Canadian champion curlers of 1974.

[Applause]

Mr. Speaker, it was 13 years ago that Hec Gervais' rink won the Canadian championship and the world championship. They are off on Thursday to Berne, Switzerland to bring back the Silver Broom. To you, Hector, tie a yellow ribbon on that silver broom.

Mr. Speaker, the members of Hector's rink are Hec Gervais, Ron Anton, Warren Hansen and Darrel Sutton. I ask that they stand now and be recognized again by this Assembly. Thank you.

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, if I may just be allowed to add a word in extending congratulations on behalf of the government and members of the Legislative Assembly to Hec and members of his team. Very sincere congratulations, very best wishes in your championship which I know you'll bring back from Switzerland. All Albertans will be with you.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, the members of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition would like to associate themselves with the remarks made by the Premier and the Member for St. Albert.

I should say to you, Hec, and the members of your very fine team that down on the floor of the Legislature we don't always agree on the same shot. We're quite sure the government doesn't often have the right weight and they don't always have the broom in the right place. But in you, Ron, Warren and Darrel going to Switzerland all Albertans are behind you. All members of this Assembly are behind you. Good luck and we'd sure like to have you back up there when you bring that silver broom back. Congratulations.

[Applause]

MR. MOORE:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, four very charming young ladies from the Smoky River constituency. These young ladies are seated in the members gallery. They won the right, three weeks ago here in Edmonton, to represent the Province of Alberta in the Junior Ladies' National Curling Championship which is being held this week at the Royal Glenora Club here in Edmonton.

These young ladies curl out of the Debolt Country Club in Debolt. I would ask that they stand: the skip, Della Robertson; third, Heather Robertson; the second, Linda Graber and the lead, Terry Matlock. Three of these young ladies are representing this province in national curling championships for the second year in a row.

MR. SORENSON:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 17 Grade 9 students from Brownfield which is in my constituency. They're

accompanied today by their teacher, Mrs. Bargholz, a parent, Mrs. Scheffelmaier and bus driver, Rodney Wadstein.

These students certainly get around. They spent 10 days last July touring Ontario. No doubt it was a reward for high marks and good conduct. They are in the public gallery and I would ask them to stand and be recognized at this time.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc, the other member of our unlikely left wing - right wing coalition I'd first of all like to express our best wishes to the Gervais team and, also on behalf of the Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc, to introduce 45 students from the Sacred Heart Academy in the City of Wetaskiwin. They are accompanied by their teachers, Sister Daly and Mr. Colburn. They are seated in the public gallery. I would ask them to rise and be recognized by the members of this Assembly.

TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. FARRAN:

I beg leave to table the annual report of the Alberta Public Utilities Board.

MR. MINIELY:

I would like to file with the House a letter from me to the Hon. John Turner with respect to removing the capital gains tax on the sale of the family farm.

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to file a letter dated March 6 addressed to the Chairman of the Canadian Radio and Television Commission signed by the hon. minister Mr. Foster and myself supporting the application of the Alberta Educational Communications Corporation for broadcasting licences. This is in connection with the application for those licences being heard in Vancouver today.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Department of Agriculture

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to file in the Legislature a very important report having regard to a very important subject in Alberta, that of egg marketing. While that subject might be a little touchy in certain legislatures I am sure that it won't be in this one.

The report has been done by the firm of Kates, Peat, Marwick. We asked them to review the status of the egg industry in Alberta because of the complaints of producers and, indeed, because of the complaints of consumers. We also asked them to work with the Egg Marketing Board and with my department and other interested people in developing a better system as they went along.

I think this is perhaps a new departure, Mr. Speaker, when we can table the report and inform the House that in fact the report has been implemented or is well into implementation. It has been my view that we often have a lot of reports but sometimes the implementation doesn't get around to being done.

The essential recommendations of the report are going to free from quota flocks of 1,000 birds and under, and the small egg producer will not be required to pay the levy and will not be subject to quota regulations. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, in attempting to improve the position of the larger producer and, indeed, to allow him to benefit from his efficiency, we have increased the number of dozen per bird which his quota can sustain, from 15 to 18. By this, the board will have a great deal more control over the larger producer.

In other matters, the consultants have recommended the sale of Alberta eggs which belong to the marketing board. I am holding back on that recommendation with the consultants because I feel very strongly that indeed Alberta eggs might indeed be a useful

vehicle in what is known as the 'breaking trade', or the industry-processing of eggs and the marketing of the small producers' eggs in the future. So we will be looking at that recommendation of the consultants, but I have asked them to take steps to have a look at Alberta eggs as a different kind of vehicle, rather than just the sale of Alberta eggs as such.

With regard to the complaints that have come from the consumer side, particularly Mrs. Plumptre, with regard to egg marketing in Canada, I would like to suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the implementation of this report will free up eggs for consumers through farmers' markets and direct sales, and will have a major impact in that area. In addition to that, we are living up to our participation in CEMA by taking a reserve quota to cover all of our small producers who are involved.

In short, Mr. Speaker, I recommend the report to the hon. members of the Legislature. Additional copies are available from my office or from the office of the Marketing Council. It is well worth reading.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, commenting on the announcement made by the Minister of Agriculture, I think it is appropriate to say at this time that the whole area of production and marketing, as it applies to the egg business in this province, has been the source of a great deal of concern, especially for those people who are small producers. It is our sincere hope that the government will recognize that there is going to be need for constant supervision and constant examination through the Egg Marketing Board, and quite possibly a number of additional changes as the whole marketing situation fluctuates, inside and outside the province.

Department of Manpower and Labour

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a brief ministerial announcement on employment circumstances in Alberta and on the Canadian scene.

The unemployment rate for February 1974 is 3.5. Last month it was 3.6 and a year ago at this time, Mr. Speaker, it was 5.6. In Canada the average is 6.8 and to indicate how difficult an average figure is to work with, I should like to point out, with no happiness whatsoever, that unemployment in Newfoundland is 20.5 per cent. Other figures include Ontario which is closer to the norm at 5.2 per cent, and possibly Saskatchewan at 4.9. Ours at 3.5, sir, is the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. That is the case now, for the third month in a row.

Coupled with this extremely significant figure, is the fact that the Province of Alberta has consistently had the highest participation rate for months and months now. The lowest unemployment rate of 3.5 per cent and the fact that it is somewhat of a trend - after three months - makes a combination of those two figures extremely important.

Also significant, sir, is the fact that in this month over the last month, we have an increase of 8,000 people employed who had not been previously employed. Of the people who were unemployed last month, an additional 1,000 have obtained employment.

Also significant, sir, is the fact that the female labour force has increased this month over last by .9 per cent to 42.1 per cent. That figure is important because since we began taking statistics at the national level, which was in 1966, this is the highest participation rate for the female labour force in Canada.

These figures, sir, and a lengthy and detailed, somewhat massive report will be carefully studied this month, as it has been over other months for implications to employment and employment programs in the Province of Alberta. I'm pleased to make this statement this afternoon to the House, Mr. Speaker.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, we are indeed pleased that the minister reports to the assembly that the rate of unemployment in this province is 3.5 per cent down from 3.6 last month.

I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, this is an indication of the economic stability which has been prevalent in this province for a number of years. The real test, Mr. Speaker, is going to be the minimum of labour unrest that in fact we have in the period of time that lies ahead.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Budget

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Government House Leader and ask him if the Budget will be presented to the Legislature tomorrow afternoon.

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, the budget will be presented on the evening of March 22, Friday at 8:00 p.m.

Tar Sands Development

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, a second question, or a question to the hon. Premier. I'd like to ask the Premier what negotiations and discussions have been going on between the Native people and the province to ensure the future development of the tar sands, taking into consideration the recent judicial decisions regarding aboriginal rights?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I'd refer the question there to the hon. Minister Without Portfolio in charge of Native development.

MR. ADAIR:

Mr. Speaker, in relation to the Native people on the Northeastern Alberta Manpower Development Committee, we have arranged for the Indian Association and the Metis Association to be a part, a direct part, of that committee. It is a joint committee between the federal government, the provincial government, industry, labour and the Native organizations. They are in constant discussions about the problems of manpower and job opportunities in northeastern Alberta.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister in charge of northern development. Has the Government of Alberta provided financial assistance to the Metis Association and to some Indian groups in the province, in helping them to prepare their arguments with regard to the question of aboriginal rights as it applies to the northeastern area, centring on the tar sands?

MR. ADAIR:

We've had no direct request for funding of that nature, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View.

Family Allowance

MR. BARTON:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Social Development. Can the minister advise if the government has passed on the increase in family allowance to foster parents or wards?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, last year the government set foster home rates. In the intervening period the issue of the family allowance seems to have become relevant to that in view of the fact that under the new federal regulations, which came into effect January 1 for parents with a first-year foster child in their home, there was no allowance. After a year, there was a flat allowance of \$20.

The proposal that the province put forward, by way of communicating with the foster parents in January, was that for those who were not receiving the family allowance, that is the first-year ones, they would receive the full amount as established by government policy. For those who had the child for longer than a year and would therefore be receiving \$20 from the federal government, this was not to be treated as additional to what they were receiving under the established foster home rates. However, there were some objections to that on the part of the Foster Parents Association. One of our cabinet committees met with the president of that association about ten days ago, and I indicated to Mrs. Potter at the time that in about three weeks it would be possible to say whether or not any change in that policy would be made.

MR. EARTON:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Would that be retroactive to January 1?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues raised by Mrs. Potter at the time didn't relate to this and it's possible that the ultimate resolution of the problem could be such that there wouldn't be any adjustment on the item raised in the hon. member's question, but perhaps there could be on the other issue she raised, which was the question of incidental expenses for children.

Taking them all together, I don't think that I can be more specific about what would happen than to say that we have promised to give a response within about that time.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View followed by the hon. Member for Drumheller.

Calgary Detoxification Centre

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Chairman, my question is to the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development. It is with regard to the Detoxification Centre in Renfrew, Calgary.

Has the hon. minister been consulted by the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission as to the possible extension of the use to which this centre may be put, over and above that which was originally intended by the commission?

MR. CRAWFORD:

No, Mr. Speaker. I haven't had any discussions with the commission in regard to using that site for anything which would be of a higher or a more complex level of treatment than that of an intoxicification recovery centre, which was the original plan.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Has the minister been advised recently that there is some proposal made to extend the services of this particular centre?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I would have to say that I have not had any discussions with the commission on that. I would be glad to look into it. I might point out that the programming is a matter which is fairly well established for this type of facility and the commission is familiar with that type of operation, in view of the fact that one has been operating in Edmonton for some time. However, if additional programs are proposed which would make the facility less desirable for the neighbourhood than was originally planned - if that is what is implied in the hon. member's question - I have no objection to checking the details of their new plans, if any, with the commission.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, has the minister given any consideration to meeting with the residents in the vicinity of the detoxification centre to consider the complaints which have arisen as a result of the establishment of the centre?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I certainly did give consideration to that and felt that the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission, being established the way it is, with representatives of the public on it, including some Calgarians, would be in a position to appreciate the feelings

of the local residents and to respond to them. Wanting to have the decision made as much as possible as a local one, rather than as one imposed from the capital, I thought it best to accept their recommendations and not try to change them.

MR. LUDWIG:

One final supplementary. Was the minister satisfied that there was no possible alternative to the present location of the detoxification centre?

MR. SPEAKER:

The question is not really in proper form. It's a request for the minister's opinion. Perhaps rather than worry about the form, the minister might wish to answer briefly anyway.

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, between the hon. Member for Mountain View and myself, the issue is quite a well-known one and I would have to say to him that in the course of examining 16 sites, which is the information provided to me by the commission, they did think that one was the most suitable.

I would have to say that as far as the views of the residents in any such case are concerned - and I say "in any such case" because this is a problem that can come up in locating almost any type of facility, alcoholism, or emotionally disturbed children or unwed mothers and items like that - I still think the best solution is the one that was used. And that is, when the Development Appeal Board of the City of Calgary sat in open session, heard the representations and agreed to allow the application of the commission for the use of that particular site. The best decision, in difficult circumstances, was in fact made.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Drumheller followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Bow.

Mackenzie Valley Pipeline

MR. TAYLOR:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Mines and Minerals. Has the government had any recent correspondence or discussions with the Canadian government or the American government on the Mackenzie Valley pipeline?

MR. DICKIE:

No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Bow followed by the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview.

Voting Rights

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the hon. the Premier. Can the Premier advise if his government has in preparation legislation for introduction at this session which would restrict voting rights in Alberta to Albertans who are Canadian citizens?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that no such legislation is contemplated for this session.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the hon. Premier care to take this opportunity to set the record straight as to his government's plans in regard to voting rights for British subjects in Alberta?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I think a more appropriate place for that would be in debate. I'll take the question under notice and try to respond at an appropriate time.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview followed by the hon. Member for Lacombe.

Dow Chemical Project

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Minister of Industry and Commerce. In light of yesterday's announcement by Dow Chemical, is the government satisfied that the Dow project now meets the requirements set out by the hon. Premier several days ago about maximizing the processing upstream in the province?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, I would rather defer any comments we may have in regard to the petrochemical programs in the Province of Alberta until after a meeting we are anticipating with Mr. Gillespie on Thursday, at which time we will have a better understanding of where the Canadian federal government sits along with our own programs here.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Can the minister advise the House whether it is still true that the Dow proposal is contingent on a substantial export of feedstock to the United States market?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, once again I think that kind of question could be better handled in the area of debate, for the simple reason that it is a very complex question and any direct answer at this time might just mislead the question that has been put before us.

MR. LUDWIG:

You've done it before.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. In light of the Alberta Gas Trunk proposal re a petrochemical complex, is the government of the view that the two projects are mutually exclusive, or is the government of the view that they can proceed simultaneously?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, from our department's position we consider that they can proceed simultaneously and there is no reason why they shouldn't.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, one last supplementary question. In light of the minister's answer, can the minister table any supporting documents to substantiate the government's opinion that the two can proceed simultaneously?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, because what is involved here is feedstock, and we can identify from various reports that there is ample feedstock for these projects to go forward simultaneously, we would be prepared to table that information.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Lacombe followed by the hon. Member for Cypress.

Natural Gas for Co-ops

MR. COOKSON:

Mr. Speaker, a question to the hon. Minister of Telephones and Utilities. In view of the concerns of some of my constituents, could the minister give some assurance of supplies of natural gas to the various gas co-ops throughout the province?

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Speaker, there is an ample supply of natural gas for Alberta requirements, a 30-year rolling reserve and excellent prospects for the discovery of new reserves. Then behind that, of course, we have what some people regard as a 1000-year supply of coal for possible gasification.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Can the minister advise whether there will be any special requirements set aside for rural gas co-ops beyond the general arrangements - requirements set by the Energy Resources Conservation Board?

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Speaker, there is no need to identify specific fields for the rural gas program which, of course, is scattered all over the province. The requirements can be drawn under arrangements from the trunk line system as required.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Cypress followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Millican.

IPSCO Complex

MR. STROM:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address my question to the hon. Minister of Industry and Commerce. On Friday last you replied to a question from the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview. The hon. minister stated that he would be replying to the question on the Throne Speech. I am just wondering if the hon. minister could give us some explanation as to what he has in mind now.

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, I presume he is referring to my reference to steel, and that I would be covering it in my speech on the debate on the Throne Speech. Unfortunately, that came to an untimely end. However, there will be ample opportunity during the budget debate, in which I will cover it or during my estimates.

MR. TAYLOR:

What year did you have in mind?

MR. STROM:

I'd like to ask a supplementary question. It is not in regard to the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. It is in regard to a possible alternative to the arrangement with IPSCO.

Is the provincial government, Mr. Speaker, pursuing any other possible course that will provide a steel complex for the Province of Alberta?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, during the course of my presentation on the subject of steel, the total matter of steel and how the government has pursued and reviewed it and what it suggests to this House will all be revealed at that time.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Millican followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo.

Children's Hospital - Calgary

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development. It is a concern of some of my constituents. A recent protest meeting took place in Calgary regarding the proposed health care centre for children in southern Alberta and the recent resignation of Dr. Holman, head of Pediatrics at the Foothills Hospital over this issue.

I was wondering if the government has any plans this year for establishing a permanent children's health care centre at the Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to note in that respect that up until 1972 the children's hospital was operated by a basically private foundation, and that in 1972 it became a provincial general hospital. At the time that was done, it was recognized that a lot of changes would have to be made.

The government, in due course - by fall, I believe, of 1972 - had arrived at the determination to make about \$6 million available, \$6 million 1972 dollars, for future capital expansion. It was thought that would be used for replacing existing facilities that were in need of replacement as well as for developing a program for multiple-handicapped children and for maintaining all the existing programs at the children's hospital.

I don't think, Mr. Speaker, there has been any unnecessary delay in the carrying out of those plans. In the minds of quite a few people there has been some delay. I would have to admit that some people have looked at it that way. I would like to mention that I felt the Calgary Hospital Planning Council should have an opportunity of reviewing the proposal before it was finalized. As of last Tuesday, they have reviewed the proposal and have made a report to the Hospital Services Commission. The result is that I expect that within a week I will be able to be in touch with the board of the children's hospital confirming the important step of choosing their architect, which is what they had asked for in order that the plans can more swiftly go ahead.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

Theatre Calgary

MR. GHITTER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation. In light of the recent suggestion that the government will be supporting the excellent theatre in the City of Edmonton known as the Citadel to the extent of \$1 million, I'm wondering if the hon. minister is also considering assisting Theatre Calgary in its plight, as I understand it will be losing its facility unless it receives some immediate assistance.

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Alberta is sympathetic to both theatres in their quest for facilities in which to be able to display the kind of excellent performances that they have given to the Alberta public in the past. However, sympathy does not mean commitment, and while we keep in close touch with them in their plight regarding facilities, the cabinet has not approved any sums to date.

MR. GHITTER:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I'm wondering if you are aware that the facility utilized by Theatre Calgary is presently for sale, and that there are some intended foreign buyers who are looking at it very favourably.

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, the government was informed of the proposed sale and again we are keeping in close touch with Theatre Calgary as to what is happening. In fact, I understand last night the Calgary City Council made a decision regarding this facility, but I have not heard what the decision was.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Little Bow followed by the hon. Member for Wainwright.

Drug Information Centre Funding

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Social Development. Why is the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission cutting off funds from the Drug Information Centre in Calgary?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if I can give the hon. member a full answer as to the commission's thinking in that respect. I can tell him that the chairman of the commission did say to me that some time ago the commission indicated to the Drug Information Centre that their programs were possibly an overlap with other existing programs and that the commission would be reducing the funding in the year to follow, which is now the year to commence April 1. After that was communicated to them, which was some months ago, I did have a meeting with some representatives of the Drug Information Centre. We discussed the possibility of some alternate forms of funding that they had been looking into, including some federal grants I believe they hoped for, and including the possibility of them successfully applying for other provincial grants, primarily through the Priority Employment Program. I would have to say that I don't think the conclusion to that has been reached yet. I do not allege that they are satisfied with what has transpired in that respect, but that is the situation at the present time.

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. Is the minister then prepared to reconsider the earlier decision of the commission at this time?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I have only this difficulty in respect to it. The commission is given, by proper appropriations in that regard, a certain amount of money each year to support its own programs and, by way of grants, programs to other agencies. I do expect it to succeed in making the decisions in the best way possible in regard to priorities. In the event that it has come to the conclusion that is apparent in respect to the Drug Information Centre, the conclusion conveyed to it last year, the only reason for that would be that the commission really believed that other programs were of greater priority. And that is the way it still stands. I wouldn't like to undertake on the commission's behalf that further reconsideration of the specific request and rejection would follow, but certainly I have no hesitation in saying that everything is still open for discussion.

MR. GHITTER:

... [Inaudible] ... The hon. minister, in the event that other grants are not forthcoming to the drug crisis centre in Calgary, would the minister then reconsider the possibility of funding it, the valuable service it has performed in the Calgary community?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member's question in that form is hypothetical. Perhaps it could be repeated when the eventuality comes to pass.

The hon. Member for Wainwright followed by the hon. Member for Sedgewick-Coronation.

Antifreeze Supply

MR. RUSTE:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Consumer Affairs. Has your department been able to determine by study, as indicated in your recent letter to me, whether the antifreeze shortage is real or forced?

MR. DOWLING:

Mr. Speaker, we have studied the matter of antifreeze supplies for some number of months as indicated last fall in the session. Our information indicates that there is no real shortage of antifreeze because the companies manufacturing the product in fact

produced something in the order of 10 per cent this year over the requirements of last year. The companies that do produce it and have it in storage, have it in storage for the purpose of industrial commitments, industrial contracts that they made some time ago.

They also indicated that there would be no further supplies to the public for private automobiles from January on - I think the date was. So if there is a shortage of supply it is created by people buying up and hoarding the product. The price set by one of the companies in question is similar to that price set last year. However there are, as is normal, some scalpers who are charging probably double that price.

MR. RUSTE:

A supplementary to the minister then. Will there be an adequate supply as far as the ordinary consumer goes? I am thinking of the automobile operator, the farmer and so on who use a lot of antifreeze for their operations.

MR. DOWLING:

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that there will be adequate supplies. If the consumer shops around he will also find it at the right price.

MR. TAYLOR:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. Is the department considering prosecuting the gougers who have been charging double the price?

MR. DOWLING:

Well, as the hon. member knows, Mr. Speaker, in a free enterprise system it is pretty difficult to prosecute anyone for free enterprise.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Sedgewick-Coronation followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge East.

MR. TAYLOR:

... [Inaudible] ... the federal member said ...

[Interjections]

School Vandalism

MR. SORENSON:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Education. Is the hon. minister considering special grants to schools so that schools can install protective equipment to combat the increased incidence of vandalism?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, no. Certainly the government isn't considering special grants. This would be in effect removing the ... [Inaudible] ... boards to decide the priority on which they would spend their monies. However, I believe that a number of school boards in the province are now looking at the question of vandalism and certainly I have indicated to them that we are prepared to make available such expertise as we might have concerning methods of protection of various premises by electronic and other devices.

MR. SORENSON:

A supplementary to the minister. Are any schools employing or training security guards at the present time?

MR. HYNDMAN:

I don't know, Mr. Speaker. They may be. These would be employees of the school board and I wouldn't want to interfere with their operations.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Lethbridge East followed by the hon. Member for Calgary McCall.

Lethbridge Community College - Fees

MR. ANDERSON:

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Advanced Education and it's with reference to a comment made by C. D. Stewart, the president of the Lethbridge Community College, as reported in the Lethbridge Herald on March 7.

Could the minister advise if his department is preparing a tuition report and, if so, when can it be expected?

MR. FOSTER:

I didn't see the comment made by Dr. Stewart to which the hon. member referred. I assume from your remarks that it had something to do with tuition fees in the Lethbridge Community College. I'll take the information you have given me as noticed and check the statement.

I am anticipating the question, Mr. Speaker, but it may be relevant to the fact that tuition fees for students in general college courses in Lethbridge are \$175 per student. They are up \$25 from last year; they were \$150.

The guideline we have established for the public colleges, which was established by the Colleges Commission, is that the tuition fees for students in public colleges should be \$200 a year. All other public colleges, save Lethbridge, Mr. Speaker, are at \$200 a year. Lethbridge College has been somewhat reluctant to raise its tuition fees from \$150 to \$200 in one year but opted for a compromise of \$175 for this year. If that is the essence of this statement, Mr. Speaker, that may answer the question. If not, I'll look into it.

AN HON. MEMBER:

They don't believe in gouging!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary McCall followed by the hon. Member for Vegreville.

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, my question has been asked and answered.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Vegreville followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge West.

Guaranteed Loans

MR. BATIUK:

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. Would the minister advise whether it is his intention to write off any part or all of the guaranteed loans on unthreshed grain?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, it is not the government's intention to write off any of the guaranteed loans. These were given as an interest-free loan to farmers who had crop under snow and were of substantial help to those farmers this winter. There are going to be areas which will have to be reviewed in the spring, once we see what the spring is like and whether or not the crop can be taken off. We will make those decisions at that time.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Can the minister advise whether or not he has had an opportunity to discuss this question with federal officials and whether any assistance on a substantial scale has been forthcoming from Ottawa?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, we have discussed this with the federal officials on a number of occasions. Other than taking part in our forage freight program, we have not had any positive response from Ottawa.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Lethbridge West followed by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking.

Municipal School Boundaries Report

MR. GRUENWALD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, regarding the Municipal School Boundaries Advisory Committee.

Has the Interim Report No. 1 been filed with the Executive Council yet as per the terms of reference by which, I believe, it should have been filed by December 31, 1973?

MR. RUSSELL:

No it hasn't, Mr. Speaker. I met with the chairman of the boundaries advisory committee. He suggested to me that they would like to change that schedule and complete the public hearings with respect to the first three items and deal with the three items at the same time after the public hearings had been completed, because they are contiguous areas. So for that reason there has been a delay in the first interim report.

MR. GRUENWALD:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Has the committee then given you an indication as to when we could expect Interim Report No. 1?

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, I'm expecting it within the next couple of months. The public hearings have been concluded in the three areas.

MR. GRUENWALD:

A further supplementary. Will the minister undertake to table it or let us know when the report has been given to the Executive Council?

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't really answer that definitively until the Executive Council has had an opportunity to look at it.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking followed by the hon. Member for Medicine Hat-Redcliff.

Rapeseed Plant Ownership

MR. COOPER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the hon. Minister of Industry and Commerce. What percentage of United Oil Seeds Products - this is a rapeseed plant at Lloydminster - will be owned by Japanese companies?

DR. HORNER:

Perhaps I could answer that. The answer to that is a three way participation by United Grain Growers, B.C. Packers and a Japanese company. I understand it is on equal terms.

MR. COOPER:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is the Alberta Opportunity Company financially involved in the project, Mr. Minister?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, there is no government financing involved at all.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Medicine Hat-Redcliff followed by the hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

DREE Agreement

MR. WYSE:

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs regarding the new DREE agreement that was reached between the provincial government and Ottawa last week.

My question is, why are the two largest cities in the province included in the program when the program is designed for the purpose of decentralizing economic growth in the province?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member's question is in objectionable form since an invitation to justify something is clearly an invitation to debate, but perhaps we might overlook that if the hon. minister wishes to reply briefly.

MR. GETTY:

I would just say, Mr. Speaker, that it was our intention to have the agreement not exclude any areas of the province. We felt it would be far better that the programs deal with applications based on their individual merit.

MR. WYSE:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has the provincial government earmarked the percentage of dollars that will be available to the two larger cities, and the percentage for the projects outside these two areas?

MR. GETTY:

No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Taber-Warner followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Bow.

Writing-on-Stone Park

MR. D. MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation. Is the hon. minister prepared to announce the restoration of the RCMP barracks at Writing-on-Stone Park in their centennial year?

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, with the Department of Lands and Forests we are working on the preservation, at least the plans for preservation, of Writing-on-Stone Park and many other historic points in Alberta. As soon as a decision is made, I'll inform the hon. member.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Bow followed by the hon. Member for Drumheller.

Fish Creek Provincial Park

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Lands and Forests. Can the minister advise if the government has appointed a member of the City of Calgary Parks and Recreation Board to its Fish Creek Provincial Park Advisory Board, as the minister indicated would be done last October 29?

DR. WARRACK:

Mr. Speaker, with one exception, every person appointed to the park planning advisory committee was appointed as an individual citizen of Alberta - from Calgary. That one exception was that we had asked the Fish Creek Park Association if they would like to recommend a name from their association for appointment. They recommended a name and we appointed that person.

Further to the question, however, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that in addition to the public advisory committee, we also have a working technical committee that is comprised of parks division personnel from the Department of Lands and Forests and the City of Calgary. That ongoing relationship the hon. member refers to does exist.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, would the minister advise what circumstances contributed to the government reversal of position in this regard?

DR. WARRACK:

Mr. Speaker, there has been no reversal.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, would the hon. minister care then to take this opportunity to explain why on October 29, 1973 he said, yes there would be an appointment from the Calgary Parks and Recreation Board to the provincial Fish Creek Park committee?

DR. WARRACK:

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, what I did refer to on that occasion was the technical management committee that has been established and is ongoing in its work.

MR. DIXON:

Supplementary question to the minister regarding the provincial park in Calgary. Last year I asked for an order for a return of all correspondence relating to the park, and I was asked to withhold the motion until most of the land had been purchased. I wonder if the government is in a position now to release all correspondence regarding the park in Calgary?

DR. WARRACK:

I think if the hon. member checks the information tabled subsequent to the time we had that discussion, he will find that has already been done.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, to the minister. It wasn't regarding the actual name of the purchaser. I want all correspondence to do with the parks. I've got the orders in council and journals, but I was wondering if I could get all the correspondence. That was what I was really after.

DR. WARRACK:

Let me explain even further, Mr. Speaker. The matter of land assembly for such purposes is under the Department of the Environment. As a follow-up, my recollection is that the hon. Minister of the Environment did table that information.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, can the hon. minister advise what action was taken by the government at the request of Calgary City Council, the Calgary Policy Committee on Community Services and the Calgary Parks and Recreation Board to have a further appointment made from the Calgary parks board to the Fish Creek Provincial Park Advisory Board?

DR. WARRACK:

Yes, we have corresponded on that matter, Mr. Speaker. The source of the request was a misunderstanding, relative to understanding that there was also the technical management committee, in addition to the public advisory committee appointment. Since that was explained, there has been no further request from the city.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Drumheller followed by the hon. Member for Highwood.

Property Rights

MR. TAYLOR:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. the Solicitor General. Will the government be introducing a bill at this spring session dealing with the property rights of divorced and separated spouses?

MISS HUNLEY:

No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Highwood followed by the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview.

The Surface Rights Act

MR. BENOIT:

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister of Agriculture. I am asking if the government intends to make any changes in The Surface Rights Act this session?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, as the House is aware, The Expropriation Act will be coming back into the Legislature and at that time, depending on the recommendations of the farm groups, there may be some changes in The Surface Rights Act.

MR. NOTLEY:

A supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. Has the government given any consideration to sending out to farmers a standard rate of compensation that would be variable by the soil conditions in the different areas, and using this through the DAS so that people have some idea of what they should be asking?

DR. HORNER:

Well, I'd hope, Mr. Speaker, and I think in a general way the Farmer's Advocate has, in fact, done that. Certainly I could report to the House that in the past two years the drop-off in the number of complaints with regard to surface rights has been truly amazing.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Millican.

Winter Grain Deliveries

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct this question to the hon. Minister of Highways and Transport. In light of the fact that a number of farmers in northern Alberta are now receiving notices from the Wheat Board to deliver grain, could the minister advise whether there has been any change in the policy with respect to snow plowing to granaries?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, we have always had a policy that cleaned out roadways to granaries or to haystacks for farmers after the roads were clear.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Millican followed by the hon. Member for Cypress.

Tar Sands Research Centre

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the hon. the Premier. My question is in reference, Mr. Premier, to your announcement in Calgary regarding the proposed tar sands research centre and the following press announcement that it was going to be located in Calgary. I was wondering if the government still favours Calgary as the location for the tar sands research centre?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, the indications with regard to that matter were expressed in a tentative way by the Minister of the Environment when he spoke in Vegreville recently. I believe the matter will be dealt with by the Minister of Mines and Minerals within the next two or three weeks.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Cypress followed by the hon. Member for Wainwright.

Communal Property Liaison Committee

MR. STROM:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. It's in regard to the chairman of the special advisory committee on communal property, Dr. Platt. I note the report sent to us states that he works very closely with the forum.

I am wondering if the hon. minister, Mr. Speaker, could give us some indication as to how he is dividing his time between the two responsibilities?

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, I think the interim report submitted by Dr. Wood indicates that there are some persons who are working as liaison or support personnel to the committee, and that is how Dr. Platt is working. He is strictly a very useful liaison support person who has a great deal of practical information, particularly with respect to the disposition of agricultural land which is a very important part of the forum's terms of reference.

MR. STROM:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is he being paid for any of his work with the land forum? And also while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the hon. minister could indicate as to whether or not we can expect a report from the special advisory committee on communal property, indicating the number of meetings it has had and some of the work it has been doing?

MR. RUSSELL:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it is Dr. Platt's intention to keep submitting reports. We did file the most recent one, which was the first one we received, during the fall session of the Legislature. It's my understanding that he is not being paid for his additional work with the land use forum, but I would like to check on that. He is under contract to the government for his role with the Communal Property Liaison Committee.

MR. STROM:

Mr. Speaker, has a full meeting of the communal property committee ever been held?

MR. RUSSELL:

If the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, is speaking of the advisory committee, the answer is yes, they have met on more than one occasion.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Wainwright.

MR. RUSTE:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education. If he would look at page 3 of Bill No. 28 introduced today, I would just like to ask him whether or not they are adding hieroglyphics to the printed word that we have in the bill.

MR. SPEAKER:

Possibly a matter that is so technical as that might be put on the Order Paper.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge West.

Workers' Compensation For ATA

MR. GRUENWALD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Manpower and Labour. Is it the intention of the Department of Manpower and Labour or of the government to introduce legislation or make regulations that would bring members of the Alberta Teachers' Association under the protection of The Workers' Compensation Board?

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, it is not the intention of the government that that be the case.

MR. GRUENWALD:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Have the members of the Alberta Teachers' Association or the association itself made representation to the minister, either pro or con?

DR. HOHOL:

Indeed they have sir, as have the members of the Alberta School Trustees Association.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of members I would just like to outline government business. The House will be sitting tonight and at 8:00 o'clock we will move to second reading of Government Bills and Orders on pages 1 and 2 of today's Order Paper, beginning with Bill No. 1, The Queen's Counsel Amendment Act, 1974.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

100. Mr. Wilson asked the government the following question: With reference to Sessional Paper No. 280, 1973:

1. Regarding Table No. 2, what are the names and descriptions of the 49 projects covered under the STEP funds (\$447,000) provided for the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation? How much money was given to each of the 49 projects and what were the names of the individuals requesting each project?
2. Regarding Table No. 3, what are the names and descriptions of each of the 144 projects approved for PEP funds by the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation? What was the amount given to each project? What are the names of the individuals requesting each project?
3. Regarding Table No. 4, what are the names and descriptions of each of the 85 projects approved for STEP funds by the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation? What was the amount given to each project? How many individuals were involved in each project and what are their names?

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, I'm very sure that the hon. member who posed this question inadvertently did not check with the reply that was tabled last Friday of Order No. 290, and I would therefore ask the hon. member to withdraw the question and rephrase it if he so wishes.

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, if I may respond to the invitation of the minister. The question was submitted to the Clerk's office prior to the tabling of the question that he just referred to which was, I believe, Sessional Paper 290.

I wonder if the minister could advise if it is the intention of the government to publish a detailed report on the subject matter of this question and have it tabled in this current spring session?

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, every department of government, or at least most of them now and I think every one after this session, is obliged to publish an annual report of the activities of the department, if this is what he refers to. However, if the member refers to asking specific questions on a specific program, if he could possibly check out the duplication that now exists, of course the department will be most willing to supply him with the information he desires.

MR. WILSON:

Agreed, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Is it then agreed that the question is to stand or has it been withdrawn?

MR. WILSON:

Withdrawn.

101. Mr. Notley asked the government the following question:

1. How much money has the government received and/or how much is forthcoming by way of rebate from the federal government of oil export tax revenue (by month) for the months of October, November and December 1973 and January and February 1974?
2. How much money has been received or is forthcoming from the federal government by way of investment in the province (by month) from export tax revenues collected by the government for the months October, November, December and January?
3. What criterion has been agreed upon by the Alberta and the federal government concerning the investment in Alberta of monies derived from the export tax on oil?

MR. MINIELLY:

Mr. Speaker, the question is okay except I would ask that it be made a Motion for a Return.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

102. Mr. Notley asked the government the following question:

1. How much money, if any, was collected by the Alberta Department of Highways (for the years 1972 and 1973 respectively) from seismic companies for testing operations on provincial road allowances?
2. What criteria, if any, does the government employ in assessing seismic companies' surface rights or rights of entry with respect to seismic activities on road allowances?
3. How much money, if any, was collected by the government from seismic companies as a result of damage to public roads and road allowances in 1972 and 1973 respectively?
4. Are seismic companies required to pay in full for all damages they cause to public roads and road allowances in Alberta? If not, what criteria, if any, does the

government employ to assess the amount of damage to public roads and road allowances by these firms?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, I accept that question and I am ready to table the answer.

103. Mr. Henderson asked the government the following question:

What assistance is the government providing to the municipalities with regard to their garbage disposal facilities?

DR. WAFRACK:

Mr. Speaker, as Acting Minister of the Environment I am pleased to table the answer.

104. Mr. Notley asked the government the following question:

How much money was spent by the Alberta government (on capital works as well as operating costs) at Moonshine Lake Provincial Park for each of the following years: 1970, 1971, 1972 and 1973?

DR. WARRACK:

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the answer.

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

1. Mr. Stromberg proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

Be it resolved that the government give consideration to removing the Assurance Fund levy, on the transfer of land titles within the province.

MR. STROMBERG:

Mr. Speaker, on March 31, 1906 in the Assembly Hall of MacKay Avenue School, parliament met at 4:00 o'clock and it at first appeared a quiet session was in store for those members. There were no petitions and few bills. Yet one of these bills came up for discussion in Committee of the Whole House. It more than made up for the lack of members, not only occupying the entire afternoon, Mr. Speaker, but also demanding an evening session, which was the first one for that year. So was born The Land Titles Act. This was introduced by the Hon. Charles Cross, Attorney General under the Rutherford government.

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Charles Cross, being of that noble profession, a solicitor, was true to form. His bill was comprised of 69 printed pages with 150 clauses and additional forms which more than used up the alphabet in lettering. This formidable document, Mr. Speaker, occupied the attention of the provincial House for days on end.

I find it very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that during this debate the hon. minister, Mr. Cross said the Assurance Fund had accumulated to a considerable amount and it had become necessary to take it over from the Dominion government. Also another member, Mr. Robertson, said that there was something radically wrong with the Land Titles Office and asked if the Attorney General would guarantee that clerks would work overtime.

Then, Mr. Speaker, Mr. McKenzie entered the debate claiming that the fee was way out of proportion and was too high. In response the Attorney General did not think it advisable to undertake any changes until the working of the bill had been tested, and suggested that it be given a two-year trial. Mr. Speaker, the clauses were laid over for future consideration, rather a long consideration of 68 years.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission I would like to read Section 117 of The Land Titles Act under Assurance Fund and Fees:

Before the registrar shall perform any duty to be by him performed under any provisions of this Act he shall, except as herein otherwise provided, demand and receive the proper fee or fees therefor as fixed and settled by tariff made from time to time by the Lieutenant Governor in Council; and demand and receive for the assurance fund upon every absolute transfer of land after the issue of the first certificate of title therefor, where the land was not encumbered at the time of

registering the grant, one-fifth of one per cent of the value of the land transferred if such value amounts to or is less than five thousand dollars, and one-tenth of one per cent. on the additional value, when such value exceeds five thousand dollars; and upon every subsequent transfer he shall demand and receive upon the increase of value since the granting of the last certificate of title one-fifth of one per cent. if the increase is not more than five thousand dollars, and one-tenth of one per cent. on any excess over such five thousand dollars.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with your permission I would also like to read Clause 2.

The value shall be ascertained by the oath or affirmation of the applicant, owner or person acquiring such land, or of such other person as the registrar believes to be acquainted with the value of the land and whose oath or affirmation the registrar is willing to accept; and if the registrar is not satisfied as to the correctness of the value so sworn to or affirmed he may require such applicant, owner or person acquiring the land to produce a certificate of the value, under the hand of a sworn valuator appointed by a judge, which certificate shall be received as conclusive evidence of the true value [for the purpose aforesaid.]

Now, Mr. Speaker, this part my seconder, the hon. Member for Calgary Foothills, and myself have strong objections to - in layman's language, on the second transfer of a title - it is making liars out of a large majority of Albertans. Instructions are usually given to whomever is handling the transaction, be honest, if you think it is worth \$5,000, make it \$2,000 but be honest.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have no quarrel with the intent of the Assurance Fund but have strong objections to, or reservations as to, why it is not handled strictly as an insurance fund and not as a hidden tax to generate millions of dollars for the provincial treasury.

Mr. Speaker, may I suggest the Assurance Fund be removed and in its place there be a true insurance fund or the buying of insurance to cover the amounts that might be lost based on actual insurance experience. Mr. Speaker, if we are sincere in giving the consumer of this province a break, I urge the support of this motion.

MR. MCCRAE:

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to speak to this very worth-while motion. I would like to indicate first of all that I am speaking for the motion. I do have a tickle that I think caused the members opposite to become speechless yesterday. In the event that happens to me, I would like you to know that I support the motion.

Mr. Speaker, as has been pointed out by the Member for Camrose, the Assurance Fund principle has been a part of our land titles practice since the inception of the first land titles act in 1906 and it has continued up to this time with very little change. As is well known, the Alberta Land Titles Act and all similar land titles acts are based on a statute of South Australia dated 1858, drafted by Sir Robert Torrens, which was intended to revolutionize the law of real property by simplifying conveyancing and providing certainty of title.

When the Torrens system was introduced into Alberta it differed radically from either of the other two systems then in use, the first and the oldest of such systems being the purchaser or mortgager relying on a change of documents produced by the vendor which the purchaser hoped would give him a good title.

Under the second system, documents relating to land are registered in a government office, but the government does not issue a certificate of title.

Mr. Speaker, the features of the Torrens system are:

1. A system of state registration of titles to land.
2. Each parcel is recorded as a unit of property.
3. Transactions are registered against the title to the land and do not merely exist as instruments executed by interested parties.
4. The certificate of title is intended to be complete and an accurate mirror of all transactions.
5. The registration of a transaction is essential to its validity as against competing interests.

And number six is of the most interest to us today:

6. An assurance fund is provided which in theory at least is intended to provide compensation to any person who suffered loss from errors or mistakes of the registrar.

The assurance fund should be an integral part of any Torrens system. Inasmuch, however, as the province operates the system, it follows as an essential feature of that system that if any loss is sustained by any reason of error or mistake on the part of the province, the person sustaining the loss should be compensated by the province, which itself provides for the potential liability by collecting a fee based upon the percentage of the value of the lands dealt with, i.e. the assurance fund levy as designated by my friend from Camrose.

Mr. Speaker, it is of interest that in 1955 the then government of the Province of Alberta appointed a committee of Benchers' of the Law Society whose general duties were to study and report on:

1. Legislation that might be enacted to settle claims of persons in regards to mineral rights arising out of errors of land titles respecting ownership of mineral rights and
2. The establishment of a special assurance fund for mineral rights.

Now prior to that time in 1955, oil and gas had been of little value and in the statute at that time was a limitation of \$5,000 liability for any registrar's error respecting mineral title which might result in a loss.

I do not propose to go into the comprehensive report filed by the Benchers' committee in 1956. But in their report they recognized the importance of the Assurance Fund and did specifically recommend, with respect to mineral rights, that claims for compensation for loss of mineral rights through registration error should include the actual cost of the mineral right to the claimant, and any moneys he may have expended in developing his mineral claim. Damages for prospective or actual loss had a limitation on the maximum amount which might be recovered of \$1,000 per acre.

Remember, Mr. Speaker, that was in 1955. In 1956, oil was selling for around \$2.45 a barrel. TransCanada PipeLines was not yet in the business of buying our natural gas. Interestingly, at that time, 1955, approximately \$3.8 million had been paid into the Assurance Fund, but only \$75,000 paid out. That is for the period 1906 to 1955, a 50 year span.

My, how things have changed! A review of the Public Accounts of recent years indicates the following receipts from the fund: 1969-1970, \$905,712; 1970-1971, \$755,270; and in 1971-1972 we have \$1,150,000; in 1972-1973, we have almost \$1,400,000 and in 1973-1974 the estimate of the revenues from the Assurance Fund is approximately \$2 million.

During that period, the claims paid out: 1969-1970, \$9,600 and some odd dollars; 1970-1971, payment of claims is \$3,900 and some odd dollars; 1971-1972, \$3,700 and some odd dollars; 1972-1973, \$1,300; 1973-1974, \$517.50. Obviously, the Assurance Fund over the years has become a very lucrative source of revenue for the province.

Inflation and other factors have, of course, increased the value of houses. A by-product of this has got to be an increase in the Assurance Fund receipts. Further, it is established government policy to endeavour - and we hope it will succeed - in increasing the price of oil and gas sold from Alberta to assure Albertans a greater return on the sale of their natural resource. A by-product of this government policy again has to be further gains for the Assurance Fund.

It appears the fund has become 'indecently solvent'. This is a phrase coined by one John Bealman, author of The Torrens System in New South Wales. Because of the surplus of money in their funds over claims for payment out, some Australian jurisdictions have now dispensed altogether with the Assurance Fund levy.

Similarly, in England, no levy is made with respect to the Assurance Fund and any claims for loss of title are paid out of general revenues.

Mr. Speaker, we may not have all the facts and figures accurately on this question. Perhaps either the Provincial Treasurer or the Attorney General might enlighten us further in this area. If the trend is as we suspect, that is, towards greater revenues and fewer and smaller claims, then perhaps the government could consider phasing out or dispensing with the Assurance Fund levy and property tax transactions. Certainly it is my view that if the levy is to be continued, we should give consideration to increasing the amounts that might be claimed against the fund, particularly in the mineral rights area. In fact, there is no limit on other than mineral rights. But \$1,000 per acre at \$5, \$6, \$7 per barrel of oil is realistic.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to support the request of the Member for Camrose that the government give consideration to removing the Assurance Fund levy on the transfer of land titles in the province.

Thank you.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, in making a few remarks to the motion, I would like to request that the hon. Attorney General give us a fairly thorough explanation as to what is actually involved under the Assurance Fund.

It is my understanding that other jurisdictions charge considerably more than the one-fifth per cent for increases in land value on transfers of up to \$5,000, one-tenth per cent over \$5,000 and one-fortieth of one per cent on mortgages for the total amount of the mortgage.

I think we should take a good look at the Land Titles Office operation in Alberta and make sure that in no way do we get into a position where we are placing some responsibility on the staff of the Land Titles Offices where they would not be assured that perhaps through some error, and humans will make errors, although the reputation of the staff in Calgary and Edmonton is excellent - in fact they have had so very few errors that were actionable that we were able to save money and put some money into the general revenue because the Assurance Fund had accumulated such a surplus. But I think that it would be to the advantage of the hon. members if the hon. Attorney General or someone who is acquainted with this particular issue would explain to us whether there are any actions pending against the fund at the present time and whether we might require this fund or whether, in substitution for the Assurance Fund, the government will undertake to guarantee any claims against the registrar of land titles, or anyone working for him, as a result of errors or omissions, et cetera, any claims whatsoever. Will the claims be guaranteed through the general revenue?

But I think that because of the minute amount of the claim there really has not been too much demand for removal of the Assurance Fund. I have had very little representation. Some people inquire as to what it is. But it does provide insurance to people who are guaranteed title under the Torrens system of land registration. It's a very safe system and people feel very secure with the way it is now. I think the only thing that I would like to see happen in the whole sphere of land titles operation is an improvement of service, it is good but it can always be improved, to ensure the morale of the employees who are very busy. It's a hard-working section of the department. They are always very busy. They put in a good day. I don't think you could say the same for perhaps other areas of departments of governments.

I would like to know whether the fund is presently being attacked, shall I say, by some claims against the registrar. I believe there is one in Edmonton where apparently the father or someone alleges that his transfer of land was forged or someone held his shaky hand and made him sign something. These are the things we would like to know.

I would like to know from someone, preferably the hon. the Attorney General, what the fund actually insures against. I know that the Act is quite clear, the section in the Act as to what is the purpose of the fund, but perhaps some judicial interpretation might extend the responsibility. We should be very careful before we remove such a safeguard by assuring the people that there will be some guarantee elsewhere.

Should we let the people who deal in real estate and make profits avail themselves of the service? Should the public generally be expected to foot the bill, to foot the costs or pay any claims against the registrar under our legislation? It could be because we may have had some good management and care that we have not had claims in excess of the fund. But there is possibility for fraudulent conveyances and some very sharp operators. We can end up with titles being transferred or mortgages being registered against titles of land when the owners are not aware of it.

I think one of the safeguards of the system - many hon. members here may not agree - has been that most conveyancing is done by the legal profession. When someone swears an affidavit that they saw someone sign, you can rest assured that this is so. But if conveyancing is left open to other areas, to people who are perhaps promoting in real estate or some hit-and-run operators, we could well end up with a lot of trouble. The registrar relies on the affidavit. He seldom questions the affidavit of a witness, who may be a secretary or who may be a lawyer. If, for instance, two people got together, got hold of a title and prepared a transfer of land and swore false affidavits the registrar would not look beyond that in most circumstances. We could end up in real serious trouble.

Now whether this kind of situation is insured against in the Act I couldn't say at the present time. I believe the Act protects bona fide purchasers or bona fide mortgagees for value, but all sorts of situations can develop in this rather fast area of commerce and we

could be called upon to foot the bill. Unless there is some more information forthcoming, I would be quite content to leave it the way it is.

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak on the motion and to say something about the land titles system in the province, in particular about the operation of the Assurance Fund. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I notice the motion resolves "... that the government give consideration to removing the Assurance Fund Levy," I want to compliment the honourable mover and seconder of the motion on bringing it before the House and to say to them that we have been giving consideration, not to the removal of the Assurance Fund levy, but to an alteration in the way in which it operates.

Before going into that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put the mind of the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View at rest by saying that I'm not aware of any litigation, either actual or potential, within the province which would threaten the solvency of the fund. As to doing away with it, Mr. Speaker, I think that shouldn't occur. I think we need, in the Province of Alberta, an assurance fund. Without going into the details of the way in which that fund operates, I simply say that it assures people who deal with the registered owner, that is the person shown in the land titles records as the registered owner, that the property which they believe they are buying has an assurance of title. I think, Mr. Speaker, that is one of the reasons that our system is perhaps one of the simplest land transfer systems in the world. I think an essential element of that is an assurance fund.

But having said that we need a fund, we then come to the question of what kind of fund and on what principles should it operate. Certainly since coming to office, Mr. Speaker, I've been far from satisfied that the current fund is operating on the proper principles. The prime reason for that is contained in the figures outlined by the hon. Member for Calgary Foothills. We've taken in, over the years, far, far more money than has ever been paid out of the fund or one could anticipate being paid out of the fund in the foreseeable future. In short, we're collecting a much higher premium, if one regards this as an assurance fund, than the risk involved justifies. It's my view, Mr. Speaker, that we ought to put the fund on the same kind of basis that any insurance operation is on. That is, there is an estimate made of the risk that is undertaken, and an appropriate premium charged to cover that risk.

It's really not accurate to treat the risk as being the amounts of money that have been paid out, even over a long period of time, because in addition to the amounts of money that are paid out, there is of course, the cost of administering the fund. While we have within the provincial government records of the actual operating costs, or could break them out, so far as administering the fund is concerned there are no figures available indicating such things as depreciation for property used during the administration of the fund, buildings and things of that nature.

Mr. Speaker, as part of an overall review of the land titles system, I have asked that an analysis be made of the operation of the fund to ascertain whether we can't put it on a realistic premium type basis, which would be a significant reduction I'm sure, from the charges that are now being paid.

I have also asked that we consider the very important point raised by the Member for Calgary Foothills with respect to the limitation on mineral claims. Without prejudging any answers that may come in, Mr. Speaker, I'm satisfied that if one were to enlarge the claims that could be made for the loss of mineral titles, there ought to be a difference in the fee structure. That is, there may well be one fee structure for surface interests and a different one for mineral interests, because the risk is far, far larger when one is dealing with minerals than it is when one is dealing with surface rights.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, a comment on the service from the Land Titles offices. We have over the years, I must say, had some ups and downs in service from the Land Titles offices. Some of that, in recent times at least, has occurred primarily because we've had an unanticipated and unprecedented increase in the number of transactions that have been processed through the Land Titles offices. They have over the years, I think, given good service but it's the kind of service that can and should be improved upon.

With that objective in mind, Mr. Speaker, we have recently, on an experimental basis, begun a program in the Southern Alberta Land Titles Office in Calgary whereby documents can be processed within the day. That, Mr. Speaker, compares with even the best of service that has been given under the other system of four or five days. That program is still in the experimental stages but I must say that the results so far have been exceedingly encouraging. I am hopeful that we will find it practical to expand it to the entire operation in Calgary and then subsequently to the Land Titles Office in Edmonton. I mention the change in the service in the Land Titles offices because when you speed up the service you obviously increase the risk of error and that will have some bearing on the assurance fund levy.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, and in resume, I would like to assure the hon. members that we have given and will continue to give consideration to making substantial changes in the existing system for determining the Assurance Fund levy.

MR. LUDWIG:

Would the hon. Attorney General permit a question, please?

MR. LEITCH:

Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LUDWIG:

With relation to the situation where we have always had a surplus in the Assurance Fund, I'm aware of that. It was good management and perhaps some good luck. But I wanted to have him comment on the potential of claims, bearing in mind the value, the high cost of property that is the potential of claims now. So there ought to be a good fund available because we can run into three or four incidents that can wipe out several million dollars. That is the situation I was concerned about.

MR. LEITCH:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I doubt that the potential has grown any more rapidly than the growth of land values. Of course the growth in land values has been related to the size of the Assurance Fund levy. I don't think there's any greater risk today apart from the increasing land values, than there was 10, 15 or 20 years ago for claims against the fund. And it's very obvious, Mr. Speaker, that the claims bear absolutely no relation to the amounts taken in. They've been a few thousand [dollars] per year where the revenue from this fund is now approaching the \$2 million per year figure.

So that in addition, Mr. Speaker, even if there were, and this could undoubtedly happen, there could be some major land transaction which would lead to a large claim against the fund. But I think that's one of the factors you take into account when setting the appropriate premium rates, if one may refer to them as that. For example, if there were a loss of some significance which put the fund in a deficit position - even an extreme loss that put the fund in a deficit position - that can always, as is the case with the regular insurance operation, be accommodated simply by an upward adjustment of premiums in the future.

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. Member for Camrose and the hon. Member for Calgary Foothills for bringing in the resolution. I agree generally with the purpose of the resolution.

The principle of an assurance fund is very sound. If people in government, or in the Land Titles Office in this case, make an error, then certainly the error should be corrected and it shouldn't be charged to the person who gets the results of that error. If a mistake is made on a title then certainly the new title owner or the old title owner should not have to carry the cost of that mistake. That was the purpose of an assurance fund.

The fact that the Assurance Fund has put considerable money into general revenue can be questioned in one respect. It could be looked upon as a backdoor method of taxation when you realize that if there is a deficit, then the general revenue of the province would cover that deficit. As long as the government in power is prepared to cover a deficit to the extent of the amount collected from that fund, I can't see too much wrong with that procedure. As the hon. Attorney General mentioned, it's a principle that has been established in a number of funds in this country.

I do think it would be wrong however, to continue to use this as a source of revenue year after year after year, if it appears that the amount will never be used for the purpose for which it's being collected, that is, for assurance fund purposes.

With that in mind, I personally support the statement made by the hon. Member for Camrose that an assurance fund is required and that possibly the present one should be replaced with a new one that would be a true assurance fund. When the fund gets to a point, if we don't want to use it as a taxation measure, when the fund gets to a point that is considered safe by the most conservative estimates, then I think there should be some process whereby the charges would be eliminated from that time on until the fund is needed again. It may be argued that this is unfair to those who've paid but any change can be argued that way. If you're not going to do anything because somebody in the past had to pay, then we are simply accepting the premise that because people paid in the past, people will have to pay forever.

As long as the purpose for the fund is being met, that is to correct errors so that the people will not have to bear the brunt of an error made by a government employee, then I can't see where anyone would have any argument. And, it would be anti-inflationary. It would leave more money in the pockets of the people at a time when they need money, and all transfers aren't carried out by large corporations and by wealthy people. Thousands of transfers are carried out in this province by ordinary, everyday working people who can ill afford to pay anything more than they absolutely have to pay, and even that takes money, sometimes from the table of their family.

So I believe that the review of this, as mentioned by the Attorney General, is very sound. I would like to have the figures, the exact amount collected to date by the Assurance Fund and the total amount paid out, the total revenue and the total expenditure. I don't know where that figure is available but I'm sure it should be able to be made available, if not in this debate, possibly through a question. As a matter of fact, I had a question partly framed, trying to secure that information, because I have felt that for some time this fund was getting too big and that some consideration should be given towards eliminating it until there is some necessity to reconstitute it, possibly in a different or a better form.

I don't think we can justify using this fund as a taxation measure year after year when it appears that the amount of money available will never be used for assurance purposes. I think that is unfair to the people who are paying it. It's taxation based on a few for the benefit of everybody. I don't think that type of taxation is sound. If there is some estimate that the fund will go into a deficit at some time in the future, then that might be a different matter and perhaps the funds should be continued at a lower rate.

The fact that the government would guarantee the fund, I think, would be there whether or not there is money from this fund that went into general revenue. Certainly the Canadian government didn't base the amount of extra money they put into the Unemployment Insurance Fund on the amount that was taken from that fund for general revenue purposes. If it had, the fund would have been bankrupt months and months ago and perhaps years ago. It was a fund set up by the government and consequently the government guarantees it and stands behind it.

I think that should be done in the case of this fund without the necessity of using it as a taxation measure. Using it as a taxation measure - I want to emphasize again - in my view is completely unsound. It is not fair to those who are required to pay. If we are going to have taxation on this type of fund for the benefit of everybody, then surely it shouldn't only be charged to those who happen to be transferring property at this particular time or at the particular ... [Inaudible] ...

I think the whole purpose of every government which has an assurance fund in connection with the transfer of land titles is to make sure that any error committed will be rectified at public expense. I think that is sound. As long as we work on that premise I can see no reason at all why there should be any criticism of the Assurance Fund.

I think it has been shown by both the mover and the seconder that the fund has reached proportions that will probably never be required even if errors were common in the Land Titles Office. Errors are not common in the Land Titles Office. I personally want to commend both the Calgary office and the Edmonton office, not only for the courtesy and helpfulness they are always prepared to give, but for the very accurate way in which they carry out their duties. Very few errors occur in these offices and I think that is to the credit of the registrars and the people who work in those offices. It is certainly, of course indirectly, a credit to the government and the people of Alberta.

There is one point where I think there should be some extension however in connection with assurance funds - easements that were placed on titles years and years ago. Where there has been no transfer of the title, or few transfers of title, and an easement remains, the persons or the corporations who placed the easement may now be deceased or defunct. I think it unfair to say to the people who have those easements, you have to take this to court. You have to pay to hire a lawyer to get this easement removed.

Surely it's not the fault of the title holder that the corporation went defunct. Surely it's not the fault of the title holder that the person who placed the easement on that title died. It seems to me that this would be a proper use of the Assurance Fund. There is probably not very much of this and perhaps the amount of money involved is not very high, but it's the principle of the thing. While an error hasn't been made in one sense, in the other sense an error has been made because the easement was not removed when there was no further need of that easement. It was not removed because possibly the title was in a deposit box and no one even remembered there was an easement on the title.

I think this is nuisance work for lawyers as well. There should be some arrangement made in cases like this. Where the persons who placed the easement are defunct and where you can't even find the reason for the easement existing at this time, the registrar

should remove the easement. I realize you have to be very careful in that to make sure that everybody's rights are protected.

If it can't be done with the registrar, then certainly the payment could properly be made, in my view, from the Assurance Fund. In a sense an error has been made that is no fault of the title holder and no fault of the Land Titles Office either, but the fault is of the persons or the corporation who placed the easement and then didn't bother having it taken off or cancelled.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very excellent resolution and I am very happy to hear the Attorney General say that this matter is being reviewed. I personally would like to see the Assurance Fund as it exists today eliminated because it has become a backdoor method of collecting taxes. An assurance fund should be set up in a different way in which the fund would be used for the purposes - and only for the purposes - for which the money is collected.

MR. GHITTER:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to address a few remarks with respect to this motion and also compliment the mover of the resolution on the intent that is contained in the motion. I didn't hear the seconder of the motion, but I am sure that, in his lucid way, he described his support of the motion that is costing so much money to numerous organizations in the province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I think there can be no doubt that from the point of view of an assurance fund as it exists in the province of Alberta today as the hon. members have described it, it is clearly a taxing process. It is clearly hidden, and it clearly overcharges from the point of view of the approach it takes to the purchaser of land. I think we need an assurance fund, Mr. Speaker, but certainly the charges may be on a level which is higher than is really required in order to provide the protection.

I congratulate the hon. the Attorney General for the experience we are seeing in Calgary in the very recent change in the system wherein documentation can be processed in a very brief period of time. I think the sooner they get that system in Edmonton the better it will be, because it is an excellent system. Also, within that system I think there are additional safeguards. I would predict there will be even less chance of error rather than more, as has been suggested, in that the system moves fluidly, quickly and certainly to the encouragement of all parties.

Personally, Mr. Speaker, I have always felt that the wrong person pays into the Assurance Fund. For after all, the Assurance Fund is based on the increment in value of the property being transferred, and yet it is the purchaser who is paying that fee. I have always thought that the person who is taking advantage of the increase in value and who is moving the title on should really be the person who is to pay the fee, not the purchaser who is having to pay the increased amount. I have always felt that the wrong person is making the payment.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. GHITTER:

I would think when the hon. Attorney General is examining matters in this regard that when the fund is set up something should be done, if it is to be changed, to ensure that it is the vendor and not the purchaser who is paying. Now this presents many difficulties in a registration system and can always be negotiated out. But nevertheless there is still a charge against the purchaser and it is always the purchaser who pays those disbursements.

What really intrigues me, Mr. Speaker, about the whole situation is that from the point of view from the Assurance Fund there is an interesting principle here and one that may, and possibly should, be examined by this Assembly from the point of view of what should be done with respect to individuals who are making a high profit on the sale of land. Let me give you a few examples.

Let us assume that someone purchases some raw agricultural land. They then, because of their expertise, take that land and they move it through a zoning application procedure so that the end result is that they have R1 residential land. The very processing of this rezoning has probably increased the value of their land, for example in the city of Calgary, by some \$7,000 or \$8,000 an acre merely by going through the process of rezoning. Now it's not that they have done anything by virtue of holding on to the land for a considerable length of time. It is not that they have done anything to the land to increase its value. But they have taken advantage of a zoning procedure to increase the value of the land and place it on stream.

In some jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, there is a taxation procedure whereby profits on land of this nature are taxed. On that basis, certainly within a funding situation through the land titles system a government should be possibly considering what can be done by way of a taxing procedure on increment valuation of land of that nature. Now this is no minor problem. Anyone who has examined the difficulties of bringing land on stream in our two major cities in the [province], anyone who has seen the increased value of land in our cities, anyone who has seen the tremendous capital that is coming into this province from other jurisdictions to speculate on land, from the point of view of just waiting - not even intending to develop the land, but just to speculate - until that land increases in value, and are paying assessments on an agricultural basis around the perimeters of our city - these people should be taxed. And these people, in many respects, are not being taxed.

Now I do not accept for a moment these great principles of land banking that have failed throughout the world, in Sweden and all these other places that have tried it. All this is is an area where the bureaucrats can get greater control of land. Of course the planners all love land banking because they suggest this is just a great way to control things. All they end up doing is forcing the price of land up. I'm not for a second suggesting a land banking concept. But the intriguing part of the Assurance Fund is that possibly a government should consider taking that same procedure to create some type of incremental taxation from the point of view of profits that are made on land on increased valuation. I know that this procedure is being considered in many other jurisdictions at the present time, in an endeavour at least to encourage the speculators who are coming in to deal with land around our cities, to do something about moving off the land, or to carry it out into the development process.

But when we are facing such a critical situation, where building lots in Calgary, now coming on stream, size 60 by 110 in an average district, are being sold for \$18,300, and where you see other building lots in the city of Calgary that have just come on stream, of a half-acre size, selling for \$61,300, and where you see this land coming on, and selling, you realize that something must be done to determine where government can respond to move land on stream so we can build these houses at a reasonable area.

So, Mr. Speaker, I support the motion - to a certain extent. I don't think we should abandon the Assurance Fund process. I think it is useful and must be maintained but certainly the manner by which the fee is determined can be substantially reduced. Secondly, I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that maybe it is time for this Legislature to start considering another form of incremental taxation from the point of view of increased valuations of land, that is really an unearned increment that should be taxed, by the people of the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HARLE:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join in this debate and agree particularly with the comments made by the previous speaker with regard to the obligation of the purchaser to have to pay this fee. It has always puzzled me why this Assurance Fund fee could not be paid by a purchaser, but usually by the time the transaction has arrived in a lawyer's office, the provision for the payment of fees has already been established by the interim agreement, or by a previous agreement.

I'm extremely glad that this particular motion was brought today by someone who is not in the legal profession. I'm sure that many lay people throughout the province have been puzzled by the charges that are made for land titles transactions. I would not, however, like to see a basic change in the system. I think our Torrens system has served us in Alberta and in Western Canada, extremely well over the years. I know when I compare our system with the system that seems to operate in the United States - where you have a title insurance scheme in which you have not only to investigate your piece of paper but have to go back and try to assure yourself that in fact you own what you are trying to sell, where you have to employ a private company to ensure that in fact you're getting what you think you're getting - this system, the Torrens system that we have here, is an extremely simple system, and part of its basis, relies on an assurance fund.

So I cannot support a complete removal of the Assurance Fund, but I would like to see a reduction in the levy that is charged. Another reason for maintaining it is that people who do not own land, and who never own land, are not, through their taxation system, bearing the costs of transactions that can result in mistakes. In other words, it is the people who use the system who are paying for it and who in effect bear the load of mistakes that are made.

This system unfortunately has become a system of taxation. For that reason it should be looked at. I'm glad to hear that the Attorney General has made some comments generally about our land titles offices. There must be some speeding up of the whole process of land registration, of the issue of title. It must be an accurate system, it must probably be put on a computer system, it must be such that it is relatively easy to administer. I

think because of the tremendous increase in volume of business that has to be handled by our land title offices, that there is a definite need for a general speed-up of the whole process of registration. I'm glad to hear that the Attorney General is in fact working on this very problem.

One problem that's come to my attention particularly with regard to the fees is the problem of the valuation of mineral titles. An individual who is an owner of a mineral title at a time when there is very little interest in those minerals, may enter into a lease and retain, in effect, a 12.5 per cent interest. This has certainly been the story in the past, although it may not be in the future. What happens when several years later, and during the term of the lease, a well is drilled, gas is found, and because there is no adequate system for moving that gas, or not sufficient discovered in the area, that particular well is capped? Then the owner of the minerals either dies, sells his farm, or he has to transfer it to his children. And immediately it becomes - well, what is the value of those mines and minerals? A complicated process is gone through, but no account is taken of the fact that the registered owner of those mines and minerals now only has his 12.5 per cent. It is valued on the basis of the total value of the particular minerals.

I would suggest that in addition, when the government department is looking to the whole question of setting the fees, the Assurance Fund levy, that some consideration be given to the fact that when a transfer is made of lands are under lease, the registered owner not bear the whole cost of those transfers.

Basically, I would support the resolution and I think that it will result in the long run in a better and more equitable Assurance Fund levy.

Thank you.

MR. BENOIT:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak in favour of the principles involved in this resolution. When I say that, I am thinking in terms of the suggestion made by the resolution that something that is either impractical or unnecessary should be removed. I am always in favour of removing any legislation or statute that has run its course of practicality or usefulness. So any reductions we can make in the number of statutes will be helpful to all concerned.

Having said that, and having commended the hon. Members for Camrose and Calgary Foothills for presenting this resolution to us, I must say this also, Mr. Speaker, that I have read some of the best-selling books on the market which have been taken as gospel truth by those who have read them because the people said that these books had to be true because they were documented by the Congressional Record in the United States, or something to that effect.

Without casting any reflections whatever on the remarks that have been made by way of information today, I want to suggest that if every hon. member in the Legislature, 75, were perfectly honest, it would not assure that all the remarks that are made in this Legislature are true or factual. Because I don't know too much about some situations like this that we are discussing, I have to make my comments on the basis of the information as facts that have been rendered by those who have spoken. So when I say I support the resolution, I do so on the strength of the information I have received.

Saying that then, I say I see two things in this matter and I want them made clear. Number one, the resolution calls for the repeal or removal of this Assurance Fund levy. The other statement is what the hon. Attorney General said, that they have been looking into the matter and while they will give consideration to this, in all probability what they are going to do is to just change the assessment rather than to remove it. This, as has been expressed by several members, is my preference also because of the use to which this fund is being put. Therefore, with the understanding that it will not necessarily be removed after the consideration has been given for such, but rather that it will be adjusted according to the circumstances that have developed through the years, I give my approval in principle to this resolution at this time.

MRS. CHICHAK:

Mr. Speaker, I too wish to participate very, very briefly in this debate. I am pleased that the motion has been brought forward by the hon. Member for Camrose, and although I may not agree entirely with the wording of the motion, in essence, in the principle, I agree. The motion reads that there be consideration given, and so my support for the motion is in relation to that particular wording - that consideration be given to the removal of the Assurance Fund levy. I do not think that currently we could consider removing the levy, but I do think that certain steps can be taken where eventually we may find that such a fee would not be necessary.

I think that many worth-while suggestions and comments have been made this afternoon with regard to this matter, with most of which I agree. I know that from time to time members of the public who have experienced the expense of the Assurance Fund fee have asked me whether I could assist them in their understanding of the necessity, or if in fact there is a necessity, why the rate is such as it is - which, of course, appears and in fact, I believe, is rather out of line or excessive to the experience that we have had in this province in any problems with regard to errors where the fund may have had to be used. I think that it has been brought to the attention of the members that the inflated values on land have, of course, caused excessive fees with respect to the Assurance Fund levy.

I would like to just make, very briefly perhaps, another suggestion that the Attorney General might take into consideration in the review of the entire Land Titles Act and the system, and any modifications that might be necessary. I don't know offhand whether the Assurance Fund levy when it was initially brought in legislation, because of its basic principle, was ever set up as such within government - whether it was ever, in fact, set aside and earmarked as an assurance fund with respect to The Land Titles Act. If in fact it was originally, and then moved out of there, then I would say that that was a move in the wrong direction. However, if it was never set up and earmarked as a separate fund, then I would say that according to the basic principle under the Act it should have been and I think that perhaps we could move in that direction.

I think the records show the excessive collection in recent years as a result of the escalating inflated values on land. Perhaps the government might take into consideration the opening of a separate assurance fund, earmarked as such and perhaps taking the most recent year, or years, or commencing with the current year, establishing such a fund and setting all of the money deposited into this fund. Then, in order to minimize or decrease the rate or the fee that might be applicable on registration of transfers, the moneys, as they are accumulated in the fund, might be applied in investments which would bring a return of interest, making the fund self-supporting. This would, over a period of time, minimize the fee that would need to be levied and perhaps eliminate entirely the necessity of charging the public, for then the fund in itself would become self-supporting.

It is that aspect I would like to pass on to the Attorney General for consideration. Again, I support the motion insofar as it indicates that we should consider the Assurance Fund levy and its need, but I hope that this will be taken with modification and applied as is necessary. Thank you.

MR. KOZIAK:

Mr. Speaker, I'd hate to be the only remaining member of the legal profession who hasn't spoken on this motion. So from that point alone, I rise in my place to address myself to the motion.

[Interjections]

I'll decide that as I speak.

There is an area that the motion doesn't cover, but which I believe one of the speakers alluded to. That is the other area dealing with mortgages. We have an Assurance Fund levy which is levied by the registrar when a transfer is registered to create the new title. Then we also have an Assurance Fund levy when a mortgage is granted by the owner of a title and that, of course, again is based on the value of the mortgage. So that when an individual needs money for home improvement or for whatever, he finds himself in the position that added to the cost of borrowing the money, added to the cost of the interest, the legal fees, the surveyor's certificate and what have you, is the cost of the Assurance Fund which the registrar imposes upon him when the mortgage is registered. So perhaps when the government considers this - and I won't consider this as an amendment to the existing motion - but I would hope that in considering removing or amending or adapting the Assurance Fund levy to present-day situations, the situation dealing with mortgages isn't lost sight of.

The other item which I believe is a little more important occurs when, and this is quite common, an individual buys a lot. Not so long ago, maybe 10, 12 years ago, a lot in Edmonton was approximately \$2,000, maybe \$5,000 with improvements, and that was the common purchase price. He then builds a house. Now when he purchases the lot free of any building, the land is worth say the \$2,500 and he swears the affidavit by transferee to the effect that the value of the property is \$2,500. He then ...

MRS. CHICHAK:

[Inaudible]

MR. KOZIAK:

This was 12 years ago, Cathy.

He then builds a house on it at approximately \$20,000 and lives in it. Twelve years later that house is probably worth \$40,000, \$45,000. Yet the assurance value shown on his title is \$2,500.

Now if the registrar made some sort of error that resulted in the loss of that title to the individual, I'm sure that individual would be up in arms if he found out that all he was going to get, because the government made a mistake, was \$2,500.

So I feel there is something mechanically and principally wrong with the Assurance Fund which is greater than just the question of the taxation that we've been discussing here this afternoon. It should be removed in its entirety from that point of view. If an employee of the government makes a mistake that causes a loss, that loss should be recompensed to the person who suffered the loss at the actual value of the loss, in the same sense as when we expropriate property we try to recompense the person who is being expropriated to the value of the property that is being taken away from him. So in the land titles system, if the registrar or one of his employees makes an error which causes somebody a loss of \$40,000, \$50,000 or \$10,000 or what have you, the compensation should be equally \$40,000, \$50,000 or \$10,000 or what have you, and not some figure, some archaic figure, as may be the case in certain instances, which has no bearing at all on the true value.

I would suggest strongly to the government, and to the Attorney General within whose department this area falls, that in considering the Assurance Fund levy, this matter also be taken into account as it is probably more important than the question of the taxation that is raised by the resolution in its wording.

MR. BUCKWELL:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a few words to this motion and congratulate the mover of it. My input is not so much on the question at hand as it is on remarks made by the Attorney General on services in the Land Titles Office. I'm not suggesting for one minute that we do away with the only two land titles offices we have in the province, one in Calgary and the one in Edmonton. But I am suggesting that with the government theme of decentralization, we should consider possibly at this time that when we are talking about transfer of land and property through the Land Titles offices that probably Calgary and Edmonton, with their record of growth and the major cities, is where most of the work is done.

I don't know if any of you have been through, and I suppose many of you have, the Alberta Medicare and the sophisticated medical service and sophisticated microfilm deal they have there, where every person in the province is covered with a card. We think about a decentralization of our Land Titles Office, not in a sense of moving the main offices from either Calgary or Edmonton, but we should try to give some type of microfilm service in the province, I'm thinking particularly in the planning regions of the province. We could have an office, say, in Lethbridge or Red Deer and Grande Prairie covering those particular areas. They would naturally have to be updated constantly. In the rural areas there is a certain amount of turnover of land but there are other titles there that haven't been changed maybe in 60 years. They are still within the same family and have never been changed. Today I realize you might run into some snags, but I think we should look at the extended services of the Land Titles offices throughout the province.

We have people today from the southern part of the province that have to go into Calgary just to find out the proper location of their lot. We have people from Grande Prairie that have to come down almost one-third of the province to the city of Edmonton to find out about their own areas. And when we have provincial buildings throughout the country, we have overhead projectors, microfilm, and if they were constantly updated they would be very similar, I would say, to our bills. You might have a complete bill here; they call it an office consolidation. They say do not accept this, you must go back to the statutes. But it does give a record for a good many transactions through microfilm for which people today are paying either lawyers, or paying transportation costs into the cities to find out some very minor thing as far as land titles and their certificates are concerned.

So I would suggest to the Attorney General that when they are thinking of greater service in the interest of decentralization, we might look along these lines.

MR. RUSTE:

Mr. Speaker, just a few words in relation to this resolution. I'd just like to point out that I appreciated what the minister has outlined in the work of the land transfer and the fund and so on, and certainly I concur with the intent of the resolution. I feel that

the protection of those involved is the highest point. Certainly when it relates to income there are many taxes, many changes that we have in government and other places that if there is enough money to offset it in other places, well the government can get along with it very well.

What I would like to mention, though, is that during this Legislature we passed amendments to the legislation providing for the loose-leaf filing of the titles, and I would have hoped that would have speeded up the transfer in the Land Titles Office. I have had concerns expressed to me on several occasions about the delays, and I think maybe the minister in charge, being a lawyer himself, might check out to see whether the delays are with the legal profession or in the Land Titles Office in the transfer of these titles. Because we get into a situation today where there are some large sums of money involved in transfers, large sums of money that are held pending the transfers coming through.

So with those few words I would ask the minister to just see what can be done to speed up the transfers in his office. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

May the hon. member close the debate?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. STROMBERG:

Mr. Speaker, in closing debate, my appreciation to the hon. Member for Calgary Foothills for his remarks and for everyone who took part in the debate on this motion. I certainly have been busy writing down the very many opinions and many viewpoints that have been brought by the different members today. I especially like my seconder's comments on a very lucrative and solvent fund.

In regard to the concern of the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View as to the risk involved in the handling of the Assurance Fund, I might point out to him that times have changed since 1906. I realize that you might not have realized it, but we're using adding machines now, we're using computers - you know ...

MR. LUDWIG:

How come you're still using your fingers?

MR. STROMBERG:

I'm celebrating my birthday next month, I would hope that you would take part in it.

AN HON. MEMBER:

How old are you?

MR. STROMBERG:

But anyway - the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View, his concern of the fund ever coming into the red. May I point out to him, Mr. Speaker, that last year there was a call on the fund of \$1,333.56 ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

[Inaudible] ... more Conservative lawyers.

MR. STROMBERG:

It helps, I'm sure the Conservative lawyers help.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell my learned friend that Lord Buckmaster, delivering his judgment said, "It is impossible to assume that the officer in charge of the registration will not do his duty investigating titles before he issues a certificate."

MR. LUDWIG:

Why don't you quit while you're ahead?

MR. STROMBERG:

Mr. Speaker, in the Attorney General's comments, it certainly seemed to be, after listening to the debate, the concern of all members. We welcome your statement, sir, that there will be a review of The Land Titles Act. Perhaps the time is prime for this and we will await your actions.

I especially appreciated the remarks from the hon. Member for Drumheller because he was mainly in favour of the bill, but he did bring out one point I mentioned and that is 'Mr. Average Albertan', the consumer, it is certainly hitting him. I also appreciate concern that perhaps we should be looking at a different way of looking at the whole Assurance Fund, maybe an insurance fund.

I was very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that the two lawyers, one from Calgary Buffalo and the one from Stettler, were in favour of it. I would hate to have those two orators against me. The hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo brought up where the purchaser was paying the fee. I found that very, very interesting. Where the hon. Member for Stettler, suggested another method, not removing the fee, I would like to point out about his concerns with regard to the petroleum industry that some considerable years ago in the province there was a Benchers' special committee of the Law Society of Alberta which wrote quite an opinion to this Legislature on how to handle mineral taxation under The Land Titles Act.

About the remarks also from the hon. Member for Highwood, I would like to point out to him, Mr. Speaker, about his concern over the figures and the quotes used in the debate today, I can assure you they came out of a book that the hon. Member for Calgary Foothills and I have been studying every night. It is called The Canadian Torrens System. It makes good reading and if he would like to borrow it, I will send it over.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood and her concern, again: not removing the fund. I think she put her finger on the mood of the debate in this Assembly this afternoon, not of the removal of the fund, but perhaps looking at other avenues of handling it.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Strathcona; when we get into mortgages, my seconder and I have stayed hands off. We thought we had our hands full on the Assurance Fund. We didn't investigate it too far. I brought up the \$5,000 limit that can be claimed on the fund.

The hon. Member for Macleod - decentralization, yes - again, the Attorney General's review, and from the hon. Member for Wainwright, I appreciate your remarks.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

MR. COOKSON:

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if I might ask the member a question. I am not sure whether, in fact, in the resolution when you suggest removing the Assurance Fund whether you are arguing that it should or should not be removed and these arguments float back and forth. I was wondering whether you could clarify this particular ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Could the hon. member eschew the use of a certain reprehensible pronoun and possessive adjective. In other words, the words "you" and "your" when addressed to other hon. members except the Speaker.

MR. COOKSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the member could clarify the particular point as to whether the fund should be eliminated or whether perhaps his intent was to continue with the fund as it reads in the resolution?

MR. STROMBERG:

Mr. Speaker, in answer to the question put to me, I thought that was what the debate was for this afternoon, to settle it one way or the other. My intent was the removal of the fund, but we left the door wide open. If there were other ways to handle it, all the better.

I would like to also mention, Mr. Speaker, that I forgot the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood was saying that we handle the fund down to actual percentage. Well, last year, with \$1,333 paid out that would be such - well, in millions of titles transferred - I believe that would be less than 1 cent per title. That would be very difficult to handle.

MR. LUDWIG:

I'm glad you agree with me.

[The motion was carried.]

2. Mr. Moore proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

Be it resolved that the Department of Highways in cooperation with local school authorities be responsible for encouraging the development of a voluntary driver education program at all high schools in Alberta in areas where such programs are not now available.

MR. MOORE:

Mr. Speaker, Motion No. 2 asks that the Department of Highways, in cooperation with local school authorities, be responsible for encouraging development of voluntary driver education programs at all high schools in Alberta where such programs do not now exist.

I think it is timely, Mr. Speaker, to introduce a motion such as this and have some debate on it before the Legislative Assembly, timely particularly, because of recent directives by the Automobile Insurance Board in regard to the amount of insurance required to be paid by young drivers who do not have driver education as opposed to those who have had the opportunity to take an accredited driver education course.

I think we are all aware that indeed some organizations and private driving schools have been doing a very commendable job in some areas of this province with regard to driver education. The intent of this motion, Mr. Speaker, is certainly not to discredit the work that has gone on by the Alberta Motor Association and a good many independent, private driving schools throughout the province.

The existing situation, as I understand it, in the urban areas is that the Alberta Motor Association and private driving schools and some education systems as well are involved in offering driver education, both normal driving courses and defensive driving courses, to a good number of young people who may be applying for their first driver's licence and their first insurance policy.

I am not, Mr. Speaker, aware of the effectiveness or otherwise of that program in reaching the total number of young people who might be reached in the urban or metropolitan areas. I would expect that other hon. members will enlighten the Legislature on that aspect. I did, however, want to talk about the availability of driver education programs, particularly in the rural areas of this province where we have, oftentimes, a limited number of people in the age category of 14 to 16 or 17 years, which, in fact, is the age category where 90 per cent or more of the driver education will be done.

In much of my constituency, Mr. Speaker, there are presently no driver education programs in existence. In many areas students would be required to have their parents drive them distances of 50 to 75 miles to reach a centre that offers this kind of instruction. It goes without saying, Mr. Speaker, that the mileage and time and cost this would involve to parents of young people in these outlying regions is prohibitive to the extent that many of them would probably prefer to pay the extra insurance premiums as well as face up to the fact that they will have to provide, however they can, for the driving education of their own children, rather than obtaining the professional instruction that so many of us feel is absolutely necessary today.

In that regard, Mr. Speaker, when we talked about providing driver education in high schools, I think we have to recognize that there are literally dozens of courses offered in high schools today, both rural and urban, which, in my view, however important they might seem, cannot rate as highly as driver education. I say that because we all, I think, recognize that more than 95 per cent of the young people who are in Grades 9, 10 and 11 in our high schools today, will be out on the road shortly after they reach their sixteenth birthday and obtain their first driver's licence. And throughout the course of their lives, many of them will be driving 20,000, 30,000, 40,000 miles per year for 50 years and more.

I don't believe that there is any other thing that young people are expected to do which receives less attention throughout our entire system than driving a car. We know, from the statistics provided by our insurance industry and from their actions with regard to lowering premiums for people who have had driver education, that indeed there is a significant advantage to be gained from taking the driver education course in terms of accident rates and one's ability to drive.

Those, Mr. Speaker, are just some of the very few reasons why it's important, I believe, that every individual in this province who comes of driving age or every individual who may be older than that and is applying for his first driver's licence should have an opportunity that is reasonable in terms of the distance he has to travel, to take a driver education course.

The question, Mr. Speaker, that may be in the minds of some hon. members is, why the Department of Highways in cooperation with local school authorities? The reason for making that suggestion in the motion, Mr. Speaker, is that the Department of Highways is already extensively involved in enforcement provisions, extensively involved in providing legislation through this Legislature that has to do with driving habits of individuals and what happens when they don't drive properly.

The other consideration when I suggest the Department of Highways, Mr. Speaker, is that I'm somewhat disturbed that there may, in fact, not be a speedy agreement between local school authorities and members of the teaching profession, through their organization, with regard to how a driver education program could operate in some of the schools which do not now have one.

I think it's important with regard to the decisions with regard to insurance and indeed in view of the accident rate, that we try to put in place a good voluntary driver education program in every high school or available to every high school student in this province before next September 1.

For that reason, I have suggested that the Department of Highways take some leadership in this regard in contacting local school authorities and in getting their opinions on how that would fit into their operation. I'd be particularly interested in trying to evolve some way in which our many school bus drivers who are now looking at a part-time three-to-five hour a day job might become involved in driver education.

In my constituency, and I'm sure in many other rural constituencies, a school bus driver arrives at the school at 9:00 o'clock and then has to turn around and drive maybe some 20, 30 or 40 miles back to the end of his route. I don't think it would be difficult at all in most jurisdictions to find able-bodied people who are driving school buses to actively engage themselves in the driving part, the actual driving part, of a driver education program.

In many cases it may be necessary to have the cooperation of the local principal. In fact, in all cases it would be necessary to have the cooperation of the principal and his staff with regard to the written part of the examination. That, Mr. Speaker, is one matter which cannot hang on the desire or the lack of desire by the teachers' organization to involve school bus drivers in the actual instruction in the vehicle.

Those, Mr. Speaker, are just a few of the points that I wanted to raise with respect to driver education. I'm hopeful that other members of the Assembly will take this opportunity to further the ideas that have been outlined here or perhaps propose different ways in which we might meet our ultimate aim, or the aim which I had in mind, Mr. Speaker, in introducing this resolution. That is to ensure that young people, no matter where they might be in this province, will, within a very few short months, have access to driver education at all times.

Thank you.

MR. DIACHUK:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to add a few comments to the resolution as presented by the hon. Member for Smoky River. On the several occasions that I rose and spoke in this Legislature, I have always raised the question of driver education.

I do want to say at the outset that I support the resolution to endorse driver education. We must, first and foremost, separate driver education from driver training. Driver education is presently available at all high schools, but naturally not being provided because of the cost. As the hon. Member for Smoky River indicated, there is a difficulty by many district school boards implementing these programs because of the high cost of providing a combined program.

In North America and in Alberta we have schools that have offered and are offering driver education. I'm advised that the Department of Education has information, very favourable information, with regard to the success of these programs. Driver education is a program of teaching of attitudes. A good example of how attitudes change on the highway scene is what has taken place in the United States following the energy crisis. Throughout most of the States they lowered the speed limit to 55-miles-an-hour and I'm pleased to read in some of the news items that their accident ratio has dropped by some 24 per cent. Really, lowering a speed limit or driving slower is an attitude. I think all of us will agree that sometimes when we find ourselves exceeding the speed limit it's basically because our attitude has changed for that moment.

In my address last year on February 27 I made reference to the programs of the Alberta Safety Council. These programs are funded by the public at large through our contribution from the Department of Highways and also through other contributions by the industry, basically the insurance industry in this country. When we look at the programs the Safety Council has provided over the last six years, a very common one is the defensive driving

course. I was advised that from January 1, 1973 to December 31, 1973, they had 1,320 graduates in Edmonton, 898 in Calgary and 1,338 in other towns in the Province of Alberta. Private companies who got the program from the Safety Council and then through the training of their own people offered it to their own employees and staff numbered some 2,911. A total of 6,467 people completed the defensive driving program in this province.

As of July of 1973, the Alberta Safety Council offered a new program and I have a pamphlet here called The Alberta Drivers' Ground School. This was the beginning of a program to assist driver training schools. The three general objectives were, if I may quote from this pamphlet:

1. To help instil in the student an attitude of personal responsibility for his actions behind the wheel ...
2. To cooperate with the driving school to teach the basic techniques and theories of driving ...
3. To fill the need for a course, short enough to keep the cost reasonable, yet long enough, including home study assignments, to come close to the requirements of the high school driver education course.

This is a program that is available at present only through the two cities because it's a pilot project of the Alberta Safety Council. But, in the eight months from July 1, 1973 to February 28, 1974, the Calgary office has graduated 420 students. Unfortunately, Edmonton has only graduated 66 students, but they gave me the explanation that possibly because of the success of the defensive driving course in Edmonton this new program wasn't getting off the ground as well as in Calgary.

Now, I say this because I feel that so often - and this could be criticism of some driver training schools - they only train a driver sufficiently to pass the tests provided by the Department of Highways to obtain a driver's licence. I feel that attitude is a very important part of the driving of an automobile. For that reason, many parents all over the province are able to give that same type of instruction, that is, to train a person to drive an automobile. But the attitude is something that must be given by trained people. And I do disagree here a bit with my colleague from Smoky River that school bus drivers would provide this actual instruction. I think it is possible that there are many good school bus drivers, but I think that anyone who has the ability to qualify as an instructor could do it, throughout the province.

I also am a little reluctant to agree totally with the resolution that the Department of Highways endorse this and be responsible for encouraging this development because I still say that this should be done in schools throughout the province. It should be an extra activity as is drama, physical education and other after-hours programs. This should be encouraged not only by the Department of Highways, but by the Department of Education, the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation and possibly even by the Department of Consumer Affairs, which could indicate the saving available to young drivers once they complete the proper program.

I do say that one basic problem is to find a happy medium in the cost of this program. It is indicated to me that this new program, the Alberta Drivers' Ground School, will cost \$15, plus a \$5 deposit for textbooks, which will be refunded when the textbooks are returned. These days, that is not a large amount and quite within reason for anyone, as the hon. Member for Smoky River indicated, to qualify for quite a saving on his insurance premium.

These few comments, Mr. Speaker, I wish to place before the Assembly. I hope that we have a fairly good exchange on this resolution and that in future we look at some extensive programs, in driver education and not driver training.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

MR. SPEAKER:

May the hon. member have leave to adjourn the debate?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:

The House stands adjourned until 8:00 o'clock this evening.

[The House rose at 5:28 o'clock.]

