

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Tuesday, March 26, 1974

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRESENTING PETITIONS

MR. GHITTER:

Mr. Speaker, I have been requested to present to the members of this Legislative Assembly a petition which has been circulated through two of the hospitals in the city of Calgary, and was signed predominantly by RNs and doctors in the city. It states, and I quote: "We, the undersigned endorse the work of the Calgary Drug Information Centre and support the view that this service should continue to receive government funding."

I am also requested to provide to the Legislature some additional names to the petition from the Mount Royal students that was filed last week, which, Mr. Speaker, you may recall had over 700 names on it. This additional petition from Mount Royal College contains a further 236 names.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce to you and to the members of the Legislature, an interesting group of young people. I would like members to particularly welcome the 24 students from Lorette, Manitoba who are here with 24 students from the Lorne Jenkin High School in Barrhead as part of the Young Voyageur Program of exchange of young people from various parts of the country.

They are accompanied by Mr. Andre Piard of Barrhead, Mr. Cameron Bowie of Lorette, Manitoba and Miss Noella Gauthier of Lorette, Manitoba. I would ask these young people to stand and be recognized by the Legislature.

MR. SPEAKER:

I would like to draw the attention of hon. members of the Assembly to the presence in the Speaker's gallery of a distinguished servant of this Legislature, the Ombudsman, Mr. George McClellan who is here, as has been his custom, for the tabling of his report to this Legislature, accompanied by some members of his staff. I would ask him to stand and be recognized by the Assembly.

MR. PURDY:

Mr. Speaker, it is once again a pleasure today to introduce another 90 students from the Spruce Grove Elementary School, a Grade 5 class. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Ibsen, Mr. Iwers, Mrs. Lazzarott, Miss Medynski, bus drivers Henry Singer and Mr. Birecoupt and a number of interested parents of the students. They are seated in the members gallery. I would ask them to rise and be recognized.

TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. SPEAKER:

I have the honour to table the Annual Report of 1973 of the Ombudsman.

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of pleasure in tabling a number of reports of the Environment Conservation Authority to give all members some material to read in regard to a resolution that is coming on the Order Paper. The first is Land Use and Resource Development in the Eastern Slopes, the Athabasca River Basin; the second is Land Use and Resource Development in the Eastern Slopes, the Athabasca River Basin again; the next one is Land Use and Resource Development in the Eastern Slopes, the North Saskatchewan River Basin; the fourth one is Land Use and Resource Development in the Eastern Slopes, again the North Saskatchewan River Basin.

In addition, I would like to table again Land Use and Resource Development in the Eastern Slopes, the Interim Report No. 1. A copy will be distributed to all the members.

I would also like to file, Mr. Speaker, an opinion poll on Land Use and Resource Development in the Eastern Slopes that was commissioned by the Environment Conservation Authority.

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to file with the Legislature a short report on the fertilizer supply and price situation which I promised the Legislature.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Department of Health and Social Development

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement which I think may be well received in some quarters, on a subject of interest to all hon. members. It follows upon previous questions and some discussion and debate in the Legislature in respect to the Calgary Drug Information Centre.

Information as of today is that an application has been made through the Calgary Social Service Department by the Drug Information Centre for funding in the upcoming year and that the City Council of Calgary has approved the inclusion of the Drug Information Centre as a preventive social service program and will be forwarding it to the province. I should note that application will come to the Department of Health and Social Development and could not have been received prior to today, perhaps prior to the next few days, because of the fact it had not been dealt with by the City of Calgary until yesterday.

The Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission would concur I feel, Mr. Speaker, in the avenue of funding that has now been adopted, [as] being the one that the Drug Information Centre should proceed with. The commission's view had been that the program is a community-based program and that it has many ingredients of social services connected to it and therefore, that avenue of funding is entirely appropriate.

I think it is important I indicate that when the application is, in fact, received by the Department of Health and Social Development it is my intention that it be accepted. Hon. members would be aware from their acquaintanceship with the Preventive Social Services Program that that will mean the province will pay 80 per cent and the City of Calgary will pay 20 per cent of the amount budgeted for, pursuant to that application.

I would like to add two other things to my statement, Mr. Speaker, and say that as a result of representations made to me by the Member for Calgary Buffalo, this particular appropriation will be a special grant over and above the regular appropriations available to the City of Calgary in the upcoming year for their normal purposes in the area of preventive social services.

Finally, I believe I have noted - I think of newspaper reports I've read, and I'm sure the suggestion has also been made by some hon. members in the House - that it is

probably very appropriate that an evaluation of the Drug Information Centre be carried out in an entirely independent way in the near future. I would just close my statement by saying it is my intention that that evaluation will be arranged and that it will be entirely independent. I, for one, will be very interested in seeing it when it comes. I think it would take up to eight or nine months because of the fact that the evaluation has to be of an ongoing process.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, in commenting on the announcement made by the Minister of Health and Social Development, I do so with mixed emotions. It was two and a half or three years ago - no, four years ago - that this Assembly passed legislation establishing the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission. The purpose of that commission was to deal with problems in the whole field of drug and alcohol abuse. The commission, in what I would consider its lack of wisdom, has decided to turn a deaf ear on the Drug Information Centre in Calgary.

Now the government, recognizing the error of the commission's ways, has seen fit to use the vehicle of the preventive social service program to give a special grant to the City of Calgary for a program that has made a real contribution in that area, and a program that was turned down, ill-advisedly, in my opinion, by the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission. I'm pleased that the government has, in fact, reversed the decision of the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission, but I'm extremely disappointed that we're using a vehicle other than the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission to do this.

In my concluding comment, Mr. Speaker, I would say this. The way the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission has handled this particular situation in Calgary is another very important vote of non-confidence in the senior administration of the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission.

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Speaker, may I have leave of the House to return to Introduction of Visitors under Orders of the Day?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS (CONT.)

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Speaker, I take great pleasure in introducing to you sir, and through you to the members of this Assembly, 20 commercial Grade 12 students from Joliette, Quebec, who are seated in the public gallery. They are on an exchange program with students of the Lindsay Thurber Composite High School in Red Deer. While in Edmonton, they have toured The University of Alberta, the Legislature and other buildings in this city. They are accompanied by Sister Arsenault, Mrs. Bosse and the coordinator of the program, the associate principal of the high school and my next-door neighbour, Ray Heard. Could I ask them to rise and be recognized by the Assembly, please.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

St. Albert Area Land Use

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question today to the Minister of the Environment and ask if the government has frozen the land between the Town of St. Albert and the City of Edmonton in keeping with the recommendations of the citizens group in St. Albert dealing with the proposed site of the Syncrude fabrication centre?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, the government hasn't frozen the land in question at this time.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Did the Minister of the Environment meet with officials of the Town of St. Albert yesterday and indicate to the Town of St. Albert at that time that the Minister of the Environment would not give approval to the site going ahead?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment did meet with the mayor and one alderman of the Town of St. Albert yesterday. The Minister of the Environment informed the mayor and the alderman that the Department of the Environment had made its position very clearly known to Syncrude. My understanding was that the Town of St. Albert had also made its position very clearly known to Syncrude, and that the decision as to where and whether or not Syncrude would locate in that area was entirely up to Syncrude.

Furthermore, I might suggest, Mr. Speaker, that before the town had passed the by-law, I had requested a meeting with the town council in fact, to discuss the situation with them in regard to the longer term plans for that area, but the town proceeded to act unilaterally and didn't take advantage of a meeting I had requested to discuss the situation before having passed the by-law.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. In the course of the discussions yesterday between the Minister of the Environment and the Town of St. Albert, was the possibility of rezoning, and a hearing dealing with this rezoning, discussed? Is the minister in a position today to indicate whether the Minister of the Environment would favour a rezoning and a public hearing on this particular matter?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, the mayor pointed out to me that the area was initially zoned "light industrial", and as a result of the possible location of the Athabasca University in that area, the area was then rezoned "agriculture". Within the last several weeks it was subsequently rezoned as "light industrial" by a by-law of the town council.

With respect to the province's plans in the area it's not unknown that the province has some plans in regard to a utility corridor in that area, as well as a metropolitan transportation corridor, as well as a green belt area, and the mayor and the aldermen were certainly informed of the longer term plans in regard to the province's point of view in that area. However, that did not mean to suggest that the corridor had been thus far established and would necessarily pick up the site, supposedly the Syncrude site, at this time. But it was necessary to let Syncrude know very explicitly what the province's longer term plans were for the area so that Syncrude could then make their decision entirely on their own as to whether they located their plant at that particular spot.

MR. CLARK:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Has the Minister of the Environment advised Syncrude that he would not approve the development of the fabrication complex in that area?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, various members of the cabinet meet with Syncrude on frequent occasions to attempt to solve some of their problems in terms of the billion dollar project that they are attempting to install in this province. This matter was certainly discussed and the minister indicated to Syncrude the longer term interests of the province in that area, and allowed Syncrude to make their decision on that basis.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, one last supplementary question. Perhaps I might rephrase the question to the minister. Has the Government of Alberta let Syncrude know that it does not want them to build in the location between the Town of St. Albert and the City of Edmonton, an area which is in the M.D. of Sturgeon?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, I do not know how I can be any plainer than I have been.

MR. CLARK:

Just a "yes" or a "no" would be quite all right.

MR. YURKO:

If he will let me answer the question, I will be pleased to answer it for the third or fourth time. The province has made known to Syncrude what its longer term plans are with respect to that area. And Syncrude was allowed to make their decision entirely on their own. I don't know whether or not they have yet made their decision.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Organized Crime

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, my question today is directed to the hon. Attorney General. Could the minister advise if the minister's department has had an opportunity to study the proposal to create a special unit to coordinate information on organized crime, such as is being done in British Columbia?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to review that with the department before giving the honourable gentleman an answer, because there have been some discussions going on with other provinces of which I don't have the details. So I will take the question as notice, Mr. Speaker, and provide an answer at a later date.

MR. HO LEM:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. Does the minister's department have any way of determining whether organized crime is on the increase in this province at the present time?

MR. LEITCH:

Well, Mr. Speaker, it would help if the honourable gentleman defined what he meant by "organized crime". But certainly we keep statistics within the department of the number of charges in the province, the type of charges, and I would think that information would have a bearing on the question he has asked.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Freight Costs

MR. TAYLOR:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Industry and Commerce. Has the provincial government received the real costs of hauling freight from the Canadian government, as promised by the Prime Minister at the western conference last summer?

MR. PEACOCK:

No, Mr. Speaker, we have not.

MR. TAYLOR:

A supplementary to the hon. minister. Does the hon. minister know whether the Canadian government has yet received these costs from the CPR and the CNR?

MR. PEACOCK:

No, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Marchand, the Minister of Transport, has had meetings with the principals of the CPR and the CNR who have agreed, in principle, to develop and expose these costs to a technical committee composed of representatives of the four western provinces and the federal government through a chairman of the CTC. But at this time and place there aren't any cost disclosures.

MR. TAYLOR:

One further supplementary. Would the provincial government support the Hon. Jean Marchand in his nationalization of the CPR if it refuses to cooperate?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member's question is clearly hypothetical.

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

Gasoline Price Reduction

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, my question is either to the Minister of Consumer Affairs or to the hon. the Provincial Treasurer.

What steps have been taken to assure that the 5 cents per gallon reduction in gasoline will be passed on to the consumer?

MR. DOWLING:

Mr. Speaker, I think that question was answered in detail yesterday. I'll furnish the hon. member with a copy of Hansard if he wishes.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. When will this program be put into effect?

[Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER:

Possibly the hon. member could ask the supplementaries after having checked the previous answers.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to advise that I was absent from the House yesterday when the question was asked.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Shame.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member for Clover Bar followed by the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview.

New Norway Gas Leak

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to address my question to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. I would like to know if the minister could indicate if the Farmer's Advocate is actively operating on behalf of the New Norway local of the NFU to obtain inconvenience damages resulting from the Sun Oil Company blowout last October?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, the Farmer's Advocate is acting on behalf of farmers throughout the Province of Alberta on numerous present problems affecting them. That is only one area on which he is now working.

DR. BUCK:

A supplementary to the hon. Attorney General. Is it the intention of the Attorney General to make legal services available to the 45 farmers affected who are fighting the case?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, the Farmer's Advocate works with the Legal Aid people and, where necessary, applications are made to them to provide legal services if required. I might say that the work that has already been done by the hon. Member for Camrose really puts the hon. member for Clover Bar about two months behind.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

[Interjections]

The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview ...

DR. BUCK:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Deputy Premier's speech but I would still like to ask another question. A supplementary to - the last time I asked this question the hon. member said he wasn't even responsible.

The supplementary, Mr. Speaker, is to the hon. Minister of the Environment. I would like to know: has the minister's department assessed this case to determine whether the New Norway community has in fact been inconvenienced ecologically or economically?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, it's not up to the Department of the Environment to determine whether somebody was inconvenienced.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Tut, tut. Oh!

MR. LUDWIG:

Oh boy!

MR. YURKO:

But in fact we determined the consequences of the blowout and we did issue a news release on February 8, in considerable detail, as well as a report outlining what the situation was, who was affected and so forth. I might just indicate that four people were examined in hospital but none required follow-up care. The rest were difficulties associated with inconvenience, to a large degree. That matter is not in my hands.

DR. BUCK:

A final supplementary. Would the hon. minister be able to say if this would be considered a whitewash?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

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

Coroners Act - Board of Review

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to address this question to the hon. Attorney General. Can the minister advise the House whether or not the interim report of the Board of Review with respect to The Coroners Act is the final report with regard to the operation of the coroner system in the province?

MR. LEITCH:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is. It is an interim report in the sense that it deals with some of the terms of reference. But so far as the terms of reference it deals with are concerned, it is a final report with respect to those terms.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Is the hon. minister aware that advertisements are being carried in newspapers - this is one I have, as late as March 21 - soliciting opinions on The Coroners Act and soliciting recommendations on what changes might be made?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I don't. The advertisements are put in the paper by the commission and I know the commission intends to have further hearings. It's quite conceivable that that was included in the general notices they've been sending out. I should also say in answer to that question that the government, during the course of considering the report from the Board of Review, will of course also consider any submissions that it receives from any interested groups or individuals.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Assembly whether it's true that the Board of Review has not yet had an opportunity to hear the College of Physicians and Surgeons or the Alberta Medical Association with respect to their recommendations on the operation of the coroner system in Alberta?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I'll take that question under advisement and make enquiries. I would expect that the Board of Review, and again I want to stress this, Mr. Speaker, functions independently of the government and does make its own decisions about hearings and the briefs that are presented to it and the manner in which they are presented, also the sources of information outside of the hearings in those briefs that it may use in connection with making its submissions.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, one final supplementary question. Can the hon. Attorney General advise the House when we might expect an announcement as to the time frame with respect to the introduction of the recommendations of the interim report of the Board of Review?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I anticipate that it will be very shortly. As the hon. member knows, the report has now been in the hands of the government for some 36 or 38 hours. I've had the opportunity of reviewing it, but obviously in that time frame not in detail. I have not yet had the opportunity of reviewing it with my colleagues and that again, Mr. Speaker, is going to take some time. I anticipate also that we will be getting some submissions - now that the report has been made public - from interested persons on the recommendations.

As is the usual practice of this government, Mr. Speaker, we want to consider those submissions along with the report before deciding on a course of action. But having said all that, Mr. Speaker, we've indicated to this House in the Throne Speech that we anticipate acting as quickly as possible on any recommendations of the Board of Review.

New Norway Gas Leak (Cont.)

MR. YURKO:

I'd like to correct an answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Clover Bar. Fourteen persons from the region were examined in hospital for the effects of hydrogen sulphide and two received mild medication. None required follow-up care.

Coroners Act - Board of Review (Cont.)

MR. TAYLOR:

A supplementary to the hon. the Attorney General. Is the government giving thought to making an inquest mandatory for deaths on the highway?

MR. LEITCH:

I don't know where the honourable gentleman got that suggestion, Mr. Speaker. The answer is no.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Nursing Homes - Rates

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development and it is with regard to possible rate increases in Alberta nursing homes. Has the Alberta Hospital Commission made any recommendations to the government or to your department, Mr. Minister?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Not yet, Mr. Speaker. I could add that the discussions between the commission and the group representing the nursing home operators have already commenced. They have not been concluded and no report has been made to me.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. In view of the fact that minimum wages will be increased to \$2 an hour on April 1, does the government plan at least an interim rate increase in view of the wage increase that is going to affect the nursing home operators?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I think that is taken care of by the fact that the effective date of the new arrangement will be April 1, retroactive if necessary.

DR. PAPROSKI:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question on that topic to the minister. Is the minister considering also a possible incremental increase for other health facilities where government funding is involved, as in nursing homes?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I think most of the institutions that type of question would apply to - which are not nursing homes - would be hospitals and auxiliary hospitals and, since they are on global budgets as are the health units, that particular issue is given consideration at each budget year.

DR. PAPROSKI:

Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, another supplementary. No, I'm referring to special care facilities operated by private agencies where, in fact, they are funded by governments.

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, there is a wide variety of services purchased on contract by the government, everything from child care facilities to special care facilities and others operated directly by the province. Those that are operated by contract are subject to renegotiation consequent upon whatever the contract provides. The ones that are operated directly by the province are given the same sort of consideration, in regard to global amounts, as hospital boards.

MR. SPEAKER:

The final supplementary by the hon. Member for Calgary Millican, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo with a question.

MR. DIXON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My final supplementary question is to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Are there any plans to increase the per patient day charge from its present rate?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, there would be some possible advantages to that in due course. There is no present intention to do so. When I say there could be possible advantages, what I

refer to is the building-in of additional quality of care. But at the present time, there is no intention to see those increased.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. GHITTER:

Mr. Speaker, my question has already been answered. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Bow followed by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking.

Christian College

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Advanced Education. Would the minister advise as to the current status of the request for a Christian college in Alberta?

MR. FOSTER:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. I received a submission from the Christian Colleges Association of Alberta a few weeks ago although I must acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, I did have discussions with this association some time ago. It's currently being reviewed by the department and I will be responding to them in more detail later.

The point I would ask hon. members to keep in mind relative to the submission - because I know that all of you have received a good deal of correspondence - is that there are already three private Christian colleges or church-based colleges that are being supported by the Department of Advanced Education in this province at the moment, in addition, of course, to the 20 institutions including six public colleges.

The submission from the Christian Colleges Association, Mr. Speaker, is to us for financial support for the creation of this college, based on the assumption that financial support will bring with it, I believe, recognition by the universities which has not yet happened although the Christian Colleges Association has had discussions with the university community.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that this college is free to commence instruction. However, with respect to university transfer programs, it will involve an arrangement with the universities which they have not yet been able to achieve. Our endorsement or support is really that of financial endorsement and support. If the hon. member wishes to discuss this matter with me in some detail later, I would be happy to go into it.

MR. WILSON:

One supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the hon. minister advise [as to] the expected date of a decision on the application by his department?

MR. FOSTER:

Well, Mr. Speaker, the proposal which we have, or the inquiry which we have is whether or not the Department of Advanced Education and the government will be prepared to support another private college in the Province of Alberta. Do we believe in a pluralistic society? That is being reviewed by the department. The proposal we have is not specifically a proposal that sets out anticipated enrolments, kinds of courses they wish to offer, operating costs, capital costs - it's a very philosophical document. If the hon. members are interested and do not have the document, I would be happy to provide them with a copy of it.

There are a great many questions that have yet to be answered, if, in fact, this college is to proceed by the time line of September, 1975, as indicated by the Christian Colleges Association. They have asked me for some sort of 'go' or 'no-go' response by April 15, which I personally believe, Mr. Speaker, is almost impossible. But we'll certainly do our best.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Lacombe with a supplementary, followed by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking.

MR. COOKSON:

I was just wondering, Mr. Speaker, if the minister would comment as to whether any of the present private Christian colleges are recognized with regard to transfer courses to the existing universities?

MR. FOSTER:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, they are. I might point out in response to that question that the level of public support for private colleges in this province is approximately \$1,180 per student.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking ...

MR. DIXON:

Could I ask a supplementary?

MR. SPEAKER:

Might this be the last supplementary on this topic. We have a considerable number of members who still wish to ask their first question.

MR. DIXON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Advanced Education. Are there any surplus facilities or staff in any of our universities, owing to the fact that the Christian Colleges [Association] says it is willing to work within the university framework right on the same campus as, say, Edmonton, Calgary or Lethbridge.

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Speaker, I have made the statement publicly in this House during my estimates in the past, and I will do so again. In my judgment, having 20 post-secondary institutions in Alberta, we have enough physical plant, we have enough physical capacity to provide the educational experiences for all interested Albertans. There is certainly a downturn, and has been in the last few years, in the university sector. We are experiencing some difficulty in certain public colleges at the moment with respect to enrolments. Medicine Hat would be a good example, where we were a week ago, and there are others where there is a great deal of additional capacity within the college sector of the advanced education community to accommodate these students.

That, Mr. Speaker, does not really answer the question being put to us by the Christian Colleges Association. However, it is their attitude that it is the method of instruction, the philosophy of instruction and the Christian philosophy that is not being taught in the public institutions that they wish to have pursued and taught in a different way.

Mr. Speaker, this matter can go on in some considerable debate for some time, which I would very much welcome, but I doubt the question period can provide me with the opportunity to debate it adequately.

MR. SPEAKER:

At long last the hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway.

Farm Supplies - Review Board

MR. COOPER:

Yes, thanks a lot, Mr. Speaker. My question this afternoon is directed to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. Has the Minister of Agriculture formed a panel of review, thus complying with the wish expressed by the Premiers at the Western Economic Council meeting in Saskatoon on February 28?

DR. HORNER:

If the hon. member is referring to the panel of review on input costs, then I can say to him that that, in fact, has been initiated and is ongoing.

MR. COOPER:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. No, I was referring to the panel to review suppliers of farm machinery and fertilizers.

DR. HORNER:

That's the one I was referring to also, Mr. Speaker. It's ongoing.

Early Childhood Services Program Grants

DR. PAPROSKI:

Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Education. Is the minister doing anything about the discrepancy between the public and the private early childhood service grants?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, for this year, the 1973-74 year, there are differing grants - \$200 per student for private non-profit organizations and \$280 for those operating under the ambit of school boards. Effective September 1 of this year, 1974, the grants will be equalized at \$280 for both kinds of programs.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Fertilizer Plant

MR. GRUENWALD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Industry and Commerce. Is it the intention of the government to encourage or discourage the building of the large fertilizer plant that has been proposed for southern Alberta?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, I think we have previously stated that it is initiated under free enterprise and at this time, under these circumstances, there are just no controls in regard to this particular facility that has been announced publicly. And if there are sufficient feedstocks and sufficient markets and it serves Alberta's purposes first, then I see no reason why it won't proceed.

MR. GRUENWALD:

A supplementary, then. Has the minister been advised at all of the exact location of this plant?

MR. PEACOCK:

No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. GRUENWALD:

A further supplementary, maybe to the Minister of Telephones and Utilities. Would this plant, as we know it now, cause a serious drain on natural gas in southern Alberta?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, probably I should answer that because I am responsible for industrial gas supplies. I might say that at this time it is under a review by our department in which we will determine to what extent the reserves of the Province of Alberta can be extended towards fertilizer products.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Agriculture. Can the minister advise whether he has received any representation or whether he has had any discussions as yet with the principals of the plant as far as supplying local needs first is concerned?

DR. HORNER:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have had some discussions with the principals of the plant with regard to the question and have received the assurance there will be no fertilizer exported until the needs of Alberta, and indeed Canada, have been met.

DR. BUCK:

A supplementary to the Minister of Industry and Commerce. Can the minister indicate if this proposed plant may jeopardize the expansion of the Sherritt Gordon plant in Fort Saskatchewan?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, I don't mind answering that question, or attempting to. The fact remains that the Sherritt Gordon plant is in existence, has pioneered and has developed ... [Inaudible] ... as a world market program in their processing; certainly their needs and considerations will be our first consideration.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, the question I asked was would it jeopardize their \$70 million or \$80 million addition? That was the question I asked.

MR. SPEAKER:

The question is certainly put in the form of a question for the minister's personal opinion. As such, it doesn't come within the rules regarding the question period.

MR. GRUENWALD:

A further supplementary. Is the gas that would be used in this plant, gas allocated for domestic use or gas for export use?

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Speaker, there is no difference in the type of gas. All natural gas ...

MR. LUDWIG:

It's all hot air.

MR. FARRAN:

As the hon. Minister of Industry and Commerce has said, the total supply position of Alberta's gas will be reviewed in the light of all these new industrial applications. At the moment we have a 30-year rolling reserve for all Alberta's requirements, domestic and industrial.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Oldman River Survey

MR. ANDERSON:

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Highways and Transport. When will the government begin its promised survey of the Oldman River to discover the best location for the bridge linking Lethbridge district and Picture Butte?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would think there is some information on it, but it is not a high priority item at the moment.

MR. ANDERSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is it the department's intention to connect this bridge with 43rd Street along the east side of Lethbridge and upgrade this road?

MR. SPEAKER:

It's a question of some detail. Unless the hon. member wishes to discuss it privately with the minister, perhaps he could put it on the Order Paper.

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would like to put that on the Order Paper I can get him the details.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Crowsnest Pass Freight Rates

MR. SORENSON:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Industry and Commerce. In light of the favourable terms to Alberta farmers of the Crowsnest agreement, is the minister prepared to guarantee that the advantages of the Crowsnest agreement will not be bargained away in the course of federal-provincial rail renegotiations?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, could answer this question more ably. However, I would like to say this, the Crowsnest Pass rate is a statutory rate and has to be changed in the Parliament of Canada. Consequently, it is not part of any considerations we are giving to rate analysis now.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Collection Agencies --- Nuisance Calls

MR. STROMBERG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was wondering if the Minister of Telephones and Utilities could advise the House if AGT can do anything about collection agencies bothering and threatening one of my constituents on the telephone?

MR. SPEAKER:

Possibly that's a representation which might be made to the hon. minister on a more appropriate occasion.

The hon. Member for Medicine Hat-Redcliff followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

Natural Gas Exports --- Saskatchewan

MR. WYSE:

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the hon. Minister of Mines and Minerals. It's regarding the exporting of Alberta natural gas to the Province of Saskatchewan.

My question is this: are enormous amounts of Alberta natural gas being exported to Saskatchewan Power which in essence is the Saskatchewan government, at a price substantially below market value and, I'm thinking, from the Medicine Hat field?

MR. DICKIE:

Mr. Speaker, I have figures, dealing with that question of the supply and also the price, in my files. I don't have the figures right handy. I'd like to take the question as notice and get the information for the hon. member.

MR. WYSE:

A supplementary question, then, Mr. Speaker. Is the government aware that Alberta gas is being used to turn Saskatchewan government turbine generators?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is now proceeding to answer his previous question.

AN HON. MEMBER:

How much gas are they using?

MR. WYSE:

Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has the Alberta Energy Resources Conservation Board made any recommendations to the province regarding the export of this gas to Saskatchewan?

AN HON. MEMBER:

See your friend over there.

MR. DICKIE:

Mr. Speaker, I think when we refer to "export" we refer to gas going to the United States; when we're talking about gas leaving the province, then that's not referred to as "export".

That report has been dealt with. I just can't recall the details of it again. Perhaps that's one of the areas I can take some notice of and furnish the hon. member with additional information.

MR. WYSE:

One last supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is the provincial government considering any action or legislation to renegotiate these contracts?

MR. DICKIE:

Mr. Speaker, I think at this time all I can advise is that there have been discussions with the City of Medicine Hat in respect to contracts, the price and so forth - and that's about as far as I could go right now.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Millican with a final supplementary, followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. DIXON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Mines and Minerals. What progress are we making, as a government, on negotiations for a higher price of gas going through the TransCanada Pipeline system to eastern Canada?

MR. DICKIE:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I mentioned before in the question period that at the present time we are awaiting a report from the Energy Resources Conservation Board. They have asked all companies dealing with removing gas from the province to supply them with their pricing provisions. After they receive those, they will furnish us with a report. We anticipate receiving a report some time in April. At that time we will be able to assess the exact status of all the contracts for gas leaving Alberta, including TransCanada's.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Little Bow followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View.

Highway 16 --- Improvement

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Highways. In light of the fact that another fatality occurred due to a traffic accident on Highway 16 west near Edson, what plans has the minister for improvement on this highway in 1974?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a very major program in that particular area east of Edson. We're constructing a bridge across the Macleod River; we're constructing a bridge across the Wolf River; we're constructing about 12 miles of road, as well as an interchange at Edson. So there is a very considerable degree of work scheduled for that area and in process.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Calgary Court House

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, my question is related to an earlier question I posed to the hon. Minister of Public Works. Has he been able to get me a date as to the possible completion of the addition to the courthouse in Calgary?

DR. BACKUS:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the anticipated completion date for the total renovation of the Calgary Court House will be the spring of 1976.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Oil Sands Development

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question the hon. Minister of Mines and Minerals. Has the government received any communication or representation from Herman Kahn or the Hudson Institute regarding massive development of the Alberta oil sands?

MR. DICKIE:

The department is ... [Inaudible] ... with Mr. Kahn. There has been a suggestion of a meeting. I not sure of the exact time that has been set.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. Has the government had any communication, formally or informally, with American government officials regarding the pace of Alberta oil sands development?

MR. DICKIE:

Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of any communications we've had from the United States Government dealing with the development of the Alberta oil sands and what pace that should take.

MR. NOTLEY:

A further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister advise the Assembly whether the firm of Walter J. Levy of New York is still acting as a consultant for the Government of Alberta?

MR. DICKIE:

Mr. Speaker, we have engaged in the past, as you know, the firm of Walter Levy and Company to prepare a report for us. We have had further discussions with them about additional information.

MR. NOTLEY:

A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the hon. minister advise the Assembly when the government will be tabling the position paper with respect to tar sands development?

MR. DICKIE:

No, Mr. Speaker, I am not able to give the exact date at this time.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Bow.

DR. PAPROSKI:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, my question has been asked.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Bow followed by the hon. Member for Medicine Hat-Redcliff.

Banking Powers Act

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the hon. Provincial Treasurer. Could the minister advise what use, if any, is being made of The Alberta Banking Powers Act?

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, that's a new one on the statutes that I have responsibility for. As a matter of fact, I'm not sure that I've ever seen it listed. But I will look into it and reply to the hon. member.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Medicine Hat-Redcliff.

School Buses - Driver Regulations

MR. WYSE:

A question to the hon. Minister of Highways. Has the government changed regulations regarding driver examinations for school bus drivers?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have changed some of the regulations in regard to qualifications as of January 1.

MR. WYSE:

Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, then. What prompted the government to change the regulations? Is the accident rate up for school buses?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, what prompted the change in regulations is the department's desire to always have excellence in management of the bus systems in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. STROM:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Is he requiring bus drivers to come into a central place to have the check made on their driving qualifications, or will he give consideration to sending an examiner out into a central area within the various divisions?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, we are going to try to have bus examiners go out to the central locations and do the examinations if it's worth it.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Child Abuse - Calgary

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Health and Social Development. Is the Zenith number for child abuse functioning in Calgary?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, as far as I know, it's in general use now. If there is any particular difficulty with its functioning in some parts of the province, I'd be glad to inquire into it.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Then will the minister check out the number in Calgary, and also with the department's north and south offices in the City of Calgary, with relation to a number of calls they received this morning?

Mr. Speaker, I suppose I could check with them from time to time as to the number of calls they are getting at that number. If it relates specifically to this morning, I've no objection to that.

MR. CLARK:

A supplementary question to the minister. Is the minister aware that as of this morning this number wasn't operating when at least two individuals tried to get hold of the number?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, in the event that it wasn't operating I expect to find out that there weren't any calls received.

[Laughter]

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Without the jovial manner, will the minister then undertake to check with the regional offices of the department in Calgary and report back to the House if there were calls to the department of alleged child beatings that took place in the city of Calgary today? It's really no laughing matter.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is certainly dealing with a very important topic but it does seem a matter which is eminently suitable for the Order Paper.

The hon. Member for Cypress.

School Buses - Driver Regulations (Cont.)

MR. STROM:

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Minister of Highway's answer to the question. I would like to pose another question to him. In the event that there are some areas where it would create problems by having it in one central place, would the hon. minister give consideration to sending an examiner to a school centralization where there are a number of vans?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we would.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

114. Mr. Taylor asked the government the following question:

- (a) How many (1) males and (2) females were in the employ of the Government of Alberta on August 31, 1971?
- (b) How many (1) males and (2) females were in the employ of the Government of Alberta on August 31, 1973?

115. Mr. Taylor asked the government the following question:

- 1. What is the total amount of money paid into the Assurance Fund since the inception of the fund to December 21, 1973?
- 2. What is the total amount of money paid out of the fund since its inception to December 31, 1973?
- 3. What is the total amount of interest and profits received from the investment of funds from the Assurance Fund?
- 4. In what securities has money from the Assurance Fund been invested?
- 5. What is the total amount of money transferred from the Assurance Fund to the General Revenue Fund of the province?

MR. MINIELY:

That question is acceptable, Mr. Speaker. One thing I wanted to ask the hon. member if I could, Mr. Speaker, is: I assume he is referring to the Registrar's Assurance Fund under The Land Titles Act?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member indicates his agreement with the question.

116. Mr. Ruste asked the government the following question:

Re: the Alberta Export Agency

- 1. How much money was expended by the agency in the calendar year 1973?
- 2. What agricultural exports was the agency directly responsible for in the year 1973?
- 3. What exports other than agricultural was the agency responsible for in the same period?
- 4. How many members are on staff and where are they located?

DR. HORNER:

I accept it, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to table the answer.

MOTIONS FOR A RETURN

113. Mr. Gitter proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

That an Order of the Assembly do issue for a Return showing:

1. Copies of all correspondence between the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission and the Calgary Drug Information Centre during 1972, 1973, 1974.
2. Copies of all reports or studies conducted by the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission relating to the Calgary Drug Information Centre.
3. Copies of all correspondence relating to the reports or studies conducted by the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission on the Calgary Drug Information Centre.
4. Copies of minutes of all meetings held between officials of the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission and the Calgary Drug Information Centre.

To which the following amendment has been proposed:

Moved by hon. minister, Mr. Crawford:

1. That paragraph 4 be deleted;
2. That at the end of the motion, the following words be added - "subject to the consent of the Calgary Drug Information Centre".

[Adjourned debate: Mr. Gruenwald]

MR. GRUENWALD:

Mr. Speaker, my remarks to the amendment will be very brief. There are questions to the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo that I would hope he may be able to elaborate on or answer when he closes debate on the amendment.

The concern I have, Mr. Speaker, is regarding the meetings that are held between the drug commission and the Drug Information Centre. Are the meetings that are held by these groups open to the public? Clearly I think this would make a big difference when we are voting on it.

Also, who is the custodian of the minutes that are kept? And is the secretary under the jurisdiction of the commission or the centre? In other words, is the secretary particularly under the control of one or the other? That's really what I wanted to know. Do the two groups meet on a regular basis in Calgary and, if so, how often?

MR. SPEAKER:

Are you ready for the question on the amendment?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:

Would all those in favour of the amendment to Motion No. 113 on today's Order Paper please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Aye.

MR. SPEAKER:

Those opposed please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

No.

MR. SPEAKER:

I am unable to tell from the voices. If the hon. members who are in favour of the amendment would kindly stand, we'll count them.

[Some hon. members rose.]

AN HON. MEMBER:

They broke the puppet strings.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Watch, the puppet's over there!

MR. SPEAKER:

I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton Strathcona entered the Assembly while the vote was being taken and I'm not certain if that's in conformity with the rules.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:

It isn't a recorded division, I agree.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Out, out.

MR. KOZIAK:

Mr. Speaker, I'll leave.

MR. SPEAKER:

I believe there's a rule to the effect that when a vote is being taken a member doesn't move in or out.

Would all those in favour please be seated and those who are opposed to the motion now please stand - opposed to the amendment, that is.

[Several members rose.]

MR. SPEAKER:

The amendment is lost.

AN HON. MEMBER:

The amendment is lost?

MR. SPEAKER:

I'm sorry, I made a mistake. The amendment is carried.

Are you ready for the question on the motion as amended, or ...

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words regarding the motion as it now stands and before somebody makes further amendments to take away some of the correspondence or to take away some of the reports or studies that we hope to see. I think there are a few issues that are germane to the subject that I would like to bring forward.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring the situation up-to-date perhaps by saying to the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development that the funding with which he is promising to carry on the operation of the Calgary Drug Information Centre would certainly be appreciated, I'm sure, by the majority of Calgarians. The work that has been carried on by the Drug Information Centre will now be continued hopefully past the end of March, and the many volunteers involved will be able to continue their worth-while contribution to society.

But, Mr. Speaker, the fact that so much pressure had to be brought to bear to bring today's action to the fore indicates that there is more behind the scenes perhaps than we know of to date. Inasmuch as the correspondence, the reports and studies that are included in this motion are being requested, I would request, Mr. Speaker, that when they are tabled certainly the one person I would like to see spend some time reviewing them is the minister.

For, Mr. Speaker, as the minister advised us last week, he hasn't had an opportunity to inspect the premises of the Calgary Drug Information Centre. He hasn't had an opportunity to analyse any reports or surveys that were done. He had to rely on information from others which evidently has been proven to be contradictory to the opinions of the majority of Calgarians.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are several things that I'd like to point out that the minister may find in the correspondence and in these studies and reports that he may not previously have been aware of because he has not had the opportunity to investigate it on a first-hand basis.

For example, is it a fact that the commission is now operating on a four-day week because of a surplus of staff, because they're geared-up to take on more work than they presently have, and things of this nature? So, you know, if the commission's on a four-day week because they have a surplus of staff, it could be that some of these community and private sector involvements in delivering desirable social goals are being phased out to allow the bureaucracy to fill in. I think that certainly, if it's true, Mr. Speaker, that is something that is not desirable.

Now then, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that may or may not show up in the reports of the drug abuse commission return is a report called "Drug-Related Problems and the Physician: The Calgary Experience" by Dr. Irving Rootman. This was carried in the Canadian Family Physician magazine, Mr. Speaker, in November 1973. Dr. Rootman was a research associate at The University of Calgary medical school. He deals in this article with an interview and questionnaire conducted with a sample of 52 physicians in Calgary. Part of the findings of that survey and interview, which I would hope would be included in the reports and studies as carried under Motion for a Return No. 113, Mr. Speaker, would be the results of that study.

I am sure that the minister would find this of particular interest when he finds that the majority of the physicians responding have had occasion to refer people with drug-related problems to community resources, and the Drug Information Centre received the second highest number of referrals, second only to psychiatrists, from other doctors in Calgary. Then, when the doctors who were surveyed, Mr. Speaker, were asked to assess the effectiveness ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Without commenting at all on the merit or importance of what the hon. member is saying, I have difficulty in relating it to the motion as amended.

MR. WILSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I will try to make my point precisely on the amended motion for a return. Inasmuch as the motion for a return calls for copies of all reports and studies conducted by the commission and others presumably relating to the Drug Information Centre, I wanted particularly to draw the attention of the minister and all interested members to this very scholarly report that was prepared by Dr. Rootman, wherein it goes on to point out ...

MR. SPEAKER:

If the hon. member knows the contents of the report, there would seem to be little purpose in getting it again under the motion for a return.

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, thank you for your ruling. The problem is that I don't know whether it is in the motion for a return or whether it will be unearthed in that motion for a return. I just wanted to identify it properly and the highlights, so that the speaker, when he does get the return, would be able to review it, Mr. Speaker.

So, at any rate, this document, Mr. Speaker, if it's there, will show that 80 per cent of the doctors in Calgary regarded the Calgary Drug Information Centre as very effective.

So then, Mr. Speaker, reports have been made at the expense of the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission that have never been tabled or printed. For example, I would request that the minister particularly enquire about a report done by one Dave Gladders while Mr. Gladders was a commission employee, or was on contract to the commission, to

come up with a study. It's my understanding that his findings were most favourable to the Calgary Drug Information Centre. This work was done in the Spring of 1973, Mr. Speaker, ...

MR. FOSTER:

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the hon. member is now debating the reports which the resolution calls for, and that seems to me to be totally irrelevant to the sense of the motion.

MR. WILSON:

On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, I certainly wasn't intending to debate the reports that may show up in the motion for a return, but I was particularly wanting to point out the urgency of some of the things that, hopefully, the minister would take the time to look for in the documents that were tabled.

MR. SPEAKER:

If the hon. member is referring at length to reports which he already has, and which he could, to follow his own argument, refer to the minister himself, it would appear to me that there is some difficulty in relevance to a motion which asks for documents which presumably the hon. members do not have.

MR. WILSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your ruling and we'll try to follow your ruling to the letter.

Mr. Speaker, there is another report which I would request the minister to endeavour to see, when the materials are tabled. That is one prepared by one Diane McAmmond. There are strange circumstances in one way about this report, Mr. Speaker. It was done in August, 1973, but it was funded by the federal Non-Medical Use of Drugs Directorate. A member of the commission allegedly got a copy of the draft report before the employer of Diane McAmmond ...

MR. SPEAKER:

With great respect, I am unable to see the time when the member of the commission received the report as being in any way relevant as to whether or not this amended motion should be passed.

MR. WILSON:

Well, Mr. Speaker, with respect, sir, apparently part of the commission's decision to cut off the funding of the Drug Information Centre was based on the draft report of this Diane McAmmond. We'd just like to draw this to the minister's attention.

Further, Mr. Speaker, on another issue. Apparently there was one Dr. Halliday who had terms of reference already approved by the commission to go ahead and do a survey, but after his terms of reference were approved apparently something happened. The minister may want to check into that one, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there has been some suggestion that the commission doesn't have the authority to carry on the type of funding the Drug Information Centre has required. If the commission doesn't have that authority, most certainly the government does and ...

MR. SPEAKER:

With great respect, unless the hon. member wishes to say something with regard to whether or not the motion as amended should be passed and certain documents should be tabled in compliance with an Order for a Return, I would have to suggest that thus far the debate he has offered in the last while is not relevant to the motion and should not go on.

MR. WILSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most certainly I am anxious to see that the remaining items on the motion are approved and that it does go through. Because, Mr. Speaker, the minister may very well uncover evidence that shows, for example, that the Deputy Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation met with representatives of the Calgary Drug Information Centre regarding funding for one aspect of their program ...

MR. FOSTER:

Point of order. The hon. member persists in debating the motion with information that is totally irrelevant as to whether or not copies of these documents should be presented to the House ...

MR. CLARK:

It's embarrassing ...

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, speaking to the point of order. It was generally accepted in years gone by that when you debate a motion for a return the debate was not restricted, but quite permissive, and a broad discussion was always allowed on these motions for a return. I believe that the hon. Minister of Advanced Education is doing nothing but an obstructive performance on the hon. member's debate.

We want to know now the motion for a return was amended - we want to make sure we get everything we are entitled to. If the hon. Member for Calgary Bow wishes to make suggestions to the minister it's completely within the purview of the present motion as amended, Mr. Speaker. There is no point in wasting time in trying to stall the expressions of opinion of hon. members who want information, especially if the minister may not know everything there is to know about this issue.

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wishes to amend the motion, to add to it certain documents which are not referred to therein, he is certainly entitled to do so. If the hon. member wishes to debate the contents of reports or other documents after the fact, he is certainly entitled to do so. But I submit, Mr. Speaker, he is not entitled to debate the contents of reports, documents, whether referred to here or not, as relevant debate and whether or not this motion should pass or fail.

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of privilege. The hon. member, I thought I heard him say that I met with the representatives of the Drug Information - No?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Wake up.

MR. CLARK:

Your deputy minister.

MR. SPEAKER:

I am unable to agree with the suggestion of the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View that the debate on a motion of this kind should be wide-ranging and I am not sure just how we would establish that that is a tradition of this House.

The basic question here, it seems to me, is one of fairness. I hope we don't use up private members' time on a lengthy difficulty over procedure or relevance. It would appear to me to be unfair to hon. members who have Motions Other Than Government Motions on the Order Paper, some 17 of them, if the time which otherwise might go to them is going to be pre-empted by a motion which is under the guise of a Motion for an Order for a Return and is used as a vehicle for the type of general discussion or policy discussion, or the type of debate which might more appropriately come under a direct motion under Motions Other Than Government Motions.

I would ask the hon. member - if he wishes to participate in the debate any further - if he might make his remarks closely relevant to whether or not the motion as amended, that this information be obtained, should be passed. I would respectfully suggest that such debate need not include some concern for information going to the minister. That's not the basis of the motion. The minister is undoubtedly able to get information from his own department without the assistance of an order of this House. The question is whether this information is going to be made available to the Assembly.

MR. WILSON:

Thank you for your ruling, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to say in closing that I look forward to the opportunity to analyse the materials that will be tabled as a result of this motion, if all members vote in favour of it. Because, for example, there is a rumour that the chairman of the commission discouraged people in writing from

corresponding, or contacting the minister. You know, those kind of things must be determined ...

MRS. CHICHAK:

Point of order. Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The hon. member persists in violating the ruling which you have made here in this House, and I think it is time the hon. member recognized your ruling.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Sit down.

MR. SPEAKER:

I would have to say that if the hon. member indicates that the motion may uncover items by which the commission, in writing, discouraged representations being made to it that that would have to be directly relevant to the motion as amended.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. WILSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another item of correspondence which hopefully would be unearthed would be on a much happier tone. That, I hope, Mr. Speaker, would be one from the Minister of Health and Social Development indicating that the Calgary Drug Information Centre plays a vital role in the Calgary community and we would ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. I would ask the hon. member to discontinue his speech.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, during the debate on the motion for a return and by reference to the amendment, two or three expressions of "no-confidence" in the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission were expressed. I would like the minister, if he will be making any comments on this motion, to indicate whether he will be taking any steps as a result of those expressions of non-confidence.

I wish to express my complete lack of confidence in the commission. I believe the minister ought ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Order please. The hon. member's debate is not relevant to the motion.

DR. PAPROSKI:

Mr. Speaker, that being the last word on this topic regarding this commission, the information that will be obtained from this motion as amended regarding the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission and the Calgary Drug Information Centre, I feel is certainly very strongly required to make comparisons with other concerns that I certainly have in community activities in this commission.

I urge all hon. members to support this particular motion. Certainly the information derived from this motion will serve to bring to the surface many of the concerns expressed thus far.

MR. GHITTER:

Mr. Speaker, just one remark I think should be made by all hon. members who may be remiss with respect to this particular motion. That is, I think we would all be remiss if we did not suggest to the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development, in the data relating to this motion, Mr. Speaker, if we did not thank him ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. I believe that the hon. member's speech will conclude the debate on the motion as amended. Is the House ready for the debate to be closed?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. GHITTER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I merely wish to say in conclusion that the hon. minister dealing with this matter has been tremendously receptive and understanding from the point of view of the crisis that has occurred in the city of Calgary. I think he should be commended by all hon. members and concerned citizens in Calgary for his responsiveness in this matter.

[The motion as amended was carried.]

117. Mr. Notley proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

That an Order of the Assembly do issue for a Return showing:

A copy of the agreement or agreements concerning the acquisition by the Alberta Government and Dow Chemical Limited of the Celanese Canada Ltd. Chemical Plant at Two Hills, Alberta as well as all correspondence relating thereto.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I move Motion for a Return No. 117 standing in my name,

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, I accept this motion. I wonder, though, if it is subject to the concurrence of the principals involved. I assume that is automatic or does this have to be amended?

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, as far as I am concerned, as mover of the motion I would certainly be willing to accept that understanding that the motion would be subject to the concurrence of the principals.

MR. SPEAKER:

There is no provision in the rules whereby an order of this kind, if made, is subject to concurrence of parties who may have participated in correspondence.

If the House agrees that this condition may be attached to the order without a formal amendment perhaps we could do it that way.

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I move ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The hon. member's motion, I believe, requires a formal vote. All those in favour of Motion No. 117, subject to the condition mentioned, please say aye.

[The motion was carried.]

118. Mr. Notley proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

That an Order of the Assembly do issue for a Return showing:

Copies of all reports, studies and factual data upon which the Government of Alberta bases its contention that there are sufficient supplies of feedstocks to permit two petrochemical plants of the size proposed by Dow Chemical Ltd. and Alberta Gas Trunk Line Ltd. respectively to proceed simultaneously.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I would now move Motion for a Return No. 118 standing in my name.

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, I accept that.

[The motion was carried.]

119. Mr. Notley proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

That an Order of the Assembly do issue for a Return showing:

1. All correspondence (if any) between the Government of Alberta and Imperial Oil Ltd., with respect to the plant gate price for fertilizer sold on long term contract to the United States market since September 10, 1971.
2. All data (if any) with respect to plant gate price obtained by Imperial Oil for fertilizer sold on long term contracts to the United States market since September 10, 1971.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I would move Motion for a Return No. 119 standing in my name on the Order Paper.

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, we are willing to accept that motion subject to the concurrence of the parties involved.

MR. SPEAKER:

Subject to that concurrence, are you all in favour of the motion?

[The motion was carried.]

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

1. Dr. Buck proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

Be it resolved members of the Assembly strongly recommend the creation of a Select Committee of this Legislature to study and make recommendations upon all aspects of ambulance service in rural Alberta.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, rural Albertans do not enjoy the same standards of ambulance service as do their counterparts in urban centres throughout the province. It will be my intention, Mr. Speaker, to outline the reason for introducing my resolution and to explain some of the major concerns that rural Albertans have with regard to ambulance service, and to suggest how we, as members of this Legislature, through the formation of a select committee, could contribute to improving the welfare of those we represent.

It seems slightly contradictory that while certain rural communities do not yet even have minimum standards of ambulance service, cities such as Edmonton and Calgary are calling for provincial assistance to initiate expensive helicopter ambulance services. It is my contention that all Albertans have a right to a minimum acceptable level of ambulance service.

The question, of course, and the practical question, is: how do we determine what is an acceptable level? And how do we rationalize the discrepancy between levels of service in various regions throughout the province, as well as various communities within a region?

Mr. Speaker, two useful reports have studied the problem. In September of 1973 the Alberta Medical Association released a report indicating there was a lack of uniformity in ambulance service across Alberta and a total inadequacy of funding. The report indicated that, as a very minimum, ambulance operator training must be upgraded, that two-way radio equipment should be an essential piece of equipment for rural ambulances. And of particular note was the discrepancy in per capita cost for ambulance service throughout the province.

Another useful report, Mr. Speaker, and a very extensive one, was produced by the working party on ambulance service to the federal sub-committee on quality of care and research, which was printed in April, 1972. The report was a very comprehensive assessment of, first of all, the need for contact care of serious injuries and the need for transportation of emergency cases to centres for medical treatment. The report dealt

extensively with the difficulties of communications between ambulances and different centres. I am sure many of the rural members can indicate to this Legislature the problems that they have in their areas and I welcome this input from the members.

I would like to indicate the problems we have in my constituency and the area I represent. In the Fort Saskatchewan-Lamont area, we must have our ambulance service either from the City of Edmonton or from the Town of Vegreville. So, heaven help you if you happen to be injured halfway between these two areas, because if they are going to wait for you to be picked up by an ambulance my advice to you is have somebody throw you in the back seat of a car. Don't wait for an ambulance because you are not going to make it if you are that seriously injured. This is just a very small example. As I say, Mr. Speaker, I welcome examples that other members can give of the problems in their constituencies.

What should be the cost-sharing formula for providing a reasonable level of ambulance service? Should it be borne by the federal government, by the provincial government, by the municipalities or by some joint cost-sharing program? This in itself, Mr. Speaker, is a very important question.

In most rural and remote areas, the absence of effectively integrated ambulance services coupled with widely scattered hospital facilities and a chronic shortage of physicians leaves these citizens not only at a serious disadvantage in terms of emergency care, but also in terms of direct costs involved in reaching such care.

Hon. members, I would like to note just briefly, in speaking to this resolution that in the report on ambulance services, one of the first recommendations made was that ambulance service be considered as an integral element in the delivery of health care services and should operate under the auspices of the provincial authorities responsible for hospital programs.

Mr. Speaker, there are several other important recommendations as well affecting personnel, affecting vehicles, affecting equipment, affecting communications and especially affecting licensing. The suggestions affect many departments and certainly cover many areas. It is my conviction, Mr. Speaker, that a select committee of this Legislature would have the opportunity of evaluating all of the known data and information on this subject, receiving new information compiled recently and obtaining input from citizens on this subject which we all consider very important - this local input - and at the conclusion of this, making a series of recommendations of all the concerns and the solutions for Alberta's rural ambulance service.

Mr. Speaker, I shall keep my portion of the presentation brief and I shall try - at the conclusion of the debate - to summarize some of the input I asked the hon. members to put into this subject. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that this will not be treated lightly, especially by the rural MLAs on both sides of the House. I hope it will not be the kind of resolution that will divide the members on the basis of government versus opposition, because I believe this is too important for that. It's an issue that affects people, especially people in the rural areas.

So, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I do wish to have support from the hon. members in the Assembly in setting up this committee, and I do sincerely hope, Mr. Speaker, that the government and the members of this Assembly will give this their just attention.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Hanna-Oyen followed by the hon. Member for Stettler.

MR. FRENCH:

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to add my support to this very important motion. I'm sure we all recognize that Alberta has certainly been providing the highest level of health benefits to our province for many years, and with our abundance of natural resources we should continue to provide the leadership in this complete field. Even before the discovery of oil in 1947 we were the first in Canada to develop forward steps in health legislation, and I only refer to the TB care that was instituted in 1936, polio treatment in 1938, cancer treatment in 1940 and maternity hospitalization in 1944. These were the years, Mr. Speaker, before the discovery of oil when certainly revenues were not as affluent as they are today. Certainly with the resources we enjoy today, there is no reason why we shouldn't be able to continue developing our health services.

When we look at comprehensive health care it is difficult to exclude [the] ambulance from the skilled members of the health team. Surely the providing of adequate means of transportation of the acutely ill from their homes or from the site of an accident must be considered as a vital part of our health system. Nevertheless, most provinces in Canada have been very slow in making ambulance service a vital element in their primary health

care. Also overlooked has been the realization that the personnel of ambulance services are the first contact in a high percentage of all vehicle accidents.

In most rural areas in the province today, the absence of ambulance service, coupled with a shortage of physicians, leaves our people at a very serious disadvantage in terms of emergency care. I say, Mr. Speaker, that the utilization of well-trained personnel operating within a coordinated ambulance service could well be the answer to part of this communication.

I'm sure we recognize that great progress has been made in the field of communication in past years. Buried cable is now providing continuous telephone service to even the remote parts of our province, and mobile telephone is an essential ingredient in the makeup of an ambulance service.

For the benefit of the members who are not aware of the importance of mobile telephone, let me say that when a patient is being transported from a rural area to the city, the usual procedure, if they have a mobile telephone in the ambulance, is to phone ahead and the city will provide an escort at the edge of the city to take that ambulance directly to the hospital. I think we realize that even the saving of a few minutes might be the difference between life and death in getting that patient to the hospital.

Now the greatest part of the province is covered with mobile telephone, and now that we have buried cable in the province, some of the problems that might have existed some years ago with respect to ambulance service have been removed. There is no reason why we shouldn't get on with a study now to see if it's not possible to provide ambulance service in the province.

I think we should also recognize that during the past few years great progress has been made with the building of hospitals in various parts of the province. Yes, and some of our cities have enjoyed new, modern hospitals, all with modern facilities and innovations. We now have hospitals, nursing homes and senior citizens' homes that are the envy of every jurisdiction on this continent. But what we're lacking in this whole health team is the ambulance services to make these facilities available for our people.

What about our present ambulance service? In many parts of the province we have very limited ambulance facilities. Some of the operators of this service have already indicated they are going to withdraw it in the near future. Other parts of the province have a heterogeneous type of ambulance service which includes modern vehicles with trained personnel in the larger centres - which the hon. Member for Clover Bar referred to. Then we have other parts of the province where they have a combination of a hearse and an ambulance. During the week, the operator puts in a stretcher and some blankets and it serves as an ambulance; then, at times when it is needed for a funeral, they take the stretcher and the blankets out and this same vehicle is used for funerals. Mr. Speaker, I can assure you it's certainly a matter of grave discomfort to the members of a family when they see a vehicle of this nature, which is used for an ambulance and also as a hearse, driving up to the house to take a loved one away to the hospital. Certainly we should not add to the discomfort of a family at a time of extreme anxiety, at a time of illness.

Then we have other types of vehicles, and I refer to the Volkswagen van that has a sliding door in the side. We have all different types of vehicles in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not trying to be facetious when I refer to these different types of ambulance service. I think we all recognize that we owe a great debt of gratitude for the service they are providing in their communities, but at the same time I think we should recognize there is much to be desired in this whole field of ambulance services. According to a recent report in the United States, statistics indicate many of the patients pronounced dead-on-arrival at the hospital could have been saved with improvements in the ambulance service.

As far as the province is concerned, the only thing that closely resembles an ambulance policy in the province today is Blue Cross. This is actually just an agreement or a contract to provide various benefits to participants under the Blue Cross plan. It was developed by the Alberta Hospital Association to provide an insurance plan for the cost of hospital and other services. The plan is voluntary. It can be procured either as a group or as an option to Alberta Health Care Insurance. It is also included with the universal benefits provided to the residents of the province of the age of 65 and over and their dependants.

I should say, Mr. Speaker, that in all the programs that have been developed over the years for the people of Alberta the one program that seems to be the most difficult to explain, the one that is most confusing to our people, is Blue Cross, and this is partly due to the \$15 deductible. I am well aware that the removal of the \$15 deductible will take place on July 1, 1974, and this in itself will provide a great deal of relief from the problems we have had with respect to ambulance. However, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out to the Legislature that the \$15 deductible will still be continued for people under the age of 65, and so I say in this connection, are we to ignore the health requirements

of some of our low-income people? Surely, are the needs of these people not as great as some of our senior citizens?

I should say, Mr. Speaker, that a few weeks ago I had a constituent of mine come to me with a problem; this man is a senior citizen, a recipient of the guaranteed income supplement. On November 25 when he was in Calgary he called an ambulance. The ambulance service of the fire department took him to the Rocky View Hospital. Subsequently he received a statement for \$25, which he paid. This account was then forwarded to Blue Cross for payment. Let me just read you the letter he received in reply to this statement. I should also say, too, before I read this statement, that this man had no receipts for prescription drugs. He was not able to satisfy the \$15 deductible. But this is the type of letter - I'd just like to read part of the letter which the man received in reply.

This is in regards to your "Other Services" claim submitted to our office, for review.

Please be advised that our Plan will make reimbursement up to a maximum of \$15.00 for ambulance expenses when the service rendered is within the corporate limits of a city or town.

Subscribers are liable for the first \$15.00 of Other Services expenses incurred during a Benefit Year commencing July 1st in one year and ending on June 30th in the succeeding year.

Since this is your first claim submitted for the Benefit Year of July 1st, 1973 to June 30th, 1974, and the amount our Plan could allow (\$15.00) on the ambulance expense does not exceed the required deductible, we cannot accept liability for it at this time. This receipt may be resubmitted to our office once you have accumulated other eligible Other Services expenses, thus exceeding the \$15.00 deductible by an appreciable sum ...

Mr. Speaker, anybody who's not familiar with the Blue Cross services in the province and who receives a letter of this nature is certainly not in a very good position to understand what this whole plan is all about.

I suppose as far as Blue Cross is concerned - they are working with this \$15 deductible all the time, but for people who are not aware of the program, it certainly is very confusing. And again, as I say, I'm very pleased that steps are being taken to remove this \$15 deductible which will certainly help some of the ambulance problems that we do have in the province. Nevertheless, it is still not going to remove some of the problems that people have who are under the age of 65.

I should also say that I had another case not too long ago. And this concerned a lady outside my constituency, who was visiting a daughter - and I might as well give you the name of the town to give you some indication - in Wainwright. During the time that she was in Wainwright, she took ill, the doctor felt that probably she had a stone in the kidney and she should be moved immediately to the city hospital. The doctor thought that she should go by ambulance, so they called the ambulance in Wainwright. The lady was moved from Wainwright to Edmonton by ambulance. There is an account of \$120 or \$130, whatever the ambulance bill was. And of course under the Blue Cross arrangement, it would be possible to provide the first \$100, so this pretty well looked after the claim. After the lady had been in the hospital for a period of time for the various tests that were given, another daughter received a phone call from the hospital advising that the lady should return to her home or to some other place. So, they called the ambulance people in the city, and the ambulance people said they would be very pleased to take her back, but they wanted the money in advance. They wanted the money in advance before they would move her from the hospital out to the rural area.

Now you can just imagine what happens in a situation like this. It was necessary for the family - they contacted me, they were quite concerned - I said well, get on the phone, and tell them you will pay the bill. And so the arrangements were made. This particular lady was a person over the age of 65 in receipt of guaranteed income supplement.

When we look at the various programs we have for our senior citizens, and especially for people who receive the guaranteed income supplement, I feel that maybe ambulance services are one of these services that should be provided to our people. And when we look at the extended health benefits which were introduced on August 24, 1973, to the residents of the province of the age of 65 and over, and these include eyeglasses, dental care, surgical appliances and hearing aids, I must ask the question: why were not ambulance services added to these other services? Surely, Mr. Speaker, there should be an equal opportunity for ambulance services to be provided to our people under any comprehensive health-care package.

So, Mr. Speaker I'm certainly supporting this motion. I feel there is a real need for a study with respect to all ambulance services in the province. I know it is a

comprehensive field. I know it is going to be a matter on which, as the Member for Clover Bar has mentioned, there have been various studies made in the past. I also understand that other provinces in Canada are looking at ambulance services. I also understand that at the present time ambulance services are not eligible for cost-sharing with the federal government, which possibly would be another problem. But when we look at the whole health team we have in the Province of Alberta - the modern hospitals, the fine doctors, the fine equipment we have - it seems to me that we should coordinate all these services, and if we are going to coordinate them, it is certainly essential that we do have adequate ambulance services for our people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Stettler followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley.

MR. HARLE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate very much the Member for Clover Bar placing this particular motion on the Order Paper. However, I want to indicate at the outset that I'm opposed to the form of his motion. I say that because of the arguments presented not only by the Member for Clover Bar but also by the member who last spoke, the Member for Hanna-Oyen.

The specific arguments that were raised by the Member for Clover Bar relate, I believe, to ambulance service in general, rather than specifically to rural ambulance problems. His motion specifically relates to aspects of service in rural Alberta, but his arguments are much more broadly based. For example, he talks about a minimum acceptable level for all Albertans. He talks about communication problems and difficulties involving city ambulances. He talks about the problem that he has in his own constituency about ambulance service to the City of Edmonton or to Vegreville. He talks about ambulance service as being a part of an integrated delivery of hospital services.

The Member for Hanna-Oyen used rather similar arguments. Talking about transportation to the city, he pointed out the requirement sometimes for having a city escort from the edge of the city to the city hospital. The complaints that he relied on seemed to relate to city ambulances, and then he talked generally in terms of a comprehensive health-care package.

So basically, Mr. Speaker, I feel that all the arguments presented by the previous two speakers on this resolution ate to ambulance service in general and not specifically to the rural situation.

I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that the requirement of having a select committee is perhaps unnecessary. I say that because the government has, in fact, been assembling a great amount of contemporary information for some time now on the hospital situation, at least the ambulance situation in the province. The matter, I believe, is of some importance to the government. I know in my own correspondence with the Alberta Hospital Services Commission and with the Minister of Health, he is certainly aware, as is the commission, of the problem involving delivery of ambulance service in the province. In the correspondence that I have, it would indicate that they are gathering the information, and in fact now have just about all of the information that a select committee could discover, with the result, I feel, that a great amount of the work has already been done by the department and by the Department of Health and Social Development. Another department involved in the delivery of ambulance service is the Department of Advanced Education.

It is, in fact, I believe, the present intention of the government to come up with recommendations and to be able to give a report to the people of the province and to the Legislature on these recommendations - one would hope, in the not too distant future.

It's true that the Alberta Medical Association has submitted a report to the Chairman of the Alberta Hospital Services Commission pointing out the lack of uniformity in ambulance service across Alberta. That report did not, in fact, relate to purely rural matters. It related to ambulance service in general. It also pointed out the inadequate funding which all ambulances suffer under in the present set-up. Again, the report on funding relates to all ambulance problems, not specifically to rural problems.

With regard to rural areas, I think most of us are aware that in rural Alberta ambulance service in the past has been provided by funeral services and by some fire departments. My own community had ambulance service provided by the funeral director until relatively recently when, due to increasing costs, another arrangement just simply had to be found. As it was not a shared cost, as it was a cost that could not be funded from the province under the present rules, an unique situation had to be found so that the burden of providing hospital service would fall upon the residents of the community.

This was done by forming a separate entity - a corporation - which operates the ambulance. An agreement is reached with the municipality to pay the deficit and then the money to cover the deficit is found by levying it in the form of taxes on the property owners. It amounts to about \$3 per capita in my own constituency - in the town in which I live.

The situation in Calgary has developed in a unique way. In Calgary the hospital services are costing about \$400,000 per year. In the City of Calgary a charge of \$25 per call is made to city users of the ambulance.

In the case of Edmonton, the delivery of ambulance service developed in a different way. One firm, Smith's Ambulance, I understand, is providing service, although there was some recent discussion in the Edmonton City Council - I believe yesterday or the day before - and there was a by-law which I believe was reported on in the press last night. The subsidy, at least in the past, given by city council to Smith's Ambulance was some \$12,000 per year. Smith's Ambulance charges \$20 per call.

I am particularly interested in the aspect of delivery of ambulance service in the area of training of ambulance personnel. There is, at the moment, a St. John's Ambulance 45-hour advanced first aid course which has been recommended by the Alberta Medical Association as being a requirement for those involved in ambulance work. However, since 1971 there has been a course at SAIT called an Emergency Medical Technical Program which is a two-year course. This was extended about a year ago for another year. It's a 1,000-hour course and there is a need for perhaps an assessment as to what should be the requirement - the St. John's Ambulance requirement or the course which has been developed by our own provincial institution, SAIT.

The nursing orderlies in the province, especially in rural areas, have been involved in the delivery of hospital service. In my own community one of the orderlies acts as the driver, other orderlies are picked up to be used as assistants, and they man the ambulance when they are on duty in the hospital. These people are also on call so that if an orderly can't get away from the hospital for some reason the cost of providing this telephone call service - rather like the fire department system - is expensive. It was only by making sure that it was borne by the general population that the ambulance service has been provided in what I think is a rather satisfactory way in some rural communities.

As has been pointed out, the cost of ambulance is not a shared cost as far as federal programs are concerned. It's also covered in some way by Blue Cross but not by any provincial funding.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move an amendment to the resolution. I have three copies for the House.

I move that Motion No. 1 be amended as follows:

that all the words after the word "Assembly" be struck out and the following substituted:

"recommend that the government give consideration to studying and making recommendations upon all aspects of ambulance service in Alberta".

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

I believe I had previously recognized the hon. Member for Drayton Valley followed by the hon. Member for Sedgewick-Coronation.

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Speaker, could we have the amendment read once more, please?

MR. SPEAKER:

The amendment is that Motion No. 1 be amended as follows:

Be it resolved that all the words after the word "Assembly" be struck out and the following substituted:

"recommend that the government give consideration to studying and making recommendations upon all aspects of ambulance service in Alberta".

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. That whole amendment, although it appears to amend the motion, all it does is strike out the word "rural" and I believe that would be a much more sensible and better amendment in meaning, in fact.

MR. HARLE:

Mr. Speaker, on the point of order. The other part about appointment of a select committee is removed as well.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Why?

MR. SPEAKER:

The amendment appears to be a substitute motion. In that event, as I understand the rules, members are entitled to debate both the main motion and the substitute motion and to indicate what their choice might be between the two.

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. ZANDER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, speaking on the amendment and also on the motion, in the years past I think the former government, and certainly the cities, the larger centres and the smaller towns, have been concerned for a number of years with the ambulance services within their community or the adjacent community. I believe - what good would a select committee of the Assembly [be] when this problem has already been studied for many years by various cities, governments, departments, hospitals, hospital committees and other services? I really don't get the idea that the select committee - if a select committee were appointed by the Legislature - would up with anything different than all the studies that have already been taken.

Mr. Speaker, I believe I was one of those, some five years ago, who were in a study that was taken up by the municipal association. It came about because there were no government funds available for funding or partly funding the service. Some municipalities, especially in the rural areas, banded together, both urban and rural, and formed an ambulance unit.

I think a prime example of that must be the County of Parkland Hospital and Ambulance Service. It's a unique formation of both urban and rural centres, whereby the unit underwrote a regular ambulance to the tune of, I believe it was \$16,000 at that time. It is privately owned. They went out and purchased it. Although it is privately owned, the owner will be making the payments on the ambulance, repaying the ambulance over a period of three years. The communities came up with a study whereby the acceptable fee to the local hospital would be \$10, and to another hospital within a larger centre it would be \$20. This operation has been in effect now for over four years. I attended their ambulance meeting some time ago, and they are now purchasing another new ambulance on the same basis. This ambulance, I presume, is going to cost somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$20,000. It will be maintained by a \$5 increase. To the local hospitals the fee will now be \$15 and to the city hospitals it will be \$25.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think the local government has a responsibility to its citizens. The original motion I think has some merit, but I do believe that the amendment has more merit than the original motion because certainly the government, if it has these studies now at its fingertips, is able to convey the findings and the studies that it has initiated over a period of years to the Assembly and to the minister concerned. And if, in the wisdom of the Legislature and the minister, the government can, by way of aid in funding or help in funding ambulance service, whether it be in the city of Edmonton or the city of Calgary, or some smaller urban centres or in the rural areas - I certainly think this has merit.

I have no idea, Mr. Speaker, just what funds we're looking at, but if government decides that it would pick up at least 50 per cent of the ambulance service in the areas in the province of Alberta, it certainly would go a long way towards giving the people, both in the larger urban centres and in the rural areas, a considerable benefit. I believe the hon. member has mentioned this before, that Blue Cross does pick up some of the fees from the ambulance service. However I have to agree that I, too, was involved some four or five years ago with this very problem, that the ambulance operator would not move an ambulance from the city of Edmonton before the down payment was made, or at least

guaranteed by a doctor or by the patient. And if the patient was unconscious, certainly he could not guarantee the payment.

I can only draw this conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I think the internal service of a hospital is no better or cannot be any better than the ambulance service to get the patient to the hospital. It is a way and means of getting the patient directly to the hospital. I think the hon. member last fall referred to - I think it was headlined in the Journal, the case where a man was shot in the Cynthia area and there was some delay because they did not know the directions. But certainly a proper ambulance at that time could have saved that young man's life, because in this case it was a station wagon that was used where the blood transfusion could not be carried on going to the city hospital, and the patient died just outside the city of Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, I have to go along with the consideration that the hon. member had mentioned, and I believe if we are going to give hospital services we should give services by way of an ambulance that is considered to be an ambulance, and not something that can be used for one funeral service, or probably a station wagon. I think it has to be an approved ambulance which can give the service that is required. Most of the time these converted ambulance services that we encounter in the rural areas - the tires are poor, the mechanical condition of the vehicles is not such that they could be used in an emergency, and they don't have the proper lighting. This is an important item, Mr. Speaker, because I know of instances where people have taken a station wagon and have tried to come down a highway with their headlights blinking, and certainly this is not an indication that it is an emergency.

I would urge all hon. members to support the motion as amended - I certainly think the motion as amended carries a lot of credit and I understand that the minister has [done] considerable studies in this area of ambulance service in the entire province. I think, Mr. Speaker, this should be revealed to the Legislature, perhaps with a view of the implementation of an ambulance service or a partial payment by government for ambulance service. Because this is something that is needed, not only in the urban areas but also in the rural areas of the province of Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Sedgewick-Coronation followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway.

MR. SORENSON:

Mr. Speaker, speaking on the motion as amended, I have received several representations from operators who have discussed with me the problems of operating ambulance services. In my own area the ambulance service runs and operates on a volunteer basis. Their two greatest problems are those of training and finance. All the volunteer personnel in this ambulance service have the basic St. John's training, but this they feel is insufficient to be truly effective. The nursing sisters in one hospital are assisting them in training on emergency procedures, but in the other hospitals the nurses do not have the time or the experience to train ambulance personnel.

Again, Mr. Speaker, such training as there is is carried out on a volunteer basis. These volunteers would like to take the advanced 40-hour St. John's course, but this costs \$100, and it's in this area that I think the government could be of assistance.

The other great problem experienced by the ambulance operators is that of finance. Often clients are transients or low-income people and cannot afford to pay the \$15 deductible charge. The elimination of this deductible should be extended beyond senior citizens to cover all these groups. The basic fees, which have been unchanged since 1967, must be raised to make rural ambulance service a viable operation. The \$100 maximum which is inadequate in most cases in urban areas, should be adjusted for rural services. If they were taking a patient to the city, for example, they might have to tie up their equipment for the whole day.

Mr. Speaker, in many municipalities the ambulance is operated by the funeral home. The subsidy these operators get is now administered by the municipalities. There is no standardization of the rate and it is subject to local politics. I know of one operator who, after 17 years of running a good ambulance service, had the right to run the ambulance taken away by the municipality, leaving him stuck with thousands of dollars in equipment. To make matters worse, the new operator will eventually build a funeral home in a community that could not afford to support two such operations. If the control of such subsidies was administered by the province and standardized on a per capita basis, instances like that would be eliminated.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that a committee would, in examining aspects of ambulance service, make some recommendations in the area of training. A mobile training unit could

be started that could visit ambulance services in rural Alberta and provide upgrading courses to the personnel. If, as the operator of an ambulance, it is not your sole livelihood, or if you're a volunteer, such a program would make training and upgrading more easily accessible.

Another idea that was expressed to me, Mr. Speaker, was the establishment of a provincial radio communications network for the use of ambulance services. With such a network a small service could get instant help in the event of a heavy demand on its services.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, from the conversations that I have had with ambulance operators and executive members of the provincial ambulance association, they have told me that more government interest is needed. Ambulance service as a useful and necessary private enterprise should enjoy standardization in training and equipment. Rates should be standardized so as not to penalize the rural operator, and training and communication should be upgraded with government assistance. It is time, Mr. Speaker, that this Assembly recognize and assist these concerns through a committee. Our ambulance firms are providing a vital service to Albertans and they themselves have asked for our help to continue and improve their service. We must not let them down.

DR. PAPROSKI:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak ...

MR. SPEAKER:

I regret not being able to recognize hon. members as soon as they might wish. I've been trying to do it on the basis of alternation and in the order in which they have first tried to get the floor.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc and the hon. Minister of Telephones and Utilities.

DR. PAPROSKI:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak in favour of this substitute motion as amended, being that "the government give consideration to studying and making recommendations upon all aspects of ambulance service in Alberta".

Mr. Speaker, I presume that the statement "in Alberta" implies exactly that - all across Alberta. I have, as the hon. members know, a very special interest in community health services. This particular area, of course, brings it to my attention even more so and focuses on that particular area of community health and social services. When we talk, and have talked, about community health and social service centres offering primary comprehensive continuing care, the primary care is the first contact emergency care. As well as the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and teaching, you can see that ambulance service and primary care, the first contact emergency care, is so important.

Mr. Speaker, when we consider ambulance service we should, indeed, consider a number of points, and that's why I favour this particular substitute motion because, to me, it's more encompassing.

Number one point is, of course, that all of Alberta be considered and not only rural Alberta. Surely, Mr. Speaker, all citizens across the province, where there is high concentration of population or where there is low concentration of population, where there are geographic barriers, barriers due to transportation or communication, certainly all of those things have to be considered. I therefore think that it's better in that respect, when we consider ambulance service, that we indeed consider all aspects with respect to being across Alberta. This is especially true because, Mr. Speaker, as we know, in Alberta as across Canada, we have mobility of people not only that they are travelling on holidays or on recreation, but simply in the day-to-day business world as well as moving from one community to another. I think it's about time that we in Alberta, not only in ambulance services, but other services of course, have uniformity in standard of calibre so that citizens, individuals and families will certainly have the comfort to know that wherever they are they have this type of service which is as good as any place.

Now, having said that, Mr. Speaker, I don't think it should be misunderstood that it's next to impossible to provide the same services across the province in all areas. But certainly in the ambulance service area where emergency deals so often with life and death, I see no excuse for this area not to be uniform and of the top calibre. I would like to remind the members that certainly towns and small cities, in addition to our bigger cities of course, deserve special attention. The ones near Edmonton, like Sherwood Park and St. Albert where from time to time, as I think the hon. Member for St. Albert,

representing Sherwood Park, will acknowledge, the service has sometimes left something to be desired with respect to ambulance services.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, I hope that whatever is accomplished here this afternoon, whatever motion we adopt - and of course, I do support the substitute motion - it not become merely a study, but a careful and prompt all-province appraisal of the situation as it is. It has been mentioned already that this information has been studied and restudied, as many of these things have. I would hope that the information that is available will be taken into account and as the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development has on so many other items, will carefully evaluate and analyse [the information] and then bring in his recommendations as quickly and expediently as possible. There is ambulance service, of course, across this province, but there is also a lot to be desired in a modern, contemporary province as we have.

Other considerations, Mr. Speaker, should be brought to focus, and that is the availability, in fact, of the ambulance in a certain area. Unfortunately, and it's amazing as the opposition member brought up, there are certain gaps where in fact there is just no hope of getting an ambulance and you might as well go by car. That's very sad, a sad acknowledgement of our health services in a modern province. I think that this should be corrected forthwith.

Another consideration, Mr. Speaker, is the qualifications [of the attendant] and the equipment of the vehicle used. When we are talking about the vehicle, of course it's not only the motor vehicle but aircraft and even boats if necessary. Consideration should be given in the appraisal that the minister will carry out, or if another study is done, regarding the qualifications of the ambulance attendants, and what training, retraining and upgrading and so on is necessary for the present ambulance drivers and attendants. I believe they are doing a first-class job under the circumstances without necessarily the best equipment in some communities, or not necessarily even the best training, but they are doing as good a job as possible under the circumstances.

I think it is time that we paid attention to a standard of qualification and training that is accepted across the province, and of course consider who shall pay for their training, retraining and upgrading. I have no doubt, in talking to the Alberta Ambulance Association in attending one of their conventions that they indeed want this type of training, upgrading and so forth for their ambulance attendants, and the attendants themselves want this. If they knew where to go and how to get their funding, I am sure that they would all be very happy. It should be done not only as a one-shot basis, but an upgrading on a continuous basis in tune with the changing events in medicine.

Another point, Mr. Speaker, the question has to be asked: who will fund such services - and this has already been brought up. Should the funding, in fact, be variable from one locality or community to another geographic area? I think that the hon. members will quickly acknowledge that being up north, the costs by and large are higher. Certainly it may be that this is an area, the northern area or some geographically locked-in area, where a government subsidy is warranted without any hesitation.

Of course then the question comes: what about a subsidy for across the province? Should free enterprise do this or should government provide this service, such a vital, as I said, life-and-death service? Or, Mr. Speaker, should it be a combination of both? Well, there are a lot of considerations here. Certainly the free enterprise service we have in the city of Edmonton is top rate. Quickly one could say that the service in Calgary, which is a municipal service, is also top rate - and I suggest it is. But there is a cost differential and a very substantive cost differential. The question you have to ask is: why is it that great? Is the quality that much better in Calgary, or are they providing a more intensive, higher concentrated type of service? These are the questions that must be asked. I am sure the minister has that information, from what I understand, from all the reports that have been handed to him over the past couple of years since I have taken an interest in this particular area. It's a matter of evaluating and acting on it.

Then the next question, Mr. Speaker, that has to be asked is, who is responsible for paying for those individuals - and I have asked this question two or three times in the Legislature - who are non-Albertans, who are not registered under any plan and yet require immediate, emergency ambulance service? To date, in Edmonton for example, a free enterprise type of service, known as Smith's Ambulance, has picked up the tab regarding this and they don't hesitate to do it. The question that has to be asked of course is, is this fair, in fact, when a person is a non-Albertan, a transient or an indigent type of patient? Mr. Speaker, I think it is high time that these questions are answered and some compensation be given, whether it's a municipal service or a free enterprise service.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are many more items such as this that we have to consider. I don't intend for one minute to go on for the next half-hour on this item, but I will bring up a few more points if the hon. members opposite will bear with me. To what other municipal services should ambulance service be attached or associated? Should they be in isolation, as they are in Edmonton - Smith's Ambulance service has a building - and

apart from any other service? Or should they be attached to the firefighters or the fire department as they are in the city of Calgary? Well, it's a good question. Should they be attached to the hospital services? Should they be attached - and the hon. Deputy Premier I'm sure will be interested in this - and be a part of and coordinated with the disaster services across the province? I would like to ask the Deputy Premier at another time what would happen if he required all the ambulances within a 100 mile radius. Would he have the ability to get them into action quickly? I suggest to hon. members he would, of course, because he is so darned efficient.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, whatever we do it is certainly about time we had an optimal uniform quality and quantity type of ambulance service across the province. As the front line health service we should be sure it is available in fact, and not just on paper. Because when you need that service, you need it now. You don't need it five hours from now.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I support the substitute amendment because it deals with all of Alberta. It will allow the minister certainly to assess and appraise the information already available to him, to utilize that information and if he is not satisfied, of course, he has the option of conducting another study under that amendment. I would hope that won't be necessary and I hope, in concluding, Mr. Speaker, that the results will be in short order for Albertans, a top-rate, uniform all-Alberta ambulance service that is, in fact, available to people and that they can afford. I hope there will not be any discrepancy in service of any substance for this important service across the province.

Thank you.

MR. HENDERSON:

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to exercise my prerogative as an independent member and take exception with everybody who has spoken thus far. I certainly didn't favour the original motion and I'm not too highly impressed with the amendment, Mr. Speaker. I have listened to the debate - you know, I have a friendly ambulance driver in my own constituency from whom, every time I run into him, whether it's at a bonspiel or just here or there socially, I get the same speech as I've been listening to so far in the Assembly this afternoon.

Firstly, I certainly agree that a legislative committee is not required. I think one experienced staff member in the hospital commission could come up with all the reporting that needs to be done on the subject, probably in about seven days without working overtime. I can't imagine seeking a high-priced committee such as a member of this Legislature on the subject - because the main issue is money. I've never heard a legislative committee, or even too many members of the Legislature, being particularly intelligent about coming up with reasons why they shouldn't spend public money these days. Maybe what this issue should be examined for is why it shouldn't be spent.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, it is one of these issues that probably is one of the most fertile untapped areas for the application of Parkinson's Law in the province of Alberta that one could possibly think of. One can conjure up all sorts of standby services here and there, vehicles on standby, staffed 24 hours a day, flashing lights, radio systems, lord knows what have you. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, if we were going to do it, the last person I would want to give it to is the Minister of Agriculture because I'm sure he'd have it set up and running, tuned up and running like a - I don't know what - in no time - like an ambulance service I guess it should be ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

It would be expensive, that's for sure.

MR. HENDERSON:

... But I still wonder if we really have to have it.

We hear a lot about uniformity and I wonder what is so sacred and magical about the need for uniformity in this particular area. We have a hospital system that is essentially right now. Sure, it's paid for by the taxpayers of Alberta, but they don't pay anything directly for it to speak of anymore. The premium on Medicare and hospital services is about one-fifth of most of the total cost of running the system, I believe - maybe a little higher than that, maybe as much as one-third. But I think it is down around 20 per cent. I recall the arguments that went through, and I'm sure they still existed when the decision was made to take the \$2.50 per day charge off for hospital services. And then the next argument we heard [was] what a horrible insult it was to still leave the \$5 admission charge in. So once a person got through the pearly gates, they were entitled to the best of everything once they got into the hospital. But what a horrible thing it was to have to pay a \$5 admission charge.

Really all we are talking about here is a proposition to find some way for the government to go out and spend more money, because that's all I've heard that is really talked about. The idea of standards and so on is basically, let's spend some more public money to institute this service so we have a wonderful uniform system of high-powered machinery on standby from High Level in the north to Coutts in the south. I'm not sure that it would do much, other than spend a lot more of the taxpayers' dollars.

I have visions of having a pretty high-priced free taxi service. You know, people phoning up and they can't get a cab. They want to take a long trip so they call for an ambulance. And this is not beyond the stretch of imagination when you get into this area of public service. I recall some of the arguments I was exposed to during the brief time I was Minister of Health about the air ambulance service out of the north country and what a horrible thing it was. Somebody in Edmonton had to approve the flight of an aircraft that was going to cost a few hundred dollars to bring somebody in from the north country to Edmonton. It was a horrible thing that a doctor in the north country didn't have the freedom to pick up the phone, order out an aircraft from Peace River, or Edmonton for that matter, and fly somebody into Edmonton. He used to do it on the assumption that the provincial government, the Department of Health was going to pick up the tab. And they told the patients that the government would pick up the tab for it. Then, of course, when the tab was not generously endorsed because there was a necessity of some prior approval on it, there were all sorts of complaints registered and I imagine the present minister is still hearing the complaints.

Maybe this isn't the best subject to make this type of speech on, Mr. Speaker, but one of the things that I have great visions of is every member of this Assembly standing up and conjuring up wonderful ways and means of spending some of this billion dollars of oil money. You know, we need a taxi service and so let's have a free dental service to take the patient to when you do get the taxi, and let's conjure up all sorts of other things.

What really concerns me when I look at some of these spending gimmicks is the fact that the oil is going to run out. In actual fact, all this money everybody has visions of, of being in the provincial treasury - in about three years at the most, just reading an energy report in the Canada West Foundation, all the oil production rates are going to start declining in Alberta in about 1975 or 1976. I have great visions of politicians and legislators in Alberta building some tremendous cadillacs of public services and in about five or ten years from now at the outside we won't have any gasoline left to put in the gas tank or we won't be able to afford to buy the gasoline for the gas tank.

So I see many areas of public service, including the health field, that have a higher degree of urgency attached to them than setting up a high-priced provincially-operated medical taxi service with uniform standards, 24-hour standby service, first-class everything, just because it looks like there might be some money in the coffers. Because I suggest that if there is a need, it could be a shortsighted one.

I'm personally far more convinced that surely the municipalities can take some responsibility in providing hospital services and the ambulance services. The provincial government now pays 100 per cent of the cost of the hospital services. They pay practically the bulk of the costs of nursing home services. They've taken the 28 or 32 mills off educational services and it seems to me this is one area in which the coordinating can be more effectively done in the service provided at the provincial level.

I have the rather biased view when it comes to doing these things: if there is a service that I could provide for myself and hire it, it would cost me \$1. If the municipality does it for me it costs me \$2. If the provincial government gets hold of it, it's going to cost \$4. And if Ottawa ever gets its hands on it, it's going to be \$8. I think we're about the \$2 cost level in ambulance services right now and maybe that's where we should leave it. Setting up a provincial-wide grid as a means of trying to spend a lot of the public's money could be directed to areas other than ambulance services. I am certainly convinced it doesn't need a legislative committee. I question it even needs a resolution from this committee, because I think the government must be thinking they had better leave something in the kitty to come up with for the next provincial election program.

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Speaker, I agree with many of the things said by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc. I imagine he was probably recalling the days when he was wrestling with hospital budgets - when he was responsible for that sort of thing on this side of the House.

I believe the general subject of the first motion has merit. I think it was very unkind to confine it to rural areas. People do fall sick, get run over by cars and require urgent medical treatment in the urban areas as well. In fact, it may well be that it happens more often in the urban areas. The substitute motion is therefore most pertinent.

MR. LUDWIG:

What's the difference?

MR. FARRAN:

I would prefer the motion to read, the government should just generally give consideration or study the matter because, respectfully, a select committee doesn't seem to be the right channel ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Task force.

MR. FARRAN:

... especially when one considers the tremendous ramifications in this subject, for it is not a simple subject.

Some years ago this problem came to a head in the city of Calgary as it does from time to time in all municipalities. For years the city of Calgary had enjoyed an excellent service at reasonable rates from a private firm called Starr's Ambulance. It had been founded by Ald. Ernie Starr, who was a member of Calgary City Council for some 25 years and had been a paramedical orderly in the Army Medical Corps in the First World War.

It served our city well. Without any formal franchise it did all the ambulance work in the city of Calgary until Calgary's population reached around 150,000 people. It operated under contracts from the hospital to deliver patients to the cancer clinic. It had a base in the garage next to Ernie Starr's house, which was fortunately situated in the central part of the city, and it had a reputation for being prompt in its calls when accidents took place.

There was no formal move by the city to protect the monopoly of this ambulance company, but I believe it is fair to say that competitors were discouraged by one means or another. This is not to say they charged exorbitant fees, because they didn't. They kept their fees within the amount allowed by private insurance companies of those days.

Then the ambulance company was sold to the employees just before Ald. Starr retired. And for various reasons the city's general policies changed. Other competitors came to the Calgary area. There was price-cutting. Hospitals entered into contracts with different small ambulance services. Their contract was just to move patients from one hospital facility to another, from hospital to hospital, from hospital to auxiliary hospital or nursing home, or to the cancer clinic - and hospitals usually let contracts on a bid basis.

I remember arguing myself as an alderman that the city was getting so big and so widespread it was very difficult for Starr's Ambulance to service calls promptly from their central location. Since I represented a ward on the North Hill I, of course, had a parochial outlook, as I suppose I still do to some extent, representing Calgary North Hill as a provincial member. But anyway, I argued, as many other people argued, that the city should be split in two in those days. It was a city divided by a river and North Hill was tantamount to being a city within a city and should have its own ambulance service. So then we had two big ones. We had one on the south and one on the north. They had a very complicated exercise of deciding which ambulance was to respond to a call on the boundaries, close to one of the bridges for instance, or how the calls from outside the city are handled fairly by the police emergency switchboard and switched one to another - the same sort of argument one used to get into when there was an attempt to give preference to local truckers on road jobs and they were constantly arguing over their position on the seniority list.

Well, we ended up with about four ambulance services operating and they were all losing money. All the operators began to suffer. There were claims that they were not paying their drivers and their attendants enough; that their attendants were poorly trained; getting less than the minimum wage; they were not getting overtime when they were called out at night - that type of thing.

A doctor founded another ambulance service which he said was much better equipped to respond to accidents because sometimes he could go on the vehicle and as a doctor give skilled medical attention. And he had more elaborate oxygen appliances and that sort of thing in the ambulance. He asked for a subsidy as his capital costs were so much higher than those of the regular outfits. The regular outfits, which were buying converted limousines which were the standard ambulances of those days, were so short of money that they couldn't keep them in good order. We got complaints from the police that these vehicles were not roadworthy. They were sometimes breaking down on the way between an accident location and the hospital, once, with a heart patient.

The operators of those days used to complain all the time about their financial problems. They said that they would be called to a distant accident sometimes outside the city, perhaps in rural areas. They always responded because they felt they had a dedication to community service, even though there was a great chance they wouldn't be paid. They would arrive at the scene of an accident - having been summoned by some passer-by who had gone into a service station or a public telephone booth and called for the ambulance - they would arrive to find the injured person or persons had already gone to hospital in either the RCMP patrol car or had been picked up by some friendly passer-by, some Good Samaritan. So there was nobody to pay their bill, even if they could have found the person who, in law, would have been responsible - the person who telephoned, not the person who was injured. In law apparently it is the person who summonses the ambulance who is really responsible for the bill.

Sometimes, when it was a slack day and the competition between these ambulance services was running at its fiercest, they would race each other to the scene of an accident hoping to pick up the business, and we would have two or three of them going to one location with their sirens howling.

We had instances in Calgary of rough stuff between the two ambulance companies where there was an allegation that employees of one service had slashed the tires of the ambulance of another one to put them out of business.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Sit down.

MR. LUDWIG:

I think we all agree it is a funny speech the minister is giving, but what is the topic? Is he debating the motion? I don't see - I think the minister as usual loses contact with the motion. He is rambling all over the field and really not dealing with the motion before the House, Mr. Speaker. Certainly he should be a little more responsible than he has displayed till now.

MR. SPEAKER:

I share the hon. member's concern for the observation of the rule of relevance but it seems to me that both the motion itself and the substitute motion proposed by way of amendment permit a pretty wide debate on the general subject of ambulances.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. FARRAN:

Well, Mr. Speaker, you disappoint me. I thought you were finding my dissertation interesting. But thank you for the ruling.

As I pointed out, the person calling the ambulance is responsible for the charge, for the bill. This is one of the reasons why we should consider some other system of ambulance service. It's important to point it out because you might, in all ignorance, go into a service station, having seen an accident, summon an ambulance, leave your name - because the ambulance company will ask for it and your telephone number. Then the injured person is whisked off to hospital in the RCMP patrol car and about a week later you get a bill for \$20. So it's not always a laughing matter.

The ambulance companies, for these reasons, had horrendous bad debts. Obviously, you can't collect from dead people, or it's pretty difficult. Some ambulance orderlies were accused of doing that very thing, incidentally, and we had three or four instances of this sort of thing in Calgary. It's also not easy to collect from someone who is severely ill, although still living. The hospitals would not cooperate with the ambulance companies' attempts to collect, except on their own contracts, of course, for which they were responsible for taking people to the cancer clinic. Blue Cross only paid \$15 per ambulance trip and the minimum costs with which these people could operate - according to the figures they produced for city council - was some \$24 a trip. Even then they said that they were often losing money and they attempted to charge any whole and healthy passenger who went with a patient in the back of the car a second charge - a second \$24. This led to controversy. If the wife couldn't go in the ambulance to hold the husband's hand without having to pay double fare, this seemed to be unjust to a lot of people. Yet, the ambulance companies could demonstrate that they really did need the money.

Many argued in those days - and with some justification - that ambulances are an essential part of the health delivery system. But unfortunately the federal government has never recognized this. They do not share, on a 50-50 basis, ambulance services or for that matter nursing homes.

Certainly the argument that ambulances should be stationed at the emergency wards of hospitals, where the attendants can be dual-purpose male orderlies while they're waiting for a call, has a lot of merit. A lot of the expense for an ambulance is obviously the standing time when the orderlies are playing crib at the back of the headquarters waiting for a call. Sometimes, of course, the calls will come in a tremendous rush and they find it very difficult to respond to them all. But there are long hours of boredom and restless waiting when they've got little else to do but play crib like the firemen. It's an occupational hazard.

If ambulances were stationed at the hospitals where they could be administered by the more sophisticated hospital administration - the hospital front office - and could be directed by the doctors on staff, then there would be obvious savings, an obvious improvement in service.

In the countries where ambulance service is acknowledged to be the best, ambulances are stationed at hospitals. They can, if need be, take one of the interns out with them to give medical treatment at the scene of the accident - something which can be quite dangerous for an orderly to do, however well-trained he is. With the present state of medical law the Good Samaritan is in grave danger of facing a damage suit if he attempts to administer the first aid he learned in the Boy Scouts.

So if they are stationed at the hospital the staff can be better trained and properly supervised by medical personnel. I personally do not see why there should be any strong objection to making a charge to the patients carried to the hospital by ambulance in the same way that they may be charged for extras such as a private room. This, of course, would help to discourage abuse of the ambulance system. Those who could go by car - the husband's car or the son's car or whatever it may be - could go that way and save themselves a charge. If they were covered by Blue Cross the hospital could merely take the number and collect as it does for other things. The indigent people, the people who just haven't got any money, may be covered by welfare grants to the hospital or carried by the hospital deficit.

Let me go back to Calgary now - that sorry state I was telling you about earlier. The city finally decided to take it over. Many aldermen argued that the right way was the way it was done in Edmonton - to reserve the city's ambulance franchise to a single private ambulance service. I think it's acknowledged in the province of Alberta that Edmonton has a most efficient ambulance service at minimum cost.

But others produced mathematical studies which showed that the municipal service would be less costly than Edmonton's service, and it would be a better service. Well, how soon fond hopes like that are dashed. How soon the optimistic projections of costs for one year are found to be totally false the following year.

The first thing that happened was that the new city employees of the ambulance service were attached to the fire department. The fire department in Calgary had always had one ambulance-type vehicle called a rescue truck which would go around with oxygen tanks and inhalation equipment. It began as a service to the fireman who might have been overcome by fumes or smoke while fighting a fire. Then it extended to babies who had flash pneumonia and this type of thing. It gradually became a one-vehicle preferred ambulance service by many Calgary residents - preferred because they didn't have to pay for it.

The new service then was naturally attached to the fire department's one rescue truck. The employees and many dedicated aldermen and city civil servants agitated for special courses at Mount Royal College and they won their case. They said, look, it's not enough - as one speaker said today - for them to just have a St. John's Ambulance course or to have been in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps or something during the war. That's not enough. Now they have to go to one of our palaces or junior colleges and get a diploma and be told the right way to do these things. After all, we've got to use those great facilities we've built with all this oil revenue. We use them now for training policemen and we also use them for training ambulance orderlies.

As soon as they got their diplomas, of course, they wanted more wages and more new and luxurious ambulances. Some of them went into ambulance design - a converted Cadillac limousine was no longer acceptable. They wanted something more akin to the sort of wagon they used to haul us around the western desert in the last war. We had a bigger one where they could get about six people in at a time and they could stand up.

Then they joined CUPE. They joined the CUPE local and they wanted parity with the firemen. I don't know how much you know about city hall finance but the firemen come close behind the policemen. Whenever the policemen get a raise - they're the highest paid servants at the city hall level - the firemen go up automatically. Of course,

right behind them or neck-in-neck with them went the ambulance personnel - the drivers and the orderlies.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. With great respect, the Chair would suggest that the hon. minister is exceeding even the broad bounds of this debate.

[Laughter]

MR. FARRAN:

I will try to come to the point a little more quickly.

Well, the service became very costly to the city of Calgary, Mr. Speaker, and it is a costly burden on the property owners of the city of Calgary today. It is wholly supported by a property tax, and what began as an exercise alleged to cost some \$300,000 a year is now crowding \$1 million a year. Costs are growing, and I suggest that when the government considers this substitute motion, as I'm sure it will, it looks into the question of a franchised private ambulance service on the one hand, the merits of that, and then on the other hand, the possibility of ambulance service originating with the active treatment hospital; ambulances which are part and parcel of the emergency department of the active hospital.

The question of oxygen for heart patients is an extremely important one, Mr. Speaker. I think that the certainty of the oxygen cylinders being well cared for and kept full, and the orderlies being able to use them, will be greater if the ambulances are attached to the emergency wards of hospitals.

I also naturally agree that the hospital emergency ward should be connected with the ambulances by good mobile radio equipment, or mobile telephone equipment supplied by Alberta Government Telephones. They can then remain in constant communication with the interns or the doctors on duty in the emergency ward and receive instructions on the spot on how to handle the case they are attending.

The socialist view of universal service across the entire province has many pitfalls, apart from the ones of cost. Certainly, I don't believe that we should make any ambulance service a burden to the property taxpayer, as it has become in Calgary. I do not agree that this is the type of program which would be suitable for a matching grant policy. We have so many policies where we merely give a grant to a local service. I don't think this route would be the right way to go in the case of ambulances.

So far as rural ambulances are concerned, they too should be stationed at the rural hospitals. Again I would say that this has to be examined with great care because it would be a mistake to station an ambulance in some remote corner of a large municipal district or county, where farmsteads may be very scattered, the roads not travelled to the great degree that they are closer to the cities. It would be very easy to over-capitalise and over-service an ambulance service in the light of the population it might be serving.

Mr. Speaker, may I have leave to adjourn the debate?

[Interjections]

MR. LUDWIG:

If the hon. minister has exhausted himself, I suggest we call him an ambulance.

[Laughter]

AN HON. MEMBER:

No way.

MR. SPEAKER:

Would the hon. members adjourning the debate please say aye.

[The motion was carried.]

MR. LUDWIG:

It's an affront to the parliamentary system.

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I move we call it 5:30.

MR. SPEAKER:

Just before we call it 5:30, might I bring to the attention of hon. members - and I regret that the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview is not here - that on Thursday afternoon we have as a result of a resolution, or an agreement, reached last Thursday afternoon, as I understand it, two hours devoted to debate on public bills other than government orders.

My understanding of the intent of the House is not that there should be two hours of debate on Bill No. 203, but that there would be two individual hours and at the end of the first hour the debate would go on to Bill No. 204. Perhaps someone might bring that to the attention of the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview in case he has another understanding of the situation.

DR. BUCK:

As his desk-mate I believe that's the understanding he had.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair at 5:29 o'clock.]

