

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Thursday Evening, March 28, 1974

[Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair at 8:00 o'clock.]

GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS (CONT.)  
(Third Reading)Bill No. 2 The Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1974

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill No. 2, The Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1974.

[The motion was carried. Bill No. 2 was read a third time.]

## GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

1. Moved by hon. Mr. Miniely:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the fiscal policies of the government.

To which the following amendment has been proposed:

Moved by Mr. Ludwig,

That the government be apprised that the members of this Legislature deplore the government's failure to take any effective action to alleviate the very real disadvantages forced on many unfortunate people of this province by the rapidly accelerating devaluation of the dollar.

[Adjourned debate: Mr. Hinman]

MR. HINMAN:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Whitecourt thought this was a very poorly written amendment.

His case reminded me a little bit of great-uncle Zeke who lived in the Ozarks and who found a stub pencil ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

That's who wrote it.

MR. HINMAN:

One rainy day he got behind the stove with a shingle and was very quiet. But in about an hour he came out with the shingle and said, look at this ma, I'll be danged if I ain't learned to write. She looked at it and said, you sure have pa, what do it say? And he said, now woman, you know I can't read.

Now maybe that's the worst part about this amendment. I think that none of us are unaware that such an amendment is ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Causing a roadblock.

MR. HINMAN:

... that such an amendment is a sort of political attempt to bring in a motion of non-confidence and therefore we are sometimes blinded by indignation. I notice the word "deplore" and I know the effect that had on the hon. members of the government, how quickly they took up the necessity to tell us all the things that the bill did do for these people.

But maybe, had they read a little bit further and asked themselves a few questions, they might have recognized that sometimes you only have to be a little bit from the truth to be called a liar.

Maybe I should tell you another story about a neighbour of mine who had a hired man - a real good one. Each week he increased his wages and gave him a better bed, lunches at noon and lunches in the afternoon, but one weekend the fellow quit. He said, now just tell me why in the world you would quit after I have treated you like this. Well, he said, because you're a liar. My friend, who is a little bit quick-tempered, said, well, if you can't show me very quickly how I've lied, I'm going to knock you down. Well, he said, it's easy. When I came here you promised me steady work, and from about eleven at night to four in the morning you haven't given me anything to do.

Now that's somewhat the situation we find ourselves in with this amendment. I think we needed to ask ourselves a few questions. Have we failed in some regard? Nobody on this side of the House is unaware of the good things that the government has done, nor are we unaware of the fact that they do offset inflation. Many of them offset inflation. But the amendment says, "... the very real disadvantages forced on many unfortunate people of this province by the rapidly accelerating devaluation of the dollar."

Now the first thing we have to do is say, are there some people, some unfortunates, whom we haven't reached by any of these means. I submit that there are.

I submit that you've done a lot for the old people, perhaps only two-thirds of whom were in any desperate need at all. I submit we look after the people on welfare pretty well, because our social workers can review their budgets and within certain limits can look after their needs. But I submit there are many other people hurt by this galloping inflation of whom we don't take much cognizance. I refer to some of the old people who didn't need any dentures, didn't need any new glasses, didn't need any hospitalization and haven't been requiring any medication. They live in their own homes and they got some benefit from the home-owner's grant, that's true, but some of these people are hurt by inflation in other ways. Sometimes they retired with an automobile that was a little bit run down to start with. It begins to give out and they can't possibly muster the money it takes to renew that transportation. Now, they're hurt.

I submit that they are not the only ones. We have people whose incomes are comparatively low. They are not going to go on welfare, but they face these same problems. They live in an older home, the furnace gives out and the cost of repairing it has trebled in four years. How can we say that we have failed to help them against this inflation?

One of my own neighbours, an elderly lady, was lamenting that her tap was leaking, so I went over to fix the tap and she told me that it had cost her \$8 to get a rubber put in one of those taps. I wasn't particularly blaming the plumber. He charges door-to-door and he has to have a helper to put a washer in. How else could he do it?

MR. BATIUK:

Will the hon. member allow me a question.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Yes.

MR. BATIUK:

Did that tap start leaking between 11 and 4 o'clock in the morning?

MR. HINMAN:

Since I thought it inappropriate to be at the widow's house in those hours, I can't tell you.

[Laughter]

The point is that this galloping inflation does catch up to these people. Are we going to deny them transportation? I don't know that I could design a plan to look after all of these people, but I know that these are real burdens. A roof begins to leak and they get an estimate. It takes \$500, and they don't where they are going to get \$500. So they patch the roof and they do these things, but I submit that they are hurt by inflation and that with all the good intentions of the government we haven't reached out to these people.

Now, there are other things too, and they come under welfare. It isn't uncommon for some of us who have relationships with these people to find a mother desperate and worried about a child. She says he could be on the hockey team if he could afford some good skates, and getting the skates is a major problem. I submit that inflation hurts those people and that we haven't reached them. A girl can't go to a graduation exercise because all the other girls are going to have new dresses, and it's just beyond the budget of that particular family.

Now there are ways they can handle it, of course. They can go to church groups and they can go to what they think are charities, but I submit that maybe we have to start looking at some of these people. I only mention these things to tell you that there are other ways of suffering than being short of food. We can have people emotionally and mentally in need, the same as we can have people in need for other things.

Now, this inflation is progressive. When we first talked about inflation in Ottawa it was a very slow thing at the time, and I remember saying to that very august body that in many ways inflation reminded me of wetting the bed. It was a nice warm feeling until you woke up. What I'm getting at is that some of us never need to wake up. But there are people who are awakened when any little tragedy comes to their home that requires money, and these are the people who are hurt.

Now, there develops among us what I might refer to as the inflation syndrome. We fall into it so easily, and we do such things as these. We persuade each other that there is nothing wrong with borrowing money to buy almost anything today, that the increase in the price will more than pay for the interest. So if you are going to need it next year or the year after, go ahead and buy it. You can't lose.

On the other hand, people are hoarding. The man who supplies fuel down in my country phoned up and said he wondered if he could buy a new truck with the help of the government because all the farmers want their tanks full before April 1. We all know why.

But that isn't exactly what I have in mind. Everybody anticipating inflation does some kind of hoarding. They buy everything, as I have said, from the syrup they might need, the sugar they might need, to more expensive things such as automobiles.

Then they begin to look at solid assets. Most of us are aware, and I am sure the hon. Deputy Premier is aware, that the sale price of land in many, many areas, in fact in most, is much beyond the productivity of the land. We've had barley prices double and we have had cattle prices go up, but nevertheless the prices of that land are beyond any recovery by the family who has to make a living and also make the payments.

And who is buying it? The dentists, the doctors and the speculators.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear, hear.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Easy.

MR. HINMAN:

Being associated with real estate people all the time, I'm having them tell me, do you know where I could find a big tract of land. Just yesterday an Edmonton real estate man phoned to say that he had a German client who wanted to buy a ranch in Alberta that would handle 3,000 to 5,000 cattle. I said, well, what kind of money is he talking about? Well, he said, he told me not to worry about the money, to find the land.

This is part of this syndrome which is forcing things up and up and up. Our efforts to put people back on the land, to keep the little farmers on the land and to assist the

farmer to add to the meagre holdings he has, are almost in vain in the face of such a syndrome.

And then we take full advantage of all the windfalls, the profit taking. We've had our Minister of Consumer Affairs tell us that he has tried to order stores selling goods to sell them at the lowest marked price. Then I talk to the cashier and she says, well, what do I do? Here comes a fellow with four articles out of the same bin; two are marked the old price, two are marked only the new price. I say, all right, I'll sell you these two at the old price and these two at the new and he thinks I'm terrible. Maybe the cashier is, but these are the difficulties that we face with this syndrome that I'm talking about.

Each person makes it a point to add a little, the wholesale price goes up, the merchant is tempted - not so much with food as with other things - to add a little extra profit in between. His argument is the same: I must have more profit to pay for the things which I find are going up.

Then we have pressure selling - the idea that the customer can afford it, so why not stick him a little bit. Again we aggravate this inflation which hurts the very people about whom I have been speaking. We get the syndrome that you don't have to worry about the poor. Nobody needs to give the poor a very good deal because, after all, the government will look after them.

Then we take all the advantage we can of depletion. I'm not talking just about the loopholes in the law. I'm talking about the idea that we don't wear it out. We throw it away, particularly if it's an item of equipment that we can use for depletion, because you can throw it away in three years and as long as you can establish that you threw it away it can be written off.

Interest rates, of course, are one of the biggest handicaps to the people of whom I have been speaking. When everybody else is willing to pay 9.5 or 10 per cent, what hope have these people, who are not on relief I remind you, who are not suffering for the very basic necessities, but who are disadvantaged, as the resolution says, because we have not reached out to help them with some necessities which may be greater than food.

I got a statement from a co-op, of all things, the other day. Stamped on it was 1.5 per month charged on overdue accounts. Well, that's legal I suppose. He's giving me fair warning that if I want credit that's what it's going to cost. But don't you imagine that that doesn't hurt the people, the very people who need a little credit sometimes. If they need a major appliance, if the washer has quit working, the dryer has quit working and the steam iron doesn't steam, they may need a little credit longer than 30 days, and 1.5 per cent a month does hurt and we haven't done very much about it.

Now we have the waves of new credit all the time. We have what we call market inventory cornering. A fellow reported to me yesterday that there is a warehouse in Edmonton with what he estimates to be a thousand tons of sugar in it. Well, somebody who had extra money was doing a perfectly legitimate thing. He bought all the sugar he could find. He filled a warehouse which he could rent cheaply and he is speculating that it will go up. I submit that he is no worse than many of us who look at the market and buy futures on barley or futures on sorgum or futures on soya beans. I am just developing for you what I hope you will understand is the syndrome that we must try to, if we would, stop the inflation hurting these people.

Then there is the next question. If there are people we have missed, and I submit there are, how are we going to reach them? Now I know what the government faces. On our side of the House we say, you've got to cut this foolish welfare, and we press the ministers not to do this. We all call our attention to the people who won't work and who don't deserve it. But I submit that if you're going to accept the standards of poverty that are set by the sociologists and if you're going to look a little deeper, you'll find that, especially now when we expect a very great windfall, we have both the opportunity and the challenge to reach out to help some of the people who are hurt by this creeping inflation.

Now one of these suggestions that has come to us, of course, is the guaranteed minimum personal income. It has some advantages. I am not going to debate that tonight. But has the government looked at it seriously to see if it would fit this need? We have the suggestion of the Conservative party in Ottawa that at least we need temporary price and wage controls. I don't know within what scope the provincial government can work in that regard but I suggest we have a feel there, that we examine it to see whether we can use it to the advantage of some of these people. I know we have within our rights certain credit controls. We know that about 5 per cent of the people who get credit never repay some 10 to 15 per cent of the bills and this always gets charged in the price of goods.

When I go to the store today, as I did, and buy a very small article and the clerk says, cash or credit, I'm reminded that I am paying the same price whether I use their

money for 30 days or whether I pay now. These things react to the disadvantage of the people I am talking about.

We have the interest controls. Here again, it isn't all within the scope of this government, but I am asking whether or not the government has even surveyed the possibilities of using some interest controls? We are going to have a chance with a windfall of money to set up funds for many purposes, and without wanting to boast about what the Social Credit government did, I would remind some of you who are older that when the Treasury Branches were first set up and they didn't actually lend money but lent non-negotiable vouchers, we set the interest rate at 6 per cent. Now we couldn't handle more than 5 or 6 per cent of the business, but it put a terrific pressure on the banks and within about five and a half months the bank interest was down from 8 to 6 per cent. And it wasn't a common expression for a banker of a chartered bank, when you asked him about interest, to say it will be the Social Credit rate. Have you explored that as a government or have we explored it as an opposition?

Then there is the idea of the negative income tax. It has merits. One of the ways a government can discover this group of people who are disadvantaged might be to require every earner to file a tax return, a very simple one, whether he owes taxes or not, and then if we want to employ some people let's have some research, let's find these people who are right on the margin. These very people who aren't going to starve, but whose children are affected by the lacks, whose children are disadvantaged and who are themselves disadvantaged - maybe we can do a little bit in that regard.

We talk about the free market. I know that this government can't establish the free market and let it work in total, but I submit that we need to look at it to see what we can do to return to the free markets those aspects of our society where competition will quickly take effect and where prices will go down to the advantage of these people.

I submit that maybe with all this new money we need to set up what I might call a social soothers bureau. All I mean by that is somebody selected, not necessarily because of training, somebody chosen locally who is sensitive to the needs of these people and to whom they can go and tell their troubles - I might even call this person a social ombudsman. But this person should be somebody sensitive enough so that if I know one of my neighbours is really suffering - they can't do what they want to do for their families; their transportation is short - I might suggest to this person or this agency that you have a look at these people. Now surely that isn't out of range of what we could do. In this way we could seek out the needy, and then perhaps we could give the same kind of leadership in that regard that we are giving in youth training. It's not impossible that this person could give leadership in establishing social agencies of a community to do things for these people, so that if I have a job I phone and they tell me, well, so-and-so has a big family and they have some children who could use the work, and I might use them. Now, if we haven't explored that then we are a little bit guilty.

The resolution, I know, is a little disagreeable because it says, apprise the government. But after all, the Premier is my Premier and as long as you're on that side of the House you're my government, and I have some responsibility and I would expect to help you.

Another thing that we could do is extend to these very people some budget help. You'd be surprised, if your not working in church agencies, how frequently you can help people by just telling them, you have to budget - that maybe the money will go around with a little help. Are we doing anything about that?

Then there are the make-work projects. We have STEP and we have PEP and they have been abused to death. I don't think it's beyond us to be considering now, when money is going to be easier, that we have specific projects to make work. We let it be known that we are going to hire the people to do these things, be it only to keep the grass short and the litter picked up, and that we give these jobs. Now, in our city of Lethbridge in the summer a lot of students are employed to do watering, but it [the hiring] is never done on a selective basis. It's the old pool system; if you know somebody at City Hall you get your name in early. This agency, which I might call the social soother agency, might go a long way in helping in that regard.

I am not going to go on, but I'm going to say that while nobody really wants this amendment passed I think we missed the opportunity to analyze what we have done. Are we liars simply because we promised steady work and we had five hours that we didn't look after? Are we guilty because we have failed some of these people? I submit, Mr. Speaker, that in that regard we have to expect some guilt and that it isn't beyond what we might do, especially in light of our expected affluence, to get busy, to help some of those many people who are disadvantaged - without assistance - by the ever-increasing inflation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BUCKWELL:

Mr. Speaker, I hadn't intended to get into this debate but if I don't take an opportunity to speak to this amendment, I have had it for awhile, which probably I don't expect you to cheer about. But this is a public place and probably I can blow a little smoke in here without getting into too much trouble.

I was particularly interested in the presentation by the hon. Member for Lloydminster - he was fairly moderate - and the hon. Member for Smoky River and the hon. Member for Whitecourt were very good in their speeches on this amendment, Mr. Speaker. They were quite hot under the collar, and maybe rightly so. One of the things, I think, that worries them is that they feel they have such a proud record that how could you 'stupid' on this side not realize this? But they have to realize also that we're in this parliamentary system where distortion and unfairness are part of the parliamentary way of life, that after you've been in here some number of years you probably roll with the punches a little easier.

There's another way you can look at it too, Mr. Speaker. When we were the government and there were ten on this side, they were past masters at it. I think what worries you, maybe a little bit, is ... I'd just like to look at the Deputy Premier today when he was on this side. He had all the answers and he's answered quite a few of them on that side. But you see, if you sell this idea that the government is wrong, then you get to be Deputy Premier, and it has advantages.

Now we're not trying to make out that you're that unfeeling or that untruthful about things, but if the solutions to our problems were as easy as many people think they are, then you wouldn't need us at all. You would solve them yourselves. And if the solutions were that easy, we're just trying to tell you where we think we can help you. A lot depends on the spirit in which it's taken.

Some of the members, particularly, keep thinking in the past. Maybe they're looking back because most of their lives were spent under one government and they are a little afraid that the ghost might rise again.

Some of the things that I would like to talk about on this resolution, Mr. Speaker, are ways which maybe we think you would like to look at to see if they would help. I'm thinking, Mr. Speaker, particularly, say, for example, of the federal government. The federal government gives enough in total social welfare programs - this is welfare, pensions and baby bonuses - that if all those funds were put into one fund you could almost have a guaranteed income for all the people in Canada without adding any more money to it. Now I'm not suggesting a guaranteed income at this particular time, but this is the sort of thought I had in mind.

I'm thinking, Mr. Speaker, for example, about the cost of food. This is where the average person today is screaming about inflation. The figures I had [indicated] that the people in the United States spend about 15 per cent of their income on food. In Canada it's slightly higher, I think it's 17 per cent. But in other parts of the world anywhere from 25 to 40 per cent of their total income goes into the cost of food.

Now, we have in this country subsidies on pretty nearly everything you can think of. For example, we have a beef subsidy at the present time of 7 cents, of which the person who's entitled to it may be lucky to get 3.5 or even 4. Where does the other 3 cents go? We have subsidies on milk, we have subsidies on butter, we have subsidies on bread, we have subsidies in this province, say, on hogs, lambs and dairy products. We also have marketing boards, control of production, and all these things cost money.

I'd like to have the Minister of Agriculture - I think he's the man to do it - get Mr. Whelan to look into the total cost of the subsidies of agriculture in Canada today. And maybe, like the Department of Health and Welfare, if we added all that money together and let people pay more for their food but subsidize those who need it most, we might be better off and the market might level off itself.

I've often found, and I think most of the people realize this, that when the farmers are well off - they're getting a fair and decent price for their products - the rest of society is in the same position. Maybe this is one way we could save a lot of money and make the money that is going out in subsidies count.

There's another problem that we and the hon. minister of transport might look into. People talk a great deal today about the Crowsnest agreement on grain. This was set up some 75 years ago. Maybe it was good at that time. But maybe the freight rates are paying for other things to pay for the difference that they're losing on the Crowsnest agreement. Maybe we'd be better off if we had a look at that. Maybe we would be better off to pay a little more to haul our grain. The cost of freight for the rest of the things would go down because we have to realize that farmers are consumers. They pay the freight just the same as anybody else on the things that they buy. What we are using today - as the Minister of Agriculture has already said, we're using the eastern feed

grain rate today. They're charged the amount of the Crowsnest rate agreement. This is wrong and these errors should be pointed out. In short, what we are doing today, Mr. Speaker, what we are losing on the apples we're having to pay for on the oranges.

There's another area that we might look at. This is the cost-shared program. The Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs was quite vociferous about the idea that we shouldn't be going into these programs with the federal government. They are costing us money. I quite agree with him. The biggest one that we were ever hooked into was the health cost, where we went into the national health scheme. We threw over a scheme that we had in the province to get \$30 million. Today we're spending \$50 million and it's ever increasing. They have an escalator clause in apart from the inflation that is costing us money.

We also have programs in education with the federal government that are costing the province money. If you match the grants, they'll give you grants.

We have, Mr. Speaker, things within the province where cost-shared programs between the province and the municipalities are actually costing the municipalities money. They cost the municipalities money because the bait of a cost-shared program is one they can't refuse. So they go into a program that they literally can't afford. The money is there and if they don't take it somebody else will.

We also have one - and I could mention one and I don't want to get into trouble over it - but the agricultural societies is another good one in which small communities today have built huge arenas and one thing and another because they got a grant. The first thing that most people heard about the agricultural societies is that there's a grant. Let's get into it. They're going to give us money. Well, it's not quite as simple as giving them money. What about these small communities that have a debt of \$250,000 or \$300,000 to pay off? Who pays it off? Is the government at some later day, when we have a recession, going to say to these communities, well, sorry fellows, if you can't pay we'll pay it off. We have \$900 million now in the kitty. We could pay this off and make good fellows of ourselves but what about the communities that didn't take advantage of the agriculture societies? I use that as one program.

We have to now either go without or we don't get any money. These are programs that we have to look at. But as I mentioned before, there are ways of life today with people so that we have to have a grant, we have to have some kind of subsidy to get anything started. The minute we get it started we are quite sorry because we are either not able to pay it back or else it costs us much more than we thought.

Those are just a few of the things, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say and I hope in a positive sense maybe, that the government could look at ways of trying to save money or trying to stop the train before it gets off the track.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Question.

MR. SPEAKER:

Are you ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

[The amendment was lost.]

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to use this opportunity in the Budget debate to bring the hon. members up to date in the in the current year with programs that I think are of special interest to their constituents - that fall under the responsibility of the Department of Municipal Affairs.

Mainly I would like to talk about municipal assistance and its companion program the Property Tax Reduction Plan, just to bring hon. members up to date with respect to our policy, dollars that will be involved, and also to announce a new addition to the program that was decided by the government today.

First, of all, Mr. Speaker, with respect to municipal assistance, I think it's important that we review for a moment just what substantial progress has been made in this area of financial assistance to our Alberta municipalites. The policy of this government ever since it took office, of course, has been to try to withdraw the rapidly-escalating social service kinds of programs from the municipal property tax base and permit the

municipal governments to move into that, and at the same time, increase the amount of financial assistance that is available under those particular programs.

In doing this, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to just review the progress that has been made since 1951, because we know the policy of the former government - and they went to the polls that year with that policy - was to freeze municipal assistance at \$38 million and freeze it by legislation. Of course, following that, one of the first things this government did was to 'unfreeze' that legislation and not only put more funds into the program, but also take over some of the responsibilities I've mentioned.

I think it is important to notice the rate of increase in municipal assistance in the last three years. The first year it was increased 10.5 per cent, the second year 14 per cent and this year there is an increase of 15 per cent budgeted for direct municipal assistance to our municipalities.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, it is important to notice the additional funds that have gone to our municipalities by way of taking over the education levy on residential property, taking over the costs of health units and the supplementary requisitions that had formerly been requested by hospital districts, taking over an additional 10 per cent of municipal social assistance, taking over completely the equity and capital cost development of public housing and getting involved in the neighbourhood improvement program. There was a very substantial amount for metropolitan transportation this year, really large increases in recreational programs; and further to that an adjustment in the equalized assessment on non-residential urban land which opened up further room for our municipalities to move into, with respect to taxation sources.

Mr. Speaker, I think that's quite a remarkable record in three years when you look at the attempts this government is trying to make, not only to provide more dollars, but to provide more taxation room for our municipalities.

I agree, Mr. Speaker, that there is much more to be done, and we're well under way with our provincial-municipal finance council, made up of an equal number of members of municipal and provincial government representatives, who are busy investigating ways and means to improve the existing situation. But in the meantime, I am pleased that the current budget permits substantial support for those programs which I have mentioned.

I'd like to go on to the companion program that goes with this, Mr. Speaker, when we are talking about municipal assistance or tax reduction, that is the Alberta Property Tax Reduction Plan.

Again, I have to look at what the situation was in 1971 when the vote for that assistance on a straight \$75 across-the-board to home-owners in Alberta - nothing for renters - was \$16.3 million. If you look at the corresponding vote in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker, you will see that that is increased to \$69.5 million, an increase of 425 per cent in three years.

Mr. Speaker, the government today, in consideration of recent announcements, was able to review the Alberta Property Tax Reduction Plan and make a further improvement to it. I am pleased to tell all hon. members that the property tax reduction for the removal of education tax on residential property has now been extended effective this year to cover all residential property. So we are moving beyond the level of the fourplex that we had recently announced at the beginning of last month. I am pleased to say that the estimated \$11.7 million from general revenues will further support this program, which will put in a new estimate, I think, of about \$81.2 million. We've just about got a 500 per cent increase in three years to the residential property taxpayers of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to change now for a few moments and talk about the programs of the Alberta Housing Corporation. First of all, there are four new programs to announce for this year, programs that we have been working on over the past year or several months. They are on the verge of being signed, of reaching agreements with the federal government. It will open up, I think, the opportunity to obtain housing, either by rent or through ownership techniques, for another large segment of our Alberta citizens.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, is the program for Metis housing based on the experience of last year. We are prepared to work with the federal government and expand the program this year, perhaps take advantage of their Rural and Remote Housing Program and some avenues, perhaps, of National Housing Act financing and proceed and expand the program that got off to such a good start last year.

If I could talk now about the second new program that will be introduced to Alberta this year. All hon. members will recall the very good debate we had with respect to how the matter of public housing could be handled, whether it should be done by private enterprise, by the government or by a mixture of both. I'm happy to say, Mr. Speaker, that this year Alberta will be entering the area of public housing provided by the private sector.



We intend to do this by way of a rent supplement program whereby the province, through its various housing authorities in various locations throughout Alberta, will rent from the private sector certain numbers of vacant suites on two-year bases. The rent supplements that will be required to pay the difference between the economic rent necessary for those apartments and the rent the tenant is able to afford will be shared on a 50-50 basis by the province and Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a tremendously exciting program, one which we have been working on for several months. It means that now we've got the opportunity to expand public housing in an area where the public sector can be involved. No longer will all public housing tenants be identified by their physical location in a project which is labelled or identified really as a public housing project. It also has further financial and construction advantages of being able to move tenants in within one or two days once this agreement is settled. So again, Mr. Speaker, I think it is a very significant advance in the field of social housing.

A third program I'd like to announce which will become effective this year, and one which we have been working on for many months, is the Assisted Home Ownership Program. Mr. Speaker, I think all hon. members are aware that the federal government some months ago announced a federal Assisted Home Ownership Program. We examined this very carefully and wanted to see if the province could participate in a way that would be complementary to the program, rather than parallel to it. We have succeeded in doing that and have developed a provincial program of assisted home-ownership which will stack on to the federal program. In other words, a provincial program will take over at the bottom of the income level that was formerly the base for the assisted home-ownership program.

But generally speaking this is going to mean outright grants per year plus reductions in interest rates to those income levels of families in the range from about \$6,500 per year to \$11,220 per year, and this includes about 42 per cent of the Alberta population on a head-of-family income basis, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I think it's a tremendously exciting program and hopefully it's one which will help Albertans at certain income levels obtain their own homes and not have to rely on public housing.

The last program I want to mention, Mr. Speaker, is the Rural Housing Program, and again I think this is one which is very exciting and which will certainly add to the well-being of the agricultural society of Alberta.

Very simply, what we're doing, Mr. Speaker - it is, I think, a new concept - but it's applying the principles of public housing to individual farm homes. Up until now in Alberta it was always considered that public housing was something that happened only in the urban areas; that you had to have a housing authority; that you had to have a group of some homes anyway, at least five or six, to get a little public housing development going. But in this way we're going to be able to provide homes for agricultural families on the family farms throughout Alberta on the same basis as homes are provided on a rent-g geared-to-income basis for urban dwellers.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but we're building in a very attractive option to purchase and doing everything we can to provide safe, sanitary and modern housing for our farm families on a financial basis that will be attractive to them. And again, the rent supplement, if there is one, will be shared 50-50 by the province and the federal government.

When I present the budget later on during the Estimates, Mr. Speaker, you will see that we have programmed for 225 farm-family homes in this first year of the program.

Mr. Speaker, I have told you something about the future programs of the Alberta Housing Corporation. I'd like to spend just a few moments talking about the past year's programs of the Alberta Housing Corporation. The corporation, of course, has been the subject of a fair amount of sensational news coverage during the past months. That news coverage contained many references to the fact that staff morale was very low and it was very difficult to get work done. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it seemed everybody in Alberta knew that except the staff of Alberta housing. They set about doing the jobs that the government and the Legislature had charged them with doing and have, I think, achieved a really remarkable record.

First, Mr. Speaker, in the program of land assembly they were given a \$4.9 million budget and by the end of the year they'd been involved in land assembly in areas throughout the province that came to \$7.9 million, so they just about doubled their budget allocation, went over it by \$3 million. Most of this was in the Fort McMurray area but it did involve a tremendous extra effort and a lot of work by the staff.

The first year of the Metis housing programs saw 55 units built. A budget of \$950,000 was over-spent by a quarter of a million. Again, a very nice kind of statistic to be able to bring to the members of the Legislature. Insofar as the Senior Citizen Housing Program

is concerned, of course it was only in May of last year, Mr. Speaker, that the new senior citizens housing Act was passed. As is often the case when you have new legislation it's very difficult to get programs under way because of administrative or bureaucratic kinds of difficulties. In any event there are eight senior citizens' lodges with 457 new beds either under construction or on the planning boards plus another 494 units of self-contained accommodation under that part of the Act. Again, Mr. Speaker, I think quite a remarkable achievement for a new program that really only had half a calendar year to run by the time that new Act was passed. Again the legislature had budgeted \$6.6 million and we were able to commit \$11 million for senior citizens' housing in the later part of 1973.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that the budget for public housing was under-spent. If this is a trend that's developing, nobody in the province could be happier than I am. It's too soon to tell if this is a permanent trend, but on the basis of last year it was encouraging. It certainly meant that those funds could be diverted elsewhere.

Again, Mr. Speaker, in the field of direct lending another rather remarkable achievement - I say remarkable because every time I talk about increased statistics in the various segments of the work of the Alberta Housing Corporation it means a lot of paperwork, it means a lot of overtime work, it means a lot of approvals and personal interviews to get these housing units under way and on the market. Members will recall that in 1971 the budget for the direct lending program of the corporation was \$5 million. I am pleased to say that an equivalent amount approved for 1973 or committed for 1973 was \$36.75 million.

Mr. Speaker, a great majority of those housing units were diverted to parts of the province outside the two metropolitan centres where other lenders were not as eager to go. Just to give you some comparative statistics, in 1971 there was a total of 349 units approved under the Alberta Housing Corporation direct lending program. The total for 1973, Mr. Speaker - 1,962 units or an increase of just over 500 per cent in two years.

I would like also, Mr. Speaker, to talk for a few moments about planning generally. With all of this activity going on throughout the province many of our municipal governments and our local regional planning commissions are concerned about the orderly development in the level of development that is taking place. Again I think it is important to note that the grants budgeted for regional planning commissions by direct grant from the provincial government in 1971 were just under \$600,000. In this year's budget they have increased steadily year by year. We're up to just over \$2 million - again a 334 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker, in three years. I know this is worthwhile financial support to planning programs and planning bodies that certainly do need the help.

I think members, particularly the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-McMurray, are aware of the tremendous input there has been made into the Fort McMurray region. I think the province has stated very clearly that it is committed to making Fort McMurray an excellent city of the North. Despite the problems we have with respect to shortages of material and men, difficulties that have been imposed on us by bad breaks in the weather, the hardships imposed on everyone who's involved as a result of the boom conditions in Fort McMurray, there have been rather substantial achievements made in the town of Fort McMurray.

Again, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. members refer to their budgets they will see that there is a budget commitment estimated for 1974 for development work in Fort McMurray of \$27.7 million. Mr. Speaker, this represents a spending in 1974 of a program that we think eventually will cost just over \$33 million. These are direct provincial development funds which are going into this potential new exciting city in the Alberta oil sands region. It's going into the development of residential areas. It's going into the development of housing. It's going into the development of industrial park areas which will be leased to private industrial developers. It's going into the preparation of a new general plan for the town of Fort McMurray. So not only are we trying to expand it, but we are trying to go back and improve and redevelop, where necessary, that which is existing there.

We recognize that there will be a great surge of house-building there, Mr. Speaker, and we have in our direct lending program set aside a substantial amount, I think this year it's \$3 million, for direct loans to individuals to build homes in the Fort McMurray region. So again, a rather substantial commitment to this very exciting part of Alberta.

Another program that will be put before hon. members of the Legislature for approval, I hope, both by way of legislation and financial support, will be the office of the northeast regional commissioner. This is a concept, Mr. Speaker, whereby the government hopes, by legislation, to establish a regional commissioner's office to be located in Fort McMurray, to be a project manager, if I might call it that, for the great array of physical development and government services, both socially and physically, that will be required for that whole oil sands region as it develops. So we are trying to look down the road, I think, to a pretty exciting time in the oil sands region.

Mr. Speaker, I haven't used my time, but I have said what I wanted to say. I'm enthusiastic about the level of support that the Estimates include for approval for our

municipal governments. I'm optimistic and hopeful that the four new housing programs which I announced for Alberta citizens will again provide the opportunity either to rent or to buy decent accommodation, will be of assistance to our citizens. And of course the brand-new announcement today with respect to the removal of the education tax for all rental property that is residential in nature, I think is one which should be very welcome news.

With those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I conclude my contribution to this debate.

MR. J. MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the rest of the Assembly in congratulating the Provincial Treasurer on this budget presentation. It is indeed a forward-looking document which will serve to continue the needs of our dynamic economy.

First, Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on the tremendous agricultural programs which we now have in this province of Alberta and the optimistic outlook which is now evident. This has not been by accident, Mr. Speaker. It is the result of careful thought on behalf of our Minister of Agriculture. For the first time in the history of Alberta, last year saw agricultural production exceed the billion-dollar mark. Truly this is an outstanding feat which is possible only by the efforts put forth by our farmers coupled with favourable markets and prices.

I would refer first of all, Mr. Speaker, to the advance which has been made by this government in seeking out and establishing markets for agricultural products throughout the whole world. We have always been an exporting province, in fact 80 per cent of our production is exported outside of Alberta. For this very reason, it is essential that we must develop markets outside our own province. This is why the export branch of the Department of Agriculture was expanded by this department to promote agricultural markets all over the world. Just last week we saw a huge sale of pork to Japan and I believe it was yesterday that another huge sale was made to Cuba.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on the one situation we now find ourselves in, and this is in regard to the price of cattle which at the moment is the only dark spot on our agricultural horizon. This situation has occurred because of market conditions throughout the whole North American continent. This, along with increased feed and input costs, has put the feeder of cattle in a very unfavourable position. I believe the start of the market disruption goes back to last August when the United States government froze the price of beef, and this was followed by an embargo on Canadian beef going down to the United States by our federal government. From these two events, the market has never fully recovered and has resulted in a backlog of beef which we still have with us today.

Just this last week we saw a flood on the market of cattle, the prices dropped and, as the hon. Member for Macleod just mentioned, most of the subsidy being paid by the federal government has been swallowed up and has resulted in the producer getting very little benefit from it. However, Mr. Speaker, we are hopeful that the federal Department of Agriculture will reconsider their stand on taking the subsidy off A-4 carcasses on April 6 and A-3 carcasses on April 13 and extend this to the life of the subsidy program so that we can have orderly marketing of our cattle. Incidentally, the loss to the feeders on the cattle they have been fattening has been in the neighbourhood of from \$100 to \$150 and even in some cases greater than that.

In this regard, Mr. Speaker, my advice to this Legislature is - to those of you who are waiting for the price of beef to drop - we believe it has hit bottom and now is the time to go out and fill freezers.

We have top quality beef in Alberta, so tell your friends to go out and buy it, eat it and enjoy it.

I would also at this time mention the many programs which have been instituted, not only to promote agriculture but also to get more people into the agricultural industry, both directly and indirectly. Under the Agricultural Development Corporation we have set up a series of loans. We have agricultural development loans, a Guaranteed Loan Program, a Beginning Farmers Program, a Future Farmers Program and a snowed-under or damp-grain guaranteed loan program. We have set up all these programs, Mr. Speaker, and our policy is to aid the needy and not the greedy. We realize there will be some abuse to these programs but we hope it will be minimal. We also realize that the prices of land and equipment have gone up, but we must bear in mind that the prices of our products have also gone up very substantially. So granting these loans to enable farmers to establish viable operations will be one of the best things that has ever happened in this province.

We have indirect programs which have aided in the establishment of secondary processing of agricultural products within Alberta. In this regard we see rapeseed plants, alfalfa processing plants, farmers' markets, cheese plants, alfalfa pelleting plants - all being developed within the borders of Alberta. At this time I would remind

you of the rapeseed plant which is being built in my Lloydminster constituency. It will be built this summer, and is being built, by a consortium of three companies, United Grain Growers, B.C. Packers and Mitsubishi of Japan. We hope this is just a start on what we envision as a tremendous industrial expansion in the Lloydminster area.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Lloydminster constituency I would be remiss if I did not mention the part the oil industry has played in my constituency in the past years. I believe I'm in a very favourable position because of the economic balance we find in the Lloydminster area. I refer, of course, to a strong agricultural industry, coupled with an important oil industry. In regard to the oil industry in my constituency, although the oil is heavy and hard to extract from the ground, it has the advantage, as far as we are concerned, of being quite labour-intensive and provides many jobs for the people of my area. We look forward to continued oil activity not only in regard to drilling but also development of an increased recovery program.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that this government is not following along the same route as Saskatchewan with their very controversial Bill No. 42 which pegs the price producers are paid for crude oil and took unto itself the land rights. By the Saskatchewan government's action the oil companies have had to reduce their employees by 25 per cent. We see this legislation sweeping expertise out of the industry in Saskatchewan in tidal waves. Mr. Speaker, you can well imagine the traumatic effect it has had on the smaller communities in Saskatchewan. We do not want this to happen in Alberta. We want a strong, viable industry to carry on the job of exploring and developing our natural resources.

Mr. Speaker, I might also mention the increased activity we find in our Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation with its numerous programs and financial assistance to rural communities. We find the programs initiated by the minister's department are being well received at the local level. Facilities are being provided to serve and make rural life more attractive to all the people.

Mr. Speaker, the building of health care centres and the total health care concept are indeed another interesting development we see in other rural areas. We find facilities being built which not only have nursing home features, but also auxiliary home care, as well as active and emergency health care. Such a centre will not only provide better service, but also prove to offer savings in health care costs.

I was very impressed with the statements made during the budget debate by our very modest, unassuming and capable Minister of the Environment.

MR. HENDERSON:

Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it the Alberta Legislature we're talking about here in this debate?

MR. J. MILLER:

Yes it is.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Right here, Jim, right here.

MR. J. MILLER:

He's doing a magnificent job in providing water and sewer facilities for all rural Albertans. He has done a tremendous job in setting up a very dynamic department to serve and uphold our clean air and water policies within the province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, we also have our Minister of Industry and Commerce carrying the ball for Alberta in regard to freight rates and the establishment of industry in our province.

Then we have our Minister of Highways and Transport building and paving roads throughout rural Alberta ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

That's what he's supposed to do.

MR. J. MILLER:

... and our minister responsible for tourism promoting a very important industry at the same time keeping a watchful eye on prices of consumer goods and services.

And then again, Mr. Speaker, we have our Minister of Telephones and Utilities, who is in charge not only of the most efficient telephone system in the world, but also is carrying out a rural gas policy to bring natural gas to the farmers in Alberta as well as providing services to all our villages and towns.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Who's next, bud?

MR. J. MILLER:

What about the efforts by our Minister of Municipal Affairs to remove the foundation program education tax of 28 mills from property, and the dedication of our ministers of education, the Minister of Public Works and other ministers towards implementing programs for all Albertans.

And, Mr. Speaker, then again, we have our charming Solicitor General. She's just got to be the greatest in Canada.

In closing, Mr. Speaker ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

You just started.

MR. J. MILLER:

... I am sure that this budget is one that is in the best interests of all Albertans. It is a budget of which we all can be proud. It is a forward-looking budget in which we not only have compassion for those less fortunate than ourselves, for those of our senior citizens on fixed incomes, but it offers a challenge for each and every one of us to look forward with optimism and the desire to make this province of Alberta the acme of success, the jewel of Canada and a province of which we all can be proud.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the programs of this government are meeting the challenge. We are blessed with hard-working ministers and a leader who is leading the way in Canada with his dynamic approach to the problems of the day.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. GRUENWALD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, everyone who has spoken so far has indicated very clearly and in no uncertain terms that this was a really good budget. All have congratulated the Provincial Treasurer, and I don't know if it's a good one or not but I'm prepared to take their word for it. I'm also prepared to congratulate the Provincial Treasurer.

I'm not an economist so I really don't know much about budgets or money - maybe that's the reason I have so little of it, Mr. Speaker. But there are a couple of things that I do know and I have observed after listening to the learned members from both sides, that we've got more of everything in the budget, we've got more income, we've got more expenses, we've got more operations and we've got more hot air - a lot of it's been hitting me in the face, as a matter of fact.

So far we've heard the voice of prophecy from some, we've heard the voice of doom from some quarters, and we've heard the voice of experience from my immediate right here, as a matter of fact. Now you'll hear the voice of one crying in the wilderness, I'm afraid.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear, hear.

MR. GRUENWALD:

It's really not my intention to analyse the budget in any detail, but there are a few areas that I believe are important and worth while bringing to the attention of the government, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I did want to have a little chat with the Minister of Education who, I see, is not in his place, but I am sure that his colleagues will convey the message to him, and if not maybe he can read it in Hansard. I believe that the Minister of Education - as a matter of fact I must give him credit, I think he does a good job, he is very straightforward in his approach to his department and I appreciate the way he goes straight into the job at hand. When he answers questions, he answers them quite straightforwardly. However, there are some areas in which I still think the Department of Education has quite a long way to go.

Number one, the minister indicates through the department that they are giving increased assistance to private schools. I think the indication is that there is about 35 per cent more assistance. I acknowledge that a 35 per cent increase is substantially better than what it was before, but I also recognize that 35 per cent of something that was very small before is still considerably small. I feel very strongly that private-school supporters, while I recognize they are doing something that they have the option of doing or not doing, are making very great personal sacrifices. They have the courage of their convictions and they are prepared to pay for these convictions. However, they are still, at the same time, making pretty worth while contributions to our society through the very fact that they are paying into the local taxation scheme for schools more than they are taking out.

I am also interested in noting that the Minister of Education, in an interview I read in The Lethbridge Herald, said that the voucher system, which would be a type of situation that would help the private schools while having the grant follow the child, would lower the standard of education. Now, I am of the opinion, Mr. Speaker, that I can get any kind of document I want that suits the type of product that I am trying to sell. I'm pretty sure that for every document the minister or anyone else could get which would show that the voucher system decreases the value or the standard of education, I think I could get one that would show just the opposite was true. Because, you know, it depends upon whom you go to and what kinds of arguments you put forward.

So I'm not convinced by any stretch of the imagination that it just automatically lowers the standard of education, and one of the real big things that people don't seem to want to realize or accept is, if the grant were to follow a child then you would see a greater involvement of the parents in the education of their children. And this is what we need in this country of ours, parents who really care about the type of education their children receive, because it's a basic right of theirs. Let's not knock it. If they want to do it, let's go along with it.

Also, there is a tremendous increase in the number of people who now feel they would like to see some permissive legislation that would at least give this system a try. In November the Alberta School Trustees' Association did a survey, and I don't know who they surveyed but it wasn't me, so there is no bias there. It showed that 50 per cent of the people surveyed in this province indicated that they would like to see, in some parts of the province at least, the voucher system on a trial basis.

Also, in the matter of the distribution of corporation taxes, Mr. Speaker, the minister has indicated the government's position on the distribution of corporation taxes and other areas of education. The statements that are made are very lofty and they sound good. I realize that the statement, as I understand it, leaves the distribution of these corporation taxes, if they're going to be distributed to separate schools and public schools on a sort of pro rata basis, at the discretion of the minister.

Now, he calls this a position. I don't know if that means it's a promise or not, and I don't know what is required in order for something to happen in this area, but I would say that the minister should be extremely careful about making promises that he may be held to. I think you will all remember, if you've read the Bible, where King Herod had a birthday party and he made some pretty rash promises. And you know what happened - somebody's head ended up on a plate. So I hope that the minister wouldn't make promises that would cause him any problems.

But the thing that I would like to know of the Minister of Education is, corporation taxes - which is pointed out in No. 2 on his position paper, and I think is the most important one:

2. On a phased-in basis, the corporate portion of revenue from supplementary y requisitions will be moved towards greater equity and fairness by administrative changes and the injection of provincial funds effective January 1, 1975.

What we're really wondering, Mr. Speaker, is will the action be taken on the basis of need and equity only? Or will a school board have to exhaust all its full legal remedies, including the rights of appeals, before the minister will act on that particular statement? I am sorry that the minister is not in to take note of this observation, but I will bring it to his attention during the Estimates.

There is another area that comes under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Education that few people know about, very few people hear about, and I think it is something that has to be brought to the attention of the government by someone. That is the area of the Alberta School for the Deaf.

It is my information that there are problems of neglect in the Alberta School for the Deaf. I understand that they are short of finances. I also have noticed that in the Estimates there is a 14 per cent increase in funds over last year, and I am not even sure if that is going to do the job. I regret that the minister has indicated - and we all know - that that school has been without a superintendent for several months now. I wonder if it's really that difficult to get a superintendent for an institution so worthy of being looked after as that one.

Also, there are other areas in the area of the schools for the deaf of this province that I think are worth looking at. I think there is a need for an advisory board or a board of directors of some kind that would look after things other than just the school itself. I think there should be some kind of community service for the deaf. I think there should be a counselling program, there should be a registry of interpreters for deaf people for areas in which they can't make themselves heard. I think there should be a home for the aged deaf, maybe training programs for these people and things like that. I think they're really important, but not of such magnitude, Mr. Speaker, that anybody's going to get elected. I hope they won't lose an election on the basis of them, but I think someone has to speak out for these people and make some of these little social services known, because I think they're important even though it's to a small segment of our society.

I was very pleased to hear of the new announcements from the Minister of Municipal Affairs this evening. I am sure it's going to help more people. In particular I am interested in the area of assisted housing for lower income people, because I think most of us will agree it used to be that if you had a \$10,000 a year income you were away to the races as far as owning a home and all the rest of it, and it just isn't the case today. So I think it's important that these people have a home, because after all, the only way that you can raise a family in an atmosphere that is conducive to a home and a family certainly is as much as possible in a single-dwelling home - if it's feasible at all. So I'm very happy about that.

I am also very happy about the announcement that Lethbridge will have a 10-unit addition to at least one of its senior citizens' homes. We've got halfway there. I think there's a need for another ten, but nevertheless it's a big help to get these extra ten units. It is also worthy of note, Mr. Speaker, that there seems to be a tremendous demand for senior citizens' homes in Lethbridge, more so than in most places. I think it is just because the temperature was 60 above there yesterday. Need I say more? It will be that way tomorrow. You know it's just a great place to be and they all want to stay there. They don't want to die, they want to live long.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Fifty-six degrees.

MR. GRUENWALD:

As a matter of fact there were some people who had died and gone to heaven and said it wasn't good enough. They come back there as a matter of fact. Yes, that's right.

It was good to see the guidelines for the municipal governments drop as far as the 7.5 per cent. I favour it but I also have some apprehension about it. I just hope that municipal governments won't become careless and go hog wild as far as local taxation is concerned. At the same time I recognize that if we are going to have local autonomy by municipally elected people, local autonomy to me means, the right to tax and the right to spend. I think it is just that simple. That's just actually what local autonomy is, but it doesn't mean they should run away with it.

Another thing that really bothers me - and I think this also comes down to the purview of the Minister of Education - is, why is it that the guidelines for local taxation were taken off for municipalities but not for schools.

I was also pleased to hear the Minister of the Environment indicate in his talk that there is a big tendency towards protecting the river valleys as far as land is concerned. I think that this is a good move. It makes it all the more feasible and all the more likely that the river bottom by the Oldman River in Lethbridge will show up as an ideal location for a park. We will be hearing more about that later on as the motion comes forward asking the government to look into the feasibility of such a park in Lethbridge.

I think in the Department of Health and Social Development there are a couple of areas that the minister might well have a little chat about with some of his regional offices. The ones that I am really concerned about and get pretty upset about are some of the

counsellors in the regional offices who are badly in need of some counselling, Mr. Speaker.

They certainly are lacking in good judgment in some of their counselling. It really upsets me to think of the poor judgment that they use at times. I am thinking now of older people who are on the - I would like to describe the situations but I am afraid that they might become known by them - but who are on the income supplement and for some reason or other they may acquire some other income or they take some small job that disqualifies them for the extra amount or they received social assistance and they feel that they now have been paid too much. They come zooming in on them, condemn them and make them feel as though they have committed an absolute crime by going to work and picking up a few dollars. It's just ridiculous.

Instead of using a little bit of common sense, coming in and indicating to them - as a matter of fact I think I would congratulate them on the fine attempt they've made to get themselves off welfare, going out and going to work, instead of condemning them for going to work and putting themselves in a position where they have - to go and say, we'll have to now delete \$5 a month payments to pay this back. When I think of a situation like that then I look at some of the payments that are not up to date, the delinquent payments to the Alberta Opportunity Company, or the farm loans for thousands and millions of dollars. Then we swoop down on these helpless people for \$5 a month. It's just unreal. I just think another look should be taken at this type of procedure. I would hope that those people would use a little more discretion in their approach to this type of situation.

The other area that I think of is the Alberta Health Care Insurance Commission. When a senior citizen - they're relieved of their premiums for Alberta Health Care, I believe, if they are over 65. But if his wife is under 65 and they have dependants and they die, then, if I understand it correctly, they must start paying the premiums. This creates quite a hardship on these people. I don't know by what rule we would assume that if the husband dies he is going to leave his wife and children in better shape than if he were alive. So I just think that once they have had that benefit, when the older of the two dies - it could be either one as far as that goes - certainly that family should continue to have those benefits. I just think it is a little rough after a situation like that for them to have to pay the premiums. There are some cases where this can happen, and it bothers me a little bit.

I wonder, while we are on Alberta Health Care, if the Member for Edmonton Ottewell is going to reintroduce a bill that we had last year, Bill No. 220. I am sure he has received a lot of correspondence indicating that this would be a very welcome type of legislation. I'm just wondering if we're going to have the courage to come forth with a bill of that nature again?

In the area of the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation - nobody is here tonight at all, Mr. Speaker. We should really call this off. I would hope that he would make himself available to the Lethbridge group that has been trying to get close to him for a long time. The Allied Arts Council has been trying desperately to get hold of the minister to see if we couldn't get a sympathetic ear to the operation of the Allied Arts Council in Lethbridge.

The Minister of Advanced Education, I'm sure, hasn't been approached and no mention has been made of it until now, but I think maybe I should tell him, and be the first one to tell him, that there is a request for a Christian college in Lethbridge at some place - at one of the universities.

AN HON. MEMBER:

He isn't here either.

MR. GRUENWALD:

I think another thing that the Minister of Advanced Education would be well-advised to do is either start checking the speeches of the deputy minister as he goes around talking to the universities in this province, or he should write them for him because what the deputy minister says and the minister says are not consistent.

Also, on the subject of the Minister of Advanced Education and that department, I still wish that they would get serious and have at least a serious look at the possibility of a school of optometry for Alberta or western Canada. The need has been demonstrated. It isn't a matter of maybe we need it or maybe we don't. That just isn't the case at all. We know the need is there. I believe he has the responsibility to do it. With the announcement of the new funds, I can't see any reason not to.

Generally speaking, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the government and the ministers for the, generally speaking, pretty good attention that they gave to Lethbridge and southern Alberta. I hope that - you know, we have a bridge coming up there. We have the downtown development where there will be a new court house. There will be a new



administration for the Province of Alberta in downtown Lethbridge. Mind you, the province bought the land too cheaply, but nevertheless we are glad they are going to be there.

I hope they will continue to exercise and realize their sense of duty and responsibility by continuously upgrading southern Alberta, and that they will do it from a point of [view of] responsibility and not a politically-oriented one. That wouldn't be very good.

I would like to thank, too, the government for the contribution it has made to the up-and-coming Canada Winter Games that are going to be held in Lethbridge from February 11 to 23 next year. We have a new sportsplex there on which we received some assistance. It's unique. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I think there are going to be only two like that in North America. With the outdoor speed-skating rink that, in spite of our balmy trade winds that come sailing through there in February and March, we will be able to hold the ice even at a 45 degree temperature on a 40 miles an hour trade wind, we'll call it. We can be very proud of that.

I hope that the government, when it starts setting the dates for the opening of the Legislature next spring, and it can't say it didn't have plenty of warning, will keep in mind the dates of the Canada Winter Games from February 11 to 23, 1975. That's February 11 to 23, 1975 in Lethbridge - that the sessions will not start until after that time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

I've already recognized the hon. Member for Innisfail. Then I think it might be appropriate if we had the hon. Member for Highwood followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley.

MR. DOAN:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a few observations on our expanded people's progress program budget so ably presented by our Provincial Treasurer. If our finances continue to improve as his experience improves, we have nothing to worry about.

Our Progressive Conservative government under the able leadership of our widely-known Premier, Peter Lougheed, never looks back.

Mr. Speaker, our 1974 budget is an illustration of a program of economic development and diversification. This program was set in motion last year and the previous year with such initiatives as the Alberta Opportunity Company, the Agricultural Development Corporation and the Alberta Energy Company, which is apparently to be the means for investment by our government and individual citizens in petrochemical and other resource upgrading industries of a major nature.

Mr. Speaker, our government's moves to diversify Alberta's energy-based economy are an absolute essential part of our policy and we really hope they can be extended to the federal level. Our budget demonstrates the ultimate in optimism, slightly over the \$2 billion mark, with well-enlarged loans to people-oriented projects.

Mr. Speaker, some of the most important loans bear mention, such as, \$76 million will go to the Alberta Housing Corporation, including \$33 million for direct home loans for low income earners. This, Mr. Speaker, will really be appreciated in my constituency where we hope to get self-contained units in two areas to relieve our senior citizens.

Mr. Speaker, in order to advance to the utmost one of our most important basic industries, agriculture, the funds allotted to every department of this industry will encourage every effort to improve agricultural production, and we all appreciate our agriculture minister's progress in advancing agriculture in Alberta today.

Mr. Speaker, farm fuel costs will be steadied by an \$11 million program to subsidize farm fuels. This will certainly be well accepted by our farmers today who have become almost completely power operators. It is said we will probably be using the cheapest fuel in the world because of this subsidy.

Twenty million dollars have been set aside for the natural gas rebates to protect all Alberta consumers from the anticipated rise in the cost of natural gas. It is hoped, Mr. Speaker, that in due time our government will be able to hold the price of propane in a ratio comparable to our control on natural gas.

Reduction in gasoline tax will help counteract expected rises in gasoline costs - a benefit to all who have to buy this fuel.

Mr. Speaker, property taxes which were cut last year by \$54 million through rebates, will further be reduced by another \$15 million with full removal of the 28 mills or the

full cost of the education program on property, a promise this government made our electors three years ago. Renters are expected to pick up \$8 million in tax credits for their allowance as renters of their homes, bringing them some consideration for exemptions from school costs.

Mr. Speaker, for those hardest hit by inflation, the budget has \$40 million in extra expenditure. Social assistance payments will rise to \$104 million, up to \$20 million to finance higher food and clothing allowances which took effect on February 1. Senior citizens will get \$16 million through programs announced earlier. There will be a \$10 monthly increase in guaranteed income supplement, extended health care benefits and elimination of the \$15 deductible on drug costs. All this helps to carry our senior citizens costs that seem to have become necessary with advanced age.

Mr. Speaker, in spite of the bright future for Alberta, as we proclaim our ambitious program that should make many of our citizens progress beyond our brightest dreams in the immediate years ahead, however, I must confess that I am a little worried just where our future citizens are headed.

Mr. Speaker, it has been said already that we cannot wait to spend our money. Stores are jammed full of dry goods of every sort because they know that what they can't sell today will probably bring more tomorrow. Mr. Speaker, our wants also seem to be unlimited and what we want we want now. I've heard it said, with our 'now' government and good Conservative management, we never had it so good.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from our honourable friends on the other side of this Assembly terrible pictures of our inflationary ways, but no one has offered a cure for this world-wide condition. Surely, Mr. Speaker, we don't begrudge the millions we spend on advanced agriculture in a world that could be on the verge of starvation for many today. Surely no one would say that we should cut out the \$76 million for loans to the Alberta Housing Corporation, \$33 million for direct loans to low-income earners. Mr. Speaker, surely no one can say that Alberta, in our time of good fortune, is contributing to inflation after so long a time when we were considered only as a source of supply to other large industrial areas. After many years of paying double for transportation, high prices for our machinery, paying through the nose for all our imports, why, we took what we could get for our exports. No, Mr. Speaker, the shoe is now on the other foot. Alberta is only now coming into her own and we intend to follow our Premier and take a back seat to no one.

Mr. Speaker, with all the warnings from our honourable opposition, I am a little surprised that no one has heard recommendations that we should revert to, or adopt the Social Credit money system. But that too, I understand, recommended keeping the money in circulation. I say, what is the difference? I see also that our friends in the opposition are driving as many new cars as we in the government, so maybe we are all, contributing just a little to inflation.

Mr. Speaker, there may be other problems in our midst that could worry us more than inflation. What about the future generations of this country? Where are many of our young people headed in this mad rush of humanity? Mr. Speaker, I have been privileged in the last year to work with our committee on corrections. I am still somewhat puzzled, in my way of thinking, if we are on the right track. I believe that much good can be done, to some, and some money saved our taxpayers by rehabilitation policies, with some offenders.

Then again, Mr. Speaker, I feel very strongly at times that we have soft-pedalled the penalties of crime. Are our jails overcrowded because of our soft attitude? Why are lawbreakers treated like privileged people? Our overworked police dare not lift the hand of abuse against them, while the victims of our society have to put up with the crimes committed as well as pay the taxes to feed these characters.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about our moral decay, our unwillingness to stand up for decency, law and order; the decay of our human and moral standards which prevails in our society today, a growing permissiveness, a growing disregard for discipline and the upholding of the law.

Mr. Speaker, the decline in our spiritual and moral fibres could be a major threat to our nation.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear, hear.

MR. DOAN:

The stability of family life is being undermined by the excessive use of alcohol and drugs.

Mr. Speaker, television and other forms of media promote the perpetration of filth, violence and pornography, paid for by the taxpayers and classed as cheap, unimaginative trash. Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely impossible for any parent to completely immunize his children from this kind of trash.

Mr. Speaker, we have a trend to abortion on demand. The deliberate destruction of human life through abortion is without human reason and opposed to human nature. The destruction of human life for selfish motives is contrary to all the laws of God and man.

Mr. Speaker, we too find ourselves in a society where discipline and punishment have been replaced with permissiveness and reform and, in many cases, reward. The criminal is treated as an unfortunate misfit, in many cases getting royal treatment under the name of rehabilitation, while his victim becomes the hard luck guy. Mr. Speaker, moral decay could destroy society just as effectively as pollution and economic chaos.

Mr. Speaker, although this expresses my personal feelings, I would not have you think that I am one who has a monopoly on morals or is a paragon of virtue.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear, hear.

MR. DOAN:

So, Mr. Speaker, to get back to our budget. I feel that there are many offers of opportunities for many citizens in Alberta if we all do our share.

MR. BENOIT:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to get into this debate a little earlier than I did last year, because there is a danger that if I'm not careful here, I might find myself missing out altogether. Last year we never did finish the budget debate. This year, I understand that the afternoon I missed was the afternoon we discussed the Throne Speech, so I didn't get in on it either.

For some reason or other, I have the uneasy feeling that if a fellow doesn't get on the ball soon, he is liable to miss out altogether.

I wanted to congratulate the Hon. Treasurer, but he isn't here. There are some good things in the budget and it's not without some difficulty that a budget of this kind is put together, so congratulations are due.

That doesn't mean that I agree with everything that's in it. For that reason I would like to offer some criticism and some alternatives. I think that probably an old saying which used to come to us from this side of the House when we were on the other side would be pretty fitting at this point. They used to say that more money spent does not mean that the quality of the department is improved. This may be the case here also.

Mr. Speaker, under the circumstances I would like to adjourn the debate at this point.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

No, no.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Well, who's he talking to? There's nobody left in the front row.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

No.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:

As I hear the sounds on the two sides of the Assembly, I believe the hon. member has leave to adjourn the debate.

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, I move the House do now adjourn until tomorrow morning at 10:00 o'clock.

MR. SPEAKER:

Having heard the motion for adjournment by the hon. Deputy Premier, do you all agree?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10:00 o'clock.

[The House rose at 9:50 o'clock.]