

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Monday, May 6, 1974

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 46

The Alberta Gas Trunk Line Company Amendment Act, 1974

MR. HARLE:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being Bill No. 46, The Alberta Gas Trunk Line Company Amendment Act, 1974. The amendments have been requested by the company and cover a broad range of matters to improve the operations of the company.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. 46 was introduced and read a first time.]

MR. DICKIE:

Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 46 be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[The motion was carried.]

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislature, 165 Grade 5 and 6 students from Ogden Elementary School. These students were up early this morning. They are accompanied by their principal Mr. Barry Fisher and teachers Mrs. McMurtrie, Mr. Driedger, Mr. Clapson, Mr. Abraham, Mrs. Stewart and Mrs. Englund. I would like the students to stand and be recognized please.

TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table a reply from the Minister of Finance to my letter on the subject of excise or sales tax on road oil.

MISS HUNLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the answer to Motion for a Return No. 170.

MR. DOWLING:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to file copies of Average Retail Food Prices for Edmonton over the past month.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Department of Agriculture

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to announce a slight change in the marketing of hogs that will affect the hog situation in Alberta.

To maintain a viable pork industry here we needed to do something to expand the marketing opportunities for our producers. To that end a program of 2,000 to 4,000 hogs per week has been negotiated on an export sales basis. The minimum price under this program will be \$49 per cwt. and will be processed by Alberta packers for export to Japan. This will have the effect of increasing the producers' price without confusing the consumer market in Alberta.

The first 1,000 hogs sold this morning under this program at an average price of \$49.31 per cwt. This is approximately \$10 to \$11 above the domestic price as of today.

The number of hogs purchased under this agreement is limited, so a pooling of prices will be necessary in order that all producers may receive equal benefit from the program.

The pooling of prices from this sale is an initial step toward price pooling on all hogs sold through the Alberta Hog Producers' Marketing Board. The Board will commence daily price pooling once the mechanics for making payments to farmers is operational.

This export sale has been necessary in order to alleviate the present situation where producers are receiving a price for their hogs far below the total cost of production. Historically, producers react to this situation by decreasing production until the market price rises to a profitable level. Then the producers increase their breeding herds and in turn the supply of pork increases. This is the self-correcting mechanism inherent in the market place.

However, Mr. Speaker, it takes a minimum of one year for a hog producer to increase his production. This time limit is not a restriction placed on production by the industry but is a biological restriction for this class of livestock. The pork on the retail counter today is the result of action initiated one year ago. If the market forces were left on their own, a severe shortage of pork on the retail counter would likely appear one year from now.

In the interest of Alberta consumers and our producers we don't think that this should be allowed to happen. The export program has been implemented in order to sustain our present level of pork production for the benefit of both the consumer and the producer.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that this is in addition to the hog sale that was announced some months ago under our Forward Contracting Export Program and we hope will help stabilize prices in Alberta to our producers and to our consumers.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the announcement the Minister of Agriculture has just made will be a welcome respite to the rural people of this province who are involved in the production of hogs.

Let me emphasize that we welcome the announcement the minister has just made. I'm sure the minister regrets - and certainly I regret - that it's not a longer term kind of commitment, but even a short-term commitment is a big help, given the prices as they are at this particular time.

Mr. Speaker, we also welcome the move that the minister has indicated in the area of pooling as far as prices are concerned. In the long run, I believe that this will average out to the benefit of the swine producers in this province.

One last comment I'd like to make, Mr. Speaker, would be this: it is my sincere hope that as a result of the announcement today and as a result of the pooling approach that the Hog Marketing Board will be embarking on, hopefully this will enhance considerably the

situation that the wiener-pig operator finds himself in now. Because, if something isn't done to stabilize their particular situation before long, we will find a substantive number of those people in the wiener operation who, in fact, will have to make the adjustments the minister referred to. And those adjustments will be, in fact, getting out of the business. That will have a detrimental effect not only on Alberta consumers but on our markets outside the province.

Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government is stepping up its financial support to the youth hostel movement within Alberta.

A \$150,000 program of assistance is committed to develop an urban youth hostel in Calgary. This money is in addition to the \$35,000 of yearly assistance already given to the Canadian Youth Hostels Association for the operation of the two Alberta divisions. It is the start of a five-year hostel expansion program and is in line with the election platform commitments to expand youth hostels in Alberta.

The provincial government recognizes that in a world of increasing travel costs young people, in particular, must be provided with clean, inexpensive and well-supervised accommodation. Alberta has already done more toward the development of a first-class coordinated provincial hostel system than any other province. Travel for many young people has become part of their educational process. What better way to learn about a country and its people than to travel? Thus, we must be prepared to provide accommodation for these young people who are interested enough to visit this part of Canada. They are our future, and so it is our task to help them in their search to understand, to know and to build this great nation of ours.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Detoxification Centre - Hobbema

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct the first question to the Minister of Health and Social Development and ask the minister if he was consulted by the Chairman of the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission prior to the cutting off of funds to the detoxification centre on the Hobbema Reserve?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, my understanding of the situation is that there was no cutting off of funds in the case of the Hobbema facility. The situation there is that the commission had been supporting their deficit, being the amount required for their operation after they received their federal funding, and had been paying the amount of a statement to the Hobbema facility each month.

From time to time, partly as a result of late billing procedures on the part of those in charge of the facility, and partly as a result of the fact that the operational funds they have are always, in part, in their hands from the federal government, there was a late payment of one or two accounts, I think for February or March. This left them in an overdraft position and for some reason the operators felt obliged to close for two or three days. The facility has been operating again since that brief closure, I believe, and two cheques have recently been processed to improve the overdraft position.

MR. CLARK:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Is it the intention of the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission to continue to fund the detoxification centre at Hobbema on a month-to-month operational approach, rather than a commitment for a year in advance?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I think the answer to both alternatives in the hon. leader's question is probably yes. The payments will likely continue to be made monthly, but it's also

intended to signify to the operators of the Hobbema facility that the support will continue throughout the year.

MR. CLARK:

A further supplementary question to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Has the government or the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission given a firm undertaking in writing to the operators of the detoxification centre at Hobbema that, in fact, they do have government funding for the period of one year?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if any undertaking in writing has been given. The commencement of funding of that facility was done with the commission's view being very favourable towards the operation of it. Everything that has been done there since has not caused them to change their view that it is a very useful facility.

I believe it was the result of discussions and early billings, rather than commitments in writing, and I don't know whether the implied commitment - because I certainly acknowledge there would be an implied commitment - is for the calendar year or the commission's fiscal year. But my view is that it is in what I would call an operational condition.

MR. CLARK:

One last supplementary question to the hon. minister, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister check with the chairman of the commission and report back to the Assembly as to what type of firm financial commitment the operators of the detoxification centre at Hobbema now have from the Alberta government?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would certainly be glad to obtain for the House the information of the degree and level of the existing commitment.

Health Care Centre - Radway

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, a second question. I'd like to ask this question of the Minister Without Portfolio in charge of rural development. At what stage of development is the Radway Health Care Centre which the minister announced on October 5, 1973?

MR. TOPOLNISKY:

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the design and the blueprints have been approved and this is a matter under the Department of Health and Social Development. I will turn it over to the minister in charge.

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I don't know the stage of construction progress at this point, but being a question of detail, if the hon. leader does not wish to put it on the Order Paper, once again I wouldn't mind ascertaining that information and advising the House.

MR. CLARK:

Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, once again to the Minister Without Portfolio. Who or what body is going to be in charge of the operation of the Radway facility?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I think once again I should indicate that the hon. leader is in error if he directs that question to my honourable colleague. The discussions up to the present time, which the hon. minister in charge of rural development may know about as a result of being a member of the Assembly and living in the area, are still the responsibility of the hospital board in the area, and my dealings with them have been through the Hospital Services Commission.

My understanding from the commission, which I am satisfied is correct, is that there is no intention of restructuring the board to a different type than any other board hospital.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Minister Without Portfolio in charge of rural development. Could the hon. minister advise whether or not any research study or consultation was undertaken which led up to the Radway Health Care Centre announcement, which he sent out with his name on it?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I have to remark to the hon. Member for Calgary Bow also that the responsibility, in regard to hospitals and health facilities, surprisingly enough, is that of the Minister of Health and Social Development.

The feasibility study which was done would be the overall study on the part of the commission. It is a well-established procedure with them of acquiring current data of the patterns in which people seek and satisfy their requirements in regard to health care in all areas of the province. They have what would amount to an assembly of relevant data in respect to that area, as well as all others in the province.

They use that for the purpose of recommending the type of facility required for any area and are able to make, what I have found so far, a very useful and reliable recommendation in regard to the mix of extended care beds, active care beds, the need for surgical facilities and the like. It is as a result of having that data that a proposal was made to the people in Radway who were interested in the replacement of a facility which was in near physical collapse and that would be acceptable to them. I understand that it is.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Was the Barrhead-Thorhild-Westlock Auxiliary Hospital [and Nursing Home] District consulted prior to the announcement?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether they were consulted prior to an announcement of the establishment of the Radway centre. The commission's policy certainly is that they don't even begin to develop a proposal for an area without discussing with board members in the area for a long, long time in advance what the needs are and how best to meet them.

Now I recognize that one thing can happen where you begin to replace a facility which was an active one only with one which serves the needs of the community better by providing both active and extended care. Then you have the active board which had been looking after the old facility, and the extended care facility may actually be the technical responsibility of another board. When that came up in regard to the facility at Radway I had a discussion with the auxiliary hospital and nursing home district board members and indicated to them that we expected the jurisdictional questions to be sorted out without too much difficulty and were most interested in providing the right facility. They did not disagree with that.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the hon. minister advise if, in his meeting with the auxiliary hospital board representatives, he indicated to them that it was made on a political decision basis?

MR. CRAWFORD:

I certainly assure the hon. member that no such statement was made. I met, I think some six weeks ago, with a number of gentlemen, or ladies and gentlemen, in my office who said that the auxiliary hospital and nursing home district board had wondered about facilities like Radway, in particular, because it was in their area, where a decision was made to vary the service provided, from pure active treatment to a mix.

I had to say to them at the time, quite frankly, that I had been to Radway, I had meetings with the sisters who are out there, I had had delegations in my office, and as we developed a proposal that seemed to be the very best for the community, there was no forethought at the moment that might involve auxiliary hospital beds.

As we developed the proposal over the period of about the last year and brought in a consultant to consider the best mix of services, the idea of the nursing home beds certainly came into it. At that point I suppose, I should have called up the chairman ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The scope of the subject seems to be putting great strain on the limits which are supposed to be observed in the question period. Possibly the hon. minister might wish to expand on the topic fully on some other occasion.

MR. CRAWFORD:

Any time.

DR. BOUVIER:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. What are the plans for the staffing of this centre, especially the medical part of the staffing, in view of the fact that there are going to be X-ray and diagnostic facilities? Is the centre going to employ medical staff or is it going to be left on a voluntary basis?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, the centre would not employ a medical person. The idea is that people who are in practice in the area will use the facility in the same way that they now use other facilities, such as hospitals, when there is a practitioner in the area.

The X-ray facility would have to be handled only on an occasional basis, no doubt because the demand is not large enough in the area, and it would be subject to all the regular rules and regulations as to who operates it, how it is situated in the building with the necessary protections and so on, and the necessary degree of strength for an X-ray for that size of facility. In other words, very sophisticated X-rays, of course, wouldn't be attempted there. It would be basically travelling technicians who would service it.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

RCMP - Organization

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct this question to the hon. Solicitor General. In light of the Alberta-Canada agreement on the RCMP, can the hon. minister advise the Assembly whether she or any officials of the Alberta government have had discussions with federal officials concerning the impact of current moves to organize the force?

MISS HUNLEY:

Not to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker. Certainly no one from my department has.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Has the Government of Alberta given any consideration to the practicality, or to what their position is, with respect to current moves to organize the force?

MISS HUNLEY:

Mr. Speaker, we have a contract with the RCMP. Our contract does not expire until the year 1975 or '76. I am not positive on the date. Really, as the hirer, should we say, of the RCMP, to fill a contract in this province, I believe that the Solicitor General for Canada and his department would be handling all the administrative details of the RCMP and their future administration, and we would enter into our contract with the Government of Canada.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the hon. Solicitor General. Is the minister satisfied that present salary rates are sufficient to guarantee a continued high standard?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Order. Order.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is clearly asking the minister to express an opinion, which is not within the scope of the question period.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Are you satisfied?

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Brucellosis - N.E. Alberta

MR. J. MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Agriculture and ask the minister just what the situation is, regarding the outbreak of Bang's disease in cattle herds in northeastern Alberta?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, we have had some additional brucellosis, or Bang's disease, infections in two herds in northeastern Alberta. In addition to that, two herds have been under observation and continue to be under observation. I think I have mentioned in the House before that primarily the flare-up of brucellosis has been as a result of importation of cattle from Saskatchewan. We have attempted, over the years, to maintain Alberta as a brucellosis-free area and hope to get back to that status by additional cooperation with the federal government under whom the program is generally run.

DR. BOUVIER:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister planning any compulsory program for brucellosis vaccination, as we had in the past?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, we are now having discussions with the federal government, since the recent outbreak, with regard to that very point of vaccination.

MR. J. MILLER:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I understand that there is compensation paid for cattle which have to be shipped subject to slaughter - for grade cattle and also for purebred cattle. I was wondering if consideration was being given to upgrade the amount of payment to those breeders who are using percentage-bred exotic bulls which in many cases have cost as much or more than purebred bulls?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, the federal government has recently announced an increase in the amount they pay under the health of animals area, from \$300 to \$450 for purebreds and \$150 to \$200 for grades, in addition to the slaughter value of the animal. Inasmuch as this comes under the federal Health of Animals Division, I would think that those producers who are using exotic breeds would have to make their representations to Mr. Whelan in this regard.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

The Community Health and Social Services Centre Act

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Minister Without Portfolio in charge of rural development. Is it the intention of the minister to move that Bill No. 202, The Community Health and Social Services Centre Act, become a government bill?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I believe the honourable gentleman would realize that that's a matter for a government decision to be transmitted through the appropriate member of the government.

Health Care Centre - Radway (Cont.)

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Minister Without Portfolio again. Did the minister indicate to Redwater officials last October that the Radway facility would be built in accordance with 1973 Bill No. 219 which is a forerunner of 1974 Bill No. 202?

MR. TOPOLNISKY:

No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister indicated to anyone that the government intends to subdivide the size of extended hospital care districts to make them coterminous with active care hospital territories?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I've certainly had discussions with all sorts of people on that particular issue and I'm pleased to report that it has not yet been resolved.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister Without Portfolio. It was rather alluding to suggestions ...

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Order. Order.

MR. WILSON:

... that the minister had made, and I would like to redirect the question to the Minister Without Portfolio.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Did he or did he not read the statement?

AN HON. MEMBER:

It's in his constituency.

MR. CLARK:

He's got to say yes or no ... [Inaudible]

AN HON. MEMBER:

Oh, oh.

MR. CLARK:

"Oh, oh" yourself!

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary then, Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister Without Portfolio indicate what influence he had on the decision to build the health care centre at Barrhead?

MR. SPEAKER:

Surely, the matter of the hon. minister's influence would be one that was in the minds of those who were influenced.

The hon. Member for Bow Valley followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge East.

Cow Camp

MR. MANDEVILLE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development. Has the minister had an opportunity to visit Cow Camp on V-V ranch at Wardlaw to make an evaluation of its program?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes and no. I've certainly had an opportunity to visit the cow camp but I don't think that any evaluation of it has been fully attempted by the department or by myself, nor should it be. I think if the time comes for that, the circumstances will have to be different than they are at the present time. As I indicated to the hon. member before, my view is that the whole issue of the cow ...

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. minister, with great respect, is going considerably beyond the scope of the question.

AN HON. MEMBER:

He's just long-winded.

MR. MANDEVILLE:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. After the visit to the cow camp, does the minister feel that it would be a worth-while program for Alberta?

MR. SPEAKER:

Again the hon. member is asking a question which seeks the minister's opinion.

AN HON. MEMBER:

He's a master of policy.

MR. MANDEVILLE:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister had any further information from the federal minister in charge of immigration, Mr. Andras, in regard to Cow Camp?

MR. CRAWFORD:

No, it hasn't come to my attention recently that there has been any communication from the federal minister, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Agricultural Machine Testing Centre

MR. ANDERSON:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Has a decision been made as to the site for an agricultural machine testing centre in Alberta?

DR. HORNER:

The preliminary decision, Mr. Speaker, is that we would make use of the facilities at the Lethbridge Junior College.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Prince Albert Penitentiary - Murder of Inmate

MR. HO LEM:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question, in the absence of the hon. Attorney General, is directed to the hon. Solicitor General. This question is in regard to the tragic incident involving one of my constituents.

Can the hon. Solicitor General advise whether or not she will be calling for a report into the death of an Alberta resident, murdered in the Prince Albert penitentiary recently?

AN HON. MEMBER:

She can't. How could she? It's federal.

MISS HUNLEY:

Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker, is a federal penitentiary. Tragic as is a murder of any kind or a death, an accidental death, I would expect that to come under the purview of the hon. Solicitor General for Canada.

MR. HO LEM:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Can the hon. Solicitor General advise whether or not she has any information why this information was withheld from the victim's wife?

MISS HUNLEY:

No, Mr. Speaker, I don't have the foggiest idea what the hon. member is even talking about.

MR. HO LEM:

May I inform the hon. minister?

MR. SPEAKER:

I would suggest to the hon. member that it's more than doubtful whether an incident in the Prince Albert penitentiary comes within the official duties of the hon. minister. In that event, the question would not be allowable in the question period and perhaps it might be directed to another appropriate minister.

MR. HO LEM:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Can the hon. minister advise if steps will be taken on behalf of the victim's wife to ensure that she receives a full report of the tragic incident?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is still asking questions which do not relate to the official duties of the hon. minister.

MR. HO LEM:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Will the hon. minister advise whether or not she would offer assistance, if requested by the victim's wife, in obtaining help during her time of bereavement? Because at the present time, she doesn't know which way to turn.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Neither do you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The hon. member seems to be caught in a series of difficulties. And the last question was clearly hypothetical.

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

Relocation of Industries

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question today to the hon. Minister of the Environment. The question to the hon. minister is, have any industries or businesses taken advantage of government assistance to relocate in another area if they are proven to be obnoxious in their present location? I have in mind the Burns feedlot in the Bow River Valley in the city of Calgary.

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, one firm in Lethbridge is actively negotiating with the Department of the Environment in respect to grants for relocating the industry. All meat packing plants which have feedlots or cattle-handling facilities within urban areas have been advised and asked to study the possibility of relocating as far as the government policy is concerned.

I must make it clear, Mr. Speaker, that the government policy puts the emphasis on the feedlot operators to make a decision as to whether they move or not. The government doesn't make that decision. It just offers assistance for moving.

MR. DIXON:

A further supplementary question to the minister, Mr. Speaker. I was wondering if [there has been] any correspondence from the City of Calgary requesting that this business be located because it's a huge, commercial feedlot; it's not really attached to a slaughter house.

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, the City of Calgary has filed a complaint with the Department of the Environment in regard to the Burns feedlot.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Drumheller followed by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking.

Hog Sales to Japan

MR. TAYLOR:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the hon. Minister of Agriculture. Was the excellent announcement concerning the sale of hogs to Japan an invitation to our farmers to go into hogs, or encouragement for those who are already in, or both?

DR. HORNER:

Well, at the present time, Mr. Speaker, what we're trying to do is maintain the production that we have so that we can get out of the ups and downs of the industry. I would say that any farmer who wanted to go into hog production should weigh the possibilities very carefully over the longer term, rather than on a short-term basis. As I think the Leader of the Opposition indicated, this is a short-term program to try to maintain or get closer to the cost of production for the individual farmers.

MR. NOTLEY:

A supplementary question to the hon. minister. Has the hon. minister any preliminary estimates as to what the bonus or the price increase would be over and above the basic market price as a consequence of the pooling of this export agreement?

DR. HORNER:

No, that will be a little difficult, Mr. Speaker. Initially, the hog board advises us, it will be doing the pooling on a monthly basis, and it will be sent out to everybody who shipped pork on a poundage basis during that month.

We also have a study under way with the hog board as to how we can improve their marketing ability of hogs in Alberta and it relates to such other things as assembly points, daily price pooling and a variety of things such as that which we hope to have instigated by the fall.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking followed by the hon. Member for Sedgewick-Coronation.

Coal Market - Japanese Investors

MR. COOPER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the hon. Minister of Mines and Minerals. Is there any increase in drilling programs conducted for the sole purpose of establishing proven coal reserves in Alberta?

MR. DICKIE:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the department, in conjunction with the Alberta Research Council, is now in the process of conducting a drilling program to prove up the reserves.

MR. COOPER:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Have there been any recent inquiries on the part of Japanese businessmen or Japanese corporations into opportunities to invest in or develop Alberta's coal fields?

MR. DICKIE:

Mr. Speaker, a number of Japanese companies have indicated interest in investing in Alberta coal fields. They have been primarily, however, dealing with Alberta companies or companies which have interests in Alberta coal fields.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Retired Female Teachers' Pensions

MR. SORENSON:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Education. Has the hon. minister received any representations from the Alberta Retired Teachers Association regarding the actuarial adjustment for female teachers who retired prior to 1970 which keeps them at an adjusted rate of 13 per cent below male teachers in the same category?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have received representations to that effect. In terms of that situation, I think it must be borne in mind, as I think the previous administration did, that when you are dealing with pensions there is the actuarial adjustment as a basic and integral part of the philosophy and principles behind pensions. One of the irrefutable facts that we have to face in terms of pensions is the fact that the ladies live a good deal longer than the men.

MR. SORENSON:

A supplementary to the minister. Does the hon. minister intend to make representations to the Treasury to remove this actuarial adjustment to ensure that all retired female teachers receive the same pension as their male counterparts?

MR. HYNDMAN:

I think, Mr. Speaker, the honourable gentleman is suggesting a basic breach in the principle of insurance that has been followed and is followed in almost all provincial and federal pension plans. At the moment it certainly wouldn't be our intention to make a representation of that kind which would, in a major way, breach the entire philosophy on which pension plans in Alberta and Canada have been based.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary question to the hon. minister. Has the government's position on teacher pension benefits changed in any way since January 1973?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, it has. As a matter of fact the increase over the last two years has been almost astronomical when compared with the two previous years under the previous administration.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the hon. minister care to give an indication of what he means by "astronomical", in more explicit terms?

MR. HYNDMAN:

I believe the increase is from some \$4 million to about \$7.5 million. Also the benefits in about seven areas have been expanded very substantially, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HO LEM:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. Does the minister support the principle that certain groups who live longer than others should be penalized?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The hon. member is asking for the minister's opinion.

AN HON. MEMBER:

A good try.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Education first, if I may. Can the hon. Minister of Education advise the House whether it is true that Alberta is the only province where, in fact, this differential does exist between female and male?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Surely the hon. member is asking the minister to make a statistical comparison between Alberta and other provinces, in the guise of a representation. Perhaps he might do his own statistical research.

MR. NOTLEY:

I'll raise it another time.

Rural Gas Policy

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Telephones and Utilities. It deals with the Gas Rebate Plan. Can the hon. Minister of Telephones and Utilities advise the Assembly what discussions took place with municipal authorities in Alberta concerning the government's proposal to bring municipal utilities under the purview of the Public Utilities Board?

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Speaker, discussions took place on the proposal, prior to the announcement in the House, with the City of Edmonton, the City of Medicine Hat and the City of Lethbridge. Prior to that, we had had some indications from the City of Calgary that if they proceeded with a proposal for a joint venture with one of the private utilities in a coal-fired power plant, they would have no objections to coming under the aegis of the Public Utilities Board.

MR. NOTLEY:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. Can the minister advise the Assembly whether the authorities in question - the cities in question - agreed to the proposition in principle and support the proposition?

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether they agreed. They certainly did not express any violent objection. I think they recognized that if they're allowed to charge a utility tax over and above the Public Utilities Board approved rate, their position is much the same as it is today.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Bow.

Handicapped Persons' Allowances

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development. Would the minister advise what response he made to the Calgary local Council of Women in their recent request that the government support an increase in allowable earnings for all handicapped persons?

MR. SPEAKER:

The Chair, of course, does not know whether this entails a letter, a speech or a discussion by the minister. If it entails a document it might perhaps be sought by a motion on the Order Paper.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, could the minister advise as to what the current position of his department is in regard to earning allowances for handicapped persons?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Order Paper.

MR. SPEAKER:

If that can be dealt with within the scope of a short answer, it may be in order. The Chair is very often in the hands of the minister in this regard because the minister knows the information and the Chair doesn't. But if it requires a lengthy answer, then I would suggest that the hon. member might seek it in another way or the hon. minister might give it by way of a ministerial announcement.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the hon. minister try the short-answer route?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, there is, of course, no limitation on the amount that can be earned. That's a misnomer. What happens is that if [certain] persons earn too much on their own, then it affects the amount of social allowance they may receive if they're on social allowance. So that is the situation.

I can indicate to the hon. member that this is under review at the present time. My hope is that the arrangements, when new arrangements are announced, will be much more favourable to the group of people - the handicapped whom the hon. member mentioned - than has been the case up to the present time.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the hon. minister advise when the final decision on the review might be completed?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I think I could indicate that we will be making an announcement prior to the fall of this year.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary McCall.

Calgary Traffic Deaths - Seat Belts

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the hon. Minister of Highways. This is in regard to the three traffic deaths that have occurred in Calgary, involving a 16 year old, an 18 year old and a 64 year old man in two separate accidents.

Can the hon. minister advise whether or not seat belts were used by the victims when they were involved in the tragic accidents which occurred in Calgary?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member could perhaps try to seek that information in another way. It is very doubtful whether it comes within the official obligations or duties of the hon. minister.

MR. HO LEM:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. Will the minister be calling for a report into these accidents which occurred during the weekend?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, I get reports on nearly all of the accidents, but not detailed ones as such. I get statistical reports on the accidents and how they happened. If it was outside of the purview of the city, then it would be in detail as to why the accident happened.

MR. HO LEM:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Will the hon. minister, after the report and after investigation, provide the House with information ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Order Paper.

MR. HO LEM:

... which would indicate whether or not seat belts were worn by the occupants?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Go to the city police.

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, I suppose that I could get that information for the hon. member if he so cares.

MR. HO LEM:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Does the minister feel that information such as that will be useful?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is again asking for the hon. minister's opinion.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. SPEAKER:

Might the hon. Member for St. Albert revert to Introduction of Visitors?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS (CONT.)

MR. JAMISON:

Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly senior citizens from St. Albert and district. They have just completed a tour of the grounds and the Legislature Building and are interested in seeing their government in action.

The Breakfast Lions Club of St. Albert arranged for the tour and with them today is their bus driver, Mr. Frank Comeau. They are seated in the members gallery. I would ask them to stand and be recognized as a group of pioneers to whom we owe so much.

GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS
(Second Reading)Bill No. 55
The Northeast Alberta Regional Commission Act (Cont.)

MR. D. MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, I have a few comments to make on Bill No. 55. We can appreciate the anticipated development of energy in the northeastern section of Alberta, the activity to be expected, the increased population and prosperity resulting from all this in the north. But having recognized this, is it necessary to change the ground rules in municipal government, the rules of local autonomy and administration, be it special area, municipal district, town or city form of government? Surely our statutes cover all situations.

When I read Bill No. 55 and the sweeping powers outlined therein by establishing a commission in preference to local autonomy, I marvel that we are so soon removed from the democratic form of government which elected us to this Legislature, a system of government which provided all Albertans, 18 years of age and over, to express themselves by ballot as to whom should represent them, the people, under the democratic system of government, in the management of the people's affairs.

Mr. Speaker, it is just that plain to me. To change or to suggest another type of management of the people's affairs is a break in trust, a breach of trust. Mr. Speaker, the democratic form of government has proven itself. It provides more freedom, develops more citizens into active, knowledgeable defenders of democracy than any other form.

Wars have been fought and millions have given their lives in defence of the freedom that we enjoy and the right of choice. Our prayers and the national anthem to our Sovereign is, "May she defend our laws". Are we defending our laws or recommending another type of law? The right to choose, the right to elect individuals to represent the people is a sacred right. Let us not step backward and implement the rule of force, a system of political submission to implement a massive giveaway program.

Someone said in the House last week that the average age in the northeastern section of Alberta is 30 years, indicating inexperience or absence of knowledgeable people to run for office in local municipal government. This being a fact, what an opportunity, what a challenge for all administrative departments in government. What a challenge to teach and train these young adults in the management of their affairs - the people's affairs - of what they, the people, want.

Let us not forget, the individual is the most important of all God's creation on earth. They should be considered first in our form of government. They should be seriously considered in preference to the appointment of a commissioner with sweeping powers.

Mr. Speaker, there are those who do not know the laws and the statutes, and they know that they do not know. Teach them. That's my suggestion. The major function of a democratic government is to bring to the people the results which they, the people, want in the management of their affairs. The quickest and the most convincing way to learn is instruction with application. So we urge the government to unite and to invite all departments of learning to make a modern application of the benefits and preservation of our democratic government in the northeastern area of this, our fairest province.

Mr. Speaker, placing a commissioner in the northeastern section of Alberta would be resorting to the rule of a despot, an autocrat who rules according to his own pleasure or

under the direction of the party which appointed him, either of which would be a disservice to the people.

Since August 1971, the government in power has been vociferous in the Legislature, and by press releases, as well as through meetings all over the province, inviting people to advise the government what they need, or what the people desire in the management of their affairs, stressing dialogue, that it is important. How many times have we heard it? May I ask, is such dialogue included? Or does it include the people of the northeastern section of Alberta? Or does it exclude them in that area?

AN HON. MEMBER:

They must be naughty.

MR. D. MILLER:

We have also heard about decentralization of government. Is the appointment of a commissicner for the northeast portion of Alberta another sample of decentralization?

Mr. Speaker, I regret I cannot support Bill No. 55 in its present form, because it takes away the rights of the people, the rights of the citizens in a given area of the province. And they are just as important as any other part of the province. It takes away the right of the people to govern themselves under the various statutes of the province which we live by.

With reference to Section 7, the appointment of a commissioner takes over from the local authority any power, duty, right it has by law, on terms and conditions acceptable to the commissioner. Who ever heard of such a thing? Talk about a despot! Subsection (2) of Section 7 also continues: the commissioner has the right to bind the local authority with whatever he decides. Mr. Speaker, I urge this government to reconsider the powers and the implications of the appointment of a commissioner, as outlined in Bill No. 55, and to abandon the appointment of a commissioner described therein, in the interest of harmony and citizen input.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I revert to my earlier suggestion. If the area indicates a serious need of uninformed leadership, send in a committee of experts. Send in a committee of instructors to the area.

Can't get these blamed pages apart.

[Interjections]

MR. D. MILLER:

I'm going to do that right now.

Teach the people in the management of their affairs - in municipal government management - teach them true principles of democracy and they will govern themselves.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, in rising to take part in second reading of Bill No. 55, I would like to say at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that a number of members have taken part in the debate. I thought the comments made by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, in justifying this particular legislation, frankly - they were a noble attempt to justify an impossible piece of legislation. All of us recognize that the minister, although he had the job to get up and introduce this legislation, present it to the House and try to outline what he thought the reasons for it were, I think the best thing we can say is that the minister did a pretty good job in an almost impossible situation.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I was rather interested in the comments made by the Premier when he said the government was reluctant to go this way. I was very interested also in seeing the Premier on television this weekend, in Calgary, I believe, on television station CFCN, when he indicated that this was a very difficult decision the government had made. That, in fact, it was one of these 55-45 decisions or 60-40 decisions as to whether the government should go the route of a commissioner, as it is proposing here, or whether it should go some other route.

I'll accept the comments which the Premier made but, as of yet, we haven't heard anything of the 45 per cent or the 40 per cent point of view from the other side of the House.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear, hear.

MR. CLARK:

In fact, we've heard nothing other than rather glowing comments about this legislation, some that I see already make the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs laugh, or blush perhaps might be a better term. One of the comments made by one of the back-benchers on the government side was that this legislation, Bill No. 55, was a bold new approach. This was a bold new approach to wipe out local government in the area, to set up a one-man commission really accountable to no one. This was a bold new approach.

Mr. Speaker, I would have to suggest that this is the oldest approach that government knows. In its crudest form, here we are really being asking to approve, in this legislation, the establishment of what we can call a commissioner, as the government does, or you can call him a czar, as the hon. Member for Calgary Bow did. You can call him a dictator or whatever term you want. We are being asked here to give approval to the establishment of a one-man organization as far as northeastern Alberta is concerned. For members in this Assembly to get up and say that this is a bold new approach really leaves a great deal to the imagination.

I was particularly shocked by the comments made by the hon. Member for Athabasca. He likened the appointment of this commissioner to - and he used two examples, one was the new chairman of the Alberta Workers' Compensation Board, which I think was a good appointment. The other which he likened the appointment of a northeastern commissioner to was that of the ombudsman. Now the hon. member has been in the House, I guess, getting on to three years. He knows very well, and if he doesn't he should, that the ombudsman is not appointed by the government. The ombudsman is an appointee of this Legislature and, in fact ...

MR. APPLEBY:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, could I ask the hon. member a question?

MR. CLARK:

Yes.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is perhaps mixing two concepts, that of a point of order and that of a question. Perhaps he should ...

MR. APPLEBY:

Could I ask a question, Mr. Speaker?

MR. CLARK:

Yes.

MR. APPLEBY:

Do you have any good suggestions for this appointment?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

MR. CLARK:

Yes, if you'll just be patient.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Would the hon. members both please address the Chair.

MR. CLARK:

Yes, Mr. Speaker. If the hon. Member for Athabasca will be patient we will get to that point in due course.

To confuse the appointment of the ombudsman and liken it to the appointment of this czar for northeastern Alberta is just a miscarriage of the facts of life. I suggest that

any hon. member who doesn't know that might give careful study to the ombudsman legislation.

The same hon. member talked about Bill No. 55 and he used the comment that this was part of the constitutional arch. Some arch! When you look at Bill No. 55, especially when you look at Section 7 and Section 8 of the act, it's some kind of new constitution, I think, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member was talking about - some kind of constitution that I hope we never see in this province or in this particular country.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the real nub of this legislation really deals around the issue of the supremacy of the Legislature. Is the Legislature going to continue to exercise its responsibilities in this province, or isn't it? Is the Legislature going to continue to have control over the development of northeastern Alberta? Or, Mr. Speaker, are the Executive Council and, in fact, this commissioner for northeastern Alberta going to assume that responsibility?

It's rather appropriate, Mr. Speaker, that we would be pondering this item during this session because there have been two other occasions during this session when the government has made a move in the direction of taking things out of the hands of the members of the Legislature and, in fact, placing them in the hands of the Executive Council. So we shouldn't expect this move in Bill No. 55, I suppose, as being extremely surprising.

The most glaring example, Mr. Speaker, deals with Bill No. 10 dealing with the taxation of gasoline in this province when we had the government use, not the legislative route but the administrative route in dealing with a matter as vital to the democratic process as taxation. I must give credit to the Provincial Treasurer - after having some second thoughts about the matter, he's agreed now to go the route of the Legislature itself. I give him credit for that.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we have the legislation which the Minister of Lands and Forests has before the House, Bill No. 33, which really gives power to the Executive Council to pass regulations to suspend legislation. That also is bad in principle.

Let me say in fairness, Mr. Speaker, to the government that the previous government in this province used that approach on some occasions and it's just as damning prior to 1971 as it is after 1971.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. CLARK:

But we have to face this issue, Mr. Speaker, is the Legislature going to continue to have control over the development of northeastern Alberta, or in fact is some other route going to be used?

It is rather interesting, Mr. Speaker, in reading the words of John Diefenbaker in his book, *These Things We Treasure*, when he said, and I quote, the Opposition can and should "... prevent short cuts through ... procedures that cabinet ministers and bureaucrats frequently find attractive." And I think this sums up this particular bill very well.

The cabinet and the senior civil servants find this route in Bill No. 55, the establishment of a commissioner, as a short cut through the procedures that are normally dealt with in a matter such as this. The words of John Diefenbaker, when he points out that it's the role of the opposition to see that these "... short cuts through ... procedures that cabinet ministers and bureaucrats frequently find attractive." must be drawn to the public attention.

I still say to the government, Mr. Speaker, that despite the fact that they have committed themselves to a very great degree to Bill No. 55, it isn't too late yet to reconsider the route that they are going.

Let's for just a moment, Mr. Speaker, look at Bill No. 55 and really in fact, see what's involved in it. Section 2 deals with the establishment of the region itself, and Section 3 with the appointment. And then we come on to the next portion of the bill, Mr. Speaker, and it talks about the functions of the commissioner. It's important, Mr. Speaker, in that area, that there's not one mention of any consultation with local people. No mention in the legislation at all and it won't be mandatory for the commissioner to consult with the people in northeastern Alberta.

I think it was the hon. Member for Whitecourt in his remarks Friday morning, when he said something like this - Mr. Speaker, this may work if there is consultation with the people in the area. Well, I point out to the hon. member that there is no reference at

all in this legislation to making it mandatory for the commissioner to consult with the duly elected local officials in the area. He may, and in fact he may not.

Then we come to the next portion of the act, Mr. Speaker, that deals with the regional committee to advise the commissioner. The government is so committed to this advisory committee that it doesn't even appear on the organizational chart. It's likely a last-minute thought someone had and they pumped it into the bill quickly, but forgot to put it on the organizational chart. The advisory committee doesn't appear on that chart at all.

Then we go on to the next area, and that area deals with staffing. Obviously, there is going to have to be some need for staffing.

We come to the next portion of the bill, Mr. Speaker, and it says, the commissioner may act on behalf of the local authorities in certain circumstances. And here, Mr. Speaker, I draw to the attention of the hon. members that in Section 7(2)(a)(iii), "the Commissioner may, by his signature alone, execute any agreement or other document to be signed on behalf of the local authority." Once again, we're just going miles and miles further than is necessary in dealing with the tremendous development that's going to take place in northeastern Alberta.

Then we come to Section 8, Mr. Speaker, and this section allows the government to go beyond and pass the laws that this Legislature has already passed. In fact, it gives the Lieutenant Governor in Council the power to suspend 12 pieces of legislation - and not 12 innocuous pieces of legislation either - but allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to disregard The Improvement Districts Act, The New Towns Act, The Municipal Government Act, The Municipal Election Act, The Municipal Taxation Act, The Planning Act, The Local Authorities Board Act, The School Act, The School Election Act, The Northland School Division Act, The Alberta Hospitals Act and The Health Unit Act. And then it says: "Any regulations made under this section cease to have any effect after the last day of the next ensuing session of the Legislature." I give the government credit for adding that particular section. But that's a very small gesture to the democratic process, by adding that particular section.

Then we come to a very interesting section in the act, Mr. Speaker. That's Section 9. Section 9 says, and I quote: "The Proposed Village of Waterways Act, being chapter 9 of the Statutes of Alberta, 1940, is hereby repealed." Section 9 in the act repeals the Village of Waterways legislation.

But, Mr. Speaker, by this act, we're being asked to repeal 12 other statutes as far as one-eighth of Alberta is concerned. We're being asked to give to the Lieutenant Governor in Council the power to repeal 12 major statutes in this province. I simply say, Mr. Speaker, this isn't good enough. It isn't acceptable.

The point has been made by the Minister of Municipal Affairs that there will be a need to be able to make decisions. There's going to be great development in this area of the province in the future. All members of the Assembly agree with that. But, Mr. Speaker, let me say that the Premier, in the course of his comments, indicated that they hope to have the commissioner up in the Fort McMurray area, and he can come to cabinet once every four weeks and report to cabinet as to what progress was being made. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think this is just foolishness, to be asking us to pass this kind of legislation, and then have the commissioner for northeastern Alberta come to the cabinet once every four weeks and make his report on those things that are going to have to be dealt with.

I get the very distinct feeling, Mr. Speaker, that there are some developments in northeastern Alberta which, for some reason, the government hasn't seen fit to announce at this particular time. Because I must give this government credit; they are very astute politically. I simply can't fathom the government coming in with this kind of legislation, taking the kind of abuse they've been taking both outside and inside the Legislature when, Mr. Speaker, very easily there are a number of things they could do to make this kind of legislation very palatable if they would be somewhat flexible.

I get the very definite impression that there are some things going to happen in northeastern Alberta, that the government doesn't want to tip its hand right now ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

I don't blame them.

MR. CLARK:

... that they're fearful that some of the local authorities in that part of the province perhaps aren't going to be as enthusiastic about it as they would like them to be, and so they can be in the position rather to have things their own way and to be able to brush aside a legitimate local objection. This is the route we're going. We're going to have a one-man czar looking after one-eighth of the province, the northeast corner of the province. And so I say, Mr. Speaker, I get the very definite impression that we're not

being told everything the government knows about what's going to take place in northeastern Alberta.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, one of the kinds of things that we might not be told about is that perhaps the Shell plant is going to go ahead rather quickly. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the government has already decided we're going to have another town 40, 50 or 60 miles north of Fort McMurray, and they want to do this in an arbitrary, dictatorial manner by a person they can appoint themselves and who will be appointable to them. If the town goes along and things go well, then okay, the government will take the credit for it. And, Mr. Speaker, if it goes badly, well the minister really wasn't responsible, the government isn't really responsible, you know, they got darned poor advice from the northeastern Alberta commissioner.

On the matter, Mr. Speaker, of a second town in the Fort McMurray area, I believe there was an excellent report put out by the Department of the Environment, in which they strongly recommended against the establishment of another major population centre in the Fort McMurray region. I'm hopeful that the Shell plant will go ahead some time in the future. But let me say this, Mr. Speaker, the approach the government should be looking at, and this blessed commissioner should be looking at if, in the end, we end up going that route, is that we should have one large centre in northeastern Alberta - Fort McMurray - and we should give very serious consideration to means of rapid transit so people can get from Fort McMurray to these sites in the adjacent area. All of us have seen the effects, on many occasions, of company towns. The last thing we need in this province is another company town.

The point was also made by either the Minister of Municipal Affairs or one of his colleagues that there was a need to be able to make decisions quickly. On balance, Mr. Speaker, I would sooner have the government call the members of the Legislature back - which they could certainly do within two weeks - to amend legislation, if that is necessary, rather than have us go this particular route we're being asked to go in Bill No. 55.

The supposed commissioner is going to report to cabinet once every four weeks. In checking with the Clerk's office this morning I find that the general procedure as far as calling the Legislature into session, if an emergent situation develops, is that the members of the Legislature must be notified that in a reasonable period of time the Legislature can then be reconvened. I'm sure there isn't one member in this Assembly who, if an important item comes up as far as northeastern Alberta is concerned, wouldn't be prepared to get to Edmonton quickly. So there could be a session of the Legislature to deal with the kind of situation that might develop.

Because, the problems we're going to face in northeastern Alberta are going to be serious. Let no one question that. No one is arguing about the need for coordination in the area, but the real nub of the argument is, how are we going to do this coordinating? Are we going to have a one-man czar or dictator, use whatever term you want, or are we going to have the power to make these decisions retained right here in the Legislature itself?

Now, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary Bow, the hon. Member for Lac La Biche and I had the opportunity to be in Fort McMurray just two or three days before the session started. We met with a number of individuals in Fort McMurray. We also met with some people from the new town's board. They expressed to us their desire that there be some sort of coordinating mechanism established for the Fort McMurray area such as is alleged in Bill No. 55. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the members of the town board in Fort McMurray, the people involved in the Chamber of Commerce, the business people and professional people we met with, had no idea at all that in asking the government for some sort of coordinating mechanism for northeastern Alberta they were, in fact, going to be dealt out of the whole thing. That is really what this legislation does.

One of the points I'd like to ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs to touch on, preferably when he closes debate on this bill is, would he outline to members of the Assembly the circumstances which took place leading up to the appointment of Cohos, Delesalle and Evamy & Associates as planners of Fort McMurray. Very frankly, we have received differing points of view. We were told, by what I believe to be responsible individuals in Fort McMurray, that the new town of Fort McMurray was told that the planning branch of the Department of Municipal Affairs would not be able to carry on with the planning responsibilities of Fort McMurray. We were also told that the officials of the new town of Fort McMurray were told that, if the firm of Cohos, Delesalle [and Evamy] & Associates were taken on as the town's consultants for planning, the government would pay the bills, but that if some other firm were taken on the government would not. Now I'd like the minister, in the course of concluding the debate, to clear this matter up. Because it is I believe, rather essential, not only to know exactly what happened in the past, but more important, an indication of the approach the government is going to take in dealing with the new town of Fort McMurray in the time that lies ahead.

Then, Mr. Speaker, in the course of the minister's comments dealing with Bill No. 55, he indicated that one of the things Bill No. 55 would enable the government to do would be to have dealt with the problem of a new high school in Fort McMurray. The Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc adequately touched on that matter when he spoke in the House. He indicated there is a legislative mechanism available in The School Act right now if the government had seen fit to use it. It's not the kind of section of the Act that any Minister of Education would want to use often, but the section is there for a situation like this if it is necessary. To try to legitimize this legislation, Bill No. 55, The Northeast Alberta Regional Commission Act, because of the high school problem in Fort McMurray is really stretching the imagination a great deal and, in fact, isn't practical.

Then, Mr. Speaker, there is no reference in the legislation at all to the role the Native people in this particular portion of the province will have the opportunity to play. There is no reference in the act, Mr. Speaker, at all as to what kind of role the government sees the very sizable Native population in northeastern Alberta playing in the course of developments in this part of the province. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we can go further than that and say that there is still no indication as to what role the Native people of that area are going to be able to play in the Syncrude development or any indication that these arrangements have been finalized yet.

Might I also say, Mr. Speaker, to the Member for Bonnyville and the Member for Peace River that you, too, have oil sands in those particular areas. How are you going to feel if the same kind of approach is suggested when we start to produce the oil sands in the Peace River area? I wonder how the minister responsible for northern affairs will feel if we try to hoist the same kind of monstrosity on Peace River as we are now trying to hoist on Fort McMurray. I wonder how the Member for Bonnyville is going to feel if we try to hoist this kind of monster, included in Bill No. 55, on Bonnyville when we get to the stage of production in that particular area.

Just moving on, Mr. Speaker, to two other areas. The point was also made that unless some immediate steps are taken we are going to be in a situation here comparable to [that of] James Bay. Well, as much as we all regret what has happened in James Bay, the way the Quebec government has handled the situation and the problems that have developed there since, let me say that not in our wildest imaginings does any member of the Legislature see that kind of thing happening here.

Once again I make the point, Mr. Speaker, that if the government wants to call the Legislature into session to deal with an emergency situation, the members could be here, I'm certain, within one week. We just would have no need for this kind of legislation.

It was rather interesting, Mr. Speaker, in reading Hansard and the comments made by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I quote him when he said, "... not many people in their lifetime get opportunities to become associated with ..." and then the end of quote, "... the kind of development that is taking place up there." Well, if we pass this kind of legislation even fewer people in the Fort McMurray area are going to have any real kind of input or any kind of opportunity to be associated with this kind of development.

I emphasize the point once again, Mr. Speaker. I get the very definite impression that there is something going on in northeastern Alberta the government doesn't want to tip its hand on right now, whether it's the Shell development or whether it's something to do with Japanese interests coming into the tar sands or a variety of other interests. If that's the case - I recognize negotiations may be at a stage at which the government doesn't feel it would be in the public interest to deal with the matter right now - if that's the case, okay, let's leave this legislation. We have a fall session, or as I say, we can come back on rather short notice to deal with an emergent kind of situation.

The last point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is that this legislation we have before us really asks the Assembly to vote a motion of non-confidence in Appropriation 1461. Appropriation 1461 is the Office of Program Co-ordination. It's under the Executive Council. Last year there was \$216,000 appropriated for this particular responsibility. According to the Budget the responsibilities are to "... assist Departments in co-ordinating the implementation of assigned programs or projects designated by Executive Council."

Then we go on, Mr. Speaker, to Appropriation 1463. Here it talks about the Project Offices. Last year's estimates, 1973-74, list Program Co-ordination offices in the Lesser Slave Lake area, Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie.

So, the government is really admitting that their efforts at program coordination, through this particular kind of approach, simply have not worked. They are admitting to the Assembly, in fact to the people of Alberta, that their efforts here have failed.

I'm sure there is not a member in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, who doesn't recognize that there are serious problems in any new town, in any new development area. I'm also sure, Mr. Speaker, that it's a political fact of life that it is extremely difficult for governments to stay popular in new towns and in very rapidly developing areas. It's

virtually impossible. You don't have to look at experience in Alberta in the past, look at other areas.

Nevertheless, the fact that there is a number of unpopular decisions to be made, the fact that the government may not appear in a good light, the fact that we're being asked here to put a buffer between the Legislature, between the cabinet and the people of Fort McMurray simply isn't justifiable from my particular point of view.

So, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion I want to make two points. As I look at Bill No. 55, the real issue is whether the Legislature is going to continue to have control over development in northeastern Alberta or, in fact, whether we're going to have a commissioner who will be a buffer between the minister and the people in northeastern Alberta, and who will serve as an effective political buffer between the minister and any flak he receives, either inside or outside the Legislature. I don't believe that's proper. I don't believe that's the way we should be administering the affairs of the northeastern part of the province which, from an area standpoint, is one-eighth of the province. From the standpoint of future development in this province, it's going to play a very, very major role.

The other point I'd like to make, Mr. Speaker, is that when we look at the kind of power that is meted out in Bill No. 55 and when we look at the kind of power that is involved in Sections 7 and 8 of this legislation, there must be another way the government can go, regardless of its stripe.

I recall legislation that was introduced in 1971 - Bill No. 116 in that particular session - which certainly had some inequities in it. But at least it was an attempt by the government of that day to set up a minister responsible for northern development and to broaden his scope immensely. It isn't particularly good legislation. I'm not suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that it's the only answer. But what I am suggesting is that it would be a great deal better than the kind of approach we're looking at here.

If the government is bound on going the commission route, if it won't change regardless of whatever arguments are presented anyplace, then I would suggest, for the minister's consideration, that they should not go for a one-man commission. They should really go the route of three commissioners and an elected or appointed advisory board.

Starting with the three commissioners, I think it's reasonable if they have to go the commission route - if they won't change there - let the government appoint a senior commissioner. Then let the people in the Fort McMurray area appoint a commissioner who would be responsible for social services. Then it would likely be essential for there to be a commissioner for public works, highways, transportation and so on. If the government has to make that appointment, okay. But then at least you've got three people who are going to be shouldering this responsibility. That really was the nub of the point made by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-McMurray, Dr. Bouvier.

Also, if the people in Fort McMurray or the local boards there either appoint or elect the social services commissioner, then this person would have his ear very close to the ground in northeastern Alberta. That's something that this commissioner simply isn't going to do.

One other point, Mr. Speaker. If the advisory committee is going to function in a practical way, it's essential that it be appointed by the local jurisdictions in the area. There is the hospital board, there are the two school boards, there is the new town board in Fort McMurray itself. There are certainly people in Fort Chipewyan who should have some input. There are people south of Fort McMurray, in the Anzac area, who could make a good case for having representation on the advisory committee. Certainly the Native people in the community should have input on the advisory committee. The legislation should be changed so that these designated groups have an opportunity to recommend someone to the advisory committee themselves.

Then, if we have to go the route of the commission - and I'm not convinced yet that we should - but if that's the route the government goes, then let someone from Fort McMurray be the public services commissioner or social services commissioner. Let's have a public works commissioner appointed and then a senior commissioner. That's not a good route but it would be a somewhat more palatable one than the very unpalatable route which is presently suggested in Bill No. 55.

MR. JAMISON:

Mr. Speaker, after hearing so much talk from members opposite, I would like to say a few words on this debate on Bill No. 55.

Mr. Speaker, I have no fears about this bill whatsoever.

[Interjections]

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted our government is going in this direction. What we are heading off - and this is looking into the future, say three or five years down the road - is action by political parties or citizen groups calling for a royal commission into the development of the tar sands in Fort McMurray.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 55 shows foresight. I am pleased that the government has chosen a full-time commissioner to be on top of developments and report back regularly to the cabinet. I'm fully aware of the powers given to this person but I must emphasize to the members opposite that at this point they are just sounding off about unfounded and undocumented fears and concerns.

One important part of government is the provision of a framework in which the orderly development of human and physical resources can be carried out. In the majority of instances local governments can provide a portion of the decision-making required to adequately discharge this responsibility. There are numerous examples in the history of municipal government in the province which illustrate the manner in which responsible local leadership has benefited individual residents living in various localities.

Unfortunately, it is also true that a number of municipal governments have not been able to conduct these affairs in an economically sound or socially responsible manner. The list of reasons which justify the intervention of the Local Authorities Board is extremely lengthy. However, one important factor rises to the forefront. Municipal governments, because of their jurisdictional limits, cannot easily accommodate massive upsurges in economic development external to their boundaries, without experiencing major problems in terms of the provision of services [such as] serviced land, roads, fire, police, recreation, transportation and preservation of the environment.

The tar sands development in Fort McMurray is a case in point. One individual or commission must be responsible for the overall development of the area. Billions of dollars of private capital and millions of dollars of social capital must be put into place in a manner which benefits both the local residents and the citizens of the province.

A number of new town councils operating on a part-time basis cannot, at least in the short run, ensure that this happens. Fragmentation of responsibility and lack of coordinated effort cannot be condoned by the provincial government, given its overall responsibility for maximizing the net social benefit received by all Albertans from the development of the oil sands resources. The short-term horizon and the size of the capital investments call for unusual action. Dumping the total responsibility into the hands of a number of local governments simply invites disasters of an unprecedented magnitude.

The issue before this House is not one of local autonomy. The issue is rational and responsible government for northeastern Alberta. We are all in favour of local autonomy. Clearly it will be restored when the boom dampens down to a reasonable degree. However, local autonomy cannot take precedence over the government of the province which is finally responsible.

Mr. Speaker, foresight is what I see in this bill and I am pleased with the government for getting on with the job in an unprecedented situation. I sincerely urge all members to vote in favour of this bill.

MR. KING:

Mr. Speaker, if I may paraphrase a great Conservative statesman of another country, this is probably the worst legislation that there is, except for all of the others.

I must say that having listened to the comments made this afternoon and in the previous debate, there has been nothing suggested in the way of an alternative which would deal effectively with a serious problem that exists for a significant number of the people of this province. There is a fundamental problem raised for all of us as legislators. I think that every member who has spoken, from either side of the House, has expressed some concern about the problem which is raised. But I would like to say, as an individual and as a member of this government, that I think this legislation was produced in consideration of a number of significant concerns.

The first is that in the legislation, the power to which so many people have referred is possible but is not committed. The legislation does not disband the new town board. It does not disband the school boards. It does not disband the hospital board. Clearly in the legislation that we have in front of us today, local authority will continue to reside with the local population unless and until it is demonstrated that that is dysfunctional.

The prime responsibility that the provincial government has had in mind in the drafting of the legislation has not been the ability of the local authority to act within its own area of competence, but rather the relationship of the provincial authority with

the municipal authority when they must work together, and as well, the relationship of one provincial government department with another provincial government department.

I don't think there is an hon. member here who would not admit that some of the difficulty that has occurred in northeastern Alberta has been in this area of interdepartmental coordination. That, I think, has particularly been in the minds of the drafters as this bill was prepared and I think it's significant that this bill does not reduce, in itself, the local authority. That local authority continues to exist and to function as it has done in the past until it is demonstrated that it is not up to the challenge that it faces in the district.

The second thing that must be considered is that such power as has been delegated has been kept, if you will, on a string, and it is going to come back annually, on a regular basis, to this House in terms of the estimates that will have to be presented each year for the operation of the commission, in terms of the annual possibility, or indeed the semi-annual possibility, for a private member's resolution or for a bill.

The third thing that I think is extremely important is the necessity of the bill. That was carefully considered and I'd like to return to it in a moment if I could.

The fourth thing that has to be kept in mind is that the power delegated in the act is subject to careful and intense scrutiny. Next year, the year after next and for every year that this bill continues to be in force, I, as a member of the Legislature and as a member of the government, but more importantly the Minister of Municipal Affairs, will return to this Legislature, as will his cabinet colleagues, and will have to accept responsibility in this Legislature for the operation of the commission. They will have to accept the responsibility which is imposed on them by other members of the government, by the Opposition seated opposite, by the media in the galleries, by the people of Alberta generally and by the residents of northeastern Alberta particularly.

I cannot see that there has been such a terrible aberration or abrogation of responsibility when the position is created by an act of this Legislature, when the operations of the position return to this Legislature for scrutiny on a regular basis and when we, as a government, and my hon. colleagues in front of me as a cabinet, must regularly accept the careful scrutiny of so many of the different people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, it concerns me that we can stand in the splendid isolation of this Legislature and talk about the philosophical concepts inherent in the legislation, the principles or the lack of principle, with so little regard for the practical human problems that are being faced on a daily basis by the 10,000 people who live in Fort McMurray, when we acknowledge that that population is increasing daily, and by the people who live in all the surrounding area of the ID and the hamlet of Fort Chip.

Mr. Speaker, we have listened to this debate while member after member has arisen to talk about the principles that were established in our Legislature 400, 500 or 600 years ago and to talk about whether or not they are being preserved in their purest and most absolute form, and I haven't heard a single member talk about the fact that there is insufficient school capacity in the town of Fort McMurray right now and that it's going to be critically worse come September.

I haven't heard a single member talk about the fact that the town is designed for a population of about 10,000 people and that it has water treatment and sewage facilities which are quickly becoming inadequate. I haven't heard any member talk about the implications for the people who live and work in Fort McMurray, when industrially zoned land is being offered for sale at \$42,000 an acre.

I haven't heard any member talk about the implications of a Native student, attempting to get educational upgrading at AVC, receiving \$300 a month allowance for himself, his wife and young children, and having to pay \$250 of that \$300 a month allowance to rent a trailer. I haven't heard anybody talk about the fact that a young businessman in the town, attempting to get ahead for himself and his family, is paying \$500 a month rent for a two-bedroom trailer.

I haven't heard anybody talk about the fact that an August utility bill can be \$134 and a November utility bill for the same residence can be \$28. I haven't heard anybody talking about trailers and mobile homes that are illegally parked on streets and lots in the town and have no services whatsoever, except power that comes to them by extension cords run through the windows of neighbouring homes.

Mr. Speaker, I do not understand how we can rise in this Legislature and talk about northeastern Alberta, about the problems that are being created there, and make no reference whatsoever to the needs of the people who live there. The population of the town is 10,000 and it's growing by 10 to 12 people daily.

Mr. Speaker, the events of the last year have created a kind of good news-bad news joke for the people of Fort McMurray. First of all, the good news: the economics of oil

sands extraction is secure. Now the bad news: the growth of Fort McMurray, as a result of that, is so critical that it might almost be described as cancerous. The theory of the cancer cell is unlimited and eventually deadly growth. There have been problems, Mr. Speaker, that have been the result of this completely unexpected growth. And it has been unexpected. It was unexpected by the town council. It was unexpected by the departments of government. It was unexpected by the people and the corporations which had considered developing there.

I have here the general plan for the new town of Fort McMurray. It was completed in 1972, just two years ago. On the basis of the work that had been done in preparation for this general plan, they predicted that in 1975, according to the most optimistic projections of growth, the population would be 14,000. The population of Fort McMurray is likely to be 14,000 people eight months in advance of this, and that's based on the most optimistic projection of growth.

Mr. Speaker, the question of the commissioner as opposed to a cabinet minister has been raised. I would just like to say, as someone who has visited Fort McMurray four or five times a year for the last three years, that I believe the presence, on a daily basis, of the person responsible is absolutely critical. I think our experience over the last two years has demonstrated the unsuitability of having as a provincial government liaison person any gentleman or lady who flies in, spends one or two or, indeed, even five days in the town, and is gone for the weekend or for most of the week. What is required is a person who has to throw in his lot with the people of Fort McMurray, who must be there in the evenings, must be there on the weekend, must deal with the people, not simply on a business basis, but on a social basis, and must come to understand the total human environment of the new town.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that I have carefully considered this legislation, including the powers which the Legislature is delegating to a commissioner. On the basis of the difficulties, the human difficulties, which the people of Fort McMurray have experienced, are experiencing now, and are going to continue to experience, then I will stand here and say that I accept the responsibility for having been a part of this, as I believe does every member of the government. I will be here one year from now, and hopefully the year after that and thereafter, to accept the responsibility - no, I'm serious about this, Mr. Speaker - that we will accept the responsibility for what we have done.

I believe that any member who has had the opportunity to travel to Fort McMurray, particularly on a regular basis, any person who has been able to see on a regular basis the way in which developments have occurred over the last three years, any person who on the basis of that experience can project the extreme difficulties that are being faced by that town in the future, has got to admit in his own mind the need for taking a chance, the need for doing something which may be described as innovative. I wouldn't even say that it is innovative, Mr. Speaker. The legislation of the previous administration in The New Towns Act provided that the government could appoint an administrator for new towns and, in fact, the new town of Fort McMurray was governed, for a number of years was without any local autonomy whatsoever, by an appointee of the provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, in all the IDs of the province, the people are governed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, not by an elected council of any kind. The legislation that creates improvement districts, the legislation that creates new towns, are in both instances legislation of the previous administration. So I wouldn't say that we are doing anything particularly innovative, except that we are combining both the new town and the ID. I'm surprised that it has now become so reprehensible in its principle and philosophy, when a few short years ago it was obviously such a desirable course of action to follow.

The final thing with which I would like to deal, Mr. Speaker, is the question of whether or not the people in Fort McMurray desire this kind of legislation. If I could, I would simply point to editorials of the Fort McMurray Courier which have recommended the dissolution of the town board and the appointment of a commissioner, letters to the editor in the Fort McMurray Courier which have supported this point of view, a motion of the executive of the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce last Thursday evening in which they approved, in principle, this legislation, and some of the comments on the local radio talk-show program last Friday evening in Fort McMurray.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's obvious that the citizens of Fort McMurray, the citizens of the surrounding district, have reached the point of appreciating that for an unusual and extremely critical situation, unusual remedies are required. We have proposed an unusual remedy. We agree that it has unusual features and we stand here now and in the future, to accept the responsibility for what comes of this. But something must come of it, because that town cannot continue to exist, to develop, as it has in the past. If we think that that town can continue in existence on the basis of what has happened in the past, then we are in for a sad surprise, I would say, the death of the town.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

May the hon. minister close the debate?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. RUSSELL:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have enjoyed this debate very much as a member of the Legislature. We have heard a wide variety of views and from some quarters a couple of very surprising ones. I won't comment on all of them individually, but I will try to deal with the general principles and chief concerns that have been raised by the members, because I think a great many of them are valid.

I must say though, before getting into that, that I was pleased to see the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-McMurray finally offer some opinion, or get into the debate in some way about the problems that are going on up there, because this has been the first indication of any kind of action on his part, towards my department, in two and a half years.

I was also rather surprised by the remarks of the hon. Member for Calgary Bow. After many hon. members on both sides of the House had tried to point to the tremendous logistic and organizational problems of the development of the oil sands area and the provision of services for people, I was rather surprised, knowing the hon. member's business background and how I thought these things worked, that the only useful thing he could see in the whole act was Section 9. I think that conclusion speaks for itself.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to now deal with a number of specific issues that were raised by hon. members, in approximately the order they were introduced.

First of all, the matter of land speculation was brought into the debate, and I think that is a critical one. We have had some experience with what could happen on the free market within the town of Fort McMurray, and I think by now all members are aware that the bulk of the land in the proposed new northeast region is owned by the Crown. Outside of a few pieces in Fort Chipewyan or Fort MacKay, I think the rest is all Crown-owned. It's not the government's intention to sell any, Mr. Speaker, and for the past year plus, we have resisted all moves in that direction. The only time at which land is sold is to the individual home-purchaser when he buys a fully-serviced lot. Even for industry and commerce, developed government land is being put on the market on a lease basis. I think that's a very important step for a government to take in freezing land sales in that manner.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge West brought up some points about the use of "shall" and "may". I think these were adequately answered by the hon. Member for Drumheller. But it is important, especially for members when they consider this bill when we get to committee study, to follow very carefully the use of the words "shall" and "may" because there is an important time sequence involved there. When it is mandatory that one thing happens or [is] permitted, then it follows that other things may or shall happen. I think the hon. Member for Drumheller dealt very well with that.

I think one very important item that was brought up was the matter of taxation and whether or not the commissioner would have taxing authority in the region. Certainly the intent of the act is that he shall not have it. But I think it would be wise, and I am giving the Legislature this undertaking, to consider an amendment to the act that makes that very clear.

The reason the specific reference to The Municipal Taxation Act is included in the list of bills, based on experience, has really been to provide for actions the other way. That is the relief of taxation. I think most of you are aware of the moves that were taken just recently for all the new towns in Alberta with respect to relieving their debts and thereby relieving their taxation. So the reference in there is specifically to make sure that the commissioner doesn't, directly or indirectly, impose taxation on the area. I think that's important and we will bear that in mind when we get to committee.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's quite understandable that the bulk of the debate has revolved around the local autonomy issue. I suppose closely allied with that is the matter of physical development that goes along with any municipal authority. I repeat again, because it seems to have been a point that's been overlooked by many hon. members, that except for the new town of Fort McMurray there is no local autonomy in the region.

The hon. leader, in referring to the deposits in the Peace River area or the heavy deposits in the Cold Lake area, needs only to superimpose those deposits on a municipal government map of Alberta and he will see that they do fall in areas where there are well experienced and well established municipal authorities at the present time. That is not the case in the northeast region, and it is one of the very strong reasons for supporting it.

The past experience of the only comparable organizations that have had any sort of essence of full local autonomy, of course, are Fort McMurray and Grande Cache. All hon. members can stand in their places, I'm sure, and very easily list a number of very serious mistakes that have been made in the past by probably well motivated governments, at both the provincial and local level, with respect to the development of those two authorities.

It's ironic, I suppose, that in 1974 we have the super-planned and super-built community of Grande Cache on the west side of the province with the wind blowing through the weeds of a million dollars worth of fully developed lots, but no buyers for them. On the east side of the province we have the reverse problem - local government and the province struggling to get serviced land on the market as quickly as possible in an area with a very limited construction season, and having great difficulty in doing that. It would be very nice if we could simply lift the town of Grande Cache and drop it on the banks of the river beside Fort McMurray because that would solve two problems. But that isn't possible.

I think one thing we can learn from the past experience of both those communities, and especially because Grande Cache received very special recent attention from Commissioner Crump in his report, is where things seem to have gone wrong, where it is essential that perhaps better planning and better coordination, better liaison with the local people might occur, so that at least, as we go forward with the northeast region, we might put the benefit of those past experiences to our own best use.

I was very interested in the remarks of the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview in commenting on the report of the task force of the conservation and utilization committee. Because, if I understood his remarks properly, he was saying that apparently the task force had put two alternatives before government, one of lateral coordination among government departments on some kind of organizational basis of a special nature; the other was the commission approach.

Mr. Speaker, in this regard I think it is fair to say that we have selected both methods. It was about the time that that report was published, or shortly thereafter, that the government formed the Office of Program Co-ordination. In the organizational chart for that you're aware that it is headed by a deputy minister of some long experience in the province. He literally does not have a department to run. He does not have a traditional line department to administer. What he does have is the responsibility of coordinating the increasing activities of many other departments of government.

One of the first employees who was commissioned by the Office of Program Co-ordination was the Fort McMurray project coordinator. I look upon the new town of Fort McMurray as a very special part of the region itself and I can see that for a long time it is going to be desirable to have that project coordinator there. If I understand the situation properly, I believe he is 'liaising' with the contractors, the planners, with the local townspeople and with the local town board on a pretty regular basis. And although all points of view don't always agree, at least there is coordination.

But I look upon the town and the region as two quite distinct areas. The town is off to a pretty good start. They have, for all intents and purposes, a locally elected board of their own and presumably they will continue with that structure. If they are able to cope with the pressures and situations that lie ahead of them in the coming years, presumably, other than cooperating with the commissioner, they won't really have to have very much to do with him on a day to day basis, although as the centre and prime communications part of the region they will certainly play a very key role in the ongoing development of the entire region.

I think it is important to make that point because hon. members, in commenting on the bill, have been confusing the main areas of challenge which lie within the region with the current or, in fact, in some cases, even [with] solved problems that lie with the new town and its board.

The question of accountability of the commissioner received a great deal of attention, Mr. Speaker, and some pretty strong terms, such as dictator, czar and all sorts of other terms like that, were used for this fellow.

Many members have tried to point out what I think is a reasonable line of authority, reporting back through Executive Council and then, later on, to the Legislature as a whole, insofar as anything the commissioner may do. I think it's important, in looking at the act, that there are two ways this function can happen. The first one listed is, if a

local authority decides on its own to transfer a certain responsibility to the commissioner, it can do that. The reverse is true, that's the second option.

Mr. Speaker, I get a little puzzled when members on the opposite side got so exercised about the apparent authority that is embodied in this new act, because if the facts were to be recognized we didn't need this act at all to get this kind of authority. We had far more authority under an existing piece of legislation passed by the former government. And it was a touted crown jewel in their package of legislation. I'm referring to The Human Resources Development Authority Act. If you want to see some real powers, some real ignoring of the Legislature, some real total ignoring of any other statute on the books, then read Clause 3 of The Human Resources Development Authority Act. We could have quite easily proceeded with ignoring all the statutes of Alberta by setting up a four-man committee of the Executive Council, not bothering ever to report back to the Legislature and getting on with the job.

I think this is a far better option. It has some inherent places where it's going to behoove the members of the Legislature to demand explanations for spending and for authority from the commissioner. The routes which allow that to happen are there. The commissioner's financial support comes through a vote of the Department of Municipal Affairs and I'm hopeful that with our subcommittee system and our close scrutiny of the civil servants which we are now able to undertake through this system, he will be fully questioned every year with respect to his spending.

The acts that he may be specifically authorized to seek special consideration on are listed. It would have been easy to use the terminology of the old HRDA Act, but I think it was at least better to list the acts. Again, it's necessary to get the authority of the Executive Council through an order in council and, again, a time limitation on it. So, I think a reasonable amount of insurance for a very special situation has been built in.

I was quite interested in the remarks of the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc and his suggestion of a special minister for the northeast, or in fact, worrying perhaps that the Minister of Municipal Affairs might not be able to pay enough attention to the rest of the province if he were involved in the problems of the northeast region ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. RUSSELL:

... I wonder who he thinks is doing that now?

Mr. Speaker, the office of the Northeast Regional Commissioner, I think, is going to be of great assistance to the next Minister of Municipal Affairs and particularly to the whole Executive Council, because I think it's fair to say that, to date, the town of Fort McMurray has certainly received more special attention, more visits and communications by a variety of ministers - certainly more communication by myself - than any other municipality in Alberta. Certainly, the per capita spending there by the provincial government far exceeds any provincial assistance to any other municipality in Alberta. I think that in itself is a great show of strength, or a sign that we believe the town of Fort McMurray does, in fact, have a very good future. The amount at which public funds are being invested in the new town, I think, is quite outstanding.

Some mention was made about the fact that the appointed advisory committee was not shown on the organization chart. Mr. Speaker, I think perhaps it's not clear that the chart deals with the office of regional commissioner as a whole, and does show the advice which he will get. What it doesn't show is the breakdown of the regional commissioner's function and of course, under the act - and we come back to the hon. member's remarks on "may" and "shall" - that specifically includes that advisory committee within the structure of the regional commissioner's office. So that's why that is not shown.

I can only conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying that in this instance I think we all recognize time is of the essence. This government did gamble, to a fair degree, by making substantial investments in the new town of Fort McMurray long before Syncrude made its decision. And it was a gamble, because had Syncrude decided to delay or not to proceed, we'd have been left with a fairly substantial investment funded by public moneys that probably might not have been used for a long time.

I think in the long run we're all pleased that Syncrude did decide to go ahead, but it's put a tremendous strain on the resources of the new town of Fort McMurray, both financially and on its board members, and it's put similar strains on departments of government.

I'm hopeful - I think in that regard we're probably over the hump, Mr. Speaker, although major challenges lie ahead. We must not ignore the probable development of the region around Fort McMurray. The things that must happen there, if it's to develop

effectively, call for a project coordinator in the region, who has the authority to do the things and undertake the things I outline; that is, the planning, the building, the financing and the arranging for local government administration to take over.

For those reasons and for other reasons we've heard during this very interesting debate, Mr. Speaker, I urge all hon. members to support this bill.

[Mr. Speaker declared the motion carried. Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung.]

[Three minutes having elapsed, the House divided as follows:

For the motion:

Adair	Dickie	Hinman	Paproski
Anderson	Doan	Horner	Purdy
Appleby	Dowling	Hunley	Russell
Ashton	Drain	Hyndman	Schmid
Backus	Farran	Jamison	Stromberg
Batiuk	Fluker	Koziak	Taylor
Buckwell	Getty	Lee	Topolnisky
Chambers	Ghitter	McCrae	Trynchy
Chichak	Gruenwald	McCrimmon	Warrack
Cookson	Hansen	Miller, J.	Young
Copithorne	Harle	Miniely	Yurko
Crawford	Henderson	Moore	Zander
Diachuk			

Against the motion:

Barton	Clarke	Mandeville	Sorenson
Benoit	Cooper	Miller, D.	Speaker, R.
Bouvier	Dixon	Notley	Wilson
Buck	Ho Lem	Ruste	Wyse

Totals: Ayes - 49 Noes - 16]

[Bill No. 55 was read a second time.]

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I move you do now leave the Chair and the Assembly resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider of the supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair.]

* * * * *

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

[Mr. Diachuk in the Chair]

MR. DIACHUK:

The Committee of Supply will come to order.

Department of Agriculture

MR. TRYNCHY:

Mr. Chairman, Subcommittee B has had under consideration Vote No. 11, the estimates of expenditure for the Department of Agriculture and begs to report the same. I therefore submit the following resolution:

Resolved that a sum not exceeding \$43,018,260 be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1975, for the Department of Agriculture.

This is broken down, Mr. Chairman, chargeable to Income: \$42,653,260, chargeable to Capital: \$365,000.

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Chairman, perhaps it would be useful if I were to give a brief review of the production that took place last year. I think on other occasions we've had an opportunity to discuss a variety of other areas that have been involved in agriculture, and I felt that perhaps we could, very briefly, go over how we did last year and what the prospects are for the coming year - at least as well as we can determine from the factors that we have.

I'm sure all hon. members are aware that in spite of a difficult cropping season last year, we were able to increase our production pretty substantially in our cereal grains areas. Wheat rose from 118 million bushels to 134 million bushels. Oats increased by 14 per cent. Flax and rye also increased substantially. Barley and rapeseed were down approximately 10 to 12 per cent in each case. We hope the decrease insofar as barley is concerned was, probably, largely attributable to the amount that will not have been harvested until the next few days.

You might say we've had a substantial increase in a variety of diversified crops with some ups and downs in the southern areas. Potato production increased by \$4.5 million per cwt., but our sugar beets declined by about a half million tons. So I would expect they both might be going up substantially in the coming year.

Insofar as our livestock is concerned, Mr. Chairman, our overall rise in cattle population a year ago is approximately 6 per cent and that's made up of varying degrees in relation to beef and dairy numbers.

Hog production expanded by only 2 per cent over 1972. Poultry, sheep, lamb and other meats remained about constant. The interesting factor there is that, hopefully, we've stopped the yearly decline in the number of sheep and lambs in this province.

Honey production increased to 21 million pounds which is a fairly substantial amount of honey. It represents 40 per cent of Canada's production of honey. As such it is a very substantial [portion] of Alberta's agricultural income.

If we look, Mr. Chairman, at our prospects for the coming year, I would hope that all hon. members would appreciate that they not only depend on the vagaries of the weather, but also on what happens around the world. Indeed, the recent announcement that the anchovy is back, in strength, off the coast of Peru may have some substantial implications for us, in the longer term, with regard to oil seeds and the world picture for oil seeds in general. On the other hand, the major loss of that protein source over the years has caused certain adjustments to be made in the way things have been fed, and indeed the latest announcement from the Government of Peru indicates that they are going to have a very strong control over the anchovy fishery from here on in.

The latest word from the FAO and the United Nations Secretariat, which are screening food supplies, is that we are now feeding 90 million more people than we did a year ago, and this is increasing at that rate or more every year; that our total world supply of food is at a critical balance, and that if we don't have a substantial crop in the northern hemisphere this year we might indeed run into some situations with regard to famine.

The real problem we're going to have to face is whether or not we can afford to feed expensive grains to livestock, or whether or not the shift will have to come to fattening more livestock on grass and using the grains in other areas for more direct use by the human population of the world.

I mention those things, Mr. Chairman, because I think it's absolutely essential that our farmers, and indeed our legislators who are concerned with agricultural policy, be aware of what is happening around the world. If we're not, we're just keeping our heads in the sand if we don't appreciate that there is a marked effect on us as to what happens out there. Because we are one of the primary food producing countries in the world Canada has a particular responsibility in that area, and because Alberta is a fairly prominent producer in a variety of commodities we have to be concerned about that as well. We're major producers, of course, in the sugar beet industry, the honey industry, the cattle industry - we probably outstrip all the other provinces in production in those various commodities. Indeed, we would hope that our expanded vegetable production in the irrigation areas in southern Alberta will also make us substantial producers in that area.

That, Mr. Chairman, is really what I think the role of the department should be, to match the aspirations of our farmers with the opportunities that the world markets provide

for them and to help them in any way to get there. This we've tried to do with the variety of programs that we have put into effect over the past two years.

We consider 1974 the year of implementation and consolidation, hopefully to take off some of the rough spots, to improve the efficiency of some of the people in handling certain applications, to shorten the time it takes to get an answer from the Agriculture Development Corporation and others, and to improve the general situation of administration in a major way. I think this time of implementation is an important one, particularly to the people in my department, to make sure they become knowledgeable about the programs and to make sure that they can get across to the farming public what they are and what happens out there.

In conclusion, I would like to say, Mr. Chairman, with regard to the credit areas, that there is a great deal of pressure sometimes by not only the administrative people but by others who keep saying that, well, you should have the big umbrella on just the one form and that would be nice; that would make it nice and easy for the people administering it. But I would hope we wouldn't lose sight of the fact that credit should be an important tool in the direction of agricultural policy as it relates to individual commodities and that we would use it to do just that.

We think that in the Department of Agriculture we have tried to face up to the demands upon our industry from a consumer point of view. We would like to stress that we can help the consumer most by being assured of a stable market so that our farmers can produce to the best of their ability and to the best advantage whatever product they might be producing, in whatever area of Alberta they live.

So, Mr. Chairman, I guess I could sum it all up very quickly by saying we had a better year last year, but this is still tomorrow country and we look forward to the coming year to make sure - if we could only put it all together in one year, with all the areas not having some major adversity, I'm sure it would be easier on the minister's stomach and it would certainly be a lot more helpful to those people who have been involved in the adverse conditions that we've had in the past year.

Mr. Chairman, we've gone over in subcommittee, in detail, a number of these areas but we're quite willing to answer any questions that the committee might have.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Chairman, I do have several questions I'd like to put to the minister. I certainly agree with him that when you're talking about agriculture, you're talking about next year country. I think, too, the word and the phrase almost go hand in hand.

I wonder if the minister could perhaps expand a bit on his announcement today with respect to the hog sale. I'd like him to advise us whether or not the \$4.50 per cwt. subsidy will continue in addition to the pooling of the price from this new arrangement.

DR. HORNER:

Yes, Mr. Chairman, we've said in a general way that the incentive program, the \$4.50 per cwt. would continue until we got the return to the producer somewhere closer to his cost of production. When we are talking, as we were last week - and I haven't seen the market for today but last week we were talking about anywhere from \$36, \$37 or \$39 for hogs - we're a substantial distance away from the cost of production.

We're hopeful that the smaller program I announced today will have an effect on the general overall returns and, indeed, will have a side effect on the domestic market to firm it up in a substantial way. But the incentive program will continue to be applied on the number of hogs in this particular program.

So the answer deals with those two questions, I think.

MR. NOTLEY:

Just to follow that up, Mr. Chairman. Can the minister advise what the cost has been of the hog incentive program to date, and what the estimated cost will be for the year?

DR. HORNER:

Well, I can tell him what the cost has been to date, Mr. Chairman, but I can't tell the estimate because I don't know what the market price is going to be in the future. But in general round figures it costs about \$1 million a month.

MR. NOTLEY:

Well, Mr. Chairman, just to follow that up. My understanding is that the Saskatchewan government in reviewing whether or not they were going to continue their floor price,

which as the minister knows is \$56 per cwt. on a maximum of 200 hogs, and the government there are deciding whether or not they are going to continue the program, have had some discussions with federal authorities with respect to a new stabilization program which will probably be coming into effect in July or August of this year.

Now I'm wondering perhaps if we could receive a little more information as to what the situation is going to be. Will there be significant changes in federal assistance for programs such as this, either the Saskatchewan scheme, or for that matter the Alberta incentive program?

DR. HORNER:

We've been having continuing discussions with the federal government and other provinces on a federal support program for hogs. As we've said, when I announced the incentive program, we felt very strongly that, in fact, it was wrong, that we might have seven or eight different programs in Canada, and that the federal government should take the lead in this area.

It's my information that they are close to making some announcements in this area. We have been working on the official level. At the last ministerial meeting we also had discussions as to the best way in which this could be done. Perhaps, in fairness, a combination of an approach such as we have taken, which has been based on an actual cost basis and which some of the other provinces have taken, or a combination of those two approaches, might be the best one approach for the federal program to follow.

MR. NOTLEY:

Just to follow that up, too, Mr. Chairman. Have the discussions reached a point yet where we are actually talking about money; that is, how much money the federal government is actually going to consider putting into this in terms of financing these programs, 50-50 or whatever the case may be.

DR. HORNER:

Frankly, Mr. Chairman, in my view it should be a federal responsibility to handle the program. We are doing it as a temporary thing, as I said in the release at the time, until such time as a federal program came into effect.

I am sure the hon. member doesn't want me to scoop John Turner on his budget tonight, not that I know anything about it. Of course, if he should give in to the demands of the third party in eastern Canada or in Ottawa in relation to a two-price system for food, I am sure that I can't predict what's going to happen to commodity prices because it's going to be a substantial change.

MR. NOTLEY:

Well, Mr. Chairman, without accepting the bait of the minister to get into a long argument here, I think this is a fairly important time to press both the federal government and the other political parties in Canada to come up with 100 per cent of the costs of a satisfactory stabilization plan. I know the Agricultural Stabilization Act of 1957 or '58, I believe, had merit in its time but I think we really do have to upgrade it if we're going to make it possible, especially for smaller producers in the hog industry, for example, to stay in business.

MR. BUCKWELL:

Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a few remarks, maybe not on anything specific, but on the Department of Agriculture as I see it.

First, I think in fairness, I would have to thank the minister and his staff for the frank way they answered all our questions in the committee. We may not agree with some of the things that have been done but they have been done and the minister, I think, is going to continue to do them whether we like it or not.

I think in fairness maybe, in thanking the department as a whole - and this maybe includes the minister - we quite forget to thank the many people in his department for their efforts to give the farmers some form of stability, encouragement and advice in improving farm life. And particularly, many of the burdens of agriculture would be taken away if farmers had a fair price for the products they produced. In many respects our production has not increased to the extent that it caused us to get over a billion dollars, say at a fixed level. But we did see some remarkable increases in farm prices, particularly in the grain market for this past year.

It was rather paradoxical because for the first time in the history of Canada we saw wheat get to \$6 a bushel and some of the other grains go to \$10 and \$12 a bushel. This year we had a strong grain market for the first time in many years and we also had a

weakening of the - you might say the cattle market. The ramifications of what has happened because of the strong grain market are yet to be foreseen probably within our country.

One of our concerns with the department - we could say that we expect the department to make policy - we expect them to deal with the federal government and with interprovincial trade. But one of the concerns is that quite a number of the farmers' problems deal with government interference. I'm not blaming the provincial government particularly on this score because I think much of it goes to the federal government, particularly in the transportation of our grains and feed grain marketing policies. Possibly we could lay some of the blame to the Canadian Wheat Board. But in a way that is possibly the way the facts of life are, we have a Conservative government in the province of Alberta and we have a Liberal federal government and they don't necessarily see eye to eye.

But our concern is not in the policy the government is making, although it is done I believe, as the minister sees it, in the interest of agriculture. We're now getting not only content to make the policy which is the right and due of the department, but we're getting into pretty near every facet of administration of that policy. Leadership, naturally, is expected. In fairness to the minister, he has given aggressive leadership. I don't say wise leadership, but I say aggressive leadership.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Unwise is the best ...

MR. BUCKWELL:

He is now directing in a major way the total direction of agriculture within the province, with seemingly very little consultation with others. I am concerned. This is a concern with many governments, and it is a concern not only with this department but with other departments of government both in this province and elsewhere in Canada. This is the drying up of farm inputs at local level. Those who are concerned with agriculture, whether in agriculture in the whole sense or commodity groups, are really having a lack of ideas of where they're going, whether it's government interference or what - we realize that the problems are complex. Rather than trying to solve their own problems, beating a path to Edmonton seems to be the major pursuit of the day. Quite often the minister is quite willing to say, well, I view your problems with some consideration.

I feel, Mr. Chairman, that agri-business itself has given very poor service to agriculture as a whole. I can't see why, if there is a pork market in Japan, the Minister of Agriculture had to go find it for them. Why didn't the packers go out and find it for themselves if they're working for the interest of the farmer? Why do we have to have others go out and find grain markets for us or for rapeseed oil? Why do we have to have the Department of Agriculture not only working on the policy of the department but then having to go out and try to sell the products we have raised?

I feel, Mr. Chairman, that there is quite a lack of direction on the part of, say, agri-business. I would say, quite frankly, there is quite a lack of direction and vision on the part of farm organizations and on the grain handling industries.

My concern, Mr. Chairman - and it may be the concern of the minister, I've never asked him - is that we are giving up the right to govern ourselves in the interest of the immediate gain. What we are doing really is giving to government our sole responsibility to try to get something done in the field of agriculture: to sell our products, to try to get young people back on the farms, to encourage those who are on the farms to stay on the farms and produce when we need so desperately food in the world.

It seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that farm leadership is one of the things we probably lack more than anything else within the province. Whether we're going to get it - I have fears that we could some day - if his stomach stands up or if it doesn't stand up, particularly if it doesn't stand up - we may have a less aggressive Minister of Agriculture. The whole house of cards is going to fall down. I'm quite sure that it's his aggressive leadership at the moment that is trying to lead us into a better tomorrow.

We have a lot of problems facing us. This year we hope will be one of the better years for agriculture. If it isn't, next year surely will be. But this doesn't really help us at the moment. I'm quite sure that the government is just as aware as we are that inflation is going to cause one of the major stumbling blocks in agriculture, particularly the input costs. Unless we're going to come to grips with them somehow I'm quite concerned that agriculture will go from crisis to crisis.

People will be fed. There are people who complain today about the cost of food. Yet they don't think about the cost of anything else in relationship if they really want it. If the price of milk goes up 2 cents a quart there is a hue and cry across the province.

If pop goes up 10 cents a bottle, well you lay the 10 cents out and think nothing of it. This is rather a shame when we grow such wonderful food within the province.

My concern, in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, is that if the minister has a long-range program that he is trying to give direction to at the moment, surely the farm leaders will come forward and take a more aggressive stand, because really it is their livelihood and their welfare that is at stake.

MR. SORENSON:

Mr. Chairman, it was my privilege to sit in on the subcommittee on agriculture. It was very informative. We received reams of information which, of course, we brought back to our members. I find the hon. Minister of Agriculture a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He's like a lamb in subcommittee and like a lion here in the House.

But now we're well into 1974. Lightning didn't strike in 1971 and all the farmers became prosperous and all is well. It breaks my heart when I drive through my community and through my constituency to see the homes boarded up and vacant lots where friends of mine and constituents once lived. In many parts of this province, whether you live in town or country, more and more of these boarded-up homes and vacant lots are appearing where a good house once stood and a family once lived. When we save a home or improve a home we strengthen the community, the neighbourhood and our way of life.

This brings us around to rural development and I'd like to make a few comments. I want to see a rural development minister and I want to see a powerful one. I like to think of rural development as having four categories and I think perhaps we could deal with these four for a little while.

The first one would be the problem of community facilities. Here I think of housing, transportation, utilities, sewer, water and so on. In my particular area we do have problems in housing and problems in transportation. We're starving for roads in east-central Alberta. Our minister, attending a meeting in Hanna just prior to the election, took the former government to task over the state of Highway 36 and Highway 41 and we still just seem to be crawling ahead at a snail's pace on Highway 36. We appreciate a little work on Highway 41. I hope the gap is closed. It won't be in 1975. It'll be nice when that gap is finished. These are problems for rural development in that area. It kind of makes me wonder what has ever happened to the word "now".

The next category is economic development. We need to remember that strong, prosperous agriculture is basic to economic development. However, we also have to have non-agricultural prosperity and employment in rural Alberta if we're going to develop rural Alberta. I'm thankful for the facilities that have gone to Camrose and Ponoka. I hope this can be accelerated and that some will find their way out into places like Coronation and Hardisty and so on.

The third area in rural development is people-building and here we come to education and health. I'll have something to say on these areas when we get to these estimates.

The fourth area is the environment: conservation, recreation, land-use planning. I'm looking forward to the report that will be coming in two or three years on land-use planning. All four areas are necessary for rural development and must work together.

In another area, maybe not as important, of course, but I think as Albertans we owe a great deal to government, to pest control officers and those people who live along our borders who have waged a long, hard but successful, I believe, battle to keep our province rat-free. Being a rat-free province has meant millions of dollars saved for our people. It is estimated that for every dollar spent for rat eradication, \$1,000 is saved for Albertans. Someone has said that this creature is the most destructive creature on earth today.

I really think that there is a story to be told in this respect, but how do we go about telling the story? We're a province, we can't issue a stamp. But I suggested to the hon. minister in subcommittee and in the question period that we proclaim an Alberta rat-free appreciation day. I think our good fortune should be Saskatchewan's good fortune and Manitoba's, Montana's and so on. I think it would be good and proper for us, as a province, to blow our own horn in this instance. I didn't get much response from the minister and so I am just wondering, are we really rat-free? Perhaps he will answer that question.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. BENOIT:

Mine's just a question and it's in the area of opinion. I think that the minister has had sufficient experience that I would like to hear his opinion on the matter. It has to do with his announcement that barley and rapeseed and sugar beets were down in production

this past year, not down in production at least, down on the market. Are the agricultural producers of the province guided to any great extent by professional and government advice or do they usually go on their own ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

They go the other way if they want to be right.

MR. BENOIT:

... depending on experience and circumstances? That's what I would like to know.

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Chairman, the traditional response to that is that if government tells you to do one thing, if you do the exact opposite you'll probably do a better job of it. So I've restrained very substantially from trying to tell farmers what to do, but rather to improve the situation with what decision they might make.

I just want to correct the hon. member. I'm talking about production totals, not income totals from those areas. Obviously, the return from sugar beets is up, but the production total in tons was down and similarly with barley and rapeseed. The income from those two crops was up but the total production was down.

MR. BARTON:

Under what appropriation could we discuss the agricultural service centres program?

DR. HORNER:

The municipal area.

AN HON. MEMBER:

1174?

DR. HORNER:

Just a minute. I think that's the one. Yes. Yes, 1174.

MR. BARTON:

Could I follow that up? In the annual report it didn't give any breakdown as to how they were working and I was wondering if the hon. minister - in the agricultural one - could give us a breakdown on the towns and what projects they are actually taking advantage of?

DR. HORNER:

If the hon. member is talking about what programs under the PEP program got grants for ag. societies - is that what you ...?

MR. BARTON:

The agricultural services program.

DR. HORNER:

Oh, the ag. service board? Well, in essence there is a variety of programs which are involved in the ag. service board area.

MR. CLARK:

He's talking about the ag. service centres.

MR. BARTON:

Yes, service centres.

DR. HORNER:

Well, the ag. service centres is a water supply situation under the Department of the Environment, the Water Resources Branch.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Chairman, there are two or three areas I'd like to ask the minister a couple of questions on and I'd like the minister to respond if he would. The first one deals with the meat inspection program that was implemented. I have a particular situation in my own constituency where one of the slaughter houses has been approved as a Class A slaughter house. Now a farmer can't kill a critter at home and bring it into the slaughter plant to have it cut up and packaged. But [the slaughter house manager is] in a situation where his competition who haven't yet met the standards are able to have the farmer bring that critter he slaughtered at home to them.

Now the proposition put to me by the fellow involved, and I thought there was some advantage in it, was that until 1975 - I believe that is the date isn't it when this is going to be effective across the province - even if a plant has received its licence, farmers will still be able to slaughter at home and bring their meat to the abattoir so that they are on equal footing. Because this fellow has gone ahead, got his facilities in good shape; now he is being somewhat discriminated against by the regulations that we have.

DR. HORNER:

Well in that particular area, I wonder whether it would be good to relax the regulations in that sense. I have another alternate suggestion that might be more worthwhile and that is, in most of the abattoirs that are certainly Class A he probably has a separate room which he could use for that kind of thing. The real danger of course is that if he is Class A and the animal is inspected, there is an ante-mortem inspection by a veterinarian or a qualified inspector.

If you go to all this trouble to make sure that you are going to have a product that you can put the seal of approval on, it seems to me to be defeating the purpose if we allow meat that isn't inspected to come into the same cutting area where this particularly inspected meat is being cut. I think we might be able to get around it, particularly in the interim, if we would allow them to use a part of their plant as a cutting area for farm meat but not contaminate it with the other. In other words, I think we have to keep them separate.

I would hope that all the people involved in the area - the world-wide restrictions are becoming more and more strict with regard to the health of the animal that is involved, particularly the slaughtering of condemned carcasses, and there are now some regulations coming out whereby our plants are going to have to slaughter these in separate areas from those where animals are slaughtered that are judged to be in good health.

So I'm quite willing to have a look at it and see if we can't work around the problem, but I would hope we could work around it without reducing our standards on the inspected meat.

MR. CLARK:

Just following along the minister's comments then. In this particular situation, you are suggesting that if there is some portion of the facility where the meat wouldn't rub shoulders, if that is a good term, we would be able to work out something. So we will follow it up on that particular basis.

May I just ask one other question right along the same line? It deals with carcasses that are condemned. The regulations, as I understand them now, are that once a veterinarian condemns a carcass after it has been slaughtered, the carcass must be left at the plant and be disposed of there. Now once again, getting into the comparison between places that have been approved and those not approved, if the critter doesn't meet the standards, the farmer still takes it home and feeds it, or whatever he does with it. Now, would you care to comment on that area?

DR. HORNER:

Well, I have no objection to the farmer taking it home. Surely, that is his, but as long as we are assured that it does go home. As I mentioned earlier, I think we are coming to the stage where down the road we are going to have to in areas where there is a substantial amount of slaughter carried out. I would hope we could get one of the smaller plants to specialize almost totally in the area of the condemned carcasses or the condemned animals so that we wouldn't mix the two. Certainly in that particular area I will check the detail of the regulations. But I'm quite willing, if the farmer will sign an affidavit that it is not for resale, for him to take it home.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Any further questions?

MR. HINMAN:

I have a few questions. I may relate them to the votes, but only partially.

Under Irrigation, we now have a considerable amount of money being spent to help irrigationists to develop. One of the problems, as the minister is well aware, that we are going to face in the future is a lack of water during the irrigating periods. This is accentuated because we have leaking ditches and because in using what we call the flood irrigation system, a great deal of water is either wasted or too much is put on the land, with resulting troubles. In the end, it may be that we will go to pressurized - I don't know whether I had better call them canals - but at least flumes carrying water under pressure, which will be expensive.

In the meantime, many of our farmers are discovering that it is pretty expensive to go to sprinkler irrigation with all its advantages. I was wondering, in view of the amount of money that the federal government is providing and that we are going to be providing, if it's possible to have some grants for people who want to convert from flood irrigation to sprinkler irrigation, or who want to develop their own little projects?

All along our rivers, we are discovering that there are areas which could be watered. Now, with better pumps, with pumps that will lift water 400 feet and maintain a 90-pound pressure at the end, this is possible. I am just wondering if we are anywhere near the time we might consider assisting farmers to develop their own projects of that nature? Maybe the minister can keep track of a few of these questions and answer them all at once.

The second was in research. The protein feeds we need are going to be hard to get for a number of years. We are aware that they have developed some corn with pretty high protein content and that they are working on barley and, perhaps, wheat to increase the content of protein a very great deal. I am wondering if our research is working on that, or if we are doing anything on the use of the protein-creating bacteria which can actually work with natural gas, or with some of the others? I think it would be interesting to the members if the minister gives us something on that.

One other field is the marketing, as we are all very concerned with the stable market. The word "stable" implies that over the years there will be a market on which a farmer can depend. I think, in his effort the minister is being very much assisted by the food crisis, which will be the real crisis on this globe within a very short time. Nevertheless our farmers are growing completely dependent, and then when a little period comes along, as it has done with hogs and as happens with other products, we have to have these incentive programs. I wonder if we can maintain a healthy agricultural economy when we always come to their rescue in these short periods?

Along with that comes the family farm which the minister and others are always interested in. I think the time has come when the minister might assign to some department the actual preparation of some feasibility studies. I have had wonderful cooperation from the agricultural development people, but I wonder sometimes if some of these young people, especially, aren't going to be in trouble over their ears because we are helping them? The only way we can help them currently is to turn them down. We have to rely on their projections. I just wonder if it might be a good thing if we had a little booklet turned out which says to people, this is what you have to produce to have this kind of income?

I do some of that myself on a voluntary basis and quite often I am able to convince these little farmers that they either grow bigger or they had better keep out of this business; they are going to be in trouble. As I said, the cooperation of the department has been wonderful, and perhaps this is only a step. But if a young farmer had a book - and maybe his father has been successful and he thinks he can be [too], but times are changing - if there were something he could be given that shows him the kind of production he has to have; which shows him what a narrow margin there is on hogs, for instance, how many hogs he has to raise at \$5 profit to make a living.

Along with this I was talking about the family farm. The only advantage a family farm has today ...

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Order. Mr. Hinman, I wonder if you would like to continue at 8:00 o'clock.

MR. HYNDMAN:

I move that the Committee of Supply do now adjourn until 8:00 p.m. this evening.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

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

[Mr. Diachuk left the Chair at 5:30 o'clock.]

