

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Wednesday, May 8, 1974

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly, a class of Grade 9 students from St. Cecilia Junior High School in my constituency of Edmonton Belmont. They are accompanied by my colleague and good friend, Mr. Bill Kobluk. They are in the members gallery. I would like to ask them to rise and be recognized by this Assembly.

MR. GRUENWALD:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce on your behalf a group of 56 Grade 4 and 5 students from the Patricia Heights School in your constituency of Edmonton Meadowlark. They are accompanied by Mrs. Kinloch, Mrs. Taylor, Mrs. McCuaig and Mrs. Schiebel. They are seated in the public gallery and we would ask them to please stand and be recognized.

MR. ZANDER:

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce to you and to the members of this Assembly, 50 Grade 9 students from the Howard Pickup School in Drayton Valley, in the constituency of Drayton Valley.

I may add, Mr. Speaker, it is a very interesting group of students. They have a model parliament, elected and structured after the federal Parliament of Canada, and further, strangely enough, they have a lady Prime Minister who is not now involved in a non-confidence motion on their budget this afternoon.

MP. ZANDER:

I would ask the 'Prime Minister' to rise and be recognized by the Assembly - Marie Swanlind.

Further, Mr. Speaker, this group is accompanied by Mr. Sawchyn, Mr. Budd and Mr. Van Dorpe. I would now ask them to rise and be recognized by the Assembly.

MR. KING:

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to the Assembly 12 ladies from Highlands United Church who are members of the United Church women's group in that church. These are ladies who watched me grow up ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

You are still growing.

MR. CLARK:

We're still watching you.

MR. KING:

Yes, and so are they. I just wanted to say that a small measure of either the credit or the blame belongs to the ladies who are seated up there. I would like to ask them to rise and be recognized.

TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to file a copy of the opening statement I made yesterday, on behalf of the Government of Alberta, in Ottawa to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Public Works with respect to federal Bill C-18.

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table three copies of the reply to Question No. 155 regarding the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission asked by the hon. member, Mr. Wilson.

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a Return to Order No. 132.

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a copy of the order in council passed in August 1971.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear, hear.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Is that the best you can do?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Where is the rest of it?

MR. SPEAKER:

The question is whether an order in council, even of some vintage, requires to be republished by being tabled in the House.

MR. LUDWIG:

One of those old tricks again.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Department of Telephones and Utilities

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Speaker, I have an announcement on grain dryers in the natural gas program.

In view of the importance of grain drying to the agricultural industry, particularly in northern Alberta where severe crop conditions have been experienced frequently in recent years, the following addition pertaining to special grants for natural gas supply for grain dryers in rural gas distribution systems will be provided for in regulations under The Rural Gas Act.

Where a number of farmers elect to receive natural gas for grain drying purposes prior to construction of a rural gas distribution system, the extra costs associated with such operations will be separated from the basic per farm costs of the total system.

These incremental costs for greater capacity in the line will be averaged among those farmers desiring the special service.

A special grant per grain dryer service will then be paid at a rate of 44 per cent of the individual average incremental cost so determined. The farmer himself will be responsible for paying to the rural gas distribution system a sum equal to the 56 per cent balance of the incremental average cost.

This percentage of grant is arrived at by the precedent of the proportion that the original basic grant of \$1,300 bears to the average \$3,000 consumer capital cost of basic gas service.

As envisaged in the Rural Gas Plan, consumers requiring extra service may be required to make extra payments for such service. And special grants may be made for special conditions.

In the case of grain dryers on other than the home quarter, one basic grant of \$1,300 will also be made in addition to the guaranteed loan to the co-operative of \$1,700. This follows the recent policy announced for irrigation sprinkler systems.

Grain dryer customers who fail to elect for service at the time of construction of the system and subsequently change their minds will not be eligible for special grant. Their application to the co-operative would have to be a matter between themselves and the co-operative, and may well not be feasible because of the likelihood of extensive reconstruction being required to fulfil their need.

Mr. Speaker, an example for clarification is from one rural gas co-operative with 100 grain dryer customers among a total membership of 500 consumers. The average incremental cost per grain dryer is \$2,000. In this case, the special grant announced today would cover \$880 while the farmer would be responsible to the co-operative for the balance of \$1,120.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Tuition Fees - Alberta Universities

MR. POSTER:

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition presented a question to me concerning an increase in tuition fees at The University of Alberta, with special reference to the School of Library Science, and, following that, provided the gratuitous comment that I appeared completely uninformed on the facts.

MR. LUDWIG:

Hear, hear.

MR. POSTER:

I would like to respond, Mr. Speaker, to the question and, in fact, deliver some facts.

There has been no general tuition fee change in the university or the School of Library Science. However, in January of 1973, the board of governors of the university indicated that the [cost of] field trips conducted by this faculty could no longer be borne from the funds which were provided by students and there would be additional costs of some \$160 attached to the program, which would go to pay for the trips, room, board, travel, et cetera ...

MR. CLARK:

Per student?

MR. FOSTER:

Per student. But that's to cover field trips, as part of the program, which are extra to the program and are not part of a tuition fee per se.

The other inquiry, Mr. Speaker, had to do with the matter of student health services. I remarked yesterday and do today that health services charges are supplementary to the services provided by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Commission and are funded on a self-supporting basis. There is an additional charge for students there but this is a matter that is entirely within the jurisdiction of the university. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that will set both the Leader of the Opposition and the record straight.

MR. CLARK:

Supplementary question to the Minister of Advanced Education. Are the field trips that the minister alludes to compulsory in the courses involved?

MR. FOSTER:

They may well be, Mr. Speaker. I'm not personally aware whether the students are required to take the field trips or not. However, this is a service that students are required to pay when they go out of town on trips of this nature.

MR. LUDWIG:

Go back and find out.

MR. GRUENWALD:

Could I ask a supplementary question of the minister? Does it come under the authority of the Minister of Advanced Education to establish or authorize tuition fees for colleges and universities?

MR. SPEAKER:

That would be a question of legal opinion, but perhaps it's a matter of policy which the minister might wish to elaborate on.

MR. GRUENWALD:

I'm sure it's policy, Mr. Speaker.

MR. FOSTER:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, that's correct.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Yes, real pat.

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Speaker, the tuition fees are, in fact, established by the institutions. However, they do require the concurrence of my office.

Petrochemical Industry Projects

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the Premier and ask if the government has been in correspondence with the chairman of Petrosar Ltd, the firm which had planned on building a petrochemical plant in Sarnia. Has the government advised them that they cannot count on a supply of petroleum from Alberta?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, the answer to the question, if we've had such a communication, is yes. The essential nature of the communication is as the hon. leader describes.

MR. CLARK:

Supplementary question to the Premier. Has the government finalized its thinking to the point where it has now decided that it will go ahead with the Alberta Gas Trunk-CIL proposition being built here in Alberta?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, the answer to that is no, and I don't really think it's put in the sense of one project as compared to another.

Our total policy is a policy to have the maximum degree of upgrading of our natural resources as is practical and feasible, having regard to the total Canadian picture in terms of petrochemicals and existing operations. So the answer is that no decision of that nature has been made by the government at this time.

MR. CLARK:

One further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has the government finalized its thinking as to whether it will introduce legislation at this session requiring new industry, using Alberta natural resources, to either get a permit or a licence from the government before, in fact, they can proceed?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, in answer to the hon. leader's question, we're in the final stages of the finalizing of that decision.

MR. CLARK:

Will it be a short finalizing or a long finalizing?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Short.

AN HON. MEMBER:

They'll think about it.

Licensing of Trades and Business Act

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, my second question is to the Minister of Consumer Affairs. I'd like to ask the minister, when will regulations under The Licensing of Trades and Business Act be implemented? The Act was approved last fall.

MR. DOWLING:

Very shortly, Mr. Speaker. We are, as you know, having a conference of consumer ministers of Canada in the latter part of next week. These things will be ironed out during that convention and will be implemented immediately thereafter.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. D. MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, my question was to the Minister of the Environment. I'll have to wait until he comes.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Legislature Grounds - Security

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, my question today is directed to the Minister of Public Works. Can the hon. minister advise the House as to the reason for the necessity now of having two security guards, accompanied by a German Shepherd guard dog, patrolling the Legislature Grounds?

DR. BACKUS:

Mr. Speaker, the security of the Legislature Building is not now under the Department of Public Works. Therefore, I'm afraid I have no information on this particular matter. This now comes directly under the Attorney General's department.

MR. LUDWIG:

Call the dogs off.

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to get some information on that and report back to the hon. member.

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Can the hon. Attorney General cite examples where guard dogs are being used on other Legislature grounds?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please. Possibly the hon. member might use the excellent research services of the Legislature library to get that information.

DR. WARRACK:

Downstairs. It's downstairs.

MR. HO LEM:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the Attorney General advise who owns the dog - the government, or is it arranged on a rental basis?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please. The hon. minister has already agreed to inquire and perhaps that information will also result from the inquiry.

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, will the hon. Attorney General inquire also as to the ownership of the dog, as well as inquire into the training - who trained the dog ...

DR. WARRACK:

How about how many teeth it's got?

MR. HO LEM:

... and also the name of the dog? I think this is important.

AH HON. MEMBER:

Rover?

MR. LEITCH:

I will get the hon. member the password, too.

AH HON. MEMBER:

Down, boy!

MR. COOKSON:

Did the hon. member from Calgary get bit?

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Petrochemical Industry Projects (Cont.)

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Premier or perhaps the hon. Minister of Industry and Commerce. It is a follow-up question to the one posed by the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Can the hon. Premier advise the Assembly what market information the government now has in its hands concerning the potential market for simultaneous petrochemical development by the Dow-Dome, as well as the Alberta Gas Trunk Line proposal?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I think in answer to that question, it can probably only be responded to by saying there is a great deal of information. We have had advice. We have had some assessments done. But the nature of it, I don't think at the moment is appropriate by way of public documentation, although we will take that under advisement. There are certainly other governments and other groups who have different views than us.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the hon. Premier, for clarification. I take it from your remarks that the government is, however, satisfied after reviewing the information, that there is, in fact, a sufficient market?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please. The hon. member is clearly trying to elicit an opinion.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could pose a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Industry and Commerce and ask him when the government will be tabling the information with respect to feedstock for both the Dow-Dome proposal and the Alberta Gas Trunk Line proposal re motion for a return?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, we will be doing that in the next ten days.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

AHC Lot Sales - Fort McMurray

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. Did Alberta Housing Corporation sell any lots in Fort McMurray in 1972 or 1973?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Order Paper.

MR. SPEAKER:

I would respectfully suggest that the hon. member accept the invitation to put the question on the Order Paper.

MR. WILSON:

Well, a supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. Why did the minister leave lot sales off Motion for a Return ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please. Order, please. The question period is a time in which there is no provision for debate. The hon. minister's answer would have to be argument or reason in favour of a decision to do or not to do something, which is debate.

MR. WILSON:

Well, on a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker. I put the question on the Order Paper as a result of previous questioning. The answer was not complete and I would like to know why it was not complete. If it wasn't complete the last time, I can't see much point in putting it on the Order Paper again without an explanation from the minister, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Regardless of the relationship which this may have to a question on the Order Paper, it is clearly a question inviting the minister to argue in favour of something which he may or may not have done. As such, it is not suitable for the Order Paper.

Without wishing to take the time of the House during the question period, it may be appropriate to observe that if argument is elicited from ministers, the ones who might be disadvantaged by that are the occupants of the upper benches on both sides of the House, because they are not permitted to reply to any debate which may be offered during the question period.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege. It has always been customary to stand up in this House and take issue with a minister who may have given a misleading answer or has refused to provide an answer to a question on the Order Paper which becomes the order of the Legislature. He has no choice to ignore to answer a question adequately.

I am taking the position that if a question is answered only partly, it could be a lot more damaging than if he had deliberately misled the House and that this is the only time that the hon. Member for Calgary Bow has an opportunity to voice what he determines to be a grievance.

If hon. members cannot stand up in this House and stick up for their own problems and voice their own grievances, how on earth will an hon. member in this House be able to handle the grievances of people outside? This is a problem that is here. He has raised a legitimate complaint about a question not being adequately answered.

Certainly it's a problem of the Legislature because through the good offices of the hon. Speaker there was an order of the House that the question be answered. If it isn't answered we want to know why. If we can't get it then we are obliged to resort to legislation perhaps to get a bill to enforce the answering of questions. This is a lifelong struggle in all parliaments - to get legitimate answers from ministers, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, could I just say that certainly there is every opportunity, or there should be an opportunity, for members opposite to ask further questions. But it does seem to me that the correct time and place for that would be one of two occasions. First, if there is a matter of privilege, which is alleged, it should be followed under the rules with notice to Your Honour and brought up at the appropriate time. Secondly, if there is a question regarding a return, the proper time for a disposition of that matter would be on a Tuesday or Thursday when returns and questions are dealt with.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, speaking to that remark which is a point of order, I was under the impression that it isn't every point of privilege that requires notice. If something comes up in the House that requires immediate reference to that, one is unable to give notice. There are instances when it isn't every point of privilege that requires notice to the hon. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Any question which might have arisen out of a compliance with an order for a return, or lack of compliance, would certainly not be one of those things that required sudden intervention in the question period sometime afterwards. With great respect to the hon. member, the question period is not intended for the purpose of airing grievances. There are other provisions for that, as has been pointed out by the hon. Government House Leader.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary then, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. Would the hon. minister indicate whether the omission was an oversight, incompetence or some other reason?

MR. LUDWIG:

All three.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Speak for yourself.

MR. SPEAKER:

There is a question as to whether there is in fact an omission. If the hon. member wishes to raise a question of privilege on the basis of a return which he feels was incomplete or did not comply with the order of the House, I would suggest that the hon. member avail himself of the usual procedure in that regard, rather than taking the extraordinary and unusual step of using the question period to air a grievance of that kind.

Cabinet Tour - - Calgary

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Premier. When the cabinet meets in Calgary sometime in June, will they be entertaining the representation and delegations through their representatives?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I missed the very end part of the hon. member's question.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to refresh the hon. Premier's mind that he has announced that the cabinet will be meeting in Calgary some time in the early part of June. Will the cabinet be entertaining representations from delegations, through their representatives, during the meetings in Calgary?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, the answer is that we will be welcoming delegations and representations during the brief period that will be available during the time we are in Calgary on June 10 and 11. I believe the prime time would be the Tuesday morning, June 11. That may be extended somewhat.

Since this is our first cabinet tour into a metropolitan centre we are not able to judge the extent of the representations or briefs that might be made to us. So it may not be possible to hear them all, but we certainly will receive them all and we will give them due and adequate consideration.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, would the hon. Premier consider placing a delegation from my constituency on the list of committees to be interviewed? And I wish to make an observation that the hon. Premier ...

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Order. Order.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

MR. LUDWIG:

I rise on a point of privilege ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Sit down!

MR. SPEAKER:

Would the hon. member please resume his seat so that we may deal with one point at a time.

With regard to the request to appear before the cabinet, I would respectfully suggest that that arrangement might be made outside the question period.

And with regard to the hon. member's observation, I would suggest also that that might be made on a more appropriate occasion.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege. The hon. Premier made a statement which is entirely misleading and I want to bring the attention of the House to that misleading statement.

He has made a statement that this is the first time ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please. There is no provision for the hon. member to be correcting misleading statements, if they be such, in the question period.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege. In every legislature in this country an hon. member can stand up immediately and bring attention to a misleading statement by any minister, and I'm being denied that right. I wish the opportunity of speaking to my point of privilege that the ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please. If the hon. member ...

[Interjections]

Order, please. If the hon. member will look at plain parliamentary precedents he will find that there is no right in the question period to comment on an hon. minister's answer, whether the member likes the answer or doesn't like the answer.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to continue with the point of privilege and I'm not commenting on the hon. Premier's answer. The hon. Premier made an observation - a statement of fact - which was inaccurate and I believe ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please. The hon. member is clearly commenting on an answer when he calls it both misleading and inaccurate. The point of privilege which the hon. member has raised is hopefully disposed of.

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, if I could just add to my previous answer. If I said, and I did not intend to say, the Alberta government - but I believe what I said is: it is the first opportunity for our government, in terms of our various tours, to visit urban metropolitan centres. That's what I intended to say.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, a further question. Is the Premier stating that this is the first time that a cabinet of a government has visited a major metropolitan area within this province? Is that what he's saying?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll try my best to see if I can be clear.

MR. LUDWIG:

Speak the truth, for a change.

MR. LOUGHEED:

The position that I'm trying to make clear is this. The cabinet of the present government has undertaken a number of tours throughout the province outside the capital. We had a tour to the Peace River region, we had a tour to central Alberta and a tour to southern Alberta. We're going to tour the Calgary metropolitan area on June 10 and 11,

and as far as the current administration is concerned, it is our first effort in terms of that sort of approach within a metropolitan area in Alberta.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Premier has straightened out the question, but ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please.

MR. LUDWIG:

The Speaker knows ... [Inaudible] ... It's sure hard to get ... [Inaudible]

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Bow.

Senior Citizens' Report

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development. Has the government commissioned Mr. Wood to do a study or a report on senior citizens in Alberta?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member has used the name Mr. Wood, and it should be "Ward". A gentleman under contract, starting I believe late last year and concluding early this year, did prepare a report for me based on interviews with a number of senior citizens' groups throughout the province. That report has not been made public yet. I've indicated that it probably would be, but after I've had the opportunity to have it more fully reviewed.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the hon. minister indicate whether or not the period of review would be concluded prior to the termination of this session?

AN HON. MEMBER:

That could be by August.

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I would think the answer to that is, not likely.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Sedgewick-Coronation followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Millican.

Commemorative Stamps

MR. SORENSON:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. Would the hon. minister consider making representations to the hon. Postmaster General suggesting that Canada issue a stamp depicting the Manitou stone? This meteorite has great historical significance for Albertans and Canadians. I think it's a subject for a postage stamp.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

[Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, I'd be glad to get all the information from the hon. member and assist in every way possible with his representations. As a matter of fact, the department has had an opportunity to assist in another event to have a commemorative stamp struck, so perhaps if the occasion and the item are sufficient to draw the attention of the federal government to agree to his stamp, we certainly will help.

MR. SORENSON:

A supplementary to the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation. Could the hon. minister ensure that one of the replicas of the Manitou Stone will be sent to the World's Fair in Spokane ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The hon. member is clearly making a series of representations and I would think that he would have to agree that they are being noted.

MR. SORENSON:

A supplementary then to the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. Have you at any time in your meetings with the Postmaster General presented him with a picture or photo of our Premier and told him that that would be a subject for a postage stamp?

MR. GETTY:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll certainly consider that representation along with the one about the Manitou Stone.

DR. WARRACK:

Got any more?

MR. SORENSON:

Mr. Speaker, a question to the hon. Minister of Education. In light of the fact that the Government of Canada has announced a complete switch to the metric system by 19 ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Is this a supplementary?

MR. SORENSON:

No.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oh.

[Laughter]

Order please. I've already recognized the hon. Member for Calgary Millican.

Oil Pricing - Federal Influence

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the hon. the Premier. It's in regard to the statement by the federal Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, Mr. Macdonald, that if the Parliament falls tonight, the proposed legislation to implement an export tax will not be possible. I was wondering if the provincial government is ready to take any action to take advantage of the difference between the Canadian price and export price as far as Alberta producers are concerned?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member could elaborate? Was that Mr. Macdonald's statement of yesterday morning or the one of yesterday afternoon?

[Laughter]

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I've got a better one than that. It was the statement of last night.

[Laughter]

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I believe that matter has been dealt with - perhaps it was outside the House - and the hon. Attorney General may want to add to my response.

The position as far as Alberta is concerned is that we have an undertaking with regard to the crude oil price of an average of \$6.50 a barrel for the period up to July 1, 1975, and that's the nature of our undertaking. Insofar as the situation the federal government finds itself in, either today or in terms of the next few hours, is something I'm just not in a position to comment on.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. In view of the statement of the Hon. Robert Stanfield, leader of the Conservative party, that if he is elected he will carry out the policies of the Liberal government as far as oil is concerned - I am wondering if the hon. Premier has made any attempt to get in touch with Mr. Stanfield to try to outline Alberta's position to him?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to respond by saying, which statement, but the question [having been] put, I think that I would have to say that during the course of the last six to eight months, I've had a number of conversations with the Leader of the Opposition in the federal House of Commons with regard to energy matters but the specific remark and specific statement alluded to just now by the hon. Member for Calgary Millican is one that I'm not aware of, so I just have to take the matter as notice.

MR. DIXON:

I wonder then, Mr. Speaker, if I could ask the hon. Premier - Mr. Stanfield says it is his moral obligation. I was wondering if the Premier, when he does talk to the hon. Mr. Stanfield, will ask him what moral obligation he would have?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Well, Mr. Speaker, the only thing I could say to that is that if it's a reference to the question of the understanding that we reached on March 27, and if Mr. Stanfield was referring to continuing that from a point of view of the federal government, then certainly that is fully in accord with the first answer I've given the hon. member. That is, the Alberta government, regardless of any change that may occur in the federal government situation, will stand by its undertaking to keep the average price at \$6.50 a barrel until July 1, 1975.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, in view of the visit yesterday of the hon. Attorney General to Ottawa, I was wondering if the hon. Attorney General could enlighten the House on the government's position as far as the tax is concerned, because major companies in Alberta announced today they are going to cut back until either the provincial or federal government can clarify the position on royalty.

MR. LEITCH:

I take it, Mr. Speaker, from the hon. member's question that he is referring to the changes in the method of calculating income tax proposed by the federal government during the course of the Budget Speech.

I just draw to the hon. member's attention that that was not in any way related to the federal Bill C-18. Although it was raised during the questions following the initial statement, my response to it was that it was a matter dealing with the budget and would be under discussion for consideration by other members of the Alberta government.

MR. DIXON:

My final supplementary question is to the hon. Premier. In view of the fact that Texaco Canada, one of the largest companies, has announced that it is not going to go ahead with any further exploration in Canada until it gets clarification, I'm wondering if

the hon. Premier or the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs will immediately contact Ottawa so that we can get this thing solved. There is a lot of money involved.

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, if that course of action is a necessary or desirable one, we will certainly follow through on it. On the other hand, I think we're all well aware of the events that may be occurring today and it may be that the budget, as has been pointed out, may be relatively academic.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Taber-Warner followed by the hon. Member for Sedgewick-Coronation.

Three Rivers Dam

MR. D. MILLER:

My question, as explained previously, Mr. Speaker, was to the Minister of the Environment.

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants to direct it to me I'm prepared to take it as notice. The hon. minister is speaking this afternoon in Calgary, and I'd be happy to pass it on to him.

MR. D. MILLER:

Thank you, Mr. Premier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the hon. Premier advise at what stage the study on the feasibility of the Three Rivers dam has progressed to date?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I'll take that question as notice, and in terms of the circumstances also involved in the study, advise the hon. Minister of the Environment and hope that he would be in a position to respond.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Sedgewick-Coronation.

Metric System

MR. SORENSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is again to the hon. Minister of Education. In light of the fact that the Government of Canada is announcing a complete switch to the metric system by 1977, does the hon. minister wish to inform the Assembly what plans he has made to facilitate a smooth transition to the metric system in all government departments and in the province as a whole?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that date or that definitive decision has yet been made by federal authorities. I think the target might be somewhere close to 1980 and is dependent still on some situations with the United States.

But certainly we would look for as smooth a transition as possible in a gradual and evolutionary way reflecting Albertans' pace of understanding and acceptance of the metric system.

I think if the hon. member goes into almost any elementary school in the province today he will find that metric is one of the subjects being studied. There has been ongoing for past months a committee comprised, I think, of up to ten departments in the government to assess the future impact of this. In addition, I know Alberta representatives have been on the Canadian metric commission in Ottawa.

MR. COOKSON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a supplementary of the Minister of Agriculture with regard to the metric system. I wonder if he could advise whether the Americans will be converting - and whether our farm equipment will be in the metric system?

MR. SPEAKER:

I believe the hon. member's question concerning what the Americans might be doing might be directed to another minister of agriculture.

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

Youth Hostels - Alberta

MR. TAYLOR:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation.

Has the department a long-term plan for the building of youth hostels throughout the province?

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, yes we have. I made an announcement yesterday, or was it the day before, regarding a five-year program for the development of youth hostelling in Alberta which takes account, of course, of the platform of the Progressive Conservative party which was announced during the election campaign of 1971.

MR. TAYLOR:

Thank you. A supplementary. Does the hon. minister have a map that may be made public, showing the location of the youth hostels and how many will be built this year?

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, believing of course in the autonomy of the International Youth Hostels Association, it is definitely, of course, up to them also to propose to government the location of the sites. However, as the hon. member may be aware, there have been some submissions to the group which studied the development of the eastern slopes, and there may just be a possibility that sooner or later these development programs or plans [will] come to fruition.

DR. WARRACK:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to add briefly to that answer in concurrence with the points made by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation. The Environment Conservation Authority, during the course of 1973 in their hearings on the eastern slopes, did receive submissions relative to the expansion and location of a fairly large number of youth hostels, and members will note that in the interim report tabled in the House earlier, the youth hostels were referred to. The Environment Conservation Authority's final report is expected in the summer of 1974, in which case it will be possible to act on those matters.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Millican.

Executive Report - Job Opportunities

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question today to the hon. Minister of Industry and Commerce. It's regarding the release of a recent publication by the Department of Industry and Commerce, Mr. Speaker, called Executive Report. This caused quite a concern in the city of Calgary because of the large discrepancy in job opportunities or proposed new jobs in Calgary [compared] to those in Edmonton.

I was wondering if the hon. minister had had a chance as yet to check out the report to see if it was actually factual?

MR. PEACOCK:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I think first of all that the report, by way of explanation, is a preview voluntarily submitted by the business executives in the province of Alberta to forewarn the general public as well as the business community of just what is about to happen, or what their programs are, as they see them. So it is solicited on a voluntary basis.

I think the discrepancy between Calgary and Edmonton that has caused some concern to Calgarians is due to the fact that in the report there are three projects in Edmonton which account for a large percentage of the capital funds which caused that discrepancy, and also the large number of employees. It's built on a petrochemical plant that was committed in Edmonton, an extension of the Edmonton Power, and also the Imperial Oil refinery. That accounts for some \$700 million of capital expenditure and some 1,800 employees, which is the variance.

MR. DIXON:

A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. I wonder if the minister could inform the House as to whether the 900 personnel who are included in that report [and] who would be attached to the new Alberta Gas Trunk Line plant that's proposed for Edmonton - are those employees, Mr. Speaker, 900 during construction, or will there be 900 employed full-time after the plant is completed?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, while these are just general figures, they are considered to be of a permanent nature. That is what was intimated in this report. I think that in regard to the petrochemical plant itself, whether it be identified as Alberta Gas Trunk or Dow, or whatever it might be, it was considered to be one petrochemical plant in Edmonton.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Sedgewick-Coronation.

MR. SORENSON:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 28 Grade 9 students from Killam.

MR. SPEAKER:

May the hon. member revert to Introduction of Visitors?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS (CONT.)

MR. SORENSON:

They are accompanied today by their teacher, Mr. Jessween, and by parents, Mrs. Bouchard and Mrs. Fossen. Killam, with a population of 900, boasts an indoor olympic-sized swimming pool and scores of other things, just too numerous to mention.

They are seated in the public gallery. I would ask them to stand and be recognized.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair.]

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[Mr. Diachuk in the Chair]

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLYDepartment of Public Works (Cont.)

MR. CHAIRMAN:

The Committee of Supply will come to order.

Mr. Ruste, Public Works is the department we're going to discuss.

MR. RUSTE:

Mr. Chairman, to the minister, in his reference last night to what is known as the Federal Building up here and the negotiations that are taking place with the provincial government for the taking over of that some place down the road; I understood that this is some years away as yet, there is no definite date.

My question to the minister is, in light of the changes taking place in this type of accommodation needed by government, does he feel that when it is possible to take it over it will be a practical building to have for the provincial government, having to bear in mind the changes that will no doubt have to be made in the building?

DR. BACKUS:

Mr. Chairman, this is certainly part of our negotiation with the federal government in arriving at an agreed price because we're looking at a price that will allow us to make necessary changes and upgrading of the building, if we do take it over. Of course, the federal government is looking at it purely from the point of view of trying to sell the building. For this reason we are in the process of negotiating and as yet haven't agreed on a price when and if we do take it over. But this is certainly being taken into consideration.

We have examined the building. The actual structure of the building is good and sound and has a lot of years in it. Some of the mechanics of the building, the air conditioning and so on, require quite a bit of work and quite a little bit of expense in order to update it to a suitable building. This has been taken into consideration and is part of our negotiation.

MR. RUSTE:

Mr. Chairman, then another question deals with Vote No. 2605, Construction Supervision Branch. Has the minister worked out any percentage of the total amount of construction that is done under this vote, what it costs in a percentage point for supervision?

DR. BACKUS:

Well, most of the - I shouldn't say most of the - it is this appropriation that is the Inspection Branch. Now apart from secretarial staff and so on within the branch, most of the salary would be going to the inspectors who actually do the inspections throughout the province. This total figure of salaries is pretty well expended on the inspectors. Is this what you meant?

MR. RUSTE:

Well, Mr. Chairman, it was just a matter of - say, for \$1 million worth of construction that they supervise - what would it cost in dollars, say, for this supervision? If the minister hasn't got that, I would appreciate getting it.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Chairman, in Public Works under Appropriation 2682 there are some services to be provided for the Baker Memorial Sanatorium. What is the present use of those buildings, and are there any planned changes for the use of these buildings?

DR. BACKUS:

That building is presently being used. There are still, I believe, some tuberculosis patients in it, 'san' patients. It is also being used for some handicapped children. But its use, mainly - well, entirely at the moment - is by the Department of Health and Social Development, primarily for 'san' patients and handicapped children.

We are certainly looking at the development of that site with a view to changing its function. It will still be under Health and Social Development, but it will probably develop more in the direction of handicapped children and the 'san' aspect of it will be faded out.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Chairman, there are no immediate plans for new construction on the site, is there?

DR. BACKUS:

Not this year.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Chairman, I would like to direct a question to the hon. minister. Could he give us some details as to the planning for construction and purchase of property on the north side of Calgary - I'm talking about the vicinity of the Beacon Hotel and in that area - what land purchases have either been made or are proposed to be made and what are the government's requirements for space, whether it be institutional space or office space, could the minister just give us some idea of what is planned for that area at the present time?

DR. BACKUS:

Mr. Chairman, I wonder - I don't know Calgary intimately - you say the Beacon Hill area?

MR. LUDWIG:

No, the Beacon Hotel on Centre Street and 16th Avenue and areas around there. It is in the area of the Balmoral School, the liquor store, the proposed senior citizens' nursing hospital. I had posed a question before, Mr. Minister, on this point and I'm interested to know just what are the future plans for that particular area.

DR. BACKUS:

Mr. Chairman, I believe the hon. member is inquiring about a proposal about which we invited expressions of interest and ultimately - we are in the process right now of negotiating. This is to be office accommodation and the office space is for the Department of Health and Social Development.

This is the only proposal, whether we go for the original intent which was to have the private sector build a building which we would lease back or lease space in. The actual prices that came in from all the proposals were rather high and we are presently looking at the possibility of, in fact, going for the purchase of the land and the construction of the building through our own independent negotiations.

One of the conditions that we have raised in this particular area is that the people from whom we would be proposing to buy the land will have to get a building permit or a development permit approved by the City of Calgary planning commission, because we certainly don't want to purchase the land unless we know it is feasible to build there.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the hon. minister can supply me with information, which is not too detailed but perhaps something that one would not expect the hon. minister to know offhand, of any proposed projects in that area - that general area within three or four blocks? I am talking about 16th Avenue and Centre Street North. What is proposed? Will the Department of Health and Social Development have any need for offices in that area - in particular, whether the government has made any moves to purchase the North Hill Auto Body property, and whether the request for proposal is being seriously pursued by the

government as an alternate way to construction by the government itself? I mean building to government requirements and lease-back.

I am also of the opinion that perhaps this r.f.p. was not considered when the extension to the main courthouse was being designed. That was one other concern I had. But generally in that area I am concerned, as a matter of interest and perhaps some responsibility, to know what is planned, how far we intend to progress, whether there are any definite moves afoot to establish additional office space in the northern part of the city and where the actual sites may be?

I would also like the hon. minister, while he is dealing with this problem, to advise me whether the space in the John J. Bowlen Building has, in fact, been used up entirely or is there additional space in the event that the government may have urgent need for office space?

DR. BACKUS:

Mr. Chairman, I'll check and provide information on those two bits of information. I believe that as far as the John J. Bowlen Building is concerned it is presently full but the space occupied in it is flexible to the point that one can adjust space there in an urgent matter of requiring a small amount of further space. Adjustments can be made within the building to accommodate some of this space.

In answer to part of your first question, the department is certainly looking at and, in fact, doing some experimentation in terms of lease-back as opposed to building ourselves. We haven't reached any positive conclusions on this being advantageous. The private sector tells us that it can build cheaper than we can and actually lease back to us cheaper than if we built ourselves. We are taking a look at this.

It certainly does create added problems in the way of public tendering. We have found, in the one or two cases where we have tried this, that problems certainly do arise in this mode of doing it. On the other hand, we are quite prepared to experiment in this direction because we want to know whether, in fact, the private sector is correct and they can do it less expensively and provide us with as satisfactory accommodation, and therefore whether we should try to develop this form of handling requirements of the department, or whether, in fact, this is not correct and we carry on the way we're doing of building our own buildings rather than leasing them.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Chairman, a further question on the John J. Bowlen Building. Will there be any easing of the space necessity in that building by perhaps moving some of the courtrooms? We have the Remand Centre now and with the extension of four floors to the main courtroom, will there be any possibility of any of this space being made available for other uses by moving the the courtrooms out of that building?

DR. BACKUS:

I would have to check on this, Mr. Chairman. The Family Courts are presently I believe occupying space in the John J. Bowlen Building. I am not sure of intentions of the Attorney General's department, whether he intends to move these facilities over to the new Court House and Remand Centre or into the Provincial Courthouse. I've not had any information on that but I can certainly check it and find out for you.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Chairman, one more question to the hon. minister in dealing with office space. I had requested certain details that the hon. minister promised to get me.

I'm concerned about the fact that one of the major sections of the Department of Consumer Affairs, and that's the Companies Branch, is experiencing difficulty in getting office space. It's now in a position - and I've been there, in circumstances which are entirely inadequate.

What is the actual position now of the Companies Branch - the whole staff and numerous offices and equipment, material, et cetera? When is it going to be moved, and where? Is it determined or is it still up in the air? This is something that ought to be determined and determined quickly. It provides one of the more valuable public services. It charges considerable for its service and it's an essential service.

I'm stating here in the Legislature that it is not adequately housed at the present time. The whole operation as it's set up right now is not geared to efficiency. It is no reflection on the hon. Minister of Public Works, but since the hon. minister is responsible for providing space, what are his instructions now and when can we expect this space to be available?

DR. BACKUS:

Mr. Chairman, with the advent of the Consumers Branch and the transfer of a number of these different branches into the Department of Consumer Affairs there has been some movement of offices and upgrading of these offices. It certainly is our intention to obtain satisfactory space for the Companies Branch and it is hoped that all that, and related branches, will be together for the greater convenience of the public.

There have been some very real problems in obtaining space in Edmonton at the present time. There's a fair amount of construction going on, but at the moment all, or a good part of it, is due to be available within the next month or two. During the last month or two there has been a very definite shortage in obtaining satisfactory space. Some branches have had to put up with rather inadequate space because we haven't wanted to move them around frequently before we got them all established in proper office space where they could be together.

MR. SORENSON:

Further to your answers to the hon. Member for Calgary Millican, you mentioned that Edmonton Telephones charges the government full business rates. Wouldn't it be better to have this whole area of telecommunications under the telephone department where they have the expertise? And couldn't a better deal with Edmonton be made if it were under the telephone department?

DR. BACKUS:

This is a possibility - certainly I'll take your suggestion - but the part of it that is under the Department of Public Works is, in fact, simply the provision of telephones in office space. Because we are primarily concerned with the provision of office space, the provision of furnishings and this whole setting up of the physical needs of departments or branches - telephones, electric lights and other utilities required by those people - all come, at present, under the Department of Public Works. Whether it would, in fact, increase the sort of service facility aspect of it if you had different aspects of an office service under several different departments is questionable; such that if the head of a department wanted to have the drapes changed, he had to go to one department and if he wanted his telephone moved to another place, he had to go to another department and if he wanted a light bulb changed, he had to go to another department. We see the present way as being most effective, having all the needs, the physical needs, the caretaking, the furnishings and everything for departments or office staff, being provided through the one department.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Chairman, following up the minister's remarks, I was wondering if Mr. Chairman and the members would go along with the Minister of Telephones and Utilities answering a question, because I feel that where we're spending almost \$2 million with Edmonton Telephones, maybe we should look at trying to get some of that business ourselves. After all, AGT is in business and supported by every resident outside of the city of Edmonton. I was wondering if at this time we could have an explanation from the minister? I think it would fit in and maybe help us with some of our concerns that we have with telephones - not that I feel that the minister can answer it, but I realize there are some things that wouldn't come under your department as far as the particular deals with the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton telephone system. So I was wondering if the House would go along with the hon. minister if he wouldn't mind answering a question that I'd like to ask?

My question to the hon. Minister of Telephones and Utilities would be: is there any way the Alberta government can get a better deal than they seem to be getting at the present time where they are the largest customers of Edmonton Telephones and no discount or any kind of consideration apparently is given, which is usually not general business practice?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. FARRAN:

If the hon. member wouldn't mind waiting for five or ten minutes, I've sent to my office for the relevant figures. I haven't quite got them at my fingertips. I anticipated that you might be leading into this line of questioning and I have sent a note up asking for figures on how much is spent with Edmonton Telephones by the Alberta government each year.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to make a few comments about the Calgary Court House and ask the minister to answer some questions. I'm informed that roughly 25,000 square feet of marble has been removed from the walls of the courthouse. I'm also advised that the total amount of the marble had been removed by the corporation that got the contract to demolish. I'm also advised that the marble cost \$10 per square foot when it was purchased 10 or 11 years ago if not more, and that the approximate cost of replacing this marble, I believe it's 25,000 square feet, would be about \$15 per square foot. I'm also advised that Wearmouth Holdings Limited is selling this marble to whomever it can and that a lot of this marble was removed intact. That is, the slabs were not damaged, they may have been chipped slightly. There were some instances of damaged slabs of marble, but the majority of the marble was reusable.

I'm not making any allegation as to the value of the marble on the market, but I'm saying, Mr. Minister, that the marble could have been utilized to advantage by the Department of Public Works on its numerous projects, for stairs, trimmings, flooring and for whatever purpose. It is valuable stone.

I take serious exception to the fact that this was not handled carefully by the Department of Public Works with the prime intention of salvaging as much of that marble as possible. My position is that with care the majority, the bulk of it, could have been salvaged. I happen to go to the courthouse two or three times a day and as a matter of interest I had a look at it. I've seen instances where this marble was handled by machinery. It wasn't handled as valuable stone; it was handled as something that was going to be salvaged.

I'm not in any way casting a reflection on the minister's advice or the minister's discharge of responsibility. But I'm saying that marble is valuable. The fact that the contractor who bid for the demolition made such a poor bid is a clear indication to me - he bid, I think, approximately half of the next person above him and considerably less than the highest bidder. I'm not saying that in the final analysis the bidder or the demolition contractor is going to make any money. Nevertheless the principle is that we were dealing with valuable stone which was adequate to remain on the walls of that courthouse indefinitely if it had not been changed.

I'm also further saying that there is a lot of marble remaining on the walls which is in perfect shape and can last indefinitely. I'm not going to be at all impressed with the minister who can show me that some of the marble was not usable, therefore it's all salvage. I know what can happen. You can drop a slab of marble and it can break up. But even if it is broken up into smaller pieces it is still valuable stone. It can be used and should have been utilized for perhaps a number of purposes in the Department of Public Works, stairways, trimmings, hallways or entrances to buildings, or even 25,000 square feet of marble could have made patios or entrances to buildings. But it was good. It was imported marble from Italy. I'm not saying it's the best or the most expensive marble, but it isn't cheap. When we import stone of that type it has to cost a lot of money.

Now I'm not sure whether the type of design and the type of construction that is being carried on at the courthouse would be suitable for utilizing the marble. But if some of it is going to be used on the building as trimmings for doorways, entrances, et cetera, stairs perhaps, a lot of it could have been used. I'm very disappointed in the fact that this was not treated as a separate valuable item because at \$10 per square foot you are looking at about \$250,000. That is what it costs.

I'm not at all concerned that it may not cost much now, that on the market it may sell for little. I'm sure the person who is doing the demolition will try to get everything he can for it. I don't blame him. He is entitled to do it and it is no reflection on him. But I think the government should have been a lot more careful - when you are dealing with something that if you wanted to replace it at current market values would be over and above \$350,000 - that is the allegation I'm making. It's no reflection on anybody's integrity. I don't want anybody to jump to conclusions, but I'm saying that in my opinion this whole thing was mishandled.

Had the DPW handled the removal of the marble itself it could have salvaged the greater portion of it. Certainly I'm not going to buy the belief that the government couldn't use 20,000 square feet of marble. I know that some of it was not reusable, but my position is that notwithstanding reports, notwithstanding the corporation that handled marble, as far as they are concerned the cutting of it, the trimming of it would be costly. It would not be as costly as buying new marble.

I've taken a stand when I've asked questions before on this issue that this was a vital issue, that it could not be treated lightly, that it is public property and we are not dealing with cement blocks or sandstone that is no longer usable. We're dealing with a modern kind of stone that in my opinion can be adapted anywhere. It could even have been brought here. DPW has the equipment, the storage space and the ingenuity of a department to use that marble.

I want to go on record as voicing strong objection in the manner in which this marble will, in fact, disappear from government ownership through the agreement made by the demolition corporation which is selling that marble in Calgary today for what it can get. I wish to be on record - I certainly disapprove of the manner in which this whole thing was handled.

MR. KOZIAK:

Mr. Chairman, before the question is called - I recall that in last year's committee meetings I had disclosed an indirect interest which I had in connection with Appropriation No. 2617.

In reading the standing orders in Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly which are in effect for this year, I notice that Rule No. 31 seems to apply to a direct pecuniary interest. However, I wish to remain consistent and indicate that I do have an indirect, though small, interest in, I believe it's Appropriation No. 2617. So I will not be taking part in discussion on that or taking part in the vote on that appropriation, or, as a matter of fact, I suppose, on the vote on the entire department.

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Chairman, in answer to the question by the hon. Member for Calgary Millican, Mr. Dixon. These are the figures: by the provincial government the Edmonton Telephones rental is \$94,500 a month for an annual total of \$1,134,000. If the same service were provided by AGT, the annual cost would be \$806,400, or a saving of \$327,600.

For The University of Alberta the Edmonton Telephones rental annually is \$376,800. If AGT were doing it, it would be \$348,000 for a saving of \$28,800 a year.

Alberta Government Telephones pays rents to Edmonton Telephones of \$506,400 a year. If AGT were doing it themselves, the cost would be \$435,600, for an annual saving of \$70,800. In other words, there would be a saving of in excess of \$400,000 a year if AGT rather than Edmonton Telephones were providing the service to those three areas.

At the present time the provincial government service is provided through a step-by-step switch. However, Edmonton Telephones has quoted Centrex rates which would transfer the service from the step-by-step office to the 5x bar Centrex switch. It's not known what Edmonton Telephones' Centrex rates would be but, as a guess, we believe the approximate comparative costs will be these: initial costs of Centrex for the provincial government, \$4.6 million with \$806,000 annual charges for the station equipment. For initial cost of Centrex for AGT itself, \$1.6 million and annual charges of \$435,000. If the Centrex were for both the provincial government and AGT, the cost would be \$6.2 million and annual charges of \$1.2 million.

Roughly speaking, the initial cost for Centrex as compared to AGT doing it itself, with a 20-year present worth of annual charges, goes like this. If Edmonton Telephones' tariff rates are what is expected, it would be \$24,500,000. If it was from AGT as cost plus their present allowable rate of return, it would be \$13,800,000. So the difference is \$10,700,000 over 20 years.

MR. RUSTE:

Mr. Chairman, getting back to the capital part, I take it that we're in the whole department at this time. With the capital on the Legislature Building, Edmonton, there's mechanical upgrading to plan and commence, \$100,000. Now what is anticipated in the total cost of that, because that can run into a fair amount of money.

And then on the same one as well, there are renovations to complete. What percentage of that is left to be done on the Legislature Building itself? It's on Capital Vote G234F.

DR. BACKUS:

The mechanical upgrading is related to improving the air conditioning in the Legislature Building. We put in a temporary type of facility at the end of last year, so that some air conditioning was provided in the building, which in fact was fairly effective in maintaining, for example, the temperature of this room during the opening ceremonies when it was full of people. The temperature only rose one degree - I don't know what happened last night.

However, that was established by simply running temporary plastic pipe and has not been made into a permanent type of facility. It's proposed to upgrade this to provide us with a little better air conditioning facility throughout the building instead of having to go to temporary window air conditioners in various offices, which really don't provide a very satisfactory facility for the building.

The renovations are various and are continuing. I don't have the details here of all the renovations, but, in fact, a number of them have been actually been put to use. Inspection by the fire marshall [showed] we actually were not complying with fire regulations and therefore there's a continual program of renovation going on to gradually bring us into line with that and provide us with satisfactory exits.

I believe we have plans for improving the first floor, upgrading that cafeteria area somewhat. There are continuous improvements being brought in as far as floors and so on are concerned. Some of the floors are rather deteriorated and have had to be redone. Steps have to be renovated, and this is a total overall figure to cover the costs required in renovating.

We're also looking at trying to improve the members and public galleries here in the Legislature because considerable expression has been made, both in the press and from the public, that the seats up there are extremely uncomfortable. We have plans for renovating there. Now whether that's all part of this, I'm not sure, but that is certainly in the books to be an ongoing program.

I think it's only fair that while I'm standing I should answer - I'm sorry the hon. member didn't wait for an answer ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

He's here.

DR. BACKUS:

Oh, he's there - about the marble.

I'm no expert on marble, and I don't pretend to be. But I do have numerous reports from the people who are more expert on marble than I am that in fact a good part of the marble which had to be removed had deteriorated. I have reports that in fact it was not outdoor marble in the first place. It had very soft veins in it. As I explained, I have some samples of it in the office with photographs showing the deterioration which occurred. I've also been told that it was rather thinner marble than is normally cut for the purpose here, and for this reason it was my expert advice - and this I don't hold up against the wide experience of the hon. member - that in fact the salvaging of this marble was considered very questionable. Therefore in the calling of tenders, his suggestion that maybe we gave somebody an advantage in being able to use the marble, the marble was included as part of the, if you like, return which the person or the company removing it would get. In fact, I think they probably did not get as much from it as they had hoped. But everybody who bid on it had that understanding, that the salvage of the marble was theirs to make on it what they could.

Because we considered that there was a much better chance that other stone could be salvage and reused, it was conditional that it would be salvaged for the Department of Public Works. But the marble was considered not to be as salvageable. Now I'm not saying it wasn't valuable, it probably is, there's probably some of it that is valuable, but it was considered not to be as salvagable and therefore it was a part of the tender that the person who took it off could keep it or sell it. In fact a good deal of it has proved non-salvageable.

The other thing is that marble is something that - although you might salvage part of it, and some of it might even have been used, as I say, the veins had already shown definite erosion. With marble you do have to try to match it if you're going to use it for repair work. Therefore, unless you were going to bring it into new construction, it wouldn't be terribly valuable to salvage just for patching of other areas. Certainly the cost of salvaging and reusing it was considered by the experts in my department and by other experts too as not worth it. And this is why it was handled in the way in which it was.

Now I'm not going to put up my opinion on that against the opinion of the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View because I think each of us probably knows about as much about it as the other. All I'm stating is the fact that those who do know about it gave me that point of view.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to respond by saying that the minister's views are based on opinions he received from certain people knowledgeable in the business. My views are also received in that manner.

I'm saying that if the DPW or the government had no use for the marble because it wasn't salvageable as it was useless, apparently the man who took it found a great use for it, placed a value on it and, in fact, bid rather low to get that marble. I'm saying that if it's a conflict of opinion then perhaps we want to know where this is. My opinion is

that the man who did the salvage operation, did the demolition, has to sell it, unless he wants to retain some of it for himself.

But I'm saying that that marble is usable, even though it might not be usable in its entirety as it was purchased, naturally. In handling stone, the best of stone can get chipped, can be dropped, can be split in two and marble isn't that strong a stone, at least this one wasn't. But to say that perhaps it was of no value at all, I think, doesn't require expert opinion to determine that. I think that it is. My view is that if I wanted to go and buy a slab or two to make something with, I'd probably have to pay top import prices for it. The man will be able to sell it piecemeal as circumstances warrant, and he'll do all right for himself.

So I'm not saying that I'm an expert on marble. Nobody is an expert except the man who lives 15 miles away from home. But my advice was from reliable people, from people in the business who expressed an honest opinion. They had no personal axe to grind. So it's a question of opinion, Mr. Chairman.

I say that I still would have preferred very much to have seen DPW salvage it all itself, handle it carefully. My view is that if that courthouse were not being altered that marble would have been on those walls for another 25 or 30 years with no one being the wiser.

I know that handling marble, handling stone of this kind with machinery, handling by a person with a demolition firm - that he didn't handle it with kid gloves. He wasn't going to handle this marble in such a manner that 95 per cent would be perfectly intact and then claim salvage, because it would be valuable stone. So he did the job quickly and cheaply, let the marble chip where it may, if I may use that expression, and took it. I'm saying that the government could have done better and could have saved it. That's my opinion, Mr. Chairman.

DR. BACKUS:

Mr. Chairman, I wish to correct the hon. member. I didn't say it had no value. I said it was not considered salvageable for the Department of Public Works. I've got a basement full of things that I consider valuable. My wife doesn't think they should be salvaged. As you say, it's a matter of opinion.

If the department, which is very much involved in the construction phase - and I believe the hon. member will agree that the department has in it some very expert people in many fields in the construction industry - if they, in fact, felt that it was not worth salvaging from the point of view of the Department of Public Works, then I'm afraid I must accept their opinion because, as I say, I'm no expert in this field.

MR. BARTON:

Just one question. On all your equipment that is outdated and disposed of, is it disposed of through the Alberta Opportunity Fund? What form of advertising - and it may not be the right area, but I'd like your tolerance to explain the procedure - once it leaves your hands until it gets to the opportunity fund - who puts the value on it and do they advertise that equipment? Is it still a central location?

DR. BACKUS:

Normally, yes. This goes to the Alberta Opportunity Company which sells it, usually on a tender basis. That is, they advertise for expressions of interest in purchasing it and sell to the highest bidder. There have been some suggestions that we'd do better to sell our furniture and equipment by auction rather than by this tendering method. I have personally discussed this with them and it's their opinion that they actually do better by the tendering method. I believe in the past - and this is not in the immediate past but in the more distant past - they had tried this other method of putting it out to auction and it's their feeling that by tendering they were getting the best price for it. Again, this could well be a matter of opinion. I'm not prepared to dispute it. It's got nothing to do with my department for one thing. For another thing, not having been in either the auction or the retail sales business, I would not be in a position to express an opinion on this.

MR. BARTON:

The point that I was really getting at is the office equipment, like chairs and desks and things like that - rural Alberta has in the past had ... fixed price and they established the price and they went to the buildings here in town. Now, I have followed some of the advertising that the Alberta Opportunity Company does but it's only in the major papers and it doesn't really give as fair an opportunity to rural Alberta to bid for this stuff as there was in the past. Maybe auctions, in certain areas, [provide] an advantage because they are usually covered with a full area of advertising. In this case,

it ends up in auctioneer's hands anyway and they are paying quite a higher price when it comes right down to it.

DR. BACKUS:

Maybe this would be a suitable recommendation to make when the appropriations of the Alberta Opportunity Company come up. They really have nothing to do with Public Works.

MR. BARTON:

Thank you. I agree.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

No further questions? Agreed on the resolution?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

The resolution, as moved by the chairman of Subcommittee C, Mr. Young,

Resolved, that a sum not exceeding \$129,409,560 be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1975, for the Department of Public Works.

[The motion was carried.]

Department of Advanced Education

MR. LEE:

Mr. Chairman, Subcommittee A has had under consideration Vote 30, the estimates of expenditure for the Department of Advanced Education and begs to report the same. I therefore submit the following resolution:

Resolved, that a sum not exceeding \$204,551,535, of which \$174,595,535 shall be chargeable to income account and \$29,956,000 to capital account, be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1975, for the Department of Advanced Education.

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Any questions?

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Chairman, hearing unanimous consent of the House, I am somewhat reluctant to get into the discussion ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

You should be, you should be.

MR. FOSTER:

... because no doubt my comments will provoke more response than if I had remained seated.

MR. CLARK:

You don't know when you're well off.

MR. FOSTER:

That's right.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Quit while you're ahead.

MR. FOSTER:

I really don't know when I'm well off.

I would report, Mr. Chairman, that my estimates have already received several hours of careful scrutiny in subcommittee, involving a considerable amount of discussion. No doubt there will be additional discussion. However, I do have one or two comments I'd like to make generally that I did not have the opportunity of making in the course of previous discussion.

For the department this past year has been one which I might best describe as a period of organization and reorganization in that we assumed, in the course of this past year, the responsibilities for the former Colleges Commission and Universities Commission. I recall the remarks of the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview on the occasion of our last budget and I'm pleased to say I have survived at least the first year of my role as minister for this department.

[Interjections]

Yes. I believe we have, in the past year, assumed the responsibilities of these commissions which existed under the act, and assumed as well certain functions of the Department of Education.

Two major divisions of the department have been created, administrative services and program services, each with a divisional structure and directors to serve them. I will not go through many of the items of accomplishment, save for a few we have been involved with in this past year. One in particular, and we discussed this earlier, was the matter of a three-year university finance plan which I am very pleased to say is, I believe, the only such plan of any province in Canada. Like most educational plans, it was no sooner in effect than it was somewhat outdated. We have had a number of appeals by the universities, except Athabasca, in the last several months relating to their finances and their ability to provide top quality service. As a result of this, Mr. Chairman, I have announced that for the 1975-76 year, I will, in fact, make a recommendation to cabinet to increase the funding for universities.

I am hopeful that we can, in fact, expand this plan beyond the three years and we are having discussions with the universities right now on that subject. I can deal later with the matter of the other post-secondary institutions in the province. It is my hope that in the course of the next year we will be able to discuss, particularly with the public colleges, the matter of long-term operating budgets and capital budgets.

The past year has seen the legislation involving the Alberta educational communications corporation, otherwise known as ACCESS - the creation of the educational authority being my colleague, Lou Hyndman, and myself. There are funds in this budget to encourage the post-secondary institutions to utilize the resources of ACCESS. We hope they will take advantage of that opportunity.

For several months we have been working on the matter of program coordination policies, guidelines and procedures, or, in short, a program-approval mechanism. I report, with some reluctance, that some institutions were concerned that we appeared to be delaying the approval of certain kinds of programs which they were anxious to receive approval for and implement. I had some difficulty, although I believe we were successful, in concluding that we simply had to have a policy that was generally acceptable to all institutions before we began approving programs. Those programs have now been approved, with some exceptions. The guideline appears to be working satisfactorily; however, we are prepared to review the same at the end of the experimental trial period.

One matter which has received little discussion here but considerable discussion, particularly in the institutions in the non-university sector of this province, by students and parents, has been this question of transfer - therefore, the question of admissions and advanced standing. Beginning last summer and fall we began a series of meetings with each of the university and non-university systems with a view to developing a policy on transfer which would be acceptable. In the spring of this year, having arrived at what we thought was a successful policy of compromise, the universities wish the opportunity of going it alone, so to speak, and trying to reach some consensus with their colleagues in the non-university sector. Certainly because admission in advanced standing is a jurisdictional matter within the jurisdiction of the universities, I, of course, was happy to accede to their request.

I believe, Mr. Chairman, that we are extremely close to an agreement between the universities and the other institutions in this province which will, in fact, see the establishment of a council on admissions and transfer. Certainly the department is

prepared to proceed with the proposal we have. I have been asked by the universities, and as a matter of fact I have also been asked by the heads of the non-university institutions, to give them a further period of time, until the end of May, to see [if] hopefully, the consensus will revalue at that time into an agreement for such a mechanism. I am hopeful that the mechanism, the council on admissions and transfer, will be able to establish policies and deal with the kinds of problems that have been plaguing me and some of my colleagues - and you, I'm sure, as well - on the difficulty for students going from one institution to another, gaining advanced standing and credit for the work they have achieved.

Some question has been raised in this House, and it was touched on briefly in subcommittee - the matter of the study which we have underway with the Province of British Columbia concerning adult education in the northeast region of that area. I will be discussing that with my colleague from British Columbia in the course of a meeting next month. We have solicited public response from that area of the province, including MLAs, and we hope to receive it by May 21. Some time following that we will carry out further discussions in the area and hopefully then make some policy decisions relative to the recommendations of that report.

The same may be said of the study which we have commissioned with the Province of Saskatchewan which focussed on the Vermilion-Lloydminster-Maidstone region of both provinces, but which is clearly broad enough in scope to have implications for a much larger region of northeastern Alberta. That, too, will be the subject of some considerable discussion and comment, I'm sure, when the report is received later this summer. Again, I will be discussing that with the government officials of Saskatchewan and responding in a positive way as soon as possible, in hopes that a coordinated approach to the delivery of post-secondary educational opportunity can be brought to bear for that region of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

I believe it is probably too early at this time, Mr. Chairman, to make any comment relative to whether or not we will, in fact, participate with the other governments in a one-college region. That decision has not yet, of course, been taken.

There is a study under way on the fine and performing arts in the province, involving this department and others. As a result we have delayed consideration of certain programs in the fine and performing arts area. For the record, I know there are many institutions anxious to have fine and performing arts capital facilities on campus - The University of Lethbridge being one - and we have had to delay consideration of that until this report is received. However, when it is, my commitment is that we will endeavour to deal with it as quickly as possible and not delay the introduction of whatever fine and performing arts programs are reasonable and equitable, in providing that service to this province.

A little-known fact, Mr. Chairman, is that the Organization of Economic and Cultural Development - the 21-nation group of the 'have' nations of the world - is conducting a review of education in Canada. Certainly Alberta will be participating along with the other provinces. We are part of a western region study. We hope to have a preliminary report approximately a year from now, and that, no doubt, will tell us a great deal about how we fare in relationship to the rest of Canada and indeed to the other nations of OECD.

A very important achievement, I believe, of this department in the past year has been the creation of a series of senior advisory committees - senior in the sense that they are advisory to the Minister of Advanced Education - involving students, faculty, certain specialist groups, and predominantly members of the public, in six very important areas: university affairs, college affairs, technical and vocational manpower education, further education, Native peoples and student affairs. These citizens, some 90 in number, who are currently meeting have a very responsible job, I believe, and a very difficult one in assessing the major issues in their area that exist in this province and advising the department and myself, in particular, on new policies. I am indeed grateful for the voluntary assistance of these citizens, whether students, faculty or members of the public, and will ensure that every assistance of this department is made available to them in the coming year.

We have as well - and this is rather an administrative thing but I think it is important for someone in my office to comment on it - we have in the past year endeavoured to make ourselves available to the 20-odd post-secondary institutions which exist, bearing in mind that we are now the single authority that exists for post-secondary education in Alberta. We have implemented a policy of taking one day a month, at least one day a month, and travelling to one of the post-secondary institutions - not simply myself but my senior staff as well - in the hope that on those occasions we can meet with students, faculty, administration, boards of governors and others who are interested in talking to us about the problems and concerns of those institutions, and hopefully in that way providing an additional channel of information both to us and from us about the problems and concerns of those institutions and of post-secondary education generally.

In the course of the past several months we have been to Mount Royal, SAIT, NAIT, Medicine Hat, Grant MacEwan College, McMurray, and next Monday as a matter of fact we will be going to the vocational centre in Lac La Biche. This is a very useful time for my office and, I believe, for my officials. Hopefully it will allow us to keep on top of whatever problems are growing in post-secondary education. We hope that we can deal with those problems before they become problems in fact.

Another very important activity which is currently under way in the department, and indeed in the Alberta community, is the matter of legislative review. The only piece of legislation before this House involving the sector for which I am responsible is The Student Finance Amendment Act. I indicated in my remarks on that occasion that the review of legislation was currently under way and would hopefully conclude in the course of the next 12 to 15 months. We are focussing, principally, on The Universities Act, The Colleges Act and the department legislation, but there are many, many other pieces of legislation involving post-secondary education - I think some 80 or 90 in total. It is my hope that members of the Assembly, the public and interested citizens of this province will provide us with their advice and comments on their concerns for a total rewriting of this legislation.

I don't want to leave the suggestion, Mr. Chairman, as I've said before, that I am carrying around a redraft of The Universities Act or The Colleges Act in my hip pocket. I certainly am not. I simply want to provide the opportunity for all citizens, and particularly those in the institutions, to comment on the issues and problems and future directions of legislation in the hope that we can, in fact, draft and prepare forward legislation - legislation which will anticipate the problems of tomorrow and allow us all to live and to deal with those matters effectively, efficiently and with little disruption.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. FOSTER:

Thank you.

We will be working in the course of the next year, and certainly in the very near future, on policies and guidelines for further education, a major area of emphasis, I hope, in this department in the next year, subject to the concurrence of my colleagues. We are currently considering a draft policy paper which I hope we will be in a position to bring to the attention of the House in the not too distant future.

One item of special interest, I think, to high school students and the parents of high school students is a small item in these appropriations - not very significant dollar-wise. It has to do with a career publication which we are making available to students of Grades 9 to 12 inclusive, sometime later this month, dealing with post-secondary programs and opportunities for employment. We have entitled this little document It's About Time. We hope to have it in the hands of students very shortly and we hope that it's useful to them. It will no doubt come to the attention of many members of the House, and we will see that it does. If you have comments or criticisms I know you will bring them to my attention.

We will be evaluating the Athabasca University project in the course of the next year. There are several other studies and reviews under way. I could go into some detail, Mr. Chairman, on other items of department activity in particular, but I think that I should conclude with those brief general remarks and give the members of the House the opportunity of asking questions as we did during the several hours in subcommittee.

MR. GRUENWALD:

I would like to thank the minister for the remarks he has made. There are just three or four areas that I would like to bring to the attention - or questions that I would like to ask of the minister.

First of all, I just want to refer briefly to the remarks you made regarding transfers. I believe the time has come - as a matter of fact it's overdue - for a good sound policy as far as transfers from the colleges to the universities are concerned. I hope when this is finally drafted and finalized, it will be made abundantly clear, in particular to the colleges, that certainly some of the courses that are offered there, like business administration and some of these, will have a value as far as transfer into universities is concerned.

But I hope that the colleges will also be made abundantly aware that they are not to get into university courses. In other words, we don't need a junior university and a real university in a city. I think the colleges are still primarily vocational courses. That is really what their main function is, I would say, and I hope that they don't try to, you

know, compete with the universities for the same types of things. I would be interested in knowing just where the minister stands on that. But I feel quite strongly, just as an individual, that this should be kept pretty clear and separated there.

As far as post-secondary education in this province is concerned, and I say this seriously to the minister, from the feedback that I have had personally, directly and through the press, I believe that the post-secondary institutions, the universities and the colleges particularly - I'm not speaking about NAIT, SAIT and AVC and those types of things - seem to feel that they don't have the minister behind them. There seems to be a lack of confidence in the Minister of Advanced Education in the post-secondary field of education. I would just like to ask the minister if he feels this and, if so - and be honest about it now - what he is going to do to restore that confidence. That's one thing, and I would like a response on that.

Secondly, during the questioning in the estimates subcommittees I remember asking the minister if he was responding to the requests in numerous letters from people from I think the Association of Christian Colleges - you know the group I mean. At that time you indicated that you weren't responding to them. Now, I don't know whether you mean that you weren't going to at all, or whether you were just going to wait and then give a final response. But, I think, not to respond to them would be totally unacceptable. I think they are entitled to response. Many of us have received letters - and I know that certainly I have always acknowledged these letters.

In the course of these remarks, what I would also like to know from the minister: what is your interpretation of what the Christian colleges really want? Is it another Christian college? Do they want one affiliated with The University of Alberta? Or do they do just want some of their own facilities on a campus? There seems to be some misunderstanding as to what they are really after. I think this should be helpful, certainly to yourself and to all of us.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. GRUENWALD:

I noticed also during the estimates that we were talking about different faculties. In the course of the discussion I believe you had mentioned that the cost of a university medical student in the province of Alberta is about \$50,000 per student - give or take a little bit - but that is the amount you had said. Did you say that's right? Yeah, okay. I'm glad you have got someone to confirm what I'm saying here.

MR. FOSTER:

It works on both sides.

MR. GRUENWALD:

Yes, good, fine. Pay attention to what really counts, which is right here.

MR. FOSTER:

Do you want to confirm that in writing?

MR. GRUENWALD:

No. That's good enough. I'm just using it as an illustration. That's not important. But my point is that we have frequently brought to the attention of the minister the necessity of a school of optometry for Alberta or for western Canada. Okay? Now, you have indicated that you are studying this and this is under some consideration. What figure have you come up with, if any? What would be the cost of educating optometric students in relation to that? I would say here, right now, popular or otherwise, that if the optometrists are expanding to a six-year program I just wouldn't go along with it because I think it's a bunch of hogwash - in plain English. I don't know if I can put it any more clearly than that. I think if you are hesitating on this, I would have to subscribe to getting both feet on the ground again, because that's just bloody well not necessary, right across-the-board. Maybe for a certain specialty that could be, but not right across-the-board. So I think you should have to do some negotiating there.

What I think is important, if it is not feasible from a financial point of view or from demand that there be a total school of optometry in Alberta, then would it not be feasible to go even to the present one - the School of Optometry in Waterloo - and see if a deal could not be made, even if they want to expand? Say, we are prepared to help them to expand and buy 10, 15 or 20 places that we would be guaranteed per year. I see nothing wrong with that. I know we did that in our own separate school system in Lethbridge where the Indian students from Cardston wanted to bring in X number of

students. The federal government said, we'll buy so many places, considering capital investment and all.

I just don't see too much wrong with that approach, certainly as an interim measure at least, because I can't help but think that we have a responsibility to train those types of students or to do something to facilitate the training of optometry students in this province. And this would be an excellent place. You could use a type of voucher system to send them down there and give them what you would normally pay to a university on a per-pupil grant. They could take that with them and we would still be better off financially, but you would be providing them with the facilities they are entitled to.

I would be kind of interested in knowing what the minister feels about that type of situation where you could get a commitment from, say, Waterloo - I think that is the only English-speaking one in Canada now - that we would be guaranteed so many places every year. I think this is important enough.

I noticed in the estimates too - I believe this is a new project - this \$900,000 for innovative projects. Am I right? Is that a new ... ? Yes. The warning I would have on that one - and the concern I would have - is that I am very much concerned that, because of their size and staff, the big universities, if they just apply for it, are going to have the edge on the smaller ones. It's simply because of the fact that they have the staff to utilize it. I hope that it won't be just another research fund because I think that would defeat the purpose. But if it means what I think it means, and if it's anything similar to what the former government had in innovative projects in the 1 to 12 system - maybe it was in the elementary system, I'm not sure - then of course, they would have to send a project in and have it approved and then it would be funded according to their requisition.

I don't know for sure how you expect it to work, but if it's a sort of a back-door approach for the big universities which have a lot of staff, which have a lot of time to dream up new ideas, you know, if they want to call them new ideas - and call on that \$900,000, it would give them extra funding, I would look askance at it because I don't think that should be the purpose of it. I'd be most interested in knowing just how you intend to handle that.

You made brief reference to Athabasca University and I don't know what the status of that is, really. To me it's not much more than a paper organization. I don't know, you can correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't believe you have any physical facilities that belong particularly to the university, unless you are renting something.

MR. FOSTER:

Right.

MR. GRUENWALD:

Yes, this is right. What I think would be an important decision, and I'm sure you realize it - but what I'd like to know is, in view of the financial difficulties that we see in The University of Lethbridge because of the low enrolment - which seems to be the key to success, because of the per pupil grant and the method of financing - now, with that experience, what would you see as the minimum enrolment, even in the first two or three years, that would justify the establishment of the physical facilities and independent campus? How big an enrolment would be required before you would justify a new campus? In other words, before you get The University of Athabasca on its own, with its own campus and its own physical facilities, what would the forecast have to show for the minimum enrolment before it became feasible in your estimation? I would be very interested in knowing that.

The other one has to do with tuition. I'm not sure, really, what your position is as far as tuition is concerned for colleges and universities. Now there are two areas I'm concerned about. Number one, in the question period today we talked about these field trips and so on for The University of Alberta, if I'm not mistaken. Where a university levies an additional tuition fee or service charge, call it what you like, for a particular program, is that just an optional thing or is that mandatory? In other words, does everyone have to pay that or do they say, if you want this field trip this is going to be the extra levy for it - this is what I'm wondering.

The next thing I am concerned about - I believe from your answer today that in universities and colleges you are trying to establish a minimum tuition fee. Is this right or wrong? In other words, why not just leave the universities and colleges to set their own tuition? If they can get along within a certain budget which would be approved by your department, and with the per-pupil grant allocated to them and any other requisition that you approve, why not let that local autonomy work and say, okay, if they can manage, if they can attract more students by charging a little bit less or if they feel it's worth a little bit more - is it not feasible that they, in fact, be permitted to set their own tuition fees to suit their own needs?

Mr. Chairman, I would hope that the minister could answer those questions before we accept any other questions, so they won't get lost in the shuffle.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. FOSTER:

[Inaudible] ... members and then come back and deal with them.

MR. GRUENWALD:

I would rather that we got these now because otherwise they're going to get lost in the shuffle.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. WILSON:

They may eliminate some other questions.

MR. GRUENWALD:

Yes, they may eliminate ...

MR. NOTLEY:

[Inaudible] ... comments, but in deference to the hon. Member for Lethbridge West, he has asked some specific questions and unless the minister objects, I would defer until those questions are answered.

MR. CLARK:

I would like to say that it seems to me that if the minister answers these questions, well, who knows, he may eliminate some future questions.

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Chairman, in the interests of brevity I am happy to answer these questions.

I appreciate the member's concern on the matter of transfer. I believe I've had, and I may be unfair in this remark, some difficulty convincing certain people in the university community that transfer was, in fact, a problem. I have no doubt from my travels and from my mail and from my phone calls that it is a problem and has been one in the non-university area.

I have made it abundantly clear to the universities, and they understand it and do not take issue with it, that the matter of transfer simply will not continue to be a problem for another seven years. It simply will not continue to be debated for another seven years. We simply have to find a mechanism which comes to grips with the matter and allows institutions, with some encouragement from yours truly, to solve these problems. The universities know that. I'm very encouraged by the work of all institutions and I sincerely believe that the serious issues and problems we have faced in transferability in the past several years will in fact be resolved. There's no doubt that there will continue to be some problems, in certain cases, rising out of inability or difficulty in communication, misunderstanding, that kind of thing, but we will establish a council on admissions of transfer or some other kind of agency representative of the institutions, to handle this matter.

Now with respect to transfer programs in colleges, there are some public colleges which offer university transfer programs and some which do not. Principally, the approach is that public colleges in centres where there are universities do not offer university transfer programs. The exception to that is Mount Royal College in Calgary. There are many students in Mount Royal who are, in fact, in transfer programs. Red Deer is in a transfer program, so is Grande Prairie. Lethbridge and MacEwan, while they have some courses which are transferable in the sense of getting credit for them in terms of advanced standing, they are not part of the university transfer programs within the colleges.

Part of our problem in the transfer question is, what recognition does a student receive, if any, for taking college courses in a college non-university transfer, and then he wants to move from there into a university. A good example would be business administration at SAIT or NAIT. I know arrangements are well along the way at SAIT for

their business administration programs to be transferable to The University of Calgary. So those relationships are being worked out, and they are receiving very considerable encouragement from me, I can assure you.

The suggestion that perhaps colleges should be vocational schools - I doubt that the hon. member meant vocational only. I'm sure he ...

[Interjections]

Yes, he appreciates that there are other kinds of programs or courses offered in these institutions which are not strictly speaking vocational, in the sense of technical.

MR. GRUENWALD:

I didn't mean that ...

MR. FOSTER:

Right. Okay, that's fine.

With respect to the comment that there is a certain want of confidence in the Minister of Advanced Education in some sectors of, principally the university community, I suspect that is indeed an accurate statement. I suspect it would be indeed an accurate statement, whoever is in this office. I don't think there is any doubt about it that the universities, quite naturally, desire levels of service and funding which exceed the wishes of government - this government, the past government and the next government, whomever - and that is not irresponsibility on their part. It is simply that their aspirations exceed that which the government of the day is prepared to fund. And that in itself leads to a certain amount of anxiety, which leads to a certain amount of lack of confidence in the minister, perhaps a feeling that the level of support for a certain program or area in any institution isn't what it needs.

Frequently people within an institution find themselves unsuccessful in arguing their priorities with their board of governors. They are met with the conclusion, well the government didn't provide us with any more than X million dollars. We don't have the resources. It's the government, and government is personified, in this case, as the terrible Minister of Advanced Education.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. FOSTER:

I am afraid that I have to accept that. I don't want to encourage it. I want to minimize it, but I am realistic enough to know, I believe, that I will never totally avoid it. That, I'm afraid, is a fact of life.

I think it's been extremely difficult for universities in the last couple of years, indeed for the same reasons that it's now difficult for the public and separate school systems, facing a period of either stable or declining enrolments. It creates tremendous anxiety and uncertainty within an institution. It gives the impression - and in some cases, accurately - that certain staff positions and programs are in jeopardy. You can't help but create suspicion, concern and anxiety when someone feels that his job or his role or his program may be going out of existence. That's a very understandable and natural human reaction.

Our responsibility is to listen carefully, to try to understand and to do what we can to help. At some point however, we have to draw a line and say the answer is \$100 million for universities and move from there. The allocation is then done by the universities themselves and not by my office, that is within the institution. Certainly we allocate between and among institutions.

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

I throw this in, Mr. Chairman, almost as an aside. In the very early days in this office - and by that, I mean about the first year and a half - I found myself in discussions with members of the university community, principally the academic staff, being cross-examined on whether or not I understood what a university was all about, whether I really appreciated its function, whether I understood its roles, whether I valued the traditional functions of a university, whether I was prepared to defend that function or those functions, go to bat for them and preserve and protect them and whether I would, in fact, speak out for universities. Where? I assume here, in cabinet and in the community.

Sometimes my university colleagues are surprised to discover, to find out that, in fact, when I go out and speak to groups, I end up, time and time and time again, having to defend what the universities are doing, having to defend their autonomy and having to defend their right to make certain kinds of decisions. I find, in many areas of the public and in many places in this House, a desire to become closer, from a management point of view, to university activities. I believe this is healthy, both for them and for the public interest.

Now with respect to the Christian college proposal, I'm happy this was raised and I wouldn't want to leave the impression that I'm not prepared to respond to this association. I have had several letters from them, I have responded to them all and indeed I will be responding to them in some detail at a later date. The position I have taken with the association at the moment is that there is a resolution on the Order Paper of this House to debate the question of yet another private college in this province - in this case a Christian college - and I have simply said that I feel it would be unfair and inappropriate for the Minister of Advanced Education to take a firm position on this without having had the benefit of hearing the views and getting the consensus, if any, of the members of this Legislature.

There is absolutely no doubt that this department must, and does, accept the proposal of this association in a very serious way. We will examine and are examining it in detail and we will respond to them in what I hope is an understanding, compassionate and responsible manner.

I am interpreted by that association - and accurately so - as having the view that I am less than enthusiastic about seeing yet another private college, Christian or otherwise, located in this province. That is not to say, Mr. Chairman, that the Christian College Association's brief and submission has little merit or value and will not, in fact, come to pass. We are in the process of reviewing our policy for private colleges and private institutions. I am simply being a little difficult to deal with because I'm afraid I have to be. I find so many demands for services and funds on my desk that they simply cannot be accommodated. I can't afford to say yes all the time.

My point is that there are three, what I would call Christian colleges or private colleges which have church affiliations and are operated by the denominations involved, already in existence. And they are funded by this department. It is now being proposed that we accept another. We have on the campus of The University of Alberta two former private colleges, Christian colleges, which are affiliated with and associated with that university. No doubt there are other private, post-secondary educational institutions with a religious base elsewhere in the province which do not receive public funding.

One of the concerns I have is that there are different kinds of Christianity, there are different kinds of Christians and there are different levels of being a Christian. I find - and I shouldn't get into the debate now because I should wait for the resolution - I find it difficult to understand why the various churches of our society apparently cannot come together with this question of a Christian college. I respect and appreciate the desire to support a pluralistic society, to have different points of view and to have different philosophies of education. I cannot accept, however, that there are 'umpteen' dozen different Christian philosophies of post-secondary education. Perhaps there are. But some where, sometime, someone - and I guess I am primarily that person - has to decide how many private Christian associations we are to have in the post-secondary educational field in this province. We have several at the moment. Perhaps we should have one more. Maybe we should have two more. I don't know. At some point we have to make that decision.

You may be asking me why. Well, we have to decide how many institutions we can have and how much money we are prepared to spend on post-secondary education. The hon. members from Lethbridge well appreciate the fact that from time to time people submit to me the fact that The University of Lethbridge should be shut down and we should take their \$5.5 million, along with Athabasca University's and we should put those funds to good use elsewhere. After all, it's only serving a full-time equivalent of 1,000 students. I have had to say time and time again - not necessarily in this House, but outside on many occasions - that we have no intention of shutting down The University of Lethbridge. If economics alone were the basis for making educational decisions, maybe. But we don't make decisions involving education simply on the basis of economics.

However, I look forward to the debate on the matter of Christian colleges. I'm glad it's been raised and I hope that members of the Assembly will participate in this. I know there are members in the House who have a Christian college in their constituencies. I would be interested in hearing from them as to whether or not there might be some way in which one of the Christian colleges already in existence can incorporate or adopt the interests and concerns of the proposal we have at the moment.

It's no secret that private colleges face a difficult financial time. On one occasion at least, Camrose Lutheran College was finding it extremely difficult to get along. In fact we had to make a special grant to it last year. We're making a special grant to

Camrose Lutheran College this year, simply because it can't afford to carry on without additional support. So when the public purse is involved, I'm afraid that part of the responsibility which falls in my office is being somewhat difficult. However, I'm trying to be fair and reasonable and listen to the views of others, and as I say, I will appreciate their contributions.

On the matter of optometry, I'm again happy this was raised. We recently reviewed a report prepared by the Province of Saskatchewan on eye care. The governments of the four western provinces have decided that rather than proceed with a college of optometry, a faculty of optometry or what have you, we will, in the short run, approach the Ontario government and Waterloo, as you suggest, with the view to seeing whether or not we could gain an additional, say, 20 spaces in that institution which would be specifically allocated for western Canada. The four western provinces would then share, on some kind of quota basis, the 20 spaces available which we would pay for and in that way, in the short run - and I emphasize short run - begin to meet some of the very legitimate concerns which exist for trained eye care people.

That doesn't solve the long-term problem and we're looking at that as well. We're keeping a close eye on some developing technology. We have, for the moment, suspended any new programs in the eye care field. The remarks I am now making are remarks that are not a matter of confidence, but I wouldn't want to go into our discussions with Ontario in any more detail than I have because we haven't talked to Ontario about it. We have just simply agreed to approach them. This comment may come to them as the first comment they hear about it. The chairman of our committee, the minister from British Columbia, will be in touch with the minister from Ontario. I'll be visiting with all of them shortly and pursuing this and other matters. So the matter of optometry is very high on our agenda from a western Canadian point of view and we'll endeavour to meet that without delay.

[Mr. Diachuk in the Chair]

On the matter of innovative projects funds, I think I pointed out in subcommittee that \$400,000 of that fund is designed to upgrade the library services or learning resource services of many of our institutions. I'm the first to admit that library service in some of these post-secondary institutions is not all that it should be. This is the beginning of some special assistance in that sector so there is, in fact, approximately \$500,000 for innovative projects.

The point made by the hon. member is, I believe, extremely valid, which is that we should take care that this innovative projects fund does not simply serve, in fact, as an additional source of research funds for the major institutions. We are conscious of that and we will endeavour to ensure that does not happen. I could comment on some projects I have seen, one at NAIT about new ways of learning, but the principle is indeed very valid.

I will be very happy, as a matter of fact, to indicate to any members of the House who may be interested the disposition of those funds after this year. This is the first time this fund has existed. I know many people are interested. I'd be happy to give them details of the kinds of projects we have thought to be of value and useful, who the sponsors are and what institutions they may represent. We'll look at that in the next budget year and see what that fund has been able to achieve.

With respect to enrolments, Athabasca and Lethbridge, I'm not really clear I understand the member's point of view. I think the suggestion is that we should be careful not to accept enrolments in Athabasca, particularly given the experience of Lethbridge where we have a few more than 1,000 students in a very large physical plant. It's very high-cost on a per-student basis.

Athabasca, at the moment, is in leased premises. There are no plans, at least to my knowledge, involving capital construction of any significant kind. There are a couple of hundred students, I think, involved in Athabasca. They are part-time students, working people, not the traditional university student in the sense of people coming to a physical institution and taking courses all day or half the evening, et cetera.

The implications for the size of Athabasca and the service it may provide to the rest of this province and, for that matter, the implications for the size of Lethbridge, are many in light of a discussion we're having with The University of Alberta at the moment concerning its ultimate size.

If we can arrange with The University of Alberta, for example, to limit its growth or to establish a ceiling - for the sake of argument let's pick the figure of 21,000 or 22,000 or 23,000 students - and to limit the enrolment in certain kinds of programs, that will necessarily mean that once we have reached that student level, students must go elsewhere in this province to gain their university education. That may mean that in time some Edmonton people will have to go to Lethbridge, or they may go to Medicine Hat, for example, to university transfer programs down there. But when we begin to deal with the ultimate size of some major institutions, we can begin to tackle the mandates, the enrolment problems of places like Medicine Hat and Lethbridge - and interestingly enough

I'm speaking to both. So there are major implications that will spin off from our discussions with The University of Alberta at the moment.

On the matter of tuition fees it's indeed possible or it could be made possible for institutions to set their own tuition fees. What I suspect would then happen would be a growing competition among institutions for students. There is that at the moment, for heaven's sake, which is pretty obvious. But I suspect that many institutions would be torn between reducing tuition fees as an incentive for students to come, and we would have some institutions offering the same kinds of programs, maybe some with tuition fees of \$200 and some with tuition fees of \$300 or \$400. I have absolutely no doubt that the very next day I'd have parents, students and a lot of other people speaking to yours truly and saying, look, can't we make some sense out of this question of tuition fees?

At the moment we have relative parity within the university system and relative parity within the public college system, and the same thing applies to the other institutions like NAIT and SAIT. It's not quite true to say there is relative parity between, say, Alberta universities and other universities in Canada because we haven't changed our tuition fees for a while. I think we're falling a little behind. We're not the lowest, but we're certainly not the highest by any stretch of the imagination.

We have to come to grips with the question following legislative review, the question of tuition fees. At the moment there is absolutely no rhyme or reason for the level of fees that exists in these institutions. It's quite arbitrary. I'm not sure, frankly, that there is, in fact, a defensible reason for moving the fees one way or the other that makes any sense. The Worth report talked about fees being a percentage of program cost. Well, that may have a certain immediate appeal and it may sound, in the short run, [as if it has] some sort of logical appeal. However, when you look at some high-cost programs like medicine, for example, you may have students paying several thousand dollars in fees and students in business administration paying very, very little. Then we get into arguments of equity and fairness. It isn't an easy question.

I continue to believe that students should make some kind of financial contribution to the post-secondary institution. I believe they are inclined to get something more out of it. Now I may be wrong in that assessment but that is my view at the moment. But we'll have to grapple with the question of tuition fees.

I don't think, Mr. Chairman, I am prepared to accept an argument that the institutions should be left to deal with the matter of fees entirely on their own. I appreciate that fees may be anywhere from 10 to 17 per cent of their operating budgets. But that's still a considerable amount of money when you consider the operating budget for which I'm responsible here, and the principle involved. However, I will take the suggestion as one of interest and it's clearly one alternative in this matter of the review of tuition fees.

I hope, Mr. Chairman, that this not-too-interesting response has, in fact, alleviated and reduced several other questions.

MR. GRUENWALD:

I don't want to monopolize the floor, Mr. Chairman, but I did want to comment on one thing. I think it would be a mistake to think that education at any level is too sacred a cow that they should become involved in competition. You know, you mentioned that they shouldn't be competing one against the other as far as tuition fees are concerned. I see no reason why one shouldn't have to compete so the students can have a choice. If the university can attract them, even with a difference of \$100 more in tuition, I think that should be open to them. Let them prove their worth. In other words, if they have the stuff, let them do it. That's just an observation.

Another one is, do you not think that now is the time for the government of this province, which has in its whole Executive Council some 19 or 20 people with university degrees, to recognize the fact that maybe this is the time when it should loosen the purse strings considerably as far as finances for post-secondary education are concerned? If you're ever going to do it, for God's sake, now is the time it should be done.

MR. FOSTER:

I mean this in a very facetious way. I see that my earlier response did not, in fact, reduce the question because I dealt with the second question before. I think I commented. Certainly I issued a press release and I have got letters out. I know I've referred to it here, as early or as late as a few moments ago, that I had given an undertaking to the universities that for the next fiscal year I am quite prepared to recommend an increase in the third year of the three-year university finance plan.

Just as a supplemental comment, the plan provides next year for \$107 million and the following year for \$114 million. Now what I am saying and have said to the universities is: would you please plan on the basis that my recommendation to my colleagues will be an

increase above the \$114 million. So they know that, in fact, some of the stinginess of the provincial government, if you want to call it that, is coming off so to speak.

On the matter of competition, I appreciate, Mr. Chairman, that there does, in fact, need to be competition. It's a very healthy aspect of all parts of our society including the educational society. It can be carried to extremes with green stamps, et cetera. I don't know that competition should exist in the area of fees. Competition should well exist in the area of the quality of service, in the level of instruction, in the kinds of programs, et cetera, the kinds of facilities and the kinds of services that students and parents can expect to get.

I'm not sure that it's legitimate to have competition in the area of post-secondary education on the cost of the program to the student. Or we'll have residence cuts and green stamp exercises in resident tuition fees - you name it - competition could go on in an area that I think doesn't serve any useful purpose for the quality of post-secondary education. That's all.

MR. HENDERSON:

Mr. Chairman, there are one or two brief comments I would like to make regarding the minister's presentation. I'd like to offer, not seriously but somewhat facetiously, relative to the minister's remarks about how he has made himself available to the post-secondary educational institutions and he hasn't met with that high a degree of favourable response. Of course it's understandable, because it's not the minister they want, it's the money they want.

I find that since the government chose to disband the commission and set a minister up in charge of it - I find it difficult to accept the minister's arguments that the government is not responsible and involved in the question of allocation of financial resources within the university. They just pay out a lump sum figure and then it's up to the faculties to battle for it, is the way I interpret the minister's remarks; that he doesn't get himself involved in the faculty distribution within the total university allocation.

Of course, I think in view of the government's commitment, as a government, to add a law faculty to the Calgary university, very obviously they do get involved in allocations to the different faculties within the university. When it comes to competition, I have a great deal of concern about universities competing with one another for prestigious faculties, and I still question very sincerely the principle of a second law school in Calgary.

I think the previous government made a mistake by committing a second medical school in the province to The University of Calgary, and I can only say that had I become knowledgeable on the subject a year sooner, I personally would not have gone along with the recommendation that was made that that medical school be established.

I think the Minister of Advanced Education has an opportunity to appraise the merits of a law school in Calgary because he's not bound by any previous commitments in total, at least I hope he isn't. My concern is, if the government pursues these policies we're going to end up with two second-rate law schools in the province of Alberta; we're going to end up with two second-rate medical schools in the province of Alberta, and I think there has to be a point in some of these faculties where the government has to choose between quality and quantity.

I have to say that I don't think that the duplication of faculties between universities should be approved until it's demonstrated there's a social need for those particular programs. I think in the question of medical schools, for example, Alberta was graduating more medical doctors than the other three western provinces combined - certainly will with the medical school. We are going to be graduating doctors for the benefit of other parts of Canada. Well, one can argue maybe we have a social responsibility in that area, but on the other hand, I question again that we need the same thing to happen in the law faculty.

So notwithstanding the strong representations forthcoming from some of the gentlemen seated to my left, I think the minister has an opportunity to be sure that he's not going to stand up in this House at some time down the road and say, I made a mistake by approving a second law school, or being a party to it, in The University of Calgary.

If there are other areas of expertise that the Calgary university can develop, I have no objections, but I certainly question these duplications that are not justifiable on a social need basis, but rather they're political plums; they're political decisions.

Having said that, Mr. Minister, I want to come back now to the financial situation and the commitment the minister has made. Certainly I think in all fairness it has to be said that 20 years ago education was a very popular thing; it was the thing, and governments all across the country poured millions and millions into the system. Then three or four

years ago the pendulum started swinging and a tightening-up process went on within the educational institutions at the elementary and high school level, but particularly at the post-secondary level. And I have to agree in principle that tightening the spending at the university level in the total educational system was not an unwise decision in itself. It was not an unreasonable decision because when governments are being as lavish as they were in education in earlier years there's no doubt whatever that a bit of fat gets into the system and it doesn't hurt to prune it out.

But I'm concerned when I hear the statements coming from all the universities in Alberta that the government has tightened the screws to the point that serious damage is going to result to the quality of the universities.

When I hear those statements, I have to add to them and contrast with them the commitment of the government to put a second law faculty in Calgary. The two viewpoints are inconsistent. At least the viewpoint that is expressed by the faculties or the universities in the province certainly is not in keeping with the views expressed by the minister. To my mind the minister can only justify the decision of the law school in Calgary if he's convinced there's enough fat in the system to support it already, because he hasn't been forthcoming with more money for the system in total.

But I do suggest, however, Mr. Chairman, that notwithstanding the political popularity of tightening up on spending in the field of post-secondary education, the time has certainly come to relax that control, and I'm not too certain that the minister may not be one year late in doing it.

It is one thing for government to argue that it had to do it because it didn't have the money. I think three years ago that was a very definite situation. But the financial circumstances have improved dramatically. The one argument the government doesn't have any longer is that it can't afford it. So it has to shift its justification to some other area.

On the question of the Christian college application, the way I interpreted the minister's remarks, I gather he is not too enthused about the proposition. I will say, as a member of the House, that I'm not either. But I find it difficult to accept the argument of the minister that he's not going to proceed with any sort of decision-making on the matter until a private resolution is discussed in this House. The way the Order Paper stands and the way the private afternoon session works, that resolution, in all probability, is not going to get dealt with during the current calendar year; at least it will be an unusual development in this Legislature if it does.

I think governments make, a very serious mistake in areas of major planning, in not making firm decisions and commitments. This is where I have to agree in principle to the three-year commitment on educational spending because at least the institutions can cut their cloth accordingly.

Leaving the question up in the air in the long run does more harm than good. Certainly I don't think the minister is on firm ground by avoiding the decision on the basis of a private member's resolution in this House, because that is not a decision-making vehicle as far as the government is concerned. And when it's going to take all year, in all probability, for the resolution to be discussed - it probably never will come to a final vote - then it's obvious that it's a stalling exercise that the minister is going through.

I want to say, while I've had a lot of representations too, as a member of the Legislature, I have not reached the 50-50 point in my own mind that there is, at this point in time, justification for government approving that. I'm not trying to put the minister on the spot, because I am of the opinion that, while it might not be too popular, it's a decision that the government has to make. The minister's action in procrastinating, I don't think is really fair to the people who are making the application. No matter that they would rather have the prospect of nothing keep them going for a couple of years than have no now.

Clearly, the justification the minister has given relating to a private member's resolution doesn't hold water as the basis for not examining the merits or demerits of that particular proposition.

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Chairman, I would like to begin in reverse order, with the member's remarks on the Christian college. I'd like to outline that the Christian College Association of Alberta approached both universities, that is, Alberta and Calgary - I think they have done so in the past year. Last August they provided me with some material that they had, in fact, used in support of their case to the universities, and the universities were not receptive. It was simply given to me as information which I received.

In March of this year, this association presented me with a document - and I'm sure it's been available to many people - a proposal for a college. They said, we'd like an answer by April 15. If anybody needs an answer from me by April 15 to a new college proposal received in March, the answer is no. It has to be. There's no way around it. If anybody wants a reaction by April 15 - there it is.

I think there is a good deal of review that must be made of the material these people provided to the universities, and of the brief I got in March. I'm not prepared to provide a response on that material because it's not completed, and I'm also not prepared to provide a response until I've heard what people have to say.

If some feel that waiting until the members' resolution is called - and I'm sure it will be called this spring the way estimates are going - if they want to call that a delaying tactic, then so be it. The fact of the matter is, it's a major proposal and it has major consequences. To go from March of 1974 to May of 1974 without a definitive yes response is not, I suggest to members of the Assembly, unreasonable.

With respect to serious damage caused by financing to universities, I can assure everyone that this has caused me a good deal of concern as well. The best reading I can get of the situation, Mr. Chairman, is that those who caution serious damage are principally referring to the year after next. They are saying, if the government does not in fact provide us with additional funds from that which is provided in the third year of the university finance plan - the \$114 million - then serious damage may well result, and I agree. That is why I have said and the government has said that in the last year of this plan we will, in fact, go up. I believe senior officers of The University of Alberta - I think one of them was interviewed on CBC on this and in talking about this was clarified and one of the deans over there, he is talking about the third year of the plan. He's not talking about 1974-75. That has been discussed by me and my staff with universities.

Look, if you will, to the reserves these institutions are carrying. As of April something this year, Calgary still had a fair amount of reserves. So did Alberta. But they are using them up. And they shouldn't be required to use them all up. I agree with that. They simply have to have some funds in reserve. I'm not interested in seeing the universities or the quality of their programs in jeopardy for want of financing. But there is a line between responsible financial management and control and serious injury to the institution. I think we've drawn that line. We have drawn it long before we get to serious damage to the institution.

Now I have no doubt, Mr. Chairman, that there may be some functions within a university or a public college which are, in fact, suffering. But I have to emphasize that neither government nor my office makes 'allocative' decisions internally within the institution. If the library, for example, of The University of Alberta is experiencing very substantial difficulty, that's an internal 'allocative' decision. Government is generally held responsible because, after all, we approve the global sums. But the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc is quite correct when he talks about the fact that we do, in fact, make certain kinds of 'allocative' decisions because we approve new programs. That's quite accurate.

I have in these estimates, as we know, \$1 million in a vote for new courses. Now that \$1 million is to provide the operating funds over and above budgets which are already approved for universities and public colleges. So, for example, in the case of - well, I have a complete list here of all the courses in the institutions that are proposed to be approved from that \$1 million fund. Some courses have operating budgets of a few thousand dollars, some of them have tens of thousands of dollars. We will assign operating and capital funds for new courses out of another vote, not from the global funds which we have assigned for universities or the global funds which we have assigned to colleges - that's over and above. To that extent we do, in fact, make an 'allocative' decision on a new program. But after that program has been implemented, it becomes part of the general budget of the institution and we do not thereafter allocate funds internally.

The concern of the member in the matter of duplication of courses is indeed well taken. In fact, the legislation, The Universities Act, right now creates that as a test. I think strictly speaking, legally, the jurisdiction of my office and of the department in new course approvals relates only to the matter of duplication of programs. Theoretically, the universities are free to offer any new program which is not offered elsewhere in the university system without a by-your-leave to my office. But they won't do that obviously, because they require the resources and want to know that there will be the support. But the emphasis in the direction of duplication of effort and duplication of courses is valid. It's guaranteed in legislation and I think we all understand and respect that a certain amount of duplication is indeed necessary and desirable.

The reference to the medical school is a comment with which I have considerable sympathy. I agree. The province of Alberta does more than its share in providing trained medical manpower in western Canada. There is absolutely no doubt about it. If anyone

wants to stand up in this Assembly and suggest that we should have a medical school in Lethbridge, I think we'll have a debate.

MR. CLARK:

You're ready to make a decision on that one.

MR. FOSTER:

Yes, I'll make a decision on that one. Right now.

I guess I have responded.

MR. HENDERSON:

Mr. Chairman, could I just make one brief comment and just ask one further question of the minister?

I would agree with the minister. I think the proposition of having a decision from the minister by April 15 on the Christian college was unreasonable. I'm simply pointing out that, I think the argument of the minister in postponing any decision until the private resolution is done with, is equally unreasonable. I liked the supplemental information he provided about the matter that has to be examined. That's fine. I accept that. That's the way it should be made.

But I want to ask the minister one question relative to special funding for new programs. The minister has said once the new program is operational or has been implemented, then it is no longer identified as a separate budgetary appropriation ...

MR. FOSTER:

In some cases, yes.

MR. HENDERSON:

... and it is absorbed into the global program. Now the key question here is, how long does the minister talk in terms of getting a new program implemented? I realize that it's going to vary with the program, but what kind of time frame is he really talking about?

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Chairman, it's quite correct that it really depends on the program. If you're interested, and obviously you are, I'll see that we provide you with a copy of our program approval procedure where, if an institution gives notice that it wants to research a certain program area they let us know by letter of intent. By that letter of intent we let all other institutions know that university X is, in fact, researching optometry, or something, so that we don't have every university researching optometry. They require whether or not we're prepared to consider it in principle and we respond to that almost immediately.

We like to approve the programs almost a year and a half in advance, because it's very difficult to approve a program now and have that program operational in the fall of 1974 because of staff problems, equipment problems, et cetera. Depending on the program, some of them can be done in very short order, but a major university program will take longer than a year to gear up. A new faculty in Calgary, for example, if approved this spring, couldn't be functional until the fall of 1975, at the earliest.

I forgot the other point.

MR. HENDERSON:

That was the main point.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Chairman, a few comments on these estimates. First of all, just for a moment, relating back to a point that the Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc raised, and that is the question of the three-year budget for universities, which the minister has already discussed. I certainly am pleased to learn that we are going to have a relaxation for the 1975-76 year.

There is really little doubt in my mind that while a certain approach of tightening up a bit might have been necessary over the last several years, we have reached the position today where universities need just a little more latitude if they are going to entice competent people to take on university teaching positions. Because the fact of the matter is that, despite what we might like to think about our province, and we're all very proud

of it, we're hardly the cultural centre of the universe and it's necessary, I think, that our salary standards are such that they are competitive, and more than competitive, so that the universities in Alberta have a constant access to the most competent scholars available.

We had a discussion a few weeks ago in this Legislature, a private members' bill, concerning non-Canadian influence at the university level. Many members got up in their places and spent a good part of their discussion dealing with the valid point that what really is vital at a university is the quality of scholarship and the competence of personnel.

But, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, as you well know, the question of both quality of scholarship and competence of personnel is at least, in part, related to the universities having sufficient funds to be able, not only to entice for new programs, but to keep present personnel in existing programs.

I would like to suggest, Mr. Chairman, that both the Minister of Advanced Education and the Minister of Education himself have rather important responsibilities at this stage, in view of the fact that there isn't quite as much political sex appeal in education these days as there was 10 or 15 or 20 years ago. The Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc is quite right. In the '50s, you know, whenever a person talked about education, almost every lawmaker would say, let's loan them the money. There was a sort of a no holds barred approach, because we were all very enthused about improving our educational standards. Perhaps in a sense we might even have gone overboard.

But what concerns me today is that there is a backlash in public opinion. Frankly I think that backlash still exists, and that the politically expedient route to take these days is not to talk about quality of education at all, but to play the role of let's be tight-fisted, let's make that dollar stretch as far as we can. That's all fair and good, but when we stretch the dollar to the point where we lose programs or lower the quality of education, then in actual fact we are, I think, defeating our purpose.

So I think both ministers have rather a difficult role, but an important one, because I make no bones about it, Mr. Chairman, I think when we talk about the great windfall which is coming to Alberta, that education has a right to make a claim on that windfall. You know we are all looking forward to a boom, a boom which will provide employment opportunities for people around the province. But I think it would be a very serious mistake in that boom period if we overlooked the crucial importance of education and especially post-secondary education.

I am not just talking about university, Mr. Minister, I'm talking about the whole post-secondary educational field because ultimately, after the oil has gone, and what have you, after the resources are taken away, the test as to whether or not this province is going to be able to survive is going to be on the basis of whether we have skilled, competent people who are fully trained, or in the case of a university background, who have the general knowledge necessary to make them critical individuals.

So I think that we just have to underline the importance of education getting a share of this windfall. I would hope that the minister, when he takes the estimates for the universities, colleges and the whole post-secondary education to cabinet next year, is able to persuade his colleagues that what we have next year is perhaps not just an increase of \$2 or \$3 million but an increase necessary not only to provide the university services that are required because of the rate of inflation, but I suspect, Mr. Chairman, there is going to be a slack that they have to pick up from this year because we haven't 'upped' the budget sufficiently.

Now I want to raise several other points, Mr. Chairman, relating to post-secondary education. I would like the minister to give us perhaps a report on - I know the committees have just been set up, the advisory committees, and perhaps it is a little difficult at this stage for us to have any kind of initial indication as to how workable they are going to be. But I have to express the concern which was raised in this House a year ago when we dealt with the legislation doing away with the Universities Commission and the Colleges Commission, that these advisory committees - especially when you have a range of meetings between two and six times a year - quite frankly I have to say that I have some very serious misgivings as to whether these advisory committees are going to be of much use to the minister. They will be of some value obviously, but I really wonder, if we are going to have advisory committees, whether or not they shouldn't meet much more regularly.

I notice that the minister, when he introduced his estimates this year, stood before us with a smile on his face and said that he had managed to get through the year, perhaps a little thinner and a little more gaunt and pale than he was a year ago. He didn't show us his back because, dealing with university politicians, he can make the rest of us here look rather amateurish by comparison. But notwithstanding that, I have to say today that I just don't think these advisory committees are going to be an acceptable substitute for the commission concept.

Just before I move over to several other issues in post-secondary education, I would like to deal with one question of program formation. I know that last fall The University of Lethbridge expressed a good deal of interest in a Native studies program. When I was at the university in October, a number of people approached me about it and I have subsequently had some representation. I asked this question during the December session. The minister at that time said that the question was under review. Now obviously the million dollar appropriation that we have set aside would be one area that might make it possible for The University of Lethbridge to move into this field. But when the minister responds to me, I would like him to advise us just what the disposition is of the request by The University of Lethbridge for a Native studies program.

I wasn't able to sit in the subcommittee and I am sure this matter was discussed there at some length, but I think the general philosophy of the department, especially as it relates to the deputy minister and his particular approach towards institutional autonomy - this is something that I consider very important.

It's going to take me a little longer to do that, Mr. Chairman. In view of the fact that we are all rather interested in an event that has taken place outside our jurisdiction, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. FOSTER:

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

[The motion was carried.]

MR. CHAIRMAN:

The Chairman would suggest that all the birds get back in their places.

[Mr. Diachuk left the Chair.]

* * * * *

[Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair.]

MR. DIACHUK:

Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain estimates, reports progress and begs leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 2:30 o'clock.

[The House rose at 5:30 o'clock.]

