

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Friday, May 17, 1974

[The House met at 10:00 o'clock.]

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this morning to introduce to you and to hon. members of the Assembly, a group of 22 students from Victoria Composite High School from my constituency of Edmonton Centre. They are accompanied by their teacher Mr. Scragg. Mr. Speaker, they are seated in the public gallery and I would ask them to stand and be recognized by the members of the Assembly.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Industrial Development Strategy

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Premier and ask the Premier if it's the government's intention to bring forward a position paper or legislation at the fall session regarding the industrial development strategy he referred to in his announcement yesterday?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, it could well be done that way, but it may be done at the commencement of the regular session in the winter-spring of 1975.

MR. CLARK:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, on the same topic. I would like to ask the Minister of Advanced Education what steps the Department of Advanced Education has taken with regard to the announcement made yesterday, which talks in terms of 16,000 additional jobs for Albertans by 1977? What steps, from the standpoint of manpower training programs, has the Department of Advanced Education been involved in to date?

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Speaker, I doubt that can adequately be answered in the question period. I would be happy to pursue that in the course of my estimates.

To be specific, we have 20 post-secondary institutions in this province. We have been assessing our institutional capacity, including residential accommodation to accept men and women for education and training, both in terms of education for the traditional student, the 18 to 24 year old, and for adult training and retraining. We, I think, are able to identify generally the numbers of people we feel we require, the skills and the level of skills we think we will need to perform the many opportunities which will be available in this province in the near future.

Our problem, Mr. Speaker, is not so much one of institutional capacity or of competent men and women to train and educate others. Our problem is that we simply don't seem to have the numbers of men and women present in this province to take advantage of the employment opportunities.

I think that is pretty evident in many, many areas of our economy and our society. In fact, while we talk about the thousands of new jobs which will be available in new projects, you can walk down almost any street in any town or city and talk to employers who are now looking for people they cannot find. So, obviously we have a manpower problem in the context of the supply of men and women and we will be calling upon the resources of all Albertans, indeed all Canadians, and no doubt beyond our borders. As the Leader of the Opposition appreciates, Mr. Speaker, the unemployment situation in Alberta is virtually non-existent and that really is the focus of the problem.

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could just add slightly to that in terms of the manpower problem and restructure it, too, in terms of manpower challenge. But in terms of the assumption in the initial question by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, I think I should make clear that the basic project, using Alberta Gas Trunk Line-Canadian Industries Limited as an example, involves 1,500 new jobs in the basic primary and secondary level when it completes construction in 1978.

The desirable feature of the petrochemical situation is that the multiplier effect into the 16,000 jobs is not something which necessarily would come on-stream at one particular period of time. But, because it involves such a large degree of potential small business, it can come on-stream over a period of time and hence permit more orderly development. To a large degree, our industrial strategy and our manpower situation is improved by circumstances where we are not faced with - like an oil sands plant or a basic ethylene plant or a basic refinery, where you have a large employment factor starting at one time. The multiplier effect in petrochemicals is something which can build up in a more orderly fashion with less waves.

MR. CLARK:

A supplementary question to the Minister of Manpower and Labour. What specific tangible studies has the Department of Manpower and Labour made with regard to the fact there will be the Syncrude project going ahead, also this particular project on-stream and many others, which it can make available to indicate the market in Alberta and across Canada?

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, I will just respond in two ways. One, there is ongoing work which could be called study in the general sense, with industry, trade unions, the Canadian Manufacturers Association, the Chamber of Commerce and others - in fact, the universities and Canada Manpower - and we are constantly looking, working and trying to assess the situation and the availability of people.

Secondly, I accepted, on behalf of the government, a question, possibly a resolution, for a return by the hon. Leader of the Opposition on this very matter. I will be tabling a comprehensive and detailed listing and cataloguing of the studies that have been made.

AGT-IBEW Contract

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, a second question, to the hon. Minister of Telephones and Utilities. Has Alberta Government Telephones accepted the recommendations of the conciliation chairman?

MR. FARRAN:

The recommendation of the conciliator is out for balloting at the moment. Alberta Government Telephones has not yet stated the position of management.

MR. CLARK:

Supplementary question. Does Alberta Government Telephones plan to make a public statement prior to May 29, when the ballots must be in?

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Speaker, in view of the time-honoured principles of the bargaining process, I would prefer not to answer specific questions such as that while bargaining, which is part of our industrial way of life, still continues.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. The employees are now at the balloting stage, and what they want to know is, is the corporation going to indicate whether they accept or reject the award?

MR. LOUGHEED:

He doesn't have to answer.

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is asking which comes first, the chicken or the egg. I've told you that it's part of the bargaining process and I'm not prepared to make a statement at this time.

MR. CLARK:

A follow-up question to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Is Alberta Government Telephones taking on emergency staff in Calgary in light of the fact that employees of Alberta Government Telephones are refusing to do overtime work as a result ... [Inaudible] ... situation?

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Speaker, AGT has hired, not on an emergency basis but on a permanent basis, 68 new employees in plant in Calgary.

MR. CLARK:

Supplementary question to the minister. Has Alberta Government Telephones in Calgary hired any individuals as the result of employees of Alberta Government Telephones refusing to do overtime work in Calgary because of the way negotiations are being handled?

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Speaker, I reject the insinuation that the reluctance of the union to do overtime is caused by the way in which negotiations are being handled. However, with the expansion in all parts of the province due to the government's successful strategy to diversify industry, AGT has growing pains. With the reluctance to do compulsory overtime and the insistence on voluntary overtime, we have hired more people to cope with this and the expanding plant.

MR. CLARK:

One last supplementary to the minister. When the minister says this, he's referring to the present negotiations between Alberta Government Telephones and its employees, for hiring additional staff at Calgary?

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Petrosar Project - Location

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Premier. It relates to his statement yesterday. Can the hon. Premier advise the Assembly whether he or any members of the government have had discussions with officials of Polysar or the Petrosar project with respect to the feasibility of moving the venue of that project from Sarnia to Alberta?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I suppose in a very cursory way at this stage those discussions have been undertaken. But there is a meeting scheduled for Edmonton on May 30, when the principals

of the Petrosar group will be coming here to meet with cabinet ministers and officials. That will be one of the matters of discussion.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the hon. Premier. Can the Premier advise the Assembly whether the government would be prepared to entertain the Petrosar project if the venue is changed?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, certainly that would be a factor. But we're also looking at the question of proper conservation practice in terms of appropriate use of Alberta's natural resources and the clear efficient use of ethane as a feedstock for ethylene as distinguished from the naptha-cracking process. However, my understanding is that there are certain requirements for various base chemicals in order to maintain the viability of the Sarnia situation. That will be a matter that we will discuss to see if there are some ways that those situations can be met in terms of a modified or restructured SOAP project that would, in fact, have an Alberta base or partial Alberta base to it.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question dealing with the Premier's statement yesterday. Can the Premier advise whether he has any statistics as to the degree of Canadian ownership in the Alberta Gas Trunk-CIL proposal?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Well, Mr. Speaker, the degree of Canadian ownership, of course, involves the fact that as compared to other projects which are there, the Alberta Gas Trunk Line is, of course, a Canadian owned concern and is the lead company involved. Secondly, there will be an opportunity, and the details have not yet been arranged because the AGTL consortium just made its announcement this week and our confirmation of endorsement occurred this week, for a possible participation by some further Alberta vehicle. So clearly and extensively there is no doubt in my mind that the degree of Canadian and Alberta ownership will be much larger in that project than in any other project, although we do have an opportunity in the Dow project for a degree of Alberta participation.

Unfortunately the situation is, and the facts must be faced, that in the area of petrochemicals and chemicals you are operating on a worldwide basis and there are a number of large companies involved. For example, Canadian Industries Limited which has been a good corporate citizen in this province, is owned by International Chemical [Industries] in the United Kingdom. But on balance we believe that it is quite clear that the Alberta Gas Trunk Line-CIL project provides a very strong aspect of Canadian ownership as distinguished from other projects.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Can the Premier advise whether or not he has statistics yet as to the degree, that is, will it be 51 per cent or more Canadian owned?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, that's very difficult to evaluate just with regard to the basic plant. But I think the really important thing for the hon. member to direct his mind to, and other members of the House, is that the advantage of the AGTL-CIL proposal is an advantage to permit opportunities for small, locally-owned business to go into the second and third ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. With great respect the hon. Premier is debating the merits of the situation.

MR. LOUGHEED:

With joy.

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Speaker, may I ask leave of the House to revert to Introduction of Visitors?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS (CONT.)

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce today 33 students from East View Junior High School in my constituency of the city of Red Deer, where my colleague, the Minister of Environment, and I were a short while ago to introduce Anti-Litter Week. They are accompanied on this occasion by Mr. Johnson and Mr. Germing. I would ask them to rise and be welcomed by the Assembly.

MR. CLARK:

If it was Anti-Litter Week, did they throw you out?

MR. J. MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, may I also have leave of the House to introduce a group of students?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. J. MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, I have great pleasure in introducing to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of students from my constituency in the city of Lloydminster. They are accompanied by their teacher Mr. Isaacs and I would ask them now to stand and be recognized.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD (CONT.)

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Cable TV - CRTC

MR. KOZIAK:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. Some time ago the minister advised the House of a letter he had written to the Canadian Radio and Television Commission outlining concern about the decision of that commission with respect to allowing cable companies in Edmonton the rights to show additional channels, show additional networks, on their cable system. Has the hon. minister received any response to the letter to the CRTC?

MR. GETTY:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have. I have heard from the Minister of Communications, of the federal government, Mr. Pelletier, and he advises us that they have reviewed it again in the federal cabinet and they feel that they must support the CRTC decision not to allow additional outlets in the Edmonton area for some period of time.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Alberta Communications Network

MR. WYSE:

My question, Mr. Speaker, is also to the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. It's regarding the operation of the Alberta Communications Network. My question is, after two years of operation, or over two years of operation, is the government satisfied that the output of unlimited propaganda justifies the enormous cost?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The hon. member is issuing an extremely clear invitation to debate.

MR. WYSE:

A supplementary question then, Mr. Speaker. Is the government considering giving free privileges to the opposition members as suggested by, I believe it was, a socio-systems report - the same as the government members - so that the public is assured of all of the facts?

DR. BUCK:

Now that's a real debate.

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Communications Network appears to be working well in its present form.

[Interjections]

DR. BUCK:

With taxpayers' money.

MR. GETTY:

We are always interested in suggestions from the hon. members. As of right now, the government is not considering allowing any MLAs, Opposition or government, other than - the network is there to carry government information to the people. It's a responsibility that we have.

[Interjections]

MR. WYSE:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I noticed in many of the government releases that government backbenchers are given credit for announcements. My question is, are the individual MLAs contributing to the operation - to the cost?

[Interjections]

DR. PAPROSKI:

We're here.

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, if one of the members on the other side of the House is able to make a government announcement, it may well be that they will be included.

[Interjections]

MR. WYSE:

The last supplementary question I have, Mr. Speaker, is, did the government in any way threaten any of the media that the ACN would be shut down if there is any more feedback or opposition to the ACN?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Oh, come on!

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge, absolutely not. I would never think of threatening the media.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Does the hon. minister also subscribe to the general attitude of the government that to the victor belong the spoils?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The hon. Member for Clover Bar followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-McMurray.

Spring Floods - Drainage Areas

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to address my question to the hon. Minister of the Environment. This is in relation to the severe flooding we had this spring. I would like to know if the hon. minister or his department is considering the re-evaluation of many of the drainage areas in the province where they have had this severe situation?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, as I have announced in the House before, I think, we are doing some major studies in terms of river basin management. However, our policy in terms of assistance for drainage is pretty clear. We work with the municipalities and assist them to the extent of 50 per cent of the cost, if the projects are initiated by the municipalities and sanctioned by them. We also fund 50 per cent of the costs of the district drainage units that have been set up. I believe there were eight of them. So we have quite a generous policy in terms of assistance, but the work must be done either through a district drainage unit, which was set up under legislation, or else the municipality.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. In spite of this, we flooded half the Fort Saskatchewan area.

So, I would just like to know, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. minister is considering some work in the Elk Island northwest area, which includes Astotin Creek? I have been after him for about three years and nothing happened but a flood.

I would like to know, Mr. Speaker, if this area is being considered in the minister's plans?

[Interjections]

MR. LOUGHEED:

We've got 36 years to catch up on.

MR. YURKO:

I think the Premier put his finger right on the nub of the thing. Nothing has happened for 36 years and we are trying to do it all in a couple of years.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. YURKO:

However, ...

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, nothing has happened in three years. I've ...

MR. YURKO:

Very much has happened in three years. Mr. Speaker, the budget ...

DR. BUCK:

We had a flood. We had a big flood, the biggest we have ever had.

MR. YURKO:

The budget of the department went up from \$8 million to \$24 million and work is being done in terms of water resource management, in a major way, all over this province.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister missed my question. I asked if anything was going to be done in the Astotin Creek area?

MR. YURKO:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the matter is being studied. As I indicated, we offer free engineering ...

[Interjections]

... services to the municipalities on minor drainage systems. Then we fund 50 per cent of them, if the municipality is willing to go ahead. If the municipality is willing to go ahead on this project we will not only do the engineering, we will fund 50 per cent of the costs.

DR. BUCK:

Thank you.

MR. YURKO:

You're welcome.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-McMurray followed by the hon. Member for Sedgewick-Coronation.

Fish Kill - Lac La Biche

DR. BOUVIER:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question to the Minister of Lands and Forests. I was wondering if the hon. minister is planning any action or any representation to the Department of Highways to get action on the situation which occurs on Highway 36 about four miles south of Lac La Biche - known as Kauffman's Creek, where annually literally thousands of fish die because they can't get through a culvert in the road that is too small. They ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. There's some doubt as to whether one can fit into the Question Period an enquiry as to whether one department is making representations to another.

DR. BOUVIER:

I asked if the minister is considering any action to remedy this situation where these fish are dying, because they can't get through a small culvert and they die in the flood pool behind the culvert.

AN HON. MEMBER:

You're lucky he doesn't kill them.

DR. WARRACK:

Mr. Speaker, the next time the hon. member gets a surge of energy he can write me a memo with information specific enough that I can deal with it.

[Interjections]

DR. BOUVIER:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister not received any representation from the Lac La Biche Fish and Game, and has he not written back to them about it?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear, hear.

DR. WARRACK:

I'm not sure about that, Mr. Speaker, but I am quite sure that the member for that area has been inactive on the matter.

DR. BOUVIER:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Does the minister consider that the member has been any more inactive than he has?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear, hear.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Atta boy, Doc.

MR. BATIUK:

Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Could the minister advise under whose administration that culvert was installed?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Sedgewick-Coronation followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

Business Files - Confidentiality

MR. SORENSON:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Attorney General. Is the hon. Attorney General considering enacting legislation to ensure that clients' personal files are kept confidential by the firms with which they do business and that a client's file is destroyed once he ceases to do business with that bank or firm?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I have some difficulty with the words in that question because it asks whether I was considering legislating in that area, and I want to draw to the hon. member's attention that that is a function of the House and not of a minister.

Going to the essence of the question, Mr. Speaker, as I followed it, it's whether we are contemplating legislation which would provide that businesses, such as banks or doctors or lawyers or any other business that gathers what might be personal information in the course of its business, would be required to destroy that at the time the business relationship ceased. Mr. Speaker, the short answer to the question is that we don't have any such legislation under consideration at this time.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Truckers - Gas Prices

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Provincial Treasurer. What is the concern of the truckers who made representation to the minister today?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Sick.

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, I had a very pleasant coffee with about seven truckers just prior to the convening of the Legislature. Their concern was that the price of gasoline at the pumps will certainly increase their costs and they felt that this would affect them as independent truckers.

I indicated to them, during the course of having a coffee with them, the many things that have been done in the last two and half years in terms of much higher royalties which provide benefits to them as Albertans and to all Albertans through government services and reduced taxation. Also, of course, I pointed out to them the five cent reduction that was made about one month ago.

It was a very pleasant meeting and I think that some of them were unaware of the fact that we had gone from \$250 million in royalties to well in excess of \$1 billion which provide benefit to all of them as individuals and to all Albertans.

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. Were the seven persons present representative of a larger group of truckers, independent truckers or what?

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, no. As a matter of fact, the man who led the group of seven who were here, Mr. Brydges, was disappointed. He had indicated that there were going to be about 75. The only explanation was that the others decided they would not come.

MR. CLARK:

A supplementary question to the Provincial Treasurer. Is the position of the government accurately reflected in the comments made by officials of the Treasury Department to Mr. Brydges earlier this week when, in asking the officials of the Treasury Department about the increase in gas prices, he was advised that they should simply increase their rates to Alberta consumers? Does that accurately reflect the Provincial Treasurer's position?

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure I understand the hon. leader's question at all.

MR. LUDWIG:

Oh, boy!

MR. CLARK:

I'll try again. Is the position of the Provincial Treasurer the same as officials of his department who advised Mr. Brydges earlier this week that rather than be concerned about a further reduction in the gasoline tax, a trucker should simply raise his rates to Alberta consumers? Is that your position?

MR. MINIELY:

Well, Mr. Speaker, first I would say that I am unaware of what the hon. leader has said. Secondly, I would say that my officials, of course, as departments do, provide their own individual advice to me. That does not mean I accept their advice. I have indicated the government's position on gasoline prices and the fact that we will be monitoring them and will carry on monitoring them and ensure that Albertans continue to receive what has been our policy in the past, the lowest prices at the pump in Canada.

MR. BUCKWELL:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Were the remarks the hon. Provincial Treasurer made to the truckers this morning the sugar for the coffee?

MR. NOTLEY:

A supplementary question. In light of the submission by the truckers, is the government giving any consideration to asking the Public Utilities Board to review whether or not gasoline pricing should come under the provisions of the board?

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, I'd say again that where we have the lowest prices at the pump in Canada, I don't think it is necessary at the present time to put them under the Public Utilities Board.

MR. TAYLOR:

A supplementary to the hon. Provincial Treasurer. Since gasoline was selling at Mile Zero at Dawson Creek for 57.9 [cents], whereas it's 59.9 and 61.9 [cents] in Edmonton, is the government prepared to carry out a probe to check into this very high increase in the province of Alberta?

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, individual exceptions are not valid in terms of making comparisons because ...

MR. LUDWIG:

They are, to the buyer!

MR. MINIELY:

Well, Mr. Speaker, if they'd like to hear my answer, I'm quite pleased to give it. They are not valid in terms of one individual exception where we have a highly competitive situation and many more service stations. I think the important thing for government, again, in a free enterprise society, which we all believe in - except with minor exceptions - is that the consumer has a choice and an alternative in a competitive situation.

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Speaker, one further supplementary. In view of the very high profits of the major oil companies as recorded in their own reports, is the government prepared to consider the merits of a probe into the present very high increases in the retail price of gasoline in Alberta?

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, I think I indicated in reply to a similar question the other day that I think we have to separate in our minds the difference between prices at the pump and excess profits. It's well known what we've done in terms of increasing the return to Albertans through royalties. I think that one has to look at profits in other areas in terms of determining what the taxation level should be. To relate excess profits to the prices at the pump is to take only one factor into consideration.

MR. TAYLOR:

One further supplementary. If, in the name of free enterprise, retailers are going to be able to charge whatever they like for gasoline, what is the sense of going to the expense of monitoring the prices?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The hon. member is extending an invitation to debate.

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

Alberta Resources Growth Company

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the hon. the Premier. Has the government abandoned its plans for that item referred to in the Throne Speech as the Alberta Growth Company?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, no. I believe we said during the course of the session, we'd probably be having a position paper in the fall. My recollection is that the phraseology in the Speech from the Throne was the Alberta Resources Growth Company.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Premier. Have any studies been conducted to determine if any need exists for such a vehicle?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think there is a growing feeling by Albertans that they want to participate in developments that arise out of the natural resources of this province. If the hon. member is not aware of that, I suggest he had better check with his constituents.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the hon. Premier answer the question? Have any studies been conducted?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, there is, I think, a responsibility on government to make judgment decisions. These judgment decisions are a reflection of our best feelings, and views of the citizens we represent.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, if no studies are being conducted to show the need, is this being designed as an election gimmick?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, - oh, I'm sorry, I'd be delighted to answer.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Calgary Youth - Aerosol Fatality

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Premier. Has the hon. Premier anything to report with regard to questions I put with reference to the death of the young boy in Calgary from sniffing the aerosol known as Pam?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raised the question of a report on that matter yesterday ...

MR. LUDWIG:

It was four days ago, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LEITCH:

I have been able since then to gather some information. I understand, Mr. Speaker, there is some element of uncertainty about the cause of the death. An inquest has been ordered and I anticipate in the near future we'll have more definite information about that.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, in the meantime, in light of the Attorney General's answer, have any instructions gone out to the vendors and the distributors of the product known as Pam to perhaps withhold further sales or to label the product as potentially dangerous?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, so far as I'm aware no such instructions have gone out from any department of the provincial government. I understand the matter of this kind of

packaging, that is, the aerosol can, is within the responsibilities of the federal drug and food administration. Up to this time I haven't been able to ascertain from them whether they have taken any action.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Polysar - Location

MR. GHITTER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Premier. In light of the announcement yesterday relating to the petrochemical industry, I'm wondering if the provincial government has received any communication from the federal Crown corporation, Polysar, to indicate their desire or any efforts on their part to locate part of their petrochemical operations in the province of Alberta?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, the checking I have done on that matter - I think it's a very important matter - is that to this point there has been no effort made, of which I am aware - that Polysar, a federal Crown corporation, has ever attempted to locate any of its operations here.

MR. GHITTER:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering, through you Mr. Speaker, to the Premier, when the government meets with Polysar later this month, if the Premier would consider inviting them to reconsider their view of bringing their industry into the province of Alberta?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, that is certainly something that we're going to begin to examine because we've heard these observations made by the federal government regarding a national petroleum corporation and participation by the federal government in the Alberta oil sands where there is, I think, very adequate involvement by Albertans and by the private sector. It strikes me that if the federal government wants to make a very important active contribution in this province, one excellent way for it to do so is to put some pressure on Polysar to come to Alberta.

MR. GHITTER:

A further supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Premier. I'm wondering if the hon. Premier would send a copy of his address of yesterday to the Hon. Mr. Macdonald in view of the comments he made yesterday relating to the desire to have this ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Order.

MR. WILSON:

Speech, speech.

MR. SPEAKER:

With great respect, that is scarcely a matter with which the hon. member needs to take up the time of the House. Perhaps he could send a copy himself.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Nicely done, Ron.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Speaker, I asked my question in the supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Bribery Claims - Edmonton

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Premier or the hon. Premier may want to ask the Attorney General or Minister of Municipal Affairs. It is regarding the news media stories yesterday regarding the claim of an Edmonton alderman that he had been offered a bribe by an unnamed developer, which in my humble opinion is a bribe or pay-off of an elected official. My question, Mr. Speaker, is this. Does the government plan to investigate this serious situation immediately?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member could enlighten us as to where that falls within ministerial responsibility.

MR. DIXON:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, under the act we passed, the city act, the municipal act, I feel this would be a category which should be investigated immediately. As an elected official, I feel we should be more than anxious to investigate any situation where an elected official, regardless of at what level he may be in Alberta, should be investigated.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member would have to assume that his representation ... [Inaudible] ... and perhaps if he wishes to raise the matter on a subsequent occasion, he might bring it specifically within a departmental responsibility.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to either the hon. Premier or one of the hon. ministers. If the Alberta government is requested by either the City of Edmonton or some other responsible body to investigate this situation, would they be willing to do so?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member's question is hypothetical, but perhaps it could be put in a more direct way.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway ...

MR. NOTLEY:

A supplementary question to the hon. Attorney General. Has the Attorney General given any consideration to investigating this matter?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I'd have to ask the hon. member to repeat his question. There were some competing noises and I didn't catch all the words.

MR. NOTLEY:

My supplementary question to the hon. Attorney General was, has the hon. Attorney General given any consideration to investigating this matter?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, the reports which have already been made public on the matter indicate there has been an extensive investigation by the police forces. Of course if there is an alleged breach of law, that is the proper vehicle for the investigation. I just simply want to conclude by repeating that in that sense, as I understand it, there has already been an extensive investigation.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Teen Challenge Rehab Program

DR. PAPROSKI:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question to the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development. Is the minister aware that [representatives of the] Teen Challenge farm work counselling rehabilitation program for teen alcoholic and drug problems have met with his department for assistance? What are the results of that meeting?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, there was no request for assistance from Teen Challenge in the meeting they had with me some weeks ago. My understanding is that they have no request for assistance. But I could offer, I think, this information to the hon. member and to the House. The program is one which is highly regarded, but the organization in question, Teen Challenge, doesn't feel able to proceed with it at the present time, so it will be a matter for future consideration.

DR. PAPROSKI:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister prepared to review their submission and encourage this very important and similar thrust which I proposed some one and a half years ago in the ...

[Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, maybe I can add to this question because I think Teen Challenge's Rev. Opheim met with the Minister of Agriculture for land acquisition or a farm type of set-up somewhere in Alberta. I think he is the minister the question should be directed to.

DR. PAPROSKI:

Mr. Speaker, one last supplementary. Does the minister recognize that this is an important and very progressive ...

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

No.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

DR. PAPROSKI:

Indeed I am.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Drinking Water

MR. SORENSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of the Environment. It concerns drinking water. Even the water in this town isn't always what it's cracked up to be, and it's driven some of us ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

It's driven us to drink.

MR. SORENSON:

... It has driven some of us to the consumption of that drug, Java, on the floor of the Legislature. But has the flooding had any adverse effect on drinking water supplies in the province?

AN HON. MEMBER:

It gives you stomach cramps.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member's question, perhaps, would come under the duties of the hon. Minister of the Environment.

MR. SORENSON:

That's who I ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Oh, ch.

MR. YURKO:

That's not exactly an easy question to answer, Mr. Speaker, but we do have a build-up of phenols in water supplies during the course of the run-off during the spring. The phenols come from two sources, first of all the natural decay of vegetation which can be affected by flooding conditions, and secondly the snowmelt which contains an accumulation of phenols from the automobiles. But this is not dangerous to health in the very small quantities involved in terms of parts per billion. It is a case of some discomfort, particularly with respect to the nose of some individuals as well as the taste of others, in the course of the spring.

MR. SORENSON:

Supplementary to the minister. Does the hon. minister know the source of that pure, clear, spring water the brewery ad keeps reminding us of?

[Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member might have ...

MR. SORENSON:

Then a supplementary to the ones in charge of the solicitor general or the consumer affairs departments. Is the Solicitor General checking into the rather questionable advertising practices of the brewery?

AN HON. MEMBER:

They've got 'em up in Jasper.

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, I'll have to take that question as notice, discuss it with my honourable colleague and she'll provide the response when she returns to the House.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview followed by the hon. Member for Medicine Hat-Redcliff.

Nursing Home Grants

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the Minister of Health and Social Development. It concerns the recent announcement of increased grants to nursing homes. My question to the minister is, has the minister had an opportunity to discuss the disposition of those grants with representatives of the Canadian Union of Public Employees?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, those discussions took place prior to the finalizing of the negotiations. I would say that the result of the discussions I had with the representatives of the Canadian Union of Public Employees was that we agreed on the view that, in the private nursing homes in particular, there was a low wage level which adversely affected the ability of the private nursing homes, in many cases, to retain employees. Because of that, the negotiated contract had a new wrinkle to it this year in that the \$1 increase that was negotiated, and which would be available for normal negotiations for part of that being committed to wage increases, had added to it an additional 50 cents per patient day that would be earmarked solely for wage increases.

Drinking Water (Cont.)

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, in reply to the Member for Sedgewick-Coronation, maybe he does know that "Calgary" really means "clear-running-water" and the brewery in question has a well inside the brewery from which they draw water for the brew they make.

Nursing Home Grants (Cont.)

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. This is for clarification. Do I take it from your answer, Mr. Minister, that that 50 cents is specifically earmarked and must go to the employees, that in fact the government is making regulations that it's not a question of being up to the nursing home but it must, in fact, be passed on?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, the arrangement is that the nursing homes operate under contract. Their agreement with the province is based on that arrangement for this year; the 50 cents is earmarked and therefore can't be used for another purpose. But also, the negotiation with respect to the \$1, I repeat, is quite important too, because a large part of operating costs is for wages and salaries and therefore that increase, too, is available for negotiated increases.

MR. SPEAKER:

There is time for a final question by the hon. Member for Medicine Hat-Redcliff.

Consultants -- Government Contracts

MR. WYSE:

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the hon. Minister of Manpower and Labour. My question is, is the provincial government continuing its practice of engaging outside consultants in departmental functions?

DR. HOHOL:

Well very briefly, I would have to say yes. From time to time departments have access to consultants on a particular subject and a particular topic. This would be in contrast to, for example, adding additional civil servants on a permanent basis when the need is for a specific function.

MR. WYSE:

Supplementary question then. When the consultants are engaged by the government in an administrative capacity, are they permitted to continue to promote the interests of their own firm?

DR. HOHOL:

Well, when they are working for the government they are working on a very specific kind of project. In most cases this has nothing to do with what they are doing for somebody else as a private consulting firm. I would see nothing inconsistent.

MR. WYSE:

Supplementary question then, has a situation regarding conflict of interest been brought to the government's attention?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Be specific.

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member would have to be specific and give us some opportunity to respond to a specific question. I'm not aware of any. If he is, I would certainly be interested, as would the government, and I would be concerned to know about it.

MR. WYSE:

I'd like to address the same question to the Premier then, Mr. Speaker. Has any situation ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Under 171 of Beauchesne the hon. member, as he perhaps knows, is not permitted to repeat the same question.

Calgary Housing Authority - Missing Funds

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to respond to a question put by the hon. Member for Calgary McCall during my absence from the House yesterday, if there is time permitting.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, through the Premier, asked questions concerning an investigation into the Calgary Housing Authority activities in Calgary.

We haven't received the information from the hon. member so I'm assuming that he understands what the authority is, how it is appointed and what its members are paid. On that assumption I have to say that I had been advised that the investigation was under way. The chairman of the authority did phone my office just prior to the news announcement being made that the discrepancy in accounting had been discovered. Of course, the new independent auditors have now been appointed and both the city and the province are waiting the outcome of that investigation.

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer. May I follow up with one or two supplementary questions at this point?

MR. SPEAKER:

... [Inaudible] ... require the leave of the Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. HO LEM:

Supplementary to the hon. minister, does the government intend to implement its own investigation, independent of the investigation being currently conducted?

MR. RUSSELL:

No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HO LEM:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, can the hon. minister advise whether steps will be taken to prevent a cover-up of this thing so that the people who are responsible for the loss of funds will be charged and the innocent parties cleared?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is dealing in a topic in a way which may involve certain risks to the effectiveness of the investigation which is under way.

MR. HO LEM:

Well, with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, there is proof that there are missing funds, so there is no doubt about that.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. If the subject is under investigation, it's of very questionable propriety for the hon. member to express that opinion in the Legislature at this time.

MR. HO LEM:

On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker. The very fact that the investigation is under way is based on the premise that there are missing funds.

[Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER:

With great respect, the purpose of the investigation may be to establish that very fact.

MR. LOUGHEED:

Right.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, just on a point of order and for the record, there is an error on page 4 of today's Order Paper in the sense that Bill No. 43, The Nursing Homes Amendment Act, is shown as having passed through Committee of the Whole, which it hasn't yet. Indeed, that will be the first bill we will be studying now.

I would move that you leave the Chair and the Assembly resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to study certain bills on the Order Paper.

MR. SPEAKER:

I express my regret to the House and the error has been noted.

[The motion was carried.]

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair.]

* * * * *

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

[Mr. Diachuk in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN:

The Committee of the Whole Assembly will come to order.

Bill No. 43 The Nursing Homes Amendment Act, 1974

MR. CHAIRMAN:

There are some amendments circulated.

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Chairman, I would like to address a few comments to Bill No. 43 as presented to this House. Mr. Chairman, I am grateful for this opportunity of addressing myself to the contents of this bill. I am sorry I wasn't here during second reading of this bill.

The legislation, because it deals with the subject of nursing homes, will, in the final analysis, affect the welfare and lives of thousands of our senior citizens during the course of the next few years this legislation will be in effect.

In many ways, Mr. Chairman, in its present form it contains both good news and bad news. The good news, of course, is the provision in this legislation which insists that operators of new private nursing homes, or buyers interested in buying existing nursing homes, will have to be Alberta residents. This is a suggestion that nursing home trustees have advocated for some time and one which I personally strongly support. It is, I believe, Mr. Chairman, good news for all Albertans.

The bad news is, if certain provisions of this legislation are enacted, community control or citizens' input over the extended care programs in their nursing home field will be emasculated and eroded. The final effect, I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, would be the complete expropriation of local control and autonomy of nursing home facilities in this province, from the community to a single bureaucracy removed from the neighbourhood.

Mr. Chairman, may I say, for the benefit of my colleagues, that because of my background in the city of Calgary as a charter member of both the Metropolitan Calgary Foundation responsible for senior citizens' lodges and the Calgary Auxiliary Hospital and Nursing Home District No. 7 for a decade or more now, I believe I may speak more knowledgeably on this than perhaps on other legislation. In fact, I find this a unique challenge to apply the benefits of experience and background I have had during the years while serving the Calgary community in this regard.

In my remarks, then, I should like to deal briefly, Mr. Chairman, with three main areas. First, because of the implications and significance of this legislation, I should like to [give], briefly, the background and history of the development of extended care facilities in this province. Secondly, I should like to present some of the implications of this legislation, if enacted, upon the existing system and as it applies to the future. Finally, Mr. Chairman, I should like to recommend the manner in which this legislation might be dealt with.

Mr. Chairman, Alberta is a dynamic and unique province founded by energetic and pioneering generations of Canadians who came here - and some born here - seeking opportunities for a better way of life, and found this province to be the challenge they sought.

Because of the relatively recent development of Alberta, it is interesting to note that in the year 1935 the average life span of all Albertans was 39 years. There were almost no old people. Medical facilities and medical care were concentrated in urban areas, yet the population of this province was concentrated in the rural areas. If you had a coronary it was likely you'd die. If you had pneumonia your chances for recovery were slim. Mr. Chairman, there was a high mortality rate. As a result we, as a province, were not faced with having to deal with providing for our aged until we had such a generation of older citizens.

As this province matured, the government recognized the need for providing medical facilities for senior citizens. When, in 1960, it became apparent that the general hospital systems could not adequately and completely deal with the matters of extended care for the aging and the severely handicapped, legislation was introduced to establish approximately 17 auxiliary hospital districts. In each of these districts a provisional board was appointed and charged with the responsibility of developing facilities to provide for the elderly and the handicapped quality of life with a social environment as well as recognizing the need for psychological support.

The legislation also recognized the importance of these facilities becoming an integral part of the community. Four years later, Mr. Chairman, these auxiliary hospital boards were given the additional responsibility of providing nursing homes. From then until now a significant evolution has occurred. There are approximately 30 auxiliary and nursing home districts throughout our province today.

The Calgary Auxiliary Hospital and Nursing Home District No. 7 is, I believe, a good example of these boards and one with which I am personally familiar. The board, as constituted, has an elected chairman and vice-chairman. Its membership consists of a representative from the community of Wheatland, one from the municipal council of Rocky View and five from the city of Calgary. It is interesting to note that on our board we not only have an MLA and an alderman, but two county councillors who are farmers, a postal employee, a luncheon attendant and a hotel manager. In other words, the board is a representative cross section of the citizens in the community who are knowledgeable and understanding of that community.

The board with which I am associated presently operates three auxiliary hospitals, the Cross Bow, Sarcee and Glenmore Park, a 222-bed nursing home and oversees the operations of 14 other nursing homes in the extended program in the city of Calgary. It is responsible for over 2,000 nursing home beds.

The nursing homes, more specifically, Mr. Chairman, are concerned about the provision of nursing care with support services designed to assist the elderly in maintaining maximum health and independence. Over the years the program has developed to a very sophisticated level. It was apparent by the mid-'60s that nursing homes had to provide more than just custodial care, which just wasn't good enough.

The district board provides a travelling rehabilitation team to assist district nursing home operators in the provision of rehabilitation care programs. Hence, the program I have just outlined is coordinated and implemented through our district board with several specialist consultants such as registered physiotherapists, occupational therapists and dietitians who work as resource people for the various nursing homes in the district.

Mr. Chairman, as the board became experienced in dealing with this matter, it was also apparent a number of nursing homes that existed were inadequate. Some were too small and could not provide the kinds of facilities that were necessary, nor could they operate economically.

At present, the Calgary board has established a standard of encouraging nursing homes to contain roughly 120 to 150 beds. We operate on a five-year development program which is developed in consultation and in cooperation with the city, the citizens of the community and the Alberta Hospital Services Commission. This program, while it's a five-year program, is updated each and every year.

I must stress that this program must, in the final analysis, be approved by the commission itself. Presently, in cooperation with the commission and with the community, we have established a guideline that calls for 4.5 nursing home beds for every 1,000 population. This was accepted by the commission. Both the Calgary and Edmonton areas, being larger communities in the province, are what we refer to as referral areas, in other words, Mr. Chairman, communities to which rural citizens tend to retire. So the boards in these two cities, I would suggest, have a special responsibility to ensure a high standard of extended care to the elderly whose families are removed and with whom they often lose contact on a regular basis.

Mr. Chairman, that briefly outlines the history of the development of the extended care programs in this province, and more particularly in the Calgary area which I represent.

Mr. Chairman, what are the implications of the legislation? First, I would want to comment on the sponsorship of the legislation by the hon. Member for Edmonton Jasper Place. After examining the content and the impact it will have on the community, I wonder just when the hon. member had the opportunity of visiting a nursing home. I wonder when he last had the opportunity to talk to nursing home trustees, other than the representation that was made to him on request by the representative of the nursing home board and the Alberta hospital trustees. I wonder, Mr. Chairman, when the honourable gentleman communicated with the operators, administrators and owners of nursing homes in this province. And finally, Mr. Chairman, I wonder when the hon. member had the opportunity or took the time to talk to those people who live in the institutions to ask them what they thought and how they felt? Because, Mr. Chairman, in my view, if the honourable gentleman had taken time to talk to these various people, he would never have written or introduced this legislation in its present form.

It is a particular concern of mine, Mr. Chairman, to learn that when the legislation was first introduced it had not yet been printed. Members of this House were presented with a photocopy of the bill. Several weeks later, we still had no copies of the bill and were unable to obtain copies to circulate to those who would be affected by this legislation. The Alberta Hospital Association itself, a very important organization in this province, could not and did not get a copy of the bill until much later, not until March 28. Only then could they get it by photocopying it themselves. No consultation was done, Mr. Chairman, with the auxiliary hospital boards which administer this program.

Where, Mr. Chairman, is the government that was going to consult with the community when they were in the Opposition and made these issues and statements?

When the hon. Member for Edmonton Jasper Place introduced the legislation he commented on the fact that only Albertans will be able to operate new nursing homes. With this we agreed. But one wonders why the other matters were not dealt with and mentioned at that time.

Mr. Chairman, the legislation, through its various sections, will eliminate local autonomy. It is clear that if provisions of this legislation are implemented several things will occur. First, Mr. Chairman, the provincial government will strip local boards of their authority and will effectively emasculate any decision-making [ability] they may have about determining programs, the level of standards desired and priorities in their own community. Of course, we all know each and every community has its own standards and desirabilities. Many of the levels and standards the various district boards presently provide are over and above what is called for by the regulations.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman, in my view, the ultimate result of centralization of power, and the definite intent of this bill, is to slowly squeeze private operators out of the nursing home business and then nationalize extended care programs in this province. This will be done through a subtle, discreet, well-planned deliberate effort to remove the private sector from the provisions of the health care program in Alberta. This is definitely spelled out in Bill No. 43 where the Alberta Hospital Services Commission has the authority to tell the district board that it shall purchase a nursing home if the nursing home operators themselves can not find any other suitable buyer in the province - Section 8(6).

The third and probably the most serious implication of this legislation is that it will decidedly lower standards of health care in nursing homes in Calgary. Clearly, if the Alberta Hospital Services Commission has the power to determine the letting of contracts rather than allowing the local boards to make their recommendations for final approval by the commission, the commission will apply its own standards of approval rather than those determined by the local boards and the community. In my opinion, the commission's standards are lower than those of District No. 7, to name only one district, Mr. Chairman.

Also, Mr. Chairman, a fourth and very definite consideration, the process that is being established in this legislation, Bill No. 43, will introduce in the interim, before private operators are squeezed out, the possibility of political patronage to the nursing home care system. I do not believe that is the intent of this bill, nor is it the desire of the citizens of this province.

Local autonomy, Mr. Chairman, is an important consideration. When the initial legislation was designed, creating district boards, it was done so members of the community, who are most familiar with the needs of that community, could determine and administer programs. For example, it is through the input of district board representatives that we can best determine matters such as planning trends and transportation problems. We can identify places of greatest need and reach a consensus in long-range planning. In other words, it is the board's representatives who have the 'gut feel' for the need of that particular community. This legislation is proposing to replace the 'gut feel' with bureaucratic decisions made by civil servants and people who are removed from the district. Mr. Chairman, I oppose this completely.

One must also consider, Mr. Chairman, that if power and decision-making with regard to priorities are concentrated in Edmonton in the hands of this government, the cabinet members as well as government backbenchers will be pressured from time to time to influence decisions to the benefit of their own constituencies, at the expense of others.

Mr. Chairman, such a situation, in my opinion, and I believe in the opinion of those I have been elected to represent, would be a disgusting situation - a political system of vested interest and special favours that the people of this province do not want under any circumstances.

By establishing hearings, as suggested in this bill, Mr. Chairman, in which private operators themselves will have an important input in determining priorities and approval of contracts - I think this bears some serious thinking. I think, certainly, we should call upon the private operators for input as to various aspects of the operations of nursing homes in their districts, and as a board we do this.

When you are asking them to come in, to determine priorities and approval of contracts, a situation would develop wherein local private operators could effectively act as a group to lobby to prevent any new nursing home operator, however able or competent, from entering into a contract and being allowed to operate a nursing home within that jurisdiction.

What does that mean? It means simply that as a group they can effectively lobby, through strong representation at the hearings prescribed in this bill, to prevent even the board itself from constructing and operating another new nursing home even though it is proven that additional new beds are required within the district. It could result, in fact, in a closed-shop type of situation. If you're not a member you simply don't get approved or considered.

In the Calgary area in our district we have 14 different nursing home operators, each with heavy investments in the facilities and in their programs. I am not suggesting that these people would deliberately get together and say let's keep the new operators out, but I know, being human, that if I had for instance a heavy investment of \$1 million or more, I would certainly look after my own interests first above others.

It is also important to consider financial considerations. Operators must be assured of at least fair and reasonable return on their investment. The trend, established over the last number of years, has been discouraging to nursing home operators. The marginal profit has been going down steadily. If this trend continues much further, Mr. Chairman, the provincial government will have effectively destroyed any incentive for an investor to maintain large investments in an area that does not provide economic return. The result will naturally be the sale of this facility, either to another operator or, as the legislation insists, to the district board. If the nursing home is not profitable to one operator, then I question its economic viability to another.

But in this particular situation, the bill spells out that if the home is up for sale and you don't get any buyers, then the commission shall instruct the district board to buy that particular home. In effect we are going to see a situation, not far in the future, where operators will be unloading these nursing homes and getting out of the business, allowing government only to continue to participate. It will require millions and millions of dollars of public money and in return provide nothing better and nothing new. I predict, Mr. Chairman, if this trend continues as it has in the past, and if the government members support this legislation to its fullest, there will not be one private nursing home operator operating in Alberta in the next 10 years.

In my view the best possible situation would be a mix of administration in this field, a combination of homes operated by the district, homes operated by private interests and homes operated by other groups such as religious organizations who are allowed under this legislation to do so. It is by having private enterprise in this system that we can establish a system of checks and balances to ensure that our program and costs are effective and are operating efficiently; more importantly, Mr. Speaker, to ensure the programs are operating to the best interests of senior citizens and of those taxpayers who are footing the bill for these programs.

At present, Mr. Chairman, although not by written policy or by legislation, our district, District No. 7, and other districts have determined high standards of health care which exceed those minimum standards imposed through provincial legislation. If we centralize decision-making and approval of contracts, a situation will very likely develop where, through a centralized decision-making process, only minimum standards will be insisted upon and the level of health care to senior citizens will decline.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to say to my hon. colleagues and hon. members on both sides of the House and from all political parties, that in my experience for the last two years as a member of this Legislature, I have questioned the government's rationale in very many areas. I have, from my seat, watched the government evolve a program of systematically destroying local autonomy and centralizing power and decision-making in their own hands. For instance, the municipal tax freeze was imposed and finally relaxed. I saw, as I sat here, the moratorium placed on school construction throughout the province, and then relaxed. We have watched, Mr. Chairman, the elimination of the Universities Commission and we have seen government meddle in private enterprise in the oil industry, undermining the trust between citizens and government.

Mr. Chairman, for some time now I have observed this process and as it progresses, it seems more apparent that it is a systematic, planned attempt at concentrating power into the hands of a few. But this, Mr. Chairman, I feel is the last straw. I cannot stand here idly and watch a system - which I have worked and contributed towards, improving the welfare of our senior citizens - attacked and destroyed.

Mr. Chairman, I must oppose this bill. I implore all hon. members not [to] be fooled by this bill merely because it says we must take control of the Alberta nursing homes and place them back into the hands of Albertans. This is fine, I agree. I oppose this bill in principle. I oppose it morally and ethically and I do so, Mr. Chairman, for one reason and one reason only: because it is not in the interests of the elderly. It is not in the interests of the severely handicapped and it is not in the interests of those we are elected to serve, the citizens of this province.

Mr. Chairman, I propose to make several amendments to Bill No. 43 and might I suggest that we take it clause by clause from this point.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Mr. Ho Lem, your suggestion is, I gather, section by section? In that case, may we then proceed section by section and have the debate on it, section by section?

MR. ZANDER:

Since you have let the hon. Member for Calgary McCall take up about 45 minutes of the time speaking on the principle of the bill, I certainly can't understand why you are going to make this clause-by-clause study of the bill.

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Chairman, I stand on a point of order. I wonder if the hon. member across the way can just cite some rules where there is a limitation on time during committee study?

MR. CHAIRMAN:

No, I think his question was, would the chairman be going section by section rather than permitting him to speak. But if you wish, Mr. Zander, go ahead and speak.

MR. ZANDER:

I think, Mr. Chairman, that in speaking to the general principle of the bill as was just concluded now by the hon. Member for Calgary McCall, I certainly hope you would not go into clause-by-clause study of the bill at this time, because I certainly have some comments on the principle of the bill, and on what the hon. member has just completed in his address in the Assembly.

I have some concerns. In speaking to the principle of the bill, Mr. Chairman, I think probably I have some questions to ask, and that is the needs of nursing homes in the province, whether they are owned by the government, whether they are privately owned or whether they are owned by organizations, by church organizations or other organizations.

I am concerned also about the standards and services supplied. I find them very good in the homes owned by organizations, church organizations. Some of those owned by private individuals are not so good. Maybe in this direction, I think, we should address ourselves for some comments. Certainly in my opinion the ones I have visited which were owned by private individuals had nursing standards far from the nursing standards supplied by the organizations. I believe it's time that the government and the minister in particular took note of the services supplied by some of the private nursing homes and owners of private nursing homes in the province of Alberta.

He also mentioned constituency pressures. Probably he meant what he said, that government members are putting on tremendous pressures for the construction of nursing homes in areas where he felt they were not needed. Well, I can only convey my message to the hon. Member for Calgary McCall that this has not been the case, certainly not within my area. We are some 90 to 100 miles removed from a nursing home, and we find it very difficult to get people into nursing homes in the city. It sometimes takes eight or ten months to get a patient into a nursing home in the city. Therefore, I certainly can't agree with him that pressure by government members for nursing homes has resulted in the building of nursing homes in areas where they were not needed.

I myself, certainly find it very difficult to apply pressure for a nursing home in my area. Certainly one is needed there. We find that the senior citizens' lodge there is providing nursing home services. Yet we have people in those homes who are 94 years old because we can't get them into a city nursing home.

I think we have to address ourselves to the needs of the nursing homes and [also to the fact], as the hon. member has said, that these senior citizens do not wish to leave their home environment and move far away. I said in this Legislature last year that I was only able, after considerable pressure, to take some of my senior citizens who required nursing home service into the city of Lethbridge. Why should it be that we have to provide this type of service for people this far away from Lethbridge when really they come from central Alberta?

The needs are great, I agree. But I can't for one moment agree with the hon. Member for Calgary McCall that there has been pressure by government members. If anything I certainly have pressured the minister and I have pressured the commission, and I find them about as hard to get at as a cement wall. I was finally able to.

Mind you, Mr. Chairman, when you consider a nursing home district as large as the one we used to be in one year ago, representing 700,000 people in the province of Alberta, we found, in the majority of cases, that the nursing homes were built no more than 20 miles outside the city of Edmonton. The rest of the province was forgotten. This was for many years, although we paid and were requisitioned for the Norwood Auxiliary Hospital Nursing

Home District as far back as I can remember. We never got one person, not one elderly citizen, into one of these homes.

You can really feel the apprehension that exists out in the rural communities. You haven't got a nursing home west of the city of Edmonton outside of Stony Plain, and you can go clean to the Jasper Park gates. If the hon. member says any pressure is needed, it has to be applied and the needs of the people must be met.

Mr. Chairman, as I've said before, I would like to know how many hospital and auxiliary beds are available in the province and where they are located, because I certainly can't find or supply information where there are beds available. Just last year we had to commit two people to the mental hospital at Oliver for six months so that we could find room somewhere in the province to put a patient in a nursing home. How can you face the family with the idea of committing their mother or their father to a mental home because there is no availability of nursing home space?

I think we must address ourselves to the problem that there aren't sufficient nursing beds in the province. As the hon. member has said, the age limit of the people who came into this province in about 1904, 1905 and 1912 - we can't catch up to the backlog. But I think we have to address ourselves to the position that we must expend more funds in nursing home and auxiliary hospital care. The backlog is there and this is one area this Legislature must address itself to. The needs are there.

If the hon. Member for Calgary McCall can tell me how I can penetrate the walls of the commission, I would certainly like to know. Maybe he has a fundamental point that he knows how to get in. I don't. When he says that this bill is the last straw, I hope that this bill will open the door so we can get more nursing beds for the people of the province.

We're not destroying the autonomy of the local board. The local board is in charge. I certainly don't hope we will turn [to] the hospital nursing home board and say they are of no avail or no input into the service they supply in the area. This certainly is not brought out in this bill.

I am in favour of keeping the local board in charge of the nursing homes and auxiliary bed nursing and in the hospital board. I think they can be one board. I don't think we need two boards for an active treatment hospital, a nursing home board and a health unit board too. I think we should have one board which controls the health services in our community.

When we get one board in charge, we have only one body to deal with. But to requisition before for expenditures of a nursing home district into which you could not get a patient, I think is something we have to take into consideration because I know from past experience that it wasn't until last year that we were able to dissociate ourselves from a board so large that it was looking after more than half the province of Alberta. The local board knows the requirements of its own area. I don't think it can be settled just by a commission here.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

May Mr. Harle from Camrose have the leave of the committee to introduce some guests in the gallery?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. HARLE:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Stettler, please.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Pardon me.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS (CONT.)

MR. HARLE:

Mr. Chairman, I take great pleasure in introducing to you and to the members of this committee a group of 48 Grade 6 students from the Stettler Elementary School. They are accompanied by Mr. Komishke, Mrs. Cronk and Mr. Kahl. The students themselves are

involved in safety patrols. I would ask that they please stand and receive the welcome of the House.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (CONT.)

Bill No. 43 The Nursing Homes Amendment Act, 1974 (Cont.)

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Chairman, might I make a few comments in reply to the comments made by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley.

Certainly I agree that his concerns are justified when he says that there are simply not enough nursing home beds in the province. We experience a similar problem in southern Alberta. I just don't know how you were able to get someone from your area all the way down to Lethbridge. I understand there is quite a waiting list in each and every district, I would presume, in the province of Alberta.

In Calgary, which includes the municipal district of Rocky View and the county of Wheatland as well as Calgary and areas west of Calgary, we have set up what we call an admissions committee. All applications to any nursing home within our district are made directly to this assessment committee. We, as a board, do not take any active part in the selections and in considering the applications. This assessment committee is comprised of members from the community, as well as a medical director to measure and evaluate the criteria. Of course, when you have a waiting list, you have to establish a priority.

When you say that you don't know how you might get an open door to the commission, really I have no solution for that either, because we also have difficulties sometimes conveying some of our thoughts and concerns to the commission itself. But under the legislation as proposed in Bill No. 43, the door would be closed even tighter. As we discuss this section by section, the hon. Member for Drayton Valley, upon hearing what I have to say about certain sections, may become better advised as to our point of view in this regard.

MR. ZANDER:

Mr. Chairman, may I ask the hon. member one question?

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Well, Mr. Zander, if it is a specific section, may we have it when we deal with that section?

MR. YOUNG:

Mr. Chairman, may I take a few moments of the committee's time to try to correct some of the facts which have been erroneously stated and perhaps set the record right ...

MR. HO LEM:

Not intentionally.

MR. YOUNG:

... in terms of some of the innuendo. I would like to begin, Mr. Chairman, by trying to complete the history of nursing home care in this province as outlined to us by the hon. Member for Calgary McCall, Mr. Ho Lem, chairman of Calgary District No. 7 nursing home board. Mr. Ho Lem has outlined the history of care for senior citizens requiring nursing home care to a relatively recent date. There is, however, in his description of the evolution of the provisions for nursing home care in this province, some incompleteness. The incompleteness arises because of changes which have occurred in the last two or three years.

I would not wish to set myself up as being a better authority on nursing homes, prior to the last two or three years, than Mr. Ho Lem. On the other hand, Mr. Chairman, I am not going to suggest or accept the view that my understanding of their operation and the overview of the provincial scene now is any less than that of Mr. Ho Lem. Maybe we should just call it a draw and leave it at that for the balance of the debate.

Mr. Chairman, at least three points should be made in terms of the evolution of nursing home programs as they stand at the present time.

First of all, I will deal with the Alberta Hospital Services Commission. The Alberta Hospital Services Commission, which as all hon. members know does not have a long history, has undergone some fairly substantial changes in the last two or three years. The change which I wish to emphasize, Mr. Chairman, first of all is the makeup of the commission. At the outset the total commission was composed, in the majority, of full-time government employees. That situation has now changed. The commission now has 11 members of which 6 are part-time members. They are appointed and represent most areas of the province. For the information of members the one area of the province which, if one were to analyse the makeup of the commission geographically, might be said to be without representation, would be the area north of Edmonton. This is a matter which I have drawn to the minister's attention, by the way.

The commission then, Mr. Chairman, is not a government bureaucracy in the sense of civil servants, which I think was expressed in some of the earlier remarks. Mr. Chairman, that's point number one which I wish to make - a change in the organization of the commission, the operation of the commission, the interest reflected on the commission and under this bill a change in the duties of the commission. I might say without this bill there has been a change in the function of the committees relative to nursing home programs.

Mr. Chairman, the second point I wish to make is a change in government attitude and I suppose a change in society's attitude toward care of citizens in general who have problems, and that includes senior citizens who may require the level of care provided in what we know as nursing homes. Mr. Chairman, the change which has occurred is tied in somewhat with changes in our treatment of persons with mental problems. We are trying, Mr. Chairman, as much as possible to reactivate people, to keep people in the community. We have, as you know, made substantial progress, Mr. Chairman, in terms of removal of people from mental institutions in this province. It has been determined, as a consequence of those efforts, that the type of approach being undertaken, though not without some difficulties, has proven that there were many people who were being provided care, and perhaps I could refer to it as custodial care or care at a level of the institutional framework which was not necessary and which did not lead to the highest level of functioning for those individuals which could have been attained.

Mr. Chairman, in connection with that and especially for the information of the hon. Member for Drayton Valley, I would like to comment briefly on a program related to auxiliary hospitals - one which I hope, through the commission, we may extend beyond this level. But as of a year ago - as a matter of fact it is exactly a year ago this week - a program of geriatric day hospital care was introduced through the Norwood Auxiliary Hospital facilities. I went to that birthday party - the first birthday party of that program - this week, hon. member, and am able to report, having spoken with about 25 of the 65 to 70 patients involved in that experimental program, that they are most enthusiastic.

The program provides care at a hospital level on a one day, two day, three day a week basis. It is primarily directed to geriatric-type patients, patients who if they were not in this program would either have to be in nursing homes or auxiliary hospitals for their care. Mr. Chairman, I would just like to say that it appears the program is successful in terms of cost effectiveness. It's successful in terms of the level of treatment provided, and it's extremely successful in terms of the attitude of these people. Because in this program they are able to stay at home for most of the time, go to the hospital during the day, get the treatment they need, have their health care monitored and return to their homes. And some of them are being assisted in transportation by their families, some are not. Regardless of which way their transportation is being handled, it's turning out to be much more cost effective than the auxiliary hospital and other types of programs which we have.

Mr. Chairman, I know there are opportunities where we might extend this in terms of nursing home type care and I am hopeful that we will be taking a look at this. I thought that hon. members, in view of some of the comments which have been made, would be interested to know that we are making a very determined effort to try to accommodate people in their communities, in their home situations as much as possible. In my view from the experience of the past year, this is effective and beneficial to all concerned.

Mr. Chairman, obviously ...

AN HCN. MEMBER:

Question.

MR. YOUNG:

Mr. Chairman, obviously it is not time for the question.

Mr. Chairman, there are some hon. members who have not taken the opportunity to read the 1973 Annual Report of the Alberta Hospital Services Commission which was tabled either

early this week or late last week. I am not sure of the date. Mr. Chairman, I would like to say, in connection with the report, that the report shows the number of beds, the number of institutions, the names of the institutions and the locations of the nursing homes. So for the hon. Member for Drayton Valley in particular, it's all there.

I would like to say, in connection with comments by both of the hon. members who have spoken, that last year 733 nursing home beds were brought on stream. So a substantial effort was made last year to increase the number of nursing home beds. You will recognize, hon. members, that the government has been in office about two and one-half years. It takes a bit of planning time to bring that number of beds on stream. So there has been a substantial improvement since 1971.

Mr. Chairman, there are a couple of other comments which deserve to be made now rather than in item-by-item treatment of the bill. The first one, Mr. Chairman, is that the number of beds currently available - and this has also been expressed as a concern - are 4.03 per thousand of population. Mr. Chairman, The Nursing Homes Act in 1964 specified in Section 10(2),

The contract nursing home beds in the district shall not exceed approximately three for every thousand of population in the district.

That's a substantial improvement then, where we are today, over the guideline of the legislation of 1964.

Mr. Chairman, it's not a question of budget. It's a question of recognition which was expressed as a concern of the changing age nature of our population and the fact that people live longer, et cetera. I am not criticizing what went on before. I am simply saying to those who have levelled a bit of criticism during the last hour that recognition has been taken of that social development and we are, in fact, accounting for it.

Mr. Chairman, there are a number of matters I want to deal with, and I gather from the expressions opposite that I will have the opportunity to deal with them in clause-by-clause reading, so I will deal only with one other matter at the present time.

Mr. Chairman, a number of expressions were advanced about the removal of local autonomy, the fact that there could be political interference, et cetera, et cetera. I won't go into it all. I'll simply say this to the hon. members ... if I can find my notes I will.

In connection with a number of those allegations, I would ask you to consider the position presently of a district hospital board. Applications by private operators, by religious institutions, by anybody wishing to construct facilities for nursing homes in a given area, are made to the district board. That board passes judgment on them. Bear in mind, hon. members, that that same board is also in the business of operating nursing homes. That board, Mr. Chairman, under existing legislation - under the existing method of operation - is both the plaintiff and the judge. Now, I ask you, hon. members, if in those circumstances it can be said that that's a fair system from the point of view of getting the balance that was expressed, is desired - a balance between private operators, public operators and service operators.

Mr. Chairman, I think I'll discontinue my remarks at that point. I think it is a point which hon. members ought to reflect upon and to consider whether - since allegations were made of the possibility of political influence of people being denied hearings et cetera - in those circumstances it sounds like a fair system at the present time.

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Chairman, just responding to some of the comments made by the hon. Member for Edmonton Jasper Place. He makes mention of the fact that the makeup of the commission itself has now changed. I agree that it has been changed to a more desirable set-up by including various members from the community, including yourself and others. I think this is good. I really do. It gives additional input. For instance, from the Calgary area we have the two members. I don't quarrel with that. I think this is a good change and I go along with it.

You mention now that we are beyond the nursing home program, beyond just providing custodial care. That just wasn't good enough. And I certainly agree, because in the various nursing homes the operators, on their own, without calling the regulations, have incorporated many of the nursing homes and have incorporated various rehabilitative programs such as employing physiotherapists, occupational therapists and volunteer groups to get into a program which is established by that particular nursing home.

In addition to that, the institutions throughout the province are now, under the Act, required to provide 10 per cent of their beds for mental patients, to which we don't object. But I think I should mention that in regard to providing facilities and care for

mental patients, there have been various difficulties experienced; namely it requires a different staff ratio to handle the extra care that is required for these patients.

Judging from the experience we have had over the years since this regulation came into effect, the nursing homes have not experienced too great a difficulty other than the staffing. But I think there is another area that should be mentioned. The patients coming into the nursing homes from mental institutions are able to cope with the situation much better than the mental patients coming from outside these institutions and into the nursing homes. I think there should be a holding area for these mental patients coming from outside the mental institutions into nursing homes. This should certainly be a real consideration because it's causing some concern to the nursing home operators.

The hon. member also mentioned the day hospital at Norwood. I agree that certainly this is a real step forward. The Norwood experiment is still on an experimental basis. It follows the one which has been started in Calgary. In fact, in Calgary we have two day hospitals and they are operating very well.

What it means really is that you bring these people in on a daily basis, or once or twice and sometimes three times a week into these day hospitals for various reasons - not only for medical treatment but for rehabilitative programs. People with strokes come in and learn how to make use of their legs and arms again; how to manage in a kitchen for instance, with one hand, if it is absolutely necessary; the older people are taught how to get in and out of bathtubs and what special equipment is required; how to dial a telephone - all these programs are included in the day hospital. We find it very useful. We find the results are very encouraging because a number of our cases have been able to be completely self-sufficient after completing the program at the day hospitals.

This is an area, Mr. Chairman, that I feel should certainly be extended. While it is still on an experimental basis, the results now are so encouraging that I think this should be made a permanent program, not only from the point of view of the results, but for the dollars spent. You don't require additional facilities. You don't have to build huge new buildings. It is generally done in a very small area of an existing nursing home or auxiliary hospital. Certainly I'm glad that the hon. member mentioned the day hospital because it is a very, very important phase of the extended care program in the province of Alberta.

The hon. member also mentioned that there is an increase of over 700 nursing home beds in the province. Even this increase has brought it up to something less than the criteria of 4.5 which we have mentioned. The hon. member mentioned 4.3. Actually the regulations and the agreement call for 4.5, so we certainly are not using that to the fullest extent and I think we should certainly try to use up the entire 4.5 to facilitate the needs, particularly since the increase in the elderly population in the province during the past 10 years. As I mentioned, in 1935 the average age of Albertans was 39 years. We virtually had no older people, but in the past 10 years because of medical techniques and expertise the older generation in the Alberta population has certainly grown by leaps and bounds.

Perhaps the commission or the government should have another look at this criterion of 4.5. It was mentioned that in Alberta there was an increase of over 700 in the number of hospital beds. But over 50 per cent of those new beds were located in one city, namely Edmonton.

The demand for nursing home beds, as mentioned by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley, is quite a concern to all of us, particularly when the regulation passed a year ago required that the existing homes open 10 per cent of their beds to accommodate mental patients because of the government policy of decentralizing the major mental institutions. This again, Mr. Chairman, makes it all the more difficult for nursing home districts to operate under the 4.5 criterion. I would just conclude with those few comments and await the section-by-section study.

MR. RUSTE:

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask the member sponsoring the bill a question. What section was he referring to when he referred to the 1964 statute - with the limitations of beds?

MR. YOUNG:

Mr. Chairman, to answer the last question first, I believe it's Section 10(2).

Mr. Chairman, without indulging further in the game of one-upmanship which seems to be under way at the moment - who knows who is most current with what is going on in the hospital and nursing home fields - I would like to correct the hon. member who just spoke with respect to the day program.

The day program as it's operated at Norwood, in terms of the hospital context, does not take patients who do not require medical help. That is a basic requirement. Other

kinds of assistance will be given but because of it being a hospital program, that is a must in terms of the patient's requirement.

MR. HO LEM:

May I just comment? In the Calgary area the situation is that the assessment committee assesses the applicant and if the patient himself, the applicant, requires medical attention either in the doctor's office or at the hospital, this is considered as the same.

MR. YOUNG:

Otherwise, Mr. Chairman, I did want to make two comments with respect to the ratio of nursing home beds per thousand of population. Mr. Ho Lem says 4.5 is the target. I would just like to apprise the hon. members that the Alberta Hospital Services Commission is examining this in terms of a number of levels of care - more than we currently recognize - and also examining it in terms of where the care may be delivered, whether it must be institutional care. I suspect, as a consequence of this examination which is quite current, the 4.5 magic figure that we're talking about may not be very relevant in the future.

In connection with the question of mental patients which was raised, this is a fairly recent development. As a consequence of some problems, admittedly, in the nursing homes, some pretty intensive review has been undertaken. I have attended a number of these meetings and I can report that at least in the Edmonton area it seems that of those present, problem patients constitute something less than 5 per 100. Of that 5 per 100 a good many are patients who do not come out of mental institutions but rather have come into the nursing home from their homes.

It's a problem that takes place with any individual. As he or she grows older there is a degeneration that occurs not only in terms of the physical capabilities and facilities of the individual but also the mental ones. Some of these patients may not have been problems for a period of time, but they suddenly develop some types of behavior which become aggravating either to the persons in charge of the nursing home or to the other residents. This is being examined to see whether it's possible, through more training or through assessment and monitoring of the individuals, to spot them and perhaps remove this aggravation.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Are you ready - section by section?

[Section 1 through 4 were agreed to.]

MR. YOUNG:

Mr. Chairman, last night I moved an amendment. I'm not sure whether it was dealt with last night.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Actually, I'm calling them by pages. Your amendment is on page 3, I believe. It does say Section 4, but you'll have to ...

MR. YOUNG:

Section 4 of the bill, as amended?

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Yes, but it is my understanding it's an amendment to the proposed Section 8.

MR. YOUNG:

Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

So we'll have to do it section by section and page by page.

If you have some amendments you hope to propose, Mr. Ho Lem, try to follow it page by page.

The top of page 3, now. Were there any proposals up to this point?

MR. HO LEM:

The top of page 3, Section 7 ...

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Well, let's finish this.

[Section 6(1) was agreed to.]

Section 7

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Chairman, I move an amendment to this section.

Section 4 of the bill is amended as to the proposed Section 7(1) of the Act by striking out the words "and furnish a copy of it to the Commission" and by substituting the words "and submit a copy of it to the Commission for the Commission's approval".

Actually, I'm adding the few words, "for the Commission's approval".

Now, in speaking to this amendment, I think it's very important because in furnishing a program for the district submitted by the board, the present Bill No. 43 calls for a submission by the district board to the commission, with which we agree. But we feel that in the development of a program for the district, certainly there should be some understanding between the commission and the board as to whether its submission is acceptable. If it's not acceptable, the district board must know where it's not acceptable and be given an opportunity to discuss these matters with the commission.

First of all let's again review the makeup of the district board. The district board is comprised of the members of that community. In the Calgary board, the city council is represented. The County of Wheatland is represented. The municipality of Rocky View is represented by Reeve Boyack. So this makeup is a real cross section of the people who live in that community, who know the needs of that community, what it requires and what its desires are.

In submitting a copy of the program, it just doesn't say, well, we want so many extra beds. It goes much further than that. It must submit a program that would be acceptable to the community. In other words, where will the next nursing home be located in that district? Where is the highest population of the aged located in that vicinity? What type of rehabilitative programs will be incorporated in that program in regard to occupational therapy, physiotherapy and psychological support? What type of dietary services are being provided to the nursing home operators in the way of advice? So the submission to the commission is based on a lot of research, much more so than the commission itself can do. As I understand it, the commission's responsibility is not the direct responsibility of operations of any one or any group of nursing homes; it's there to implement the policies of the government, of this Legislature. That's the situation as I understand it.

In talking about this program, we're not just talking about a yearly program because we all know that when a go-ahead or an application for a new nursing home is approved, after its approval the operator must seek a location that is suitable from many points of view - accessibility to the doctors, accessibility and closeness to the relatives, also how it relates to other nursing homes in the district insofar as location is concerned. After so doing, after receiving approval, if they are able to get it completed and on stream within two years, I think they are doing very well. In some cases I know of, after the application is received it goes beyond the two-year period. That is the reason the district boards do it on a five-year basis, upgrade it each year. The only way it can be done is on a five-year basis because, as I have mentioned, after the approval it takes a number of years before a 150-bed nursing home can come on stream.

There is the matter of financing. How does the operator finance it? Oftentimes this takes six months before the approval is received. The applicant must go to various lending companies and say, well, we need \$1 million or we need \$1.5 million.

So, merely for the bill to say the district board should submit a copy of its program for the ensuing year, is not sufficient. We must have a different rapport to discuss the various methods of implementation of a five-year program, and the subsequent year, the ensuing year to be dealt with on a priority basis. I think this is very important. As a consequence, the words "for approval" are included as an amendment. I think it is very important that we have some rapport between the commission and the district board, because

if the commission asks the district board merely to submit and forward a copy of its program and hear nothing else, it really doesn't know where it stands. And neither do the nursing home operators within the district.

Now, I should also mention that by making and submitting this program to the commission for approval, the approval - I must emphasize - is not made by the district board but the approval, in fact, is made by the commission. I mean, if the submission is way out, the commission can come back and say, well, we won't approve it and you have to make certain amendments. If the district board is on the ball it will say, well, these are our needs and we feel this is justified; if however, the commission doesn't want to go along with it, we must amend it. In other words, Mr. Chairman, it's the commission that has the final authority as to what the program should be. But there is some understanding, some courtesy and some communication in the development of a proper program for the district.

MR. YOUNG:

Mr. Chairman, the hon. member has advanced an amendment which, it seems to me, would be doing the very thing the hon. member has argued against, and that is, take away some of the discretion for local decision-making. I don't know whether that's the case or not because I'm a little bit unclear, listening to his elaboration, of what kind of detail he is anticipating to submit to the commission.

But it seems to me his second point, that is his amendment, would force a "rapport" - to use the expression he did - which is not the kind of working relationship I hope would and could develop and I believe, in fact, does exist; and that is, that there would be some discussion. It wouldn't be a matter of, send us a blueprint and we'll either stamp it approved or we'll send it back to you and stamp unapproved on it. That, it seems to me, is not the way to get an effective dialogue going. I really don't see the need of this.

In fact, I can see quite a bit of harm coming from it because it seems to me to be putting the local board and the commission in a somewhat legalistic situation in which they are forced to say, it's either black or white, and if there is a difference of opinion on some small item, then it's unapproved I would assume.

My understanding of the desirable working relationship is that the commission should know from the district board what kind of needs and what kind of planning horizons and plans, within that planning horizon, the district board sees as being required.

With that information then, the commission is enabled to look at its budget requirements for the total province to fit the plans of the district board into what the commission sees as the level of care which must be established and attained for the total province, particularly for the portion which is the responsibility of the district board, and at the same time to rank priorities as to where the needs are greatest and what can be accomplished in certain limits of time. That is the kind of request that is being made. I don't think it's necessary at all that we get into a formal approved/unapproved situation. In fact, I think to do so would be detrimental to a good working relationship.

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Chairman, might I just read the legislation as it presently reads:

7(1) After the making of an order pursuant to section 4 or 5, the board shall, in accordance with the regulations, develop a nursing home program for the district and submit it to the Commission for approval.

This is what has been going on. We develop a program, we submit it to the commission and the commission tosses it back to us if they have concerns. Finally, after certain amendments, it is approved.

Having been approved we then incorporate it. Now how does this go on this year, and what about the following years? Because, as I explained to you, you just can't approve a program for one year and expect to have a comprehensive and workable long-range plan. It's got to be done on a five-year basis.

So what we're saying is: while we're sending a five-year program to the commission, we want to at least have that program approved, particularly for the ensuing years.

Now I should say at this time the nursing home program in Alberta has worked so well we are far ahead of other provinces. For instance, only this past week the Ontario Nursing Home Association, their nursing home operators, 158 strong, came to Alberta to look over the nursing home programs and the nursing homes operating here. This is how highly advanced they feel our program is. It was made known to me that in Ontario the criterion for the number of beds is set at 3.5 per 1,000. Now, that 3.5 per 1,000 also includes senior citizens' accommodation, quite apart from our program.

So we are far ahead in this program of nursing homes, and [this is] done by the existing legislation which I have just read, that these programs are submitted on a yearly basis for approval. That's all we're asking for. If we're going to send the commission a five-year program we want them to take a look at it and approve the ensuing year's operation so that the district board will know just where it stands in the way of finances, in the way of programs that the commission wished to have incorporated in this program. It's really no different from the present situation if you add the words "for approval", and it's worked out well.

MR. YOUNG:

Mr. Chairman, I don't wish to repeat all the comments that I made before. The hon. member advances this as being necessary for longer-range planning on the part of the district board. It's my submission that this can be achieved without the approved or unapproved stamp he is requesting.

I would also point out to the hon. member that while this may have been what has been going on, certain problems have arisen with which I'm sure he's familiar. I'll just refer to one here in Edmonton where a nursing home, falling within the purview of the district board, had problems which had to be investigated and sorted out. Now just how would the provincial authority be able to move into a situation of that nature if the plans had been approved? This is detail and I just don't see how anything but confusion as to responsibility can arise out of the situation which the hon. member is requesting. In fact, I'm saying that I question whether the system he refers to has, in fact, been followed, has, in fact, been operative.

I would ask the minister for his comment upon this particular reflection upon history, because he is closer to it than I and works with it on more of an administrative basis than I. Perhaps he would care to comment on that element of it.

MR. HO LEM:

Just before the minister comments, certainly I would like to say that these problems regarding individual operations do occur from time to time. Under the district board obligations and responsibilities, it is the responsibility of the district board to ensure that each and every nursing home within its own district follows the regulations which are prescribed by the commission. So really I can't follow your argument in that area. In fact, I would feel your argument really works in reverse to your statement that you should go along with this amendment.

Certainly, in my amendment where I call for approval, and again having consideration to the makeup of the board, it's a community membership makeup in this board and there certainly should be some consideration given as to yes or no; we agree with the community's request, or we do not agree entirely, how about some amendments? Does the community agree? This is what I'm trying to establish by having the words, "for approval."

MR. YOUNG:

Mr. Chairman, very briefly, I don't wish to repeat my earlier comments. There is possibly a different method of operation. I'm not quite sure of what we're differing on, other than we seem to be fixed on different desirable types of relationship.

On the latter point, which has been mentioned at least half a dozen times by the hon. member, about the district board being representative, I don't wish to challenge it except that he might be interested. I have a letter before me. I'll just read two sentences out of it.

The Board of Directors for District Nursing Homes and Auxiliary Hospital No. 7 is not representative of our community. Indeed it does not even include in its ranks one woman, and only includes one senior citizen.

So obviously we have different expressions of opinion on the matter of representation. I would again invite the minister, though, from his administrative experience to comment upon the approved/unapproved debate which has been ongoing.

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Chairman, I'm glad to offer just a few comments in regard to this proposed amendment. My understanding is that we are dealing with the one numbered (A) on the amendment that the the hon. Member for Calgary McCall ...

MR. CHAIRMAN:

That is right - adding the words, "Commission's approval".

MR. CRAWFORD:

Yes. Mr. Chairman, I agree with the views expressed by the hon. Member for Edmonton Jasper Place that what we're really dealing with is quite unnecessary. I think it is calculated more to change the direction of the act's intent, to restore the act the way it was, which is what the hon. member in so many respects would like.

I'll explain why I put it that way in a moment. But I have just been reading through the several pages of proposed amendments and I think the conclusion the hon. Member for Calgary McCall has come to is that the government has arrived at a policy decision to change the role of the nursing home boards, and that we will indeed change the role of the nursing home boards. But because he disagrees with that, which is certainly a perfectly fair thing to do, and would like to maintain the system which he has extolled so many, many times here today, if he can get back a little of what he regards as being lost then he will have achieved part of his purpose, or maybe at this point, his whole purpose.

But the point made by the hon. Member for Edmonton Jasper Place that the obligation being placed on the commission to behave in a certain way in regard to approval or disapproval, is not in the interests of what is the new concept for the operation of the whole system. The operation for the whole system does recognize the existence of local boards and a role for them. However, it presents a different role for them than what the previous one was.

The government knew there would be disagreement on whether or not this is a better way to do it. I suggest it is. What is being achieved is that the auxiliary hospital and nursing home boards in the various parts of the province - where they are structured similarly to the one the hon. member has referred to in Calgary - concern themselves more with operation, and change their role as long-term planners to more of an advisory role and not a deciding role.

The reason for that was the inequity of receiving applications from, say, two or three would-be operators in an area, one of which is the nursing home board, and having that board make the decision as to whether it or someone else, who has a competing application, will go ahead.

The hon. member is shaking his head and I don't know what result he intends to achieve by that.

MR. HO LEM:

Just for clarification, each and every application which comes before the board, before it is approved, must be approved by the commission under the present Act. It is a fact.

MR. CRAWFORD:

Oh yes.

MR. HO LEM:

Yes. So we have no right to disapprove of any application. It's submitted to the commission.

MR. CRAWFORD:

Well then, the amendment becomes even simpler ...

MR. HO LEM:

If there are any inequities, certainly they are not on the local or district board level. The final decision as to the granting of the application rests with the commission itself.

MR. CRAWFORD:

I'm trying to suggest the hon. member knows very well that in practice that is not the way it works at all. In the consideration given to these matters by the district boards, there is the greatest concern on behalf of the other applicant who is not the board in a particular case. It's true the Alberta Hospital Services Commission can finally decide not to enter into a contract and thereby the application won't go ahead no matter who it's from. That can be done. But the board members know, the other applicants know and the Alberta Hospital Services Commission knows that on the whole - and under the previous legislation I don't quarrel with this - the commission is inclined to take the view of the local board for the very reasons the hon. member has described. It is inclined to say, this is the view of the local board. Maybe it's a hot political issue and they are

glad to have the local board to lean on and say it's their decision and that is why we are backing it as a commission. They may be happy about that part of it.

But the inequity remains that the person who is making the application, which may compete with the desire of the board, some people would unkindly say, to expand their little empire - some people unkindly make those remarks - and you have someone coming in wanting maybe to maintain the balance between the public and private sectors, head the local board off and bring in a nursing home which might be operated by another applicant, maybe a charitable organization or maybe private operator - feels the process he is going through in going over his application with the local board is the actual decision-making arena. The central provincial authority has so much of a tendency to rely on the recommendation made by the local board, that the other applicant is in the position that he is applying for his contract in circumstances where the person, at the moment of the local board giving its deliberations for their purpose under the act, is his adversary at the same time as being his judge. That's the element of it which appears to be unfair. The whole tenor of the Act is intended to be changed to take that away.

Things like the hon. member's proposed amendment to sort of involve the commission again in a relationship with the board which is different from the relationship with another proposed operator, are just attempts to try to swing the pendulum back a little bit, because the hon. member thinks we have swung it too far the other way. That's how I read the way this amendment is being put forward.

But I say we haven't swung it too far the other way. I think we have swung it to the right position; a position where the boards will continue to have the full responsibility for auxiliary hospitals. There is no change in that. In respect to nursing homes, what they will have is a role which is more oriented to operation and to advising, as opposed to actual establishment of the program and operation of it in their own areas.

That may not be satisfactory to the hon. member. It may be a program or a policy direction he disagrees with. I acknowledge that, but I believe there is a great deal to be said for the new proposals which are being made as the substance of Bill No. 43, and I will resist efforts to try to swing the pendulum back a little bit in these amendments as they are proposed.

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Chairman, ... [Inaudible] ... of the minister's remarks, certainly there are some inequities as he claims. One of the inequities is that it actually is against the government-owned or the local board operated nursing homes. I think it is understood by the minister as well as by the commission, and passed on to the district boards, that what we would try to meet in the future in the way of balances [is] that the nursing homes would be operated 30 per cent by government, 30 per cent by private operators and the other 30 by religious organizations. I don't think we have reached anywhere near that percentage insofar as the government operated nursing homes are concerned.

DR. BUCK:

Speak up.

AN HCN. MEMBER:

Can't hear you.

MR. HENDERSON:

Speak to the Chair. Talk to the microphone.

MR. HO LEM:

As I have said, government operated nursing homes certainly don't meet that 33.3 per cent. So really when you talk about inequity, we, as the district board who are operating the government sponsored nursing homes, are receiving the short end of the stick.

Having the words "for approval" included in the bill, certainly would give some recognition to the work of the district boards because actually when you say the recommendation is coming forward from the district board regarding applications, many things are taken into consideration that perhaps a commission doesn't know. Number one, we have to take a look at the application and the applicant from the point of view of experience. How much experience has he? What is the past track record of these people?

Secondly, what are their financial capabilities? Are they able to provide the type of facilities which would meet the requirements of the regulations?

Thirdly, [and] very important, we have to take a look at how it affects the other nursing homes in the district as regards location. I have mentioned this in the past.

Having done that, we make a recommendation for or against the applicant and then submit it to the commission for approval. If we have to do that, certainly on a long-range program - we have a five-year program going - we should have some understanding in 1974 as to what is going to happen in 1975.

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Chairman, I can just respond to that briefly. There is no reason why the advisory capacity of the boards shouldn't fulfil all the expectations the hon. member has for them and why all those things in regard to long-term planning and balance of the system as between charitable, private and public shouldn't be what their recommendations and advice are. All I'm saying is that I see the amendment as an attempt to link the commission and the board in a statutory way that gives the local board, when related to other operators who may also be in the same area or want to be, a special status. They do have a special status and the objectives and hopes the hon. member has for the boards, I think, will be fulfilled in the sense of balance and long-term planning. But that is an advisory function. It's not one that should tie the hands of the determining agency, which we are proposing to be the Alberta Hospital Services Commission, to respond in a particular way within a particular time. It has to be something that becomes part of the input to the commission once you've made the decision to have the commission be the deciding agency.

The hon. member has said, in a sense they already are the deciding agency; and we discussed that. But I'm saying once you change the role of the board and change the role of the commission, then it has to be described with clarity and it has to be done in a straightforward way. The way the section is drafted at the present time achieves the objective that we had in wanting to change the relationship and change the role of the board and the commission. I acknowledge that there will still be disagreement over the advisability of changing those relationships. But these words as put down in Bill No. 43 achieve that change, and that is why I say that the amendment is not one that assists us in what we're trying to achieve. It begins to bend the intent of the bill a little bit.

MR. HENDERSON:

Mr. Chairman, I just want to ask the minister a question relative to the government policy or intentions in this area. On the basis of my experience in this area there is certainly a difference in the capabilities or attitudes of the boards in the rural areas as opposed to the large urban or metropolitan areas. But I'm wondering what the attitude of the government would be, for example, should a local board, let's say specifically in a rural area, by way of a resolution should state that they want all nursing homes in that area to be publicly owned in future? I think if the minister goes back on record he will find a number of problems that have developed in rural areas relative to private nursing homes.

In light of the minister's statements, what is the government's attitude towards that type of policy position on the part of a local board? Does that necessarily conflict with the intentions of the amendments now before the House?

MR. CRAWFORD:

No it doesn't, Mr. Speaker. Maybe I could just make a brief reference to the policy as I've seen it develop and as I foresee the way it should develop in the next little while, acknowledging that a stereotype is not what we are seeking. We're seeking a maximum type of flexibility so that we can allow for the fact that there should be perhaps, a balance if for no other reason than to have, as is often referred to, a bench mark for comparison between the operation of the public and private sector and acknowledge that that opportunity most likely exists in the major cities and you'll have a real mix in the major cities of these types of services.

In the rural areas, I agree, there has been a series of complaints in respect to some privately owned, primarily older nursing homes now, that were built a few years back and have reasons other than the management, perhaps, for being slightly less than expectations of this day and age. So resolutions of that type from a local agency, saying we would like to see our whole area done on a public basis because we think we can upgrade it better if we sort of consolidate all of our interests in the area, rework our long-term plan, bring everything under one board, this particular unsatisfactory private operator we'd like to buy out, we would receive that very sympathetically.

MR. HENDERSON:

What the minister is saying is that all the local authority has to do is convince the commission of the merits of their argument relative to the policy they propose and the board is quite amenable to that?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Yes. The commission's job would be to hear that side of the case which I would hope would be well worked up, well prepared and based on maximum consultation, and not resolutions passed off the top of the head of one or two of the board members some evening. Then obviously to hear the other side, if it's presented, because the other side, the small private operator with a lone outpost here or there in Alberta is just as anxious to be out of it as the people are to get him out of it. So having heard the other side, if any, the commission, I think, would respond very favourably.

MR. HC LEM:

Mr. Chairman, the hon. minister has mentioned, and I don't disagree, that the role of the district board is an advisory role. I certainly think that if, based on the merits of our submission in the way of submitting advice to you and if it were reasonable, I can't see why the commission should not, out of courtesy, say to the board, yes, we approve your submission. That's all I'm asking for. We are in an advisory role. We don't want to say that anything we submit to you would be final or binding by legislation. But certainly if we have a program that is developed by past performance and research and the needs of the area and into the future needs in a five-year period and extending, certainly we, as a board, are entitled to know how the commission feels about this submission. If the commission itself says, well, we disapprove, it opens up the whole thing and we can say, well, which points do you disapprove? This is what we're trying to establish.

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Chairman, maybe I'm now arriving at the point the hon. Member for Jasper Place was a moment ago and wondering out loud if we're really arguing about anything.

I think in the hon. member's submission there is a sort of presumption that the commission won't answer its mail, that it won't respond after receiving a proposal and won't give an opinion. That just won't happen. It's clearly in their interest, with the major responsibility for the allowing or not of the next authorization for any area in the province, to be fully and completely tuned in with that board, its advisory board, and to have full discussions.

As the hon. member told me only yesterday, he had a very full and satisfactory discussion with the commission with regard to new proposals in Calgary. My concern is that when you start legislating, if something like approval has to be provided, I know what happens. Rather than that easy and understandable relationship, somebody is going to say, all right, if we're going to pass this - saying the commission must approve - then by jingo we'd better put in something saying that it can disapprove.

The hon. member in his remarks has said it may be amended and then approved - the commission may amend it or it may send it back for further thought. But that can happen without this amendment and it will happen without this amendment. That relationship will exist. Legislating that an approval or a disapproval or an amendment must be made, apart from unnecessarily lengthening the wording of the bill - to which there is no objection just because it would lengthen it or take longer or make it more complicated - no objection to that, the objection is that it is really quite unnecessary to the process.

I know that when you start legislating that a certain approval has to be given, you then get into the question of having to legislate how many days the commission has to give it. You have to legislate all manner of things which complicate the issue unnecessarily. It's for those reasons that I say, as drafted, the section achieves what the government's intention was and these consultative relationships will indeed continue. It's entirely consistent with the responsibility of the commission to assure that they do continue. They can't operate unless those consultative proceedings continue.

The only other thing about statutory approvals and disapprovals - and I say statutory because this amendment would require then that it would be done, it wouldn't have the possibility of a relatively easy relationship with the flow and change which can take place - is that the approval of long-term plans is seldom in the best interests of the development of plans.

Say the board comes in with a five-year program and suppose the commission really likes it and approves it. Then you have saddled yourself with five years of approval, whereas three years down the road the commission, the local board, the citizens and everybody else may want to change it. You say, well then we'll change it. And I say, why tie it up so tight in the first place that you have to have these stereotypes placed on planning.

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Chairman, the minister said that certainly it is very difficult to approve a long-term program. Actually, we are not asking for that approval on a long-term basis. As I

mentioned before, the programs are planned on a five-year basis, to be upgraded each year. It's necessary that we have approval from the commission for the board to ensure that the necessary program for the ensuing year can be accommodated and implemented - particularly from the point of view that if the board is not given this approval, how can they advise the various nursing homes within the district to whom they are responsible as to what that program might be? We are merely asking for authority through this. By having approval we would advise those applicants, yes you are approved; you have the approval of the commission to go ahead.

Once that is given, then it follows a number of processes which require quite a lengthy time before the nursing home, itself, comes on stream. So, actually, I think it would be helpful to the commission. Rather than the commission answering each and every applicant, an approval for that particular year is given to the board and the board passes it on to those people who are interested and are operating within that program.

MR. YOUNG:

Mr. Chairman, if I might - I have now had the opportunity to read through all the proposed amendments and I have arrived at the conclusion the minister arrived at on reading them. When I was debating this little section I hadn't had that opportunity.

Clearly the suggestion which is being advanced in this amendment, particularly the argument which has just been made by the hon. member, is to try to give the local district board responsibility which is not intended in this legislation. The intent is to make it advisory in nature, and operational in terms of the homes which it owns and operates. But the suggestion which is being advanced here is to give it a relationship with the other operators within its geographic jurisdiction, which would be of a slightly different nature than is envisaged in the longer run plans, as proposed for implementation in this legislation.

That's where the difference of opinion is occurring and it's becoming quite clear to me now that this is the case. I'm sorry I hadn't had a chance to read the other proposals which you advanced to us. I agree with the minister on this and, as it happens, with his concept of what the role and the responsibilities of the district board should be in future. I think that having the requirement for statutory approval which this amendment proposes would simply fix us in a very rigid, legalistic type of arrangement which would not provide for the free give-and-take, the advisory nature of responsibilities and the changed role which is proposed under this legislation.

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Chairman, I really can't agree with the comments made by the hon. Member for Edmonton Jasper Place regarding his interpretation of the amendment, having read it.

I'm just wondering whether this Bill No. 43 - it certainly changes the originally existing legislation which reads, "for the Commission's approval". Really it hadn't worked that badly. We are still in an advisory role. From that point of view, I feel that this should stand. If the hon. members across the way, who haven't just received the amendment, would wish to perhaps adjourn debate on this particular bill for further study, perhaps at the first of the week we might be able to get together and talk about it again informally.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Has any question been called on this amendment?

MR. HC LEM:

Mr. Chairman, to my request to the hon. minister, would you agree to that, that we hold this discussion?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Chairman, we could call it 1:00 o'clock. I would want to say to the hon. member that I admire the way he has dug in on this issue. It says a great deal for his strength of character.

But I have considered these matters. We began with meetings last August with the people involved, both private operators and representatives of the Alberta Hospital Association, to begin to discuss the very issues the hon. member and I are discussing right now. Over the weekend isn't going to make that much difference, but I would think that if the hon. House Leader wants to call it 1:00 o'clock, hon. members would agree.

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. HYNDMAN:

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

[The motion was carried.]

[Mr. Diachuk left the Chair.]

* * * * *

[Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair.]

MR. DIACHUK:

Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole Assembly has had under consideration the following bills: Bill No. 42, which was omitted from last night's report, begs to report same with some amendments, and Bill No. 43, begs to report progress on same and asks 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. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, next Tuesday night we will swing back to Committee of Supply, beginning with continuation of estimates of the Department of Advanced Education, and following that with estimates of the Department of Industry and Commerce, and then probably the Department of Lands and Forests.

Mr. Speaker, I would move that we call it 1:00 o'clock and that the Assembly do now adjourn until next Tuesday at 2:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER:

Having heard the motion by the hon. Government House Leader, do you all agree?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Assembly stands adjourned until next Tuesday afternoon at 2:30 o'clock.

[The House rose at 12:58 o'clock.]

