

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Monday, February 3, 1975

[The House met at 2:30 p.m.]

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 15 The Alberta Property Tax Reduction Amendment Act, 1975

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill No. 15, The Alberta Property Tax Reduction Amendment Act, 1975.

The purpose of this bill is to substantially improve administrative procedures involved in paying farmland and minimum benefit payments to Alberta residential property taxpayers. It also increases the senior citizens renter rebate from \$100 to \$150.

[Leave being granted, Bill 15 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill 216 An Act to Limit Smoking in Public Places

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce An Act to Limit Smoking in Public Places. This is an amended version of the bill I introduced last year.

The purpose of the bill is to perhaps clear the air on what sometimes has become a very burning issue, Mr. Speaker. The bill can also be entitled an act to establish the right to clean air by the majority of the people of the province.

[Leave being granted, Bill 216 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill 217 The Senior Citizens Affairs Act, 1975

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 217, The Senior Citizens Affairs Act, 1975.

The main purpose of this bill is to establish a department of senior citizens affairs for the purpose of developing comprehensive policies and coordinating existing government programs.

[Leave being granted, Bill 217 was introduced and read a first time.]

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. TOPOLNISKY:

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted this afternoon to introduce to you and to the members of

this House, 32 colorful cubs and scouts from the Andrew community. They are accompanied by their leaders, Mr. Tom Evans, Mr. Gerald Tymchyshen, Mr. Peter Basisty and Sam Cholak. They are in the members gallery. They are also accompanied by seven parents. I would ask them to rise and be welcomed by the House.

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to introduce to you and through you, a parent delegation from the community of Milo in my constituency. They are here today to present a brief and have presented a brief to the Minister of Education with regard to small rural schools.

I'd like to introduce Susan Ivers, the president; Paula Mowner, Linda Sharp and Margaret Umschied.

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, I have the very great pleasure to introduce to you today and to the members of the Assembly, 30 students from the Maple Ridge Grade 8 and 9 school from the constituency of Edmonton Gold Bar, a constituency of some prominence for several reasons. These students are in the members gallery and I would ask that they stand and be recognized by the House.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Syncrude Discussions

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Deputy Premier and ask him if he can give us some indication of the status of negotiations which I understand are taking place in Winnipeg today? I would assume from the vacancy of seats in the front row that the Premier and a number of cabinet ministers are taking part in those discussions in Winnipeg.

DE. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, that's correct. The Premier and a number of cabinet ministers are in Winnipeg and the negotiations are ongoing. I am sure the hon. Leader of the Opposition will appreciate that any statement at this time would be premature and we'll have to await the return of the Premier to the House.

AEC - Special Warrant

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a second question to the Provincial Treasurer and ask him what were the urgent and immediate reasons for the \$75 million special warrant to the Alberta Energy Company? I use the term "urgent and immediate" requirements because of the wording in the special warrant itself.

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, the board of directors of the Alberta Energy Company, together with the management, indicated that commitments they were making relative to the plans of the Alberta Energy Company at this time required that the initial cash flow of the Alberta Energy Company and the province's portion of the shares be advanced to them in order that they could commence their operations and fulfil certain commitments they had.

The president of the Alberta Energy Company provided me with some indication of those required commitments and on that basis we passed the special warrant to provide for the purchase of the province's portion of the shares in the Alberta Energy Company.

MR. CLARK:

A further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the Provincial Treasurer. Would the Provincial Treasurer be kind enough to list the major reasons this money was required at this particular time, rather than being done through the budget?

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to answer that question. I think it's more in the nature of one that should be on the Order Paper which could provide a more detailed answer than I can give in the Oral Question Period.

MR. CLARK:

Further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the Provincial Treasurer. Why was the money - \$75 million - not included in the budget presented to the Legislature last spring?

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, I think the reason for that was that first of all in the budget presented ...

[Interjection]

If the hon. member would like to hear the answer, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to give it. At the time we presented the original budget it was not anticipated that the \$75 million would form part of the budgetary provision.

I should say the necessity for advancing the \$75 million by way of special warrant was created because of the fact - hon. members will recall in the fall sitting of the Legislature, that whether or not the subscription and the manner of subscription in the Alberta Energy Company shares would be paid out of the general revenue fund as opposed to out of the capital funds of Alberta or the general investment assets, was not clarified particularly in the legislation. It became necessary for us to pass a special warrant even though, Mr. Speaker, the funds will no doubt return back to the general revenue fund of the province when it is decided where this investment will be held.

So it's not really a question of a \$75 million expenditure out of the general revenue fund, because in the final analysis this may come back into the general revenue fund when it is decided, as I say, where the investment will be held - in the capital fund or in the general revenue fund or in the general investment fund of the province.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question for clarification. Do I take it then, from the hon. Provincial Treasurer's answer, that the request for the \$75 million from the president of the Alberta Energy Company came subsequent to the fall sittings of the Legislature?

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, I can't tie myself to specific dates except to say that I believe yes, in the chronology of events. What happened was that the board of directors of the Alberta Energy Company was appointed, including the management and the president. They then started to analyze their cash flows, which is a natural thing, the commitments they may have for pipe, at least to stockpile the pipe for the construction of the pipeline, and the other kinds of commitments. They felt they had to make a request, in view of delaying the actual issue of the shares to Albertans, and to have market conditions which may be more advantageous at that time for the province to take up their subscription of the shares so that the company could actually get operations going, fulfil certain commitments they had indicated.

MR. CLARK:

Further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the Provincial Treasurer. In light of the Provincial Treasurer's answer to that question, can we assume it's because the order had to be placed for pipe that the \$75 million special warrant had to be approved the week before the Legislature started and couldn't wait two months until the Assembly had had an opportunity to peruse the expenditure? Is that the major reason?

MR. MINIELY:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would point out the hon. leader suggests a week before the session started. In fact the Alberta Energy Company had made first contact with us some months before we finally passed the special warrant.

There were things that we requested of them, as I indicated to the hon. leader. We requested they provide us with some indication of their commitments for which they required the \$75 million. Certainly we in no way wanted to prevent them from actually being able to go into operation.

We must not forget they are also looking at potential investments that will ultimately benefit the people of Alberta through the Alberta Energy Company. There is a wide variety of things which at this time the board of directors and the management of the Alberta Energy Company are examining in terms of their participation. Some of these might require option payments; some of these might result in the actual decision for the Alberta Energy Company, and of course that's left for the board of directors.

Again I say there were some months that we had discussed this with them. They provided us with what we felt was an indication that this money should be advanced to them so they could get operating and building this company which is going to benefit all Albertans in the final analysis.

MR. CLARK:

Further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Did the Provincial Treasurer ask the president of the Alberta Energy Company if they, in fact, could wait two months for their money until the Assembly would have had a chance to peruse the expenditure rather than go the special warrant route? Was that question asked of the president of the Alberta Energy Company?

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, I think from the beginning, when the matter first came to my attention, we asked them to provide us with all the information. By the time all the information was provided, it was indicated that by that time the Alberta Energy Company felt they had

waited much too long for their \$75 million and felt it was essential that we issue the \$75 million to indicate the confidence we have as a government, and the people of Alberta have as a government, that this company should commence its operations and ultimately the shares will be sold to the people of Alberta.

MR. CLARK:

Further supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Provincial Treasurer. Did the Treasurer ask the president of the Alberta Energy Company if the company could withhold getting this money for two months so the matter could be dealt with in the budget rather than by the route of special warrant one week before the Assembly started?

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. leader is not understanding about two or three answers which I've given to him: first, the answer to an earlier question that the amount advanced, while the route of special warrants was chosen, is not necessarily in the longer term an expenditure out of the general revenue funds of the province, but will be held as an investment in the general assets of the province, or in what ultimately may form the capital fund for the province and for the future of Alberta.

The question as to whether or not I would ask Mr. Mitchell, the president of the company, to delay a decision for which he had been waiting for some time in order that it be put in the parameters of a budget is an irrelevant one in the conditions where they would form an investment in the general assets of the province, not an expenditure.

MR. LUDWIG:

Supplementary to the hon. minister. If he indicates that the Alberta Energy Company indicated some months before their need for money, why was this issue not raised and dealt with in the fall sittings? It was only two months before.

MR. SPEAKER:

I would suggest we get on with the next topic. We have had actually a mini-debate in the question period on the matter where we are seeking reasons and opinions and so on. Perhaps we might call on the next member.

Oil Extraction Methods - Policy

MR. SORENSON:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of the Environment. Is the hon. minister considering allowing any company to undertake any tests involving detonation of a thermonuclear device in the area of the Athabasca tar sands?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, my views are fairly well known on this matter and I've put them in writing in the course of correspondence.

I would like to indicate that the Phoenix [Canada Oil] Company applied to The Atomic Energy Control Board and put before them a proposal for testing a nuclear device and The Atomic Energy Control Board approached the Government of Alberta, the Department of the Environment specifically, with regard to having a member on this committee to review this proposal, at which time I wrote back and indicated that we flatly refused in any way to examine or consider the proposal. I flatly refused to nominate and have anybody sit on any committee to consider this type of proposal. I think personally this is a madness that it's not necessary to impose on the people of Alberta as yet.

MR. SORENSON:

Supplementary to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Can the hon. minister inform this Assembly why meetings are being held between officials of Phoenix Canada and the government to discuss this very subject?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, I spoke in relationship to the performance in my department in this regard and I'm not aware that there are any meetings held between this government and Phoenix Canada with respect to a thermonuclear device. There may in fact be with respect to the Government of Canada but I would say that when Mr. Moore or anybody else comes in to visit any minister of this government, the least we can do is to say good day or good morning to him and perhaps offer some degree of welcome with respect to coming to the province.

MR. SORENSON:

A supplementary to the minister. Has a complete study been made on the extent of the environmental damage that would result from such a test?

MR. HYNDMAN:

It's not going to happen.

DR. BUCK:

You can't really do that now.

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, I indicated that there are other alternatives. From our point of view and from an environmental point of view this would be sheer madness to undertake at this time at the state of knowledge that we have with respect to the oil sands, the underground water formations, the heavy-metal content of some of the sands - it would be sheer madness at this time to contemplate any type of thermonuclear explosion to extract oil sands.

I have no intention, with my responsibilities to this government, to in any way associate myself with this type of process.

MR. DRAIN:

To the Minister of the Environment, Mr. Speaker. If his judgment had been determined by the results of the Colcrado tests, were they detrimental, and is this the reason for his value judgment?

MR. YURKO:

Well, Mr. Speaker, not necessarily. I did have occasion to review the proposal in relationship to the proposed thermonuclear experiment quite some years ago, and I was very very disturbed at the lack of knowledge in relationship to that proposal which was considered at that time.

However, I do have some experience, Mr. Speaker, with radioactivity and induced radioactivity. I also have some knowledge in regards to the knowledge gaps with respect to the underground water formations, with respect to the sinkholes between the various underground water formations. I have some knowledge in relationship to the heavy metals associated in the oil sands, and unless somebody could indicate by experiment somewhere else on a repetitive basis that this was a safe method to use in the oil sands, I consider it highly unsafe, highly disturbing ever to consider this type of process for extracting the oil sands when in fact we have so many other methods that haven't been investigated for in situ extraction of oil from the sands.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Minister of the Environment. Could the minister advise if the Alberta government has access to or has requested any information regarding the Russian experiments in nuclear extraction programs?

MR. YURKO:

From my department's standpoint we are simply not interested in this type of process at this time. I've indicated that we have so many other alternatives to investigate with respect to in situ extraction involving thermal devices, involving biological processes, involving underground combustion, and we haven't even begun to investigate some of these other methods. I consider there is no place for any kind of study involving nuclear devices in the Alberta oil sands at this time.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview with a final supplementary, followed by a question by the hon. Member for Camrose, and then if there's time we can come back to this topic.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask one very quick question for clarification so there's no misunderstanding, and I'll direct it to the Deputy Premier.

Can the hon. Deputy Premier advise the Assembly whether or not the minister's very excellent remarks today represent the official policy of the Alberta government on this matter at this time, rather than the personal opinion of the minister?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, they represent the policy the Government of Alberta has outlined for oil.

Declining School Enrolments

MR. STPOMBERG:

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Education. Does the government have any plans to help school boards which have financial problems because of declining enrolment, such as the County of Camrose?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, we received a very large number of helpful submissions on this subject, and we're sensitive to the problem which I think is a unique one in terms of those school boards where they have fixed costs but declining enrolments and have difficulties in maintaining the location of pupils where they now are.

I would say that next week I believe I would be in a position to make an announcement in this House indicating the response of the government to these submissions.

Also next week I might mention, Mr. Speaker, I would see making an outline announcement of a new plan which has been developed whereby provincial dollars will be injected into the educational finance system in a move to more substantially equalize the moneys raised by supplementary requisition. That will be of special interest to school boards with low assessment situations.

MR. R. SPEAKER:

A supplementary to the minister. Would the minister consider pilot projects in various areas of the province, for example in small rural schools, whereby various approaches are used with regard to the multigrade system or an ungraded system?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, we have a number of ongoing pilot projects in the province now and we are always looking for useful suggestions with regard to the actual implementation in a field-study way of ideas with regard to improving education.

So suggestions like that, some of which I received only a matter of hours ago, are very helpful. We would certainly look at them very closely with a view to assessing whether they would benefit school jurisdictions throughout the province.

MR. PURDY:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Is the minister considering looking at the 15 per cent guidelines and changing them for areas that are rapidly growing so the per capita base is higher than the base of an area that is declining?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, if the question relates to the school foundation program fund for this year, there will not be any change with regard to the announcement some months ago of the 15 per cent increase in the per pupil grants which put Alberta, I believe, when all the figures are in, probably with the largest expenditure per pupil in Canada.

However, certainly we are looking for next year with regard to an announcement this fall of a new two or three year finance plan at even greater equity from the point of view of urban and rural jurisdictions to ensure there is the maximum kind of educational opportunity for students, irrespective of where they live or the conditions under which they are taking schooling.

Conference on Natives and the Law

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Acting Solicitor General and I'm not sure just who that would be today.

My question is: has the minister or the Government of Alberta approved of or endorsed the attendance of 14 convicted criminals at a conference on Natives and the law which got under way today in Edmonton?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, as the second Acting Solicitor General, I would advise that the hon. minister, Miss Hunley, is attending the convention at the moment and I think it would be best if I take the question as notice. I am sure she would be happy to provide a full answer to the honorable gentleman tomorrow.

ECA - Eastern Slopes

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct this question to the hon. Minister of Lands and Forests. It's a follow-up question to one posed last fall.

Can the minister advise the Assembly what plans the government has, if any at this point, to introduce the recommendations of the Environment Conservation Authority on the east slopes?

DR. WARRACK:

Mr. Speaker, that matter is dealt with in the Throne Speech as a matter of fact, and indicates the care and careful consideration that the government intends to undertake with respect to the possibility of implementing some of the development recommendations and some of the nondevelopment recommendations on the eastern slopes of the Rockies. We shall be doing that in the coming months and shall be undertaking it in a very careful manner and not a precipitous manner.

MR. NOTLEY:

A supplementary question to the hon. minister. Is it the minister's intention then to table a position paper in the Legislature during the spring sittings which would give an

evaluation of the various recommendations of the east slopes hearings, similar in principle to the assessment done on the Worth Report on education by the Department of Education?

DR. WARRACK:

We have made no such commitment with respect to any position paper of that nature, Mr. Speaker. I rather think that the date mentioned, the spring sitting of the 1975 session, would be rather premature. At the same time I would, however, refer the hon. member to a careful reading of the Environment Conservation Authority report and recommendations which were tabled in the House this past fall.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. Can the minister be more specific with respect to a timetable on this whole matter with respect to the recommendations?

DR. WARRACK:

Not at this time, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the hon. minister. Has the government developed any policy with respect to a moratorium, or continuing a moratorium, on major developmental plans in the east slopes as he indicated last fall during the session of the Legislature, or will there be any change in that announcement or that statement in the question period until the final position is tabled?

DR. WARRACK:

Mr. Speaker, the matter stands as it did in the fall of 1974, but I think it is worth while to reiterate at this point.

For major resource development proposals, it is the intention of the government to consider these only very carefully and also in the context of an evaluation of the Environment Conservation Authority's study, hearings and recommendations. So that matter does indeed stand as it did in the fall as an outstanding matter with respect to the considerations being in the context of an overall examination of the east slope land-use opportunities.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, one final supplementary question to the minister. Can the minister advise the Assembly what the status is of the Gregg River coal application to develop a mine south of Hinton?

DR. WARRACK:

I think the hon. member will probably have noted the reporting in newspapers and so forth some time ago that that particular development was not being approved by the Government of Alberta pending the kinds of examination of the overall east slope considerations that I mentioned in the last supplemental answer.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my supplementary question regarding the eastern slopes to the Minister of the Environment and ask the Minister of the Environment if he has received the report from the Environment Conservation Authority regarding the moratorium that was announced in 1973 on new permits in the eastern slopes? If he has received the report from the Authority, will the report in fact be made public and tabled in the Assembly?

DR. WARRACK:

Mr. Speaker, as a matter of correction I want to be sure there is no misleading intent suggested to the Legislature. The hon. Leader of the Opposition referred to "moratorium" with respect to permits which would include exploration permits. I repeat, as I have many times, that there has been no such moratorium.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the minister is sensitive on the matter.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of the Environment going to respond to the question?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, there has been so much dialogue since he asked the question, perhaps he might ask the question again and I'll ...

MR. CLARK:

Has the Minister of the Environment received the report from the Environment Conservation Authority regarding the moratorium on new mining permits in the eastern slopes, and is the report going to be made public and tabled in the Assembly?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, the Authority, under its Act and with the approval of the government, undertook to investigate the issuing of exploration permits and the damage resulting therefrom. They have not reported as yet. It's anticipated that the Authority is anxious to witness whether or not there was any damage first-hand. As a result, they were requested by Dr. Phillips to perhaps delay their examination until such time as the snow disappeared - the request came from Dr. Pharis as a matter of fact - so that they might have an opportunity to witness the damage first-hand after the snow disappeared and subsequently issue a report after that first-hand examination.

Mr. Speaker, in regard to making the report public, it will be an Authority report. It will be treated in the same way by government as any and all Authority reports.

Congratulations to Athletes

DR. PAPROSKI:

A question to the hon. Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation. Did the minister send an appropriate congratulatory letter to Camille Rebus who won the all-Canadian singles junior women's skating championship recently?

Mr. Speaker, she hails from Edmonton, Alberta, and the well-known and now better-known constituency of Edmonton Kingsway.

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, a congratulatory telegram has been sent to the young lady as well as to Mr. Gordon Russell who won the Air Canada award last night, and Becky Smith, I think, who won a medal in New Zealand.

Dow-Dome Project

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address my question to the hon. minister of industry and transport. I'd like to know, Mr. Speaker ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Industry and Commerce.

DR. BUCK:

Industry and commerce and transport?

[Interjections]

Mr. Speaker, I always assumed that it was Highways and Transport, but any time we wanted to find out anything about transport we seem to have to ask the Minister of Industry.

But my question, Mr. Speaker, is: is the minister or the government in a position to indicate to the Legislature and the people of Alberta the status of the Dow-Dome project in Fort Saskatchewan, the proposed ethylene plant?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, we intend to have something to report on that to the House later in the week.

Commercial Fishing Season

MR. JAMISON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Minister of Lands and Forests.

As a short preamble, Mr. Speaker, many concerns have been expressed to me about the commercial netting of fish on Lac La Nonne. I was wondering if the minister and his department have had a chance to assess the situation as it now exists?

DR. WARRACK:

Mr. Speaker, yes, we have had representations on both sides of that question. The basic approach we follow in all commercial fishing instances, including Lac La Nonne, is to try to make a fair allocation between the sports fishery, the Indian-domestic fishery and the commercial fishery and, in so doing, stick to the deepest parts of the lake which yield whitefish and tullibee which are relevant for commercial fishing.

The season continues until one of the four events happens and stops, whichever one happens first. Either the maximum quota on sports fish, particularly pike and pickerel, are caught; the maximum quota on whitefish; the maximum quota on tullibee; or, failing those three, the maximum period of time which in the Lac La Nonne instance was two weeks. I am informed the season has now concluded on Lac La Nonne inasmuch as the first constraint has been reached.

MR. PURDY:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Lands and Forests. Has the minister had an opportunity to assess reports that the extended commercial fishing season for Lake Wabamun could endanger the sports fishing aspect of that lake?

DR. WARRACK:

Yes, I have, Mr. Speaker. It's basically the same approach with the three allocations for whitefish and, in the instance of Wabamun Lake, quite a substantial amount of harvest that is permissible and still in biological control with respect to the lake's productivity.

We have assessed this matter and will be watching it very closely when the season does go forward on commercial fishing. We'll follow the same set of constraints as we have outlined for Lac La Nonne, except that the amounts in each of those constraints will be different.

Senior Citizens Highrises - Fire Safety

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I believe my question is to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. It deals with senior citizens highrises.

Are any additional precautions being taken with reference to fire safety in the highrises, in particular above the levels which are accessible to firefighters?

MR. RUSSELL:

If the hon. member is referring to smoke detectors or sprinklers in individual apartments, the answer is no, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LUDWIG:

Are any steps being taken to improve the fire safety situation in the present senior citizens highrises? I am particularly referring to the sprinkler system.

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that any senior citizens highrises are fairly recently constructed and as such would comply with the most recent and stringent national building code requirements.

MR. LUDWIG:

Has the minister had any representations from senior citizens or other concerned groups concerning the safety, with special reference to fire hazards above the fifth-storey level, of the highrises?

MR. RUSSELL:

I don't believe so, Mr. Speaker. None that I can recall.

MR. LUDWIG:

Has the hon. minister made any personal inquiries to determine whether present safety precautions with reference to fire are adequate?

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, I have visited most of the senior citizens high-rise apartments and talked to many of the residents. That particular proposition hasn't been put to me and I'm satisfied in my own mind that they have very safe accommodation.

MR. LUDWIG:

One further supplementary, Mr. Speaker, in view of the hon. minister's answer. How do senior citizens vacate a high-rise apartment if they are above the level of reach by firefighting ladders? How do they get out? Do they scream for help?

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member knows that any high-rise building, aside from any elevator service that it may have, must have two well-separated fire-protected and sprinklered stairwells. That applies to any highrise building, whether it's for senior citizens or not.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member indicated his previous supplementary to be the last and if there's time perhaps we can come back to this topic.

MR. RUSTE:

Mr. Speaker, my question was directed to the Provincial Treasurer and I see he's disappeared, so maybe I'd better hold it.

Oil Sands - Technological Research

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Industry and Commerce in his capacity as the third-ranking minister of Mines and Minerals. Would the minister advise when the oil sands technology and research authority will be operational?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the hon. member who asked that question can wait until tomorrow to receive an answer, when I expect the hon. Minister of Mines and Minerals will return. We'll take it as notice and see that he's aware of it.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the hon. Deputy Premier advise if the government has decided to permit the Alberta Research Council to carry out the oil sands in situ technology research in view of the long delay in establishing the Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, that's a sort of assumption by the hon. member and I'm sure that if he's patient the proper announcements will be made with regard to who and how the research into in situ methods will be carried out.

Drugs Study

MP. TAYLOR:

My question is to the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development.

Has the government, or any branch of the government, initiated a study on the various aspects of marijuana?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, from my own memory the provincial government has not initiated such a study. It seems to me that a number of localized or regionalized studies have been done in Alberta by private agencies in the sense of research people at one of the universities working through a certain sample of the population.

I would be happy to review the amount of work that has been done in the province on the subject and inform the hon. member.

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary with regard to drugs. Is the department considering withdrawing its program of distributing free Tolbutimide to diabetics who can pass a means test, in light of the recent studies which show that 10,000 to 15,000 people on Tolbutimide are dying prematurely of heart disease?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I think the question is sufficiently technical. I noticed the hon. member's difficulty in pronouncing the word. As between two laymen, referring to him and me, I would like to take that question as notice.

Travel Alberta

MR. COOPER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Tourism and Consumer Affairs. Would the hon. minister inform the House of the reasons Travel Alberta has adopted a policy of no-growth for tourist zones this year?

MR. DOWLING:

Mr. Speaker, that's of course not correct. The hon. member will find out it isn't correct when the budget is introduced.

MR. COOPER:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister aware that the information that this was to be a no-growth year was conveyed by letter to the Lakeland Tourist Association just a short time ago?

MR. DOWLING:

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member will examine the figures for last year for his tourist zone and then examine the figures for that zone for this year, he will find considerable growth.

Conference on Natives and the Law (continued)

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. minister responsible for Native Affairs, Mr. Adair. Will any funds from the Province of Alberta be used to pay for the accommodation of the 14 inmates or convicted criminals who are now at the conference on Natives and the law, for their accommodation in hotel rooms or for their meals, et cetera?

MR. ADAIR:

Mr. Speaker, not to my knowledge.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

2. Hon. Mr. Hyndman proposed the following motion to this Assembly:

Be it resolved that the report of the Special Committee, established under Standing Order 46, be received and concurred in.

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I move Motion No. 2 standing in my name on the Order Paper. This motion is for receipt and concurrence of the report of the hon. Member for Lacombe with regard to the four standing committees of the Legislature appearing in the Votes and Proceedings of Thursday, January 30. I don't believe there are any changes or any substantial changes in the memberships of the standing committees.

[The motion was carried.]

CONSIDERATION OF HIS HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Mr. Koziak proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable Ralph G. Steinhauer, Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate: Mr. Crawford]

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, one of the very important features of the announcements in the Speech from the Throne that had to do with new and increased benefits for senior citizens in the province related to the fact that there have been, over the past few years to my knowledge and I would expect over the past number of years, a number of areas in which the senior citizens themselves have been expressing the opinion that they could be helped in a number of small ways that would be meaningful.

Because of that the government was pleased to bring forward a program which bears directly upon the financial burden that has been imposed on some senior citizens in respect to the use of ambulances. Because of that, for trips within the corporate limits of a city or municipality where the rate of \$20 has applied before under Blue Cross, the new rate will be \$25. Perhaps more important is that [with] the previous rates, if the patient had to use the ambulance more than two or three times in a year, which is far more likely in the case of elderly people with more complex health problems than the younger

part of the population, then the limit under Blue Cross would perhaps be quickly used up. So in doubling that limit from \$100 to \$200, Mr. Speaker, this is meant again to be a significant assistance to the senior citizens.

Now, I think all hon. members from time to time would have received representations on the question of the cost of medical examinations for drivers 70 years of age and over. That was another one of the annoying and, in the view of the senior citizens, potentially discriminatory types of anomalies in our legislation that was done away with, or will be done away with as a result of policies flowing from the principles announced in the Speech from the Throne.

Continuing on the subject of senior citizen health care, Mr. Speaker, Alberta is the only province in Canada which provides coverage for eyeglasses and dental care as a part of a special senior citizen program. One other province helps with hearing aids but not to the extent that is done in Alberta.

The prescription drug plan, of course, covers 80 per cent of costs, and recent changes in the manner of handling that plan have made it much more convenient for people who use it and certainly for the senior citizens.

I think also, Mr. Speaker, that the extended health benefits plan itself stands as being unique in the country. So often in previous years senior citizens went without adequate eyeglasses or hearing aids for lack of financial resources. We know that difficulties with hearing and eyesight can be some of the things that attend upon any person's advancing years. When you consider it from the point of view that these things were beyond the reach of a lot of our senior citizens because of a lack of financial resources, the extended health benefits plan is brought particularly sharply into focus. Inadequate hearing or eyesight can have a bearing on the ability to relate socially to people and can affect mental health. As well, there is no question that poor teeth can affect nutrition.

So this part of the health care program, which I've said is unique in our province, is another one of those ways in which, as I tried to stress the other day, the government is doing its best to contribute to the independence, in their lives still, of citizens of Alberta despite advancing years.

I think it is a further significant step, Mr. Speaker, that the province will be providing a division on aging within the department, a provincial advisory council whereby senior citizens can have direct input through that division to help describe and outline the policies which government should consider to have a bearing on the areas of concern of the senior citizen.

The record is, Mr. Speaker, that this government has given the senior citizens a say in the sorts of plans which were being developed for their benefit. The intention of the division, of the provincial advisory council and of local advisory councils will be directed to increasing that participation much more.

I mentioned too, in respect to the desire to achieve independence as much as possible in the lives of senior citizens, special community support type programs that have a great bearing on the ability of people to remain in their own homes. The development in various local communities of plans and programs by volunteer agencies working through their municipal bodies and working with the province to participate in the overall funding is something we look forward to very much. The programs in the beginning are going to be perhaps on a modest scale because we want to see how they work. But it is not our intention, once the great usefulness of this type of program has been demonstrated, which we believe will be the case, to do anything other than develop them as rapidly as possible for senior citizens in their communities throughout the province. I think the volunteer component in that type of service is going to continue to be very important.

I want to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying I don't want to conclude. I'd like to be able to say a great deal more. I just want to note that - if I can leave this contribution of mine to this debate on this basis. We've outlined the proposals we're making in regard to senior citizens. We've outlined the importance of the message of independence for senior citizens in their own lives wherever they may be in Alberta, and our determination to work toward that goal which is probably - I say it again - the most important single objective we could have on their behalf.

I just wanted to give some idea of the type of input there has been, and describe very quickly a few of the reports that have come to us. These reports, for example, include: "The Continuum of Care for Senior Adults in Alberta, 1973-74", a study conducted by the Alberta Council on Aging; "Senior Citizens Survey", [by the] Family Service Bureau, Preventive Social Service, Smoky River, 1974; "Health Care and the Non-Institutionalized Senior Citizen in Edmonton", an MSI research foundation study of 1973. A lot of attention had been given in regard to the Ward report, as it was frequently called, commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Development - "A Report Concerning Senior Citizens in Alberta." That is a report I have been asked about frequently and intended to file in the Legislature. I will, therefore, file a copy of that report today, Mr. Speaker, in wrapping up my remarks now, and say to hon. members that for those of them who may be interested in that report, which had not previously been published, I have a number of copies in my office and it would be available to any hon. member who would like it.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of others I just wanted to make reference to. "Operation New Roof" was the name of a study conducted by 10 senior citizens representing retired organizations in Edmonton. I would have liked to quote from that report and a number of the other studies, including ones going back as far as the Blair report where comments on mental health of senior citizens were remarked upon.

Mr. Speaker, I think I may be a few brief seconds over my limit and want to thank hon. members for their indulgence and their attention.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest followed by the hon. Minister of Telephones and Utilities.

MR. DRAIN:

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to address myself to the Speech from the Throne, couched as it is in rather ambiguous language. Still you can glean some values and programs that indeed have merit, Mr. Speaker, for the people of the province of Alberta. Of course the crown jewel of all Speeches from the Throne was the last one, Mr. Speaker, which mentioned the west end of my constituency. Later on in my remarks I hope to report to the hon. members how in fact these particular programs were carried out.

I also wish to join with the other hon. members in acknowledging the excellent presentation of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor and also to say that I make these remarks without reference to race, color, skin or anything else, Mr. Speaker, in the context of The Alberta Human Rights Act.

I was very intrigued by the remarks of the mover of the acceptance of the Speech from the Throne, the hon. Member for Edmonton Strathcona. I confess I did have some difficulty with his starting remarks because I tried to relate them to Ukrainian and I was having real difficulty because I wasn't grooving in any particular area at all. I was certainly lost, Mr. Speaker. When it was discovered it was the Cree language, this sort of cleared things up for me very well.

The hon. Member for Athabasca also made some excellent remarks and spread the sweet taste of honey across the Legislature. However, he did not touch very much on the difficulties of marketing this sweet product at the present time, and there is some difficulty of which we are all aware. However, so long as the price of sugar stays where it is I'm sure the honey will prevail.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to acknowledge the contributions that have been made by the members who are no longer going to be with us, the Member for Banff-Cochrane who has an extraordinary rustic and interesting manner of dealing with things, and very refreshing to the Legislature, and the hon. Member for Calgary Glenmore. I believe it was a sort of inhibition to put him in the cabinet because we lost that free full-flowing style of debate he was so excellent at when he was on this side, Mr. Speaker. He would swing his hands wide and embrace the entire Legislature, and hammer away. Some of it should have been put on tape and I guess it has. It should be played back to him some time; I'm sure he would enjoy it very much.

We also have the hon. Member for Hanna-Oyen, the hon. Member for Cypress, the hon. Members for Cardston, Taber-Warner, Calgary McKnight, Vermilion-Viking, Wetaskiwin-Leduc. So one wonders how sails the vessel launched upon the turgid waters of politics, Mr. Speaker, after the next election. Many will be called and I'm sure some will be chosen, Mr. Speaker. To those who survive, cheers, and to those who do not, farewell. I think all of us in this Legislature have enjoyed each other and have all worked in our own way towards the betterment of the province of Alberta.

I will touch briefly on the impacts of the program that was introduced as a result of the last Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, in relation to the west end of the constituency, the Crowsnest Pass. This particular area is unique in that it has suffered great hardship and some moments of prosperity. I'm pleased to announce to the Legislature that there is a considerable resurgence in that particular area.

However, as a result of the closing down of the coal mines during the '50s, there was a loss of what you could call a complete generation. The survivors of course are a much older population and there has not been the income among many people to maintain their homes, the amenities of life and so on.

So the NIP program that is introduced there is very worth while and I wonder if it is not as a result of this [that] the Crowsnest Pass is where the hon. Premier launched his political career; I believe also the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview. They were two novices who started in the Crowsnest Pass and that invigorating air just blew them right up into Edmonton, Mr. Speaker, proving quite conclusively that the west wind that blows through the Crowsnest Pass has some value.

I'm pleased to announce to the Legislature that all areas in the Crowsnest Pass during the coming year, if the programs are carried out, will be serviced with sewage and water, an important thing. It might not be important to some people but it is important to those people there, because for some 70 years these particular areas have been without these elementary services.

The Speech from the Throne also referred to workers' compensation benefits. I had the honor to be on this particular committee which was the advisory committee to the Minister of Manpower and Labour on this subject. I note that one of the members, who was a very good worker on the committee, died while the committee was still in operation, Mr. Claude Hopkins from Calgary Power, who had made an excellent contribution, and it's a very regrettable thing.

Of course the problems of the workers' compensation are the problems that affect everyone in the province of Alberta; simply the problem of inflation, where to go and what to do with it, how to raise the money. It is, I think, very gratifying to myself and the hon. member from the government side who served that we see that some of these recommendations are accepted and will be implanted and will go to some degree forward

towards helping this particular situation. However, I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that it is indeed difficult and virtually impossible, unless something is done about the accelerating rate of inflation, to maintain in any way a rational value in the awards, or to assess the costs that will accelerate towards industry in the future.

I was disappointed of course not to see pinpointed some indication that there would be some reduction in income tax. All of us have to be aware that in fact the money that is in the hands of the Government of Alberta is fundamentally not money that belongs to the cabinet. It is money that belongs to the people of the province of Alberta. It is not, as I see it, the role of government to pile up vast hoards of money. It is the role of government to raise the taxes in relation to the amount of social services they deem reasonable.

There has been a problem which has been mentioned in the question period today, the matter of schools and dropping pupil [enrolment]. We have that situation in St. Michael's School at Pincher Creek where our pupil enrolment is down from 500 to 400 and our costs remain constant, with the result that we have a situation where some programs are cut to bare bones. There is a large number of Native students and on the basis of adaptation to the different standards of environment that they live in, shops and crafts and home economics are especially suiting. As a result of the stringent budgeting that has to be maintained in this particular school, these programs have been considerably reduced. There was a cumulative deficit in this school of \$47,000 last year. They were able to pull through this year by selling for \$27,000 a piece of property which had cost them \$7,500.

Then of course there is the problem of the Mathew Halton School and the elimination by order in council of the foundation grant for students over 23 years of age. This of course is very detrimental to the community school concept [which] has most assuredly worked for the well-being of the community and has had great community involvement. So I would look to see some consideration in the Budget for the situation that applies to both the Mathew Halton and St. Michael's schools.

The assistance to senior citizens is most timely and welcome. Here again of course we wonder if we have gone far enough. In fact at the present rate of inflation we will be very much aware in another three or four months that we have not gone far enough.

I might mention the integrated health care hospital centre that we have in the Crowsnest Pass and tell the hon. members how it is working. In the matter of patient care it is probably one of the most forward innovations we have in health in the province of Alberta. Use in the integrated service is approximately these figures: active treatment, 80 per cent occupancy, which is very high; nursing home, 100 per cent; senior citizens, 100 per cent, and there is a waiting list.

I might point out that there has not been, in reality, a rush to take advantage of these facilities. But, as I mentioned before, there is a large number of people who are in the age category who are unable to take care of themselves. Most of the people in the Crowsnest Pass, because of the independent nature they have, are very much predicated towards taking care of themselves as long as they can.

A problem arises in the matter of financing because of the type of care given. A person could well be a senior citizen care case today, a nursing home case tomorrow and [a] chronic treatment [case] the next. How do you evaluate this? At the present time there is definitely quite a gap in the matter of meeting the costs of this particular operation; something that will have to be studied and looked at.

Looking at the future of the Pass, it is projected that the population by 1980 will be 10,000, up from 6,500, with about a 25 per cent deficiency because of inability to supply the amount of labor that is required. There could be another population increase of another 10,000 if coal mining is allowed to proceed. That of course is an unknown quantity at this time.

So the area calls, because of the restricted nature of the geological surroundings, for very careful planning and development. It most assuredly is something that for the well-being of the people who live there and the interest of all of the considerations, environmental, ecology and all the rest of it, should not be proceeded with very rapidly but should be proceeded with according to a plan.

The highway relocation study of course is under way and has certainly created a lot of ill will in the west end of the constituency. This was a problem that was solved, not happily of course, but accepted. Then out of the clear blue sky drops the environmental impact study. I don't think people were ever too clear on just what was intended to be accomplished by the environmental impact study. Their impression was that they could make representation to their very diligent worker who was in charge of this particular thing and as a result of these studies, the highway could be moved up, down, in or out, hung in the clouds or any particular thing at all.

I don't think this was the intent of the environmental impact study at all. I think the impact was to determine what effect the building of a new highway would have. However, what it did do was start a war, particularly in Coleman where people saw the representations of their town council as an invitation to the Department of Highways to bulldoze down their houses. They weren't about to have that and they were prepared to go forth and hang people and do all sorts of things.

So all of these sleeping dogs were lying quietly. The particular highway relocation had been accepted and suddenly the whole thing starts like a gasoline fire again and everyone is getting their fingers in the grease again. And I wonder, Mr. Speaker, whether we are in fact going anywhere with this particular thing.

There is no question that certain areas on Highway No. 3 have to be brought up to standard because of the number of accidents; because of the increased traffic flow which is accelerating and has probably doubled in the last three years and can be expected to double again in the next three; because of the tremendous expansion anticipated for coal and coal development on the British Columbia side in which there will be at least four new mines in the next two or three years.

The Crowsnest Pass, of course, could be one of the major trading areas because of the benefits we do have. Not having the sales tax to fight makes, in fact, an invitation for the people of British Columbia to get in their cars and come down this particular area.

The Throne Speech has really no clear indication where it is going on natural resource policy. I would have expected to have some rules spelled out at this time. I see no clear direction.

I was aware that in Blairmore, at least, there was a program to go ahead with some coal development. As a result, there was a railroad spur built and some 150-ton trucks ordered. There was a shipment of some 30,000 tons of coal shipped east to determine whether it had any value as thermal coal. Clearly it did have, because the company was prepared to proceed. Then, somehow, something happened and because of government's inability to come up with a policy at this time, the trucks were redirected to Montana and the work was proceeded with there. Of course it's a value judgment in how it should go.

There are certain complaints about the cutting off of forestry roads. There are certain implications, one the limiting of access. That's a minus. The pluses, of course, are that in cutting off seismic lines and so on there will be no way these lines will ever rehabilitate themselves with the number of four-wheel drives you have running around the Pincher Creek-Crowsnest forest reserve. They drive up these seismic lines - the lines are not ditched as a Crown road would be. Very obviously enough traffic creates ruts, starts the processes of erosion, and if that does not occur, it definitely does inhibit the growth of the flora and fauna by which nature would have a means of rehabilitating the area.

However, I find difficulty in reconciling cutting off a forestry road which is ditched and has been graded and has been used for many years, and is accepted by common knowledge as a road. There are many uses for the forestry [roads] other than backpacking and so on. Children and families like to go out and take a picnic basket. There are older people who like to go out and pick mushrooms and berries and so on and, in some places, go hunting. To be blocked off in this particular manner they feel is an infringement on their right. They feel this is bureaucracy gone mad. They feel that after using a road for 20 or 25 years, it is a road by public right that the people should have to use. I would say there should be considerations in that.

Reading the Environment Conservation [Authority's] east slopes report and referring to the part where much was made of game being driven to a less desirable environment as a result of noise factors and people encroachment - this I question very much. When you can see seven bighorn sheep - rams at that - within 100 feet of the No. 3 Highway this morning - and one is a seven-eighth curl incidentally - just peacefully eating away there, that's something that is really something to look at. Although you can see bighorn sheep going through Calgary in the park, there is a slope on the east side and you can also see them there.

But there is definitely a hazard insofar as the big game grazing along the highway is concerned. This is attempted to be overcome by the police blowing their sirens and driving them back because there are some Canadians who have game hunting privileges that are not afforded to others and the reason therefor is, this game is set up.

I asked a question in the question period and I thought afterwards about whether certain areas that were the winter grazing ground of the big game should be - were there any plans to protect them. I thought about this afterwards and I was referring to a particular place where moose have wintered on an annual basis for the last 30 years or so to my knowledge since they have come back to the Crowsnest forests. There was a time some 30 years ago when there were no moose. The number which wintered there has varied from 50 to 60. And when they were close, of course you could drive a vehicle right through them and have to wait for them to get off the road.

Interestingly enough, after the hunting season, the moose are there because this is where they feed during the winter, but the noise of a vehicle would have them - they will spook and head for the hills. After about two or three months they'll tame right down and there is no impact whatsoever and of course they'll stay that way until the next hunting season.

There were snowmobile tracks in this particular area and I thought, well, this is a terrible place to snowmobile. But on the other hand, if they are left there and people who can shoot game at any time come up there, there is very little protection for this particular game. So I wonder about that. I suppose the long-range solution would be to do both; arrive at some arrangement with the hunters who can hunt 12 months of the year by some sort of subsidy payment in lieu of hunting rights, if this is a serious situation, and also to request - I think [to] request snowmobile operators to stay off certain areas would be sufficient. I don't believe legislation would be required.

There is no question that the hunters find less and less game. Whether the game is more sagacious or not, I don't know. But there is a tremendous amount of sentiment towards allowing one animal only, in the matter of big game hunting, for a while, until at least we have some building up or some nuisance value and so on.

Because of the deer, which are increasing in a tremendous number, there is more and more damage being done to hay and haystacks along the foothills, an area that in reality should have been kept as a game preserve, but now is used as ranching country.

It depends a great deal on the individual rancher, how he responds. There's one rancher I talked to who owns a considerable area, about five or six sections. He was complaining bitterly and he was wondering whether if he went down to Brocket and brought up the Indians if this would be all right. I said, "How much hay do you lose in money?" "Well, I can't tell you that." "Well," I said, "is it \$50?" He said, "It's more than that." "Is it more than \$150?" "No." But here's a man who owns 3,000 or 4,000 acres of land and he's concerned about \$150 worth of hay. He's not prepared to fit into the ecosystem at all. He's concerned about \$150 worth of hay. And then there are others who just accept that this is part of Canada and part of everyone fitting together and the game was there first.

But anyway, I don't think it would be unreasonable to have an assessment of this and a payment to those people who are in fact suffering a loss. I would ask the Minister of Lands and Forests to look at this in the future.

These are some of the concerns that I have, Mr. Speaker. I wonder in looking after the matter of consumer affairs, if there was any policing by the Department of Consumer Affairs, of franchised carriers who carry freight. They are franchised, therefore they're a public utility. Is freight included? I don't know for sure. Possibly it is.

So generally, Mr. Speaker, I touch the highlights of the Speech from the Throne again. I welcome what has been done for senior citizens. I voice concern that this is only the tip of the iceberg, that the problems we are facing in the next few years are going to be indeed serious. It's going to require the good judgment and cooperation of all levels of government, of Albertans, Canadians and probably international cooperation. I realize that an era has come where in fact we cannot expect our standard of living to move forward on a continuing basis, where in reality there will have to be sacrifices of people in order to help their fellow man.

Mr. Speaker, with these brief remarks, I thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Chair has already recognized the hon. Minister of Telephones and Utilities, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View.

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the rules I rise uncovered to address you on the subject of the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, I expect this government to continue ...

MR. LUDWIG:

Boy, I'd cover you.

MR. FARRAN:

... for many many years.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Too bad you won't be here.

MR. FARRAN:

I have concrete assurance, Mr. Speaker, it was written in stone: "Honor your father and mother: that your days may be long." That, Mr. Speaker, is a precept as old as the Judaic and Christian faiths, in fact, much older since it was contained in the philosophies of many early civilizations. It's not only a religious principle, it's also one of the basic planks on which all civilized society has been built.

I know today there are many so-called enlightened people who believe that the ancient rules no longer apply, who argue, there's no need any longer for the family unit; that there's no need for different roles between sexes; that children shouldn't be allowed to be children any more, should be rushed into the problems of adult life as soon as possible; that children and old folk are nuisances who are not wanted and that ethics are things of the moment and may be tailored to fit a situation of the moment of individual greed or convenience. But time has shown, as time will show again, that they're wrong.

I have frequently been appalled, Mr. Speaker, in the past 30 years, at the readiness with which some young families have shrugged off responsibility for their fathers and mothers. Of course, there are outstanding examples the other way. But I have come across many cases of older people being hastened on their way to a nursing home and then forgotten.

I've met senior citizens who spend their declining years in such facilities and seldom have any visits from their children while they sit in lonely exile thinking and wondering. I have visited people, Mr. Speaker, in advanced years living all alone in small houses in my riding, their partners perhaps having passed on before them. They struggle along on a limited income, striving to cut the lawn, trim the hedge, fix the tap washer, change a light bulb or sweep the snow off their sidewalks.

They're the breed that built this province and they don't give up easily. Five years ago I had a daily radio program in Calgary and many of my listeners were senior citizens. I learned of widows and widowers struggling along on a diet of not much more than tea and toast. Often they are too proud to ask for assistance from their own relatives. After

all, they say, they have their own families to look after now. They'll say it bravely. Sometimes senior citizens help senior citizens, but often they struggle on alone.

And it's the loneliness that's perhaps the hardest burden for them to bear. A letter or a telephone call, above all an occasional visit, make such a difference. They worry over complicated forms they have to fill in for the government. They worry over their bills, for they're of the type of yesteryear who boast proudly that they don't owe anyone anything. If they do have unpaid bills, they worry. And usually, from their small stipends, they're the first to give to charity.

I remember once collecting for the Community Chest in Calgary around the stampede grounds, and of how the least able to afford it were the first to give, even if it was only in nickels and dimes. I remember one old-timer, who lived in a bare room with a trestle bed and a naked light bulb, dressed in a torn undershirt and ragged pants, and when I knocked at the door and said I was from the Community Chest he went to the bottom drawer of the little plain wooden dresser in the corner of his bare room and he produced a \$10 bill, and said, that's for the creche, that's for the providence creche.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the record of my party and this government for its efforts to improve the lot of senior citizens. Much more remains to be done, but the progress has been remarkable. The emphasis on this subject in the Speech from the Throne represents another giant step forward towards justice for perhaps the most deserving of all our people.

Alberta's history is a short but proud one. This year my city of Calgary celebrates its 100th birthday. This reminds us all that many of those who came in the first quarter century are still with us. They came from all corners of the globe: from eastern Canada, from the United States and from western and central Europe.

Many of them came from industrial towns and had no background in agriculture. Yet with their limited resources they proved up homesteads, they built roads and railways, and they laid the foundations of this blessed province in which we live. They survived a world war, the coincidence of world depression and cyclic drought in what was known as 'the hungry thirties'; they suffered hard times and good times. If only by their mere persistence in staying here, they built Alberta. So it's not only proper that they should be at the head of the lineup in receiving some of the benefits from the revenues derived from the sale of our natural resources.

When we were first elected to office in the fall of 1971, Mr. Speaker, again programs for senior citizens were on the top of the Speech from the Throne. They were among the first things we did. We recognized that many people in our society were suffering from rising costs as related to their own fixed incomes. The most readily identifiable were the senior citizens, and injured workers. We moved almost immediately to cancel out medicare premiums for all people over the age of 65, regardless of income. We also legislated for the premiums to be cancelled for the Blue Cross option, which covered 80 per cent of the costs of drugs. Now we've moved another step recently and have eliminated even the \$15 deductible.

We took the education tax off property - off the property of senior citizens first. Those on guaranteed income supplement were guaranteed a minimum tax relief of \$200 and those who were not on guaranteed income supplement, a minimum of \$100. This compared, Mr. Speaker, to previous home-owner rebates in the order of \$50 or \$75.

The shelter allowance for senior citizen renters was introduced for the first time and has moved up rapidly from \$50 to \$100, to now \$150 as announced today by the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

We eliminated such irksome little details as drivers' tests, if a senior citizen was in good health. The fact that these tests were insisted upon by the mere fact of their being in advanced years, even though they were in good health, has showed a lack of understanding of the position of senior citizens.

We have begun, Mr. Speaker, to build senior citizen lodges again. I've got to give some credit to the former government in that it did start senior citizen lodge programs, but for almost seven years before we were elected to office hardly a new one had been built. They ran out of steam in the mid-sixties.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Just money.

MR. FARRAN:
Perhaps it was money. Perhaps it was because of the declining revenues from the sale of oil leases and the fact that they had boxed themselves into a corner over a fixed ceiling on royalties.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Bad management. Bad management.

MR. FARRAN:
We have begun to build self-contained suites for senior citizens with rents geared to income. We have also built senior citizen accommodation through the public housing route and those beautiful highrises where the senior citizens, to me, seem extremely happy. I'm talking in particular of the one on 8th Avenue East in Calgary.
We built recreation facilities or remodelled other facilities for senior citizen recreation like the Kirby Hall in Calgary, where the Premier and I attended a meeting of more than a thousand senior citizens last year.

We have legislated financial assistance for major health appliances such as eyeglasses, dentures, hearing aids and other major surgical appliances, all of which have become a real financial problem for those in advanced years.

Now the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development has come in with a big new charter for senior citizens, expanding all these initiatives. I'm very glad to see, Mr. Speaker, that the emphasis is on assistance for those who choose to stay in their own homes, the homes they've built over a lifetime.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear, hear.

MR. FARRAN:

This is not only in accordance with the wishes of a large number of senior citizens, it's obviously a practical approach. To accommodate the need we would have to build some 2,000 senior citizen 65-bed lodges at a cost of \$2 billion. However, at the rate we are building these facilities now, there is no doubt that the sad lineups and backlog of applications are being cut rapidly. They had really got to pathetic proportions by 1971.

I'm glad also to see, Mr. Speaker, that there is to be a new division specializing in senior citizens problems within the Department of Health and Social Development. These are the major departures that I applaud. I applaud the encouragement now being shown for meals-on-wheels, the Victorian Order of Nurses, home maintenance services - all these organizations which can assist older people to stay in the homes they have built over the years.

In my own riding, Mr. Speaker, I'm grateful that the government has seen fit to build several facilities for senior citizens. The Confederation Park Senior Citizens Lodge on the west side of my riding is now up over three storeys and the roof is being put on it. It is a 65-bed lodge in a beautiful location on the edge of Confederation Park. It will contain - it will be the first of these facilities to contain - a recreational drop-in centre in the basement. People who will use that recreational centre are among the congregations of some six churches in my riding and they were introduced to the Assembly during a visit last year. They come from churches of all denominations: United Church, Catholic churches, Anglican churches, Presbyterian, and so on.

I'm also grateful that on the other side of my riding the minister has announced a \$9 million senior citizen complex with some 300 auxiliary hospital beds, a senior citizens residence alongside and every sort of convenience the senior citizens could desire: an enclosed shopping mall within the facility including a theatre, a restaurant, small shops, a tavern and a place where the senior citizens can dance.

I applaud further the other three facilities, the two extensions to the Bethany Lutheran Auxiliary Hospital, one a senior citizens accommodation and one a nursing home within my riding and also the rebuilding of the Salvation Army Sunset Lodge, another senior citizens lodge within my riding.

Mr. Speaker, the concept of a guaranteed income of at least \$235 a month for all senior citizens in the province is a first for Canada and a credit to Alberta. I think through the attention we have paid to senior citizens over the last three years there has been a growing recognition on a federal level that there should be a greater awareness of senior citizen problems.

I'm grateful also for the removal of the cost of medical test for driving licences from senior citizens. This was another onerous burden that had not previously been covered by health benefits legislation.

I'm grateful for the removal of the \$5 admittance charge. Every dollar counts, to a senior citizen - the \$5 admittance charge for a hospital, and for the expansion of ambulance benefits.

In passing, [I am] also grateful for the earlier removal of tax from bingo and the help of some \$2,000 for renovations being given to community halls enabling them to build better facilities for senior citizens.

Above all I think senior citizens will be most grateful for the help for the drop-in centres throughout the province, the capital help coming from the Alberta Housing Corporation and the help for furnishings from Culture, Youth and Recreation.

The establishment of a senior citizens council is also a step in the right direction, long urged by senior citizens themselves.

The fact, Mr. Speaker, is that every year since 1972 senior citizens have been mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. Now I'm proud to say they are the headline, for in 1975 senior citizens programs are on the top of the billing. It gives me personally cause for great satisfaction, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Speaker has already recognized the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to participate in this debate. I'm also pleased to follow the hon. minister who dealt very broadly with the work done for senior citizens. Of course all hon. members in this House, regardless of which party they belong to, endorse programs for senior citizens because we know they have earned the right to have a better living.

After that I'm going to state, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. minister's concern did not quite cover the whole field. He forgot to tell us the amounts of the tax reductions paid in his constituency and in mine and in many others as compared to those received by his neighbours maybe. Let's look at the real concern for the senior citizens - those who want to live in their own homes - and find out whether some people in some areas are getting \$1,000, \$2,000 or \$5,000 for tax discounts and some are getting \$100. That \$100 doesn't buy very much in these days.

We're concerned about senior citizens not having to pay \$5 for their medical - that is a good move. But let's reduce the gasoline tax where it ought to be. Let's not take money from them when we don't need it. Let's reduce the gasoline tax and give them a means of getting around. Getting the licence isn't good enough when they can't afford to buy gasoline which is almost the highest in Canada. Let's show some real concern and let's ...

[Interjections]

Well, Mr. Speaker, it might not be the highest in Canada but there is good reason it should be a lot cheaper. That is the point I'm trying to make.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Sock it to them.

MR. LUDWIG:

It's strange how the Conservatives will rise up and start hissing when you mention that they ought to reduce taxes. Anyone in his right mind knows they can't justify collecting money from the people now when they don't need it. They are worried as to how to give it back and they set up a special department, the 'Crap Fund' ...

MR. APPLEBY:

Point of order. The hon. member has made the insinuation that members on this side of the House are not in their right minds. I think he should retract that.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Can you prove it?

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I shouldn't entertain any debatable questions at the present time. I will deal with it when I'm through with my remarks.

So now we are talking about taking care of the senior citizens. We're so proud we are bursting with pride that we followed a move made in B.C. about giving them a guaranteed income, Mr. Speaker. If you check Hansard, I raised the question of some assurance to senior citizens by way of a guarantee to them long before the hon. minister who got up and spoke thought of it. But we're all anxious, and I'm no different I suppose, to take all the credit we can for something which has been happening in this province for years and years and years.

Certainly we appreciate the fact that this government is spending more money on senior citizens and it ought to. It has it. It has the money and I don't believe they are really providing for senior citizens to the extent they can afford to. So let's not just talk. Let's do something. Let's reduce the gasoline tax for all people. A lot of old people will drive around.

Let's do what I recommended here a long time ago, let's give every home-owner an equal kind of a tax reduction grant. If we can afford to give tax reduction grants on large scales to some people, let's give everybody a minimum of \$400. Then you will get some eternal gratitude from these people, and not boast about the fact that we're giving you more than the government did four years ago.

Well, if you give twice as much they are not buying any more for it, Mr. Speaker, if you assess the value of the dollar. So giving some people \$100 today does not in any way represent a magnanimous attitude towards the senior citizens. I'm appalled at the fact they all like to say how concerned they are. Well let's grab all the money we can while we are at it and let's give those who have more a little more. I'm going to say a little more on that while I have the opportunity of speaking, Mr. Speaker.

I was impressed with the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development and in particular [with] the moves he is making towards welfare reform. We're moving into giving some more incentive and I think this is long overdue. He had a position paper a couple of years ago that gave a broad hint as to what he thinks on this matter. I had raised this issue on several occasions, that we have to stop providing public funds to pay people not to work. Whatever changes we could make we could not be worse off than we are today in this regard. I would like to urge the hon. minister to err on the side of reform. He can't go far wrong by making any changes, you just can't possibly sink lower than with the scheme of welfare we have today. I think if he did that he would probably leave quite a name for himself for posterity.

I think we must not become so preoccupied with the Syncrude problem and the petroleum industry problem that we are ignoring a number of major issues. One hon. member on the other side made this statement in Calgary and we have made it before.

We have the labor problem looming large in this province and it isn't sufficient to say that if we grant them the increases they want, this will be inflationary. I'd like to

know what isn't inflationary - especially governments at the present time. I think the government can show some initiative in making a proper adjustment with these people so that when they are through the year's work they have something to show, at least a little bit of something to show instead of being deeper in debt than they were the year before.

I'm making this statement in light of the fact that we are talking about our high level of income, our buoyant economy and the revenues of the province. The government has never had it so good.

But when I hear some hon. ministers saying we are used to a high standard of luxury, my reply is, not quite, Mr. Speaker. A lot of people are not enjoying luxury, they are not enjoying security, they are suffering problems and concern and prosecution from creditors. Maybe some of them have no one to blame but themselves. On the other hand, there is a large segment of our society, including senior citizens, who have not cashed in on all the good things we talk about. The government should not boast about its concern. It should show a serious concern and do something about it.

I think this government ought to stop talking about private enterprise. It preaches differently [from what] it does. You might say, well, we haven't transgressed in any large scale. But they have transgressed, Mr. Speaker, in that area. They have shown that when it suits their purpose they will take over, take over whether it is a good deal or not.

I'm amused at the fact that every time you raise this issue of the difference between word and deed, they will trot out the Alberta railway. I'm not saying with hindsight that a better job could not have been done on that railway, but if the previous government made a mistake on that railway, this government hasn't learned a darned thing from it. They haven't learned anything from it. They're just content to say, well, you people aren't all that good, 10 years later we know you didn't do a good job on the railway. I know another railway built years and years and years ago, and we're still criticizing it. This government ought to be able to learn from that incident that perhaps we should be very cautious and careful how we get involved in business.

The hon. Premier has discussed the matter of a cabinet shuffle, and when I hear hon. members speak on the other side it's obvious they don't see them the way they are. The hon. ministers [are] listening to all the plaudits and all the congratulation from the backbenchers and they are beginning to believe them. I think the hon. Premier ought to come on this side and we'll give him a few pointers as to how we see some of the ministers. Maybe he might agree with us because if he wants to make a cabinet shuffle and he means an entire cabinet shuffle - that he isn't as satisfied with the performance as he might be.

Notwithstanding those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I believe there are some ministers who have done a very credible job, and it would be in my opinion, wrong to move them from the departments. I'll just name a few.

I believe the hon. minister, Mr. Yurko, would be very hard to replace in that department. He has always been able to come up with a good display of hard work and a good display of understanding and sensible answers. When I say sensible answers, he overdoes it sometimes, but we don't mind it. We like to get as much as we can because it's an interesting topic. I believe the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development has done an outstanding job, but I think he deserves a better role than having to work 18 or 20 hours a day. Although I would hate to see him leave that department for want of a better replacement, I would like to see him in something that doesn't demand as much time because I believe he has served very well and has perhaps worked too hard.

I see the hon. Minister of Advanced Education is waiting with baited breath. I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that Advanced Education ought to be phased out.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Albert!

MR. LUDWIG:

Where I come from they don't hear much about this outfit, the advanced education. It's a nice name, and it says here, Mr. Speaker, "It's About Time ...", on this finely colored magazine. I say, it's about time we got somebody who's going to show some concern about the university and advanced education instead of coming up with postdated announcements about what should have been done. It's a real brochure he's got here. "It's About Time ... To start thinking about the future", and he's four years too late, Mr. Speaker. I'm saying, if you're going to continue that department, Mr. Deputy Premier, then at least get somebody who's going to be concerned, not only about Red Deer, and I'm not sure that he did so well there, but get somebody who's going to have a sincere concern about advanced education.

We're crying in Calgary for - we have the finest facilities in North America, all brand new, lots of space, no shortage of money in this province. And we're begging the province to loosen up a bit. They were criticizing us for having been too generous five years ago, and now they've reversed the situation. We need someone who's going to seriously go down there, meet with the MLAs in Calgary and find out what's going on. We're prepared to accommodate him and inform him. But we expect better results than that and, as a Calgary MLA on behalf of The University of Calgary, we're not entirely satisfied.

I think when I look at the hon. minister Dr. Horner that he has done a tremendous job as Minister of Agriculture. I know that any farmer who hasn't got a grant or a debt, or isn't in debt by now to the province, doesn't have to wait long before he will be. So he

will be hard to replace. Notwithstanding that remark, I believe the hon. minister has done an outstanding job, and agriculture in this province is all the better for it.

I'm sorry the hon. Attorney General is not in his seat because I frankly believe he is doing a much better job in that department than is apparent to the public. With all due respect to him, when a minister is in charge of an important department like the Department of the Attorney General, the public also has to be fully aware what is going on. I think in that regard perhaps he is not as politically oriented as some other ministers. I know from his department that he is doing an excellent job and he is a good man, but I have my grave doubts as to whether everybody is aware of this.

I see that the hon. minister Mr. Russell is in his seat. I would like to say that as far as Calgary is concerned, we won't forget the fact that he referred to us as ingrates and that he got up in the House and said that we have never had it so good, what are we complaining about. Edmonton and Calgary and these big cities are better off than they ever were before. I wonder what they are all squirming and complaining about and talking about higher assessments.

When you talk about senior citizens, let's look at the assessments in these areas. A lot of old people live in these cities. Their assessments are going up this year very drastically, and it means only one thing: that the taxes are going up. I would like to recommend, Mr. Speaker, although I wish I could do this on the hustings rather than here, that we perhaps move the hon. minister be the minister of northeastern affairs, and have someone else take his place.

One minister is not in his seat, and I'd like to give our free advice to the hon. Premier as to what to do with him, the hon. Minister of Lands and Forests. I believe I could do both sides a favour by recommending that the Premier move him far back where he will neither be seen nor heard. Somewhere behind the third row, if there is a seat there. I believe that not only will the ministers feel better, the backbenchers on the other side will feel better, and the people will be better for it.

As far as those ministers who did not get any recognition from me, I believe the Premier will have to deal with some of them when he gets around to it himself.

Now, on the question of home-owners tax discounts, Mr. Speaker, it's such a serious problem I will leave it to the last of my remarks.

I'm remiss in not commenting on the mover and seconder of the Speech from the Throne. I must compliment the hon. Member for Edmonton Strathcona for not only giving a nice speech, delivering it well, but he wasn't long. He was short. That's the shortest mover I've ever heard in this House in 16 years. I believe his remarks were very appropriate, and they made sense.

As far as the hon. member who seconded the move, he is trying to mislead the ministers and make them feel they are something greater and more important than they are. He lauded them from beginning to end, and for that I do not believe he really served much of a purpose. We on this side are going to have to advise the Premier that he better take a hard look at his front row.

With regard to tax discount, I believe the tax reports from Alberta municipalities indicate clearly there are gross inequities created by the scheme in the provincial government's Property Tax Reduction Act. I don't believe they serve the people equally and fairly in the distribution of general revenue of the province which belongs equally to all people, Mr. Speaker. The government of this province is paying larger sums of money to those people who have more valuable property, whose residential property is worth more.

Now there must be some real reason for this. They're hiding behind the technicality that this is a tax reduction plan, and that's all, and we have to go this way. They don't have to go that way at all. They could give every home-owner, every residence owner, regardless of size, rich or poor, an equal amount.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear, hear.

MR. LUDWIG:

I believe that if the taxpayer were organized and unionized in this province this government could not get away with this scheme. But there are not enough MLAs in this House standing up for the majority taxpayer. When the hon. Minister of Telephones talked at length about how much we are doing for the senior citizens, the old people who are in homes - when the taxes go up \$100 they are hurt - he did not consider these people. The government attempts to justify its action, as I stated, by saying that this is an education tax abolition program. Well, that is exactly what it is, but the money doesn't come from taxes collected. The money comes from a pot of money, the general revenue, that belongs equally to everybody insofar as giving dividends or paying money out is concerned. That is the position I am taking, Mr. Speaker, that these are oil revenues collected by the province and they are distributing them unequally. This is a serious situation. I believe the hon. members in this House ought to stand up and be counted. If you look at your own constituents whom you represent, a lot of them don't know this. But they are going to find out in due course and a lot of them do know it and they are most unhappy to know that some - even ministers who live in Canyon Meadows and their neighbors, I would like to see what they get for tax discounts. Then to have a minister stand up here and cry out for the plight of the aged and say, but we are not going to give them more money because we are going to build them this and this, but we are not going to give them the security that perhaps they would prefer. And they say, we are getting more because it happens to be the program. I have studied this issue in some municipalities where there

are some education tax discounts as high as \$7,000. That's a lot more than some senior citizens have to live on all year.

I think if the government can afford to pay these large sums to some people, they can afford to raise the bottom level of the tax discount, the tax reduction scheme, the tax contribution from the general revenue of the province for everybody. When I say that a minimum amount for anybody should be \$400 per home with one payment to one individual only, it is not such a high amount when you talk about \$250 in the past or \$200, because today \$400 will not buy as much as \$250 did four years ago, especially in food, clothing and shelter.

So that is a point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, that we should be very concerned about the senior citizens in a more real way. Give them security and they will be able to get a lot of things that we are providing for them now. The hon. minister who preceded me spoke at length about the fact that we are doing so much for the senior citizens. It is an admission that this government and other governments cannot cope with inflation. It seems we are doing more for them but we need to do more. So to that extent, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe we should be patting ourselves on the back and feel that we have discharged our responsibility by throwing them a little more money. I approve the help but we have to do more in other regards.

The question of concern about the fire hazard in high-rise apartments is not a matter we can drop in this House, we have to deal with it. We're satisfied we are doing the best we can at the cost we are prepared to put out for these people. But I think when we are talking about highrise safety we are talking about dollars as against people's lives. There is a real test of people's attitudes, ministers' attitudes and MLAs' attitudes - whether we are prepared to see that more is done in that regard. We all know that senior citizens cannot cope with disaster such as fire. Even at lower levels where they can be rescued by firemen and be got at with other people helping them is one matter. When they are above a level when all they have to do is panic, there will be a disaster. There is nobody in this House who can stand up and say that these buildings are immune from fire. These buildings will burn as well as any other building. Maybe they are built better, I admit they are, but they will burn and it's our job to do something here. I'm sure that if all politicians were told that they must live on the twentieth storey of an apartment block, the laws would be changed very quickly to demand real safety measures. There would probably be a helicopter pad or something to take them off. But as long as we're all right - very few of us live in high-rise apartments - we'll let the issue go by until something goes wrong.

I'm not trying to stir up an issue that has not been raised by the senior citizens themselves at every turn. When I talk about high-rise living, there are a lot of young people who live in high-rise apartments who are seriously concerned about adequate fire protection. We could do something about this. It might cost more but it's a question of weighing dollars against people's lives, people's safety. We spend an awful lot of money on people's safety in other areas. Why don't we move by declaring today - let the Minister of Municipal Affairs in charge of the Alberta housing authority declare today that no more high-rise apartments or high-rise buildings will be built for senior citizens without perhaps a sprinkler system, without better detection and earlier warnings for fires. It takes these people a long time, they can't move fast and they might end up in a disaster. Now there's a concern that perhaps the government could show some leadership in. This issue has been raised before.

Mr. Speaker, with those few issues I would like to urge that the government move in the field of labor to forestall the move that labor is forced to take, move in and see whether we can negotiate and come up with decent settlements in advance, on the basis of the inflated dollar.

When the government chose to break agreements in this province, which is an unusual example, justifying it on the fact that circumstances have altered so drastically ...

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I don't usually do this but the hon. member is completely, absolutely, one hundred per cent wrong, without intending to mislead the House. The government did not break its agreement with its employees.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I was not referring to breach of agreement with the labor people. I'm talking about the agreements the Premier had broken. So if I wasn't clear - the Premier had broken with the petroleum industry, that's the agreement I am talking about, the legislation and deals they had before.

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to be clear on that because ...

MR. SPEAKER:

With great respect to the hon. minister, we are back in the same situation in which we often are. It is contrary to good parliamentary practice for disputes of fact to be raised as points of order or to be used to achieve a second opportunity to speak in debate.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I'm stating that the impression has been created in this province that the sanctity of contract so far as this government is concerned simply doesn't exist. The argument, and somewhat justifiably so, was that the circumstances have altered so drastically since we entered into those situations, those agreements, that we had to change them. When you have a two-year labor contract and the dollar is deflated by 20 per cent in those two years, as far as the workman is concerned, that is a cause for a complete renegotiation. His deal with the employer, be it government or local government, was based on facts as they knew them then. When we had 12.5 per cent inflation last year and maybe as much - you are looking at a 25 per cent difference. I believe that the public has to know. The government ought to look at this to see what can be done in advance and not wait until they knock the doors down demanding more pay.

I have to state when I listen to the CUPE people in Calgary that they are concerned because what they got some time ago doesn't give them a proper standard of living. We have incentives on one side to get people to go to work, and on the other hand people are having their purchasing power taken away from them, so they are wondering whether they should continue to work. Then where are the incentives to keep people on the payroll, to keep people working.

Mr. Speaker, in completing my remarks I want to state that there is one serious criticism I want to make about this government. That is that they all want to talk and boast about how big everything is. Everybody wants to be the biggest, the greatest, we've done the most. If you review the programs, the programs for senior citizens in this province, they have made tremendous advances, but most of them are an increase of what was done before. But everything has to be the biggest. We have the biggest money, we're the biggest spenders in every department.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs never misses an opportunity to tell the cities that we're the biggest; we're giving you the most and don't you ever forget it. He expects their eternal gratitude even though they have to reassess their property and increase taxes to keep operating.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity of making my presentation.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley.

MR. HENDERSON:

Mr. Speaker, I have a few brief comments I would like to make relative, not so much to the Throne Speech itself, but to a number of areas of policy which in my view the government should be looking to.

I also would point out that it's the last opportunity I'll have to participate in the Throne Speech so probably I'm at liberty to say a few things some of the other members are not because they are seeking re-election. Nonetheless, it doesn't mean, Mr. Speaker, that I think the matters which I would like to raise should not be considered.

I would like first just to comment briefly on the programs and services which governments offer to elderly people in the province and all across Canada. Certainly I'd be the first to agree it's incumbent upon government to see that the elderly citizens of our province enjoy a reasonable share of the rewards or prosperity that the province as a whole is enjoying. I think that was the policy of the past government and it certainly is the policy of the present government. Let's hope it can continue. But I must take exception to the assumption, which many speakers seem to proceed on, that everyone becomes a pauper when he reaches the age of 65, because of course that's absolute nonsense.

As I listen to some of the speeches made inside and outside the House about the elderly and the views of politicians on the subject, I can't help but think of my experience watching my six children grow up, you know. The first time they looked out the living room window and saw the new moon, it was a tremendous experience to them. They were so impressed with it they thought they invented it as a matter of fact, or that they had discovered it. I think when a lot of people come into public life, they get up and make speeches about the elderly. I think the reaction which I hold to and I think a lot of people hold to too falls in about the same category; that they didn't discover it, they weren't the originators of it, they had been around for a long time, it's just the first time the subject has come to their attention. In I think government, in trying to pat itself on the back about what they are doing for elderly people, has to be careful in the process to not really discredit our elderly people.

As I listen to some of the speeches being made on the subject on both sides of the House, I'm reminded of some of the debates that went on not too many years ago in this province and all across the country about welfare recipients. It got to be such a popular subject, there weren't enough of them to go around. There were groups competing with one another to enhance the position of welfare recipients. Of course, I think most members in this House are old enough to realize that anybody on welfare today and our old citizens, older folks who are not necessarily on welfare but living on pensions, by and large the people living on welfare today live better than the average, the substantial majority of people did in this province 40 years ago. Certainly that doesn't in any way detract from the desirability of improving the programs. But I think also the parallel situation exists relative to the elderly people. A great many of them, a substantial number of them, are living better today than they ever lived. And I think that's in keeping with the fact that all Canadians and all Albertans in general are living better, and so they should. But let's not get carried away in getting into an unseemly public political scrap over who is going to corner the market on political goodies for elderly citizens.

Mr. Speaker, there are about three subjects I want to touch on briefly which I think the government should be looking to in the near future. One I see is in the Throne Speech and that concerns the question of conflict of interest. Certainly I'm of the opinion that The Municipal [Government] Act should be amended to limit the conflict of interest at the municipal level to the question of direct interest. I am not just too sure how the indirect interest got into the Act, but I do know this. In many communities, particularly resource-based communities that are tied to oil, gas, coal mining and so forth, all too often a great number of the people who are best qualified to serve on local government in the community are employed by some large company in the community. Fort McMurray is an excellent example. As the Act now stands, if it were rigidly enforced it would in effect distinctly discourage many people at the community level who have abilities and training who are needed at the community level, discourage them completely from becoming involved in local governmental affairs. I think a direct conflict requirement is certainly adequate to deal with the question.

Furthermore, I think if necessary, if one wants to go beyond that in strengthening the direct conflict, I think also maybe we're approaching the point in time where it's in the public's interest, and I think in the interest of all members or individuals who serve the public as elected officials, to be required to disclose their interest publicly. One can argue this is a penalty, you know, why should one have to do it, to do something the private citizen doesn't have to do simply because you want to participate in public office. I suppose there are some arguments in favor of that approach. But I personally am of the opinion, Mr. Speaker, that preserving the democratic political process and the public's confidence in it takes precedence over those considerations. I can't think that anybody should really have anything to hide, why he shouldn't be prepared to disclose his interest. But I think the proposal to eliminate the indirect conflict portion of the municipal legislation is highly desirable. I thought the situation with Mr. McKnight in Fort McMurray was absolutely ridiculous.

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, in looking back, one reason I feel strongly about this. Some years ago I was mayor of the Town of Devon where I live. My family had outgrown the house I lived in. I found that I wanted to build a new house. All the lots in the town were owned by the town. You could only buy a lot from the town. So I sold my house and bought a new lot from the town. It wasn't till I got to be a member of the Legislature some time later I found out that was a conflict of interest. According to The Municipal [Government] Act I was legally prohibited from buying a lot from the town on which to build a house for my family. To my mind it was completely ridiculous. I had to have a lot; I had to have a bigger house. The only other choice was to demolish the one I was living in, I presume, build on the same lot and end up costing me twice as much as it would to sell and build a new one. So I think the direct interest provisions are adequate and the statutes should be amended accordingly.

I've come to the conclusion, Mr. Speaker, somewhat reluctantly, that I think the government should really look at the policy relative to land developments surrounding our urban municipalities, and I mean large and small municipalities. I think some of the experiences in Calgary and increasingly in Edmonton's surrounding communities dictate that the public interest isn't necessarily being served properly by the policy in its present form of private enterprise development of land for subdivision purposes.

In the community I live in, for example, one developer has options on all the land all the way around. I don't say he's not doing a reasonable job, but basically at this point in time the future of the town depends upon the town agreeing with that developer if it wants to expand.

But one has to do something to deal with the rapidly escalating cost of houses. We hear lots of reasons and arguments why inflation is to be justified or understood. A lot of it relates to the fact that we import so many goods we can't control prices. But the price of foreign land doesn't have anything to do with the price of land in Canada. And the price of lumber on the international market at this point in time doesn't have much to do with it.

But I think the most ridiculous argument used is related to the price of land. It's extremely difficult to understand why land prices should have escalated as rapidly as they have. It seems to me we're reaching the point where we should do with land for development around our municipalities, urban municipalities, the same as was done with the development of the land to the north of here in the city where reserves were set up. It happened around the university too. There was a public reserve set up and all the land in that area was reserved for, in this case it was for government offices and building or for expansion of the university. It was an act of the Legislature as I recall, and everybody there had the option of selling then or later, whatever they wanted, to the university or to the government. If the parties didn't like the price, it went to arbitration. It stopped the question of land speculation in those areas but still assured the then property owners a reasonable price.

I'm of the opinion that consideration should be given to amending The Municipal [Government] Act, at least make it optional that a local authority could by by-law make it mandatory that all land subdivision that is to be annexed and joined to the community should come under the municipality's jurisdiction for subdivision purposes so that the elected authority has some control over where development is going in its community. Once that land comes under its jurisdiction, under its control - and I mean they would have to pay for it - they are then at liberty to put it up for tender and get it out for bid for development and get some sense of competition into it, because private enterprise to me means competition. As the whole question of land development comes under the control

of fewer and fewer developers, the question of competition increasingly goes out the window. I think some measure such as this is highly desirable to restore some concept of competition to the land development business. I'm still of the opinion that in a competitive environment the private developer, and private enterprise, could probably do the development cheaper. But where there is no competition, I think that argument falls down substantially.

Another area I think the government should look at, Mr. Speaker, is the question of pensions. I don't mean in terms of specifically dollars and cents, but the basic law underlying pensions. In my view, I am finding increasingly - and this may be just something that is related to the oil industry, but I think it also relates to large corporations - the fact that since the Canada Pension Plan came in many of the pensions with larger companies and so on are not vested in the name of the employee. They become noncontributory by the employer. So the employee works for him for a number of years and he's led to believe that when he retires he is going to get a certain pension whenever the regular retirement age comes along. But it's strictly noncontributory on his part other than to the Canada Pension Plan.

I think an increasing number of middle-aged men and women too are finding that when they get into the years of 45 to 55 they are literally obliged to stay with the employer they are with because they are too old to move out into the labor market and compete with the younger men. Their pensions are not vested in their names and staying with the employer they are with until they retire is the only way in which they can retain any pension benefits. So after a man has spent 25 years or 30 years working for one company, he really thinks twice - more than twice, many times - before he throws away that security he thought he built up. I can't help but wonder, particularly in a day and age when the labor force and all types of corporations are becoming much more mobile and moving from one company to the other, whether we haven't reached a point in time where there should be a statutory requirement that the pensions be vested in the name of the employee, because in absence of that, Mr. Speaker, there is the holding out which is done by the employer on those pensions and the employer concerned really become meaningless.

I know of many cases where employees would like to get out of the predicament they are in. To my mind they are in a rut and they are just not prepared to do it. And they sit around waiting until they get fired because that way they can get some consideration on their pension, which gives them difficulties in some cases when they go looking for employment elsewhere. But I think the environment, the philosophy which underlies the pension programs in private enterprise, the philosophy that underlay those programs when they were developed, where a man would join a large firm and stay with it throughout his working career - that philosophy is rapidly fading and the work force is becoming much more mobile. I understand vesting the amount in the name of the employee was considered at the time the Canada Pension Plan was set up. But I think as a matter of looking to the policy of the future, there is much to be said in the part of the average workingman in seeing that his interests are protected by vesting the pension in his name and establishing a certain degree of portability relevant to that pension with it. Because in the absence of it, in actual fact the noncontributory pensions on many occasions today are really completely valueless.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that on my part it has always been a privilege and I have always enjoyed the opportunity to participate in the debates in this House. I think probably I enjoyed the debates as much as or more than anybody. Over the years I got to feel completely at home in here, probably too much at home, because in the course of debate I am inclined to forget the audience, forget the press and figure we're just a private group, we're discussing different issues. It's certainly been one of the highlights of my life to have had the opportunity to serve in this Assembly. I would certainly say that I would wish every member who is running in the next election for this Assembly the best of luck in his endeavor. In that, I would also have to say I include my honorable friend from the far left, the one from Spirit River, with whom I basically disagree on everything philosophically.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Applause]

MR. ZANDER:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank His Honour Ralph Steinhauer, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Alberta, for his gracious delivery of the Speech from the Throne.

I also wish to thank the mover and seconder in the able way that the hon. Member for Edmonton Strathcona moved the Speech from the Throne.

It is again my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to participate in the Throne Speech debate. Primarily this time, Mr. Speaker, I'll probably have to refer to the remarks sometimes made by people who are not in agriculture, and basically looking into my constituency, that we have two basic industries: one of agriculture and one of oil, forest products and the development of natural resources.

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't help but make a few observations that the hon. Opposition House Leader made in his reply to the Speech from the Throne, in that he attempted to go back to the years 1972 and 1973 in his remarks.

I thought it would be very interesting, Mr. Speaker, to just go back one year to 1971, the closing year of the Sacred dynasty in the province of Alberta. As it referred to agriculture - and I hope that the hon. Opposition House Leader would be in there because

it is a very interesting thing. May I read just a portion on page 5 of February 11, 1971. It says:

Agriculture will continue to be regarded as basic to Alberta society.

During the past few months, my government has noted more optimism in the agricultural industry. This is due especially to increased sales of wheat, feed grains and oilseeds as well as the buoyant situation in livestock. The improved agricultural situation is having a beneficial effect on most segments of our economy. My Government will continue to develop programs designed to increase the income of Alberta farmers.

This prompted me, as a farmer, back there in 1971 to take an honest-to-goodness look to see what happened. And I thought the remarks that he made that the livestock situation was buoyant in the province ... I looked at the agricultural program of some \$14 million in the budget. I also looked at the pork price of \$21.37 a hundred with no government assistance. Really, Mr. Speaker, what lip service could you give agriculture unless you are going to give it a boost monetarilywise?

Mr. Speaker, in dealing with the program as outlined in the Throne Speech, I can certainly concur to some extent [in] what the hon. Minister of Telephones and Utilities made regarding senior citizens, but I could also agree with the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc on the remarks he just concluded with. I would only say that I think senior citizens in my constituency at least since 1971 - we hadn't a senior citizens lodge within our constituency. The nearest lodge in the constituency was, I think, 60 or 70 miles away. Although we had in excess of 1,400 senior citizens the age of 70 and over, our senior citizens had to move many miles from their residence in order to find accommodation. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, in looking at the situation as it is today regarding senior citizens in my constituency, we now have one lodge constructed in 1972. We have another one which is under construction and we have another one which is going to be constructed this year. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, we owe a debt of gratitude to our senior citizens and I hope we can only give them some comforting hours in the latter part of their lives.

Mr. Speaker, I was primarily interested in agriculture and in the oil industry. First of all I will divide my address to the House regarding the ups and downs of the farming industry in Alberta. Maybe my honorable colleague from Calgary Buffalo sometimes does not agree with me, but statistics, Mr. Speaker ...

MR. GHITTER:
Whose?

MR. ZANDER:

... are the ones I accept as facts. And the statistics, Mr. Speaker, are taken from my income tax returns from 1951 to 1971, and 1975 which have not yet been handled.

Let's look at the situation some 20 years ago in agriculture. It was a good price for hogs, Mr. Speaker, basic price for hogs, May 25, 1954. I have an invoice which shows that hogs were worth \$35 a hundred and a premium of \$2, making it a very attractive price.

However, it wasn't quite so with the calves and the cattle. I have two calves dated December 7, weighing 820 pounds, bringing a price of \$102.50.

Let's look at the input costs of the farmer of that day. Tractor gas, no. 2: 20.4 cents per gallon; diesel fuel: 15.9 cents per gallon. The cost of fertilizers: \$78 a ton for 16-20 and \$91 for 11-48. Let's also look at the price of the baler twine that was utilized by the farmers: \$10 per bale.

Let's also look at what the farmer derived from the sale of his products: oats, 34 cents a bushel; barley, 45 cents a bushel; cost of farm labor at that time was \$5 a day.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we're talking of fertilizer - and that's the greatest investment the farmer has as far as the return he will receive - we find that to fertilize an acre of land in 1954, applying either 11-48 or 16-20, the cost per acre was \$3.50.

Then, Mr. Speaker, I took the year 1959 which followed five years after. The price of hogs basically hadn't changed, in fact it dropped \$20.90. The price of gas used by the farmer remained relatively the same at 20.9 and diesel fuel at 16.5, up somewhat from the 1954 price. But the price of baler twine had dropped to \$8.25. The price of fertilizer, 11-48, gained, so the price of fertilizer at that time was \$94 per ton for 11-48 and \$73 for 16-20.

But surprisingly enough the cattle industry was very good if you gauge it by the price you receive now to what it was in 1959. A return shows September 19 ALC, cow: 1290 pounds, 17.10, 210.59.

Then we look at the returns on the grain the farmer produced. Oats returned 38 cents per bushel - and the high happens to be 42 cents - but barley remains steady at 50 cents. The cost of labor, however, rose to \$10 a day. The cost of fertilizer rose somewhat to \$3.60 per acre.

Then, Mr. Speaker, I chose 1966, which seemed to be a fairly good year. Grade A hogs sold for 34.60, dated August 22, so a return for hogs was somewhere around \$50. But surprisingly enough the price of cattle had dropped drastically. Steer calves, at an average weight of 560 pounds, were selling for 25 cents. Heifer, weight 600 pounds, 22 cents.

Surprisingly enough the feeder hogs were selling at 13.75 and the price per bushel of wheat hadn't moved very much. It remained at \$1.15; rapeseed was at \$2.51 but what was noteworthy again was that the fertilizer price had crept up somewhat. Fertilizer dated May 20 rose to \$89 per ton and the cost of fertilizing an acre of land was \$3.40. The price of barley had gone up 5 cents, the price of oats had gone up 2 cents - it rose to 42 cents, and the price cost input, farm labor, was \$12 per day.

Then, Mr. Speaker, I looked at '71. If you recall, Grade A hogs, grading 105 on the register, were selling at 34.60, but in '71 a shipment of 23 hogs was made and the top price rating on the index 105 stood at \$21.37. So I received for a load of 23 hogs, which were all over 200 pounds, \$679.62.

I would remind my critic over there from Calgary Buffalo, at the same time the lawyers of that day - I checked that out - in 1954, somewhere in that neighborhood, the lawyer in training received \$100 per month and in 1971, the articulated lawyer gets \$500. So it's an increase of 500 per cent.

MR. GHITTER:

Mr. Speaker, after hearing the hon. Member for Drayton Valley, I think we should all rise and have a moment's silence for the plight of the farmers.

MR. LUDWIG:

On a point of order, I think the hon. member is remiss in comparing hog prices and lawyers.

[Laughter]

MR. RUSTE:

Another point of order, Mr. Speaker: if they are going to have a debate on their side, could they do it in caucus, without coming here?

[Interjections]

MR. ZANDER:

Mr. Speaker, it seems that the hon. member who was the former Minister of Agriculture doesn't like what I'm revealing.

MR. RUSTE:

... discussing your debate.

MR. ZANDER:

What I like about it, though, is that I touched on a soft spot there, according to the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View.

Continuing, Mr. Speaker, I found in 1971 that the calf and the cattle price was down to where it is today. The hogs were down also.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Shame.

MR. ZANDER:

Relatively, the barley moved up 40 cents, the oats moved up 3 cents and the wheat moved 11 cents. But the price of fertilizer strengthened and the price of 16-20 fertilizer went to \$83 a ton and 11-48 went to \$104 a ton. The labor on a tractor at that time, paid labor, was \$7 per hour.

Well, the cost, that time, Mr. Speaker, of fertilizing an acre of land stood at roughly \$3.65 per acre and if you get the average yield per dollar invested it rose to about \$2.15. The daily cost for labor on the farm rose to \$22.50.

Then, Mr. Speaker, I tried to show the ups and downs of agriculture. Today we have [in] one segment of agriculture the cow-calf operator who has difficulties. His cows now being brought to sale are bringing about 12 cents per pound, and that's only as high in the Edmonton area as about 14 to 15 cents per pound.

But, Mr. Speaker, what intrigues me most is that the Calgary market and the Edmonton market usually were close if not on [an] equal basis. But today we find our farmers, stockgrowers, hauling their cattle some 200 miles to the Calgary market because the price on cows and steers in that area ranges from 3 to 4 cents a pound higher than it does in the city of Edmonton. I would certainly like to see some research [on] why this has occurred in the past few years.

Of course the other thing - I've got an invoice here - was a steer that was sold here on January 24. Now if the consumers hear this price and the yield that occurred from this steer: it weighed 700 pounds and it yielded 342 pounds. This steer was sold for 33 cents a pound. This is all the producer got, and I wonder what the price of hamburger is, Mr. Speaker.

So we find the one segment of agriculture that's having difficulty. As I intended to show, in 20 years we found that not one or all segments of agriculture were on the plane where the farmer could make very good return because it's just like the yo-yo, the prices go up and down. It seems we never get an equal base summer, and this can be expected. I think you can go over the history in western Canada and you can probably find that at no time were hogs and beef up at the same time. It just doesn't follow.

Mr. Speaker, what seems to bother western Canadian farmers more than anything else is the fact that we do not enjoy, or our cattle are sold on a Toronto-based price, less freight. When we look at the cattle price in Winnipeg and in Toronto we find the price per pound varies as much as nine cents in Toronto, as against Edmonton, and six cents a pound on hogs. So what we're doing - it doesn't necessarily mean Mr. Speaker, that this hog or this steer will actually go east or be sold there but the steer that is sold here is subjected to that freight rate whether it gets there or not. This is one area, Mr. Speaker, that I feel there has to be a freight rate disclosure of just why, if we must sell our oil on the basis of the same price across Canada, can we not sell our beef in the same manner. There's no way that Oshawa has ever sent any honorable gentleman a car out here that he didn't have to pay the freight on, or a farm tractor was delivered in western Canada where he also didn't have to pay the freight. The farmer pays it both ways and there's no question about that.

Mr. Speaker, Central Canada has for nearly one hundred years enjoyed the benefits provided by western Canadians, particularly the western farmer and the western oil industry. It seems some two years ago, Mr. Speaker - to be exact, 18 months - that the Prime Minister of Canada, at the meeting in Calgary, promised faithfully to disclose the freight rate in the Dominion of Canada. It was supposed to be. It's now two years since that happened and we still have not received that. I suppose that his swimming pool or the plan that the federal Minister of Agriculture has, the design, got mixed up with his cow-calf policy and I think it's all going to come out sometime, maybe 10 years from now.

Mr. Speaker, some 70 years ago the West was governed by a territorial government and although since becoming a province ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

...[Inaudible]... a dictatorship.

MR. ZANDER:

That's enough of you.

Although since becoming a province in 1905, Central Canada has never changed its attitude about the West. We are still considered the hewers of wood and the carriers of water. We're expected to supply our farm products and our feedstocks of our natural resources to the industry in Central Canada.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission may I read just from January 27 Oilweek, on page 3. I think this about describes what is going on in Ottawa with our oil industry. This is written by Les Rowland, and I quote: "Canada simply can't afford to send Donald S. Macdonald to Venezuela, ever again."

DR. BUCK:

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LUDWIG:

Sit down, Zander.

MR. ZANDER:

"The large, genial, boisterous ..."

[Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Would the hon. member allow the hon. Member for Clover Bar to state his point of order.

DR. BUCK:

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to ask. Last year I was asking permission to read an article out of a paper and, Mr. Speaker, you ruled that I could not. Has it become the custom now that hon. members are able to read articles out of papers or newsweeks, et cetera, et cetera?

MR. SPEAKER:

There is not really a hard and fast rule, as far as I'm aware, with regard to reading quotations. I believe it's a matter of discretion on the part of the hon. member, and perhaps on the part of the Chair as well, because long quotations are not to be read. As hon. members know, the authorities who are entitled to be heard in this Assembly are the hon. members themselves.

But if the hon. Member for Drayton Valley is going to read just a brief extract, and if he can assure us that the editor of Oilweek does not live in his constituency, then perhaps he might proceed.

MP. ZANDER:

Well I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the editor does not live in my constituency. If the objections raised by the hon. Member for Clover Bar - I will only state the contents of that paragraph. All he said, Mr. Speaker, was we had better not let Mr. Macdonald go to Venezuela again because every time he went there the price of oil went up.

Mr. Speaker, I do believe the oil industry has, since December 1974, had an upswing in my constituency. I see there is considerable drilling; there is some seismic work being carried on. But I wonder why the Government of Alberta had to subsidize the oil industry when already we were giving away something of \$1.5 billion in subsidy, or more than that, to eastern Canada.

In the past years and in the last two years in particular, Mr. Speaker, the oil industry has been in limbo for the simple reason that they did not know what the Government of Canada was going to do next. And it wasn't until November of this year that something concrete came out of Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, why I recognize the oil industry in my area is that it employs something like seven out of every ten people within the constituency who are of the labor force. It can be said truthfully that how agriculture goes so goes the economy of Canada, but also how the oil goes so goes the economy of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, in dealing with the senior citizens recreation area, I just forgot or omitted to say that in 1971 there were no recreation facilities whatsoever and now there are three which are strategically located within my constituency and easily accessible, accessible from other parts of the constituency. And this was not, Mr. Speaker, totally or 50 per cent funding of the government. The senior citizens initiated those programs on their own.

Mr. Speaker, in speaking of the oil industry I also have to mention the traffic that is created in a developing oil field, where the services that must be rendered to the wells must be taken care of in all kinds of weather. In 1971, out of 10 secondary highways in my constituency only two had been started, one was completed, one was partially graded, and there was hardtop on about four or five miles on the same one that I mentioned, some four or six miles of asphalt. Mr. Speaker, since that time, under the able portfolio of the hon. Minister of Highways, we have now started construction on 8 of the 10 secondary highways.

Mr. Speaker, ever since ...

Mr. Speaker, I see I have only three minutes left, so I'm going to have to cut some of this out. I'd have liked to have talked to the hon. Member for Clover Bar ...

[Interjections]

Mr. Speaker, in talking about grants received by municipalities - and the hon. Member for [Calgary] Mountain View berating the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and I think he said a good word about the Minister of Highways - but the grants in the counties and towns have gone up over 300 per cent. These are figures taken from the records. I can say only this: when the grants in three and one-half years have gone up 300 per cent, I think the ministers responsible should be given thanks.

Mr. Speaker, in 1971 the average tax on a three-bedroom home in the town of Drayton Valley stood at \$700 to \$800. The tax on the residential property today has dropped [to] \$400 to \$500, certainly a welcome relief to our home-owners and to our farm family units.

Mr. Speaker, there is one area that I wish, if I could be given just one moment ...

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. ZANDER:

... and that is the concerned area that I have with our senior citizens, where a senior citizen aged 65 or 67 passes [away] and leaves a widow who is under the age of 65. All benefits cease after the death of her spouse, and they find themselves in an age group which cannot be employed readily. I would certainly hope that in years to come we look at the age group of these unfortunate widows who are cut off from all the benefits after the passing of their spouses.

Thank you very much. I'll have to quit now.

MR. YOUNG:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER:

May the hon. member adjourn the debate?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. HYNDMAN:

... [Inaudible] ... the Throne Speech, and the Assembly will not be sitting tomorrow evening. I move we call it 5:30.

MR. SPEAKER:

Assuming unanimous agreement with regard to the motion of the hon. Government House Leader, the Assembly stands adjourned until this evening at 8 o'clock.

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair at 5:30 p.m.]

