

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Wednesday, May 28, 1975

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members that we have as guests in the Speaker's gallery the distinguished consul general of Belgium from Vancouver, Mr. Balder Posthuma, accompanied by Mr. William Henning, Q.C., the consul of Belgium in Edmonton. I would like to ask them to stand and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you, and through you to the hon. members of the House, three distinguished visitors who are also in your gallery: Mr. Omer Patrick, the owner of the Atlas mine of Century Coals located in East Coulee; the president of the United Mine Workers of America, Mr. Donald McDonald; and the secretary-treasurer of the United Mine Workers of America, Mr. Stan Grocutt.

These gentlemen are here to make a joint presentation on coal to the hon. Minister of Energy, and I think it's a unique occasion. It's the first time in the history of this province that I can remember the union and the coal operators getting together to make a joint submission. It's too bad the union and management in Montreal can't follow this example.

I would ask these gentlemen to stand and be recognized.

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure today to introduce to you 28 young adults from the Henry Wise Wood High School in my constituency, along with their teacher, Mr. Buehner, and their driver, Mr. Peter Luoma. They are seated in the members gallery, and I would ask them to stand and be welcomed by the Assembly.

DR. HOHOL: Mr. Speaker, I should like to introduce 75 students from the Steele Heights school in my constituency of Edmonton Belmont. They are Grade 5 students, accompanied by teachers headed by Mr. Dale Smith. I should like them to rise and receive the recognition of this Assembly.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to the House a group of students from the Harry Ainlay High School in the constituency of Edmonton Whitemud. There are some 28 Grade 10 students from Harry Ainlay visiting with us today. They are in the members gallery, accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Knudsen. I would ask them to rise and be recognized by the Legislature.

TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. DOWLING: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a response to Motions for Return Nos. 109 and 122 as ordered by the Assembly.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a copy of the Surface Rights Board report with respect to public hearings held to review annual compensation or surface lease

rentals, and annual compensation or rental for above-ground structures connected with oil and gas pipelines and power transmission lines.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Office of the Premier

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, as hon. members will recall, I advised the House that I had requested the Provincial Auditor to make a special investigation as to the circumstances connected with a grant by the Department of Agriculture to Canadian Stock Breeders Services International Ltd. of a shipment of semen to Brazil, and in particular, as to the involvement of Dr. Glen Purnell, former Deputy Minister of Agriculture.

Monday afternoon, May 26, after leaving the Legislature, I received the report of the Provincial Auditor regarding this special investigation, which I now will table in the Legislature.

Essentially, the report concludes that the Auditor is able to come to no final conclusion as a result of the inconsistencies in information received during his investigation, the fact the information was not taken under oath, and for other reasons as set forth in the report. The Auditor recommends, in order that the noted uncertainties and inconsistencies might be resolved, that the matter be referred to an appropriate forum of judicial process.

The Executive Council has considered the Auditor's report and has passed an order in council establishing Judge Legg as a commissioner under The Public Inquiries Act, with the following terms of reference:

first, whether there was any misconduct or improper act or omission on the part of any person acting on behalf of the Government of Alberta, or any employee or agent of the Government of Alberta, in connection with the negotiation and grant or sale of bull semen to the Government of Brazil between January 1, 1973, and the date hereof;

secondly, whether any person with the capacity to influence the activities of the Government of Alberta or the Alberta Export Agency, or any employee or agent of the Government of Alberta, has improperly used or attempted to use his or her position in such a way as to directly or indirectly derive a personal benefit from the said negotiations and grant or sale to the Government of Brazil;

thirdly, such other similar matters or transactions as may be considered relevant by the Commissioner to assure a full and fair inquiry and to enable him to make his report.

Pending the report of the Commissioner, Dr. Purnell has been suspended from any further duties or involvement with the provincial government, and Dr. Purnell has been so informed. As members are aware, Dr. Purnell was formerly Deputy Minister of Agriculture until transferred on April 4, 1975, to an advisory capacity concerned with economic development.

Mr. Speaker, I have noted the Auditor's concerns connected with government procedures regarding such transactions, as set forth on pages 7 and 8 of his report. I have responded by asking the Auditor to include in the special assessment that he has been undertaking with regard to the grants procedures of the various government departments, referred to earlier in the House by the Provincial Treasurer, recommendations as to how procedures regarding such transactions should be conducted in the future to assure adequate safeguards to protect the public interest.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the announcement by the Premier with regard to a public inquiry into the matters outlined. I think it's a responsible approach, and I'm pleased the government sees fit at this time to go ahead with this type of inquiry.

From just hearing the terms of reference, it is my sincere hope that item three, dealing with such other matters as may be seen necessary to look into, will be wide enough so that a number of people across this province who, over the past have seen [fit], wisely or unwisely, to make a number of comments with regard to the Export Agency, to Dr. Purnell himself, and others, will take this opportunity to, in fact, lay these things before the inquiry, so that once and for all this matter can be dealt with, and dealt with in a rapid manner.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Municipal Financing

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my first question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and ask when we might expect a report from the Alberta provincial municipal finance commission regarding municipal finance in Alberta?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is referring to the Alberta Municipal Finance Council, or commission . . .

MR. CLARK: Council.

MR. JOHNSTON: Provincial or Alberta?

MR. CLARK: The Alberta Provincial Municipal Finance Council.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I believe the Alberta Municipal Finance Council is the responsibility of the Provincial Treasurer.

MR. CLARK: I am pleased to redirect the question to the Provincial Treasurer.
[interjections]
Even the former Provincial Treasurer.

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I take it the hon. Leader of the Opposition is referring to the municipal finance corporation.

MR. CLARK: No, I'm referring to the organization the government announced in the House over a year ago that was going to have on it representatives of the government, of the municipalities, and some Conservative MLAs, and that was going to bring recommendations back to the Assembly which, hopefully, were going to solve the problems of municipal finance in Alberta.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the clarification from the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury. He is referring to the Provincial Municipal Finance Council. That has just been reconstituted, sir, and the members are in the process of being reappointed. As you know, there was an unfortunate situation with respect to one of the executives of that organization, and some of the continuity has perhaps been lost. But it is my assurance to this House that it will proceed with a high priority.

No, I can't give him a specific date as to the next recommendation forthcoming.

MR. CLARK: Is the council at this time looking at the possibility of sharing of income tax revenue, also natural resources revenue?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, to consider the very complex issues with respect to provincial municipal finance requires quite a bit of thought, but to deal with it on a fragmentary basis would not be part of the government's policy at this time.

MR. CLARK: Recognizing that the council has now been operational or was announced over a year ago, has the minister had an opportunity to survey what's happening to municipal taxes across the province now?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, we are always conscious of the continuing pressures on the local authorities with respect to budgets and taxes, certainly. What I have done, and will advise the House, is that a Mr. Ellis has joined our department as of May 1, as the executive director of that organization and will be directing his complete attention to achieving some of the goals and objectives of the council.

MR. CLARK: Has the minister caused a specific survey to be done in light of the increases in property taxes across Alberta, i.e. the City of Calgary \$100 per home increase?

MR. JOHNSTON: No, we have not conducted any surveys, Mr. Speaker.

School Financing

MR. CLARK: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Education. I'd like to ask when he expects to be able to report to the Assembly regarding the revisions to the foundation program announced before?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, the matter of revisions to the entire financing of education in the Province of Alberta is under study by the Minister's Advisory Committee on School

Finance, and a copy of that report has just reached my desk. I haven't had an opportunity to study it in the detail I'd like.

MR. CLARK: Is the minister in a position to indicate whether he can table this report in the Assembly? If he hasn't read the report, will he read it and advise the Assembly at the earliest possible date?

MR. KOZIAK: Yes, Mr. Speaker, as soon as possible I'll study the report and advise the Assembly as to whether or not that report will be tabled.

School Plebiscites

MR. CLARK: Further supplementary to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister indicate to the Assembly the number of plebiscites that have been held by school jurisdictions across the province this year and the results of those plebiscites?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, I'm informed that 21 school authorities have passed by-laws and have advertised without any request for a plebiscite. I'm also informed that 2 school authorities have passed by-laws, have advertised, and the resulting plebiscite was a defeat of the by-law. To my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 10 other jurisdictions in the various stages of advertising and what have you.

MR. CLARK: Further supplementary to the minister. Is the minister familiar with the specific situation in the County of Camrose regarding the closure of the Round Hill High School?

MR. SPEAKER: With great respect, the preceding supplementary was somewhat doubtful in regard to municipal finance, and we have really gotten well beyond the limit of a supplementary on this question. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition has a second question, perhaps he would like to ask it, unless there are other supplementaries on the main question now.

School Financing (continued)

MR. TAYLOR: Supplementary to the hon. Minister of Education. Has the department made a study of the number of school districts in the province that have raised their supplementary mill rate to a point where it is now equal to or greater than the previous mill rate for the foundation program?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, a study in that connection hasn't been undertaken. However, I'm informed that the mill rates -- the supplementary requisition is less, of course, than the original school foundation program mill rate, which was removed from residential and farm properties by this government in compliance with a new thrust put forward before the 1971 election.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, further supplementary. Could that type of information be secured if it were put on the Order Paper in the form of a question or a return?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would place the question on the Order Paper, we would do our utmost to supply the information.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. I don't mean this in a facetious way, but if no study has taken place, how can the hon. Minister of Education assure us that the supplementary requisition is not greater than the basic 28 mills?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, the assurance comes from just a brief look I've had at one of the tables which has been prepared and which shows the proportion of funding by the provincial government, the proportion of funding by the local jurisdictions, and the proportion of funding that comes from the school foundation program fund which is levied on commercial and industrial property.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the hon. minister. Can the minister advise the Assembly whether there are any specific plans to introduce basic changes in the school foundation plan this year as a result of the report he has just received? I realize it can't come in immediately, but is it a target to announce changes in the structure of foundation grants this year?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, that matter isn't presently under consideration.

Round Hill High School

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, the second question, then, to the Minister of Education. Has the Minister of Education received representation from the Round Hill High School [on] its impending closure as a result of educational finance problems which the County of Camrose is incurring?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, the County of Camrose, of course, is one of the counties I've mentioned in which a plebiscite was held. My understanding is that the plebiscite was defeated in a vote of 958 against to 634 for. I haven't received any representations, or at least nothing has come across my desk to date with respect to the closure of any school within that jurisdiction.

MR. CLARK: In light of the government's commitment to small rural schools, would the minister be prepared to give an undertaking to the Assembly that he would have the Round Hill High School situation checked out and report back to the Assembly?

MR. KOZIAK: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd be pleased to determine what, in fact, is happening at the Round Hill High School and report back to the Assembly.

Rent Review Boards

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, in light of last night's council meeting resolution in the City of Edmonton calling for permissive legislation to allow the City of Edmonton to establish a rent review board.

My question, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister is: is the government prepared to give the idea of permissive legislation serious consideration at this time?

MR. JOHNSTON: With respect to the hon. member's question, I think we would consider it, certainly.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. Is it the view of the hon. minister and the government that, consistent with local autonomy, municipalities should have the right to establish rent review boards?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, that's a debatable point, I think.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. Is the hon. minister prepared to meet with officials of the City of Edmonton to discuss this matter? Has any initiative been taken by his office to discuss the matter with the City of Edmonton?

MR. JOHNSTON: To the first part of the question, Mr. Speaker, we'd be willing to listen to their point of view, certainly. If they request enabling legislation, we could consider that.

Secondly, we have not met with the City of Edmonton on that specific point.

MR. GHITTER: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the hon. minister, when making the same consideration, also consider the report of Dr. Cragg in the Province of British Columbia which spoke against rent review boards and the disastrous effects they have upon the economy?

MR. JOHNSTON: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we'll consider all types of input.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. Is the minister aware that the proposal for a rent review board passed by the city council also has the whole-hearted support of the Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board in the city, which has the problem of monitoring this on an ongoing basis?

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps we might discontinue this thinly disguised debate and go on to the next question.

MR. NOTLEY: Well, Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the hon. minister. Can the minister give the House any indication of the time frame the department would be looking at for consideration, and whether any legislation might be considered for the current spring session of the Legislature?

MR. JOHNSTON: The time frame has not been established, Mr. Speaker. I doubt very much any consideration will be given in this spring session.

Land Use -- Edmonton-Devon Area

MR. PURDY: Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Environment. Can he advise if any land has been leased within the Edmonton-Devon restricted development area since October '74?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I'm unable to answer that question without checking the file. I'll be glad to do so and report to the member.

Real Estate -- Federal Legislation

MR. GHITTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Business Development and Tourism. I'm wondering if the hon. minister has had an opportunity to examine the concerns of the Alberta Real Estate Association relative to the pending Bill C-2 before the federal House, and the negative impact it would have upon real estate enterprises throughout the Province of Alberta?

MR. DOWLING: Mr. Speaker, I haven't since this session started. However, I did have some chance to examine it during the last term of the Legislature.

That bill has some profound effect on all business in Canada. Perhaps the Minister of Consumer Affairs may have had an opportunity to examine it since he took office. However, I'm extremely interested in any involvement that any federal legislation has with our provincial business community. We will have a look at it very shortly.

MR. GHITTER: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. When the hon. minister was looking at it prior to the March 26 election, I'm wondering if he came to any conclusions relative to the fact that if this bill is passed in Ottawa, it will mean the demise of the multiple listing service in the Province of Alberta?

MR. DOWLING: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we did take that into account. The Real Estate Association did make a submission pointing that fact out to us, as other organizations made submissions to us on some problem the bill gave their particular part of the business community. We are aware of it.

As I say, perhaps further examination has come to the attention of the Minister of Consumer Affairs. If not, I can assure the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo that we will keep on top of it and make representations when they are required.

MR. GHITTER: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry -- to the hon. minister.

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, to add to that, I met with certain members of the Real Estate Association recently. The word I had from them was that they understood some amendments were proposed to the federal legislation which might cure the problem they were facing.

MR. GHITTER: A supplementary to the hon. Minister of Consumer Affairs, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the hon. minister would consider sponsoring a bill that would in fact make the Alberta Real Estate Association a statutory body which could then overcome the suggested amendments of Bill C-2 and avoid the necessity of a floating real estate rate, which would be disastrous from the consumer's point of view?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, I think we should first see whether the federal bill goes ahead in the amended form before considering such legislation here. I would say we would consider all suggestions they might make.

Elk Island Park

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct this question to either the Minister of Environment or the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. I would like to know if the provincial government has had any discussion with the appropriate department of the federal government in relation to a protective zone around Elk Island Park?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I can answer on behalf of the Department of Environment. None, to my knowledge.

MR. HYNDMAN: Not to my knowledge either.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, has the Minister of Municipal Affairs or the Minister of Environment had any meetings with the counties affected in the area around Elk Island National Park?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, since the appointment of the new cabinet, I've had no such meetings with such officials.

MR. JOHNSTON: Nor have I.

Deerfoot Trail

MR. LITTLE: Mr. Speaker, I would address this question to the hon. Minister of Transportation. Could he advise what progress has been made in plans for the extension of the Deerfoot Trail south of 17th Avenue in the City of Calgary?

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, I can't advise the House that we have finally resolved that particular difficult problem, but we are working on it. I would hope that in the very near future we can resolve the problem to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Beef Marketing -- Federal Inquiry

MR. TAYLOR: My question is to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. Has or will the provincial department be making representations to the federal commission on beef and veal, headed by Dr. Hu Harries?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, the provincial Department of Agriculture has not, and will not, be making any representations to the commission at their public inquiries.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary. Is the department keeping a watching brief on the hearings?

MR. MOORE: Very much so, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, it's provided some assistance with regard to other persons making submissions to the hearings.

Municipal Financing (continued)

MR. JAMISON: Mr. Speaker, my question is a supplementary to the first question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I'm wondering if the minister would be prepared to recommend the growth factor to the Provincial Municipal Finance Council when taking into consideration municipal assistance? This factor has been a strain on fast-growing centres like St. Albert, and I was wondering if you would care to comment on it.

MR. JOHNSTON: A comment on that, Mr. Speaker, would require some detailed remarks and perhaps would better be left to the budget debate. But it's certainly one of the items under consideration for the PMFC.

Land Tenure -- Wabasca-Desmarais

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. minister responsible for native affairs. Is the government doing anything, or is any positive action planned, to solve the problem related to land tenure, in particular the problem related to the Wabasca-Desmarais area?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, the entire question of land tenure in the Wabasca-Desmarais area and other areas of the north, excluding the aboriginal rights, is currently under review. I hope we will be able to proceed on it soon.

Physicians' Fees

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. It's in relation to the Extended Health Benefits Program for senior citizens.

Is the minister monitoring the surcharging which seems to be occurring, from reports I am receiving from constituents?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, in a discussion I had with Dr. Ben MacLeod, the chairman of the Health Care Insurance Commission, it did come to my attention that the surcharge being applied by physicians generally in the province was more than the provincial government would certainly like to see. As a result of that, under my instructions the chairman of the Alberta Health Care Insurance Commission wrote immediately to the president of the Alberta Medical Association and the College of Physicians and Surgeons indicating they should comply with the request of the provincial government in terms of requesting their members to discontinue the practice of extra billing beyond the fee for service, as we had agreed.

MR. YOUNG: Supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister advise whether it's a widespread practice, or whether it's in isolated situations?

MR. MINIELY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the word "widespread" would be a relative term, and I don't think I could define it in that. In reply to the hon. member, I would rather indicate, Mr. Speaker, that the degree of extra billing was such that it was not consistent with the agreement between the Alberta Medical Association and the government through the Health Care Insurance Commission.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Is the government giving any consideration at this time to legislative contingency plans in the event the medical association does not comply with the request?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, it would be my view, as well I believe as that of all members of the Legislature, that legislation would only be a last resort. We should, in all these things, make every attempt to have voluntary compliance.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, my last supplementary to the minister, on the subject, if I may. At what stage are negotiations now with the doctors, or are negotiations under way for a new schedule of fees which would be accepted?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, there is no particular timetable at this stage. Of course, in the natural process of my duties as Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care, I will be meeting, and hope to meet frequently, with both the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Alberta Medical Association as resources in terms of the challenge and responsibilities we may want to move in, in the future direction of total policy. But as to the specific item -- as to negotiations -- other than what I'm sure all hon. members may have read in newspapers, there is no particular timetable and no particular discussion between myself and the AMA at the present time.

Alberta Assured Income Plan

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. When does your department plan to bring forward legislation to set up the Alberta assured income plan?

MISS HUNLEY: Legislation is proposed for this session of the Assembly.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. What will be the maximum payment in that legislation?

MR. SPEAKER: If the legislation is slated to come in, perhaps we might go into it further when it comes in.

MR. CLARK: Would the minister care to confirm whether it's going to be a \$50 increase over what senior citizens now get?

MISS HUNLEY: No, Mr. Speaker, I would not care to confirm anything, except to wait anxiously for Friday night. Then all these things will be made known unto you.

Crime Statistics

MR. KUSHNER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the Attorney General. On Monday, May 26, 1975, an article appeared in the Herald that "violent crimes take upswing in 1974 . . . sexual offences decrease". It has the statistics of all the provinces with the exception of Alberta. Maybe at the time it was published, the figures . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps the hon. member is under the impression that yesterday's debate is continuing. Could he come directly to the question?

MR. KUSHNER: My question, Mr. Speaker, is: could the Attorney General bring us up to date on what the crime trend is in Alberta?

MR. FOSTER: Mr. Speaker, that's quite an assignment. I think the hon. member is referring to a Canadian Press report in the Calgary Herald that did not include the statistics for the Province of Alberta. Those statistics, I understand, were subsequently published and indicated that while the murder rate in the Province of Alberta was up, it was less than the national average of 2.4 per 100,000 people, and that there was a decline in offences such as manslaughter, robberies, and sexual offences. There was, in fact, an increase of .2 per cent in violent crime in Alberta, compared with the national increase of something like 5.7 per cent. I'm just recounting what I recall from news reports, Mr. Speaker. I don't have further information on that.

MR. R. SPEAKER: A supplementary. Can the minister give one or two reasons why there was a 41.7 per cent increase in the number of female inmates during the 12 months ending March 31, 1974?

MR. TAYLOR: Women's Lib.

MR. FOSTER: Mr. Speaker, when the hon. member refers to female inmates, I assume he's talking about penal institutions in the Province of Alberta. I could take the question as notice and inquire further.

Eastern Slopes

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to either the hon. Minister of Energy or the chairman of the resources committee in the cabinet, and ask whether the government has reviewed the Energy Resources Conservation Board assessment of the Environment Conservation Authority recommendations concerning the east slopes? I had raised this last week with the Premier, and he referred it. Could I have an indication of where the government stands on this matter?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I've certainly read the report of the Energy Resources Conservation Board and requested it be made public. It will be a guideline and a source of information to the government and the department in establishing our ground rules for development of resources in the eastern slopes.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question for clarification. Do I take it from the hon. minister's answer that the government intends to use the ERCB assessment as a basis for determining policy on the east slopes, rather than the recommendations of the ECA?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has misunderstood the reply. As I said, it will be one source of information the government will consider when developing guidelines for the eastern slopes.

MR. NOTLEY: A supplementary question. When does the government propose to release comprehensive guidelines for the development of the east slopes?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it's a matter that is obviously of considerable importance and one that we are going to do as quickly as we can, but with the knowledge there are enough complex matters to be taken into account that it will just have to be done as well as possible, as quickly as possible.

MR. NOTLEY: A supplementary question. Can the hon. minister place any timetable at all on this?

MR. GETTY: The only timetable I'd like to place on it, Mr. Speaker, is the one that would be required to do the best possible assessment.

MR. NOTLEY: A further supplementary question. In light of the fact the ECA hearings took place 2 years ago, and the report was tabled 10 months ago, is it the government's intention to table an inventory of its response to each of the major proposals of the ECA as it relates to the eastern slopes?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it is not. It is the government's intention to develop guidelines within which to allow resources and other multiple land uses to proceed on the east slopes.

MR. NOTLEY: One final supplementary question to the hon. minister. What is the position now with respect to development of coal reserves or any other kind of development in the east slopes, pending the government's final conclusion of guidelines for the east slopes?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, some matters were held up, if you will, because of the hearings. The Environment Conservation Authority and others did not feel they were a problem in proceeding. The government is looking at some of these to see about unplugging the number of things held up because the hearings were proceeding. Those we judge are able to proceed, the government will allow to proceed.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary to the hon. minister. Does the government have an inventory of the reserves of coal and other minerals in the slopes?

MR. GETTY: The government has a report from the Energy Resources Conservation Board based on known exploration, Mr. Speaker. However, it should be remembered that as additional exploration might be carried on, it would add a great deal of information to any reserve estimate.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, one final supplementary question. Is the hon. minister able to advise the Assembly what the position is with respect to, I believe it's the Gregg River coal proposal south of Hinton, which had been held in abeyance until this matter had been resolved?

MR. GETTY: It's still being held in abeyance, Mr. Speaker, pending a matter I also discussed yesterday in the House, a new coal royalty.

Gasoline Retailing

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Minister of Business Development and Tourism. Dealing with the question we pursued yesterday regarding the minister's meetings with representatives of the oil companies and their dispute with the ARA, I'd like to ask the minister what companies he has met with to date?

MR. DOWLING: Well, Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last several months I've met with the principals of all the major companies. But since this is a new round of meetings, the latest meetings were held with the ARA executive and the last meeting with the management personnel of the Imperial Oil Company.

MR. CLARK: A further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister indicate to the House when he hopes to meet with the other three companies involved?

MR. DOWLING: In the not too distant future, Mr. Speaker. I should say that during the last several months we did attempt to have the major companies meet in a body with the ARA or with representatives of the ARA. They said they thought there was a bit of a conflict with the terms of the federal anticommon legislation, and therefore couldn't agree.

The second reason they gave for not wanting to hold that meeting as a group of majors with the ARA was that the Automotive Retailers' Association represents some 20 to 25 per cent of the total retailers of gasoline. They felt, in view of that, there were 75 per cent at minimum who would not be represented at the meeting.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary to the minister in light of his recent answer. Did the minister buy both arguments?

MR. DOWLING: Since I've been in politics, I haven't bought anything I didn't want to buy.

Syncrude Project

MR. TAYLOR: A question to the hon. Minister of Energy in connection with the Syncrude [consortium]. Is the board of directors undergoing any undue experiences in the first free enterprise project of government and industry?

MR. GETTY: Recognizing that it is a rather unique project, particularly with the participation of major oil companies and three governments, Mr. Speaker, I would have to say there are not any unreasonable occurrences going on at the board of directors level.

MR. TAYLOR: Supplementary. Is construction now up to schedule?

MR. GETTY: My information is that it is, Mr. Speaker. It's now proceeding on schedule and as quickly as possible.

Ontario Wagon Train

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, in light of some uncertainty over where the lands branch is at the present time, I'll direct this question to the hon. Premier. It concerns a very important national issue, that is, the wagon train to the Peace River country and the West.

My question to the hon. Premier is: is it the official position of the Government of Alberta to welcome the wagon train to the West and to the Peace River country?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether somebody else wants to answer. The situation, as I recall it, is that advice was given to the sponsors of the enterprise referred to by the hon. member that they would find some difficulty with regard to the situation they might face in Alberta at the present time, relative to our review of the homestead situation in this province. But on the other hand, recognizing that we have a reputation for hospitality in the Province of Alberta -- in terms of that nature of welcome, and subject to the restriction I mentioned in my remark, when they arrive we certainly will welcome them.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. Is your department monitoring the progress of the wagon train?

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I gather everyone in Canada, including the news media, is monitoring their progress.

MP. TAYLOR: Supplementary. Will the Department of Agriculture try to have some tractors to look after those sick horses when they get to our boundary?

Apprenticeship Training

MR. JAMISON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower. I was wondering if the minister would consider an apprenticeship program within the civil service, particularly in plumbing, electrical, and sheet metal work for graduates of such schools as L. Y. Cairns and W. P. Wagner. I understand apprenticeship programs in the private sector are hard to come by.

DR. HOHOL: Mr. Speaker, without reference to the names of particular sources of students, it's now the policy and practice of the government to be involved in a program of apprenticeship for employees of government.

Lands Division

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, if I might just respond further to the question from the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview, with regard to the preamble to his question.

Perhaps I may have confused the House the other evening. I want to make it absolutely clear that the Lands Division of the former Department of Lands and Forests is with the Department of Energy and Natural Resources as of now, and will stay there until some change is considered. I merely want to say a reassessment is being made as to whether any change should occur relative to the departments of Environment and Agriculture.

AOC Loans -- Drilling Industry

MR. MUSGREAVE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address this question to the hon. Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. It's my understanding that a loan of approximately \$4.5 million has been made available to a drilling company in Calgary to purchase drilling equipment. I'd like to know if this equipment is designed to drill wells in the foothills and frontier areas, or primarily shallow wells in Alberta. Also, is there any guarantee that work will be available to the men who would be associated with the purchase of this equipment?

MR. GFTTY: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Opportunity Company recommended to the Executive Council, through the Minister of Business Development and Tourism, a loan to Kenting Drilling Ltd. in Calgary to purchase seven drilling rigs from Keen Industries. The Executive Council approved that Alberta Opportunity Company recommendation, and the Opportunity Company made that public knowledge today, I understand.

As for whether there is guaranteed work for these rigs, that of course is a business judgment of the Opportunity Company and the organizations purchasing the rigs. It is certainly our desire, and our hope, that with the potential we have here for the exploration and development of oil and gas reserves, these rigs will certainly be busy in Alberta, and in Canada. As I understand it, a condition of the loan was that the rigs remain in Canada. I'm pleased to see these rigs stay in Canada. Probably more important, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the talented individuals, the talented Albertans, will also stay in Canada and be available for the exploration and development, which we trust will go on in this province.

MR. MUSGREAVE: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, perhaps this should go to the hon. Mr. Dowling. Does the fact the government has approved a loan of over \$500,000 to the Opportunity Company, on their recommendation, mean the restriction of \$500,000 is going to be lifted?

Also, it's my understanding that the Alberta Opportunity Company is a lender of last resort. Does this mean the terms of lending are going to be made more flexible?

MR. DOWLING: Mr. Speaker, this is a departure from the normal loaning procedures of the Alberta Opportunity Company since over 50 per cent of the Alberta Opportunity Company loans to date have been for an amount of \$50,000 or less.

It isn't a departure at all. It's an attempt through the Alberta Opportunity Company to stem the flow of drilling rigs to the United States where these drilling rigs would be contracted for two- to three-year periods and would be lost forever to the drilling industry of Alberta. We feel that has been achieved and ties in extremely well with our

exploration program or the drilling incentive program of the province, and the attempt to keep a very viable and important industry of Alberta continuing to be viable.

I should mention, Mr. Speaker, some 200 people are employed, mostly directly, with the Kenting firm on these Keen rigs. They will remain in Alberta. In total, the 7 rigs remaining in Alberta means continuing employment for 200 Albertans.

DR. BUCK: Supplementary to the hon. minister . . . I'm sorry.

MR. MUSGREAVE: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The question I wanted answered was: does this mean that the loan limit to other groups or business ventures in the Province of Alberta that may have made requests and been turned down because the limit was \$500,000, is now going to be increased over the \$500,000?

MR. DOWLING: Mr. Speaker, no, it doesn't. Our position is still that the limit is \$500,000. Only in exceptional circumstances will loans beyond that point be considered.

It should be noted also that the Kenting organization, in order to put this package together, did attempt to receive or obtain financing from other sources, and it was unavailable at that time. The percentage and terms AOC was in a position to offer were such that they could proceed to purchase the Keen rigs.

DR. BUCK: Supplementary to the hon. minister. Did I hear the hon. minister say that the amount of the average loan is now down from \$131,000 to \$50,000?

MR. DOWLING: Mr. Speaker, what I did say is, more than half the AOC loans to date have been for amounts below \$50,000.

DR. BUCK: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Did the hon. minister say there had been very few loans over \$500,000? I just happen to have looked at The Alberta Gazette, and there have been two or three very large ones over \$500,000 in the last little while.

MR. DOWLING: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see the hon. member is doing his homework for a change. I do know that through the lumber inventory program, which was a special program instituted by this government to solve a problem of the lumber industry, some loans have been made over and above the \$500,000 limit. I should say this program is unique in Canada and is something that perhaps other jurisdictions might look at in order to salvage their faltering lumber industries.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS (Second Reading)

Bill 8 The Department of Health and Social Development Amendment Act, 1975

MISS HUNLEY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 8, The Department of Health and Social Development Amendment Act, 1975, be read a second time.

In speaking to the principle of this bill, Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment upon the definition of health as outlined by the World Health Organization. The objective of the World Health Organization is the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. Health as defined in the World Health Organization constitution is: a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease, or infirmity.

Because of my very strong conviction that this indeed is the true meaning of health, I look forward to the challenges which lie ahead during the next few years in my work in this department. Social Services and Community Health is indicative of our intention to try to bring social services and health, preventative health particularly, into full focus in the arena of the community. To do this it will be necessary, of course, to refine the existing programs, of which there are many.

Some of the programs which we presently have in place are not so new, but some have been rather innovative over the last few years. There's one in particular I'd like to refer to while I'm speaking to the principle of co-ordination and the use of resources made available by the government, by the initiative of local administration, in order to bring to bear the full value of services offered by the government for the people of this province.

It was brought to my attention that in one of my schools there were four children suffering severe learning handicaps. In an attempt to assist the families, of which there were two, the people involved were: the principal of a school, a teacher who took special

interest, a child care worker, the superintendent of the Rocky Mountain school division, the educational consultant from Learning Assistance Field Service in Red Deer, a speech therapist, a psychologist, a social worker from the Department of Health and Social Development, the public health nurse, and the psychologist. That sounds like rather a massive array of skilled people. And so it is. It is a very valuable array of skills and professions which are made available at a local level if people are concerned enough and wish to make use of the services.

Perhaps, with permission of the House, I could just quickly read a paragraph which clearly outlines the importance I feel about community involvement, and use this as an example:

There are few, if any, small community schools that will attempt to accommodate extremely handicapped children. Even schools with Opportunity Room Programs tend to refer children of this nature to special schools or institutions . . . I happen to know in this one instance, it was suggested that perhaps the family should move out of its environment and come to Edmonton in order to seek the special treatment that was available in Glenrose.

At the onset, none of the four children (aged five to nine years) had meaningful verbal communication skills. All but the youngest displayed behaviour which would completely disrupt a normal classroom. Two of the four children were performing at a severely, if not profoundly, retarded level of intellectual development. The remaining two were, at best, in the trainable retarded population. Due to these reasons alone, the families were at wits end, and the School was unable to continue extending their normal facilities.

That's just a brief description of some of the problems our people have. The method used to solve the problem was to bring to bear the resources not only of the then Department of Health and Social Development, but of the Department of Education as well as the local administration.

When I visited that school in late December there was great excitement among the teachers over the success of the program. I mention it at this time, Mr. Speaker, only to illustrate how I feel departments should work together in co-operation to serve the people, and how knowledgeable professionals engaged in various fields in the constituencies, in the country and in the city, can make use of services available.

The whole family was helped immensely, and perhaps we have salvaged four lives. Certainly we've reduced the problem of four children being admitted to institutions. The last report I had was that the same enthusiasm and interest is maintained not only by the families, but by the pupils in the school as well as the children who are handicapped, and the professionals who are involved in making the whole thing possible.

So it is with this kind of interest and enthusiasm that I approach the responsibilities of the Department of Social Services and Community Health. I think it's extremely important that the various resources, and there are many, learn to co-operate and work with one another so the best possible service can be given to those who are in need, in whichever way it happens to be. They need to exchange information, and they need to rid themselves of professional jealousies in order that the best service be given to those who need it.

Much has been done, but much remains to be done in the various areas within the department. The position paper on senior citizens has now been published and widely circulated. Many of the recommendations in that position paper have been put into effect. One in particular deals with the driver's licence. That became effective on April 1. The assured income plan will come into effect probably June 1. I believe the removal of the \$5 admission fee to hospitals will come into effect on June 1, if my information is correct. We are making progress in other lines and areas outlined in the position paper.

We are using the preventive social service aspect to deliver some of the services to senior citizens in communities. There has been great interest from the various towns and cities across the province in increasing the social services they are prepared to offer.

I have had some experience, but only limited, in the past two months, and some exposure to the concerns of the physically handicapped and the mentally retarded. That has been a most rewarding experience for me. I was inspired, Mr. Speaker, when I met with some of the volunteer agencies and, indeed, when I met with some of the staff within the department and found their dedication and enthusiasm for the patients they were trying to serve. It's truly rewarding, as a new minister, to meet with so many people who are anxious, willing, waiting, and saying, how can we help? What can we do to help? It's my intention to work with them during the months ahead and to make good use of their skills, talents, and dedication.

The child welfare services is one that interests me a great deal. To date, I have not had a great deal of involvement, but I'm looking forward to that within the very near future, getting more knowledgeable of the adoptive procedures and the various concerns that have been indicated to me from citizens in Alberta about the adoption process and why it should take so long.

I might say also, Mr. Speaker, that early after my appointment the Vietnamese crisis blew up, I guess you'd call it. We were besieged with calls from concerned citizens who expressed a desire to adopt a Vietnamese orphan. As probably most members in this Assembly are aware, there were really no orphans available. For those who were scheduled to come to Canada, the arrangements had been made long before that immediate crisis arose on April 4, I think it was. So many people were disappointed, and failed to understand why orphans could not be brought out of a war-torn country and given peace and security in this country. It was a matter of immigration. It was a matter of dealing with another

government, and that government was not prepared to release any more of its citizens no matter what the troubles were within that troubled land. It was interesting and heartwarming to find the great desire and outpouring of concern that was indicated by the citizens of this province.

I look forward to the challenge of the next months and years as I work in and with the department, with members of this Assembly, and with members of the public. It's with a deep sense of humility that I accept the challenge and will do with it, Mr. Speaker, all I can, to the best of my ability. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say a word or two in connection with this. To start with, I would say that I believe the Department of Social Services and Community Health is in very capable hands.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. TAYLOR: I think there's a responsibility on the part of all members in all departments -- but particularly in this department, where the welfare of children, the aged, and the handicapped are concerned -- of assisting that department in every way possible, and not making things tougher for the department.

I would like to say a word or two in connection with handicapped people. The government, I think, can be proud of what it has done in regard to the handicapped, to quite a good degree. Particularly those who have been handicapped mentally, I think, have had a break in this province over the last three or four years that they haven't had for many, many years.

I would like, during this next term of office, to see the same considerations given to those who are physically handicapped as have been given to those who were and are mentally handicapped. The physically handicapped people now have a feeling that they've been left out, to a degree. Now I can't go along with that entirely, because during the last three years I think we have made tremendous progress with regard to building standards. It was only during the last very few years, I think probably the last three years, when changes were made in the building codes. I think the Hon. Dr. Hohol has a great deal to be proud of in that regard. I remember mentioning in this House before, that many of the stores in Edmonton and Calgary completely ignored or forgot all about the handicapped people, those in wheelchairs. And I mentioned how, in other major cities, there were proper restrooms, proper ramps, and so on, so they could get into the stores and the various departments within the stores. I've noticed that the City of Edmonton has also lowered the curbs in some places so a wheelchair can go down.

But you know, many of us completely forget the inability of those who are confined to wheelchairs to manipulate and get around. Their transportation is a very, very great concern to them. Some taxis won't even go when they hear it's a wheelchair, because it takes too much time. They have no place to put the wheelchair, they say. Well, in some respects you might say they can't be bothered.

Some of the cities in Canada have set out definite transportation programs. The physically handicapped people, I believe, are to be commended in that they're trying to help themselves. They're not sitting back and saying, the government should do this for us and that for us. They're saying, will the government help us to help ourselves. And this is an excellent attitude. Some of these people in wheelchairs have gone to university; some are going to university. They want jobs. They don't want to sit around and go on welfare which they could very ably do. They set a tremendous example to those of us who don't happen to be physically handicapped, in regard to their energy and their desire and their motivation to do something for the country and the community in which they live. I would hope that during the period of this government we can make vast strides, in regard to a number of areas, for those who are physically handicapped, as well as expanding the program for those who are mentally handicapped.

I would like to say a word or two in connection with one of the points raised by the hon. minister. I think there is a great difference between slow learners and the retarded. Sometimes people are inclined to shove them in the same basket. I have had the privilege, and I count it a privilege, to have taught both slow learners and students who were retarded. There is a tremendous difference in the approach, in the psychology of teaching, in the pedagogy of trying to create the best motivation so the boys and girls in each class can learn.

It's not wise to put a slow learner in a class composed of retarded boys and girls. It just doesn't work. Maybe they can make some progress. As the former normal school principal used to tell us when we were at normal school -- and I refer to the late Dr. Coffin -- some kids will progress and advance in spite of the teacher. And this is so. I've found this so many times. Some youngsters have that motivation. But where you have retarded children and slow learners, I think we have to try to separate them in every possible case. A slow learner is not retarded. Slow learners can reach the same height of academic progress as any of us, if they're given the proper teaching and the proper motivation. I know. I have followed some slow learners over the last 15 or 20 years. Some are now holding excellent jobs. To talk to them now, no one would ever know that they were slow learners, that they took longer to read a page, sometimes four times as long as an average child. And they sometimes took a lot more repetition to go over and over and over and over. That part, of course, is also applicable to retarded youngsters.

But I'd like to emphasize to the hon. minister that I hope something can be done for the slow learner, whom we have somewhat forgotten in this province. We've shoved them in,

him or her, with the retarded. While we want the retarded to have every opportunity, I don't think they have the potential that a slow learner has. And I hate to see slow learners put in with the retarded, because it gives them the feeling that they aren't much good, that they can't progress and do a worth-while job of citizenship in the country.

I'd also like to say that I visited a school in Calgary. I wrote the hon. minister about it. Some of the youngsters there who are retarded and who are emotional -- not slow learners particularly, but those who are retarded and those who are very badly retarded, to some degree -- sometimes have a crisis, two or three periods of crisis in a week. Some have been known to have these crises in one day. Now, when there's a teacher with 15 or 20 students and no place for that child to be taken when he is undergoing the crisis, it creates a terrific problem for the teacher and for the other members of the class.

I hope the hon. Minister of Education will watch this point carefully: where there are retarded youngsters who have this terrible emotional experience of having a crisis, there should be some room where the teacher can take that child to be by himself or herself. And we need extra teachers in this type of school. The regular pupil-teacher ratio is not good enough when you come to the slow learner, certainly not with the retarded. Those who have crises should certainly have a special room to go to, in fairness to them and to the other children in the class.

I think the senior citizens of Alberta are organizing almost everywhere so they can have centres where they can meet, where they can have gatherings, where they can live their lives more fully. I would like to see, even in addition to what the government already has, some programs advanced to assist them to secure centres that they can amortize over the next 15 or 20 years. These are essential. If they can get a proper second-hand building, there already are provisions for redecorating and so on. Many senior citizens are worried about going into debt, because most of these people have been frugal all their lives and have never been in debt. But they do want a centre. I think it would be a mistake now, for the sake of a few dollars, to build something inadequate that's not going to serve the needs of our senior citizens for a few years to come.

I'd like to speak for just a moment or so in connection with health in our communities. I think this is just as important as any other item in the minister's portfolio, and there are a lot of items in that portfolio. If we can prevent sickness, it's certainly to the good. Everything I said the other day under the compensation act, in regard to preventing accidents, holds good here too.

One of the things I would like to see even further advanced, and certainly we have one of the best programs in Canada now, is water and sewer where there are settlements of people -- hamlets, villages, or towns. This is one of the best preventers of illness I know. I know a community in the Drumheller valley -- I think the hon. Deputy Premier will recall when the cabinet committee was in Drumheller, a lady brought a sample of the water they had to use. It's an old mine system, and how it's held together I'll never know.

It's really amazing that we haven't had an epidemic in the Drumheller valley over the last 10 years. I've said to the previous government that a doctor in the health unit says he can't account for the fact that we haven't had a serious epidemic because of the water, the sand point wells and the outdoor toilets. There's hardly a spot in the backs of scores of the houses in these hamlets where, sometime during the last 50 years, there hasn't been an outdoor toilet sitting, and with sand point wells every hon. member can understand the seriousness of that situation. I would like to see the water and sewer program advanced even from what it is. It is excellent now, but in some cases not quite fast enough. This is one of the finest things we can do for the people of this province.

There's just one other point I'd like to mention, and that is in connection with child welfare. It seems to me -- and I don't want to criticize the courts, because we have to hear all the evidence -- that in many cases the rights of the parent are being given priority over the rights of the child. When I see some children placed back in homes where, in my view, they should not have a child, it makes me really sick at heart. When there are good foster homes with loving and understanding parents who would give that child a home, to put it back in a home where the parents put their number one priority on how much beer they can drink a day, with little thought given to the care of the child; even though they are the proper parents, in my view, it isn't right. I would hope our courts will give more weight to the rights of the child in cases like this, rather than the rights of the people who brought the child into the world.

Every one of these items is very difficult, and the hon. minister has a tremendous task ahead of her. I'm sure that with the help of the hon. members and the people of Alberta we can do a tremendous amount of good for these people, who of all the people of Alberta, I think, need the help the most. There's only one other thought I'd like to express when I look at all the acts the hon. minister is going to administer: I sometimes wonder what she's going to do with her spare time.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, in rising to take part in this debate, I am pleased to see the shift in emphasis in the department which, as I read it, is going to place a good deal more emphasis than in the past on the whole concept of preventive health.

[Dr. McCrimmon in the Chair]

I believe that this is really one area we have to concentrate on for the future. We have an excellent health system in Canada. There's really very little doubt about that from a curative standpoint. But when we look at total health and recognize the importance

of prevention, I'm sure most hon. members will agree that there is a good deal of improvement to be made.

Certainly, rhetoric today by most politicians emphasizes the importance of preventive health. But clearly we have, I think, some important work to do in order to translate that rhetoric into concrete action. I notice that in 1971, 89 per cent of all health expenditures in Canada was directed to personal as opposed to public health expenditures.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity of spending some time at the Canadian Public Health Association annual meeting. I was extremely impressed with the concerns of delegates who came from across Canada to discuss preventive health. One of the soundest views, I think, was presented by the keynote speaker yesterday morning, who made the point -- and I think it's a valid point, Mr. Speaker -- that when we look at health, we shouldn't just review those particular programs that, for example, would come under the purview of either the hon. minister or the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care.

We should look at health in a larger sense, from the standpoint of the environment, from the standpoint of housing. Mr. Speaker, yesterday it took some time to point out that housing is crucial to preventive health. If you have inadequate housing, you're going to have the spread of communicable diseases, you're going to have mental pressures, you're going to have just a host of other difficulties or problems which arise and eventually have to be dealt with from a curative standpoint.

So, Mr. Speaker, one of the things the hon. minister is going to have to do, as I see it, is not only reorient the department to preventive health, but it seems to me there's going to be a tremendous job of co-ordination, to make sure that the government, in total, shifts its emphasis so we can look at preventive health in the largest sense. I say that because, as I see it, Mr. Speaker, other departments are clearly going to have to play a role in this. We shouldn't just look at the Department of Social Services and Community Health as being the initiator and the sole responsible department for this type of program, because the government as a whole is going to have to make a commitment. Part of preventive health, of course, Mr. Speaker, also involves moving on the recommendations of the health and occupational safety report, which we discussed briefly the other day when we discussed the bill setting up the new Department of Labour. But again, Mr. Speaker, that is something which quite clearly relates to preventive health.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a couple of brief comments about the physically handicapped. This matter has already been raised in the Legislature. I had the privilege for the last several years of sitting on the joint committee of the physically handicapped and the MLAs. We had a number of meetings and I thought those meetings were extremely useful, I am sure, especially for the MLAs in getting a better perspective of some of the problems the physically handicapped face in everyday society.

The problem of public transportation, for example, the problem of public buildings, the problem of getting around, just the idea of going to work. If you have to pay for a taxi to take you to work, that may be a \$5 trip one way and a \$5 trip back home. The costs the physically handicapped have to face and resolve day to day just to carry on living is something which, you know, is a matter that many of us who aren't physically handicapped can overlook unless it's brought dramatically to our attention.

I'm willing to acknowledge that in the last three and a half years there has been some progress, particularly with respect to changes in the building code, which now acknowledges the problems of the physically handicapped.

There are, it seems to me, two other areas that have to be examined. One of these areas would come under the hon. minister's department; the other, I expect, would come under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. The first deals with providing the physically handicapped with the benefits of the assured income program for senior citizens. It seems to me that this is one area that we should undertake for the physically handicapped. I understand this is already done in the Province of British Columbia. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, it is a reasonable proposal which has come from the physically handicapped themselves, and which the government should seriously consider. The second deals with providing, through the extended health and hospital benefits, wheel chairs and additional aids for the physically handicapped. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that this is an area we should move on also.

I want to just make one final observation with respect to this department, Mr. Speaker. I know the hon. minister, because she is in charge of social services, is going to receive continued criticism from many people in our society because of what they claim to be the abuse of the welfare system. Well, I have no doubt there is some abuse of the welfare system. You can't devise any governmental operation whatever it may be, and not have abuse. But, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the old wives' tales that we hear in this province about the abuse of the welfare system have been so completely exaggerated that in a way it really is almost funny.

I've had many people come to me with claims about so-and-so abusing welfare. As a member I say, "Well, that's a very serious charge. Who is it?" "Well, I don't know who it is, but my friend knows who it is." "Well, will your friend tell me who it is?" "Oh, no, no. Well, I don't want to get involved." We get this sort of thing. I've discovered in the checking I've done, as a member, that in my constituency the cases where there is abuse, when you actually get down to examining the facts of the situation, are few and far between.

Now that doesn't justify continued abuse of any program, but I think what we have to do, Mr. Speaker, is make sure we put this thing in perspective. The greatest problem facing Alberta today is not the 3 or 4 per cent of the people who abuse welfare. That doesn't mean we shouldn't try to remedy the problem. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't

provide incentive schemes so that people who are able to work are encouraged to find jobs. Some of the proposals made, for example, are . . .

[interjection]

Beg your pardon? Corporate welfare bums? Well, I could go on for a long time and discuss that kind of abuse of the welfare system. I think if we ever put it on the balance sheet, Mr. Speaker, we'd find that the amount of money going in incentive grants, tax rebates, and what have you to the upper end of the scale, the abuse at that end would be somewhat greater than the abuse at the bottom.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the hon. minister is going to receive some flak from people on this particular score. I, for one, would just like to say that in dealing with the Department of Health and Social Development, as it was formerly constituted, I found the officials of the department to be extremely conscientious, and the extent of abuse minimal when one actually investigates the facts.

Having said that, it seems to me that the thrust in the direction -- if I can use the term "thrust", Mr. Speaker -- of the department is a good one. I think the emphasis on prevention is certainly consistent with recognition throughout Canada now of the importance of prevention. The emphasis on community service and community involvement is also vital. In 1972, we had a meeting, as I recall, of health ministers with the federal Minister of Health. As a result of that conference some pretty strong statements were made about directing the emphasis in the future on community health services, making sure there is involvement from the communities so there is an understanding of the interdependence of the social service and health fields. I certainly support any moves made by the government in that direction.

So as things stand, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to support the principle of Bill 8, and like the hon. Member for Drumheller, I certainly applaud the Premier's choice of minister. I don't necessarily make that comment about all the choices across the way, but this particular choice -- and I hope that I don't destroy her career in the government by saying so -- I think the Premier made a wise choice, and I wish her the best of luck in the future.

DR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, as I rise and speaking very, very briefly on second reading of this particular bill, The Department of Health and Social Development Amendment Act, 1975, which will establish the Department of Social Services and Community Health, may I say, in all humbleness, as the advocate of community health and social service centres in this province, first, that I am very pleased to hear the comments of the hon. minister regarding community health co-ordinated at a community level where the needs are known best.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased that the title of Department of Social Services and Community Health is being advocated today. It so well explains, as has been indicated by the minister and other speakers, the direction this government is taking regarding total health, meaning, as the minister stated, physical, mental, and social well-being. I hope the minister will also include in her definition the indices that the World Health Organization has so often indicated as an equation of the well-being or total health of the individual. Those indices are: food, clothing, shelter, physical health, social security, recreation, education, jobs, and freedom.

So, Mr. Speaker, if community health is brought down to the individual and family level, the community level, to provide not only prevention -- which I think is certainly a neglected area, and I hope will be emphasized, and I'm sure it will, according to what the minister has stated -- but also early diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, and teaching. I think this should circumscribe the whole individual and family at that level.

Mr. Speaker, I've advocated this type of direction since taking office and even prior to taking office. This is well marked in the Hansard reports. I am particularly proud, as an individual and as a representative of Edmonton Kingsway, that this direction is being followed even more vigorously.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I am confident that the hon. minister will carry out and act vigorously on behalf of the individual and family for total health, as I'm sure the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care will. I wish both ministers well. I'm sure they will do a top-rate job.

MR. DIACHUK: Mr. Speaker, I too want to make a few points on Bill 8, The Department of Health and Social Development Amendment Act, because we had to go through an experience in this province when, as was referred to, the two departments, the Department of Welfare and the Department of Health, were co-ordinated into one department, which we've seen up until recently. Some of that was unfortunate, because the services some of the members spoke of here in this Assembly, the preventative services, were definitely shelved and took a back seat to the services of health. It is rather unfortunate that we couldn't go into the more preventative nature rather than the cure. However, through the method of trial and error, I am confident that returning to a Department of Social Services and Community Health, social services, broad as the name is, will be able again to place its emphasis on the needs of the citizens of the Province of Alberta in all social services.

Several members who have spoken on this have indicated exactly these -- and I want to concur -- particularly the need for social services. I don't intend to elaborate on the different needs and programs. I know many of the people who are going to be in the department under the new minister. I know them personally, as I worked with them a number of years ago. I know they will take interest and take serious pride in the fact that

they're going to return to being more important than just a branch of one of the largest branches of the government service, as they've been up till now.

I was interested in the comment of the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview that he sort of accepted, or was willing to accept, a little bit of abuse in welfare. I would hope he doesn't really mean it. I gathered from his comments that it seems it is difficult to overcome a little bit of this abuse. I'm troubled by this abuse, because this small abuse is continuously repeating. Several years ago, a study was made -- unfortunately we always have to refer to some of these studies in an American state -- and they realized that that 3 or 4 per cent was about 50 per cent of the recipients were repeaters and abusers. So sometimes this small 3 or 4 per cent are the ones creating a bad atmosphere for the legitimate receivers of social services. I would urge that the new department under the new minister have a program of clamping down on these repeaters. Even though it may be 3 or 4 per cent, I don't condone it. I think we should permit the social workers to go out and find the abusers and properly deal with them, because this is not acceptable to the great majority of our society.

In the closing comments, I'm looking forward to the new role this department will have. I would urge that the department have a more open and acceptable role in our schools, as was mentioned by the Member for Drumheller. At times, I found social workers from the former department were not really at ease when they visited schools. I would urge that they co-ordinate some of the roles they perform in the area they serve, in co-operation with counsellors in schools, the area councils we have in some areas of the province, the volunteer services, and most important, that they do not overlook the service available in the different denominations in this province, within the different parochial services or the clergymen who are qualified and able to help them out voluntarily and with no cost to the taxpayer.

I would urge that when this department is set up, even a year or two from now, a conference be held of people from the department and people who are doing volunteer service in this province to communicate the needs and services and possibly make the civil servant more aware of what really can be offered with no cost to the taxpayers.

In closing, I find this is a move to a better service in this province. The title itself, as the Member for Edmonton Kingsway indicated, is one that seems to be becoming more common and more acceptable in this nation and in the world. I am not downgrading the former Department of Health and Social Development. I feel they will still have their share of the budget and will not lack any part of their emphasis or their importance. But I'm glad the Department of Social Services and Community Health will now possibly receive a more important position and the minister sitting there in the front row will be recognized in that capacity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, if I may add a few comments to the debate on this subject and point out, from the point of view of my constituency, Medicine Hat was chosen by the former Minister of Health and Social Development to launch a pilot project in the establishment of a community resource centre, as it is known in our district. I believe this may have arisen from a resolution passed in this House some few years ago to establish community health and social services centres. Having next to me the hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway, I know that I share his concern in this particular area. I'm sorry he didn't have the pilot project in his constituency, in view of the fact that he had demonstrated such interest in this.

However, I can say that I've had an opportunity in the past two years to observe the operation of this agency, and I wish to commend the former minister for having established it. The agency has been able to bring under the same roof practically all the welfare services, preventative social service agencies, and many voluntary organizations. It seems to be operating very well indeed. I don't want to prejudge the ultimate outcome of this concept, but I do wish to report to the members of the Assembly that it appears to be working well. I know the minister will be watching this particular project with a great deal of interest.

The Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care will be interested in it as well, in view of the fact that both hospital boards in Medicine Hat and the hospital boards in the district surrounding Medicine Hat are co-operating on the board in this community resource centre.

An important thing, I think, to point out about this pilot project, too, is that it is a regional concept, that it is not associated with just one city, but includes a good portion of southeastern Alberta. The boards of hospitals and voluntary organizations are co-operating well.

I did want to comment on this in view of the remarks made earlier in this House by my friend on my left from Edmonton Kingsway, and I wish to report to you that it seems to be working; people are taking a real interest. Just recently they concluded a very successful seminar at which Dr. Blair, author of the report on mental health services in the province, with which you are all familiar I'm sure, was the main speaker. Just last weekend it was reported to me that this concept resulted in a very large attendance of interested people from the region, and it seems to be getting across very well to the people of southeastern Alberta. So I commend to the minister this particular pilot project, and I'm sure that she will be watching it with a great deal of interest.

May I also add to those of the other members, my congratulations to the minister for her appointment to this very vital portfolio. I wish her well in her endeavors.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make one or two comments with regard to the principle of this bill. I certainly would like to congratulate the minister for outlining her objectives, and for the sincerity with which she is going to approach the task ahead of her. I think that's very, very excellent.

When I recall the last six or seven years, I still see before us some of the basic problems that occurred, problems with regard to co-ordination, problems with regard to trying to bring people together at the provincial and local levels so they would work hand in hand and understand what each was doing. I know from my own past experience that that is a very difficult task.

One of the things we felt was most important when we introduced the concept of the Department of Health and Social Development was that in order to bring about co-ordination, it came to a point where we had to physically bring the employees, the civil service, together so they would be adjacent to each other in offices or in work areas, and they had to co-ordinate. That was one of the basic reasons we had for putting all of health and social development together. There were even considerations at that time, as I look back in my notes, of bringing parts of the Department of Education and parts of the Department of Youth -- I forget what it was -- together physically so that better co-ordination would occur. I think some of that has occurred, and possibly we're at the stage now, because, as the Premier explained in an earlier debate, the workload is very trying for a single minister. To keep up with policy decisions and ongoing operations, I'm sure was a very difficult task. So at this point in time, introducing the new department is most likely very timely.

I would want to say, though, that the two ministers will have to continue to work as closely as possible. My priority most likely would be that between the two of them they continue to look at the co-ordination at the provincial level. Because we can't co-ordinate at the local level until we, as a provincial group, make that commitment. We can ask the community of Red Deer or Calgary to get together and co-ordinate, but if they can come back and say, look, your social workers don't know what someone in the health department is doing; forget it, there's just nothing that's going to happen. So I would want to have the ministers keep that in mind as they are progressing.

I'm not sure what the status of the planning committee was in the original plan. I remember, prior to the election in 1971 I had two or three meetings with the group we were establishing, called the Health and Social Development Planning Committee. This committee was composed of the directors of the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan, the hospital commission, the Deputy Minister of Social Development, the Deputy Minister of Health -- I think it was a five- or six-man planning committee and I acted as chairman at that point in time. I haven't heard too much about that committee in the last year or so. But I think a body such as that would still be very important where senior officials of both of your departments met once a month in an attempt to co-ordinate at the provincial level. If we allow the senior civil servants at that level to separate and go their own way, whether we want it to happen or not, they will establish their own directions.

We had discussed in this Assembly two separate directions that are occurring: one, the new Minister of Social Services and Community Health talks about the preventative approach, co-ordination, more authority at the local level through decentralization, community involvement -- that's good. But the discussion in the Assembly up to this point with regard to the new department of Hospitals and Medical Care is with regard to how are we going to control spending. How are we going to control that establishment out there that is made up of hospital boards, local representatives, local doctors, and local negotiations? Now, those two objectives can be at cross purposes. I think it's very, very significant that a structure of some kind, that has a formal timing and a formal meeting schedule, occurs over the next six months or a year, so you force people to get together to talk about what the others are doing. I certainly hope that will help the two ministers.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that is the basic comment I would like to make at this time. There are some specific things that we can talk about during the study in Committee of the Whole. But I certainly appreciate the outline the minister has made and wish her the best, because I support the objectives she has put before us. If there is any way I can assist in my capacity, certainly we're prepared to do that.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is it agreed that the hon. minister may close the debate?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MISS HUNLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I thank those hon. members for their good wishes and their valuable comments which I will not take lightly.

I would like to comment on the planning committee which was referred to by the last speaker. This was considered, and we discussed it at some length. But enshrining it in legislation doesn't necessarily make it happen. So it was with the knowledge that it had been in the previous legislation that I agreed it would not be necessary to bring it forward in the new bill. That doesn't mean I don't think it's necessary. It's essential. Certainly we are well aware of it. Not only as ministers will we be co-operating and working closely together, our officials are well aware of what is expected of them. I think we have a common goal and a common objective to have that co-operation and co-ordination go right to the grassroots where everybody knows where they go for service and how that service is best delivered. Surely it's almost a mandate that we have, and without co-operation it will surely fail.

I would like to make one correction, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet. I believe I said June 1 as the date of removal of the \$5 admission to hospitals. It should have been July 1. I believe that's when it will become effective.

Again, I thank hon. members for their contribution, and I certainly will be keeping their remarks in mind as I go forward during the work I have ahead of me. Thank you.

[The motion was carried. Bill No. 8 was read a second time.]

Bill No. 9 The Hospitals and Medical Care Statutes Amendment Act, 1975

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 9, The Hospitals and Medical Care Statutes Amendment Act, 1975.

Mr. Speaker, this Friday at 8 p.m., my colleague, the Provincial Treasurer, will be presenting his first budget address. I raise that because that will answer the question to hon. members as to whether I've gone from being the watchdog of the public purse to the biggest spender in government. But, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt, whatever the answer to that question, that the area of active treatment hospitals, auxiliary hospitals, and medical care represents a very large area of public expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, it would concern me if hon. members assumed that the Ministry of Hospitals and Medical Care is solely a cost-control ministry. Certainly, our goal would be to maintain the position -- and I think it's appropriate that [the bill of] my colleague, the Minister of Social Services and Community Health, was immediately prior to mine. I'm sure that the Minister of Social Services and Community Health and I will have to have a lot of lunches and dinners together, Mr. Speaker, because there is no doubt that we will have to co-ordinate and work very closely, in terms of policy development and the policy directions, in the total field of health care for the next three and a half to four years.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to dispel any view that the subject is solely one of cost control. Certainly, it's a large area of public expenditure. But I would, at this point, describe the challenge in the broad sense as being one of ensuring that in the expenditure of this large amount of funds the citizens receive maximum value for the dollars we are spending. I mean maximum value in terms of the best health care in relation to the amount we are spending.

Mr. Speaker, to define the basic area of responsibility of the Ministry of Hospitals and Medical Care: it would include all active treatment hospitals, the auxiliary hospital and extended care fields -- some extended care being attached to hospitals, of course, including nursing home care in the hospital field, which is programmed through the Hospital Services Commissions. In addition, Mr. Speaker, there are medical care coverage, and the priorities in terms of medical care as it relates to adequate health for our citizens through the Alberta Health Care Insurance Commission, the fee for service system, and of course, the premium system, and all the policy in that area through the Alberta Health Care Insurance Commission.

Mr. Speaker, we have in excess of 150 active treatment, auxiliary, and extended care facilities throughout the Province of Alberta. It's my intention to devote my personal time to meeting with people in the health care field, to examining and visiting our care facilities, to meeting with the professionals, citizen groups, the citizen boards in the field, to meeting and hearing from interested citizens in the health care field.

Mr. Speaker, for the next several months, and perhaps for the first year, before drawing any conclusions on the proper policy directions we might make to achieve the broad goal I've stated, it would be my intention to dig into the area, to learn and educate myself, and to work closely with my colleague, the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. There's no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that we can learn much from the people who have been involved in the field for many years. I go into it with no preconceived notions as to what the right answers are in this very large area of public expenditure.

You know, at this point I can't list all the challenges in the field, because as all hon. members know, it's a very, very large and complex area. But I would like to list some of the questions, in terms of the directions we go, some of the questions all of us -- myself, my colleagues, all members of the Legislature I'm sure -- have in the backs of our minds. One of the major ones, it strikes me, that we have to address ourselves to is: do we have a proper mix of health care facilities? Are we overbuilt, for instance, in the active treatment area, and underbuilt in the extended care area? Whereas at the same time, in terms of the economic question, if that's the case, Mr. Speaker, our active treatment areas, as an example, will run from in excess of \$100 a day down to \$25 a day for the extended care facility. So, Mr. Speaker, that's an important question, both in terms of meeting the need in health care facilities, but also, obviously, a relevant economic question we must address ourselves to.

Another major question is the development of cost-effective programs in our health facilities, and health care institutions. A good example perhaps is the expansion of day surgery. It has been done to some point at this stage, where a citizen doesn't even have to be admitted into a hospital facility. A much lower cost area can be provided, and the citizen can have the surgery that day, relax in an area set aside for day surgery, and actually not have to go through the admitting procedures of the hospital at all. Of course, Mr. Speaker, again, if that were the case, that development would be one which would not only improve the ability for surgery in the hospitals, in terms of being able to

handle more, but it also fits right into the economic question in terms of future cost control.

Hon. members in the debate on the Health and Social Development Amendment Act, spoke about preventive health and preventive medicine. Certainly, working again with my colleague, that is an area that has tremendous potential for keeping people out of hospitals, keeping them in the community, and keeping them at home -- home care programs. These kinds of things are questions that we must look at. Certainly I think we all agree that where we can develop home care programs at reasonable cost, most of our citizens feel much more secure in that kind of environment than they do within the four walls of a hospital care facility.

Another question, Mr. Speaker, is: can a better provincial ambulance system, an improved provincial ambulance system, first of all, allow us to upgrade facilities outside our major centres . . .

DR. BUCK: Hear, hear.

MR. MINIELY: . . . can we move in that direction, and thereby better rationalize our health care facilities throughout the Province of Alberta? It might allow us to reduce the cost of duplicated facilities in terms of improving our ambulance system.

Mr. Speaker, some of the meetings I had, and some of the questions I have been taking a look at, which concern me with respect to a balance of health care facilities in Alberta -- meetings with the Dean of Medicine at the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary -- [questions] that intrigue me are: can we improve in professional medical knowledge sharing between our major centres and our rural medical care? Can we improve that even through the training, for example, as the development of family practice now under way in the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta? Can we have teaching institutions out in a rural hospital facility or smaller facility that's tied in with the university?

I think these are questions we can explore and, perhaps, make progress. I am not by any stretch of the imagination, Mr. Speaker, naive enough to think there's an easy solution to it. But I think that we've got to do our best to achieve these kinds of directions. Can we work more effectively with the profession in the field of medical care?

One question that interests me is: are we really establishing the proper priorities in terms of the total health care of citizens? In terms of what we're covering in medical care, is it in the proper scale of priorities? That in itself, Mr. Speaker, is a major question. Certainly, the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower, the universities in Alberta, and the medical schools have a major role to play in how we're able to shape the health care for our citizens in Alberta in the future.

Mr. Speaker, up to this point I have not been stressing the financial side, but on the financial side the question of longer term planning both in terms of the facilities and budgets for the facilities, is one that I think we must achieve. Can we work towards our individual health care facilities knowing their budgets earlier? Also, over a longer period of time so they can do their planning and we can establish a much better scale of priorities in terms of a planning process.

Mr. Speaker, I don't by any stretch of the imagination try to indicate to hon. members that these are all the questions. But I did want to outline a few which I feel are among many we will have to look at in this field in the next three and a half to four years. Not all, Mr. Speaker, will be workable. We may find we have to reject some; they will not be workable. But they are certainly questions, and major ones, we will have to examine.

I know it's not going to be simple or easy, because in our hospital and health care system we are basically moving to decentralize decision making. Mr. Speaker, in my view that means that we have to exercise a great degree of leadership. We have to improve public education and communication of what we are doing in the health care field. The citizen has to have a better understanding of what we're doing, why we're doing it, and what the priorities are. Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, I am still confident that in due course, with direct attention to the area and with the reorganization of government whereby my colleague, Miss Hunley, and I can devote a substantial amount of time along with the rest of our colleagues in government, we can make progress and [achieve] the broad goal I have stated in this large area of public expenditure: to ensure we maintain and improve upon Alberta's position of the highest quality in health care, while at the same time hoping, Mr. Speaker, that the citizens of Alberta receive maximum value for these substantial funds they are putting into the area.

MR. ZANDER: First, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the minister on his appointment to this most challenging portfolio which he has the care of for the next number of years. I'm certainly happy in my discussions with him in the last few days pertaining to the health priorities in my constituency.

I'm certainly happy, Mr. Speaker, that he understands the problems not only in the urban areas, but also in the rural areas, related to health care services provided, though they are perhaps not to the standard that is provided in the larger urban areas.

I hope the minister would also consider sometime in the future the need for ambulance services related to the degree of hospitalization, to provide care to people who have to be moved more rapidly, either because of heart attacks or some related accidents, to larger centres for more proper and faster service, and probably save a life thereby.

I'm happy, Mr. Speaker, the minister also recognizes the difference in costs between extended health care and, as we are now providing in the province, extended health care in the active treatment hospitals. We are looking at a cost difference of anywhere between \$25 and \$50, looking at senior citizen or extended health care requirements. Some of these cases may be afflicted by some of the most dreadful diseases. I'm referring to the cancer patients of our province. Certainly, one thing I hope the minister will look at is that proper care will be given to the people of this province who are afflicted with that dreadful disease, cancer. Perhaps some better type of care, or more or longer extended care can be provided in the W.W. Cross hospital.

I think all hon. members, over a period of years, do not seem to recognize a need for a type of health service until it directly relates to one's own immediate family. Then, of course, it drives the point home of where the lack occurs. I'm glad -- and speaking to the minister yesterday, I pointed out my concerns -- that he is going to take this into consideration. Perhaps some of the care in the W.W. Cross could be extended to a longer period of days or weeks. Although some of these cases are curable, most of the cases are now terminal.

Certainly we should provide some aspect of care to show the people we really care, although they are afflicted by this dreadful disease; that we are willing to even bend over backwards to give them the services in the latter stages of their suffering.

I'm also glad, Mr. Speaker, that the minister has considered consulting with each MLA in this Legislature pertaining to the requirement of health services in his constituency. I think this is a vital link, because if an MLA represents his constituency properly he should know what services are required. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that at all times we will not be able to receive the total requirement, because this is a goal we hope to achieve but never seem to. But certainly I'm glad that the minister has recognized the input, the discussion on the local level with local boards, with the MLA, to try to get some of the services lacking in the community. To this end I must congratulate the minister, because I think this is the type of open government where we can sit down and discuss with our elected representative what the needs and requirements of the constituency may be.

I also note that the minister has briefly touched on the fact that some of the services now provided by isolated hospitals -- and I think this is what he meant -- we are going to try to bring some type of better service into the area. I know it's hard, Mr. Speaker, to look at a hospital with only one doctor -- and I have gone through this stage a number of times, that we have one or two doctors, or no doctors for a period of time. I hope we can induce doctors, by whatever manner and means we can, to use these beautiful facilities. If we can't use them for active treatment hospitals then let's use them for other things such as extended care. I'm glad the minister will take that under consideration. I'll certainly be waiting -- and I'm sure I won't be waiting too long, as he has promised we would meet. We have met and will meet again to try to come to grips with the health service problems in my constituency.

Thank you very much.

DR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, in making a few comments on this particular bill, The Hospitals and Medical Care Statutes Amendment Act, 1975, I would like to congratulate the minister in charge of hospitals and medical care.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased the minister has indicated the need for co-operation with the minister in charge of the Department of Social Services and Community Health. I'm also pleased to hear that he indicated the need to obtain a cost control, or at least minimally obtain an optimal value per dollar spent in the area of hospitals and medical care.

Mr. Speaker, I hope he takes note and considers the need, as I see it and from what I hear from the communities across the province in my travels as an MLA during the past term, for community co-operation and co-ordination with personnel and facilities, and the boards of facilities outside of hospitals, and not to allow well-established hospital boards to become overwhelming and stifle these new and fresh community activities that occur outside the hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, I think this of great importance, because the new and fresh activities that are going on in the communities from time to time are, as I understand it, being stifled by well-established boards of hospitals, maybe not even with the intent of doing that. But the intent of those activities outside hospitals in the new thrust to keep people out of hospitals, for example, by the mental health programs and the project in Medicine Hat and so forth, has at times been blocked, inadvertently I suggest. So the minister, I hope, will keep cognizance of that area. Yet, at the same time, co-operation and co-ordination is necessary between the established hospital boards and the new community activities. I'm pleased that he mentioned such things as day surgery, expanded VON, and I hope he will consider Meals On Wheels, general community activities, and mental health programs.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, as another note that I would like to bring to his attention for his consideration -- and I'm sure he has probably considered it -- maybe he would consider a special subsidy to relatives or friends of senior citizens in order that they can care for their relatives, or the senior citizens at least can have provision for extra care in their homes rather than be tempted to be transferred to nursing homes or senior citizens lodges because the subsidy is already there. As a result, of course, if they are transferred there, there is a need for escalating building and capital expenditures and

operating expenditures of nursing homes and lodges. So, Mr. Speaker, I hope he considers that area for a special subsidy to relatives and friends where senior citizens who want to stay at home, in fact, may very well do so, and probably be a lot happier than they are in institutions.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the minister has indicated an interest in the area of family practice in the Province of Alberta. I think the minister is aware that this province has certainly set a pace across Canada for family practice education at a postgraduate level, and there is a great need here for expanded support services. Mr. Speaker, one comment here: it's a shame that this province has not followed up on the initiation of that postgraduate course and given the support to this particular area that other provinces have, and, as a matter of fact, have surpassed us. I think the minister has indicated his interest in this area, and I hope he will follow through and indeed give adequate support for this vital area of general practice, which provides the primary comprehensive, continuing care that is so needed in this province and in Canada.

Thank you.

MR. DOAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words on this bill today because we do have a hospital problem in my constituency. I am very pleased with the opening remarks of our minister. He has indicated sincere interest in our hospital problems.

In the Town of Innisfail, we have a small hospital of about 40 or 50 beds, but the building was built in 2 parts. One is quite an older part of the building and has become quite dilapidated. It happens that this is where our operating room is located. The facilities there, I'm sure, have become quite antiquated. However, in meeting with the hospital commission in Edmonton in the last year or year and a half, we were told that we would have consideration of redeveloping our hospital there in the very near future. As a matter of fact, we anticipated it this year. However, we were also told at the same time that the City of Red Deer, which is in the centre of my constituency, would possibly develop into a specialized hospital care place, and this is understandable. I think this is what our people want. They would like to go to a place where they will obtain special care. There isn't any doubt that this should be in a centre, probably servicing several areas.

However, we are in an area where the rural population probably is the heaviest in the province. We have a considerable number of our people who have come to that stage in life when they do need some care. I was glad to hear the minister mention the two types of care: the extended health care, which I understand is more or less . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: A nursing home.

MR. DOAN: . . . a nursing home. We have an old folks' home in our town and it is always filled to capacity. We have a considerable waiting list. We are also wishing for a nursing home. However, I understand from the hospital commission that in building our hospital they intend to make, and possibly use, half of it for extended care and the other half for active care, which I believe would also be a good idea. But I want to draw to the minister's attention that we do have a waiting list in our Red Deer Hospital at the present time of between 800 and 900 applicants. I understand they're anticipating a very extensive development there of some \$35 million. But the people are a little concerned, because up until now there has been no indication of starting on this program, and we wonder when we are going to be able to look after this number of people.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the minister wish to close the debate?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, very briefly, first of all I would like to thank the hon. members who participated in the debate on the bill. There is no doubt, as I said during the course of moving second reading, that I will certainly need their help and co-operation because of the basically decentralized decision-making system in the hospital and health care field.

There are only two, I think, that require specific answers. One is from the hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway. I think when I was referring to home care, I was talking about the general area of home care. Of course, it is something that we should take a look at on a general basis. As the hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway knows better than I, we now, for instance, in some hospitals are having dialysis units on a home care basis. I think it is an area that has merit and potential. Of course, we'll have to examine it in terms of reducing the pressure on our hospital facilities, but balancing, of course, that economic cost against the other, with our mutual goal of achieving better health care for the citizen.

With respect to the specific mentioned by the hon. Member for Innisfail, I certainly would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that with respect to individual hospital problems I encourage hon. members to come to my office. I think the reorganization of government by the Premier and the two ministers in a field that overlaps to a great degree, is a recognition of the fact that it is such a large and vast field that it requires more personal ministerial attention. I encourage hon. members who have individual hospital problems by all means to come to my office and discuss them with me, because I would be happy to discuss them. Please don't assume that you're going to get everything you want. But I really think we can sit down and take a look at a program for MLAs in terms of the need for facilities you have, and what we can credibly afford to do, Mr. Speaker, over the next three and a half or four years.

[The motion was carried. Bill No. 9 was read a second time.]

MR. SPEAKER: I believe the hon. Member for Vegreville wishes to revert to Introduction of Visitors if the House gives leave.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS (reversion)

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Speaker, the gentleman I was going to introduce, which I thought was very appropriate, the chairman of the Hospital Visitors Committee, walked out just as you stood.

GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS (continued) (Second Reading)

Bill 18 The Department of Telephones and Utilities Amendment Act, 1975

DR. WARRACK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to move second reading of Bill 18, The Department of Telephones and Utilities Amendment Act, 1975.

In doing so, Mr. Speaker, I thought I would address a number of brief remarks on the programs that are being undertaken under the now renamed Department of Utilities and Telephones, and follow up on some of the concerns that might be expressed, and also on the remarks I made at the time of introducing the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I referred to the new amendment and the new department as a part of government reorganization in terms of the emphasis on utilities in Alberta, across Alberta generally in all of its parts and all of its people, but in addition and particularly with respect to the very great emphasis that has been placed, beginning in the last term of our government, on rural utilities, and will make some remarks about that. So there is that emphasis in terms of utilities in Alberta. Secondly, not at all to suggest that there is a lessening of importance or emphasis on telephones, rather that the utilities and telephones concept is intended to include telephones as a subset of the utilities concept.

Speaking to the utilities functions and programs themselves, Mr. Speaker: particularly highlighted in its importance to Alberta is the rural gas undertaking that has been made and is now under way. I would refer hon. members to the early times of the natural gas policies generally [made] by this government for Alberta, and particularly to the New Natural Gas Policies for Albertans statement, dated November 1972. In it are some of the early positions with respect to energy policy generally as far as natural gas is concerned in its conservation, in its pricing, in its use as a resource upgrading source in Alberta, and as to its greater availability to the citizens of Alberta, particularly to the then 20 per cent of Albertans who were going without that particular convenience and very great assist in their lives.

In addition to that, I would draw members' attention to Rural Gas Policy, Position Paper No. 11, tabled by my predecessor in the Legislature in April, 1973, followed shortly thereafter by the extensive guidelines that were put forth: Natural Gas for Rural Albertans -- guidelines to the development, construction and operation of the programs that were intended at that time and are now under way. This is dated May, 1973. Finally Mr. Speaker, I refer, still in the natural gas area, to the rebate plan, Position Paper No. 18, tabled in the Legislature in May, 1974.

These programs have been going forward since those dates, and a great deal of work has been done. A great deal of work remains to be done, and I'd like not only to admit but to state at the outset that there are a great number of problems. I think this is to be expected in a major undertaking that is done on a relatively collapsed time frame, particularly in a booming province. We're all happy to know that's the case and to feel the benefits, but at the same time, [there are] shortages that amount to competition for materials and people which are necessary to put these programs and facilities into place and make the service available to people. These programs are under way, and I really think it's only fair to offer my congratulations to my predecessor with respect to the amount that has been accomplished in a very short time period, in the order of some 14,000 additional hookups, as I understand it, already in place under the program.

So the construction is going forward in a large number of co-operatives. Many others are in a formative stage. All rural members will know that there are a variety of ways to approach the question of distribution, the service areas within the franchised areas, the basic gas supply, the distribution within the franchised and service areas from there, and all the attendant problems in pricing that are involved.

In addition, with respect to the matter of supply, the area of gas Alberta that secures the supply and then resells it to the users and distributors with respect to these

co-ops, is a part of the Department of Utilities and Telephones operation, and a major part indeed.

The rebate plan under way is one that does protect, as stated in the position paper put forward in the Legislature, the Alberta user from the full impact of price increases that would otherwise be the case with respect to the use of natural gas in Alberta by Albertans.

This very brief survey with respect to the natural gas considerations involved -- the programs to build and construct these facilities, to operate and secure the necessary materials for them, and the rebate plan, which is a major budgetary item and a major protection for the Alberta users, are under way within the purview of the Department of Utilities and Telephones Act. Certainly I would re-emphasize that I recognize there are many of these situations under development across the province that do have problems of one sort and another. I would also take the opportunity to emphasize the view, Mr. Speaker, that these are rather happy problems in that we are no longer, as a very short time ago, worrying about rural areas dying, and why it is that these rural areas cannot have natural gas for their available use and consumption. But we are, in fact, worrying about the happy problems of getting it done, of implementing these important programs that follow up from the policies I mentioned at the outset of my remarks. So these are happy problems, in my view. They are, at the same time, frustrating ones from time to time, but I would certainly like to assure all hon. members that I want to do everything I can, and solicit their co-operation on behalf of their constituents to assist in having these programs go forward in the most orderly and cost-effective manner possible.

Another important area in the utilities and telephones jurisdiction refers to the electric services. I would emphasize particularly the rural electric program that was undertaken by the previous government. A very large number of rural electrification associations were formed on a co-operative basis and are under way at the present time. There are still some fill-in and extension situations that need to be dealt with. Certainly there are some situations where the capital of the facilities has been depreciated so that there is, in some instances, a rather major need for refurbishing of the electrical facilities for distribution to rural Alberta. All of these are part of the rural electric responsibilities in the Department of Utilities and Telephones.

It's also important to emphasize the responsibilities and review involved in the basic supply of electrical power in Alberta with respect to many questions. I would look forward to comment and advice on many of these from members of the Legislature. Some of these problems focus in areas of what fuels ought to be used in the present, intermediate, and longer term future for the generation of electrical power. Certainly, as we look towards the rapid growth of Alberta, and as we also look towards a redressing of the geographic and economic sector balance of what we have in Alberta, in offering job opportunities to young Albertans in the future, we have a real horizon of additional electrical power supply in our future. These need to be met or the objectives of this growth and diversification can be lost, in part at least.

In meeting some of these kinds of objectives, we need to address the best fuel source that might be used. For example, should natural gas be used in generating electricity? If so, on what basis: base load versus peak loading kinds of facilities? Also, what about the role of coal on the plains, and as far as it might be involved in the mountain coal and eastern slopes areas of the province. But primarily this involves the thermal coal, or the plains coal as it is often referred to. The questions of what degree of use should be in the planning horizon to provide electricity in the future from there, coupled with this supply-source set of questions, are the questions of hydro with respect to electrical power generation in the future in Alberta. Certainly we have important water impoundments that yield this kind of service to Alberta.

There are other potentials that from time to time have been brought up and discussed in the Legislature, as to other areas in the future. Most of these take a great deal of time to bring on stream, but at the same time need to be a part of the planning for the future that's necessary to have the power generation capability in Alberta that we will need, as we work toward meeting our aspirations in Alberta's future economic health. These responsibilities, along with those of other involved ministers and departments and certainly the Energy Resources Conservation Board, also fall to a very great extent within my responsibilities in utilities and telephones.

I would also like to make some remarks to the specific matter of telephones, with respect to the very able -- I think, from my very brief review that's been possible so far -- Crown corporation of Alberta Government Telephones and the basic concept of providing this service to Albertans and doing it on a basis of relatively equal opportunity for people to have telephone service, as distinct from an alternate approach. This might, Mr. Speaker, be something like a major development in a clustered area of population, which could be done much more cheaply, more leaving the rural areas, the more remote areas, of Alberta without proper service at a reasonable price.

I do not subscribe to that alternative but do, in fact, subscribe to the one that was pressed forward by the previous government, and presently by Alberta Government Telephones, with respect to the fact that relatively equal opportunity for this service is provided across Alberta. The rates that are applicable there come forward on a basis of application, like any similar company, to the Public Utilities Board for review, and these rate matters are decided then. It's my understanding that it was in the year 1967 that the last rate increase was granted to Alberta Government Telephones.

The buried cable program was nearly complete -- at least in terms of the planning stages and the basic construction operations -- at the time of our government's responsibility. That has not been completed.

The extended area service that had been undertaken, and helped many communities prior to this government's involvement, was continued up to the 15-mile limit. The extension of that, which has been referred to as the extended flat rate call system, is now under way and that work is going forward in the many areas of Alberta where it was agreed by the parties concerned, whose rates would be affected, that they did indeed want this additional service.

One area that is not directly reflected in Bill 18, Mr. Speaker, but one I would like to comment on, is the attitude or viewpoint that has been suggested to the government that the Public Utilities Board would be better administratively responsible to the Attorney General than to myself as the Minister of Utilities and Telephones. This was mentioned by the Premier in his remarks on Monday evening, with regard to respecting the independent nature and autonomy of the important judgments that need to be made by the Public Utilities Board. With the increasing emphasis on utilities and the provision of those services in Alberta, there would be some real question in concept as to whether the Public Utilities Board ought to be administratively responsible to the same department and to the same minister under whom those other areas of utility planning and policy were being devised. So that is the basic thinking that underlies the reorganization of the public Utilities Board from the Department of Utilities and Telephones to the Department of the Attorney General.

I recognize that I'm a bit outside the exact confines of Bill 18 in making those remarks, but I'm sure the subject would be in the minds of a number of members. I take this opportunity to mention that as well as the preceding remarks that are directed briefly to the Department of Utilities and Telephones, its responsibilities and the bill before us that would establish the department as the Department of Utilities and Telephones.

[The motion was carried. Bill 18 was read a second time.]

Bill 19 The Department of Business Development and Tourism Act, 1975

MR. DOWLING: Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 19, The Department of Business Development and Tourism Act.

The principle of this bill, Mr. Speaker, is to facilitate the organizational changes in the new Department of Business Development and Tourism. The bill will emphasize small business and regional business opportunities in the province. It essentially involves an amalgamation of tourism, the main elements of the former Department of Industry and Commerce, and the northern development group.

The transportation division of the former Department of Industry and Commerce, along with the responsibility for the Alberta Resources Railway, will become a part of the Department of Transportation. The Department of Business Development and Tourism will be responsible for the Alberta Opportunity Company as well as the Alberta Export Agency and the Research Council of Alberta.

One of our principal economic objectives is to provide creative earning opportunities for all of Alberta. We are confident that both the resources and the potential exist in Alberta to achieve this objective. Clearly, we must complement our reliance on primary production and resource extraction by accenting secondary and tertiary industrial development. It is the intent of the department to emphasize support and service to small and medium-sized businesses in Alberta.

Alberta has provided its citizens with a high standard of living through resource export, but many of our presently utilized resources may soon attain their maximum production level. In the long run, resource exports will probably decline as the non-renewable resources are depleted. For this reason, Mr. Speaker, we must diversify our economy by planning and realizing alternative means of generating income and employment.

It has been our experience that large industrial complexes eventually become reasonably self-sufficient, but there is a real and constant requirement for government liaison in support programs among small and medium-sized businesses. The most significant function of the Department of Business Development and Tourism therefore, Mr. Speaker, will be to speak for and service the business community in Alberta. Industrial growth must be achieved in an orderly fashion. It is our intention to assist business in relating its activities to this government's philosophy of economic development over the entire province. Economic growth in Alberta will provide challenging opportunities for small business activity and individual entrepreneurial talent. It is our intention also, Mr. Speaker, through the Department of Business Development and Tourism, as a principal objective, to attain a position of orderly economic development through supporting, fostering, and servicing these small and medium-sized businesses in Alberta.

Thank you.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say a word or two. First of all, it took me about 18 months to get the Minister Without Portfolio into a portfolio. Now I'd like to spend the next four years getting him out of the ministry he is in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to say I think . . .

MR. CLARK: Give him heck, Walt.

DR. BUCK: . . . I would be much happier if the department was divided into northern development and tourism and the other portion of the department was left the way it is. I think if we're going to really make this department function properly, the two departments should be divided. Now I don't think we should do that by adding another portfolio. Heaven only knows, we have enough portfolios now. The only thing keeping the Premier from fulfilling all his promises about everybody who wins getting into cabinet is the fact that they've run out of benches. Never mind the cost -- that's nothing. What's a million dollar airplane here or there?

AN HON. MEMBER: Get six more.

DR. BUCK: Seriously, Mr. Speaker, I really think tourism should be married with northern development. It's sort of a natural marriage. Leave the other portion as a separate department.

I bring to the attention of the new members, especially, the fact that the Alberta Opportunity Company is not helping the small businessman the way it should. It is just a complete failure as far as I'm concerned, if the thrust was supposed to be in that direction. I voted in all good conscience to support the establishment of that fund. I have great respect for the people working in the department, but I don't have too much respect for what has happened. It just hasn't been helping the small businessman. The loans just haven't been small enough for the little fellow who can't go to the Royal Bank or the Bank of Commerce and put down in black and white his cash flow, his debits, his credits, his liabilities, his assets, and get a loan from them.

You and I, as the neighbors of that small businessman down the street, know the man's been making a living for the last 5 or 6 years. You know all he needs is \$20,000 or \$22,000 to enlarge his premises, increase his stock. We, the taxpayers, are going to get all of our money back plus the interest rate. I have less confidence in some of the \$300,000, \$400,000, \$500,000, and \$600,000 loans, because in many of those I don't think we're going to get our money back.

But the hon. Deputy Premier says, well, we have to blow one or two. It's fine for the Deputy Premier to say that because it's not coming out of his pocket. In the lump sum, few tax dollars are. But I think the government has to be just a bit more responsible than that, and not blow a half million here and a half million there.

It's sure a lot easier to spend the other guy's money than it is to spend your own. And if you're borrowing for yourself, if you need \$150,000 you figure that's all you can handle. But if you're going to borrow from the government you might as well have an extra \$120,000 because it might be a little easier to get along. If the government's going to give it to you, you might as well take an extra \$120,000.

I've said this to the former minister and I'm going to say it to the new minister: my heart bleeds for poor Jim Pattison of Neonex and my old buddy Ron Southern of Atco. They got half a million dollars apiece from the Alberta Opportunity Company. I'm sure they're laughing all the way to the bank, because where else could they get it at that kind of rate? It's good business on their part. But poor old Jim Pattison and poor old Ron Southern have the resources to go to the Royal Bank or the Imperial Bank of Commerce and borrow half a million dollars; they're not going to be turned down. But that little fellow who wants \$20,000 to enlarge his premises is going to get turned down by the regular banking sources. Those are the people we want to help. If this government keeps talking about thrust and helping the little businessman in the small community, because we want the small communities to expand, they had better put their money where their mouths are -- mouth is -- where the minister's mouth is. It's just that plain and simple. Those are the people who need the help.

AN HON. MEMBER: Put some teeth in his mouth for the little guy.

DR. BUCK: The little fellow. So if we have any justification in this Legislature for getting involved in lending money, it's the little fellow we want to help.

Mr. Speaker, there are other areas we can look at when the bill goes to committee, but I would just like to reinforce the new minister, with his new enthusiasm, to help the little businessman. Let's really do that. Because it is the small businessman in the small community who has the unfair competition of the large chains, the volume buyers. If there is anybody we want to help, it's that little guy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, in taking part in this debate, I recall the discussion which took place in this Assembly in 1972 when The Alberta Opportunity Fund Act was introduced. During the discussion of second reading of that act, the then minister made it quite clear this government was not interested in making grants available to business and that there would be provision for loans. Getting into the actual expenditures of grants by the public to industry just simply wasn't part of the philosophy of the now government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I notice that that particular philosophy seems to have been set aside, because a good part of the bill we're dealing with today concerns grants. I notice in Section 6 the minister is authorized to make grants, then in Section 6(2), "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations authorizing the Minister to make grants . . .". The outlines of the limitation on those grants are contained in subsection (2).

The only positive feature I can see about this, Mr. Speaker, is that at least there seems to be some commitment to regulations as far as grants are concerned. Because in just very quickly reading the Auditor's report on the Alberta Export Agency case, the Dr. Purnell case, one of the complaints the Auditor makes quite clearly is that it is inexcusable or wrong for the minister to have unfettered authority to make rights which are not subject to regulations passed by order in council.

But that doesn't really deal with the larger question, Mr. Speaker, of whether or not we should be getting into the business of making grants available to business. I say that because I listened very carefully to the rhetoric three years ago of the then minister, who said the grants approach would be the wrong way to go and only by making credit available through the Alberta Opportunity Company as a last resort, where people have an obligation to pay it back, are we going to help the small businessman.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I really wonder to what extent we're getting ourselves onto a rather slippery road here once we accept the proposition of switching from loans to grants. I may have some sympathy that we're going to have a scheme of grants to smaller business. I don't really share any enthusiasm, however, if we find ourselves in a position where we're handing out large amounts of grants to large corporations which should be able to fend for themselves.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, there's a very real danger in our effort to diversify the economy, if we commit ourselves to continually prop up, through public subsidies or grants, businesses which are not going to be able to stand on their own feet. I know that we can talk about many glamorous ideas for diversifying the Alberta economy. These ideas may seem very reasonable, but if the consequence of making them a reality is subsidies on an ongoing basis, or millions of dollars of taxpayers' money being poured into grants to get them started, are we not just simply going the same route as the DREE program which was much criticized, and as a matter of fact, during the first term of this government, often criticized in the House by government members?

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that this is a very important matter I would like to see the minister respond to when he concludes the debate. Just what is the philosophy of the Government of Alberta with respect to grants? How far are we going to go? Are we going to make grants available to small business, or are we going to extend this principle to large concerns? Are we going to give Imperial Oil a little bit of money to help them build their refinery in Edmonton which replaces the refinery in Calgary? Are we going to make funds available to the petrochemical industry in relocation grants or front-end assistance or cushioning the price of natural gas? What is the extent of public commitment going to be in this province to diversify the economy?

I think the people of Alberta, Mr. Speaker, have a right to know what the government's philosophy is, and what the perimeters are of the policy. As things stand here, what we are doing, Mr. Speaker, is passing a bill which gives the Lieutenant Governor in Council carte blanche authorization to hand out millions and millions of dollars of public funds. I notice in subsection (1)b, money "appropriated by the Legislature" or a grant authorized "pursuant to a special warrant". Well, Mr. Speaker, we've had experience with special warrants in this province. As I read the act, it simply means that if a particular program has not been debated in the Legislature, under the terms of this legislation the government could hand over money by special warrant, and it would never be debated in the Legislature except in an after-the-fact way. So, Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue which, I think, has to be debated during the discussion of this particular department of the government.

Another area that seems to me to be important is: just what does this government plan to do to protect the retailer in the petroleum field? We've had a number of questions last week and again this week about the particular problems faced by small service station operators belonging to the Alberta Automotive Retailers' Association. They're having real troubles with their companies which are also involved in retailing. We have the example, Mr. Speaker, of the major integrated oil companies going into the self-serve business in a very big way. The only end result of this kind of policy, Mr. Speaker, as I see it, will be to run the smaller independent retail outlet out of the picture completely, out of business. We will then find ourselves with the major oil companies having almost complete control of every facet of energy in this province -- the production of energy, and the final retailing of oil and gas products. I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we have some commitment from this government about the McKenzie report on gasoline marketing which was tabled in 1969 and which made some very accurate observations about the marketing of petroleum products in Alberta. But to date very little progress has been made to implement the major recommendations of the McKenzie report.

Mr. Speaker, what concerned me as I listened to the minister answer questions during the question period on the ARA matter is that, while he's prepared to try and arrange a meeting, there doesn't seem to be any real commitment to bring in legislation which will ensure that the major portion of the market is maintained for the small retail outlet. I'd like to see the Government of Alberta introduce legislation similar to the Maryland legislation, Mr. Speaker, which represents a functional divorce so that the integrated oil companies cannot be in the retailing business. Mr. Speaker, I realize that the

counter of the integrated companies is that the retailers in Alberta are making too high a markup. Well, I don't accept that proposition, Mr. Speaker. In any event, if we don't maintain the present service station operators in the field, and we find that the self-serve operations owned directly by the integrated oil companies replace them, the opportunity in our urban areas to properly service our motor vehicles will certainly be reduced. Mr. Speaker, that not only has an impact on the convenience to the public, which is important, but also in terms of automobile safety as well.

Mr. Speaker, as I have some additional comments to make on this bill, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: May the hon. member adjourn the debate?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow night we'll continue with bills on the Order Paper at second reading, and if bills are completed, move to committee study.

MR. SPEAKER: The time being indistinguishable from 5:30, the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 2:30 o'clock.

[The House rose at 5:29 p.m.]

