

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Wednesday, June 4, 1975

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce three bills. They are all money bills. His Honor the Honorable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of the bills, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Bill 3 The Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act

MR. LEITCH: The first bill, Mr. Speaker, is Bill No. 3, The Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act. The purpose of this bill is to provide the necessary funds for expenditures of the government from April 1, 1975, until the Legislature can fully debate the items in the budget presented to the Legislature on May 30.

[Leave being granted, Bill 3 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill 11 The Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation Amendment Act, 1975

MR. LEITCH: The second of the three bills, Mr. Speaker, is Bill 11, being a bill to amend The Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation Act. The purpose of this bill is to increase the maximum borrowings permitted under that legislation from \$1.4 billion to \$1.7 billion.

[Leave being granted, Bill 11 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill 23 The Financial Administration Amendment Act, 1975

MR. LEITCH: The last of the three bills, Mr. Speaker, is a bill to amend The Financial Administration Act. The purpose of this bill, Mr. Speaker, is twofold: first, to provide an increase in the salary of the Provincial Auditor effective August 1, 1974; secondly, to provide amendments to enable the Data Centre to be operated in other than the Auditor's Office.

[Leave being granted, Bill 23 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill 5 The Senior Citizens Benefits Amendment Act, 1975

MISS HUNLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being Bill 5, The Senior Citizens Benefits Amendment Act, 1975. The purpose of this bill is to make possible the payment of the Alberta assured income plan benefits.

[applause]

[Leave being granted, Bill 5 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill 10 The Irrigation Amendment Act, 1975

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being The Irrigation Amendment Act, 1975. This bill, Mr. Speaker, is designed to restructure the irrigation advisory council.

[Leave being granted, Bill 10 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill 14 The Ombudsman Amendment Act, 1975

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being Bill 14, The Ombudsman Amendment Act, 1975. This bill is a money bill and His Honor the Honorable the Lieutenant-Governor, having being informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

The purpose of the bill is to increase the annual salary of the Ombudsman from the present figure of \$30,000 a year to \$34,000 per year, effective January 1, 1975.

[Leave being granted, Bill 14 was introduced and read a first time.]

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. DONNELLY: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to this Assembly, 42 Grade 6 students from Sherwood school in my constituency. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Tilbrook, Mrs. Keith, Mr. Scoville, and Mr. Thompson. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask them to rise and be recognized by the House.

MR. KIDD: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to the members of this Legislative Assembly, 54 Grade 5 pupils of the Elbow Valley school in my constituency. They are accompanied by their teachers, Miss Sharon Bremner, Mr. Keith Brind, Mr. Gord Elson, and one set of parents: Mr. Jack and Mrs. Joan Merrifield. They are in the members gallery, and I would ask them to rise so they can be recognized by this Assembly.

TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. DOWLING: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the annual report required under Section 10(4) of The Department of Industry and Commerce Act.

I should mention that the annual report of the Northern Alberta Development Council for 1974 was tabled on February 6, 1975.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Farmland -- Rent Increase

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the Minister of Agriculture. Could the minister confirm whether Canadian Pacific or one of the subsidiaries of the CPR is the landholding company which the Farmers' Advocate reported to be increasing lease rental prices for farmland in Alberta from 45 to 240 per cent last year?

MR. MOORE: My information, Mr. Speaker, is that indeed it was Marathon Realty. In answer to the hon. member's earlier question, my information also is that the situation insofar as it was reported in the Farmers' Advocate annual report has not changed.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. In light of the minister's answer, is the minister himself considering becoming involved in the matter raised by the Farmers' Advocate in light of the kinds of increases that Marathon Realty has imposed upon farmers?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, as was indicated in the report of the Farmers' Advocate, the problem he encountered on that occasion has been presented to the Land Use Forum. That, along with a good number of other questions about land utilization, will form the basis of the report the Land Use Forum will be making toward the latter part of this year.

MR. CLARK: Further supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Has the minister discussed this matter with officials of Marathon Realty?

MR. MOORE: No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. CLARK: Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Does the minister plan to discuss the matter with officials of Marathon Realty?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, so far as I've been able to determine, there is not on their behalf any violation of any provincial statute. I would prefer that matters of that nature be brought to the Land Use Forum. Until we have a report from the Land Use Forum, and the government and, indeed, the Legislature has an opportunity to study that report, I don't anticipate direct contact with them.

MR. CLARK: One further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister prepared to use his good auspices personally to discuss the matter with Marathon Realty, in light of the problems this has caused to a number of farmers in Alberta?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, that was the prime reason the former Minister of Agriculture established the office of the Farmers' Advocate. In my view, his office has gone a considerable distance in discussing the matter with the realty firm involved, and tried to do his very best to change that situation in the interests of the farmers involved.

MR. CLARK: Unsuccessfully?

Rural Police -- Firearms

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, the second question I'd like to ask of the Solicitor General. Is the Solicitor General in a position to indicate to the Assembly the status of the recommendations from the Ombudsman regarding the question of firearms in the presence of county and rural police forces?

MR. FARRAN: Mr. Speaker, that was not exactly a recommendation from the Ombudsman. He recognized that the matter was beyond his jurisdiction, but he did offer some gratuitous advice, admittedly. This is presently being studied with a view to determining what the best course is for the government to pursue.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Has the Solicitor General met with representatives of the rural governments, counties, which find that their law enforcement officers, due to provincial government regulations -- not legislation -- are not able to have firearms?

MR. FARRAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm well acquainted with the problem. I met the principal individuals concerned before I assumed my present office. I don't think there's one aspect of the particular problem I'm not acquainted with.

MR. CLARK: One last supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In light of the fact the minister is acquainted with every aspect of the matter, can he announce to the Assembly today what he's going to do about it?

MR. FARRAN: Mr. Speaker, I will, when we're ready to make a statement.

Steel Industry

MR. GHITTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Business Development and Tourism. I'm wondering if the hon. minister could advise the House as to the nature of a company known as Steel Alberta?

AN HON. MEMBER: How do you spell that?

MR. DOWLING: Mr. Speaker, I do know of Steel Alberta. It's a proposal for a provincial government entity relative to steel. Of course, I'm not in a position to present the

details to the House at this time. We as a province have some considerable input into steel development in Alberta through our involvement with the IPSCO organization.

MR. GHITTER: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is it the intention of the government to transfer its IPSCO shares to Steel Alberta?

MR. DOWLING: There has been no decision taken on that, Mr. Speaker. I would imagine that in developing steel, all sorts of alternatives will be examined. I would suspect if that one is presented to the people who make that decision, it will be examined very carefully.

MR. GHITTER: Further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister clarify whether the government is in a position to actually transfer its shares in IPSCO, considering the agreement it entered into at the time it acquired the IPSCO shares?

MR. DOWLING: I would suspect, Mr. Speaker, that is a matter relative to the agreement. I'm not in a position to respond on that point.

MR. GHITTER: Further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is it the further intention of the government to consider transferring a portion of Steel Alberta to the Alberta Energy Company?

MR. DOWLING: I understand, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Energy Company is interested in becoming involved in a number of things which could, in fact, stimulate the economic development of the province. Whether they are, in fact, interested in Steel Alberta or any part of IPSCO, I'm not sure.

MR. GHITTER: Further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the hon. minister be in a position to advise when he would be able to report to the House as to the intentions of the government relative to Steel Alberta?

MR. DOWLING: I would suspect if there's some movement relative to Steel Alberta, the Alberta Energy Company, and IPSCO regarding the Energy Company's involvement, it would have to come from the Alberta Energy Company, Mr. Speaker.

Food Sanitation

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Social Services and Community Health. In view of the fact that the last report of the Department of Health indicates 545 persons in Alberta died of food poisoning, namely salmonella infections, has any monitoring of the causes of this sickness been done?

MISS HUNLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm a little taken aback by the comment that 545 people died. I was not aware of that. To my knowledge, we have not had any deaths from food poisoning. I would have to double-check the report and advise the hon. member and this House.

MR. TAYLOR: Supplementary. I will recheck to see if they died or were just ill.

DR. BUCK: There is a difference.

MR. TAYLOR: There's a slight difference. However, in reading it, I thought they had died. The point I'm trying to make is: have we made any check on the sources of the infection with a view to ascertaining whether it's from contaminated fowl or meat?

MISS HUNLEY: Mr. Speaker, the procedure we follow in the event of a complaint about food poisoning is that it's reported to the municipal health inspector who investigates the source, if possible. One of the concerns we have, and one of the problems that arises, is that it isn't always determined soon enough. Some of the evidence has then already disappeared. But certainly, it's followed up very carefully through the Department of Health.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary. Is it possible that some of the tainted hamburger from eastern Canada got into our province?

MISS HUNLEY: I don't think so, Mr. Speaker.

DR. BUCK: A supplementary to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Is she in a position to advise the House if the deadline will be extended for truckers to comply with the directive that they must have adequate refrigeration in trucks that haul groceries? Is this deadline going to be extended, or rigidly enforced?

MISS HUNLEY: Mr. Speaker, that deadline has already been extended from 1970 till 1972, and from 1972 till 1974. In the interest of the health of our citizens, we felt that sooner or later they must make the move to have temperature control for perishable foods. As a result, the deadline will not be extended beyond July 1, 1975.

Freight Rates

MR. KIDD: Mr. Speaker, this question is directed to the hon. Minister of Transportation. Could he comment on a newspaper statement by Professor George Wilson of Indiana University that in the West, transportation is a real obsession and isn't that important any more?

MR. SPEAKER: Possibly the hon. member could seek the hon. minister's comments on another occasion.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's a good question.

MR. NOTLEY: A supplementary question, if I may, to the hon. . . .

MR. SPEAKER: It's difficult to conceive a supplementary to a request for a comment. The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview followed by the hon. Member for Bow Valley.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I was going to ask another minister a question, but I think I'll take the opportunity of asking my supplementary question because I know this is an important subject.

My question to the hon. minister is: has the government made any representation to Ottawa on the question of freight rates? Can the minister advise the Assembly whether this regrettable report by Dr. Wilson is having any bearing on federal transportation policy?

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, the Mr. Wilson referred to works for the prime contractor that did a study which is in the process of being completed after further input from the four western provinces and the federal government. We don't agree with Mr. Wilson's assessment of the situation and have been making representations. My information is that his observations will not have an impact on the impending national transportation policy that will be announced.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the hon. minister. Since assuming office, has he had an opportunity to discuss with either Mr. Lang or any other federal officials the Crowsnest rates question and the federal government's attitude toward preserving the Crowsnest Pass agreement?

DR. HORNER: Not more recently than the earlier meeting I, as the Minister of Agriculture, had with the other western ministers. I believe that was in January or in that area. I will be meeting with Mr. Marchand in the near future and intend to bring that matter up.

MR. NOTLEY: A further supplementary question. Is it the government's intention to make representation to Ottawa that the Crowsnest Pass agreement is unamendable as far as western Canada is concerned?

DR. HORNER: I don't mind repeating the statement of the Government of Alberta that it is unamendable as far as we're concerned.

Beef Industry

MR. MANDEVILLE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. Is the Department of Agriculture monitoring cattle numbers, broken down into cows and feeder cattle, to determine the supply and demand pattern?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, although we do some monitoring in the Department of Agriculture, we depend to a large extent on information we get from other sources. Certainly we utilize information supplied by the Canadian cattle commission, Western Stock Growers, and groups of that nature.

MR. MANDEVILLE: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister had any indication of the number of cattle feeders which have gone out of business in the last 18 months?

MR. MOORE: Cattle feedlots? Mr. Speaker, not those who went completely out of business. By that the hon. member would be referring to those who either sold out or closed up their operations. It's very difficult to tell, as the hon. member would know, whether those who have no cattle in their feedlots are actually out of business, or waiting until an opportune time to fill them again. The figures we do have probably relate to the number of cattle on feed, as opposed to perhaps a year ago or something of that nature.

In addition, I might say we do try to get figures from a western Canada point of view and a Canadian point of view. Although we may have accurate figures for the Province of Alberta, it is really hard to relate what the total picture would be with regard to market opportunities and prices in the future unless you have some pretty firm figures for all Canada. Indeed, if we get to the position where the Canada-U.S. border closure is

resolved by the federal government, we would need, of course, accurate figures with respect to United States cattle numbers as well.

Northeastern Alberta Commissioner

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Premier a question. In light of the fact we are now on subcommittee estimates of the Department of Municipal Affairs, can the hon. Premier indicate when the northeast commissioner will be available for questioning in subcommittee?

MR. LOUGHEED: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we were prepared to answer that question today through the Minister of Municipal Affairs who, unfortunately, had to leave the city to journey to his constituency. On his behalf, we've made tentative arrangements if the subcommittee so requests -- I believe it would be Subcommittee B -- to have the northeast commissioner in attendance before the subcommittee at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, June 17.

Assured Income Plan

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. In light of the bill introduced by the federal Minister of Welfare, which would give pension benefits to the spouse of a pensioner when the spouse is between 60 and 65, is the minister considering any change in the present provincial assured income supplement plan which would give the provincial supplement to people who would qualify under the federal bill -- that is they receive OAS or GIS -- when they are between 60 and 65?

MISS HUNLEY: Mr. Speaker, I've not had the opportunity to look at the legislation, but it's certainly something we are aware of. We've also had that as part of our long-range considerations, but I'm not prepared to make an affirmative statement at this time.

Hunting Regulations

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife. In view of the declining big game population in Alberta, is your department planning to impose any new big game hunting regulations for the fall hunting season?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, they are currently under review and will be coming out very shortly.

Fish Stocking

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: Mr. Speaker, my question, regarding some of the streams and lakes in our western area, is to the Minister of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife. For the benefit of fishermen who seem able to catch more suckers than anything else -- sucker fish, I mean -- I was wondering if he has any plans to remove the sucker fish so the trout can flourish, and the fishermen can have more fun?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, to start with I wasn't just sure what you were after. A program relating to the harvesting of suckers has been in effect. We are considering speeding up the number of fish coming from the fish hatcheries, so we can get better stocking in the streams for the fishermen of Alberta.

Schools -- Discipline

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask a question of the Minister of Education. In view of Mr. Bunney's statements at the ASTA conference in Banff with regard to the breakdown of discipline in the schools, partly due to heavy class loads, has the minister any indication of resignations of teachers so far at the end of this term?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, a joint study on discipline is under way by the Department of Education and the Alberta School Trustees Association. As to a direct answer to the question whether I am aware of any teachers who have resigned because of a lack of discipline, I personally am not.

MR. COOKSON: Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I could ask a supplementary. Has the minister any knowledge of an increase in class loads in the classrooms, outside of the supportive staff in the school?

MR. KOZIAK: Well, Mr. Speaker, an answer to a question placed on the Order Paper by the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview was filed the other day, and as a matter of fact appears in Votes and Proceedings for yesterday. It shows a decline in the pupil-teacher ratio between the years 1968 and 1975 from 19.41 in the 1968-69 school year to 18.40 in the 1973-74 school year. The figures for 1974-75, the present school year, won't be available until some time after the end of June.

MR. APPLEBY: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the hon. minister could indicate if those figures are actual classroom teacher to pupil ratios, or do they include support staff and administrative personnel as well?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, no, they are not actual classroom ratios. That information is not available. They include all the certificated people employed by the boards in whatever capacity.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. In light of his answer that this, in fact, includes support and administrative staff, is the government giving any consideration at this time to increasing funding through the foundation plan so this can be lowered?

MR. KOZIAK: Not at this time, Mr. Speaker.

Environment -- Potash Spill

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Minister of Environment and ask him to report to the Assembly what steps are being taken to clean up the potassium chloride spill on the CN main line, northwest of Hinton.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, with respect to that spill, we're concerned about the time the railway is taking to clean it up. We're advising them that if better progress isn't made by tomorrow, we're prepared to issue a clean-up order. If they don't adhere to that, we'll issue a ministerial stop-order under The Clean Water Act.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Can the minister advise the Assembly the reasons for the delay of almost four weeks in the clean-up?

MR. RUSSELL: Yes, Mr. Speaker. In fairness to the company, I think they did have a problem as a result of a second derailment in the area involving equipment being used in the clean-up.

The major problem revolves around a disposal site for the spilled material, which is now mixed with dirt and gravel. The Department of Environment is insisting a site be found where there will be no harmful effect on ground water or surface drainage channels. So far, the railroad has submitted sites to the department for the stockpiling of the spilled material, none of which have been acceptable. We're concerned now that this has gone on long enough and are prepared to take the steps I spoke of earlier.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question for clarification. As of now, the CN has not found a disposal site acceptable to the department?

MR. RUSSELL: That's right, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that as a temporary relief measure, they are thinking of moving it to their own marshalling yards or sidings in the Hinton area. That, of course, would be an unacceptable permanent solution to the railroad. It's apparent that if they must, they'll have to load it in the cars and haul it back to where it came from.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Has the government made an assessment of the environmental damage caused by the spill?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, we don't have such an assessment in report form yet. Indications are there's no permanent damage of any kind and no fish-kill or harm to fish in nearby Brule Lake. But a number of citizens in Alberta are getting very concerned about the length of time taken to clean this up. The department has tried to co-operate in assessing sites and has had a person out there. That's the situation as of today.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary question. Is it the government's position that the CNR should pay all the costs of the clean-up and whatever environmental damage is caused as a result of the delay in cleaning up the spill?

MR. RUSSELL: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that is the position. Furthermore, if we have to take the further steps I mentioned, there's the possibility of rather stiff fines on a per diem rate.

Body Rub Parlors

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Attorney General. Based on a statement by the mayor of Edmonton claiming the problem is in the hands of the Attorney General, does the Attorney General plan to legislate or take any legal action concerning body rub parlors in Edmonton which have topless attendants?

MR. FOSTER: Mr. Speaker, I haven't seen or heard the statement of the mayor. However, my memory is that the city has some licensing capacity with respect to such commercial ventures in the City of Edmonton.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. What action does the Attorney General plan, in light of the Alberta Bill of Rights, for what may be a discriminatory hiring practice, based on body measurements rather than on the ability to rub, or . . .
[laughter]

MR. FOSTER: If you want [inaudible], answer that now.

MR. CLARK: So seldom you have the answer.

MR. R. SPEAKER: The Attorney General even rubs this lightly.
. . . or females being hired rather than males?

MR. FOSTER: Mr. Speaker, that's a tantalizing legal problem . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Titillating.

MR. FOSTER: . . . and one which I would be happy to address my mind to, if it's in fact requested of us by the mayor of the City of Edmonton, as you suggest. I am not aware of any formal communication to me on this matter at the moment.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, is the hon. minister considering on-site inspection of the facilities?

MR. TAYLOR: If the hon. minister needs any help to measure, I'm a Taylor.
[laughter]

Calgary Ring Road Study

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Minister of Transportation with regard to the DeLeuw Cather ring road study. Is it your intent to table this report in this House, and if so, when? If not, why not?

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, as soon as the report is finalized, it will be made public and tabled in the House.

Federal Budget

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question to the Premier. Has he been requested by the Prime Minister to attend a meeting of first ministers in Ottawa prior to the coming down of the federal budget?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, no, I have not.

MR. CLARK: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Has a request come from the federal government for the Provincial Treasurer or other ministers of the Crown from Alberta to meet with federal officials prior to the coming down of the federal budget?

MR. LEITCH: No such request has come from the federal government to me, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I should elaborate. There are ongoing meetings involving the various ministers with their federal counterparts in which matters that may arise in the federal budget are naturally discussed. We took the question from the hon. Leader of the Opposition as related specifically to the budget.

MR. CLARK: One further supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. Is it the intention of the Premier or the Provincial Treasurer to request a meeting with the Prime Minister, or the Treasurer's counterpart, prior to the coming down of the federal budget?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, with regard to that, I don't really believe it's an appropriate position for a provincial premier to request a meeting to discuss a federal budget. I'd have some concern if he accepted and then decided to reverse the process with regard to our budget in the future.

But as far as we are concerned, we're trying to keep close communication with the federal government. To that end, the Provincial Treasurer has had discussions with the federal Minister of Finance.

Wage and Price Controls

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Premier. Has the Government of Alberta made any representation or has there been any communication with the federal government concerning Alberta's position on the whole question of voluntary price and wage restraints?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I believe I answered almost the identical question from the hon. Member for Little Bow earlier in the House. It was to the effect that at the meeting of first ministers the discussion of a consensus was proposed to us by the Prime Minister and by the federal Minister of Finance. It was left on the basis that if there was a need for further consultation with the provincial premiers, it would be on the call of the Prime Minister. As related to the first question, such a call has not been made.

PWA Operations

MR. GHITTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Transportation. I'm wondering if the government has completed its long-term detailed evaluation in terms of maximizing the opportunities available for the future expansion of PWA, alluded to briefly by the hon. Premier in October 1974.

DR. HORNER: Those are not completed as yet, Mr. Speaker, but are in an ongoing stage.

MR. GHITTER: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister give any indication as to when we might be [made] aware of the evaluation and the terms of it?

DR. HORNER: I would expect, Mr. Speaker, we might have that evaluation by fall.

MR. GHITTER: Further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the hon. minister could advise the House whether the government is considering any additional expenditures relative to PWA at the present time?

DR. HORNER: Not at this time, Mr. Speaker.

MR. GHITTER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Provincial Treasurer. I'm wondering if he has any views as to whether it is the intention of the government to turn FWA into a Crown Corporation?

MR. LEITCH: That, Mr. Speaker, is a matter on which no decision has yet been made.

PWA Air Cargo

MR. GHITTER: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. I'm wondering if the Minister of Agriculture has taken any steps to encourage the use of PWA for air cargo in the areas of breeding stock, processed foods, and the like, as earlier suggested in the House?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, as far as I'm aware, Pacific Western Airlines is a world leader in terms of moving agricultural products, particularly live cattle, around the world.

MR. GHITTER: Supplementary then, Mr. Speaker. Have any steps been taken by FWA in the last year to expand its field in this area, or is this something that is just a carry-through from its prior activities?

DR. BUCK: Frozen semen.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, my information would be that as a company interested in making corporate decisions which will result in an improvement in financial operations, they have

been aggressively seeking new opportunities in the field of moving agricultural products. To what extent they've been successful in that regard, I really don't have that information.

MR. GHITTER: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Possibly the Minister of Transportation would like to allude to changes in policy in PWA in this area since its acquisition by the government.

DR. HORNER: Well, I'm sure the House appreciates there are longer and medium term policies in which we would have a much more major input. At the present time the instructions, through the chairman of the board, are to run a profitable, efficient regional air line. In regard to the cargo part, I might add the company itself is doing an evaluation of air cargo and how it can expand its facilities in that area.

MR. GHITTER: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Will this evaluation of the company be available for the members of the Legislature to look at?

DR. HORNER: If it's that type of report, I see nothing wrong with using it, provided the company has initial access to it to make its decisions.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, supplementary question to the minister. Would the minister be prepared to request of the president of PWA that the evaluation be in a form so it could be made available to the members of the Legislature?

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure even the hon. Leader of the Opposition appreciates we are in a very competitive business in air cargo. I'm not for a moment going to say we will table a document which would help the competition.

MR. CLARK: We're not asking for that.

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Is the minister prepared to ask the president of PWA to prepare the evaluation in such a manner that it could be made available to the members of the Legislature, and none of this other rubbish the minister is talking about? [interjections]

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, my previous answer stands. We're not going to make available a document which would hurt us in a competitive way.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Business Development and Tourism. Is the government, through the Alberta Export Agency, giving priority to PWA in fulfilling orders that have been developed and promoted by the Alberta Export Agency outside Alberta?

MR. DOWLING: Mr. Speaker, in discussions with the Alberta Export Agency people, I did question them on the use of PWA to transport goods and so on to various parts of the world. They indicated -- even members of the private sector indicated -- that at this time air transportation is at such a level that it can't compete with other modes of transportation.

PWA Annual Report

DR. BUCK: Supplementary to the hon. Deputy Premier. Would he inform the House if the annual report of PWA will be tabled in the Legislature?

DR. HORNER: I appreciate that the hon. member was away yesterday, but I answered a similar question from the hon. Member for Little Bow.

DR. BUCK: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. Would the hon. Deputy Premier like to know why I was away, seeing he's being so smart?

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Chairman, or Mr. Speaker, I'd like to know [interjections] if the hon. Deputy Premier can inform the Legislature if he's aware that the returns per share of PWA went from 75 cents down to 45 cents, or thereabouts?

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

The hon. Member for Drumheller.

Food Sanitation (continued)

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege. I've re-read the report, and I'm very pleased to advise that the 540 people who were very ill did not die. I regret this error and apologize to the minister and to the House.

Farm Fuels

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I may take this opportunity to answer two questions asked of me yesterday.

The first, from the Member for Lacombe, asked whether the government was considering removing the coloring from farm fuel. The answer to that question is, no.

The second question was from the Member for Drumheller, who asked what the cost was of coloring such fuel. I've had inquiries made and find that the cost is .0052 cents per gallon, so that if one used a thousand gallons in a year, the indirect cost he would bear would be 52 cents.

* * * * *

Under Standing Order 29:

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 29, I rise to move that this Assembly adjourn immediately to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the rapidly deteriorating rental housing situation in the Province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I do have copies of this motion for other sides of the House.

Mr. Speaker, in briefly stating the reasons for the request for an emergency debate, I'd like to state that yesterday we had the release of the survey by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation on construction and apartment vacancy rates across Canada. It reveals, Mr. Speaker, that apartment construction is down very seriously, especially in the City of Edmonton, and that in our capital city we now have a vacancy rate of less than 1 per cent, which is the equivalent in the industry of no vacancy.

Mr. Speaker, according to the most recent statistics we've received for May 1975, apartment construction in the City of Edmonton is drastically down. To illustrate, Mr. Speaker, in May 1973 we had 292 units under construction. This May, it's down to 24, a drop of 92 per cent.

Furthermore, Statistics Canada indicates that housing costs in our capital city have risen between 30 and 35 per cent in the last year. The no-vacancy rate and spiralling rents create an artificial demand for home ownership. As a consequence, we now see a spiralling home market, and prices going up very, very substantially.

Mr. Speaker, in asking for an emergency debate I point out that this matter is of extreme concern literally to thousands of people in all the major cities and, for that matter, in the entire province. It might be suggested, Mr. Speaker, that this matter could be dealt with under the estimates. However, the estimates could well be two or three or four weeks hence, as far as the Department of Housing is concerned. Moreover, I note under the Alberta Housing estimates for this year that the vast majority, almost all the money allocated, is for home ownership as opposed to rental units.

So, Mr. Speaker, for the reasons I've outlined, we are facing a serious housing crisis. In the customary, traditional route of the Legislature, when a situation of this nature develops, it is certainly in order to call for an emergency debate. I believe the urgency has been demonstrated, and ask for a ruling that we have an opportunity to undertake a full-scale debate on this matter.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, certainly the question raised by the hon. member is one of public importance. The government, because it has stated a priority in the area of housing -- there's a new ministry in that area -- would be willing and happy to discuss the subject of housing at the appropriate time. I suggest the issue here is the urgency of debate at this moment. I frankly disagree that now is the proper time to discuss this important subject, or that the proper route is by Standing Order 29.

It seems to me that in view of the past opportunities the hon. member has had to bring up this subject, and the future opportunities, it would be a very questionable precedent for the House to move at this time to discuss it under the emergency debate process.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the Edmonton City Council brought up this issue at its meeting about a week ago last Tuesday. I think the next day the Minister of Municipal Affairs invited the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview to bring the matter up in debate. The budget debate, in which the hon. member spoke, was just two days ago, on Monday. He had full opportunity to ventilate his approach to the subject at that time. It also seems to me that The Landlord and Tenant Act, which was certainly germane here, is now in committee of the House. Therefore, the item could be brought up by the hon. member at that time.

It seems to me further, Mr. Speaker, the estimates of the Department of Housing and Public Works would give a full opportunity for a wide discussion of the subject. The main

concern I have, though, relates to budget Motion 1 on the Order Paper, which in my view is the proper area for debate, Mr. Speaker.

We'd be prepared to consider moving to that motion immediately after Orders of the Day. After discussion here of this matter, we'll be happy to continue to discuss the subject of housing.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, if I may. The hon. Government House Leader has said Rule 29 relates to urgency of debate rather than urgency of the matter which is under debate. What has to be considered is whether to debate this matter today rather than tomorrow evening or Friday morning will significantly alter or affect the resolution of the problem which has been referred to.

I would suggest the criteria required by Rule 29 aren't being met. To turn around an apartment shortage would require 12 or 18 months. It can't be accomplished solely and immediately by government fiat. In such circumstances, opportunities such as the hon. House Leader has mentioned seem to exist for all members.

If I could refer to some authorities, Mr. Speaker, Erskine May makes these comments about adjournment for a matter of urgent public importance. He comments that such a motion cannot be made if debate on the same subject could be raised during discussion of a matter already on the Order Paper. I note that an amendment to The Landlord and Tenant Act, the motion on the budget, the estimates of the Department of Municipal Affairs, and the estimates of the Department of Housing are all presently before the Assembly.

He notes that such a motion cannot be made if it relates to a matter for which the government "has no administrative responsibility". This government does not have administrative responsibility for the construction or lack of construction of housing in this or any other city. Finally, he quotes a Speaker of the British House of Commons:

What I think was contemplated was the occurrence of some sudden emergency either in home or foreign affairs. [I don't] think it was contemplated . . . that a question of very wide scope, which would demand legislation [or programs] to deal with it in any effective manner, should be the subject of discussion

A story which appeared in the Edmonton Journal, Mr. Speaker, suggested that this similarly short supply of accommodation has existed since at least December of this year. In fact, there has been a 12.5 per cent improvement in the tenancy situation in Edmonton since December.

I think those facts argue against the suddenness of the emergence of this question. The hon. member opposite was in the House in January, at which time the situation was worse, and didn't make the motion at time. I would suggest his failure to do so, clearly argues against the suddenness or urgency of the motion at this time.

MR. GHITTER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to address a few comments to this motion, because I regard the matter of the rental and housing situation we are facing as one of great concern to Albertans everywhere, particularly in our urban cores.

I would ask the hon. member who proposed this resolution: where have you been? In October of last year in this very House, I recall relating to his very subject, the importance of the housing situation in the Province of Alberta. I recall giving the statistics as to construction drops. I recall stating the CMHC statistics. I recall dealing in terms of the difficult situation, worse at that time, I might add, than it is now. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest this urgency is probably just grandstanding on an issue when in fact, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the government's recognition of the difficulties relating to this problem, the hon. Premier, in a most detailed public statement relative to housing, said -- and I think it's important that it be quoted in this House:

- The government recognizes the urgent need for immediate apartment rental accommodation in the urban cores of our cities due to the recent drop in construction starts [in] this form of housing.
- Alberta Housing Corporation will immediately develop innovative and special techniques to assist the private sector with satisfactory administrative and financial programs for the assembly of land and the development of satisfactory rental accommodation in urban core areas.
- Alberta Housing Corporation shall also within these programs give special assistance to the private sector in the development of planning guidelines so the developments can be approved as quickly as possible by the various planning authorities at the municipal level.

Mr. Speaker, for the hon. member to come forward today, in June 1975, and suggest this is a matter of urgency, when the matter had been debated in this House in October 1974, when the hon. Premier responded to this urgent need in March 1975, and to suggest that out of the blue, because the CMHC report shows a drop in available apartment suites in City of Edmonton, is just grandstanding.

In the City of Calgary, it should be noted, Mr. Speaker, it has lessened. In fact, there are more suites available in the City of Calgary now than there were in December of last year when the CMHC statistics were released. To suggest this is an urgent matter, Mr. Speaker, just belies the fact. I would submit there is adequate opportunity to debate this very, very important topic either in the estimates or in the budget debate or in other matters coming before the House. I would certainly welcome hearing the hon. member's views at that time. But it certainly is not a matter of urgency for the House to consider this afternoon.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, in speaking to the question of a debate on this particular matter at this time, certainly my colleagues and I would welcome the opportunity to take part in a debate of this nature at this particular time. I can say very frankly that it was because of our concern in this and the related area of housing that we chose to have the first motion we had on the Order Paper deal with the question of housing in its broad context. I refer to the motion by the hon. Member for Brooks, Mr. Mandeville.

I don't propose to become involved in the discussion of grandstanding at this time, but simply say it's extremely difficult to convince those people in Edmonton or Calgary who are finding rental notices put under their doors almost daily saying their rent is going up \$25 a month, \$15 a month that this isn't a matter of urgent public importance and shouldn't be given the attention of the Legislature perhaps as often as is necessary to draw the situation, in fact, to the attention not just of this Legislature, but to the people of Alberta and some of those people who are responsible for the situation we face today.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, it appears to me that the importance of housing can't be overrated. It's a very important item, whether it's apartments or house building. The offer of the Government House Leader that this could be debated, that the Housing Department could be brought to the Legislature within hours or within a day -- I think would answer the question.

Actually, in my view a lot of talk in this Legislature isn't going to build any more houses or any more apartments. I can't see the urgency of the emergency debate under the rules that have been set down. Even though the matter is important, it appears to me we can discuss anything we want to under the Department of Housing or in the budget debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no question that from time to time in the past there has been an opportunity to debate the topic. There will undoubtedly be opportunities in the future. It may well be that, in the course of the estimates of the Department of Housing and Public Works, there will be further opportunity to debate the question.

If one were to assemble all the objections to all the various conceivable motions which might be brought under Standing Order 29, and use them in connection with each proposal, no doubt none of those motions would ever get past the preliminary stage. The motion under Standing Order 29, as hon. members know, is not one that leads to a vote and a conclusion which recommends or compels any action by anyone. It is a debate pure and simple.

As has been mentioned by the hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands and, I believe, the hon. Government House Leader, the question is: the urgency of the debate. There is no question at all that the housing situation has been what might be called one of chronic crisis. But there is always the possibility that a crisis which has been chronic may become acute.

With regard to the objection to the motion that it's something of very wide scope, my understanding of the precedents is that, in fact, if the situation is not one of wide scope, if it's a matter of very local concern, that would be an objection to the motion rather than to say that it was of wide scope. As has been pointed out by the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo, there isn't any question about the importance of the topic. It's one of the three oft-recited necessities of life -- food, clothing, and shelter -- and it's shelter that's involved here.

In deciding whether or not the motion is acceptable, the role of the Speaker is very similar to that which he has in a matter of privilege. His function is merely preliminary. After that, it is up to the Assembly. That is the situation here. The Assembly decides whether the debate will go on within the provisions of Standing Order 29. The function of the Speaker, as I have mentioned, is preliminary, and only preliminary. Whether the debate subsequently goes on or not does not involve any agreement or disagreement with the ruling of the Speaker. Once he has dealt with the question in a preliminary way, the Speaker's function is complete.

The possibility of future debate may be something which hon. members might wish to take into consideration. But under the circumstances, and having regard to the provisions of Standing Order 29 and the precedents, I would have to say that the motion would be acceptable if it were acceptable to the Assembly. I am, therefore, obliged to ask the Assembly whether the debate shall proceed, and for that purpose ask those who support the motion to please stand.

[Several members stood.]

MR. SPEAKER: There being more than 15 members supporting the motion, the debate should now proceed.

MR. YURKO: Mr. Speaker, I take great pleasure in rising in this House, as the first minister of the Department of Housing and Public Works, to address myself to this emergency debate. My understanding, Mr. Speaker, is that I have 10 minutes. Is this correct?

It's hardly possible for me, Mr. Speaker, to cover the subject of such wide-ranging scope and such enormous interest and, in fact, concern to all the people of this province. I would, however, like to touch on a few matters today in a fairly substantive way. First of all, Mr. Speaker, to review very quickly what the situation is in Alberta with regard to housing.

During 1965, there were approximately 10,630 housing units built in Alberta. In 1966, we built 9,091 housing units in Alberta; in 1967, 13,239; in 1968, 21,416; in 1969, 21,001; 1970, 19,293; 1971, 23,535; 1972, 24,426; 1973, 23,731; and in 1974, 20,155. Right now, it is estimated that the building capacity in Alberta is in the order of 22,000 to 23,000 housing units per year. I might indicate that our best estimates at this time indicate that Alberta will drop to approximately 12,500 units this year, indicating a fairly substantive shortfall. As Edmonton was specifically mentioned, last year 3,900 permits were given out for housing units in Edmonton. Based on existing housing permits, it is estimated that about 2,500 housing units will be issued in the City of Edmonton. So, in fact, there will be a shortfall in housing units in Alberta in total, and in Edmonton.

There is some indication that this shortfall might be higher than the national average for a number of reasons, particularly the fact that the economy is somewhat more heated in the Province of Alberta, and money has options in the direction in which it goes.

I would also like to indicate that the activity of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, on a per capita basis, has been somewhat less in Alberta in the last year, and projected for this year, than in other provinces.

I would like to advise the House, Mr. Speaker, that the Government of Alberta has certainly recognized the difficulties that will be encountered in the area of housing if Albertans are to be housed to the degree to which they have become accustomed. I anticipate that the housing shortfall in Alberta can readily be taken up this year, because Albertans are some of the best-housed people in Canada. However, the concern for 1976, 1977 is indeed real if action is not taken at the earliest opportunity.

I would indicate that I met with the hon. Mr. Danson in Ottawa on May 26, which was the reason for my absence from the House. At that time, I had a general discussion of the housing situation in Canada and Alberta with him and one or two of his officials. I laid our concerns before him, and requested some assurances in certain areas. Mr. Speaker, I would like to read from a letter I left with him, which I discussed with him at that time:

Dear Mr. Danson:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you on May 26, 1975, to discuss the general housing situation in Alberta.

In addition to a generalized discussion on housing, we will seek some measure of assurance from your government in four areas.

- [A] Assurance that irrespective of the Alberta government's increased initiatives in the housing field, the federal government will make available to Albertans an equitable share of national government initiatives in the housing and related fields. Available data suggests that Albertans have been treated less than equitably in this regard.

I have the statistics in terms of the programs for this year, but I will refrain from indicating them to the House at this time because of the time element. I also indicated to him that we request:

- [B] Written assurance, where necessary, that individual assistance provided by the Alberta government to its citizens for home ownership and/or home improvement purposes, will not be considered as income for income tax purposes.

Mr. Speaker, that item is so important that I would like to repeat it:

- [B] Written assurance, where necessary, that individual assistance provided by the Alberta government to its citizens for home ownership and/or home improvement purposes, will not be considered as income for income tax purposes.

This, Mr. Speaker, would indicate some of the reasons that the \$1,000 home improvement program has to await the resolution of some items before it can be incorporated or, in fact, be brought to fruition in Alberta.

Item [C] in my letter to Mr. Danson, Mr. Speaker, is as follows:

- [C] Some measure of assurance that the federal government will be providing additional stimulation to the private sector of the Canadian economy to meet the housing needs of Albertans and Canadians. We recognize that government programs complement but are not a substitute for private enterprise initiatives in meeting the housing needs of Canadians. We suggest that the upcoming federal budget address itself meaningfully toward this objective by giving consideration to the following amongst many recommendations that have been made to your government:

- (i) Additional lowering of the federal tax on building materials
- (ii) Extension of the capital cost allowance principle in the housing industry for at least five years
- (iii) Re-examination of the need to permit home owner mortgage interest payments to be deductible for income tax purposes
- (iv) Consideration toward the establishment of a human shelter mortgage money market, partially independent from the conventional financial markets which are unduly sensitive to the industrial consumer and institutional sectors of our economy.

- [D] Assurance that Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation and your Department will work with the Alberta Housing Corporation and the new Department of Housing and Public Works of the Alberta government in an atmosphere of trust and cooperation that is necessary to meet the housing needs of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I should inform the House that Mr. Danson indicated to me that he will give these four points his utmost consideration. I might also indicate -- I'm prepared to table this letter, Mr. Speaker -- that in the interval, Mr. Danson has been talking to

other housing ministers in the nation and has requested a meeting with the housing ministers on Tuesday, June 10, in Ottawa. It is my intention to attend that meeting and press again for additional initiatives by the federal government in the area of housing.

I would like to say to the House at this time, Mr. Speaker, that the provinces -- not all of them, but many -- have traditionally looked upon the federal government as the prime mover in the area of providing adequate housing for their citizens within each and every province. I want to indicate that Alberta has recognized and is continuing to recognize the federal government's role in this regard. But it has recognized that there is a great need for the province to play a very prominent role in the area of housing in Alberta, particularly with regard to the fact that the Alberta economy is growing at an unprecedented rate, that the Alberta government has adopted a policy of decentralization, of locating industries throughout the province where, in fact, infrastructure is in dire need, and where housing is certainly a necessity if we're going to decentralize the economy of this province.

As a result, the Premier, during the course of that event which proved to be so successful for a number of members in the House . . .

[interjections]

. . . or all members of the House, some more successful than others, Mr. Speaker. I would hope to spend more time indicating the extent of Alberta's thrust in this field of housing, but I notice I only have a few seconds to go. All I wish to indicate at this time is that the Alberta Housing Corporation this year will be responsible for approximately 5,400 housing units. About 2,000 will be under our direct mortgage lending program, which was announced in the budget as \$65 million, and could be enhanced through the starter home program if we filter in additional moneys out of the \$200 million fund. However, there are about 3,400 units of basically public housing or supported social housing, and I admit we can stand additional initiatives in a number of areas in the field of social housing as well as in the field of rental accommodation.

Mr. Speaker, I think my time is up. I hope to advise the House on another occasion, in much greater depth, the extent to which the Alberta government will be involved in housing, the initiatives that it is going to take, and its major priorities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, in rising to take part in this debate, I think it was certainly worth noting the statistics the hon. Minister of Housing and Public Works gave us during the course of his remarks: housing starts last year of some 20,155, and an estimate this year of 12,500. Notwithstanding the increase in housing starts under Alberta Housing, it is quite clear that the total amount of housing stock this year, both in terms of single-member dwellings and multiple-family buildings is down from last year, and rather dramatically down.

Mr. Speaker, I think we should take just a moment to assess one of the reasons the minister cited. I happen to agree with him when he says that Alberta's economy is overheated compared to the national economy. Certainly that was one of the points the New Democratic Party tried to make during the election campaign. Some of the members will recall the document, Management of Growth, which was released. One of the concerns very clearly enunciated in that document was that too rapid growth will have a serious impact on the housing market in the Province of Alberta. That, in turn, will increase rents and will cause a spiralling of the construction costs of single-member dwellings.

That is basically what has happened. The statistics are very clear, Mr. Speaker. They show that the rate of apartment construction has declined. The figure I cited, Mr. Speaker, the most recent one from the City of Edmonton, is a remarkable drop. In May 1973, 292 apartment units were begun. In May 1974, that was down to 46, and in May 1975, only 24 units in 2 small walk-up apartments were begun: a reduction of some 92 per cent in 2 years, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to that, we have skyrocketing rents as a result of the lowered building of apartments. Every 3 months, people get notices of \$10, \$25, or \$30 a month increases in their rents. What is that doing? First, Mr. Speaker, it is imposing a real hardship on the working poor, on those people who have to dig up more money for rent. Rent is becoming a larger and larger portion of the consumer's dollar.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, it's having another important [effect]. Faced with the uncertainty of renting without any protection in the form of a rent review board, an ombudsman, or Rentalsman as they have in British Columbia, more and more people are saying, well, we can't take a chance on the rental situation, let's get into home ownership. So you have an artificial movement of people from renting to home ownership. That would be fine, Mr. Speaker, if we had a slack economy. It would be fine if we had serious unemployment, wanted to expand our housing stock, and had no other competing demands on materials and labor within the Province of Alberta.

But unfortunately, here we run into the obstacle of our overheated economy. With the Syncrude plant and various other projects going ahead, the housing industry has to wait in line. The consequence, Mr. Speaker, is that we aren't pushing ahead fast enough with our supply of single-dwelling homes to accommodate the new demand.

In that sort of situation only one thing can happen, and it is happening. I had a person call me today who, last week, went out to St. Albert to look at a home for \$68,000. He went back two days later. A new price tag was placed on the home: \$79,000. He cited a case two weeks ago of a house sold in west Edmonton which was valued at \$84,000. One down the street in a new development, exactly the same sort of home, was listed at \$103,000 two or three days later.

That's the kind of thing that's going to happen, Mr. Speaker, when you don't have adequate housing stock in place or construction starts under way. All of a sudden, you have an artificial shift of people who, with the uncertainty of the rental situation, might very well prefer to rent, but get into the buying of homes.

Mr. Speaker, add to that the problem of the increased cost of land. The hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo talked about an easing of the situation in Calgary. Yet I think it's worth noting that in 1965, the cost of land amounted to 19 per cent of the cost of a home, whereas by 1973 it had increased to 26 per cent. Clearly the government's failure to move on land speculation is a major contribution to the housing crisis -- a failure, Mr. Speaker, which I point out is not shared by the Conservative government in Ontario. In the 1974 budget the Ontario government introduced a land speculation tax. I would like to see us move to introduce an unearned increment tax or a tax which could deal with land speculation in this present session of the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, in the minutes I have remaining to me, I'd like to make one additional argument. Rather than encouraging the shift into housing starts -- and we've heard from the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo many times over, don't control the rents, we won't get any increases in building. The fact of the matter is, we've had uncontrolled rents. We've had open season. We've had "all the traffic will bear". We've had "let the buyer beware". We've had all the mythology of the private enterprise system, and there still aren't housing starts.

Edmonton does not look well compared with the rest of the country, Mr. Speaker. The same is true for Calgary. So the old private enterprise mechanism hasn't worked. At the same time, there is no protective device. The Edmonton City Council, Mr. Speaker, has asked for the right to set up a review board within Edmonton. We haven't moved on that. That's still being studied. How long are we going to study it, Mr. Speaker? To what extent does the crisis have to become severe before we act in this Legislature?

Mr. Speaker, the other part of this issue is that we are not moving to encourage the private sector to expand investment in housing. We are doing exactly the opposite. When it comes to the oil industry, one of the provisions in this budget, Mr. Speaker, is to give enormous incentives to people who might otherwise consider investing in housing stock to change from that sort of investment and dump it into oil company stocks or investment in oil wells or what have you.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, my concern is that we have a positive disincentive, in terms of personal investment contained in the 1975 budget. Why was there no write-off provision for investment in housing stock? The minister quite rightly points out there's an increase in expenditures under Alberta Housing. Fair enough. But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, we should be mobilizing available private capital. There's not one smidgen of evidence in the present budget, Mr. Speaker, that the government is prepared to move in that way.

AN HON. MEMBER: Agreed.

MR. NOTLEY: Therefore, Mr. Speaker, in my view, the reasons for the debate are obvious. The concern is very real. Action by the government to date has been inadequate. It simply isn't good enough to talk about what Ottawa should be doing. Clearly, this Legislature and the Province of Alberta have a very crucial responsibility. We should begin to take it up.

MR. MANDEVILLE: Mr. Speaker, in making a few comments on this emergency resolution, I realize there are other areas where we could bring this topic up: in the estimates or in a bill on housing. We also have the resolution at the top of the Order Paper at the present time. But it is pleasing to see this much concern with housing in this Legislature.

It seems there is good support for anything that comes up on housing. I was pleased with the support I got on the resolution, starting with the member from Fort Macleod, a rural area, indicating we don't just have this situation in the larger cities; we have it throughout the province. The hon. Member for Hanna-Oyen said he had the same problem. The hon. Member for Medicine Hat indicated the same problem in a middle-sized city like Medicine Hat. Also, you have the problem in Calgary, Edmonton and our bigger cities.

In the statistics the hon. member mentioned, I think it was in 1971 we kind of got to the peak in housing starts. In '67 it was 13,000, and in '71 it increased to 23,000. In '72, housing starts went up, but then he gave the indication with the figures that in 1974, housing starts were down to approximately 20,000. That's an indication that housing starts from '71 to '74 dropped 20 per cent. With our population and the demand for housing increasing, this is certainly not a very good position to be in.

However, I realize it's a national problem and not just a provincial one. This problem is throughout Canada. I was just reading some statistics. Housing starts in Canada were down 17 per cent last year as well. I heard on the news that the occupancy rate in Edmonton was almost nil. There was just nothing available. This is not the case only in Edmonton. It's the case in Brooks, where I come from. I'm sure Fort Macleod or Hanna or Medicine Hat have the same problem. There is no housing, no rental apartments, no accommodation for people.

The biggest reason for housing starts going down is that they're getting priced out of reach of most of our people. Our low- and middle-income people just can't afford to purchase a house. As I stated in my resolution, there are 2,500 lots. But by the time they service these lots and get them available to move into, only a small percentage of our people can afford to buy.

I was looking at a house in Edmonton. It was 960 square feet, and the price was \$54,000. The home was 18 years old. I'll agree that it was remodelled, but that is \$50 a square foot. As near as I can figure, it costs \$25 a square foot to build a home. We're in housing construction ourselves in Brooks. We don't do it ourselves, but we're involved with a firm which builds homes. You can build a home for from \$22 to \$26 a square foot. However, this home I looked at was priced at \$50 a square foot. This is the reason these homes are not available to people in the low- or middle-income bracket.

It's easy to wonder why we have so many strikes going on, why people are asking for more money. They've just got to have more money. If they want to have food, clothing, and housing, they just have to get into the bracket where they do have enough money. This is one of the reasons we have so much discontent amongst laborers today. As the hon. Leader of the Opposition indicated, approximately every 90 days our renters have a note under their doors indicating that rents are going up. I realize that rents do need to go up. One of the main reasons they're going up and getting so high is the fact that the demand is so great.

Another area that gives me some concern, and I've talked to many people in Calgary and Edmonton, is our condominiums. There now are many landlords who want to move out of apartments and into the condominiums. This is putting a lot of people out into the street. They can't afford to buy a home of their own. I do realize the solutions to this problem are very difficult.

At the present time there are very few lending agents where you can get mortgage money. Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, one of our biggest lending agents, is out of funds. Royal Trust, another big firm that loans money, is out of funds. Money is very short at the present time. I can see that before we're going to have money available, our interest rates are going to climb. I'm certain that within the next few months our interest rate for housing is certainly going to go higher.

I do think it would be a real advantage to all mortgages on homes if one could use the interest for tax deductions. I think this would be a big step in the right direction, because it is money you borrow. You're paying interest on the money, and I think it should fit into the category. I realize it is federal, but it should be deductible as an expense on income tax.

I do think one of the answers would be for our government, possibly, to subsidize mortgages to some extent. If we could come up with some plan where we could subsidize mortgages -- if we could do this, I don't think the trade would be able to absorb this in any way. Also, I think through our treasury branches possibly we could have a guaranteed loan program so we could have loans guaranteed by the government to give more people a down payment to get involved in homes of their own.

One of the areas which I find serious, and the hon. Member for Ponoka mentioned, is that I think our towns and cities should have full control of land development. However, I think in order to keep our lots and land at a competitive price we need a land bank. The towns and cities need a land bank so they can make lots available to people who want to purchase lots, build homes on them, and make them competitive with free enterprise. I think this would be a big step in the right direction.

As I said in my resolution, we do have a number of programs but I think they're very confusing. I would just like to see us pull them all together, get a good program that would really work towards solving our housing situation. I do realize, as the hon. Member for Drumheller indicated, no matter how much we discuss this in the House it's not going to build homes. But it will certainly bring it to the attention of our people and they'll realize that we are concerned. As I said, I'm very pleased with the concern we give housing in this Legislature.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, in a discussion of housing one of the things which should concern every member is the degree to which a comprehensive attack on the problem can be organized and mounted. I think one of the things every member would have to acknowledge, irrespective of party, is that to this point in Canada, there has not been in any jurisdiction a comprehensive government policy for housing. With some notable exceptions, the view of legislators, and I think of the general public, has been that the individual or the family in most cases is capable of assuming their own responsibilities with respect to housing. What we have had develop in all jurisdictions is a variety of programs, some of them good and some of them not so good, but nowhere has this variety of programs been merged into a comprehensive policy.

There seem to me to be six aspects of any housing policy that should be considered and which should be attacked together. The first one is development, planning, and regulation; the whole question of entrepreneurship, whether it's private or public; the question of the engineering studies, regulating how these programs, subdivisions, housing projects, are brought on stream. The second important component is land. The third is the servicing of land. The fourth is construction, including technology, standards and labor. The fifth is the entire area of ownership and maintenance, and the sixth is taxation.

Within any of these particular areas, you can develop specific programs in which your aim is to reduce the cost of housing or to make more housing available to more people. In fact, that's what has happened.

We have developed housing programs which related specifically to land, housing programs which related specifically to the servicing of land, or housing projects which related specifically to construction. What we have failed to do is gauge the peripheral

impact of a land project on some other equally important aspect of the housing program or housing problem.

What have we done to make regulation easier or more inexpensive, a peripheral effect of which has been to increase the cost of construction? What have we done to make housing construction standards easier to achieve, which has, as an unanticipated side effect, reduced the life expectancy of housing units and therefore increased the real cost?

It seems to me to be an unavoidable truth that housing has to offer an economic return to whomever is involved in providing housing. If there is a shortage of housing, the fact of the matter is, in our economic system today that is the inevitable, the unavoidable result of the failure to provide an adequate economic return. We must, therefore, either reduce the cost so that at the same price the economic return is enhanced, or we have to increase the return, or we have to do some combination of those things.

The options available to government are numerous. Some of them have been undertaken previously in this jurisdiction. Some of them have been undertaken in other jurisdictions. I have great expectations that with the creation of the department, with the interest of the minister and, indeed, with the interest of other members in this Legislature, other alternatives will be considered; they will be considered, not in isolation, but also in terms of the impact they're going to have on other aspects of the housing problem. I would just like to throw out some of them this afternoon for your consideration.

One of the things we can obviously do is to improve legislation, including the Landlord and Tenant Act, The Condominium Property Act, The Planning Act, the subdivision transfer regulations. When I say improve The Landlord and Tenant Act, my perception of how we achieve that might indeed be different from the perceptions held by the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo, so I won't go into any detail. I assume that we can both agree that the act should indeed be improved. That's under consideration. The Institute of Law Research and Reform has been directed to consider landlord-tenant legislation, to report to the government. The government has indicated that it is going to consider the report of the institute and act upon it appropriately. The Condominium Property Act, The Planning Act, and the subdivision transfer regulations are under review.

Aside from improving legislation in order to expedite the delivery of housing to the market, the second significant thing that we can do is to improve our tax policy. I would agree with hon. members that there are major initiatives that can be undertaken in this area. I think we can categorize these improvements in two ways. First of all, we should use our tax policy to benefit development, to encourage the assembly of land, the servicing of land, and the bringing of land to the market. Further, we should use our tax policy to encourage the individual home-owner to maintain his property, to improve it, to enhance it in whatever way he can. The general area -- the other side of that coin -- is that we should tax the failure to use housing components to deliver housing to the market. One suggestion already implemented in Ontario has been raised here this afternoon.

The third thing I would suggest as a general principle is that in the housing market we should subsidize the consumer rather than the producer. I would have to say, Mr. Speaker, that I think home ownership is extremely important psychologically as well as economically. We are in a situation where almost 50 per cent of the population of Edmonton lives in rented accommodation. That percentage is increasing annually. Under present circumstances I cannot see any shift, let alone any significant shift, in that ratio of tenancy to ownership. I think that has serious implications, not just for owners or for renters, but for society as a whole.

People my age could justify renting when they left home and went to university, because university was a priority. When they left university and were just getting established in a job, they could justify the fact that they still didn't own their own home as their parents had done, because they were getting established. When they got married and had children, they could put off the rationalization for a few more years. But when people my age . . . Sorry, who sent me this anonymous note? When people my age have been raised in homes their parents owned, in communities where virtually all their neighbors were home-owners, when those people reach the age of 30, 31, or 32, and discover that what their parents and their parents' neighbors had is not now available to them, and is likely never going to be available to them, you're then going to have a psychological dislocation which is going to be serious in proportion to the number of those people in society. When we have today, in our community, so many people just reaching that age, so many people whose experience had been that of the home ownership of their parents, I think we're creating a serious problem for ourselves.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as you can imagine, I had a number of other things I wanted to say. I'll defer to whoever sent me this note and take a similar opportunity on an amendment to The Landlord and Tenant Act. Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I just want to deal with six points in connection with the debate. Before starting the six points, I'd like to make a general observation in regard to the point that more people are renting today than buying homes. I believe that will continue just as long as it's cheaper for people to rent than to pay the monthly rate on the amortization of their homes plus taxes. If it's going to cost more to live in a house, it's an economic factor with these people and they will rent, even though they can rent for many, many years and still own nothing. There are six points that I want to deal with which I think are contributing to the lack of homes being built and also to the fact that many people today are not buying homes because of a lack of finance.

The first item is the cost of land. Land has become a very, very valuable item. Free enterprisers across this country have taken advantage of the inflationary tendencies and of other aspects of our economy to raise the price of land, even though if they were paying an unearned increment tax on it, that unearned increment tax would be very, very high today. There's just nothing to give rise to that land except things over which they have had no control. Many free enterprisers are taking advantage of those factors and making a bushel of money through the price of land. I think the alternative to that is for municipalities to take more and more of the land, service it, and make it available. Many people today are not building homes because the price of a lot is too high. The price of a lot is out of reach before they even start building. Consequently, I think the municipalities themselves can help to solve this by making available land that the municipality owns at a reasonable price that will ignore the unearned increment factors many free enterprisers are using to make an extra bushel of money.

The second item I would like to deal with is the planning commissions. The planning commissions are holding up home-building. They are taking too long to deal with the application on subdivisions. They are asking for too many copies of too many things that are irrelevant. People get sick and tired -- and that includes municipal councillors -- of waiting for planning commissions to make a decision.

The third item I want to deal with is servicing. Again, private enterprisers -- some, not all, but a great number of them, possibly a majority -- are taking advantage of the places they are servicing with water and sewer as the opportunity to make an additional amount of money to which they are not really entitled. A fair profit, yes, but not the additional amounts they are charging today. Again I say the answer lies in our municipalities. Our municipalities can do this provided they have the capital. If they are going to be restricted because they can't borrow above a certain amount on a self-liquidating project, then the provincial government would have to take some of that responsibility. But where you have a self-liquidating project, and where you have people who want the homes, and where you have the evidence that the people are there, then I can't see why money can't be made available to our municipalities so they can provide water, sewer, streets, and lights in subdivisions. This item alone will go a long way toward providing homes in towns, cities, and villages across this province.

The fourth item is the cost of houses itself. Again, scores of our people are taking advantage of the situation. A home which was purchased for \$16,000 in 1950 is now 25 years older and, with just an average amount of maintenance, today it's selling for \$30,000, an unearned increment. The people who own it are taking advantage of the situation. Now whether you blame them or not isn't the point I'm discussing. The value isn't there. A home purchased for \$16,000 in 1950 that is now 25 years older shouldn't be selling for more than it was purchased for in 1950. The value isn't there. But because the costs of plumbing, electricians, carpenters, and everything else has gone up in 1975, the old houses go up in price too. Again, this is just a tendency to make a bushel of money to which a person is not entitled. I think we have to stop using kid gloves about this thing if we're really serious about this matter of homes. Homes which are 25 and 40 years old shouldn't be selling at the cost of a new home today. There's simply nothing comparable about that.

Again, when we come to the cost of new homes -- when young people look at the price and figure that by amortizing it over a 20-year period at today's interest rate -- it doesn't take them very long to figure that they are going to pay the total amount in those 20 years to buy 3 houses at the present price. Why should young people today be penalized to the point that if they want 1 house they have to pay for 3 houses because of an unfair interest rate.

Who's doing the hogging? Somebody's doing the hogging in this economy, and they're taking advantage of the young people today. They cry crocodile tears and say our young people can't buy homes, it's the huge interest rate that's stopping them from doing it. If young people could figure out with simple arithmetic that they're going to pay for the present price of the home plus a reasonable amount -- but not buy two or three houses -- then many young people could go and buy houses today. But when they have to buy three houses in order to have one, they just simply aren't doing it. I don't blame them for not doing it. Why do they want to mortgage their lives to that extent? This is our economy, our people, who are doing this -- not government, but our people. I don't know whether government can do anything about that. Certainly, it's a blight in the behavior of people living in our day and age.

The fifth item I'd like to deal with is the matter of income tax. We talk about this being so important. Yet, I haven't seen the federal government come out and say, we'll let the people deduct the price of their home from their income tax over a period of 20 years. Some people in our economy can do it, but not the laborer, not the ordinary everyday citizen. If you happen to be in a particular category, you can deduct the cost of your home at so much per year over 20 years.

Look at the farm homes that were in this country a few years ago, and look at the same areas today -- the improvement in farm homes. One of the major factors, I contend -- and I know for a fact in many cases -- is because they can take it from their income tax. I'm not decrying that. It's proper that they should. We want our country to be good, and we want our people to own their own homes. There has to be an incentive, a monetary incentive, an economic incentive. That incentive is there when we say you can deduct the price of this home over a period of 20 years. This is a big help even though the amount deducted each year isn't that big. But it's still gradually paying for the home out of what they would have to pay for income tax.

If the federal government of this country and the authorities who work out our income tax forms are serious about wanting more homes, let's give that privilege to everybody, not just certain categories. I tell you, then our people would want to buy homes. They could figure it out and bring homes within the reach of hundreds of our people today who can't begin to think about it because it's not a deductible factor on income tax.

Well, I mentioned six points when I was dealing with the old houses, the new houses, and the sixth one is in connection with old houses. Whenever I hear of anybody wanting to tear down an old house, a house that is serviceable -- it might need a new roof, it might need a new floor, but the foundation is there, and the general structure of the house is there -- then I say this is another blight in our economy today, and misguided thinking. Many people can live in older homes by repairing them. A program by the provincial government to help our people -- not only senior citizens, but all of our people, to improve the homes they are living in, improve the older homes -- will keep an awful lot of homes on the market, and make some of these available for those who are no longer able to keep their own homes. But they won't be torn down and sold for scrap.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close with the same point I started with. There are a lot of things which can be done in order to get more homes by those who live in the name of free enterprise. There are things that can be done by the federal government and the provincial government to make home ownership the sanctity of private ownership that we want a home to be. But as long as we make it economically impossible for our people to buy homes, then we're going to have situations like we have today in Alberta, and it's even worse in other parts of Canada.

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few remarks about the matter we are debating now, which I think all of us in the Legislative Assembly recognize as a very important matter in Alberta, in Canada, and in fact, throughout North America.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt also, that in my constituency of Edmonton Centre some of the problems are accelerated or exaggerated, depending upon the word one might choose to use. Certainly during the election campaign many of my constituents with whom I had the opportunity to speak raised their concern about the matter of housing generally, and of course, about the availability of rental accommodation. Mr. Speaker, they were concerned both with the availability of accommodation generally and the level of rent.

I was pleased last year that the government, recognizing a developing situation in the case of rents, was able to double benefits under the renter tax credit. Nevertheless, we recognize that the underlying problem with respect to the level of rents, and the underlying problem with respect to the availability of both rental or housing accommodation, was not solved solely by that measure. While it helped to offset some of the rising cost of accommodation, it did not address itself to the underlying problem.

Mr. Speaker, I would like, in speaking to hon. members, to stress when we consider debate, when we consider proposing solutions or analyzing this problem, that we must first of all make the best and most accurate assessment we can of the causes we are in this position today. I would suggest that the causes have added up -- not over the last year, not over the last two years, not over the last three years, but some go back as far as four to five years ago.

Mr. Speaker, before I was elected to government in Alberta and took part in the first cabinet, one of the actions that distressed me a great deal during that time was the federal government going through tax reform. It struck me immediately that some of things they were doing in tax reform -- for example, disallowing the deduction of depreciation, the deduction of property taxes which might put a rental property, for instance, into a loss position as being deductible for income tax purposes. What distressed me, Mr. Speaker, was that they were hurting the small investor more than they were hurting the large investor with that very move.

Historically, up to that point we had a great number of people building apartment blocks. I'm sure the hon. Member for Clover Bar and a lot of hon. members in the Legislature remember it was a good thing for an individual, individual professional or other person to invest in rental accommodation, an apartment block, a house, and, in fact, rent that out. Our tax policies at that time encouraged a person to invest. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately that move by the federal government created a situation where it was no longer attractive for the individual investor to put his money into rental accommodation or into accommodation generally. As a matter of fact, in my view, what it did was to force all individuals to put their money into the large national companies under registered retirement savings plans in order to achieve any tax relief at all. In turn, of course, when we had a period of high interest rates and particularly the short-term rates, Mr. Speaker, almost equalling the long-term rates, it was no longer advantageous for national financial institutions or national trust companies to put their money into the mortgage market when they could get the same rate of interest on short-term investment.

Even today, Mr. Speaker, the gap between short-term and long-term interest rates is not sufficient to encourage money into the mortgage field. Certainly, in my view, the combination of the federal government's move during tax reform, combined with very high interest rates and the high rates on short-term compared to long-term, have both been major contributing factors to the position we are in today.

Along with that of course, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that housing, like any other area, is not an island. It is not isolated from other economic factors, both in terms of within Canada and in the world-wide situation in the economy. Certainly, the general inflationary rate has contributed to higher interest rates; has contributed to higher land

cost; has contributed to higher servicing cost of land. This is something, Mr. Speaker, from which we within this Legislature are not isolated. We in Alberta are not isolated from the factors that exist throughout Canada and, in fact, throughout the world in terms of inflationary costs.

Another cause, Mr. Speaker, and I think it was mentioned by the hon. Member for Drumheller, is the multiplicity of governments involved. Every level of government is involved in the housing problem. Of course, many boards and agencies are involved in zoning, by-laws, all these types of things which certainly add to the difficulty of getting housing and accommodation on stream.

The federal government, Mr. Speaker, is, of course, involved through Central Mortgage and Housing, in the provision of mortgage funds. It has a definite ability in terms of interest rates in the mortgage field and long-term interest rates. Of course, the tax policy of the federal government in the area I mentioned and in terms of developing tax policies at the national level that will encourage people to invest in their home or encourage people to invest in developed property as opposed to undeveloped property, are certainly things the federal government should be doing.

A province cannot just go ahead and develop apartment blocks in downtown Edmonton in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes I wish we could. But the fact is, we can't do it without working with the municipal governments, if we believe in local autonomy, working co-operatively with them, abiding by their zoning and their various by-laws in the development of rental property.

Mr. Speaker, I think those are some of the key causes, although not all, which have contributed to the difficulty we are in now. But any program we come up with must be well designed and well planned to ensure that, in fact, the citizens we want to help are the ones who are helped.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's the reason the government and the Premier made an announcement of the kind of program we would come up with to assist in this area. I would like to refer briefly to the program. The \$200 million mortgage fund for starter homes, in addition to the funds we have in the Alberta Housing Corporation, have preferred low interest rates to assist in this problem, bearing in mind, Mr. Speaker, that it must be well administered and well designed to help the citizen. I was particularly pleased, Mr. Speaker, with the provision of additional funds, working with the municipalities and the private sector to develop more apartment accommodation, because the underlying solution to rentals is to see that we have more rental units on the market.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to participate in the debate this afternoon. I would like to say at the outset that housing has been a concern of mine, and was a concern in the 17th Session of this Legislature. At that time I tried to express my concern in terms of what I thought I could interpret from the statistics, the directions where we were going, and what the needs were.

I expressed at that time the concern which I had then. That was that until a couple of years ago this provincial government had acted in the housing field only in response, if you will, in a reactive manner to initiatives of the federal government. I indicated then that there were some questions which we needed answers to if we were going to be able to deal with the problem of accommodation. For instance, and it's been mentioned here today, the proportion of houses, single-family dwellings, as opposed to apartment units. It has been mentioned here that there has been a shift in Edmonton from a larger number of apartments and fewer single-family units. Now we are getting a shift back the other way.

Mr. Speaker, anybody examining the statistics four years ago in the type of housing in Calgary, as opposed to the type of housing in Edmonton, would have realized that either Calgarians' tastes are quite different from Edmontonians', or the market is dictating, not the persons who require accommodation. It was obvious. We just had to look at the statistics. I tried to make that point and apparently didn't do a very good job of it.

Mr. Speaker, several times this year in the Assembly we have had the opportunity to debate this issue. Some of us have. The hon. member who raised the urgent debate today, I note in all his remarks on Monday afternoon made passing reference to housing in two sentences. Mr. Speaker, in my view, there's a great deal of headline opportunism with respect to housing. I regret it, and I think it's very much to be regretted for those people who are in need of accommodation, and in need of accommodation they can afford.

Mr. Speaker, one of the problems in the housing industry has been inflation. Inflation has wreaked havoc in that industry that I think very few people have taken the trouble to analyse. Now we are getting screams for rent review boards and rent control. I appreciate the problem and the challenge to find accommodation, but let's not get carried away.

My analysis of statistics, which I just looked at, and the latest information I could get my hands on from the library, suggests that the cost of housing has risen in the order of 10 per cent in the last year, according to Statistics Canada. The average industrial weekly wage in the Province of Alberta in that same time frame has risen 21 per cent. Mr. Speaker, 21 per cent -- almost double the amount that the cost of accommodation has risen.

I appreciate that income may not be evenly distributed throughout our society, and that's a problem of inflation. But I also submit that we are too readily carried away with our cries of inability to afford. If rents had risen at the same rate as the industrial wage composite in this province -- and the industrial wage composite, hon. members, is what we generally refer to as the blue-collar sector and the lower paid white-collar sector of our employees in this province -- if rents had risen that much, Mr.

Speaker, in the last year, if they were \$250 to start the year out, they would have risen by \$50 in a year.

Mr. Speaker, even the CBC, in its program on housing the other evening, referred to the rental market in the City of Edmonton over the last five years. They referred to decreasing rents two or three years ago. There is no way, Mr. Speaker, when you have decreasing rents, when it's so uneconomic for people to build -- we've heard explanations about it; we've heard about changes in The Income Tax Act, et cetera, that we're going to get construction. Rents have been one of the best buys, with respect, that consumers have been able to afford in quite a while. Now, unfortunately, we're paying that penalty. I submit we're clouding the issue very dangerously. Because, Mr. Speaker, what we're inclined to do now, at least some people are, is move toward rent control, toward government intervention.

There are two very harmful developments in terms of supplying our citizens with the housing they require. One is inflation, because it destroys the certainty of businessmen. It introduces uncertainty, which they do not know how to deal with. Just ask your insurance companies. We know the impact and the effect. How can insurance companies put money out today and know whether they're even going to get their dollars back in 20 years? There is just a great deal of risk and uncertainty there.

The other great risk we engage in by going through much popular exercise about accommodation is raising the possibility to businessmen that governments are going to change the rules of the game. Already this afternoon we've heard how many governments are involved in housing and the development of land for housing purposes: the federal, provincial, and municipal governments. Any one of those, Mr. Speaker, can change the rules of the game for construction of housing in the City of Edmonton in such a manner that a developer may take a loss for three years, until he unloads whatever he happens to be holding at the time the rules were changed.

Mr. Speaker, I've long had an interest in this topic. I feel sorry for the people who now are short of housing. I think our government has recognized the problem. A department has been created. The minister has indicated his directions in his speech earlier this afternoon and on other occasions. Mr. Speaker, I think this Legislature could do a great deal by considering the problem calmly and in all its complexity. Let's not undertake to make suggestions which may frighten the business community responsible for the construction of housing. Let's look at it pretty carefully. Let's try to co-operate with them, but let's recognize the problems they face.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest again that one of those problems, and a very great problem, has been inflation. A second one, if we're not very careful and don't proceed in co-operation and consultation with them and maintain their confidence, will be the ravages government action at any one of the three levels may cause. Mr. Speaker, in that connection, I say again, as I've said before, the headline hunters who are proposing certain types of freezes and controls are doing the public a great disservice, unless they're prepared to extend those controls to all portions of our economy which are responsible for construction of accommodation and the supplies that go into construction. Mr. Speaker, I would include wages in that. Anybody who wants to control rents should also advocate controlling wages, profits, material prices, et cetera. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if such controls have ever been applied successfully anywhere in the world. I'm not aware of any, and I challenge the hon. members here to advance an illustration.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree this topic is very current and urgent for discussion at this time. I think there are two points I would like to make, outside of indicating that the information given about the need for housing, the urgency, has certainly been supported by the hon. members to this point in time.

There are two points, though, that I would like to make in relationship to that urgency. One is relative to the initiative I see the provincial government taking, and secondly, the implementation of some action that can deal with the problem as quickly as possible.

When we examine the initiative of the provincial government at the present time, knowing well what the problem is, I think the government is open to criticism. For example, earlier in this session we had a ministerial statement with regard to surveys of the Alberta Housing Corporation. The surveys indicate they are being initiated at this time, through the summer. Toward fall we will have recommendations and some type of information upon which we can make decisions. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough. That's this fall. It does say in there it excludes the cities of Edmonton and Calgary where, as indicated earlier, the major problem exists at the present time. But we haven't time for surveys. The problem is before us and obvious.

If we look just a few months ago or a short period ago when the problem of Syncrude faced us, within 48 hours the government was, over a weekend, able to make a commitment of millions of dollars, on details and information presented to them either Friday or Saturday morning. By Monday morning they made millions of dollars available to a company, so the Syncrude project could proceed. Here we have an urgent situation for many people across Alberta, for the grass roots of Alberta. We're finding delay and inability of the government to make decisions on the funds. One, I've pointed out the survey and the delay. Two, the minister read us a letter today indicating his point of view to the federal government. It is a letter that, to me, says this, here is a letter, federal government. We want you to do something. We're going to wait for you to reply before we really get on with the show in Alberta, and get some of the things done.

To me, it's a letter of delay, not a letter of initiative and direction. I think the letter is excellent. It outlines some very, very good points, a meeting with the minister, a follow-up letter. That's not good enough. That's just not good enough at this point in time. The issue is here before us, it's urgent, the problem has to be solved. I think there has to be a lot more than that.

The third thing I note as an indication of delay is with regard to the heritage fund. In the election and earlier this year, the Premier so well announced the heritage fund. In the heritage fund there would be \$200 million available for housing in Alberta. Well, we get into this session of the Legislature and find the legislation will be implemented in the fall, that maybe the \$200 million can be made available through that medium at that time. We don't know whether it's going to be low-interest money. We just don't know what it is. But it's delay, and the problem is today and now and must be solved. Where's the initiative? To me, those are three very obvious delay tactics that the government is using, delaying the decisions it has to make. I think the government should look at it.

What are some things I suggest it should do at the present time, that can be enacted to show it is ready to take hold of this particular problem? One, I think the province itself shouldn't wait for the federal government to make these funds available. If it knows the heritage fund is going to be a medium through which low-interest money can be made available to Albertans, well then, let's do it. I think the problem is before us, and the timing is now to do that kind of thing. It's not that difficult to do that sort of thing.

The second thing, the minister indicated in his letter to the federal government that we should have a "re-examination of the need to permit home owner mortgage interest payments to be deductible for income tax purposes". The minister is asking the federal government to do that. Well, if we're going to show some initiative in this session of the Legislature, we could remove the provincial tax in that particular area, reduce the provincial tax to show incentive. But nothing has ever been heard about that. Ask the other guy to do it, but we're not going to do it. It's a way of delaying and keeping the red tape going back and forth between the province and Ottawa.

I don't think that's good enough. I think that if the minister and the government are really serious, those are two things they could do immediately: get on the move and show that they're leading rather than waiting for federal initiative, as one of their own honorable colleagues has indicated to this House this afternoon. That's the kind of action we want. We can have this nice debate today, and it's all smoothed over. The press gets a few headlines. The government got involved in the debate. Then tomorrow we forget it. Well, I think the action can be now. The funds are available. We're not in that kind of economic bind. We can stimulate the opportunity for people to be home purchasers and get on with the job, Mr. Speaker.

MR. KUSHNER: Mr. Speaker, I have to agree that we in Alberta have never been better housed, better dressed, or better fed. Let's face it. Basically, because of inflation -- just to give you an example, a house that cost \$30,000 last year is selling for \$40,000 this year. It's hard to conceive, but in fact that's what's happening. The sales in housing in the City of Calgary have gone up this year 37 per cent compared with last year. Right now the question remains, basically speaking, that most people can't afford to buy a house because they cannot afford to make a payment; because of inflation and interest an average home today is around \$400 a month. Not very many people, in fact, can afford it.

As far as I am concerned, I don't think the problem of housing is so much, but I think that we, as Albertans, are demanding too much today. We want big houses, properly landscaped, things that basically we now can't afford. So, in fact, we'll have to get into an area of designing and building the kind of homes that those people we are so concerned about today, people with low income, can afford. This is the problem as far as I can see, being involved in construction most of my life, talking to people, the ordinary joe. I know maybe I'm even speaking against myself at the moment, but I have no hesitation in elaborating again that we have never been better off than in this day and age. Again, we're probably demanding more than we can afford.

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, as has been expressed by many of the members of this Assembly, we're all concerned about housing, the shortage and the problems related to housing, the high cost. I'm sure we all welcome the initiatives that have been taken by this government, by the Minister of Housing and Public Works. I'm particularly pleased with this request to the federal minister that interest on mortgages be a tax-deductible item. This would have an excellent effect on home-owners.

In the rural areas, and particularly in my area, there is a shortage of housing. The people are faced with the same problems, that is, high costs. Land prices are not a problem as they are in the cities; the high cost of land isn't really that big a factor. But, of course, inflation, the higher interest rates that are necessary now in the money market, higher labor costs, and the desire of the people to have better accommodation, are all factors in driving the prices of homes up out of the reach of many of our people.

I think what is required, and maybe some of the members have touched on it, are some innovations in housing design. There are some new ideas, there always are, in the modular home field, in the prefab field, and in prebuilt homes, but I would perhaps make a suggestion that the provincial government have a competition among builders, designers, and architects, and even take advantage of the Research Council of Alberta in their own field. Put on a competition, say, with a time period of two years, asking for innovative

ideas and a complete scheme for building a new home. This would include new materials, new design ideas, new methods of construction.

Perhaps by offering this sort of competition in the private sector with an award of \$200,000 or something of that nature for the successful submission, we might come up with something in the home industry that would help solve our problem; that is, adequate accommodation at a reasonable cost. I think it's a thought the government could look into. I know it has been used in the less developed countries where they have been innovative in providing homes for people in lower- and middle-income brackets. I think that this sort of idea, or the emphasis on a new design idea, would be particularly useful for rural people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. CHICHAK: Mr. Speaker, I will try to be brief, but cover points that have perhaps not been raised, or points that require some rebuttal.

It concerns me somewhat when the hon. Member for Little Bow asks us, where is the government with its own initiative, that the provincial government is using delaying tactics with regard to its housing programs. Perhaps he needs to be reminded, or we need to be reformed, about where our initiatives have been and where they are, and perhaps we need to look at some of the causes of some of the problems.

To begin with, with regard to our own initiatives, perhaps the hon. Member for Little Bow needs to be reminded that the provincial government has embarked on a public housing program to provide subsidization for rental accommodation to the private sector as well as the accommodation developments owned by the provincial government. Surely this assists to level off some of the accommodation that might be available in public housing.

Our program provincially, with regard to the Metis housing program, has been increased only within a year from \$3 million to \$6 million -- that's been doubled. That certainly is an initiative of the provincial government. When we talk about rural housing, both subsidized and non-subsidized loans have been made available through our Alberta Housing Corporation loans for Alberta farm families to assist them in the area. Last year we had a program of \$5.5 million, and this is being repeated with regard to rural housing alone. I think that never in history had Alberta had any consideration of this nature from the provincial government for rural housing, until the Progressive Conservatives came into office in 1971 and have since looked at the needs throughout Alberta, not only in concentrated urban areas.

I think we need to remember the senior citizens housing programs implemented in the last couple of years, the approvals given, and the funds made available for the construction of new lodges, improvements to existing lodges, and the construction of self-contained units. In the past 3 years, 31 new lodges have been constructed or are on the way; 35 lodges have given an additional 2,047 beds throughout the province. The self-contained units program is being given 100 per cent capital financing by this government. If we're asking where are our initiatives, I think these are very, very significant ones.

With regard to taking housing off the market as a result of our government decentralization program, we have provided housing for our own staff so they would not take housing away from citizens who are residents in the area.

This year we're budgeting some \$4 million, a continuation of the land assembly program, and an additional amount for the development of stalls for mobile homes. We're looking at every aspect.

I'm very fortunate this year to be able to acknowledge that in the constituency of Edmonton Norwood a neighborhood improvement program has been approved, to which the provincial government contributes 25 per cent of the federal assistance.

Fort McMurray, under the new town development, has had nearly \$50 million budgeted for land assembly and servicing of lots to date. We have the provincial Homeowners' Assistance Program with regard to interest subsidy on a sliding scale relative to income. Our direct lending program through Alberta Housing -- have we forgotten that in 1971 it was only \$5 million, already an increase from what the former government had in place -- for 1974 was increased to \$68 million. We want to know about initiatives. I think these are excellent initiatives.

Then in the NewStart program there was an injection of an additional \$200 million for mortgages, [also] the broad school programs we are developing with regard to the areas where they are required.

I think we need to see a little bit more that the problem is not totally provincial, and that the province has not been dragging its feet, or been unconcerned, or had a low priority with regard to housing. It's evidently had a very high priority with regard to housing.

But it gives me a great deal of concern that recently the mayor of Edmonton indicated, in a statement in one of his television interviews, that the City of Edmonton, for instance, has sufficient serviced lots. Where are those serviced lots? People are constantly wanting to purchase lots. Are they all concentrated in one area, and is that the desire or the direction? Should we be requiring every citizen who wants to become a home-owner to move, to live in one area of the city? Or should these be made available in other areas? That is a municipal government responsibility. We need to pressure them more, rather than pass the buck only to the provincial government.

The kinds of initiatives, programs, and moves which have been suggested by our Minister of Housing to the federal government are in place, and have a very high priority and seriousness. These areas need to be dealt with by the federal government. With

regard to removal of taxes, we are developing a program with regard to assistance in interest rates paid by home-owners.

The whole issue which has really sparked a housing situation is the acuteness of rental accommodation. I think there are two sides to that coin, Mr. Speaker. If you speak with the owner of the accommodation, he will tell you what governs some of the costs he is applying or the rental he is charging: tenants wish to have better quality and many more things within their living accommodation; property taxes are being increased by the municipal governments, not the provincial government; and property damage caused by many tenants certainly has a very direct bearing on what the landlord is required to consider, as to how he might come out of the situation with regard to the accommodation he offers for rent.

But I'm not patting the landlord on the back, because the other side of the coin troubles me a great deal. I went around during the election to . . . I probably have one minute, but I'm going to make this point, Mr. Speaker. I have many older homes in my constituency with absentee landlords. They rent their properties to tenants, and the properties are in shambles. They keep increasing the rental rates. The tenant must pay because he has nowhere to move to, but there's absolutely no improvement to make that accommodation livable.

I think I would like to suggest to our Minister of Housing that we need some basic standards for quality of accommodation when certain rents are being charged. I think that would be making a move in the right direction. I'm certainly concerned about accommodation, but I think a combination of factors need to be looked at -- not solely by the provincial government, as we certainly are not lagging in this area. I hope all governments will take on the responsibility.

I think, in addition, as a final note, it is the responsibility of those who live in rented accommodation to treat that accommodation with respect. Then they can demand that the provincial government make the kind of standards necessary. I think there are two sides of the coin and both have to be considered.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a few moments to participate in this debate. Coming as it does, late in the afternoon and after several speakers on the subject, it may be hard to add anything new to the debate. However, I've noticed that several speakers have spoken without adding anything new. So I think I can do the same.

I refer particularly to the members seated to my right on this side of the House. I'd like particularly to make reference to the mover of the motion, who complains we have an overheated economy. I would suggest to that hon. member that the people of Alberta had an opportunity to slow the economy by the election of an NDP government on March 26. They certainly would have done so had they elected that government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make particular reference to rent controls, advocated today by the mover of the motion. I would suggest he take a look at British Columbia if he wants to see an example of what happens when rent controls are applied. I can only rely on the news media -- and of course, I'm sure I can rely on the news media, as we all can, for accurate information -- and the news media indicates certainly that the program in British Columbia has been a disaster. As a matter of fact, the article which appeared in today's Edmonton Journal, which no doubt gave rise to the motion, says this: "builders say . . . rent control in provinces like B.C. also has reduced drastically apartment construction". Now, perhaps the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview has a much better connection with the Government of British Columbia than I do, and he might seek out from them some information as to how effective their programs have been before he comes to this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, and advocates we introduce rent controls in this province.

Now, in reference to some of the criticism made, and I've heard it several times: it is simply not good enough. I wonder what would satisfy some hon. members. This government has moved with a good deal of dispatch to deal with the housing issue.

During the election campaign a platform statement was issued by the Premier which not only outlined the steps taken to date, but also outlined in some considerable detail the steps which would be taken to alleviate the situation.

AN HON. MEMBER: When?

MR. HORSMAN: One of the major proposals, of course, was the introduction . . .
[interjections]
I hear some chatter on my right.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's all it is, too.

AN HON. MEMBER: The squirrels have got their nuts.

MR. HORSMAN: However, one of the first steps which had to be taken was to introduce a ministry of housing. That is one of the first things that has been done, and I'm delighted that has been undertaken by the government.

If the hon. members would take time to read the budget speech of the hon. Provincial Treasurer, Mr. Speaker, they would find it contained therein, and I quote:

\$77 million is proposed for home ownership programmes including \$65 million for direct lending programmes, \$6.6 million for native housing programmes, and \$5.5 million for rural housing programmes for farm families. Our commitment to provide adequate shelter for Albertans is reflected by the creation of a Housing and Public

Works Department and our policy statements regarding the development of a Starter Home programme.

Now, of course, that was referred to by the hon. Premier when he introduced the housing platform of the Conservative Party in the election campaign, and \$200 million of the Alberta heritage trust fund would be dedicated towards that concept.

We have in Edmonton, I understand, a serious housing situation, particularly with regard to rental. I watched with interest the other evening the CBC show, which I believe was entitled No Vacancy. I was not able to watch the conclusion of that show, which I thought certainly dealt in some depth with the problem in this particular city. Far be it for me, coming from southeastern Alberta, to indicate to Edmonton City Council or Edmonton members of this Legislature how to deal with their problems, but it seems to me that it may be worth while viewing that show once again, particularly since I understand it will be rerun in the next few days. I would like to watch the conclusion, although I did think that perhaps there were times when it got off the subject and dealt with other areas of concern relative to the City of Edmonton.

One thing I want to mention, and I've already done this I think in the debate on the motion moved by the hon. Member for Bow Valley, is the question of planning. I certainly urge the government, as they have already indicated that they will do, to bring forward the new planning act, because planning is certainly a holdup of our present situation with regard to putting new housing on stream in this province.

In conclusion, because some of the other points I had down have already been touched on, there's been a good deal of criticism directed at home-owners who are selling their homes for increased prices. Several of the members have touched on the inflationary factor in that regard. The inflationary factor has worked against the vendors of their homes equally, because in most cases they are not moving away, or ceasing to occupy single-family homes. After they sell their homes, they are forced to go into new houses where they, of course, are faced with having to take all they got out of the home they sold and put it into new housing. So I don't think it is fair, Mr. Speaker, to point the finger at the home-owner who is selling his home, and say that he is the cause of the increased cost of housing. I should like to make that point.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, may I say that I applaud the actions taken by this government, and I suggest to the hon. members that this is indeed a government that has moved very quickly, as evidenced by the growth from \$5 million to \$68 million in Alberta Housing Corporation funds in the last 4 years. This is a government which has moved extremely quickly to deal with this problem of housing. I must say as well, it's not the type of problem faced by no-growth provinces which may be saddled with another party form of government than Alberta is fortunate to have in the Conservative government.

DR. BUCK: The hon. members on the government side can talk all afternoon and tell us what a great job they're doing, but that's not going to solve the problem. It's not going to go away. It's here, and it's now. Mr. Speaker, I'm really amazed the government would allow this debate to go on, that they would even permit it to take place with the terrible record they have shown in housing.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear, hear.

DR. BUCK: It starts, Mr. Speaker, right with the establishment of the new ministry. The new minister came into this Legislature as a cabinet minister in 1971, full of vim, vigor, vitality, and enthusiasm. I'm not so sure the concept of having a "super cabinet" and the "also-ran cabinet" hasn't dampened his enthusiasm, because I have never seen the hon. minister less enthused about trying to do a job.

AN HON. MEMBER: He's looking down in the mouth.

DR. BUCK: To me, that's just not like him. I have to admit he's enthusiastic. He was enthusiastic. He usually really tries to do the job. I just don't know what has happened to the hon. minister, but I surely do hope he comes to, because we need some help, and we need it now. We need it in housing.

When the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood tells us about all the great things that have been done, I would like to know where the government was when it waffled and waffled and waffled when the City of Edmonton wanted funds for public housing, and there was a big hassle about who the title of the land was going to belong to. It doesn't really matter, because the property is going to belong to either the municipal or the provincial government. They are both elected bodies, and it still belongs to the people. It doesn't belong to the government. The government wants you to think the property belongs to it. It belongs to the people. So, Mr. Speaker, the record is just not that good. When the hon. Member for Medicine Hat tells us about the great things that are going to be done and the great promises that are made, it's quite obvious he didn't come into this Legislature in '71, when "now" was supposed to mean something. It's not "now" anymore. We don't use that word. It's "when". It's "when" something is going to happen. Quite obviously nothing is happening.

There are things that can be done. The \$1,000 senior citizens grant, do you know why that program was stalled? It's very simple, it's right in this paper. It's called the Vegreville Observer. The reason the \$1,000 senior citizens program was stalled is because of a news reporter called Len Grant, who brought the Horst house tumbling down. It says in here that because of the inquiry by the member of the media -- "Because of [this]

action, a much closer scrutiny will be made of applications . . ." It goes on to say, "Because of this action, the Senior Citizens wishing to obtain the \$1,000 home improvement grants may have to wait several months longer."

AN HON. MEMBER: Shame.

DR. BUCK: Now, I'm sure the honorable Mr. Grant, Mr. Speaker, didn't . . .

HON. MEMBERS: Order.

MR. BATIUK: Point of order.

DR. BUCK: I have the floor.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order please.

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Speaker, I think what the hon. member read is a little misleading. That's one of my publications he's reading. I said that is one of the reasons that grants are going to be delayed.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I'll read the entire article to the hon. member.
[interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps the hon. member might do that without the benefit of the Speaker.
[laughter]

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I have more important things to say to this House than what the hon. Member for Vegreville had to say. If the hon. member wants to proofread his articles, he can certainly read in here. But he blames the member from CHQT for the \$1,000 senior citizen grant being delayed. You know, I always believe everything I read in the paper.

Mr. Chairman, there is an opportunity for this government . . . Mr. Speaker, I apologize. Somebody over there at least is awake. Mr. Speaker, there is an opportunity for this government to take one of the boldest steps any government has ever taken, because it has the money. This is the first time in Confederation any province has ever had the surplus this government has. Mr. Speaker, this is the time when this government could take out \$500 million of the Alberta heritage trust fund and put it into housing, into a revolving fund. Now, Mr. Speaker, they can do this: they can say to Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, they can say to the chartered banks, the lending institutions, and the trust companies, we have \$500 million in a housing fund. To the people of Alberta: if you have a conventional mortgage that you have to pay 10, 11, 11.5 per cent on, come to the Alberta Housing Corporation. If your mortgage is \$35,000, come to us. We will lend you your own money at 8 per cent. Go to that lending institution, pay off your mortgage, then use your own money to house yourself.

Now, this is the first time that any province has had this opportunity. This government is pussy-footing around. Tokenism -- that's all they are doing. They have the opportunity. I would like to see the hon. minister get back some of that vitality he showed before, show us some initiative, and go ahead with some bold new programs such as this, because it is our own money, and let's use our own money to house ourselves. We have the vehicle. We have the Alberta Housing Corporation. We have the treasury branches. That doesn't mean that we're just going to lend the \$500 million to just anybody. They have to show that they are responsible enough, that their income is adequate, so that the mortgages will be paid. What better way for Albertans to use their own money than for housing?

Mr. Speaker, another area that I would like to mention that hasn't been touched on is that in the small towns and villages the former minister, and now the Minister of Housing, tried, and did initiate programs for water and sewer. But they are not adequate, and the assistance to small towns and villages is not adequate for them to proceed with new subdivisions. They just don't have the borrowing power. They just don't have a large enough population, and a large enough base. If we're talking about decentralization and having people move into the smaller towns and villages, we've got to give them more help than we're presently giving them.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude with this. The costs of housing have gone up dramatically: as was mentioned, any place from 35 to 40 per cent in Edmonton and Calgary, depending on whose statistics you use and how you use them, but it's some place between 30 and 40 per cent. The real estate agent who sells a house that was worth \$50,000 a year ago now sells that same house for \$70,000, and is still charging that consumer the same amount of rate for that transaction.

AN HON. MEMBER: A rip-off.

DR. BUCK: I am not saying that it is necessarily a rip-off, but I am saying that the Consumer Affairs Department has not been doing its job.

I would like to say at this time that I was quite impressed -- I was very impressed -- with the openness and the enthusiasm of the new Minister of Consumer Affairs . . .

SOME HCN. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

DR. BUCK: . . . because the new Minister of Consumer Affairs is really going to try to do something with this department, and that is refreshing, gentlemen and ladies [interjections] Mr. Speaker. That is refreshing, because there certainly wasn't anything done in the Consumer Affairs Department previous to this minister coming in.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude with this. There is an opportunity, because we have the money to set up a revolving fund so that Albertans can use their own money to house themselves. Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. minister to consider that.

Thank you.

MR. STRONBERG: Mr. Speaker, down in my constituency at Camrose we're noticing a trend that's becoming very evident, and that is the number of foreign licence plates that are in that area from British Columbia and Saskatchewan. This, of course, has had quite an impact on the community. Camrose, right now, has no apartments for rent. It has a building boom taking place. But the increase in population last year was only 1 per cent. New subdivisions are being completed, new apartments -- I believe it's something like a dozen going up this spring -- and still the population remaining at 1 per cent. The town council asked for a second census to verify that 1 per cent, and found a trend developing in Camrose, that probably could be applied to other areas of Alberta, that more and more people are living as single people -- by the loss of a spouse.

We have been fortunate in our city that Alberta Housing has offered considerable co-operation. They have offered to purchase a quarter of land, to develop that quarter with services, financing, et cetera. Alberta Housing has also been involved in a number of trailer courts. But the message I wanted to get across, Mr. Speaker, is that some of our villages and small towns outside Camrose are having a difficult time trying to convince the mortgage company to set up business or supply mortgages there. They want to be in Edmonton and Calgary. When a new industry comes to a small community, that village or town really has a serious problem annexing and buying more land, and putting the services in. Perhaps this is an area we could look into.

But I think what has happened in my constituency is that now the trailers coming in. Not 1 hamlet, 1 village, or 1 town has lost population in the last 2 years. This is because of the cost of a trailer. I can name village after village that 10 years ago had vacant lots and vacant businesses and now has 6, 8, 10 new trailers. These trailers are going on serviced lots that are costing about \$75. They are on paved roads to Camrose, Wetaskiwin, Leduc, and Lacombe.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention what is taking place in Ferintosh, a very small village in my constituency. Their community had really been going downhill for a good number of years. A group of businessmen formed a co-op. They approached the co-op activities branch and received financial help. Last week they poured the foundations for two trailers. These two trailers have been sold for 5 per cent down. Five per cent down is certainly going to give a number of younger people their only chance to break out of a basement suite or apartment. They don't have enough financial means for a down payment from Central Mortgage and Housing. I hope this idea extends from Ferintosh into other communities.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if I'm accurate, but I believe 20 per cent of the housing in the province last year was trailers. I think we should be doing everything, through Alberta Housing, to encourage the cities, villages, and towns to pass the necessary by-laws to allow trailers to come in, buy a title to property, put a trailer on foundation, or allow the development of trailer parks.

MR. ZANDER: Mr. Speaker, I want to mention a few statistics. I went upstairs and got them just a moment ago. It's very interesting to look at the figures. In 1961, the price of a 3-bedroom home consisting of 1,000 to 1,100 square feet was \$14,000 to \$16,000 with an interest rate of 5.5 to 6 per cent. The average wage at that time for an ordinary person was \$2.75 to \$3 an hour. In 1971, the interest rate for a similar home was 8.25 and the cost of the house had gone up 100 per cent to about \$23,000. By and large, Mr. Speaker, the salaries of the same type of people employed in the same trade went from \$4 to \$4.50 an hour. In 1975, the same home cost approximately \$35,000, with an interest rate of 10.5. But, Mr. Speaker, the average salary for the same workman has risen from \$4 to \$4.50 to \$5 to \$8. So when we look at the incremental increase in the cost of housing, the housing has gone up 250 per cent in the last 14 years, and salary has kept pace; it has increased 300 per cent over 1961 salaries.

AN HCN. MEMBER: Not for MLAs.

MR. ZANDER: I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that I adjourn debate.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, if we could just stop the clock for a moment. Regarding business tomorrow afternoon, on page 8 of Votes and Proceedings of Tuesday, which hon. members received this afternoon, Government Motion No. 1, which is proposed to be moved by myself on Friday, and which relates to certain changes in the business of the House and private members' afternoons basically on Thursday, is one which, in my view, relates essentially to the privileges and rights of private members. I propose to the members of the opposition that that be debated tomorrow, after Orders of the Day, instead of Friday. Members of the opposition have agreed to that. I just wanted to give notice that this

would be debated Thursday, after Orders of the Day, following which we'd move to Motions Other Than Government Motions.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: The Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 2:30 o'clock.

[The House rose at 5:32 p.m.]

