

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Friday, June 6, 1975

[The House met at 10 a.m.]

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 13 The Department of Energy and Natural Resources Act

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill No. 13, The Department of Energy and Natural Resources Act. This bill essentially reflects the reorganization of the previous Department of Mines and Minerals with certain components of the previous Department of Lands and Forests.

[Leave being granted, Bill 13 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill 211 The School Amendment Act, 1975

MR. PURDY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill No. 211, an act to amend The School Act. The principle of this bill, Mr. Speaker, is to allow Indian reserves representation on local school authorities. This was asked for by local authorities which have Indian reserves within the school jurisdiction and by the Indian reserves that would like to become incorporated in that area.

[Leave being granted, Bill 211 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill 212 The Matrimonial Property Act

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 212, The Matrimonial Property Act. Basically, this act provides that all property acquired by either partner after marriage would be considered jointly owned. If a divorce were to occur, all property acquired after the marriage would be divided equally between the partners. The bill would not apply to any property brought into the marriage by either partner, and the couple would have the opportunity to opt out of the plan before the marriage, if they so chose. The bill would be retroactive to all marriages, but couples would have the opportunity to withdraw from the plan before January 1, 1977.

[Leave being granted, Bill 212 was introduced and read a first time.]

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. YURKO: Mr. Speaker, I have indeed a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you, and to the members of the House, 90 students from the St. Gabriel school in the constituency of

Edmonton Gold Bar. They are here with their teachers, Mr. Vojtiw, and the vice-principal, Mr. Paul Stewart. Sixty students are seated in the members gallery and 30 in the public gallery. I would ask that they stand and be recognized by the House.

TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

DP. HOHOL: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the first annual report of the Alberta Educational Communications Corporation, known as ACCESS Alberta. I should like to add that the report was prepared by Mr. Justice Michael O'Byrne, chairman of the board of directors, and Mr. Larry T. Shorter, president and chief executive officer.

DR. WARRACK: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the annual report of the Department of Telephones and Utilities for 1974-75.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to submit a report outlining the regulations and orders made under the authority of The Gas Resources Preservation Act.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Syncrude No-Strike Agreements

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the Minister of Labour. Could he indicate to the House whether electricians have walked off the job on the Syncrude project? If they have, at what stage are the discussions?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, the discussions the hon. Leader of the Opposition would be referring to are between the bargaining parties. Of course, the involvement of the Department of Labour would be through the labour relations branch, in the sense of offering any conciliatory or mediation services they can. My understanding of the present situation is that it is somewhat unclear. My preference would be that statements on the progress of this particular matter really be sought from the parties, because each has his own view to present, I think.

MR. CLARK: Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, recognizing the minister's desire not to comment on the question as far as the electricians are concerned. All well and good for the time being.

Is the minister in a position to indicate the number of unions or the areas between labor and Bechtel which have not come to terms? In recognizing the electricians have not worked out an agreement, how many other groups have not been able to work out no-strike agreements?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I think there are two factors involved. One is the well-known attempts made by the Bechtel corporation and by a number of the international trade unions to take advantage of the fact that what was known a year ago as Bill 52 was passed by the House, making it possible for a no-strike, no-lockout type of contract to be entered into in respect of the Syncrude site.

However, as hon. members will recall, that was enabling legislation and did not have any degree of compulsion requiring the parties to come to that type of agreement. Therefore the result is that although it had provisions in it that would make it easier for them to arrive at that type of agreement, it was still up to the parties to negotiate it.

I think one of the impressions I had of the attempts by the parties to arrive at an agreement was that they would make it as comprehensive as possible. At the same time, there were strictly bilateral negotiations going on between Bechtel and individual trades. It is in the area of the bilateral discussions that I understand some success has been achieved. To answer the hon. leader's question, my rough estimation would be that now probably half the trades, which would number between 15 and 20 in total, have come to some sort of agreement with the main contractor.

MR. CLARK: One last supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. What agency of the government will be doing the ongoing monitoring from the government's standpoint as to working out these arrangements between the individual trades and Bechtel, having regard for the public involvement the Government of Alberta has in the area? Which government department has that responsibility?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I do not presume that with our interest of only 10 per cent of the particular project, we would have any special position relative to the negotiations the Minister of Labour has underlined.

Government Contract Employment

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the second question to the Premier. Could the Premier indicate to the Assembly the number of contracts between individuals working for the Government of Alberta and its agencies?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. leader would have to put that on the Order Paper.

Mackenzie Valley Pipeline

MR. TAYLOR: My question is to the hon. Minister of Energy. Has the Alberta government taken a position on the Mackenzie Valley pipeline?

MR. GETTY: No, Mr. Speaker, other than the one the government made at an energy conference some two years ago, in which the Premier advised that the government generally felt that if the resources are necessary for Canada, they should be developed, subject first to having adequate conditions to cover the concerns of environment, native needs and local residents in the north.

MR. TAYLOR: Supplementary. Has any department prepared an inventory of the benefits and disadvantages of the pipeline coming through Alberta?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, there has been some general discussion of these, because those people sponsoring the various applications have kept the government informed. I know that the Department of Environment has also been considering the impact of a major pipeline through the province. However, inasmuch as the pipeline is really hypothetical at this stage, the planning has not been finalized.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Concerning the route through Alberta, has there been any negotiation by any level of the Alberta government with any of the applicants as to whether it's in the interest of the province to have the pipeline go through the Province of Alberta?

MR. GETTY: We have had discussions with applicants on that matter, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TAYLOR: Supplementary. Have any representations been made to the Government of Alberta regarding a possible route through Alberta?

MR. GETTY: Yes, there have been discussions regarding the possible route and how it might tie in to existing pipelines within the province.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the hon. minister. Have any of the consortia considering the development of a Mackenzie pipeline made requests to the Alberta government for any kind of assistance, either debt or joint venture, from the Province of Alberta?

MR. GETTY: No, not to the best of my knowledge.

Banks -- Government Involvement

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Premier and ask whether the Government of Alberta still supports the position paper presented to the Western Economic Opportunities Conference on capital financing in the regional financial institutions, particularly with respect to amending the bank act to allow provincial governments to own voting equity in chartered banks?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, that area of the Western Economic Opportunities Conference was essentially at the initiative of the Government of the Province of British Columbia. We endorsed it in a general way. I believe that endorsement in a general way would stand.

Whether the hon. member is referring to any specific matter, I haven't had an opportunity to refresh my memory as to the specific wording of the position paper of the Western Economic Opportunities Conference, except to underline it was essentially a Government of British Columbia initiative.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. By way of explanation, I want to ask the hon. Premier about the proposed amendments to the bank act which would allow provinces to own 25 per cent of shares in new banking institutions and 10 per cent of shares in existing banking institutions.

My question is: does the Government of Alberta still endorse that position which is contained in these recommendations?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I would believe the answer to that is: generally; although we're very pleased with the results the treasury branches have been showing in this province. They have proved to be a very effective vehicle from our point of view. So it would be a general endorsement, but certainly nothing beyond that at this stage.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, further supplementary question to the hon. Premier. Is it the government's view that the commercial lending institutions, the chartered banks, are sufficiently adaptive, knowledgeable, and concerned about investment opportunities in the West? Or is it the government's view that there is a requirement for a larger western input into the chartered banks of Canada?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, frankly I would have to say there's been some considerable improvement in the last three years in the response by the chartered banks in Canada to efforts by the Alberta government to have a greater element of decision-making in the chartered banking system in Alberta, and to service our economy. In addition to that, of course, and probably to some extent because of it, the treasury branches in their effective performance have created a competitive atmosphere in this province that has helped that movement of direction by the chartered banks in Canada.

Wood Buffalo National Park

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask a question of the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. In light of the fact that the Cree Indian band at Fort Chipewyan has asked to open a gypsum mine within the boundaries of Wood Buffalo Park, I'd like to know if the provincial government has had any consultation with the federal government and the Indian band in relation to opening a gypsum mine in Wood Buffalo National Park?

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd have to check with regard to that specific resource project to which the honorable gentleman refers. I would think, though, the matter of resource development within the boundaries of a national park would be essentially a matter under the jurisdiction of the federal government. However, I will check and provide such information as might be helpful.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Can the minister report on the status of the transfer of the particular piece of land containing the gypsum mine out of Wood Buffalo National Park to accommodate native claims in the area?

MR. HYNDMAN: I could report on that, Mr. Speaker. However, I think the history of the matter should be gone into in some definitive detail. I had planned to do that in consideration of the estimates of my department. At that time I would welcome a thorough debate on all aspects of it and would be prepared to present to the House an outline of where matters now stand, what has happened, and what our position vis-a-vis the federal government is at this time.

Green Zone Committee Recommendations

MR. ZANDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. Has the minister any planned timetable for implementing some or any of the recommendations of the Green Zone Policy Review Committee completed some two years ago?

MR. GETTY: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have.

MR. ZANDER: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister consider meeting with some of the original members of the committee to familiarize himself with the problems and recommendations of the committee?

MR. GETTY: Yes, Mr. Speaker, he certainly would.

Visit to Halifax

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address a question to the hon. Premier. I'd like to ask if the visit to Halifax this weekend will be an official visit from the Province of Alberta to the Maritime province, or is it an unofficial visit?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, the visit is not being made at public expense.

Child Protection Registry

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health and is a follow-up to a question I raised last week with regard to the child abuse registry. I was wondering if the minister could report any further decisions that have been made with regard to procedures on the registry?

MISS HUNLEY: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I was waiting for an opportunity to fulfil a commitment made to bring additional information to the Assembly. Following the raising of the issue in the House, the Ombudsman was courteous enough to phone me to discuss his interest in it and his intention. He advised me that he wanted to pursue and examine the method in which the child battery registry operated. I decided I would wait for his recommendations before undertaking any extensive review of it myself. I felt it would be very useful to have his candid opinion.

I might say, Mr. Speaker, I am quite satisfied that confidentiality with the records is strictly maintained. I might also alert the Assembly to the concern I have that confidentiality must be maintained, but the registry must work effectively or the whole intent of it will be lost. It's been very widely accepted by the people in the Legislature and the Province of Alberta. They feel it's very valuable. So this is one of the areas we'll be examining, and the Ombudsman has indicated his interest in that particular area.

Also, I'm sure all hon. members would be pleased to hear me relay his comment that he was very favorably impressed with the work done by officials in the department. He didn't have the slightest fault to find with their work and their relationship with the people concerned, because it's a very serious matter, and it's very upsetting to people who are falsely accused. I'll look forward to working with his recommendations as soon as I receive them.

REA Takeovers

MR. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I direct my question to the Minister of Telephones and Utilities. How many rural electrification associations have been taken over by Calgary Power or Alberta Power?

DR. WARRACK: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure of the exact answer, although I do know the number is small, particularly in proportion to the 300-and-some REAs in Alberta. The situation with respect to the rural electrification association systems is that some are in excellent condition, others fair, and others in need of refurbishing. In the case of those that need to be rebuilt, there's the question of how they'll be financed. In some instances the REAs have requested that the power companies consider taking on the system and doing the necessary capital financing. However, I do not know the specific number, but I'd be pleased to check and report to the member.

MR. MILLER: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, if I may. When the minister's looking into the number that have been taken over, would he also check to see how compensation for rural electrification association assets is arrived at?

DR. WARRACK: I'd be happy to do that, Mr. Speaker. That is a matter of fairly substantial complexity -- on a formula basis as I understand it -- so it would require that kind of checking. I'd be pleased to do so.

MR. NOTLEY: A supplementary question to the hon. minister. Does the government monitor, or is there any device or agency by which the government will monitor the actual reconstruction costs which are charged to the REAs by the subsidiaries of either Calgary Power or Alberta Power that do the maintenance or reconstruction?

DR. WARRACK: Mr. Speaker, I don't think the hon. member quite understands how it works. An evaluation is made of the system itself for the future provision of power into the areas in question. On the basis of that, a decision is made by the REAs as to whether they wish to have their system go to the power company. The remainder of whatever costs are involved must then be undertaken.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. With great respect, the minister didn't answer my question.

My question is: is the government monitoring the work done by the subsidiaries of the power companies which, in actual fact, do the repair work on the lines?

DR. WARRACK: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think this is more than repairs. In an instance like this we're talking about a reconstitution of the systems and, therefore, a capital investment that's involved. If the investment is being made by the power company in terms of the freedoms they have to make those kinds of investment decisions, they do not necessarily have to have approval of the government in order to proceed. However, we do offer our technical capability in order to provide advice and discussion with respect to both REAs and the potential power supplier, as to whether they're working toward a mutually acceptable arrangement. So on an advisory basis, upon request of the participants we're available for that. But we do not, in a strong-arm regulatory way, enforce our views on those who are participating.

Housing Funds

MR. KUSHNER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question to the Minister of Housing and Public Works. Since the housing situation seems to be critical, would the minister advise how much money, in fact, is available from the provincial government towards housing or apartments? As well, how much money is available from the federal government for this type of program?

MR. YURKO: Mr. Speaker, as we are in a budget debate, I wouldn't want to release or give too much information during the question period. However, I would ask the hon. member to address himself to page 17 of the capital appropriation in which is listed an amount of \$111,900,000 from Treasury to the Alberta Housing Corporation. That sum is the estimated cash requirements of the Alberta Housing Corporation during the forthcoming year. I would also ask him to address himself to the income account for the Alberta Housing Corporation, which is some \$12 million.

In addition, the Alberta housing program is supplemented by funds from Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. For public housing, including senior citizens housing, this is estimated to be in the order of \$21.5 million this year.

However, Central Mortgage and Housing will be funding other programs in Alberta such as the Limited Dividend Housing program, the non-profit and the co-op program, the AHOP program. It is estimated that the total allocation of funds to Alberta by the federal government -- and it must be remembered that some programs are still not totally defined -- will be between \$60 and \$70 million.

Eight Mile Lake

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Speaker, if I might ask a question of the hon. Minister of Agriculture to do with a letter from Alberta Fish & Game.

In view of the some \$200 million which the province will be putting into irrigation, and the current concerns of all people and their concern about the St. Mary River Irrigation District, does the minister know whether he received any correspondence from the Alberta Fish & Game Association with regard to the drainage of a local wetland area known as Eight Mile Lake?

AN HON. MEMBER: Order Paper.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of having received any representations in that regard.

MR. COOKSON: Perhaps I could ask the Minister of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife whether his department received any submissions on behalf of the Alberta Fish & Game Association with regard to the drainage of this low-lying area called Eight Mile Lake?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I have a letter on my desk right now from the Lethbridge area Fish & Game Association in relation to Eight Mile Lake.

MR. COOKSON: One further supplementary. Perhaps it could be directed to either of the ministers. Is there any legislation which requires or at least directs an organization such as the St. Mary River Irrigation District to take into due consideration the submissions on behalf of the Fish & Game Association?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member is asking a question of law, but perhaps if he really is referring to a matter of policy, it could be answered in the question period.

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I would have to direct that question to the minister responsible for the irrigation projects.

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Speaker, the province is putting \$200 million into irrigation. I think it is in the interest of all the people of Alberta to look after all interests since, after all, the money belongs to the people of Alberta. I'm making a submission on behalf of the Fish & Game Association.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, part of the problem is that I'm not fully aware of the contents of the hon. member's submission in regard to the lake he referred to. Certainly, the Department of Environment, working with the Department of Agriculture, is concerned about all aspects of environmental protection in delivering water to water users in irrigation districts. It is my belief that co-operation between the two departments will continue in that manner.

Calgary Convention Centre

MR. MUSGREAVE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address this question to the minister responsible for Calgary affairs.

MR. NOTLEY: Oh, oh, he got one.

DR. BUCK: [Inaudible] have to do something with that \$30,000.

MR. MUSGREAVE: I'm glad the opposition recognizes what an important post that is.

Mr. Speaker, the Province of Alberta made a substantial contribution to the purchase of land for the convention site in the City of Calgary. I'd like to know if the government is monitoring the hearings to see if its interests are being well looked after?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, the government is only monitoring the hearings through the newspapers and, of course, the other publications which cover it.

DR. BUCK: We spent \$30,000 for that?

MR. MUSGREAVE: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister advise if the commission has made any requests for provincial officials to appear before the hearing?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of any requests of that nature.

Deaths Report

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Social Services and Community Health. A very short explanation is necessary first. During the 1974 Estimates, the Minister of Health and Social Development mentioned a report being prepared by Dr. Walter MacKenzie on deaths, including suicides. Has this report been received by the government yet?

MISS HUNLEY: I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, whether the final report was published. There was an interim report published, and a news release accompanied it. That would be several months ago. I remember reading it.

MR. TAYLOR: Are these reports available to the public?

MISS HUNLEY: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure they are.

Bechtel Preassembly Plant

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Minister of Energy and ask if he could advise the House where things stand at the present time as to the Bechtel preassembly plant location in Calder -- whether he's had any discussions with Bechtel or Syncrude people, and can he report to the Assembly?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the government's equity interest -- the Premier referred previously to a 10 per cent equity interest -- has been represented on the board of directors by the hon. Member for Edmonton Calder. We have discussed this matter and have expressed generally the government's feelings that that is not the best location, in our estimation, for the plant. However, as the Premier pointed out, we express a 10 per cent equity interest in that matter.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. As a result of his discussions with the hon. Member for Calder and the hon. member's discussions with the Syncrude board, is the minister in a position to report any progress in encouraging Bechtel to relocate?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, since the matter is presently being considered among Bechtel, community residents, and the City of Edmonton, we can only report that it is still being discussed.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the Minister of Environment. Has the government given any consideration to applying the new Industrial Relocation Program to this particular problem?

MR. RUSSELL: Yes, consideration has been given along that line, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. Is the minister in any position to report when a decision may be made on this particular consideration?

MR. RUSSELL: Well, Mr. Speaker, I hope it's clearly understood that that policy is one which is implemented through discussion and co-operation among the various parties concerned. Naturally, anybody applying to establish an industry in Alberta is governed by local zoning by-laws and municipal statutes.

Manpower Requirements

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Manpower and ask if the government has done any studies to determine what the Alberta labor force requirements will be over the next five years.

DR. HOHOL: Mr. Speaker, we have done this kind of work. It isn't conclusive by any means, because of the nature of movement of people and the demands for different skills and competence by industry, commerce, agriculture, and the institutions. Within the constraints of certain known limitations of studies of this kind, yes, we are doing the best we can.

MR. CLARK: A supplementary question to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Could he indicate to the House what portion of the anticipated labor force five years down the road will be Albertans and what percentage he anticipates will come from the rest of Canada?

DR. HOHOL: We do have those estimates in the reports. While I read it recently, I would be a percentage or so out. I prefer to be exact, look into the files, and give the member and the House the exact information rather than estimates. We do have the information.

MR. CLARK: One further supplementary then, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister be prepared to bring those reports to the Assembly and discuss them during his estimates?

DR. HOHOL: Yes, indeed. I would be most pleased to.

Welfare Benefits

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. It is with regard to a representation I had from Edmonton Centre concerning telephones for welfare recipients. Is there an allowance for that kind of convenience for welfare recipients?

MISS HUNLEY: I can't be specific, Mr. Speaker, about whether every welfare recipient is entitled to a telephone as part of the policy guidelines. I would expect that if it's a matter of illness or disability where a telephone is essential, it probably would be. I would prefer to check it so I can be completely accurate and then reply to the hon. member in this Assembly.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, to the minister for further clarification. The representation was with regard to a special case in which the recipient needed a telephone for medical care, and the person asked if it could be allowed. This is from the medical doctor. At present it seemed it couldn't be.

Crime Victims -- Compensation

MR. KUSHNER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the Attorney General. I noticed from the report that \$1.5 billion of taxpayers' money has been spent on convicted or accused criminals. I'd like to know how much of that money is spent on victims. What portion of that is, in fact, the amount of Albertans?

MR. SPEAKER: If this information can't be sought in the debate on the Estimates, it should certainly appear on the Order Paper.

AN HON. MEMBER: Agreed.

Bechtel Preassembly Plant (continued)

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Minister of Energy. It's a follow-up on one of the answers of the hon. Minister of Environment dealing with the Bechtel preassembly plant.

My question is: has any discussion taken place by your department, by you, or by the hon. Member for . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Would the hon. member please address the Chair.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry. Has any discussion with the Bechtel people taken place, either by the minister or any representative of the Alberta government, concerning any kind of financial assistance for relocation, funded by the province?

MR. GETTY: No, Mr. Speaker.

Visit to Japan

MR. CLARK: I'd like to direct a question to the Premier, or he may want to farm it out. Would the Premier be in a position to confirm that two hon. members, namely Mrs. Chichak and the hon. member Mr. Stromberg, will be . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Would the hon. member please refer to members by their constituencies, which is the capacity under which they are present in the Assembly.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, let me rephrase the question. Would the Premier be in a position to indicate to the Assembly whether the Member for Edmonton Norwood and the Member for Camrose will be representing Alberta on the junket to Japan?

MR. LOUGHEED: Yes, Mr. Speaker. They will be on a trip to Japan to broaden their perspectives and views of the world. [interjections]

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, we might as well find out if the broadening process will be at public expense. Was the answer yes or no, Mr. Speaker?

MR. LOUGHEED: The answer was no, Mr. Speaker.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, as the delegation seems to be representative of government, is a private corporate body or entity giving support, or is the money for the trip from their own personal funds?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, as the member is well aware from his past experience, on a number of occasions and sometimes on both sides of the House, opportunities are provided on inaugural flights by air lines so our citizens can see the world and attract people to this great province.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a question to the Premier. Is the Premier saying the flight is being provided by Pacific Western Airlines or some related company, or Air Canada? What air line is the Premier talking . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Not wanting to restrict the inquiry unduly, it does seem, if it's not a matter involving public funds, there might perhaps be an invasion of privacy involved if we go along this line of questioning too much further.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. We are talking about people who are elected, public servants, people in the Legislature. It seems we are going to get the experience from the trip back in the Legislature. I think it is part of our responsibility.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. R. SPEAKER: So I would appreciate it if the Premier would answer the question.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair must hasten to add, however, these members do have private lives.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: What air line?

MR. SPEAKER: If it involves a matter of public concern or public interest, definitely the question is in order, but within the restrictions I mentioned a moment ago.

MR. NOTLEY: I think we would want to know the air line, because we want to know that the safety of the members is looked after.

[laughter]

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. Premier if he'd advise us what air line they're going on.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, just to clear the matter, it's the Japanese air line, and we have no intention of acquiring it in the immediate future.

[laughter]

AN HON. MEMBER: At this point in time.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS (Second Reading)

Bill 3 The Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1975

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 3, The Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1975. In doing so I will merely call to the members' attention that it provides for interim supply of 50 per cent of the estimates which have been tabled in the House, plus the entire amount of those appropriations set out as Schedule A to the bill, less all the amounts in respect of the estimates that have been provided already by special warrant which are set out in Schedule B, plus in Section 2 of the bill, an interim supply of \$50 million in respect of the Syncrude project, less the amount which has already been provided by way of the special warrant referred to in the bill.

[The motion was carried. Bill 3 was read a second time.]

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move you do now leave the Chair and the Assembly resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill No. 3.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair.]

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COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

[Dr. McCrimmon in the Chair]

Bill 3 The Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1975

[The title and preamble were agreed to.]

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Chairman, I move that Bill No. 3, The Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1975, be reported.

[The motion was carried.]

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

[Dr. McCrimmon left the Chair.]

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[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

DR. MCCRIMMON: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole Assembly has had under consideration Bill No. 3, begs to report the same, and asks leave to sit again.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair.]

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COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

[Dr. McCrimmon in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Committee of Supply will come to order.

Department of Hospitals and Medical Care

MR. MINIELY: During the course of the presentation of the bill creating the ministry of Hospitals and Medical Care, I outlined to the hon. members just a few of the major questions and challenges I felt we would have to be looking at, and making some decisions on, over the next three and a half to four years.

I also indicated at that time, Mr. Chairman, that I was in danger of going from a position of being the watchdog of the public purse to the biggest spender in government. I note to hon. members that on page 3 my suspicion at that time is confirmed. Not only is the hospitals and medical care field the largest area of public expenditure, \$474,373,000, but other than Social Services and Community Health, it is also the most rapidly rising. Mr. Chairman, I think this indicates that it will represent a major challenge to all of us, in terms of trying to come up with more cost effectiveness in the system yet still maintaining the quality of our hospital, auxiliary hospital, and nursing home care delivery system. It will be a challenge to look at the different organizational aspects of this and, certainly, to attempt to de-escalate, if you like, the rate of escalation in this particularly large area of expenditure.

Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to review briefly for the hon. members the major budgetary increases in the current Estimates so they are aware of them. Of the total increase in the hospitals, auxiliary hospitals, and nursing home budget, \$73,961,000 or 39.8 per cent increase over last year is in the area of salaries for hospital workers, the various categories of workers in the hospital system; 19.5 per cent, a total of \$15,100,000 in real increase terms, is in the area of replacement of equipment and supplies within the hospital system; and an increase of \$628,000 is in debt charges, which is the liquidation and actual debt interest charges on the construction of hospitals, additions, and these types of things.

Mr. Chairman, within the budget, only \$4,899,300 is for new programming within hospitals. I would like to outline to members the major new programs we are funding in the hospital system. I can't outline all of them, but they might be interested in the major ones that are being funded.

At the University of Alberta Hospital we are spending \$1,107,000 in the cardiovascular surgery area, which will enable the hospital to perform 9 to 10 open heart operations per week. They are presently at a level of 5 to 6 open heart surgery operations at the University Hospital. This will include diagnostic equipment and renovation of operating rooms, and will provide for additional manpower to handle this very, very highly specialized service, Mr. Chairman.

In the area of cancer, at the Dr. W. W. Cross Cancer Institute we are improving and expanding three programs at a total of \$247,700 to try to improve our cancer diagnostic services as well as treatment services.

At Holy Cross Hospital in Calgary we are funding \$666,500 for a cardiac radiological room, which will tie in with the cardiovascular surgery they now perform, and upgrade the diagnostic radiology equipment to the support level of the amount of work they're presently doing. At the Holy Cross they are performing 3 to 4 open heart operations per week.

To all southern members, I'm sure you'll be pleased that in the new program area we have an amount of \$2 million to provide for the upgrading and air-conditioning -- air-

conditioning in particular -- in southern Alberta hospitals. I'm sure all southern members will be pleased we have that amount in the current budget.

Mr. Chairman, I've outlined the major reasons for the increase in the budget. I've indicated that certainly it results in a dramatic rise in what is already a very heavy expenditure, and that we will all be challenged to try to maintain our quality of care and to de-escalate the very rapid rise in expenditures in this area. I've outlined the major new programs we are funding. The total new programming in hospitals, as I indicated, is only \$4 million.

I'd like to give the hon. members one last bit of information in the area of staff in the hospital system. In 1974 the total staff in the hospital system, general and auxiliary hospitals, was 23,320. The estimated staff required as a result of the new programs and the expansion of existing programs in the general hospital and auxiliary area will total 410, which is a 1.8 per cent increase in actual staff. That will mean we estimate the total staff in the general and auxiliary hospital system in 1975 will be 23,730.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, all hon. members can see that the current budget has been a budget of tremendous adjustment in the salary levels of our hospital workers, with a minimum amount of new programming.

MR. NOTLEY: I'd like to offer a few comments on the general appropriation. It will probably save me making some comments on the specific appropriations as we proceed through the estimates.

Certainly as we look at hospitalization -- the minister points out the very substantial increase this year, 32 per cent in the hospital benefits plan and the nursing homes up somewhat less than that -- I think this is just the price we have to pay to catch up, Mr. Chairman. The minister properly pointed out that there was a very substantial increase in the amount of money being spent on employees in the hospital services. I think that is just a fact of life. We're not going to be able to retain employees in our hospitals in the province unless we pay wages that are at least to a certain extent competitive. Because hospital employee wages had lagged behind other areas of the Alberta economy as well as other hospital workers in Canada, there was a time when we had to catch up. This year is a catch-up year as I see it, and it's going to reflect itself in the budget.

I wouldn't think we should be assuming this sort of increase every year, but it's certainly the sort of upping of the estimates which will occur in the year we bring hospital workers up to a level where we can keep staff, Mr. Chairman. I think it's rather foolish economics for anybody to think we can save a few dollars by paying substandard wages. The net result of doing that . . .

MR. MINIELY: Excuse me just a moment. There's a feedback in our mike system, at least for me there was. It makes it difficult to hear the hon. member.

MR. NOTLEY: I see. Are we off and running?

I think it's short-sighted economics to assume we can continue to operate our hospital system with inadequate salaries. Because salary levels have come up this year, there is going to be an increase. I would doubt that we're going to see that sort of 39 per cent increase continue into the future.

I want to make several observations as far as the Health Care Insurance Commission is concerned, Mr. Chairman, and urge the government to pick up the premiums for health care in the Province of Alberta. I know that the immediate cry from the minister will be, how can you possibly make that sort of proposal? In 1974 I see that premiums earned a net of \$56 million. Well, Mr. Chairman, I suggest to the members of the committee and to the minister in particular, that eliminating the Alberta Health Care premiums would put more money into the hands of lower income people than the tax reduction this year which is going to cost the province \$115 million in lost revenue.

I have done a little research on this matter, Mr. Speaker, and I think it bears repeating in the Assembly. As you know, we have a premium system of \$5.75 a month for individuals and \$11.50 for families. There is a subsidy arrangement, but to qualify for the subsidy a family has to have a taxable income of less than \$1,000, or \$500 or less for a single person.

Mr. Chairman, let's take a look at what the savings would be to a family with a taxable income of \$1,001. If we eliminated the medicare premiums, their savings would be \$138 a year. Looking at the government's table for the tax benefits, their savings under the government's tax scheme would be \$46. So the savings to the working poor of eliminating the health care premiums in this case would be 3 times the amount that particular family in the \$1,001 taxable income bracket would receive under the government's taxation reduction scheme.

Mr. Chairman, in looking at the statistics a little further, I find that eliminating health care premiums would put more money into the hands of people earning \$12,000 a year and under. A family earning \$12,000 a year would save more money under the elimination of health care premiums than they would under the taxation reduction scheme. Over \$12,000, of course, it's quite clearly the other way around. The benefits under the taxation reduction scheme far exceed the elimination of health care premiums.

I would point out too, Mr. Chairman, again comparing the cost to the public treasury, the taxation reduction is estimated to be \$115 million plus some additional amount for

lower income families. The elimination of medicare premiums, using 1974 as a yardstick, would be \$56 million, or approximately half the cost to the public treasury.

But the point is, elimination of health care premiums would be getting money into the hands of low-income people who need it. People on welfare have their premiums picked up anyway. But the working poor, working for the minimum wage or just slightly above it, with a taxable income of \$1,000, \$1,500, or \$2,000, are the people who would benefit more by having medicare premiums eliminated than by the taxation reduction scheme which this House will be debating in the budget.

Mr. Chairman, I just happen to feel quite strongly that if we're going to finance medicare or any kind of care, whether denticare or health services generally, we shouldn't, in fact, be talking about a free service. Because there is no such thing as a free service. The important thing in these health schemes is that in financing them, we make sure the services are equally available to everyone, and people pay for those finances in relationship to their ability to pay. The lawyer who makes \$50,000 or \$100,000 a year pays far more than the cleaning woman who makes \$5,000 a year. They not only pay more, they pay a higher rate through our taxation system. Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that that is the basic philosophy contained in the Hall Commission report of 1964, which set the whole concept of prepaid medical care into play in Canada.

I would urge the government right now, not just a few months before the next provincial election, Mr. Chairman, to eliminate the premium structure. It would be a very useful move which would get money into the hands of low-income families who need it. That's the important thing -- not these taxation reduction schemes that will hand out \$1,000 to \$1,300 to a person who earns \$50,000, \$75,000, or \$100,000 a year. They can well afford to bear the brunt of inflation. The low-income people are most seriously affected, one might almost use the term victimized, by inflation. This is the area, it seems to me, where the government could and should move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Banff has asked leave to revert to Introduction of Visitors. Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS (reversion)

MR. KIDD: Mr. Chairman, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to the members of this Assembly, 45 pupils from the Banff Composite High School. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Ken Wygle, Miss Carol Sawka, and Mr. Rudi Kucy. They are seated in the members gallery. I ask them to rise so they can be recognized by this Assembly.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (continued)

Department of Hospitals and Medical Care (continued)

MR. KUSHNER: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I will be permitted to ask the hon. minister a general question which has been a concern of mine for some time. I congratulate the minister on being on top of co-ordinating hospital problems. In a line of specialization where we have considerable duplication, say, heart surgery or other fields -- speaking in reference to our hospitals in Calgary, there is no question there is duplication. Is this being reflected in this budget, or is it being processed now?

I would like to touch on another item, as well. That is laundry service. Is anything being done now to co-ordinate so all laundry could be done from one central base, or are we proceeding still on the line of every hospital having its own?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Chairman, I was waiting to see if there were very many questions. It seems hon. members do have some questions. So I'll respond to the first two.

First of all, to the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview, I would say we have subsidy levels in our medicare premium system now, as he knows. There is no premium charge to Alberta citizens who have no taxable income. We have a subsidy up to the \$1,000 level of taxable income, differentiating between \$500 and \$1,000 taxable income. So our premium system in Alberta has been related to ability to pay.

Yet we recognize the fact that there is a need for continuous review of income and subsidy levels. I don't know that I agree with him. I'm not fixed-minded, but I don't know that I agree that we eliminate premiums across the board, because that doesn't

reflect ability to pay either. In our system now we have the flexibility to review and, if necessary, increase levels of subsidy or levels of taxable income at which no premium is charged.

I think also that we could, unless we consider the matter very carefully -- I would caution the hon. member against looking at one side, medical care, and divorcing it from the rest of the health care delivery system. Because totally free medicare, I think, can have a real bearing on the demands on hospital and other facilities in the health care delivery system. If the citizen does not see any cost for medical care coverage -- and I think that's a question we all have to give considerable thought -- but I would caution against making decisions in terms of medical care coverage totally separate from the rest of the health care delivery system, and the demands on hospitals and other facilities in community health services.

Certainly, I think we'll always continue to review and update where necessary the elimination of premiums in lower income areas, and the subsidy level at certain levels of income. I think that would answer that particular question, Mr. Chairman.

Of course, I think the hon. member knows as well that in the tax reduction he was referring to, there was a selective tax reduction which applied only to citizens with taxable incomes below \$4,000.

In response to the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View, I would say one of our major challenges is the organizational system of hospitals, auxiliary hospitals, and extended care facilities, nursing home care. We do recognize there is duplication of facilities and services in the system at the present time. Each hospital board is autonomous. As a result, the government and the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care deal directly on facilities and requirements -- as an example, in the Calgary area -- with each hospital. We try to keep this at an absolute minimum, but I think it's only fair to say it is an area of concern in terms of the future, in terms of rationalizing facilities within the City of Calgary and within areas of Alberta, to ensure that we maintain quality health care for citizens living throughout the entire province and yet keep duplication of facilities down to an absolute minimum.

In the area of laundry, I can say I'm pleased there is a trend now within hospitals to share laundry and certain other kinds of facilities. Right now, the University Hospital and the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton are pooling laundry facilities, and also looking at pooling of kitchen, of actual food; they would have a central facility to provide both hospitals. I think prepackaged or frozen foods would be utilized in a centralized kitchen to provide food for both hospitals. So there are some moves in this direction, which it's certainly my intent to encourage to see if we could make some economies in terms of duplication of facilities.

MR. ZANDER: Mr. Chairman, I just want to make a few comments regarding what the minister outlined in the beginning, the extended health care services to be provided in the Province of Alberta. I think he clearly said, as I understood him, we're going to look into that field more closely than we have before. Certainly this is a necessity in my constituency, and also the upgrading of hospital services throughout the province.

Mr. Chairman, what amused me more than anything was the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview saying we should remove the medicare premiums from all the people of the Province of Alberta. It seemed to me that all the time he was talking, whether out on the campaign trail, when it suited him he said, we have all the provincial resources now so we can take all the provincial share of the income tax off the people of Alberta. Then he said, take all the health care premiums off. I can understand his concerns. I think we would all like to see that, as individuals, but certainly I think we must be responsible. Just because the province has money, it doesn't necessarily mean we have to take all the premiums off everybody holus-bolus. I could certainly agree with him that we should remove the medicare premiums from those who pay less than \$1,000 income tax, and I think they are pretty well taken care of. I just wanted to point that out to you, Mr. Chairman.

The other thing I want to ask the minister is: in the plans for renovating some of these hospitals, has the minister the preliminary architectural engineering cost factor for some of these major renovations?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, two areas. One, the minister has outlined the plan he has to control costs at the present time. I was wondering what kind of statistics he has on the increased demand on hospital facilities. In my mind I see a very difficult situation ahead. If the increased demand on hospital facilities is up, up, up, and at the same time we're trying to hold down the staff, I find the local boards in just about an impossible situation. If that is the case -- I'm making some assumption that there is quite an increase -- what are the causes? Are doctors indiscriminately referring patients to the hospital? Are there better care facilities in the hospital? Just what is happening? Does the minister have some statistics and analysis in that area? That's the first area.

The second thing is: what is the new hospital plan for the coming fiscal year? Maybe that comes under capital budget, but I think I could raise it now and save time later.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, there are just two points I would like to mention. The first involves decentralization of hospitals. It seems to me that for quite a number of years we have been centralizing hospitals in our major cities. While there is a place for hospitals in the major cities, particularly where specialists of various kinds are available, I think there's also a place for hospitals in smaller centres. I certainly like the attitude of the present minister, who is taking a look at this whole problem. I

hope we can get hospitalization facilities decentralized, at least to a degree, because it does mean a great deal for everything else in an area if you have hospitals and doctors there. It certainly encourages industry to settle.

The other point I would like to refer to under the same item is that during the last few months I have had the opportunity of speaking to practically every guest of Wheatland Lodge in Strathmore. The big worry every one of these had was the thought that they might get ill and have to go to a nursing home in Calgary. This is a real worry, a real weight on their shoulders. Some cry when they even think about it. All of these people are over 70, some over 80 and some over 90, but they still have their roots in the Strathmore area where they've lived for many, many years. They have their friends there. They have their assemblies and social times in the Wheatland Lodge. For them to be taken away to a place, even though it's only 30 miles away, it might as well be 500 miles as far as many of these people are concerned. I hope there would be some thought, too, of establishing nursing homes and auxiliary beds in areas where we have lodges. Where this has been done -- and it has been done in Drumheller -- I think it works out very, very well. It's certainly a very simple matter for people then to move from the lodge to the auxiliary, or from the lodge to the nursing home. I think it does give maximum efficiency in service.

The other point I want to mention to the hon. minister, which I hope he will have a chance to look at, is that in parts of Alberta we now have as many as three boards operating our hospital facilities. There's a board for the active hospital, a board for the nursing home, a board for the lodge, and sometimes there's also a board for the auxiliary. It seems to me that steps should be taken to put these under one board, particularly when they're in one town or one city. I think it would save money, give greater efficiency, and have a tendency to accomplish what the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View is mentioning, using common facilities for laundry, food preparation, et cetera.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake has asked leave to revert to Introduction of Visitors. Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS (reversion)

MF. SHABEN: Mr. Chairman, it's a pleasure for me to introduce to the members of this Committee of Supply, 59 Grade 8 students from Prairie River Junior High School in High Prairie. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mary Goede; bus drivers, Ed Albertine and Richard Poirier. Also accompanying the group of students are Mrs. Arledge, Brenda and Larry Pedrone. It's a real pleasure for me to welcome these students, particularly since my daughter is among them. I would like the members of the committee to recognize them, and I ask the students to rise.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (continued)

Department of Hospitals and Medical Care (continued)

DR. PAPROSKI: Just two or three brief comments to the hon. minister . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

DR. PAPROSKI: I, too, agree, thank you.

. . . for his consideration and comments. One is regarding cancer research, relative to other provinces. I wonder if he would comment where we stand, relative to the other provinces. Is it lower or higher? Even if we are at an average level, would the hon. minister take into consideration allocation of an increased amount of funds in this area because of the importance of this matter?

The other comment I would like to make, Mr. Chairman, as an overview if the minister would give us, what measures is the minister contemplating in his philosophy of the department to minimize the increase in cost or lower the cost or get at least optimal value for the taxpayers' dollar, in addition to those things that are mentioned; for example, avoiding duplication of laundry, food services, and specialized area services. Is the minister, in fact, seriously considering the subsidization of nursing-home-qualified patients to stay at home, subsidizing them so that they will stay at home and decrease the amount of necessary capitalization and services for an increased amount of nursing homes in this province?

The other question I would like to ask the minister is: what is the trend now regarding election of hospital board members versus appointment? Is there a trend in that direction, in addition to that of having one board, as the hon. Member for Drumheller mentioned?

These are the comments I would like to make, and I hope the minister will be free to make some comments. Thank you.

DR. WALKER: I too would like to go further on the duplication area. I would like to ask the hon. minister if any consideration can be given to amalgamating the present cancer and tuberculosis hospitals into the main hospital system. These areas were set up many years ago, long before general health care was available to everybody to alleviate the distress of cancer and tuberculosis. There are 53 different diseases in cancer, and it's absolutely ludicrous to go to a different hospital. You're spending \$2.6 million at the moment on the W.W. Cross Institute. Why couldn't this be incorporated into the general hospital system and stop referring to cancer as some special disease, or tuberculosis in the same way?

I would also like to agree with the hon. Member for Drumheller that hospital boards, senior citizens boards, and health units all be amalgamated into one total health care aspect, and form something in the line of a regional health care board or committee which could administer all aspects of health. At the moment legislation is such that even though they do want to amalgamate, they can't. Could this legislation possibly be changed to allow such amalgamation and reduce costs in this way?

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Chairman, just to take a minute or two. I would like to go on record publicly as commending those dedicated people who do open-heart surgery in the clinic in Edmonton in particular, and who are working with cancer patients. I've had nothing but positive advice with regard to the work they do here. We have a number of people in our area who have to make occasional trips here. They are invalided because of heart conditions, because of cancer problems, and they can say nothing but good with regard to the dedication of doctors and supportive staff.

I think it's got to be one of the most remarkable things when a person invalided with a heart condition, and practically at death's door, can make a trip to a clinic such as we have here in Edmonton and inside of two to three short weeks can go back practically a new person.

There's one thing I wanted to comment on, Mr. Minister, with regard to the Hospital Commission. I made this petition when the former minister was Minister of Health: that the commission be alert to those efficiently run hospitals and not be snowed under by extreme requests from hospitals that aren't efficient. I think they've really got to be on top of the representations made by hospital boards to make sure they don't penalize the efficient hospitals and then give way to those not operating efficiently. They have a really tough responsibility, and I think they have to be tough. Where a hospital is run extremely efficiently, such as the one at Lacombe -- and you can check the record; it's probably one of the most efficiently run hospitals for its size anywhere in the province -- we're careful not to discriminate against them because they're efficient, and we take a closer look at those hospitals that aren't operating efficiently.

You know, I get a kick out of the member for Spirit River-Fairview who runs off at the mouth about what he would do if he was ever Premier of this province. Heaven forbid. Many of his statements are totally irresponsible, because if you add up the total amount of requests he makes, we'd probably have to triple our budget. Well over \$700 million of our budget now comes out of oil and gas revenue, and if he had his way he'd chase all the oil companies out of the province. I'm not sure where he would get the funds to do the things he's asking for.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps you should confine your remarks to questions to the minister.

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Chairman, sometimes I have great trouble listening to the hon. member and accepting some of his submissions.

If you look at the costs of hospital and medical care in this province and add up the total, as I've suggested, we're talking about something like \$700 million a year. We're talking about well over 40 to 50 per cent of the total budget of the province. If you look at the escalating rates of increase, you only have to look at the Estimates to see what is happening. You're talking 25, 30, 35, 40 per cent -- I sound like an auctioneer -- increases in costs for hospitals, medical care, and social services.

I don't think the province can continue at this rate. I can give lots of advice in this Assembly as to how we can do it, but we're not going to be able to do all the things people demand. I think we have to take a really hard look at our costs each year. We just simply can't bow to the demands and pressures placed upon us on occasion both by our constituents and by members of the opposition who operate in a carefree way with regard to costs. So if there's anything further I can say Mr. Chairman, it is that we get on top of these costs. We're going to have to say at some point in time, somehow, this is all we can afford and put the onus back on the individual.

When we started taking supplementary costs off property, I had some great misgivings, because you have to put the onus on the individual. If we start taking medicare payments from everyone, I'm not sure just how long we can survive. I don't think we will survive. There's something about human restraint and it starts in the pocketbook, where an individual can't say, well, I'm not worried about it, let government pay for it, where the

individual has to reach in his pocket and say, I have to pay a portion of that cost. That's all I've got to say, Mr. Chairman. I hope someone takes a little advice.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I wasn't going to add any comments on the elimination of medicare premiums, but I've been motivated for a change by the marginally relevant comments by the Member for Lacombe. Usually his comments aren't worth bothering to reply to, but I should just point out that if he'd like to look at the budget speech a little more carefully, he'll find there is more than \$700 million that comes in from oil revenue. I don't want to hold any brief for the government in this respect, but I think if he'd do his homework, he'd find that there was some more money.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman, the suggestion that in fact I have talked about adding -- if he had listened carefully, what I said was that it is really a question of priorities. In this Legislature we are now talking about reducing income tax by 10 percentage points. That will cost the provincial Treasury \$115 million, in addition to the added costs of the special assistance to low-income groups.

Mr. Chairman, the point I made, and I think it's a valid point, is that if you're going to help low-income groups, you will get more money into the hands of the low-income people by eliminating medicare premiums.

The suggestion that if we eliminate medicare premiums we're suddenly going to have a mushrooming cost factor that is completely out of control is total nonsense. If the Member for Lacombe had bothered to check the experiences of other provinces, if he looked at the Province of Saskatchewan which has eliminated medicare premiums, for example, there is not one smidgen of objective evidence to demonstrate that their medicare costs have increased any more or less than in Alberta. So let's not get up and talk about old wives' tales, Mr. Chairman, which may be very nice to relate, but are totally unrelated to the facts of life.

Mr. Chairman, the point which I think needs to be made is that people who earn \$12,000 a year or less would have more benefits under the elimination of medicare premiums than the budget tax cut we are considering this year. I'm a little surprised at the Member for Drayton Valley. Knowing something of that constituency, I would guess that if you took a median income in Drayton Valley, you would find it was \$12,000 a year or less. These people would benefit more by the elimination of medicare premiums and health care premiums than they would by the tax reduction. Sure, if you live in Windsor Park or have a high income, it's a totally different story. But it gets right back to the basic point, Mr. Chairman: if we're going to reduce taxes, let's look at the ways in which we can do it.

We may get a lot of publicity in the paper, perhaps, about the tax reduction which was announced in the budget. But I maintain that we would be benefiting the working poor or the lower income people in our society more by reducing the medicare premiums. Now, the only suggested argument -- and as I say, it just isn't borne out by the facts -- is that if you eliminate the premium structure and take away that personal responsibility, suddenly you're going to have overusage of the system. I just don't believe there's any evidence to back that up. We've had the example of our neighboring province to the east where the former government brought in deterrent fees, which played a major role in their ouster in 1971. The evidence I've seen indicates the system has not been used in any greater amount after the elimination of the deterrent fees, or certainly not by any serious amount. I don't like to see the pocketbook being used as a penalty clause, Mr. Chairman, either in using the service or in paying for it.

So I come right back to the point, rather than talking about irresponsible suggestions, that the most comprehensive report on health care in this province and in this country still remains the Hall Commission report of 1964, which was prepared for the federal government. I might add, and I'm sure the hon. Member for Lacombe isn't aware of this, it was commissioned by the Diefenbaker government and headed by Mr. Justice Hall. The recommendations of the Hall report are clearly the basis on which our modern medicare and health care system has been developed in Canada.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. There'll be an opportunity for debate on this subject on third reading. I think we should stick to general questions on the subject for the minister.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order, during the discussion of the minister's office, it certainly has been traditional that we can make general speeches on how we feel the department should operate and how the estimates should be spent. That's been the traditional approach. When we get into the individual estimates it's a different matter, and I certainly concur. But my comments relate to the general question of health financing in the province.

Mr. Chairman, what I'm saying, and I repeat, is that the elimination of health care premiums is totally consistent with the philosophy of the Hall commission report, which still stands as the most comprehensive document in this field.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Chairman, there are three points I'd like to make very briefly. They're simply brief briefs to the minister.

The first is a concern I have about how far we should go in the system in terms of centralizing services, for instance laundry and food services. I realize there are economies. Especially on a theoretical basis, there are quite extensive economies. But I caution the minister that those economies can be lost if, in fact, we find ourselves in the position where there are no alternative means of providing those services. For

instance, we are then in a position where one small group of public servants is able totally to disrupt the operations of quite a number of health institutions. This is true of a centralized laundry, and it's true of a food service situation. While I think we should not stop moving in that direction, I think we should be cautious about maintaining some alternatives.

Secondly, Mr. Minister, I've been concerned about what I regard as a problem in the apparent breakdown in the responsibility of hospital boards. I do not think hospital boards now have to answer sufficiently to the community. I don't know whether we can revert to elected boards, and I don't know how one would do that in situations where you have a number of different boards in the same geographic area. Nevertheless, some of the decisions taken by these boards, in my view, are empire building, encouraged by some of their staff, and aided and abetted, if you will, by the boards. I lay this out as a problem I see and a challenge which I think faces us all.

Thirdly, Mr. Minister, the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview remarked on the Hall Commission. That takes me back to my days at the University of British Columbia where I had an economics professor who was guiding us in the social welfare area. On the basis of the Hall Commission report, he showed us how politicians and the public, every one of us, would have to make some tough decisions, otherwise we could break the country with health care. Until the last four years, I never thought I would have to be in a position to exercise that kind of concern and consideration.

Mr. Chairman, I am convinced he was on track. There are enough techniques that would save lives or delay death, whichever way you want to put it, if we accept all the advice the medical profession can supply, and undertake to provide all the available techniques to all individuals, we would indeed expend our total resources in that manner. Whether we talk about premiums or doctors' responsibility or individual responsibility or hospital boards' responsibility or just legislatures' responsibility, I think we'd better start recognizing that some tough decisions have to be made, that we're not going to go all the way to what the medical profession regards as the ultimate in medical services at any given point in time.

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Chairman, I want to thank all hon. members who made comments, because I think many of the comments bordered on some of the major questions I'll be addressing my mind to, particularly over the next several months. I think I said on introduction of the bill that I saw the organization of the hospital system -- all general, auxiliary, and nursing home care -- as many complex questions that we have to address ourselves to. It's too early for me to come up with any fixed conclusions, because they are complex questions. Perhaps, rather than responding to individual members, I could take my notes and just indicate to you some of the questions I'm delving into at the present time.

First of all, I think two or three hon. members asked about extended care facilities. I think this borders on two or three things that are valid government policy. One is that in terms of economy it may be that we're adequately built, or even overbuilt, in active treatment facilities, but short on extended care. I think that borders on the whole question of an analysis, which I am in the process of doing, of the mix of facilities between active treatment facilities and extended care facilities in particular. There's a wide variance between the costs of those two facilities. As I indicated, Mr. Chairman, active treatment hospitals are running as high as and in some cases higher than \$100 a day, and some of our extended care facilities may be around \$25 a day. So it's a major question.

It also accomplishes, in my first reaction, something valid and very important in terms of public policy. If we're devoting our dollars to the active treatment area and in the meantime have a shortage in the extended care area, then, on the question the hon. Member for Drumheller and some other hon. members brought out, we're not able to devote perhaps what we should be devoting to extended and longer term care facilities. So we're assessing that. I haven't come up with any conclusions.

The whole question of the mix of facilities borders into many of our small communities too. The question, should we be building an active treatment hospital at the sacrifice of extended care -- because let's face it, we only have so much money -- when perhaps the greatest need is extended care, for the very reason the hon. Member for Drumheller said: senior citizens who have lived in a community most of their lives, certainly have their roots there, would rather be in a nursing home there than going to a metropolitan centre like Calgary or Edmonton.

The whole question of extended care borders on proper mix of facilities to meet the real health care needs citizens have. It also borders on the whole question of the kind of facility we build in some of our smaller communities, which is one side of decentralization as I think some hon. members mentioned. Maybe you decentralize less expensive facilities, but if you're going to build very complex medical treatment facilities they may have to be in the major area in a particular region.

Again, we're taking a look at the question of increased demand on hospital facilities, examining it in some depth and detail. It strikes me that the way the hon. Member for Little Bow raised the question -- I see he's not listening -- of increased demand on facilities, it strikes me from the information I've seen to this point that that would probably be an over-simplification; on the surgery and active treatment side of our facilities, I haven't seen that large an escalation of demand. But it does border on the question of how our active treatment hospitals are being utilized: are some patients in the hospitals longer than necessary.

I mentioned, Mr. Chairman, extension of out-patient care and things like day care surgery which, if we move in that direction, certainly are going to have the effect of reducing the demand for active treatment hospital beds. But again, those are interrelated questions which require a great deal of analysis before we make any particular conclusions.

We are looking at the question of patient-generated services as opposed to doctor-generated services. We have not been able to come up with a conclusion yet, but we are examining it.

With regard to a new hospital plan for the coming year, I would say, first of all, the actual capital cost construction of hospitals has been financed through the Alberta Municipal Finance Corporation. For the current year, while we're examining the entire organization of hospital and delivery systems, it's basically my intention to meet the immediate needs and commitments we have, but not to proceed with those which you may not classify as immediate needs in lieu of looking in depth into the entire balance or mix of facilities in our metropolitan centres and in rural Alberta, and how we can try to accomplish the broad challenge of retaining quality health care, at the same time developing some economies in the entire system. At the present time we are just going ahead with commitments and immediate needs, developing a longer term plan that will also be related to an in-depth look at the organizational system we have in Alberta now, and coming up with some conclusions as to changes that might be of benefit to the citizens of Alberta.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, could the minister itemize the ones under construction right now?

MR. MINIELY: Well, you know, I can name some off the top of my head, but for others I would have to get a list because they are outside the budgetary context. If the hon. member would like, I can draw up a list and . . .

MR. R. SPEAKER: There's no hurry.

MR. MINIELY: They all border on looking at the entire organizational system, because the question of combined boards -- we have some movement, on a voluntary basis at the present time in certain parts of Alberta, to combined active treatment and auxiliary treatment, extended care boards. I think certainly there is value in examining this because it can perhaps aid in the rationalization of different classes of facilities, and also location of facilities within a particular area of the province. So again, we're looking at that question in depth in examining the entire organizational and delivery system.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway raised a question on cancer research. I met with the W.W. Cross cancer board and I'd answer two questions in connection with that; one I believe from the hon. Member for Macleod, relative to combining cancer hospitals with other hospitals. First of all, on the research: this is a matter I have under consideration at the present time. The W.W. Cross cancer hospital has requested an expansion of the research into the cancer field in connection with their total funding. I haven't made a decision yet, but I'll certainly take the hon. member's views into account as we're examining this particular aspect.

I haven't made any conclusion in the longer term on the question of combining cancer hospitals with active treatment hospitals. I think we probably have to remember the question some hon. members raised about duplication of facilities. In our current system the tendency is, if we have cancer treatment in one active treatment hospital, other active treatment hospitals want cancer treatment. It tends to proliferate. As you know, up to this point it's been centralized with the W.W. Cross Cancer Research Institute. That's a question we certainly can look at and see what direction we go in the longer term. But I would raise that concern about duplication and also where it's in-depth research.

You also have the problem, Mr. Chairman and hon. members, of it not just being a matter of putting facilities into a hospital. When you put facilities into a hospital, it's a matter of having a high-quality specialist in the field too, particularly in the active treatment hospital area. As an example, if you put cardiovascular surgery in the Holy Cross Hospital in Calgary, which there is now, and you also allow it to go into another hospital, there tends to be competition just between hospitals and then there's a need for another cardiovascular surgeon. It just keeps going like that. I think it's a difficult question and one which, again, we will have to examine in detail in order to come up with some conclusions.

Someone mentioned a regional health care board. I think that's a question we have to examine in connection with the total organizational system of the hospitals in Alberta.

The hon. Member for Lacombe commended some of the people we have in the health care field. I think he referred to many of our Alberta heart specialists. I think we can take some pride in that. Alberta is a leader in Canada in the field of open-heart surgery. I suppose that illustrates as well, Mr. Chairman, in terms of future development of the system, what areas of health care delivery should be decentralized and what areas, by necessity, have to be where the best quality of care and treatment is available.

The hon. Member for Lacombe again just underscored what I said about the escalation in costs and the challenge we have, and made a comment about the supplementary costs being taken off property. I think we would all have to agree this has reduced the pressure in a

community in Alberta in terms of a new hospital. This is another area we will have to look at in the total context.

I thought the hon. Member for Edmonton Jasper Place made a very good representation in the question of centralizing services such as laundry and food, which I certainly have to take into account. I'm aware of that potential problem. Perhaps there's a way of overcoming it. I think what the hon. member illustrated is something I certainly will take a look at. Basically, what he was referring to, Mr. Chairman, was the fact that if we centralize facilities and don't have alternatives in the event that services are withdrawn from those facilities, it can affect more than one hospital, affect the delivery of health care in more than one facility. I think it's a very important point.

With respect to the responsibility of hospital boards, I think we have to say that to this point many volunteer people on hospital boards have given a great deal of their time and generally speaking have done an excellent job. Yet, in the meetings I've had with them, I don't think even they feel there aren't some important questions that have to be dealt with in terms of where we go from here. Certainly the strength of our hospital boards will be a major question in terms of looking at the entire hospital and health care delivery system.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, these questions are complex, as I say, and I intend to devote a considerable amount of my time. I've already met with many people: the Alberta Hospital Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the Alberta Medical Association. I've toured the University Hospital, met with the W. W. Cross cancer board, and the Calgary children's hospital. It's my intention this summer to tour rural facilities as much as I can. I intend devoting my energies, primarily in the next several months, to examining and assessing our existing system in Alberta, and the many questions hon. members have raised. I feel, Mr. Chairman, it's only after in-depth examination and searching for alternatives that I will be able to make any conclusions. When I'm able to make those conclusions, Mr. Chairman, I'll be able to propose some valid and hopefully good directions for the future of Alberta.

Agreed to:

Appropriation 2401	\$127,000
Appropriation 2402	\$2,205,620
Appropriation 2403	\$28,869,000

Appropriation 2404

MR. CHAIRMAN: Appropriation 2404 Hospitalization Benefits Plan, \$401,337,300. Are you agreed?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Was that the total vote you just moved?

Somewhere along the line I wanted to ask a couple of questions with regard to the Stony Plain inquiry. Should we do that at the end? I'd prefer to do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I was wondering whether night services have been looked after adequately? I think the minister mentioned earlier that this was all right. Maybe he could comment on that again. Secondly, when will that inquiry finish? What is the target date for the completion of the inquiry? Does it look like it's winding up at this point?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Chairman, on the first question, the report I have is that they're able to handle immediate or emergency care needs in Stony Plain, and that they don't have any real problem. Those in Stony Plain who are not in that category are fairly close to facilities in Edmonton for things like elective surgery. The assessment I have is that at the present time there is no problem related to health care delivery in Stony Plain.

With respect to the second question, Mr. Chairman, my view in things such as inquiries -- I've had a conversation with the chairman -- is that they must operate on an independent basis. I'm even reluctant to put any kind of deadline on the chairman. He's advised me that there are volumes and volumes and volumes of testimony that have to be gathered into a report. The hon. member's real question is: what is the time frame on it? In things like public inquiries, and it's my own personal view, I think it's important that they be allowed to do their job as thoroughly as they think necessary. As the minister, I would be reluctant to put a time frame on the inquiry. Putting a time frame on the inquiry might sacrifice the kind of job the commissioner feels he has to do. I think that's something [on which] we'll be in touch with him, but he has to do his assessment independently and within the time he feels is necessary to draw proper conclusions and make his report.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, the chairman you referred to is John Hill. Is that correct? How was the chairman chosen? I believe he's a lawyer. Was he chosen on a recommendation from the Attorney General?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Chairman, he had also had experience with the inquiry in Fort Vermilion. That's one of the reasons he was chosen for the Stony Plain inquiry. It was, at that time, the view of my colleague, Mr. Crawford, the then Minister of Health and Social

Development, that Mr. Hill could do an excellent job heading the inquiry. For that reason, he was chosen. I'd be happy to answer any other reference the hon. member may have with respect to it.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Is the fee paid to a consultant such as this on a day or an hourly basis, and is it from your appropriation?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Chairman, I'd have to check that, but I believe it's a professional fee. I'd have to check specifically, as I may be wrong on that.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I'd be satisfied if the minister would just give me the order in council, if that's what it is, or whatever arrangement was made -- present it, bring it back to the Assembly.

MR. MINIELY: [Not recorded] Mr. Chairman, of public record, the order in council would specify the nature of payment for the commissioner.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I could follow the line of questioning of my colleague for just a moment more. Some people, quite a few people in fact, from the Stony Plain area have expressed real concern at the way the inquiry is dragging on. Being pretty frank about it, they find it a little difficult to understand why the inquiry, I think, is not sitting more than one or two days a week. When the inquiry is supposed to start sometime in the morning, it oftentimes doesn't start until a half or an hour later, and it adjourns early in the afternoon. Being pretty frank about it, the information has been presented to us that on some occasions the inquiry isn't going for more than perhaps one or two hours a day on a basis of perhaps two days a week. If this information isn't accurate, we'd like to know about it. But if it is accurate, we'd like to know why it's being done this way.

MR. MINIELY: Well, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate what the hon. leader is saying. I've had a lot of communication with my office from people in Stony Plain. But I don't think it's unusual for people to feel that public inquiries drag on for a considerable period of time. I don't think it's a particularly unusual feeling that citizens will express. I remain to be convinced, but I have a great deal of reluctance, as the minister, or for that matter as a member of this Legislature, once a public inquiry and commissioner are appointed, to make comments even on those kinds of matters. I think the commissioner has to run it in the manner he sees fit to draw his proper conclusions, also the times. I'm sure, in terms of the testimony and the people he calls, there's a tremendous amount of organizational work.

What I'm stressing, Mr. Chairman, is that I don't feel I should be interfering in any way in the conduct of the inquiry, or the time or the depth he feels he has to go to in order to make proper conclusions on the inquiry. I expect every hon. member would agree with that conclusion. The hon. leader has made certain representations. I have received some of those representations. But I have had to advise the citizens who have made such representations that the conduct of the inquiry is in the hands of the commissioner, and that it's not my intent to interfere in any way with it.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, might I just comment with regard to what the minister has just said.

I don't think the minister should take from my remarks -- and he didn't indicate he did -- or from concerned people in the area, that we want the minister to interfere in the inquiry and, in fact, give direction to the commissioner as to what he is to find. That's the furthest thing from anyone's suggestion.

On the other hand I preface this by saying, if the representation made to us is accurate, and it's from what I regard as responsible people in the area, that when it's decided the inquiry is going to start at 10 o'clock in the morning, I find it very difficult to understand why it doesn't start at 10 o'clock. Why would it sit for a short period of time, have a lunch break and then sit for another very short period of time? I just don't think it is asking too much at all to find out why that kind of thing is going on.

If there is some good reason for it, let us know about it, and let the people in Stony Plain know about it. But if it's simply a matter of extending the thing so everyone is involved a bit longer, I don't think that's a very healthy situation either. Frankly, this is a difficult situation regardless of what the findings of the inquiry are. If we can remove some of these kinds of things from peoples' minds before the inquiry report is made public, we'll likely have a better chance of settling the situation in the Stony Plain area.

So I would ask the minister if he would be prepared to reconsider his situation and check with the commissioner with regard to those points. If they are not right, let's tell the people in Stony Plain and tell us in the Legislature that isn't going on. If they are right, let's find the reason. If there are good reasons for not starting on time and having very short sessions, let's hear about it. If there isn't any reason, let the commissioner know the people out there are concerned. Frankly, I don't mind saying I'm concerned, if that's the situation.

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Chairman, I'm certainly not drawing any conclusions from what the hon. member is saying. I have in my mind a question as to where you draw the line. Between my office and the commissioner's office questions can sometimes be interpreted as improper interference, even from members of this Legislature. Around timing again, I would suspect there is a whole matter of organizational things in the conduct of inquiries as to the timetables of the people testifying, whether it starts on time.

I'm raising the question with the hon. leader -- relative to even those kinds of questions. How far do you go before you are in the sphere of telling the commissioner how he is going to conduct his inquiry? That's the question in my mind. The position I've taken to this point has been that other than the commissioner advising me if he is having any problems coming from him to my office that I can assist with, other than him generally advising me how he is proceeding, it is not my intent to interfere beyond that kind of general relationship.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I wonder if there would be anything wrong with very objectively asking the person who is the chairman to outline what his procedures are and not to infer any directives, pushing or pulling or slowing down or speeding up. Just saying, look, what type of schedule have you established in the hearing? He can come back and say, for two days a week I have the hearings and the other three days I'm studying the briefs and putting together the report. I think that's the kind of information the community really wants at this time, just to understand what the process is. That's very objective information. It's not information to influence that flow in the process at all.

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Chairman, they have given me a thought. I think it could be valid for me, if there is misunderstanding in the community, to ask the commissioners to make a statement which might help clarify it in the community. I would prefer we did that. I could ask the commissioner if he felt he could make some statement as to where it stands on these questions.

Appropriation 2404 agreed to:

\$401,337,300

Appropriation 2410

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, one last question. A couple of days ago one of the ministers made a comment with regard to research on dental programs. Is that research being carried out under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Commission or through the Department of Social Services and Community Health?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Chairman, at this point I don't think we have made any decision. My colleague, the Minister of Social Services and Community Health, and I are working jointly on it. In spite of what conclusions we may draw, there is also the question, if we draw any conclusion, as to where it would be administered. We are working jointly on it, and to this point I believe Social Services and Community Health, because of the former Department of Health and Social Development, has done some. I understand -- and my colleague could correct me if I'm wrong -- that most anything received to this point has been the dental profession and the dental association itself with some analysis and study by departmental people and also by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Commission. But the short answer is that both of us are working on it.

MR. R. SPEAKER: The department hasn't hired any special consultant or had anybody preparing a survey to take on this assignment?

MR. MINIELY: My department or the Health Care Insurance Commission hasn't, although I have indicated to them that on a policy basis I would like them to take a look at what we have to this point. I haven't given them any direction beyond accumulating what we do have and taking a look at it on a policy basis. Perhaps Miss Hunley would like to comment from her department.

MISS HUNLEY: No, Mr. Chairman, the information is correct. We have a report which was developed by the dental association. It is being reviewed by the department. I'll be meeting with the dental association after the House rises when time permits. I'll be working jointly, of course, as we must do in the development of other programs in the Province of Alberta.

Appropriation 2410 agreed to:

\$41,834,564

Total Income Account agreed to:

\$474,373,484

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Chairman, I move the resolution be reported.

[The motion was carried.]

Department of the Attorney General

MR. FOSTER: Mr. Chairman, I know the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues want to spend some time discussing this most important department, and I will be happy to oblige them.

I would like to say at the outset what a privilege it is for me to have been appointed Attorney General by the Premier.

DR. BUCK: You're right.

MR. FOSTER: Thanks doc.

I think any lawyer in this province would regard it as a very considerable privilege and responsibility, and, of course, I do. I would like to express my appreciation to my predecessor in office, who I think inherited a department which, as history has now proved, was probably far more comprehensive and involved than it need have been. Thus, in the course of the last couple of years we have seen the introduction of a Solicitor General's Department and a Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, to which a number of activities from the Attorney General's Department have been transferred. I consider myself fortunate that as I enter this portfolio, the Attorney General's Department is almost completely a law and law-service department.

As I leave the portfolio of advanced education, and my successor is not now in the House, I want to wish him well. I'm confident I have visited a few sins upon him for which he will be responsible, and for which I will deny any prior knowledge. [I also want] to express my appreciation to my colleagues in that former portfolio. I look forward with great interest to working with Bill McLean and the members of the Attorney General's Department and the very, very interesting and exciting years ahead, I am sure.

I entered the Department of Advanced Education, Mr. Chairman, at a time when the government was receiving, from a number of quarters, good advice for serious and significant change, indeed. The report of the Commission on Educational Planning was about to be received. It was my privilege to operate partially as a change agent during that period of time. I'm sure there are mixed feelings as to how successful that change may have been in advanced education.

I find myself in a similar capacity as I embark upon the role of Attorney General. There are a number of voices in the community that feel there needs to be substantial change within the administration of justice in this province. Indeed, the Kirby report on the administration of provincial courts in this province is to be received shortly. I find there is an attitude among the bench and the bar, and indeed the public, of a willingness to embark upon some significant change. I'll deal with that a little further in the estimates, because we have some funds built in for anticipated change. So I look forward, Mr. Chairman, with great expectation to the changes which will be upon us in the course of the next few months and indeed, the next few years.

I referred to the Kirby commission report, which I now expect to receive some time in July. I look forward to a complete and full debate some time in the future in this House on that report and the response of the government to it. As I think all members know, we have received a first report dealing with the coroner system. There are, I think, a number of significant steps we have taken with respect to that report, although much more will no doubt be done. One is an order in council making provincial judges coroners. Another is the appointment of Dr. John Butt as the Chief Medical Examiner. Indeed, we have a group considering, as I think the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo referred to one day, the proposed fatal inquiries act. Hopefully, we'll have more on that very shortly. We have removed the police from the inquiry role, if you will, and put them in the proper role of witnesses. Indeed, the same may be said of the medical profession itself. There are a number of recommendations in the report that touch upon legislation that will be brought forward for my consideration in due course, so I don't propose dealing with it in detail at this point.

I have received recommendations from the Legal Aid Society for certain changes in that sector. I look forward with great anticipation to the changes proposed in the annual report of the Legal Aid Society which I have here. I am ordering sufficient copies for members of the House. I think you'll find it a most interesting document. In that report, it discusses what it feels are the significant achievements of the past year and some new directions. I'm looking forward, as well, to the introduction of a new faculty of law at the University of Calgary, which I've had something to do with; indeed not only the formal legal education process of this province, but the public legal education process, which I hope to discuss further at a later date.

I noted with interest that the Leader of the Opposition introduced a bill in the House today with respect to matrimonial properties. I think everyone realizes that the institute will be preparing its final report, hopefully, some time this summer, and that very important subject will be addressed by the members of this House; again, another subject of considerable interest and importance to all of us.

I'm also looking forward to working with the members of the bench, the provincial court judges, the district court judges and the Supreme Court judges. It is my hope to establish good working relationships with them because I feel they can be of considerable assistance to us in the work of this Assembly and in the administration of justice in Alberta.

If you address yourselves to the budget, you will notice that there has been roughly a \$6.2 million change in the department, compared with last year. That's really for 5 basic reasons, and I'll just be very brief, Mr. Chairman. One concerns the salary increases for provincial judges. A second is an increase in the legal aid plan, although I understand that the society is seeking further funds. I'll have to talk to them about that later in the year. A third concerns additional funds for the continued conversion of the land titles systems in both Edmonton and Calgary. As I mentioned earlier in my remarks, there is \$1 million built into this budget as a contingency fund for the Kirby commission response. I have details of that. It's split among three appropriations, Mr. Chairman: 1202, 1218, and 1220. Finally, as I think all members realize, the Alberta Securities Commission has been transferred out of this department to my colleague on my left. However, I have assumed responsibility in the last short while for the Public Utilities Board. There is a budget differential there of some few hundred thousand dollars -- \$537,000 to be exact.

Looking specifically at the analysis of the increases, Mr. Chairman, broken down by vote: \$300,000 for provincial courts; \$200,000 for legal aid; Calgary land titles \$200,000 and Edmonton roughly \$286,000; the \$1 million I referred to for the Kirby commission report; \$.5 million roughly in the differential between the Securities Commission and the Public Utilities Board; some \$783,000 for additional staff benefits, witness fees, travel, inflationary costs, renegotiated contracts, et cetera; and some \$2.9 million for additional staff in the last year.

I anticipate, Mr. Chairman, that the opposition, and quite properly so, have been interested in the staff increases in departments and the orders in council that have been passed in the last year. So I'll take 2 or 3 minutes just to comment on that. In the period of the last year, there has been an increase of some 75 people in several sectors of the department: 11 in administration, 5 additional in the coroner's section, 1 in the Supreme Court section, 11 in the court reporters section, 36 in the provincial judge Vote 1220, and that's made of a position for a chief judge which, I think, will be recommended by Mr. Justice Kirby . . .

[interjections]

Pardon?

. . . and other ancillary staff in the juvenile, family, small debts, and provincial courts.

AN HON. MEMBER: Are they on contract?

MR. FOSTER: I don't think so, in that category. Mr. Chairman, most of our contract people are, for example, people conducting inquiries or acting as solicitors on behalf of the Crown in legal proceedings.

We've had 11 new agents for the Attorney General appointed in the last year. In this budget, Mr. Chairman, '75-76, we anticipate an additional 9 people in the court reporters area; 46 within the provincial judges category, and here we're anticipating Kirby in some respects -- of that 46, 1 is the proposed chief judge, keeping that position open, 10 new solicitors, 14 people you might loosely describe as clerks, stenographers, typists, et cetera, to provide for the administration of the provincial courts, and 21 positions which we are holding open for the moment in anticipation of the Kirby report: land titles, 11 in Calgary and 24 in Edmonton; and 31 new people for the Public Utilities Board. With respect to the PUB, Mr. Chairman, those positions were approved last year, but not funded, and it is currently acquiring additional staff, I can go into that in some detail if you like.

There were 5 orders in council by special warrant passed in the last year. Just very briefly they are: one for \$91,000, which was a salary increase in the department during the year -- I think all departments received that similar kind of adjustment, \$10 million under -- I'm not familiar with the numbers here; it was described as incidental justice -- Vote 1207 for the payment of The Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation, reimbursement of some \$10 million related to security trust; \$175,000 for the funding of salaries for provincial judges appointed during the year and not budgeted for by the department; for the fourth OC, Mr. Chairman, was \$160,000 provided for the fees, salaries, and expenses for the Lands Compensation Board which was not budgeted for last year; and finally, the fifth one was a warrant passed in June, \$449,000, roughly, for the Public Utilities Board and a commitment to enable them to acquire additional staff.

Now that's a very brief overview, Mr. Chairman. I would welcome the observations, comments, suggestions, and criticisms of the House.

MR. CLARK: In light of the fact that my colleague has a time problem . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview.

MR. NOTLEY: I have to make some very quick comments and then leave, but I'm completely confident that with the questions from the other members of the opposition, plus the minister's ability to answer at great length, we'll be able to carry on this debate next week.

Mr. Chairman, I wanted to raise just one or two points. The first is with respect to The Land Titles Amendment Act. I just want to express my very strong disappointment that we've taken so long in proclaiming this act, notwithstanding the minister's answer the other day. I know that educating the lawyers, especially those on the government side,

can be a very slow process. But I would hope we can improve the performance in the future. Beyond that, Mr. Chairman, the question of monitoring land acquisitions by people who don't live in Canada is really a larger issue than I think the government has recognized to date. There are calls from around the province, and in a sense, where this sort of flip-flops over into the Department of Agriculture, there is a growing demand, not heard in this House but heard throughout the province, by farm groups and organizations, even traditionally very conservative organizations -- small "c" conservative organizations, Mr. Chairman -- which are asking for some kind of protective legislation. The government's response, generally, has been to await the recommendations of the Land Use Forum. But it seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that we're going to have to move somewhat further and somewhat faster.

I want to raise some questions when we get to the Public Utilities Board. It seems to me we need more reliable consumer assistance. When we've looked at consumer assistance in the past -- and I realize under the present legislation there is provision for the Public Utilities Board awarding costs, but that's a hit-and-miss proposition -- there's no way that a consumer group making a submission to the utilities board has any guarantee that all its costs will be awarded. They may get 10 per cent, 50 per cent, or 100 per cent. It seems to me that we have to improve our mechanism for ensuring consumer representation at the Public Utilities Board. I also think we have to extend the Public Utilities Board to cover wholesale pricing of petroleum. We'll get into that when we come to the specific appropriation.

As for the Kirby Board of Review, the minister has mentioned that this is forthcoming or expected shortly. I would be interested in just what timetable the government sees for acting upon the board's recommendations.

Dealing with legal aid very briefly, I would be interested in reading the report which is going to be circulated to us. But my initial research on legal aid reveals some uncertainty as to the application of this program, based first of all on assets and also on income. It seems to me that there's at least some degree of uncertainty in it, and I would like to see the legal aid system replaced with prepaid legal aid. You might call that socialized law, Mr. Minister, but we've accepted socialized medicine and I think perhaps equality before the law is just as important as the right to health. I think some kind of prepaid legal aid system is well worth while.

I see that I have to very quickly scoot out the door, but as I say, I'm quite confident that when we resume next Monday, we'll still be discussing the minister's first estimate.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank the minister for the comments he made. I noted particularly that in the Department of Advanced Education he was a change agent. I'm not sure whether that bodes well for the future of equality before the law in Alberta. It depends on whom you speak to in advanced education. However, we'll perhaps await judgment on that a year or two down the road.

I would like to start by saying I was rather impressed with the comments the minister made soon after he took on his job as Attorney General. He talked about more public access to the law, more public knowledge, more public understanding of what, in fact, is going on. If I could just use an example from my own constituency this week -- and I should say that I received excellent co-operation from the Attorney General's Department in this situation. Some people had been responsible for a charge being laid in Calgary; the case was going to court, I believe, on Wednesday of this week. This was their first experience with the law. A divorce was involved and, frankly, as of Monday these people had heard nothing from the Crown prosecutor as to whom he wanted down for the case. Now I recognize in the large number of cases the Crown prosecutor has that this, in his opinion, was a very small case, or could have been viewed that way. On the other hand, to the people involved it was their first experience of this nature before the law. There were a number of witnesses, and none had been advised if they were to come down or if they weren't to come down. The thing had been to court once before. Thanks to some assistance in the Attorney General's Department, at least the people had a chance, supposedly, to sit down with the Crown prosecutor for a few minutes before they went into court. I just want to remake the point many members have made in this House. It is those kinds of cases which are most individuals' first and, hopefully, only experience in our courts.

It leads me to this area: I would be very interested in asking the Attorney General if he would spend some time this morning giving us some kind of background which has led him to the conclusion, in fact, to put \$1 million into the Estimates as far as Kirby is concerned. Unless I have missed something between the election and now, and that's certainly possible, the decision to add 46 people to the public service, to add a number of solicitors, I think the Attorney General used the term of a "chief judge" for the province, this whole concept doesn't really seem to me, at least, to have been aired publicly up to now. If the minister is in a position to outline this to us now, I think it would be of considerable help when we're going through these estimates and starting right at the outset.

The second point that I would like to make deals with the question of the monitoring of land which was approved in the fall session last year. I would just like to refresh the minister's memory. On February 14 -- that was Valentine's Day, but it was also the day the election was called -- I asked your predecessor in the House when proclamation would take place. The answer we got was, in the very immediate future. There were many people who took this to heart. In fact, in the course of the forums held during the campaign in my own particular constituency, I raised the question that this thing still

wasn't in place. My Conservative opponent maintained that he phoned no less an authority than one of the cabinet ministers, and I could be more specific than that, but I don't think that would serve any purpose right now, but in fact this monitoring was already in process.

The minister said in the House the other day that it took some time to do some reshuffling or reorganization in the Land Titles Office and also to re-educate the lawyers. Well, we can pursue that later, but frankly, that's just not a good enough answer. I know the minister was somewhat restricted by question period, but frankly we'd like a very detailed answer as to why it took from November of last year until June 1 this year to become involved in this monitoring of land sales, especially when the Land Use Forum asked for the information long before, and after a great deal of discussion in the Assembly there was unanimous support for the move.

The third area I would like to touch upon for just a moment deals with the process the government uses in the selection of legal people for such agencies as the Alberta Housing Corporation or the Agricultural Development Corporation. We can start with those two. To put it frankly, there are some members of the legal community who have come and said, what's the procedure used? I can cite the Ag. Development Corporation, if we'd like to spend some time there, or the Alberta Housing Corporation, but I would prefer the Ag. Development Corporation because it has been involved in the last two years in changing from an in-house system. Now they have lawyers in various centres across the province. Just recently we got one in my particular constituency. I'd like to know exactly the procedure the government uses: who does the selection, and what the basis for selection is.

I'd also like to ask the Attorney General if he is in a position to indicate to the committee the status of the Morrow inquiry. I know the inquiry has been completed. What's the status, and what action has been taken?

Also, the Attorney General will recall that during the question period I asked if there was money in the Estimates for prepaid legal service or this kind of plan, which I understand the law society discussed at Jasper last week, and the benchers are kind of hot and cold about. I'd like some indication from the Attorney General as to how he's going to warm up the benchers to this kind of idea, because if my discussions are somewhat accurate, that may be what the benchers need before we move into a prepaid legal services plan in Alberta.

Perhaps we could start off by asking the Attorney General to comment on those four or five areas, Mr. Chairman.

MR. FOSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was interested in the comment of the Member for Spirit River-Fairview, who had to leave, concerning The Land Titles Act and the growing demand for public protection. In suggesting something should be done now, I note he doesn't suggest what; he merely suggests something should be done to protect landowners and land buyers in this province, and suggests we have to move faster and further than the Land Use Forum. Again, he doesn't suggest where he's going. He wants to have the government stamped into making decisions before they have the kind of information we're seeking from the Land Use Forum.

MR. CLARK: Pass Dr. Buck's bill.

MR. FOSTER: I don't think that's reasonable. I think we all share concerns about consumer protection before the Public Utilities Board, their capacity to pay costs. That capacity is very small at the moment. There isn't very much money in this budget for costs.

The timetable on the Kirby [report]: my most recent information is the middle of July. I am getting concurrence from my advisors. I am disappointed it wasn't possible to get the Kirby report before now. I think we all share that. There are valid reasons, I'm sure, for the delay in having it put together and printed. I'm looking forward to it with great anticipation.

The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview also suggests we should totally replace the current legal aid system with a system of prepaid legal services or the like. I think we have a rather good legal aid system in Alberta. I think there are no doubt areas of change, expansion of its role, which should take place.

One of the unique characteristics of the legal aid system in Alberta is that it employs members of the private bar. We don't have all sorts of Crown solicitors running around performing legal aid services, which we find in some other jurisdictions. It becomes a very expensive operation. Again, when you talk about prepaid legal aid, my very firm preference is that, if we ever get into that field at all, the government does not get into it by hiring all kinds of people in the Attorney General's Department to provide these legal services to the citizens of this province, that we continue what in my judgment is an excellent practice, calling upon members of the private bar to provide such services as we require.

I'm sure the expression, "prepaid legal aid", conjures up all kinds of suggestions. One is that the provincial government should somehow dump all sorts of money into a scheme. I had a brief opportunity last week to look at the scheme in Utah, which is funded by the users of the system. They also have a legal aid system, which the government supports, but it's not a state-run or provincially-run legal aid system intended to be comprehensive in a civil and criminal sense.

With respect to the hon. Leader of the Opposition and the several points he made, you're right. I have a concern as that article suggested, for the awareness of the public

of the state of the law and their access to it. That may be my earlier portfolio responsibility showing now. It seems to me there are some things we should consider doing, to give the average citizen a little greater access to the letter of the law. I was specifically thinking about high school libraries and the public libraries of this province. Are they equipped with the Statutes of Alberta and other sorts of publications, so the ordinary citizen, while he may not have the capacity to interpret the law, at least has the opportunity of gaining access to the letter of the law for his own use?

I regret the confusion the hon. leader referred to on the witness problem. I don't know the situation there, other than to say that over 80 per cent of the public of this province have their one and, probably, only experience with the law in the provincial courts system. About 92 or 93 per cent of the activity carried on by the superior courts in this province comes through the provincial courts. So we have to have a system of justice in the provincial courts that is fair and reasonable and relatively speedy, because that's where an individual's respect or otherwise for the administration of law is gained. That's where the institution is experiencing, I think, great difficulty at the moment.

With respect to the Kirby [report], we're anticipating that Justice Kirby will come up with a number of changes. I don't know whether he is going to be specific or is going to say, in sort of general terms, I identify this as a problem area, and you might want to consider a, b, and c. I simply don't know. While Mr. Justice Kirby and I have met on several occasions, we have not discussed his report. I think it would be improper of me to do so until it's completed.

I'm anticipating recommendations relating to the operations of the provincial courts. Some, indeed, may go to jurisdiction of that court, what should or should not be in a provincial court, which may or may not have cost implications for us. I'll give you an example. Perhaps there are some cases proceeding to provincial court today which are really more in the nature of a civil contract. For example, if you owe your municipality a couple of dollars for having parked your car too long in a certain place, or what have you, perhaps there should be other mechanisms to recover that than through the provincial courts system. That's a small example.

Other examples may be a little more far-reaching and have to do with the Criminal Code. Maybe, for example, we should not have a system of what's called "trial de novo" from the provincial courts to the district courts where, if you have a full trial in provincial court, under certain circumstances you're entitled to a completely new trial when you go to district court and up, a complete repeat of that entire system. That's largely a Criminal Code question, but there is absolutely no doubt a great deal of time, energy, and resources in the system today accommodates the trial de novo concept.

I think the rationale may go back many years. Obviously it does. It may have something to do with the quality of people who are on the bench in the provincial courts, heretofore called magistrate's courts, and the feeling then that people may not have been dealt with fairly and may have had to have an opportunity for a completely new trial in a district court with a proper judge, legally trained, et cetera. If that situation was valid then, in my judgment it is not valid today. We've been trying to ensure that we appoint men and, hopefully, women to the provincial court who are legally competent, and not to call upon non-legally trained personnel to become, in fact, the bench of that court.

If you ask me to be specific about what kinds of programs Kirby is going to recommend, I can't answer you. I simply know that we have picked a figure of \$1 million, broken into 3 votes to which I referred, in anticipation of moving on Kirby. It's been a while since I practised in the provincial courts of this province, but I'm sure all of us can think of examples where that system should be speeded up or changed or, with the addition of certain kinds of facilities, the public can be accommodated better than they are at the moment.

The alternative to that is to put nothing in the budget whatever and simply say, when we deal with Kirby and decide what we're going to do, we'll come back by special warrant. Then we're into that debate: why wasn't it budgeted? Surely you should have had some idea that you were going to be involved in the expenditure of public funds and you should have provided for that eventuality. I don't care where you come down in the argument, you can be criticized both ways: you shouldn't provide for it until you know what you're going to do, or you should have put something in because you knew you were going to do something.

We've chosen to say to the House that we anticipate a positive response to what Mr. Justice Kirby, Dr. Wyman, and Ted Bower will have to say to us. I would be surprised if we agreed with everything, but no doubt there will be a great common ground, and we want to have the capacity and resources to respond meaningfully.

The Leader of the Opposition has also suggested: when can we expect a response to Kirby? My difficulty is that when I read that report I'll likely have some immediate reactions, and no doubt some very firm opinions and conclusions. But I must remember there are a great many people who participate in the administration of justice in this province, not the least of whom are my colleagues around me, and they're entitled to respond as well before I start taking firm conclusions.

I would like to provide for a period of time, if my cabinet colleagues agree, for this report to be considered by many groups and organizations, and I've had several requests, and other members have as well, to respond to Kirby, to consider it carefully, then to make some decisions and move. That would be my approach to it, not simply to respond immediately and indicate then what we are or are not going to do, without other people having an opportunity to consider it.

With respect to The Land Titles Amendment Act . . .

MR. CLARK: I wonder if I might take the opportunity to ask the minister two questions on Kirby? With regard to mid-July, when you expect to get the report, is it your intention to make the widest possible distribution of it? Secondly, going back to the \$1 million included in the Estimates, you talked about 10 solicitors, 14 back-up people and 1 . . . Did you say chief judge?

MR. FOSTER: Yes.

MR. CLARK: Could you elaborate in that area? If you're going to be talking in terms of absolute numbers, could you be a bit more specific?

MR. FOSTER: First of all, the Kirby report will come to the cabinet. It's not my document. It belongs to Executive Council. They have to decide what to do. I'm very confident that my colleagues would want to see that report circulated as widely as possible. I think that would be in the public interest, and I don't think anyone would object to that. That would be my intention as well.

With respect to the additional staff, we're anticipating that Justice Kirby and his committee will recommend, as is the case with the other courts in this province, that there be a chief provincial court judge. At the moment, there are senior judges in communities, but there's no one person charged with the responsibility of that court. That is probably a very useful suggestion, and anticipating that we may well accept that recommendation, if it indeed is one. I simply say to you quite candidly that we are putting that figure in there of one additional judge, because that may be what he's for. Now if Kirby comes out and says, we think the concept of a chief provincial court judge is highly undesirable, stay with your current system, then I've erred, clearly, if we happen to agree with that.

With respect to the 10 additional solicitors, we are quite confident that Justice Kirby is going to recommend the addition of members to the provincial court bench. Mr. Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition cited the case of difficulty with witnesses, et cetera. There's absolutely no doubt that in many communities the provincial court is very, very, very busy. The senior judge in Edmonton has suggested to me that he needs an additional 2 or 3 people right now. In fact, 4 new courtrooms were opened in the last short while, and some funds are in here for that. So they are very, very busy courts. Part of it has to do with their jurisdiction, which may be changed in time. But that won't change overnight. We anticipate that Kirby will come along and suggest to us that we have to engage -- and I don't know how many -- several new or additional provincial court judges. Every time you [inaudible] a judge you have to be prepared to add support staff and, if necessary, Crown prosecutors and the like.

We are also anticipating that the department will perform, a little more than it has in the past, a service function to the other departments of government. That's one of its roles. On many occasions we will hire outside counsel to do work for government departments. I endorse that approach. But there's no doubt we will need some people in the department to accommodate growing demands by government departments that we provide services for them. I haven't yet had the time to do the kind of assessment I need to do with my colleagues as to what those demands will be, but I know they will be there.

With respect to the selection of solicitors, in most cases when a government department wants to proceed on a matter which involves a solicitor, my office is consulted. On occasion we hire outside counsel. For example, in the inquiry headed by Judge Legg that the Premier announced a short while ago, it was my responsibility, in consultation with my colleagues in the House and outside the House, whomsoever I can call upon, including Bill McLean and others, to talk about the lawyers in the province who have the capacity to handle this particular responsibility, who have the counsel experience, who may be available, and who are interested. I developed a list of people. From that I selected a short list and called people. In this case I called upon a solicitor from a large reputable Calgary law firm, which to my knowledge has not been called upon by this government for some time, if at all, to perform in this capacity. The fellow I called upon is known to have been a very competent counsel. I don't know the gentleman personally, but I checked him with my colleagues and others and I'm satisfied that's the case. The department [know him and] agree. So I called and engaged him.

With respect to who's doing what for the department, I don't have a handle on that. I haven't appointed an outside counsel for other people, although I've talked to some of my colleagues about some of their up-coming concerns. We need lawyers to assist various Crown corporations, and I'll be doing so. I hope to have a look at who's doing what for the various agencies and commissions, recognizing that some have complete capacity to appoint people on their own. My first concern is competence, frankly. I don't think anyone can quarrel with that. My second concern would be whether we have done a great deal of work with that law firm in the past. I think we have to develop some additional experience in the private sector, and I wouldn't propose seeing us call upon the same lawyers to do the same job in perpetuity. So I'll try to be reasonable about it.

It's much like the consideration I guess I was asked about previously: what do you consider when you appoint a member of a board of governors. There are a number of factors involved, not the least of which is the fact that they are intelligent, competent, able people who are willing to serve. If you want to suggest that we're running around appointing all the Tories in the province, and you're not making that suggestion I know,

I'm quite prepared to be examined on that basis and to look at who we do, in fact, appoint to the provincial court, even recently. I happen to know the politics of one of them, because he's known to me. I don't happen to know the politics of the other, and I don't particularly care. As politicians we recognize that that consideration sometimes comes up.

With respect to the Morrow inquiry, there are really two areas of interest. One is: Mr. Justice Morrow commented on a number of areas of conflict of interest, part of which can be settled by the municipal level of government, part of which probably should be considered by the provincial level of government, and it will be. The department has the Morrow report, and is looking at it. I'm not aware of anything in the report that would suggest the commission of an offence of any kind. I've been through the report quickly, but that's not my role. It's gone to the department. They're doing an assessment of it, and it may be that they feel some further action should be taken. If they do, no doubt they'll be back to me about it. But the area of conflict of interest generally is being considered by Edmonton. It must surely, hopefully, be considered by other municipalities in the province. I know it's being considered by my colleague, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and others in government who have copies of it, for how it might amend the possible conflict legislation.

With respect to prepaid legal services, there is no money in this budget to embark upon a system of prepaid legal services, Mr. Chairman. I said earlier that if we do get into the area of a pilot project in prepaid legal services, recognizing there isn't one in Canada today, I anticipate the bar association will carry that and set it up. They may come to me and to government for some assistance, I don't know. My response to the hon. leader in the House was that the Law Society is looking at it. The benchers, I know, have tabled a motion until the fall, because the [Canadian Bar Association] is also looking at the pilot project and may well select Alberta. Because there isn't a system of prepaid legal services working anywhere in this country at the moment, they are moving fairly slowly to see whether the [Canadian Bar Association] was going to move on it before the Alberta Law Society decided whether they want to establish a pilot project.

If they do establish a pilot project, it's really not clear at this time whether we would be involved in a funding way at all. I would suspect not. I emphasize again my desire to see such a system utilizing the private bar, that is to say, the private sector, and not more and more people in this department. None of the people, whatsoever, being hired in this department are being hired in anticipation of a prepaid legal services function.

MR. CLARK: In view of the time, and having regard for the [fact that] the Attorney General didn't explain why it took from November until June 1 to work on The Land Titles Act -- and I'm sure he won't be able to do that in five minutes, because a number of questions will come back -- could we adjourn?

MR. FOSTER: I could do that. Mr. Chairman, with respect, I really have nothing further to add to my earlier response, which you may find quite unsatisfactory. I find it an interesting practice -- and if I were up in opposition, Mr. Chairman, I might do the same thing. If I were over there, I would want the government to move quickly and screw up the system, and then say, you just didn't handle it properly, Mr. Attorney General, and it's a terrible administrative botch-up. You'd be very critical of this government if we did, in fact, move very quickly and botch it up. Fair comment. I say to you that we moved carefully and deliberately to ensure that that system was in place and able to function without problems. It's now been functioning . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Problems?

MR. FOSTER: There may be problems, but I'm not aware of them. I would rather move with a certain amount of caution, frankly, when I'm moving in such an important area, than move precipitously and get myself into all kinds of difficulty.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. CLARK: I'm pleased to see the former Attorney General banging his desk, because I'd like to ask the present Attorney General who he would consider -- to use your comment about screwing up -- the prime screw-upper? On February 14, the former Attorney General said this was going to be done in the very near future. Not even under the greatest stretch of conservatism can I consider February 14 to June 1 the very immediate future. Would you like to explain that?

MR. FOSTER: Mr. Chairman, I assume what the hon. member is reading, in fact, is the quote of my previous colleague, and no doubt it is. The people of this province were involved in some very important matters for at least 7 weeks during that period. They involved 75 people in this House. I don't know what my predecessor may have had in mind. I don't find [2] or 3 months great waste of time whatsoever. If the hon. leader wants to make a great debate out of it, please proceed. The system is there, it's functioning, and if he wants to quibble about a matter of weeks, we can carry on for some time.

MR. CLARK: We'll quibble about it Monday. I wish the Attorney General would think over the weekend and do a little checking around to see how much land was transferred from

November until June 1. It was long prior to November that the Land Use Forum asked the government to become involved in this monitoring process.

I wish further that the new Attorney General would go back and read the debates in the House in October and November of last year. Because I, for one, certainly left that session with the idea the government was going to move on this rather quickly.

MR. FOSTER: Let me make one closing remark. The hon. leader seems to be suggesting there is something suspicious . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. FOSTER: . . . about a delay, that somehow something wasn't done and all these transactions took place in the meantime. I want to make the record clear. I believe, from my examination of the situation, the government moved reasonably, fairly, and as expeditiously as reasonably possible in the circumstances. There may have been difficulties in the administration in the Land Titles Office which I am not aware of. But any delay which may have been occasioned -- if any -- was clearly not occasioned because of any desire to see the system not in place.

MR. CLARK: Will you find out over the weekend why it took us eight months? Check with land titles and find out, so you can come back and tell us on Monday -- whenever we do it -- what in the heck went wrong. [interjections]

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[Dr. McCrimmon left the Chair.]

* * * * *

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

DR. MCCRIMMON: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration the following resolution and begs to report same, and asks leave to sit again:

Resolved that a sum not exceeding \$474,373,484 be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1976 for the Hospitals and Medical Care Department.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, if we could stop the clock for a moment. Regarding business next week: as I indicated about a week ago, the Assembly will not be sitting on the evening of Thursday, June 12, by reason of the annual Alberta Teachers' Association dinner, but will be sitting during the evening next Tuesday, June 10, for government business.

On Monday afternoon we would first proceed with third reading of Bill No. 3, The Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1975, then to Government Motion No. 1, the general budget debate. If there is time that afternoon we will proceed to committee study of Bill 20, The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 1975. Study was commenced briefly on the clauses of that bill about a week ago. There is an amendment that we would proceed with during the balance of Monday afternoon or, if necessary, early Monday evening.

Following committee study of Bill No. 20 we will move again into Supply on Monday evening, moving into Tuesday evening to give further consideration to the estimates of the Department of the Attorney General, Advanced Education and Manpower, Agriculture, and Consumer and Corporate Affairs, in that order, subject to the attendance of the ministers.

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

[The House rose at 1:03 p.m.]