

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTATitle: **Friday, March 5, 1976 10:00 a.m.**

[The House met at 10 a.m.]

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the annual report of the Alberta Hail and Crop Insurance Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1975.

MR. YURKO: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table the 15-month review and financial statement of the Alberta Housing Corporation for the period January 1, 1974 to March 31, 1975.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table the annual report of the former Department of Public Works, ending March 31, 1975.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to file two copies of an agreement between the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada, pursuant to Section 2 of the Alberta Temporary Anti-Inflation Measures Act.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD****Unexpended Funds**

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my first question to the Premier. The question flows from a certain report done by the Provincial Auditor and released on December 18, that portion of the report that dealt with attempts to use unexpended funds before the end of the fiscal year.

My question to the Premier is: has a directive gone out to the responsible officials in each of the government departments, giving guidelines or direction to those officials regarding this problem of funds unexpended before the end of the fiscal year?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether any particular guidelines have gone out by way of directive. I think it's clear that in our system of fiscal expenditure — and the Provincial Treasurer may well wish to expand upon it — the objective we have is that if expenditure of funds is required for public purposes, it should be made, if at all practical, during

the course of a given fiscal period. But there shouldn't be any feeling that if circumstances are of such a nature that they can't be handled within that fiscal year, therefore they should not be expended in that fiscal year, and should be brought forth by way of estimates in a following or subsequent year.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Premier in light of the answer, perhaps to rephrase the question something like this: has a directive gone out to senior officials in the government departments since December 18, regarding the problem of unexpended funds being expended before the end of the fiscal year?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I believe, as the hon. leader is aware, the view by the Provincial Auditor, with respect to his review of grants generally, was an assessment that with the exception of the Office of Special Programmes, which was only a small portion of the former Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, and with the exception of certain aspects within the Department of Agriculture, no concern was expressed by the Provincial Auditor, hence no general directive was deemed to be required.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the Premier, flowing from the same report and from that portion of the report that dealt with a breakdown of the preaudit function. The question to the Premier is: have steps been taken so that the Premier can now assure the Assembly that the preaudit function is now effectively functioning in all government departments?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I would refer that question to the hon. Provincial Treasurer.

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. leader and members of the Assembly would know, the preaudit function is performed by the Auditor as opposed to being performed by persons within the Department of Treasury. Without having spoken in detail to the Auditor about that — and I've had some general discussions with him concerning it — I wouldn't want to say more on the subject than that I understand the Auditor has made some changes in the preauditing function.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the Premier, once again flowing from the same report. Is the Premier in a position to indicate when the Auditor General legislation will be presented to the Assembly?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, that matter is being handled by the Provincial Treasurer. I'd refer the question to him.

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, the House will remember

that some months ago I had announced that very important change in concept whereby we would move from the current preaudit system to a system of an Auditor General performing a post-audit function, now performed also by the Auditor, and to a controller in treasury who would perform the preaudit function. That's not only a very major change in principle, but it also involves very substantial administrative and organizational changes. We are working hard in the department to prepare for those changes, and while I would be reluctant to give any firm dates as to when they can be made or when the legislation can be presented, I am hopeful that we'll be able to present the legislation this fall.

Criminal Charges — Government Employee

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the Premier. The question flows from the criminal charges which were laid as a result of investigations carried on by the law enforcement agencies. The question flows from the sentence which was handed down within the last week to a former employee of the department.

Is it the intention of the government to appeal the sentence?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, that would come under the jurisdiction of the Attorney General. I am not aware of those facts.

MR. FOSTER: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the leader could indicate whom he is talking about.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'm referring to the charges which were laid against a former employee of the government who was sentenced last week to a two-year suspended sentence. The Crown prosecutor on that particular occasion called for a much harsher sentence.

My question to the Attorney General is: is it the intention of the government to appeal the surprisingly light sentence?

MR. FOSTER: Mr. Speaker, I remember the case . . .

MR. CLARK: You should.

MR. FOSTER: . . . and I didn't discuss the matter with my staff. However, I would be happy to do so. I have given no particular instructions in the matter, nor have I discussed it with the agent handling the case.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Will the Attorney General have that discussion, then report his conclusion to the Assembly?

MR. FOSTER: Certainly, Mr. Speaker.

Oil Pricing

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, the second question is to the Premier. I'd like to ask if an agreement has been worked out between Alberta and the federal government on the question of oil pricing.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. members will recall, the only understanding which was dis-

cussed in terms of agreement was the matter that if the Alberta government agreed to the release of the TransCanada PipeLines permits — as I spoke in the Legislature, if my memory is correct, on June 23, 1975, at the date of the federal budget — as the budget stated, the federal government committed itself to see the price of crude oil continue to move towards international levels in succeeding years; and that was, in our view, both a commitment and an agreement.

What, of course, is not agreed to, and is the subject of discussion and negotiation that the hon. minister is, I presume, involved in at this moment, is the question of the nature of the price increase that might occur on or about July 1, 1976.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. As of now, to the best knowledge of the Premier, no agreement has been reached as to how close we will come to that world price?

MR. LOUGHEED: That's right, Mr. Speaker. The situation is that over the course of about a year and a half of difficult negotiations we were able to shift the federal government's view to one of depressed prices to full accord that we should move in Canada toward international prices over a period of years. For our part, we in Alberta have agreed to that staging-in, and that is the nature, if you want, of the agreement.

From this point on there will be constant negotiations as to the staging that would be involved. As the hon. members are aware, the Minister of Energy is in Ottawa today and will be involved in, perhaps one might say, early portions of what I'm sure will be rather lengthy and protracted discussions over the next few months.

Gun Control

MR. TAYLOR: My question is to the hon. Solicitor General. Is the Government of Alberta planning to introduce any type of gun control?

MR. FARRAN: Mr. Speaker, the laws and regulations in regard to gun control fall under federal jurisdiction and are contained within the Criminal Code. The province is charged with the administration of the Criminal Code within its borders and, of course, that includes those provisions for gun control.

The federal government has an amendment before it at the present time in regard to a new proposition for the licensing of owners of long guns: shotguns and rifles.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary. Has the federal government discussed with the Government of Alberta, or any of its ministers, the nature of the gun control it plans to impose in Canada?

MR. FARRAN: Yes it has, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Mr. Basford and Hon. Warren Allmand visited this Legislature Building a few months ago and introduced us to their proposition in regard to tightening up the regulations for restricted weapons; that's hand guns and machine guns, and their new proposition for the licensing of owners of shotguns and rifles.

MR. TAYLOR: A further supplementary. Is the Government of Alberta in favor of this type of legislation?

MR. FARRAN: Mr. Speaker, the position of the Government of Alberta is that we favor some aspects of the federal proposals, particularly those in regard to stricter control over weapons which can be concealed, like hand guns and machine guns, prohibited weapons, sawed-off shotguns, and that type of thing.

DR. BUCK: Small machine guns?

MR. FARRAN: They can be pretty small. By machine guns I mean fully automatic weapons, and they can be concealed all right. It's really a weapon with a drum. Of course, they can have fully automatic .22 weapons which have huge numbers of bullets in the magazine which can be fired with one burst.

Mr. Speaker, I think I've lost the trend of the question.

MR. CLARK: Bite the bullet.

MR. FARRAN: I'll try to get back, and perhaps the hon. member will tell me if I have been diverted from the main point by that red herring.

In other words, we are in favor of tighter controls of restricted weapons. The whole proposition of licensing the owners of shotguns and rifles seems to us to be a horrendous, costly, administrative exercise of limited public benefit. I believe we should recognize that the atmosphere in Ontario and Quebec may be a little different from that out in the west, since they've had some tragic incidents of young people shooting their colleagues and their teachers with shotguns and rifles in high school.

There are parts of the new legislation which we would approve: that is, the tightening up and keeping of records by gun dealers, the need for parental consent for younger people to buy a weapon, and so on. But we think the other proposition would be very costly, and we doubt whether the proposed \$15 licence will cover those costs.

MR. TAYLOR: One further supplementary to the hon. minister. Did the federal government make any changes in its legislation, following the representations by the Government of Alberta?

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps we're getting a little far afield here, and if there were any changes in legislation they would undoubtedly be of public knowledge.

Land Use Forum

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Premier. It flows from yesterday's Speech from the Throne, as well as his ministerial announcement of December 11 on foreign ownership of land.

Mr. Speaker, my question is: can the Premier first of all advise the Assembly, in a little more definitive way than the Speech from the Throne outlined yesterday, when we might expect legislation on the major recommendations of the Land Use Forum?

MR. LOUGHEED: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Land Use Forum covers such a wide variety of recommendations — I believe some 182 in number — it's our view, as we mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, that there would be a resolution before the House. We would like to hear the view of the legislators of the province, with regard to the various recommendations of this report, before we embark on framing or drafting legislation.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Premier. Have there been further meetings between federal and provincial officials to consider the Prime Minister's letter of September 5, to which you referred in your ministerial announcement of December 11? To refresh your memory, it deals with the exceptions that the hon. Prime Minister has outlined prior to passing changes in the federal citizenship act.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, it is a subject that I may be able to deal with, perhaps, next week. There have been discussions with regard to the nature of the proposed amendment now before the federal House, to their citizenship act, that does affect the issue of absentee foreign ownership of land. I believe I may be in a position to give further information to the House next week. I would like to defer my answer to that point.

MR. NOTLEY: One supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, for clarification. Has the position of the hon. Premier and the government been modified as it relates to exception five in the Prime Minister's letter? This is the exception which deals with the Foreign Investment Review Act. At that time you expressed some concern about it.

Has the position of the government been modified as a consequence of the recommendation of the Land Use Forum, that indeed our whole approach to foreign ownership of land in effect be handled by the process of the Foreign Investment Review Act?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, we've reached no conclusions on that matter. Again, we would await the views of the legislators when the matter is debated. The essential nature of the recommendation of the Land Use Forum is an attempt to convince the federal government that, insofar as the operation of the Foreign Investment Review Act is concerned relative to land, in particular agricultural and non-recreational land within the province, the jurisdiction and operation of that agency be transferred from the federal to the provincial government. We would not anticipate that that recommendation is likely to be well received by the federal government, because of the complexities that it would create for it in the operation of its agency across the country.

On the other hand, the fact that the citizenship act, with the amendments, includes the provisions that have been discussed in the Prime Minister's letter to me, makes the question that much more complex because if we are going to have legislation, we have to have legislation that fits in effectively with both the amendments to the citizenship act and the operation of the Foreign Investment Review Agency of the federal government. So it's a very complex and

difficult question; and I presume it will take some additional negotiation and discussion with the federal government. We certainly would be interested in the views of the members of the House.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. In view of the very well considered concerns of stockmen and farmers about the recommendation that anybody can tramp over private land as long as they've got binoculars or a camera, is the government prepared, at this point in time, to rule out that recommendation for any serious consideration?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, together with the other members of the cabinet, I will certainly be receiving, over the course of the next few months, the viewpoints of rural Albertans about that and a variety of other recommendations made in the report. Decisions in that regard will not be made until this Assembly has had an opportunity to debate them, and until our citizens have had an opportunity to put their point of view forward.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary to the hon. Premier. Is the government pursuing the suggestion, in the forum's report, of seeking from Ottawa the right to impose a capital gains tax?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I have to do some checking on that; but I believe again that the capital gains tax approach was one of the recommendations. There was also the land speculation tax. We have a group of members who are working on the feasibility of this matter. It was our thought that, because of the all-encompassing nature of that particular forum's recommendations, we didn't want to reach any firm conclusions until we had heard the debate in the House. We would hope that hon. members would be of the nature to have any particular motion of that nature extensively debated here during this spring session of the Legislature. Certainly it would be helpful to the Executive Council if that occurs.

Propane Supplies

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. It is with regard to propane supplies. I was wondering if, at the present time, there is a surplus of propane supplies in Alberta or western Canada.

If there is, is it causing a strain on western Canadian propane storage facilities?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I would refer that question to the Minister of Utilities and Telephones.

DR. WARRACK: Mr. Speaker, on that matter, not that I am aware of to the present time, although that doesn't preclude the possibility of it being so. This would be the kind of thing that the industry would be involved in, in discussion with the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources as well as myself. I will undertake to ascertain that matter.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the Minister. At the present time, are any private Alberta companies leasing storage space in the United States for any Alberta surplus propane, or propane?

DR. WARRACK: It's pretty difficult to imagine having that kind of information at your fingertips. But, certainly, by way of either private communication or perhaps, better still, on the Order Paper, I would be pleased to see what I could learn.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the Premier. Will the Minister of Energy be back in the House on Monday to answer those questions?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy will be in the House on Monday. I'll take notice of that question — as the Minister of Utilities and Telephones has as well — and respond with an answer.

Cow-Calf Program

MR. MANDEVILLE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. It is regarding the cow-calf loan.

Has consideration been given to extending the deadline for the renewal of loans? I'm referring to the original, existing, interest-free loans that cow-calf operators have got.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, the deadline for applications for the new cow-calf advance, carrying a 7 per cent interest rate, which was implemented in early November 1975, was January 31, 1976. We did give consideration to extending it. But, after having given that consideration to the matter, we decided that, indeed, the cow-calf producers had had better than three months in which to make applications, application forms were available throughout the province, so the decision was not to extend that date.

ADC Livestock Loans

MR. MANDEVILLE: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Has the minister given any consideration to putting a moratorium on the ADC livestock loans?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, in the Ag. Development Corporation we deal, generally speaking, on an individual basis. Where, in fact, individuals can show they have some difficult financial circumstances but that the situation down the road may be that they're able to make payments, the Ag. Development Corporation will defer payments from time to time. I don't think we should — and we haven't, Mr. Speaker, made any blanket policy of deferring or freezing any loan payments in a general way through the Ag. Development Corporation.

Cattle Stabilization Plan

MR. MANDEVILLE: One final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister had any recent negotiations with the federal Department of Agriculture in regard to a national stabilization plan for the cattle industry?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, during the period from early December until now, we've had officials of the Department of Agriculture in Alberta consulting on a fairly regular basis with their counterparts in Ottawa. Indeed, on one or two occasions I have spoken directly with the federal Minister of Agriculture and with other provincial ministers about that matter.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question for clarification. Is the minister in a position to advise the Assembly whether any specific progress has been made as a result of his proposal on December 19 for a cow-calf stabilization plan, 75 per cent of the cost of which would be borne federally, 25 per cent provincially?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, some progress was indeed made. The progress, however, was not as much as I had hoped it might be. The only thing I can really say is, we're continuing to pursue the proposal which we put forward in early December 1975.

We're hopeful that one of two things will happen: either the federal government and the other provincial governments will recognize the value of a separate cow-calf stabilization program under the federal stabilization act, or they will recognize the real failure of the existing formula of paying on fat cattle, and the effect that has on the cow-calf producer, and change that formula so it will be of more assistance to the basic herd and the cow-calf producer.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. During the meeting on December 19, was the minister able to achieve any consensus on the proposal that Alberta made concerning the cow-calf stabilization plan?

MR. MOORE: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Generally, I would say there was agreement among provincial ministers and the federal minister that, indeed, the cow-calf industry or the cattle industry in Canada would be best served by a single national stabilization program, rather than a variety of provincial programs across the country.

Mr. Speaker, hon. members will have to appreciate that it is not that easy, of course, for those provincial governments, which went hurriedly into some income assurance programs for the cow-calf industry, to get out of them in favor of an all-encompassing national program.

So while there was general agreement, the difficulties of finalizing a specific program and having all agree to it are something we're still working on.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, one last supplementary question. Was there any discussion among the ministers, both the federal minister and the provincial ministers, as to a possible target date that would be practical to implement a national scheme?

MR. MOORE: Not specifically, Mr. Speaker. But we did insist the matter is one that should have been dealt with as early as possible in 1976, recognizing, however, the major portion of the marketing that will occur during the course of this calendar year will be in the fall.

Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Institute

MR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address my question to the hon. Solicitor General. I'd like to know if the minister can indicate what steps are being taken at present to try to prevent further escapes from the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Institute.

MR. FARRAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, to answer that question properly I think I should tell the members roughly what the situation is first, so that they can appreciate what is being done.

MR. NOTLEY: In five minutes or less.

MR. FARRAN: In five minutes?

Mr. Speaker, at Fort Saskatchewan we have a facility designed to hold 200 prisoners now containing close to 500. Those 500 prisoners are meant, under the rule of thumb, to be those serving two years or less. In fact, they include a large number of prisoners who are facing charges which may involve sentences of a lot more than two years. They are there on remand, awaiting trial, awaiting appeal, as witnesses in serious cases; so you've got a mixed bag. Seventy per cent of the prisoners are the minimum security type, serving less than six months; but there are some who, under normal circumstances, would be in a federal penitentiary.

When a federal penitentiary is built in Alberta, I expect the prisoners will be housed there. Also, when we have our remand centre in Edmonton on stream by 1978, the situation will be substantially relieved.

The government has invested some \$2 million in capital improvements for that overcrowded facility, and they should be complete in about six weeks. While those renovations have been going on, this abnormal number of prisoners has had to be crowded into corners while the cell blocks are being rebuilt, so the situation has been even more aggravated. There will be relief, first of all, in about six weeks.

One of the anomalies of the place is that women prisoners, who are the least dangerous from a security point of view, were in the most secure part of the institution. They are now being transferred to a remodelled area so we can use those more secure cells, that the females formerly occupied, for much more dangerous males.

Part of the remodelling includes a secure fence and lighting around the maximum security unit. We now have under active consideration a security fence around the whole complex.

I appreciate the questions from the hon. Member for Clover Bar, because we must think of the security and psychology of the people in the town of Fort Saskatchewan, and I'm very conscious of this.

DR. BUCK: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister indicate which section is going to be the maximum security section of the jail?

MR. FARRAN: Only the hon. Member for Clover Bar would perhaps know which one I'm talking about, but it's called C block and it's the northern block that's separated from the largest building — the place where the women prisoners have been, up to now.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate if an independent committee will be established to investigate some of the escapes from Fort Saskatchewan, or will it be just from the department?

MR. FARRAN: Mr. Speaker, I have a large department. There are people who are not directly involved in that particular institution — who come from other institutions — and I feel they're quite capable of carrying out a thorough inquiry.

I'm well aware of the record of Fort Saskatchewan. I know that to be made the director of Fort Saskatchewan is often equated in the service to being made the captain of the *Titanic*. They normally last about 18 months because of the difficulties there. The present director, I believe, is doing an admirable job and we're quite capable of carrying out a full investigation with our own resources.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate if he has met with the special Advisory Committee on Corrections, established last fall, to discuss the Fort Saskatchewan situation?

MR. FARRAN: Naturally, Mr. Speaker, I've met with the advisory committee to the minister. That's why they were set up — to give me advice. However, I have so many areas in which I need advice that that advisory committee . . .

DR. BUCK: You're right.

MR. FARRAN: Oh yeah, well I admit it. I'm not thinking that I'm the font of all wisdom or anything like that.

DR. BUCK: You told us that before you were a minister you were.

MR. FARRAN: That's right. I've learned a little since, but there are some members who, perhaps, haven't.

DR. WARRACK: Good put-down.

MR. FARRAN: Mr. Speaker, shall I continue?

But at the moment I have not directed this advisory committee to the minister to the problems at Fort Saskatchewan. Their first task was the young offenders act. They are now dealing with the problems of alcoholism, and offenders in southern Alberta where I have another problem.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary to the hon. minister. Why can't persons charged with serious offences under federal legislation be held in the Drumheller institution?

MR. FARRAN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the suggestion, but Drumheller's a long way from the court in Edmonton. You have to have a facility close to the court. When they're on remand they have to come into the court once every eight days, so they have to be close to the court facilities. We have a remand centre in the Calgary area, so the problem isn't as acute; but in the Edmonton area, the only place we've got is Fort Saskatchewan.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary. Shouldn't the federal government worry about that?

MR. SPEAKER: Possibly the hon. member could direct his recommendation to another elected member.

DR. BUCK: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Has the Advisory Committee on Corrections toured the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Institute?

MR. FARRAN: No. Their hands have been full, Mr. Speaker, and there's no possibility that they could be a part-time committee doing everything at once. I don't want them to gallop off in every direction at once. I'd like them to concentrate on one.

DR. BUCK: My final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I made arrangements to tour the institution last Tuesday. Can the minister indicate if it was under his order that that tour was cancelled, or was it somebody below the minister's level?

MR. FARRAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, first let me say the hon. member's interest is to be commended. But if he goes in, wants to visit any of the facilities under my jurisdiction, I would appreciate that he comes to me, and we'll look at the situation. So I don't know how the hon. member made the arrangements to tour Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Institute. However, when there has been an escape from a correctional institution, the atmosphere is likely to be tense. It is really no time for conducted tours. I would hate anything untoward to happen to a member of the loyal opposition. So we have to be careful. But in a short time, when our renovations are finished, I would welcome a proposal from the hon. member for a conducted tour of this important institution in his riding.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my final, final supplementary. Can the minister indicate to the Legislature if he has toured the facility?

MR. NOTLEY: Have you had a conducted tour?

MR. FARRAN: Of course I have, Mr. Speaker.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. It flows from his comments about the *Titanic* attitude of the department towards the position of superintendent at Fort Saskatchewan.

In light of the minister's comment, would the minister be prepared to reconsider his decision not to have someone outside the department, a well-respected group or individual, look frankly and pretty bluntly at Fort Saskatchewan, if in fact there is this *Titanic* attitude within the department?

MR. FARRAN: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. Leader of the Opposition would define what he means by a *Titanic* attitude?

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd be very pleased to, but it was the minister who used the term. I wouldn't want to be accused of putting words in his mouth. He does well enough himself.

MR. FARRAN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is putting words in my mouth. I said earlier, as I recall it, that to be made the director of the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Institute is likened by many people to being made captain of the *Titanic*, because they only last about 18 months. There have been some 20 over the last 15 years.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, is the minister prepared to have either an outside individual or group look at the whole question of Fort Saskatchewan, and report publicly?

MR. FARRAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that we have the problems of Fort Saskatchewan well under control and are well able to handle them. They are big problems, but I don't think any more gratuitous or solicited advice from outside is going to help to solve the facts. I think they are just as I have laid out to the hon. members, and the real relief will come with the building of the remand centre in Edmonton and the federal penitentiary in northern Alberta.

MR. JAMISON: Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister partially answered my question. I was wondering if he could bring us up to date on the proposed federal medium and maximum security penitentiary proposed near the same area to alleviate the problems that arise at the Fort Saskatchewan jail.

MR. FARRAN: Mr. Speaker, that's a question for the federal minister, the Hon. Warren Allmand. I understand that they have budget appropriations and are prepared to proceed as soon as they can settle on a suitable site.

Speed Limit Reduction

DR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, further to a question I raised last session regarding the desire to lower the speed limit to 55 miles per hour, for energy and health savings, a question I posed to the Deputy Premier, Minister of Transportation, and an experienced medical colleague.

AN HON. MEMBER: Nice try, Ken.

DR. PAPROSKI: Would the minister please indicate to the House to what degree he intends to lower that speed limit on our highways in Alberta for that purpose? As a sideline, Mr. Speaker, I intend to continue to ride on this issue until it's done.

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, as indicated in the Speech from the Throne, we will be bringing forward a selected group of speed reductions that are relative to improving the traffic safety on our highways. I'd have to advise the hon. member that these will vary from road to road and location to location.

Housing Programs

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Housing. Is the government meeting with any success in getting more mortgage money from the federal government for housing in Alberta?

MR. YURKO: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta situation with respect to housing has improved considerably during the last year, but that isn't to say that we've solved all the housing problems in Alberta, by any stretch of the imagination. We have been very fortunate to have had 24,707 starts last year when we were only expecting somewhere in the order of 13,000 to 15,000 earlier in the year.

There doesn't appear to be a shortage of money at this particular time with respect to housing starts, Mr. Speaker. The biggest problem at this time is affordability: can buyers in fact afford housing. In this regard, I would ask the hon. member to wait to view some of the budgetary comments made after the budget is in fact released, so that he might get a better indication of what the provincial government programs will be doing, directed towards the affordability problem.

PWA Purchase

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Minister of Transportation and Deputy Premier. In light of the recent court ruling on Pacific Western Airlines, has the government considered appealing this decision?

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, at the moment the government has under consideration the question of appealing that decision of the federal court to the Supreme Court of Canada.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. Is the minister in a position to advise the House what the time frame is for making a decision of this nature, and when we might expect an announcement on the appeal?

DR. HORNER: Well, Mr. Speaker, as my honorable friend may know, this is a complex constitutional legal problem rather than really anything that affects the operations of the air line. I'll be looking toward my colleagues, the Attorney General and other people who are trained in the law, to provide me with that kind of advice so we can make the best possible decisions.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question for clarification. Do I take it from the hon. minister's answer that it is the government's intention to appeal the court ruling to the Supreme Court of Canada, or have you made a decision on that as yet?

DR. HORNER: That decision has not been made, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that there is 60 days in which to lodge an appeal.

VS Services Ltd. Contract

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. The question arises as a result of a contract entered between her department and VS Services Ltd. as far as services are concerned at ASH Deerhome at Red Deer, and the statement being made that a million dollars would be saved.

Would the minister please indicate to the Legislature the major areas in which that million dollars would be saved? I ask the question in light of officials from her department saying that this information is confidential.

MISS HUNLEY: I'm pleased to answer that question, Mr. Speaker. The principal saving can be achieved, as I understand it, through the recommendations which have been made to me from the officials in my department who did the assessment and evaluation of the various proposals. The principal area in which savings can be achieved is in the purchase of food and supplies. Through skill and bulk buying they are able to achieve considerable savings. I think it's a very useful exercise to be able to pass that on and make use of the money for human services.

MR. CLARK: A supplementary question to the minister. From what the minister has said, why hasn't the government in fact been going the route of this kind of purchasing, recognizing the large number of government institutions we have?

MISS HUNLEY: That's a very interesting question, Mr. Speaker, and it's something that I've wondered myself. This has been in effect for quite a few years. There were quite a few years in which, maybe, those matters could have been achieved. I understand that it relates to The Financial Administration Act. I'm not an expert on that, perhaps the hon. Provincial Treasurer could elaborate.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister, so I clearly understand the answer. Is the minister saying to the Assembly that the reason the province — for many years, when we were over on that side of the House too — hasn't moved to a bulk purchasing type of approach is simply because of The Financial Administration Act? Just two years ago we had The Financial Administration Act in the House. Why wasn't it changed then?

MISS HUNLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm not prepared to answer that question, because I don't know the answer. There must be some logical reason. Perhaps it's in the very process that parliament uses and the Legislature uses in acquiring supplies and goods. I know that the tender process has always been, in my opinion, not necessarily the most economical, although it's the one commonly used in business as well as government.

I'm sure if there are other ways and means in which savings can be achieved, this government will be looking at those with an eye to seeing what is in the best interests of the people of this province.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Provincial Treasurer. In light of the comments of his colleague, is it the intention of the government to bring forward legislation in the spring portion of this session to deal with some aspects of The Financial Administration Act, which seem to be encumbering us to the extent of a million dollars more of expenditure than we should be making?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, it's not the intention to bring forward amendments to The Financial Administration Act in that area. I would like to expand on the question which has been raised, but before doing so I would like to do some checking to ascertain precisely what, if any, obstacles in the way of this kind of purchasing are contained in The Financial Administration Act. I will do that and respond to the hon. leader at a later date.

MR. CLARK: One further supplementary question, going back to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. Would the minister be in a position to consider tabling with the Assembly the vital portions of the assessment her department did, so that in fact members of the Assembly could see now where this million dollars is supposed to be saved? We could then do an accurate job of assessing the success of the minister one year from now?

MISS HUNLEY: There are a couple of areas there, Mr. Speaker. I think it's suited for the Order Paper and should be put on. But one area I don't think should be overlooked is: not only what are we saving today, but what will the future saving be? I think that is extremely important and shouldn't be overlooked.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, one further supplementary to the minister. Is it a fair assessment of the minister's position that it's expected a million dollars will be saved in the upcoming fiscal year by moving to the contract of VS Services Ltd.?

MISS HUNLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's my interpretation from information received from officials in my department, that a saving of approximately a million can be achieved. I will be quite frank with the members of this Assembly and say I do not wish that entire saving to go back into the general revenue of the province. There are some other needs in ASH Deerhome, in the nursing and service areas of caring for patients. I wish to make use of some of that saving in order to accomplish that.

DR. PAPROSKI: A supplementary if I may, Mr. Speaker, on that same topic, to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. Mr. Speaker, as I applaud — and I'm sure the citizens of Alberta applaud — these savings, whatever they may be, providing the quality does not go down, I wonder if the minister would indicate to the House whether this company is a private company, a public company, and where its home base is located.

MISS HUNLEY: I don't have that information, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure I could obtain it from their prospectus, and I would be pleased to provide the hon. member with the information.

DR. PAPROSKI: Would the minister be so kind as to report to the House on that issue?

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Can the minister advise the House what reasons prompted the government to by-pass the judgment of the labor management review committee which, as I understand it, scored the CSA proposal highest among competing bids, including VS Services?

MISS HUNLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's a very complex matter to assess a contract of that magnitude. We were considering three areas. One was dietary, one was housekeeping, and the other was laundry. Hon. members may be aware that a contract for some of the laundry services was already in existence. When we assessed the entire proposal and the recommendations that came forward to me from officials in my department, they had considered all areas of it and decided that the best possible management team throughout the entire area, and the greatest achievement of the greatest efficiency in the long run, rather than having it broken into a number of areas, would be to sign a contract with one firm. They recommended that and various different types of contracts that might be entered into, or various alternatives; we considered it and then made the decision which we announced last Monday.

MR. TAYLOR: Supplementary to the hon. minister. Is there something wrong with getting rid of some government bureaucracy and getting it back into the hands of private enterprise?

MR. SPEAKER: The time for the question period has run out, but with the indulgence of hon. members, perhaps we could have a final question from the hon. Member for Little Bow.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

Hospital Construction

MR. R. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's to the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. Has the government placed a freeze on hospital construction for 1976?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, I think that question will be clarified for the hon. member when my colleague, the Provincial Treasurer, starts to move the budget through the House.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, supplementary to the minister. Will the minister renege on his responsibilities or would he clarify, when he can, the Premier's promise to build a 300-bed hospital in Grande Prairie in 1976?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, I firstly would want to assure the hon. member that we do not renege on our commitments. I think all hon. members know that there is a long time frame over which hospitals are constructed. In fact, if a decision were made today to build a hospital, it would take some two years by the time the planning phase — the architec-

ture is done — in order for the hospital actually to become operational. Certainly, Grande Prairie is within our longer term priorities. That can be shuffled from one year to another, depending on a given total capital budget parameter that we may be pursuing in one given year.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a very quick supplementary. Will the Grande Prairie board be given permission to proceed with the initial preparation plans this year?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, generally I have indicated to boards that the 11 per cent operating expenditure guideline should generally not affect our capital expenditure budget, as long as the expenditure of the capital side does not result in increased operating expenditures during the year or years of operating restraint that we may have. So generally speaking, in conclusion, our long-term capital planning can proceed in a relatively normal way, as long as the facilities do not come on stream resulting in substantially increased operating expenditures in this year of provincial expenditure restraint.

DR. PAPROSKI: One supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister confirm that Albertans have more hospital beds per capita, relative to other provinces, by far?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, I think it is well known in Canada that we do have the highest number of active treatment beds of any province in Canada.

DR. PAPROSKI: Is this true also for nursing home beds, Mr. Speaker, and auxiliary . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I believe the hon. member could abbreviate his list of virtues for confirmation.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Has it always been like this in Alberta?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, it has particularly been improving since 1971.

Members' Lounge

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, before we move on to the next item of business, I wonder if I might on a matter of personal privilege place a question before the Assembly and perhaps, in not placing it before you, ask you to comment on it, sir. It deals with the question: are members of the Assembly at liberty to discuss with members of the media in the members' lounge directly behind the Chamber?

MR. SPEAKER: I'll be glad to deal with that matter.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, might I ask: are members at liberty to meet with members of the media in the lounge?

MR. SPEAKER: As the matter stands at present, the media have been asked not to use the lounge for interviews, so that the members may join the other members of legislative assemblies across Canada in having at least a slight modicum of privacy. However,

the matter is still under discussion and review with members of the press gallery, and for the time being they have been asked not to interview hon. members in the members' lounge.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

head: **CONSIDERATION OF HIS HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR'S SPEECH**

Mr. Shaben proposed the following motion to the Assembly: That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta as follows:

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

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

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents, the residents of Lesser Slave Lake, I wish to thank the hon. Premier for the privilege of leading off this throne speech debate. I'm particularly pleased, having been a member of this Legislature for less than a year and having had an opportunity to sit on both sides of the House. [laughter]

But no matter on which side of the House the members may sit, we all have a responsibility to our constituents and to all of Alberta.

I'd also like, Mr. Speaker, to make a comment. It's probably a coincidence that the hon. Member for Calgary Bow and myself were both born and raised in Endiang, and that's near Hanna for those who haven't heard of Endiang, which is now represented by the hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Last September, our government acted with responsibility and courage in moving ahead of the rest of Canada in placing self-imposed spending restraints. I believe that Albertans applaud this government for taking a lead in this crucial area, the insidious problem of inflation, which had been talked about. But the action in Canada started in Alberta. I think it's important that in addition to giving rhetoric to the problem, we all act responsibly in dealing with the problem. It is evident in the Speech from the Throne that, though we have embarked on a one-year restraint program, there are many programs, and the policy of constructive action of this government is continuing.

It may be appropriate for me to recite a few lines from a poem entitled *My Countrymen* by Kahlil Gibran.

What is it you would have me do,
My Countrymen? Shall I purr like
The kitten to satisfy you, or roar
Like the lion to please myself?

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech neither roars nor purrs, but it sets out a course of continuing constructive action.

Our government's initiative in housing, as evidenced by the increase in housing starts in 1975

over 1974, leading all of Canada, is worth repeating and emphasizing. The continuing importance of this basic need of Alberta citizens is appreciated by my constituents. It's particularly important to those persons who are in the lower-middle and lower income groups. I recognize the comments of the Minister of Housing and Public Works that the difficulty today is not so much the availability of funds but the ability of people to afford houses. I would hope that we would continue to look for innovative ideas, in addition to providing funds, to provide housing for our people.

There have been examples in my constituency where the housing program of the Department of Housing and Public Works has been most beneficial. The transitional housing program in Slave Lake and High Prairie has allowed people from the isolated communities, from the rural areas where there are no job opportunities, to move to the larger centres to avail themselves of this accommodation and have an opportunity to work.

In the area of senior citizen housing, the senior citizen housing grant has been helpful in relieving the pressure on senior citizen lodges. The public housing which is available throughout Alberta — and I understand well over 2,000 social housing units were developed in 1975 in Alberta — also assists the people, particularly those in the low-income bracket.

Now I'd like to move briefly to comment on the item in the throne speech dealing with the Kirby Board of Review and the intention of the government to move ahead in this area. In the extensive debates last session on the Kirby report, in the responses made by the Attorney General and the Solicitor General, in the indications of the government in moving ahead with our criminal justice system, and indeed in some of the questions raised this morning on the state of our correctional institutions, I believe the government has shown great leadership in moving in this area. Again, it's an area that is of concern to all Albertans.

In my constituency it's kind of a mixed bag of blessings, and I think I'd first like to talk about agriculture and how it affects the people in my constituency, particularly those in the west end. We also have forest, recreation, and other assets; but agriculture is often neglected, not in this House and not by this government, but in the overall view of the importance of the industry to Alberta and its growing importance. I'm pleased and looking forward to joining in the debate on the Alberta Land Use Forum report, and I'm sure it will focus attention again, as is always important, on the importance of agriculture to all Albertans.

The marketing and processing of agricultural products in this province of ours — I would urge that the government continue to press in that direction. There have been difficulties that the opposition draws to our attention from time to time, but the overall objective of achieving this processing and manufacturing of our own agricultural products is vitally important to all Albertans.

In the field of our rural farm families, the rural gas co-op program has had some difficulties. But as mentioned in the throne speech, some 90,000 rural Albertans now have the benefit of natural gas that urban dwellers just take for granted. It's a wonderful thing. It has caused some financial problems because of inflation, rapidly rising costs. But the

Minister of Utilities and Telephones moved recently to assist the rural gas co-ops by providing them with additional support. This is indeed helpful. In 1975, the program of sheltering Alberta consumers of natural gas has meant an average of well over \$80 per family in savings. This is important to us in an area where rising costs are affecting us all.

Energy — we are all concerned and interested, because the revenue of this province and the future of this province and the growth of this province, Mr. Speaker, have developed from our vast energy sources. I am pleased that attention will be given to coal, a new source of fossil energy. I'm particularly pleased because there are large deposits of coal in my constituency. I may offer a suggestion that if other parts of the province aren't anxious to have power plants constructed in their areas, I would be happy to encourage that development in my constituency.

I'd like to speak, just for a moment, about the forest industry and the importance of this industry to all Alberta and to my constituents. Some 6,000 Albertans are employed directly in the forest industry, and that work force is growing day by day. The importance of this industry is that per dollar invested the greatest number of jobs are created in this industry. I am pleased that in my constituency a large, modern flakeboard plant recently went into production. It's providing well over 100 jobs. There are possibilities of more forest development throughout Alberta, and it's an area which I would urge the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, although he's not here, to pursue because it is a renewable resource and it's very, very valuable in the creation of jobs.

I'd like now to comment on a few of the things that probably relate only to the north and that some of the members who live in central and southern Alberta are not particularly aware of. One area in which the government moved last year was the creation of a land tenure secretariat. It's of vital importance to my constituents and to many of the native people in the north, in that many of the native people are sitting in green zones and have lived there for many, many years. Last year the Department of Municipal Affairs, at the urging of the minister responsible for native affairs, moved to establish a land tenure secretariat. This secretariat is now functioning in the area of Wabasca-Desmarais, where there are some 3,000 native persons, and will be providing an opportunity for the native people to own their own land. Again, this is an area where Alberta is leading the rest of Canada and moving ahead. The intention of the secretariat, as I understand it, is to move from that part of the province throughout the other isolated communities in northern Alberta to solve this most pressing need.

Going hand in hand with the activities of the secretariat and the minister are the activities of the Northern Alberta Development Council. The Council, chaired by the Hon. Bob Dowling, Minister of Business Development and Tourism, is doing an outstanding job in bringing government to the people in the rural and northern areas. Some weeks ago we had the opportunity to visit Fort Vermilion. At Fort Vermilion well over 27 briefs were presented to us, expressing the needs and concerns of northern people. The previous meeting was held in Wabasca,

at which a similar number of briefs were presented to the Council. The lay council members — those who aren't elected, representing all of northern Alberta — do an outstanding job of drawing the needs of northern Albertans to the attention of this government. I look forward to the meetings this coming year and hearing the views of the people of northern Alberta and having an opportunity to raise them in the House or to bring them to the attention of the ministers.

For this coming year, we have tentatively scheduled meetings in Elizabeth Colony, Grande Prairie, Swan Hills, Hay Camp, Fairview, Fort McMurray, Bonnyville, Beaverlodge, Plamondon, Rainbow Lake, and Assumption. These sorts of meetings and the response we have received are very important to the development of northern Alberta and to the development of all Alberta.

I'd like to change, for a moment, and talk about the environment of the north. The geographic centre of our province is Lesser Slave Lake, which happens to be the area I serve. Many Albertans don't realize that half of Alberta lies below Lesser Slave Lake. There are problems related to the development of the north: huge distances, the environment is very fragile in the north. It requires intensive work, preplanning by the Department of the Environment. I would hope that in the future we don't have the difficulties that have occurred recently and are continuing to occur: the flooding, the soil erosion. A lot of it may possibly be attributed to a lack of planning back in the '50s and a lack of proper control, concern, and consideration for the environment.

Recently the Environment Conservation Authority held hearings throughout the Peace River country and heard representations from citizens and groups. The report, I trust, will be made available to the members of the Assembly as soon as possible. I look forward to hearing the recommendations of the Authority, and perhaps [to] this having an effect on the attitude we have toward protecting the environment not only of the north, but of all Alberta.

I mentioned Lesser Slave Lake as it is the largest lake in Alberta, and that leads me to the fishing industry. In Alberta last year, well over 5 million pounds of fresh-water fish was caught, some 3 million pounds of which was sold in Alberta. Alberta is a member of an agreement between the federal government and the western provinces, the fresh-water fish marketing agreement. In this agreement, our fresh-water fish catch is all marketed and handled through this marketing corporation. I would strongly urge that the Minister of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife give consideration to getting out of this agreement, because I think we in Alberta could do an adequate job of marketing and processing our own fresh-water fish to a greater advantage to our own fishermen.

On many occasions last session, a matter was raised both by myself, representing my constituency, and by other members concerning some amenities the people of the north don't have, and that they should have. One that is of importance to me and to my constituents, particularly the residents of the town of Slave Lake, is that they have no television reception. I would like to urge that the Minister of Utilities and Telephones make representation to the federal minister, as communications is a federal

responsibility, to urge that the CBC and CRTC accelerate their program to provide people of northern Alberta, this large community, with television.

I look forward to discussing the proposed amendments to The Northland School Division Act. There were worth-while debates and discussions as a result of the Worth report, and I understand the Minister of Education is moving to introduce some amendments. Perhaps I could add a suggestion that the Minister of Education may wish to consider. The division is huge. It may be worth considering reducing its size by taking portions of it and adding them to existing divisions, thus leaving a smaller division that would be less unwieldy and difficult. Perhaps it would be possible to add trustees to those portions that are added to the other divisions.

While talking about education — and we all understand its importance — I'd also like to recommend to the minister, Mr. Speaker, that he have a look at the higher costs that education jurisdictions in the north face, particularly in the area of utility costs, bus transportation costs, and these sorts of costs that don't compare with the school boards' costs in southern Alberta particularly.

I'd like to mention that in the north, and [in] my constituency particularly, the native people and the white people are working very, very well together. There are some examples of the kinds of things that are helping to develop the north. In High Prairie an economic development committee is operating, which has as members native people who are working with the leaders of the communities in and around High Prairie to develop economic opportunities. [There is a] similar situation in the eastern end of the constituency, in Slave Lake, where the Indian regional council, made up of 11 native bands, 7 of which are in my constituency, is working closely with the leaders in Slave Lake to develop job opportunities and industry, and to diversify their economy.

As mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, the native people are receiving excellent support from this government. I would trust that this sort of support and co-operation will continue.

Probably the major item that will provoke the greatest debate in this Legislature in the coming months will be the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. The great majority of Albertans accept the concept of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. They accepted it in March 1975, and they still do. When Bill 74 was introduced and allowed to die, there was a great deal of discussion throughout my constituency on this subject. It's rather interesting that everybody agrees with the concept, but everyone you talk to has a different idea as to how the money should be invested. But we as legislators in this province will have to make those decisions as to how we handle this great resource. It is a first; we're in a unique position in having this problem. I think one of the ways in which this province and this Legislature will be measured is [in] how we handle this situation.

I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to this session, to our budget deliberations, and to the work we have before us. This is the Second Session of the Eighteenth Legislature, and I'm sure all the members here will work constructively toward achieving a better Alberta.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I consider it a great honor, not only to me but also to the people of my

constituency of Calgary Bow, to have been invited by the hon. Premier to second the motion thanking His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor for the Speech from the Throne.

It is also a privilege to follow my colleague, the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, and to have come from Endiang, the same town as he did, many years ago.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, may I publicly express my best wishes to a distinguished member of our Assembly who is absent today. I hope, as I am sure we all do, that Fred Peacock will quickly recover from his illness and be back with us very soon.

Yesterday's Speech from the Throne outlined the objectives and commitments of our government for 1976. It stressed the theme of economic restraint and social responsibility. Economic restraint is reflected in the objectives of consolidating existing programs, trimming the outdated services, and controlling government and public sector spending. The social responsibility is reflected by the expansion of housing programs, the special attention to the health and safety of workers, the special attention to traffic safety, and the implementation of justice and law enforcement recommendations of the Kirby report.

Economic restraint is a principle important to both government and individual Albertans. As responsible citizens, we have an obligation to help break the psychology of inflation. Our individual rights in a democratic society can only exist with individual obligations. It is my hope that Albertans will not come to expect the rights without the obligations.

We must consider returning to the concept of investment for tomorrow, rather than spending everything for today. Our government's commitment to invest for Alberta's future is evidenced by the introduction of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act in the last Legislature. Albertans expressed their support for this commitment during the last election, when our government pledged to establish this important fund.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I think our government deserves recognition for economic restraint by the establishment of the 11 per cent provincial guidelines in advance of the federal government's move to control prices and wages. Also deserving recognition are those Albertans who, through either contract settlements or the pricing of their goods and services, showed their commitment to this particular principle. Unfortunately, the federal government has not accepted its full responsibility in combatting inflation, as seen by the recent inflationary 17 to 18 per cent budget increase.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne refers to the new, updated Planning Act and the recent Alberta Land Use Forum. It is important that we examine each in the context of the other, as the future planning roles of the various levels of government are established. The land-use report is a most comprehensive, interesting, and readable document. Dr. Wood and the other members of the Land Use Forum are to be congratulated for their efforts.

A particularly valuable aspect of the report was the examination of such emotionally charged issues as the economic survival of the family farm, the threat of communal farms, the foreign ownership of land, and urban growth. The report helps to allay fears Albertans have had about some of these issues.

Although Albertans have fewer land-use problems than many areas of the world, the Forum reports a need for better co-ordination between provincial government departments and between various levels of government in this province. It reports a concern for country residential development, as this development relates to the use of good agricultural land and to property taxation. The report also deals with two topics that are of particular concern or interest to my constituents. These topics are urban growth as it relates to land use, and housing. The Forum concludes that urban growth is not a problem with respect to the total amount of land occupied by the cities, since only about .2 per cent of Alberta's total area is taken up by our cities. This is much less than the area that transportation networks take up throughout the province. According to the Forum, it is the management of urban growth which requires special attention.

I agree with the Forum in its view that general policy decisions regarding the future expansion of Edmonton and Calgary should be provincial decisions, whereas the intra-urban form of growth should be the responsibility of the municipality. A step in the right direction was taken last fall, when our government passed legislation placing final approval for annexation with the province.

Mr. Speaker, the citizens of my constituency recognize that Calgary has to grow, but they are concerned with the form which that growth is taking. New land on the peripheries is constantly being annexed, resulting in low-density development or sprawl. They feel that alternatives to this very expensive form of growth need to be considered.

I am pleased with the continuing emphasis, as outlined in the throne speech, on meeting the housing needs in this province. Housing is the second particular interest of my constituents, which I referred to a moment ago. The establishment of the Alberta Home Mortgage Corporation will give special attention to the direct lending home mortgage programs, with the assistance of added investment funds from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the throne speech that the senior citizen home improvement program is being well received. Calgary Bow contains some of the older communities in Calgary, and as such, many of our homes need improvements and repairs. It's indeed gratifying to see our senior citizens making use of this grant for the improvement of their homes. There are a large number of senior citizens in Calgary Bow, many who because of their age and poor health are finding it difficult to maintain their own homes. For them, more senior citizen accommodation is most welcome.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, incentives are necessary to encourage younger families to move into our older communities. I would suggest the establishment of a new program under the Alberta Home Mortgage Corporation to assist first-time home-owners to settle in our older communities. Another possibility may [be] the adaptation of the starter home ownership program for this purpose.

The high cost of housing is a major concern of Canadians today. We often wonder whether our children will be able to purchase their own homes. In fact, the single-family dwelling is becoming a luxury they likely will not be able to afford. The Land Use

Forum recommends that "government must recognize that the single-family detached housing unit is not a realistic goal for all Canadians." The Land Use Forum reports:

The preoccupation . . . of consumer, developer and mortgage lenders, with single-family housing, the most expensive form of housing from the total cost and land-use perspectives, should be considered a major contributing factor to increased housing costs. Servicing of the low-density subdivision is not cost efficient for a municipality. While the internal servicing costs are borne by the purchasers in newly developed subdivisions, most other costs are charged against general taxation.

Thus, Mr. Speaker, not only is low-density single-family development expensive for those who purchase the homes, it is also expensive for the rest of society.

The Forum recommends that government support programs should be directed towards multi-family developments, both in new and redevelopment schemes. I'm glad to see our government moving in this direction, as seen by the following comparisons of 1975 housing starts in Alberta, by type, over 1974. Single-family detached home starts are up 11 per cent, two-family starts up 94 per cent, row housing starts up 123 per cent, and apartment starts up 52 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the huge increases in the cost of raw land and the cost of servicing land for urban residential development are of great concern. Indications are that metropolitan land development in Canada has been taken over by the large land development corporations. They buy up their competition and, through vertical integration, consolidate their position. These corporations appear to prevent the operation of a competitive system in our larger cities and may have been partially responsible for the inflated land prices.

One vehicle the Forum suggests for the control of land profits is the special capital gains tax or speculation tax. Since most of the raw land around our larger centres appears to be owned by the development firms, my fear is that this tax may simply be passed on to the consumer in the purchase price of his home.

The existence of the large land development corporations could lead to several different objectives for public policy. There are those who would suggest the break-up of the evolving cartel, there are those who would suggest the nationalization of the firms, and there are those who would suggest increased public supervision of their products and services. Of the three alternatives, the latter seems most directly related to the quality of life and substantive needs of our society.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech commitment of our government to more extensive enforcement of existing speed limits and increased emphasis on driver education is indeed encouraging. As drivers, we all need to improve our driving skills and attitudes. Driving skills can be improved through driver training programs and more stringent testing procedures. Possibly, testing drivers at regular intervals, particularly those with poor records, would help to improve driving skills and reduce traffic accidents. Driver training programs in our high schools should also be

encouraged.

Part of a good driver education course should evolve from the following: the study of driver attitudes; the identification of undesirable, aggressive driving habits and how these develop; the advantages of using seat belts; and the menace of the drinking driver. The encouragement of more drivers to take advantage of our existing programs may be necessary to reduce the high cost of accidents on our highways.

Mr. Speaker, one of my most interesting experiences as an MLA is being a member of the Alberta Government Telephones Commission. AGT has been meeting customer demands for telecommunication services in Alberta. Because our province has had steady and, more recently, rapid development, these demands have also been increasing.

Growth, rapidly escalating costs of telecommunication equipment and skilled personnel, plus the costs of obtaining capital have necessitated an AGT rate increase. The Public Utilities Board granted an interim rate increase of 20 per cent on December 1, and further hearings will continue later this month. The last increase has been only the second AGT rate increase in the last 50 years. The overall level of service provided is as good as or better than any found elsewhere in the world.

The extended flat rate calling program is one of AGT's services referred to in the throne speech. Instead of toll charges, telephone customers have a monthly flat rate on calls to primary market centres within a radius of 30 miles. This program is designed to enhance the quality of life and improve the economic framework of rural Alberta.

The introduction of phone centres and the installation of telephone jacks in some of our larger communities is an additional service. Customers are able to visit a phone centre, choose telephones from a variety of styles and colors, take them home, and plug them into preinstalled jacks. This program increases customer convenience and reduces rapidly escalating telephone installation costs.

Mr. Speaker, it is the determination of the minister, other members of the Commission, and myself to provide the highest standard of telecommunication services that can be made available at reasonable cost.

Moving from telephones to utilities, I am pleased with the continuation of the natural gas rebate plan and the progress in the rural natural gas program. The modified formula for government assistance,

recently announced by the Minister of Utilities and Telephones, will be welcomed by those gas co-ops currently experiencing difficulties.

I realize, Mr. Speaker, that the topics I have touched upon are just a portion of the Speech from the Throne. My remarks have been primarily concerned with the areas of land use, urban growth, housing programs, traffic safety, and telephones and utilities. There was also a brief reference to the all-important Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act. The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake has covered extremely well many of the other points of rural, business, and social concern.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne gives an excellent overview of our government's plan of action for 1976. It outlines a program of strength and consolidation, using as its guidelines the basic commitments of economic restraint and social responsibility. I feel both privileged and proud to be member of this Progressive Conservative government and to have the dedicated leadership of our esteemed Premier in carrying out our plan of action. It now gives me great pleasure to formally second the motion of the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

MR. SPEAKER: May the hon. Leader of the Opposition adjourn the debate?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, next week the Assembly will continue with the throne speech debate, and we would see sitting on Monday evening and Thursday evening.

I move the Assembly do now adjourn until Monday afternoon at 2:30 o'clock.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

[The House rose at 11:42 a.m.]