

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: Tuesday, March 9, 1976 2:30 p.m.

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**Bill 11****The Alberta Health Care Insurance
Amendment Act, 1976**

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being The Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 1976. Mr. Speaker, this bill recognizes for the first time the importance of citizen input into the development of policies in Alberta health care, by providing for the appointment of three Alberta citizens-at-large to the commission board.

[Leave granted; Bill 11 introduced and read a first time]

Bill 211**The Temporary
Non-Resident Farm Ownership Act**

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill No. 211, The Temporary Non-Resident Farm Ownership Act. Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to plug the loophole that exists at the present time, until the matter of the Canadian citizenship act is clarified. There are two principal features of the bill, Mr. Speaker: one is that it is of a temporary nature and will run for only a year's time. The second is that beneficiaries of residents of Alberta, who live outside the province, would be exempt from the terms of this act.

[Leave granted; Bill 211 introduced and read a first time]

Bill 14**The Real Estate Agents'
Licensing Amendment Act, 1976**

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill No. 14, The Real Estate Agents' Licensing Amendment Act, 1976. Mr. Speaker, the bill has a number of very important aspects. Two of them are: it provides, among other things, the right of appeal to a person who has been refused an agent's licence, and clarifies the amount a licensed agent must deposit in trust upon entering into a guaranteed sales agreement.

[Leave granted; Bill 14 introduced and read a first time]

Bill 220**An Act to Amend
The Fire Prevention Act**

MR. PURDY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 220, An Act to Amend The Fire Prevention Act. This bill, Mr. Speaker, would set up the apparatus so that we could have standardization of fire-fighting equipment throughout the province, and set up the machinery whereby municipalities in rural Alberta would be able to borrow for such equipment.

[Leave granted; Bill 220 introduced and read a first time]

Bill 201**An Act Respecting Body-Rub Parlours
and Nude Parlours**

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being An Act Respecting Body-Rub Parlours and Nude Parlours. Some cities in Canada have been plagued with a multitude of body-rub parlors and businesses offering nude photography, nude ping-pong, nude dancing, and even nude meditation. Some 50 of these congested Yonge Street in Toronto. This bill gives the municipalities in Alberta the necessary muscle to deal with this matter before it becomes a serious problem here.

[Leave granted; Bill 201 introduced and read a first time]

head: INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you, and to the members of the Assembly, a group of agri-leaders with the Rural Education and Development Association. All of these individuals, Mr. Speaker, are leaders within their respective communities. They are here today furthering their knowledge of the legislative process and meeting with a number of MLAs. They are seated in the members gallery. I would ask them to stand and be recognized by the Assembly.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, today it's a pleasure for me to introduce to you, and through you to the Assembly, some 60 enthusiastic Grade 5 and 6 students from the Grovenor Elementary School in the very progressive constituency of Edmonton Glenora. They are in the public gallery, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the Assembly rise and show them welcome at this time.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to introduce to you, and through you to the members of the Assembly, 25 students enrolled in a PEP course at the Cromdale Campus of Grant MacEwan Community College. They are accompanied this afternoon by their instructor, Mr. Whalen. They are seated in the members gallery, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that they rise to be recognized by the members of the House.

DR. HOHOL: Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to introduce to you, and to the House, 26 Grade 8 students from the St. Francis of Assisi School. The

school is just inside the constituency of Edmonton Belmont, so it takes students from both it and Edmonton Beverly, represented by my colleague, the hon. Mr. Diachuk. They are accompanied by one teacher, Mr. Arcilla. I would ask them to stand in the public gallery and be recognized by this Assembly.

That's what my notes said.

From the University of Alberta, a class of students in School and Community Studies in the Department of Education, accompanied by a friend — I was going to say of several years, but the truth is of many, many years — Dr. B. Y. Card. Twenty-four students and Dr. Card are seated in the members gallery. I would ask them to rise and be recognized by this Assembly.

MR. CLARK: We can see why Advanced Education is in the state it is.

DR. BUCK: Twice and you're out, Bert.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I hope I have better luck.

I have great pleasure in introducing to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the hon. members of the Legislature, Mr. David Parker and 14 political science students from the University of Alberta. These young men are here to observe the Legislature. It is my pleasure now to ask Mr. Parker and his 14 colleagues in political science to stand and be recognized.

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I wish to file a copy of an order, as required by Section 3 of The Government Emergency Guarantee Act, of orders made under that act.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

PWA Move

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my first question to the Deputy Premier, who is responsible for PWA, and ask if the Alberta government has done economic studies setting out the costs and benefits of moving the head offices of PWA to Calgary, and the maintenance area to Edmonton.

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, no formal studies have been done in that area. It's interesting that the Leader of the Opposition should register objection to what we're trying to do with the expansion of Pacific Western in making its headquarters here in Alberta.

DR. BUCK: Nice, nice try.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, we've now seen another indication of the Nixonism in this government.

DR. BUCK: That's right.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Is the minister prepared to table these informal studies that the government has done then, so we can have a look at them?

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, I thought I indicated to the hon. member that the decisions we've made with regard to policy, as owners of Pacific Western Airlines, are based on the faith and the obvious development we see for that air line in developing northern transportation and, indeed, transportation generally in the province of Alberta.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Is the minister in a position to indicate to the House the effect this move will have on the profit picture as far as PWA is concerned, recognizing the profitable operation — I believe \$1.2 million — of last year?

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, having regard to some of the distortions that have been put forward relative to the move, let me say this: it is our view that in the medium and longer term, this will have a very positive effect on the profit picture of the air line.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might have a further supplementary question to the minister, and ask when the minister first sat down to discuss his decision to move PWA headquarters to Alberta, with the chairman of the board of PWA.

DR. HORNER: That's been an ongoing process over the past several months, Mr. Speaker, relative to the general policy objectives of the government in the area.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, in the course of those general ongoing discussions, did the minister sit down — in addition to the chairman of the board of PWA — also with the president of PWA, and get input there before the minister made his decision?

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, my relationship is with the chairman of the board and the board of directors. The president is an employee of that board.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. Did the minister at any time seek the advice of the president of PWA, prior to the minister's decision to make the move?

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of the fact that we have a great number of dedicated Albertans, and indeed other people from the Territories and the province of British Columbia, who have agreed to serve on that board of directors with, I might say, great distinction. These people are allowed to make those kinds of decisions.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I didn't make the question clear. Did the Deputy Premier and Minister of Transportation sit down with the president of PWA and solicit his advice on the question of moving the head offices to Alberta, prior to the decision being made?

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, the president was aware, through the chairman of the board of directors, of the policy direction of this government.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the Deputy Premier. Did the Deputy

Premier, or individuals from his office, issue directives to the board of directors of PWA that, in fact, the president, Mr. Watson, should be removed?

DR. HORNER: No, at no time did we do that, Mr. Speaker.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the minister. Were there discussions between the minister and the chairman of the board with regard to Mr. Watson carrying on as president of PWA?

DR. HORNER: There were no direct discussions relative to the question of Mr. Watson carrying on, Mr. Speaker. I might repeat again that our discussions had to do with the long-range, broad policy objectives that I conveyed to the board of directors through the chairman. I would like to add, we assured the province of British Columbia, and do so again, that job equity, as fairly as we could ascertain, would be carried out in any relocation of personnel.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I simply can't accept the minister's answer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order.

MR. NOTLEY: A supplementary question to the hon. minister, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister assure the House that the costs of the move will be borne exclusively from PWA sources and will not in any way, either directly or indirectly, be borne or partially borne by the taxpayers of Alberta?

DR. HORNER: I can certainly do that, Mr. Speaker. We're trying to have, right from the outset, an arms-length relationship with this company, in which the board of directors would operate it as a commercial, profit-oriented company relative to the other broad policy objectives we've given them.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to clarify the minister's answer to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Can the minister advise the Assembly — and this is for clarification — whether the minister or any member of the government or department held discussions with the chairman of the board, or any other member of the board, concerning the status of Mr. Watson?

DR. HORNER: I think, Mr. Speaker, I've already answered that question. My discussions with the chairman of the board were, again, with regard to the policy objectives of the government being the owner of the air line. Relative to that, the other decisions are then up to a very competent board of directors.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question for clarification. Did any other individual in the government speak to the chairman of the board of directors, or any of the members of the board of directors, concerning Mr. Watson's status?

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, as far as I'm aware, the hon. Premier has given me the responsibility of reporting for Pacific Western Airlines in the Legisla-

ture and to the people of Alberta, and I'm not aware of anybody else interfering.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary to the hon. Deputy Premier. Would it not be ironical for the people of Alberta to own an air line and operate it from another province?

MR. SPEAKER: We appear to be getting clearly into a debate on the topic. Perhaps the last argument might remain rebutted.

MR. NOTLEY: Could I ask a further supplementary question to the hon. minister? Is the minister in a position to advise the House today just exactly what role Mr. Watson will play as an adviser to the board, in view of his reported opinions on the competence of the Alberta government?

DR. HORNER: Well, I'm sure my hon. friend can take what solace he likes out of that. The question of Mr. Watson's future help to the board of directors will be a matter for the board to look after, for they are the ones who hired him as an adviser.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. Has the chairman of the board of directors given the government any indication yet as to the nature and term of Mr. Watson's services as an adviser?

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, I am rather interested that the opposition should want to get into the day to day management of a company such as Pacific Western Airlines. We certainly consider that matter part of the day to day operations.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I have one final supplementary question I'd like to put to the hon. Premier, concerning PWA. In view of the Premier's reported comments on the principle of co-determination that you discussed during the European tour last fall, is the Premier in a position to give serious consideration to the proposal that several pilots or employees of PWA should be placed on the board of directors as a method of improving employee morale?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, no. I do not think that would be appropriate.

VS Services Ltd. Contract

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the second question to the minister responsible for the operation of Deerhome, Alberta School Hospital. It is with regard to the contract entered into by the Alberta government and VS Services Ltd. The question centres around the \$1 million saving.

Is the \$1 million alleged saving to be in the fiscal year 1976-77, or is it to be spread over a number of years?

MISS HUNLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd prefer it if the hon. member would address me by my portfolio, since I don't operate ASH/Deerhome, but have a great interest in how it is operated by those who are hired to administer the affairs of ASH/Deerhome.

The estimated \$1 million will commence when the contract takes effect, which is intended to be May 1. Mr. Speaker, I have to comment on the fact that the hon. member seems so concerned about private enterprise getting involved in administration.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. I realize that we have had a great deal of latitude in the question period, but I think we really should avoid out-and-out, blatant debate.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the minister's sensitivity. A supplementary question to the minister with regard to the contract.

Is the contract on a set fee for service base, or is a cost plus arrangement in the contract?

MISS HUNLEY: The contract will last for two years, Mr. Speaker. I think it is a point I haven't made before. The contract terms are presently being negotiated, based on the agreement we arrived at as to what the ultimate saving would be and what they could operate the facility for.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Perhaps I didn't make the question clear at the outset.

Are the negotiations centring around a cost plus approach, or is it for a set fee? Is that the basis for the contract?

MISS HUNLEY: Mr. Speaker, I haven't reviewed that information. The indication I gave to the officials was to negotiate a deal based on the information they had as to the total saving that we might realize.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Would the minister be prepared to go back to the officials in the department, and report to the House whether it's on a cost plus basis or a set fee for services?

MISS HUNLEY: Yes. It might be similar — although I'm not sure, but I would also ask them to check how similar it is — to the one entered into in 1967 by the previous government, when a contract similar to that was entered into for the operation of the Alberta Hospital in Edmonton.

MR. CLARK: A further supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Perhaps the minister could indicate to the House what kind of mechanism she set up to assure that the program at Deerhome will be as successful as the one that was set up in '67.

MISS HUNLEY: Mr. Speaker, the mechanism I have set up is to hire the best possible people to administer the programs in the department. I happen to have great confidence in their ability.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the minister. Can the minister indicate to the House whether VS Services has experience in the area of housekeeping, in any of its operations in Alberta? Has it been involved in housekeeping work in the course of its, I believe, 23 projects here in Alberta?

MISS HUNLEY: No, I'm not able to answer that at the moment. I'll be glad to check into it, though, Mr. Speaker.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, one last supplementary question on the matter to the minister. Can the minister be prepared to indicate to the House what kind of monitoring procedures she set up, or that the government has set up, to see in fact that the services at Deerhome and ASH remain at the high standard they have been? What's the monitoring procedure going to be?

MISS HUNLEY: Mr. Speaker, I've already told the hon. member of the confidence that I have in the administrator of ASH/Deerhome. It was that administrator who helped do the assessment and on whose recommendation, partially, my decision was based. I don't think that administrator is anxious to borrow trouble. He has enough things to deal with in the day to day operation of ASH/Deerhome. I'm sure he would not be encouraging us to incur anything that would at all diminish the service that he is able to give to the people entrusted to his care.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. I'd like to ask the minister if that's the same administrator who recommended that the government accept the public service proposition which was put forward.

MISS HUNLEY: I dealt with the final analysis report given to me by my officials, and I am under the impression that Dr. Koegler was in accord with that recommendation.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Did the hon. minister not receive a memo from Dr. Koegler which indicates that the VS Services could only achieve their cost reduction at the expense of services provided?

MISS HUNLEY: Not to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker. There are a good many assessments that have gone forward over the past few months and weeks while this has been reviewed. I would not lead any hon. member to think that I have personally reviewed every one of them.

DR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary on this same topic, and it's a rather simple supplementary. I wonder, just for the purpose of allaying any fear, if the minister would assure the House that if in fact the quality of service is not satisfactory the contract could be terminated without waiting for the whole term of the contract.

MISS HUNLEY: I wouldn't enter into a contract or recommend that my officials enter into a contract if I was uneasy in any way about it, Mr. Speaker. I feel very confident that it's been properly assessed and that, indeed, it will be effective.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Do I take it from the minister's answer that the only monitoring will be by the officials, the executive director of Deerhome, or will any formal committee be established to monitor

this particular contract to make sure that the services provided are at the same standard or better than they are now?

MISS HUNLEY: I would consider that if I felt it was necessary, Mr. Speaker. I think there are many ways of having opinions from outside the actual administration of that particular facility, and people from the department visit there regularly. They'll be very interested in seeing how it works. Certainly with all the publicity this has received, I feel sure I'll have many reports, not all of them accurate.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a supplementary question to the hon. Premier. It concerns a letter sent to the hon. Premier from Mr. Broad, president of the CSA.

Mr. Speaker, the question I'd like to put to the hon. Premier is: has the Premier's office had an opportunity yet to review the rather serious allegations or charges contained in this letter, suggesting that senior officials of the department did not make information available to the hon. minister which was necessary in order to render an accurate judgment on the ASH/Deerhome situation?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I have reviewed very briefly the contents of that letter with the hon. minister, who assures me that there was a full and adequate review, as she has explained in the House. I've asked her to prepare a response to that letter which, in due course, I'll send to Mr. Broad.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the hon. minister. This again dates back to a question posed yesterday, concerning employee salaries and benefits.

Mr. Speaker, the question is: will there be any provision, within the contract with VS Services, to ensure that employee salaries and benefits are retained?

MISS HUNLEY: I would be willing to table the contract for hon. members to inspect, when it's finally drawn and signed. Also, I can only assure this House and the hon. member that my instructions have been that the staff benefits are to be protected. In reviewing the contract which was let earlier and which I referred to earlier, I believe it has worked quite satisfactorily. At least, during my term of office, nothing has come to my attention that the employees of VS Services are anything but satisfied.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. It relates to Mr. Broad's letter.

Mr. Speaker, my question is: has the government checked the suggestion, within this letter, that VS Services did not file a complete or accurate statement with the companies branch?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, as far as I'm aware, I have not seen the letter.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Will the minister, as the minister in charge of

the companies branch, take it upon himself to review that file and report to the Legislature?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, I will make inquiries.

Preventive Social Services Budget

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question to the hon. Minister of Social Services and Community Health. It deals with the PSS budgets.

Can the hon. minister advise the Assembly whether it is true that PSS budgets this year will be restricted to an 8 per cent increase?

MISS HUNLEY: I would prefer to discuss that during the consideration of my estimates, Mr. Speaker, though I believe there has been some advance consultation for guidance to municipalities, so that they can do some of their planning.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Did the department, in fact, send out a communication to PSS directors within the province of Alberta, and did that communication contain the figure of an 8 per cent increase in PSS estimates?

MISS HUNLEY: I'd have to check to determine that, Mr. Speaker.

Foothills Hospital

MR. KUSHNER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct this question to the hon. Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. Has the minister received any correspondence from the Foothills Hospital that, due to the budget restraints, an unhappy situation is developing as far as staff morale or services are concerned?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, I have not received correspondence, but I have had the opportunity of discussing with both the chairman of the board and the administration of the Foothills Hospital their plans for how they feel they will be able to meet the budget granted to them, which is consistent with the government's 11 per cent expenditure guideline.

I can only say, Mr. Speaker, in reply to the question, that I think the co-operation indicated by the Foothills Hospital, in terms of being able to meet the budget granted to them, has been absolutely outstanding. In particular I think they have indicated to the citizens they serve through the hospital, that while they will have to curtail service in order to meet this, it's a situation they feel they can handle and which will not reduce the quality of care generally in the hospital.

MR. KUSHNER: Is the minister in a position to advise the House at this time to what extent the staff has been cut? I understand that some of the floors have been closed due to staff cuts.

MR. MINIELY: Well, Mr. Speaker, in reply to that question, as you know, the specific decisions are made by the hospital board and the administration. They have indicated to me that they may very well be laying off staff. We started the hospital system in Alberta, certainly, with a level and quality of care

generally equal to or better than any province in Canada. That is generally acknowledged and accepted.

So, while they have not indicated specifically to me, they have indicated that certainly it may very well be necessary to lay off staff in order to meet the expenditure guideline granted to them. I think, in the longer term, Mr. Speaker, the hospital system generally in Alberta recognizes that a certain amount of this may be necessary. But they also indicate they feel, first, that we're starting from a very high level of care, and, second, that we're able to maintain that high quality without any serious reduction in it.

MR. KUSHNER: A supplementary question. One: is the minister, in fact, in a position to give the number of personnel that has really been cut? Two: is the minister in a position to advise the House what the waiting list is in fact, at this point in time, for people getting into the hospital?

MR. MINIELY: Well, Mr. Speaker, if I could take the last part of the question first, I think the waiting lists can be very deceiving, because they vary in terms of what the waiting list is for. In some cases most of the waiting list, and acute . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. I think we're getting into the area, perhaps, of general speculation. If the hon. member wishes to have specific figures, perhaps that would be a question that might be suited for the Order Paper.

DR. PAPROSKI: A supplementary to the minister, Mr. Speaker, if I may. Is it not true, Mr. Speaker, that, for efficiency and even prior to budget restraints, hospital boards did in fact on many occasions reallocate, redeploy, and even let go staff for increased efficiency in hospitals?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to answer the question. It is an important matter right now, relative to the hospital system generally in Alberta. If, Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. SPEAKER: There is no question that it's an important matter. It's just a question of how far we're going to have the question period used to make out-and-out representations, rather than have it used to seek information.

DR. PAPROSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, it would in fact just require a yes or no answer. If I may, with your permission?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member is clearly asking the minister for an opinion. In fairness, there would be no way in which the Chair could prevent other hon. members from then expressing their agreement or disagreement with that opinion, also in the question period.

MR. KUSHNER: A supplementary question, again to the minister. Is it the policy of the hospital at this time that, if any staff resign or leave for whatever reason, they are not to be replaced?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, every hospital in Alberta will deal with that on an autonomous basis. We have to remember that each hospital is a corporate body, that the decisions relative to how they will adjust to the particular budget granted to them will be made by the board and by the hospital administration. Mr. Speaker, once the province has provided a global budget to a hospital, each hospital will make its own decision.

MR. CLARK: Is that yes or no?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. leader wants to stand up to ask the question, I'd be happy to answer him.

MR. CLARK: You see!

Red Deer River Dam

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of the Environment. Is any progress being made in locating a site for a dam on the headwaters of the Red Deer River?

MR. RUSSELL: Yes, I think we're making a great deal of progress, Mr. Speaker. The public hearings have concluded. As a result of those hearings, it became apparent that the residents of the region wanted more information on another potential site farther west. I've asked the department to see that those studies are carried out, and that's being taken now.

University Grants

MR. GHITTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower. It relates to the University of Calgary.

I'm wondering if the hon. minister agrees with the contention of the University of Calgary that they have not received government grants to deal with their larger than anticipated enrolment in 1975-76, nor have they received government grants to deal with their anticipated increase in enrolment commencing this fall.

DR. HOHOL: Mr. Speaker, this important question is under study by the university, obviously, certainly by our department officials, and by myself. At this point I couldn't respond definitively one way or another, but certainly it will be a matter of significance in the budget of the department.

MR. GHITTER: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the hon. minister would agree with the contention that the University of Alberta has received grants from the point of view of their past enrolments and their enrolments for this fall?

MR. SPEAKER: With great respect to the hon. member, introducing contentions into the question period, and asking ministers to agree with them, may not be quite within the parameters of the question period.

MR. GHITTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the hon. minister would like to comment on the suggestion that there is an inequity between the

situation at the University of Alberta and that at the University of Calgary?

MR. SPEAKER: With great respect, the hon. member is clearly asking for a judgment in equity, which is certainly a matter of opinion.

If the hon. member has a question of fact, I'd be glad to recognize him again.

MR. GHITTER: May I get one more kick at the cat, Mr. Speaker?

I'm wondering if the hon. minister would comment on whether the University of Alberta is receiving its grants from the provincial government on the basis of enrolments, relating to the increase in enrolment last year and the anticipated increase of enrolment this fall?

DR. HOHOL: Mr. Speaker, I have been called other things, but "cat" is interesting also.

In all honesty, to respond to this particular question would be to go into the details of financing, which have to do with such matters as the base upon which special warrants and certain grants — some formula, some non-formula — in addition to per student, which is of some considerable detail. The response would require that kind of comparison. I would wish to respond, but the response is best presented at some time, and in the subject of the estimates.

University Admission

MR. GHITTER: One final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize for the comment to the hon. minister. I'm wondering if, when the hon. minister makes his comments, he would also address his views to the House as to suggestions for guidelines for our universities and colleges to ensure that children of Alberta taxpayers achieve some form of priority in admission requirements at our universities, to ensure they will have these opportunities.

DR. HOHOL: Mr. Speaker, I just want to rise and give the hon. member and the members of the House the assurance that the statement I'll make at that time will certainly address this important question posed by the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo.

No apologies were necessary. When anyone is called a "cat" in politics, I feel he is ahead of the game.

Syncrude Agreement

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Member for Edmonton Calder, on the board of Syncrude. I'd like to ask the member what issues at the present time are delaying the signing of the agreement with regard to Syncrude Canada?

MR. CHAMBERS: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with government policy, I would like to refer this question to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it's difficult sometimes to anticipate why another body in a negotiation is really not signing an agreement or coming to an agreement on various matters. I think it's fair to say that outstanding issues now of substance appear to be a

problem with some additional leases — I would refer to them as additional Atlantic Richfield leases — and the rates of return that are being negotiated between the Alberta Energy Company and the six participants in the Syncrude project.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. The federal minister, Mr. Alastair Gillespie, indicated that the form of arbitration may be necessary to settle the dispute on the remaining issues.

Has the government taken a position with regard to arbitration at this time?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the negotiations have gone on for some time. At one stage, it was my understanding — and again they're between the Energy Company and the six participants — that they were virtually in agreement. Then there's been some falling apart, apparently because of the Ontario government's reluctance, but to some degree supported by the Government of Canada.

I have been made aware of the desire, now, to bring arbitration into the picture. That may be an answer. Frankly, it would seem to me that the judgment that could be exercised by two groups negotiating something at arm's length is probably just as good a judgment, should they be able to reach agreement.

The real concern seems to be the Government of Ontario, which feels that by being a participant in the main Syncrude plant, it has an opportunity to earn something like an 8, 9, or 10 per cent rate of return. This is all speculation, because it's all in the future — and that the Government of Alberta, and the people of Alberta will earn considerably higher rates of return through the Alberta Energy Company, by the pipeline and utilities plant being at a cost-of-service rate of return, and could be in the order of 15, 18, 20 per cent. Frankly, I don't have any great sympathy for them, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to have the high rates of return out here and the low rates of return down there.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. Since there has been some delay in the signing of the agreement, have any of the progress plans of Syncrude, as such, been delayed, or has this interfered with progress at this point in time?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, there's been no delay in the construction of the plant. The negotiations have been carried on completely separate from the construction and operating schedule.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Is the minister in a position to advise the House today precisely what rate of return the Alberta Energy Company is asking for the power plant and the pipeline, or is that subject to negotiation, and not the type of thing you want to make public?

MR. GETTY: It's subject to negotiation, Mr. Speaker. A guideline for the hon. member would be that it's a normal type of cost-of-service rate of return that utilities and pipelines throughout Canada and Alberta are normally receiving on this type of operation.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, one final supplementary question to the hon. minister, also dealing with interest rates. Has the final determination been made on the interest rate that will be paid on the \$200 million loan to the consortium?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, that is a matter being negotiated by my honorable colleague, the Provincial Treasurer. I'd pass the question to him.

MR. LEITCH: Negotiations in that area, Mr. Speaker, are continuing.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member's final supplementaries are becoming a little numerous. The hon. Member for Vegreville, followed by the hon. Member for Bow Valley.

Rail Line Abandonment

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question to the hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Transportation. Since there has been some rail abandonment, and it's inevitable that there will be more in the future, could the minister advise what is going to be done with those 99-foot railway right of ways?

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, the position we've taken, as a government, is that we should have first chance at any rail right of way for the purposes of a transportation corridor, and then for other government purposes. Only after that should it be allowed on the open market.

MR. BATIUK: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister advise whether he has given consideration that particularly some of these rail lines that are abandoned from north to south could make very fine secondary road systems?

DR. HORNER: Of course, Mr. Speaker, they may become very important to us for all modes of transportation in the future.

Honey Industry

MR. MANDEVILLE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. I understand that the Canadian Honey Council is presenting a brief to the United States international trade commission, in March, to oppose the 30 per cent proposed tariff on honey to that country.

Is the provincial government planning on presenting a brief in this area?

MR. MOORE: No, Mr. Speaker. We certainly have been aware of the efforts in the United States to protect their producers from honey flowing from the Canadian market. We have made representations to the appropriate persons in the federal government who have responsibilities in that regard. Our wishes are being carried forward in that manner.

MR. MANDEVILLE: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. On whose initiative was the recently formed Alberta Beekeepers' Association set up, the government or the beekeepers themselves?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, more than a year ago a group of beekeepers, representing the Alberta Beekeepers' Association, approached the Minister of Agriculture with a plan which would involve the establishment of the Alberta Beekeepers' Commission, such commission to be involved in the development of research projects which would be of assistance to commercial beekeepers throughout Alberta. The commission was voted on in December 1974, and approved by a vote of 50 to nine among members of the Alberta Beekeepers' Association, at their annual general meeting in Edmonton. After that, on April 17, 1975, as Minister of Agriculture, I appointed five members to be interim members of the Alberta Beekeepers' Commission until such time as they'd had an opportunity to determine which producers wanted to be a part of the plan and pay the proposed check-off which would be used for research and development of the industry.

That date has now been moved back to November 30, 1976. It is our intention to see that all the beekeepers throughout the province have an opportunity, at the annual general meeting which will be held prior to November 30, 1976, to vote on the makeup of the commission, and perhaps on whether or not the commission will continue as it is now structured.

MR. MANDEVILLE: One final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Where will the funding come from to operate this commission?

MR. MOORE: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a matter which will be brought before the annual general meeting, and was before the last meeting of the Alberta Beekeepers' Association. The funding can be changed from time to time by the members of the commission at the instruction of the beekeepers who are part of the Alberta Beekeepers' Commission plan.

I might say it's envisioned that funding for this year would be provided by way of a check-off of somewhere between one-quarter and one-half cent per pound on honey produced by commercial beekeepers with over 150 hives. Those funds would be matched, to some degree at least, by a grant from the Alberta Department of Agriculture.

Gaming Regulations

DR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, a question to the hon. Attorney General, regarding bingo and related games of chance. Would the minister indicate to the House what progress has been made regarding a new policy and/or program for allowing the many requests for expanded and new bingo activities and other games of chance in Alberta? Mr. Speaker, to be crystal clear on the topic, I speak here not of the nude bingo, but the dressed-up bingos and game activities.

MR. FOSTER: Mr. Speaker, I think sometime last fall I indicated to the House that the Department of the Attorney General had very little capacity to control,

regulate, and license gaming and lottery in the province. It has not been a problem until now. The capacity in the department has been minimal. There is, or was, a coming problem with the number and type of applications we were receiving, so we arrived at an interim position of essentially no-growth, and a chance to examine the proposed growth of all forms of gaming and lottery activity in the province. Our priority was stated to be a preference for community-based social activities rather than the large bingo halls that we've seen in some regions of the province, notably Edmonton,

I have been having some discussions with the police forces of the province and with some individuals much more knowledgeable than I. I expect to be in a position in the course of the next few weeks to indicate to the House, indeed, to the province, that a top gaming and lottery expert in Canada will be joining my staff as an adviser to assist me in the proper identification of the problem and the drafting of appropriate regulations, perhaps even legislation to deal with this important matter in the future.

DR. PAPROSKI: Supplementary if I may, Mr. Speaker. Recognising the presence of organized crime in Canada, would the minister assure the House — and I am sure he can — that in fact he'll keep this on a high index of concern in his deliberation of formulating new policies for this very important social activity?

MR. FOSTER: I have no difficulty whatever, Mr. Speaker, in agreeing with the hon. member. That's part of the reason I indicated to the House that I have obtained the services, as an adviser to me directly, of a top gaming and lottery person; because I think it is important that we clearly understand what is going on in the organized criminal world, and in the social world so involved in gaming and lotteries.

I repeat that our capacity to regulate, license and control it is not large. I'm not looking forward to the day when we will have an expanded bureaucracy to handle this difficult problem. But I think we have to get our hands on the facts and put in place at least the minimal level of regulatory and licensing capacity, which we don't have today.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. Is the minister considering any change in the licensing fee schedule for games of chance?

MR. FOSTER: Mr. Speaker, I think that's one subject we must give very serious consideration to, and I would answer yes, we will be considering it.

Right now gaming and lottery in all its forms is probably a \$30 million business. The amount of licensing fee, at the moment, is very, very minimal. I doubt very much that the fees we charge today really pay the cost of administering the licensing part of the program. If we're going to get into licensing in somewhat more detail in the future, and I suspect we are, it will involve a little more investigation and work on our part, because of the natural tendency for organized criminal activity to become involved in this sector. If that is the case, I think we should give serious consideration to having a licensing fee which comes very close to paying the cost of the

investigative process, and that will be higher than it is today.

Rail Line Abandonment

(continued)

MR. ZANDER: My question is directed to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. Since the Minister of Transportation has indicated he is going to make an attempt to obtain the surface rights on the railway abandonments, is the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources also going to make an attempt to retrieve the mineral rights under those as well?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure of the specific surface rights the hon. member is referring to. I'd like to check because the provincial government already controls the petroleum and natural gas rights in a considerable number of the railway right of ways. I'll liaise with my partner and check into it.

Automobile Insurance

MR. KUSHNER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct this question to the hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. A situation seems to be developing, which is not very good, with regard to people getting automobile insurance.

Can't an insurance company refuse to insure a person? The reason I am asking this, Mr. Minister, is because I have a couple of letters on file here saying that certain people have been turned down and, in the meantime, gotten into an accident. Is there also a way of appeal?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member identify the type of automobile insurance he's talking about?

MR. CLARK: PL and PD.

MR. KUSHNER: Right, the general insurance.

I can't refer to the type of insurance, and I'm certainly not going to mislead the minister, but generally speaking, compulsory insurance.

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, the compulsory portion of the insurance policy is, of course, regulated by the Alberta Automobile Insurance Board. One of the trade-offs that was made in establishing the present system of compulsory insurance was that the insurance companies would arrange to make sure that any person in Alberta who needed automobile insurance would be able to get it.

As a result of those two things, the compulsory package and the undertaking by the insurance industry to provide insurance, in fact an individual in this province can get insurance through the Insurance Exchange. Now, it is certainly true that a member of the public who is looking for insurance can in fact get turned down. Where possible, we have urged the insurance agents to make sure that, if a company does turn someone down, they refer the application for insurance to the Insurance Exchange. Unfortunately, that does not always happen.

Lamont Elementary School

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, thank you. It looks like I got lost in the batting order there some place.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address my question to the Minister of Education. This has to do with the closing of a portion of the Lamont Elementary School. A short preamble, Mr. Speaker: there is a conflict here between the school buildings branch of the Department of Education, and the building standards branch of the Department of Labour. The school buildings branch said the school is good for nine years, and the standards division has closed it. Now there are 100 students who don't have anyplace to go to school.

Is the minister aware of it, and what's he going to do about it?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, it has been brought to my attention that a portion of a school in Lamont has in fact been found to be unsuitable for use, but I'm sure the hon. member who is interested in this particular question in this area is aware of The School Act and the way in which it allocates responsibilities for the provision of school facilities for instructional purposes. Under The School Act the direct responsibility for the provision of school facilities for instructional purposes falls on the local school jurisdiction.

The Department of Education provides assistance in one of three forms, in terms of the provision of facilities. One is through the building quality restoration program, by which certain repairs to existing structures can be effected, and portions of the cost of those repairs will be borne by the provincial government. The second is in the support of debentures for new school construction at the existing rates, which were announced approximately six months ago and which are presently under review. The third is by subsidizing the interest on that portion of debenture debt which is taken out by a school board for costs in excess of those recognized by the school buildings branch.

With respect to the particular situation, Mr. Speaker, in the regulations under which the school buildings branch operates and under which financing is provided for school jurisdictions in the replacement of, or in the construction of new facilities, existing facilities are calculated as having a life span of 35 years. If the local jurisdiction saw fit 26 years ago to build a facility of inferior quality, of a quality that would not stand up to a 35-year life span, that of course is their concern.

However, in terms of recognition of support for any future construction in the Lamont jurisdiction, the depreciation figures would have to be applied as provided for in the regulations.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to frame a 'Hornerism', he's not interested and is not going to do anything about it.

[interjections] He's not concerned.

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister whether he was aware that there was a special meeting yesterday at 4 o'clock in Lamont, and that there was a by-law passed for procedures to go ahead.

MR. KOZIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't aware of that information. I'd like to thank the hon. member for that.

I think the hon. Member for Clover Bar should, of course, be aware that local autonomy also carries with it certain responsibilities. If local jurisdictions feel that they are entitled to that, they must, at the same time, assume the responsibilities that flow with local autonomy.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the hon. minister a further question? In light of the fact that there is a conflict between two different departments in provincial jurisdiction, these people are in a position that, under one section, they can't apply because theoretically the school is still supposed to be functional, while another section says they must close it. This is the circumstance they are caught in.

MR. SPEAKER: I wonder if we might bring this to a conclusion. We've run over the time. In recognizing the hon. Member for Little Bow, I underestimated the length of the last exchange.

If the House agrees, we might hear the hon. member now. Otherwise, I would ask him to ask his question tomorrow.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

Retail Goods Labels

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Consumer Affairs. I want to ask if he has received any complaints from Alberta retailers, with regard to the federal government policy which requires goods produced by United States manufacturers to have French/English labels put on those goods before being released by customs into Alberta markets?

MR. HARLE: Not that I'm aware of, Mr. Speaker.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a short supplementary. Would the minister make an inquiry of the officials at the Canadian customs to assess what goods are being held up? And would his department do an assessment on the effect this has on Alberta retail sales?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, as that would appear to fall within the jurisdiction of the federal government, I would respectfully suggest that perhaps a contact should be made with the MP for the area, to make the suitable enquiries through the federal government.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

head: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

100. Dr. Buck asked the government the following question:

- (1) How much money has been expended from April 1, 1974 to March 31, 1975 on the remodelling, renovating, and refurbishing of the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Institution?

- (2) How much money has been expended from April 1, 1974 to March 31, 1975 on the remodelling, renovating, and refurbishing of the female section of the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Institution?
- (3) Which contractors submitted tenders to undertake the remodelling and renovations referred to in (1) and (2) and what were the amounts of the tenders?
- (4) What are the names of the contractors who performed the remodelling and renovations referred to in (1) and (2)?
- (5) How much money has been paid to each contractor referred to in (4) and for which specific services?

MR. YURKO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to have this converted to a motion for a return, as the information requested in this question is fairly substantive. While making that request to convert to a motion for a return, I would like also to suggest to the hon. member putting the question that this work is still in progress. It's sometimes rather difficult to separate expenditures on the basis of a very specific date. The work will be in progress, I believe, Mr. Speaker, for about another month. If the hon. member converts this question to a motion for a return, he may adjust the dates so that he gets the full information at the appropriate time.

MR. SPEAKER: Just so we don't run into any procedural problem here, if the hon. minister is accepting the question, it then becomes an order for a return. If, on the other hand, the hon. member withdraws the question and replaces it on the Order Paper by a motion for a return, then we can perhaps accommodate the observations of the hon. minister.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, if this will simplify it, I will withdraw the question and re-present it as a motion for a return.

head: MOTIONS FOR RETURNS

101. Mr. Clark proposed the following motion to the Assembly:
That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:
Copies of all studies, documents, and submissions prepared by, for, or submitted to the Department of the Environment which deal with the Canadian Johns-Manville Company Ltd. plant to be located in the Innisfail area.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I move Motion for a Return 101 standing in my name on the Order Paper.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask that that motion stand.

[Motion ordered to stand]

102. Mr. Clark proposed the following motion to the Assembly:
That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:
A copy of a study prepared by the Alberta Health

Care Insurance Commission relating to extra billing by Alberta doctors between January 1, 1975 and June 30, 1975.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move Motion for a Return 102.

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, I would like that question to stand.

[Motion ordered to stand]

103. Mr. Clark proposed the following motion to the Assembly:
That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:
An itemized statement of the cost of the remodelling, renovating, and refurbishing of Government House.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask for Motion for a Return 103.

MR. YURKO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to request that this motion stand. Again I would like to suggest to the hon. member presenting this motion that he give some consideration to altering it, in that he's asking for an itemized statement on remodelling Government House and doesn't indicate any dates.

Government House was, in fact, built in 1913. We would have to go back quite a way. I'm not sure we have all the information going back that far. So I would like to ask the hon. member to seriously consider altering the motion so that it does in fact present some specific dates, and we can get the information he desires.

I would also point out again that the renovations are ongoing and will not be completed until about July 1. Again, I'm not sure whether the hon. member wants the complete itemized information as of the end of the remodelling and renovations, or whether he wants it as of some specific date.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, might I simply ask the hon. minister a question?

Thanks for the information. If the dates were from September 1, '71 until the renovations are presently completed, then I would assume the return could be made available for the fall session. Is that reasonable?

MR. YURKO: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that the hon. member revise the motion accordingly.

[Motion withdrawn]

104. Mr. Mandeville proposed the following motion to the Assembly:
That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:
 - (1) The total number of applications received under the Family Farm Housing Program to February 29, 1976.
 - (2) The total number of applications mentioned in (1) which have been approved as of February 29, 1976.
 - (3) The total number of applications mentioned in (1) which have been rejected as of February 29, 1976.

- (4) The total value in dollars of the applications mentioned in (2).

MR. YURKO: Mr. Speaker, again I would ask that the motion stand, and perhaps suggest to the hon. member that he give some consideration with respect to clarification of this motion. However, at this time, I just wish that it would stand.

MR. SPEAKER: Would the hon. minister care to be specific, either in the Assembly or by a memorandum to the hon. member, as to the respects in which the motion might be clarified?

[Motion ordered to stand]

head: **MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

1. Mr. Clark proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the Government of Alberta to give a higher priority to educational grants programs within the provincial budget and to revise commitments already made by the Minister of Education with such revisions to be included in the 1976-77 Estimates of Expenditures.

MR. SPEAKER: Although I readily acknowledge having signed an approval of this motion so that it might appear on the Order Paper, I have some second thoughts about its procedural acceptability, having regard to the rule with respect to anticipation and the principle that the Assembly ought not to be expected to debate and decide on the same topic more than once in the same session. I think hon. members are probably aware of Citation 131 of *Beauchesne*, which covers the rule with respect to anticipation. While I realize that there is not on the Order Paper any item dealing with the budget or estimates generally, or of this department in particular, we know this will be coming up. My concern is that we should not be twice debating the budget or the estimates of the Department of Education or any part of that budget, and that is the problem I have with regard to the acceptability of this motion. If any hon. members would like to add some observations on the acceptability of the motion from the point of view of the practice of the Assembly, I would be glad to receive that assistance.

MR. HYNDMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the government shares your concern about the acceptability of the motion. However, insofar as it is on the Order Paper today, we are prepared to concede that it could go ahead today within certain very definite limitations and guidelines. I would submit that the motion is probably out of order, and if carried forward on a weekly or monthly basis would result, in effect, in two budget debates.

However, we would be prepared to agree to have the motion proceed today, moved by the hon. opposition leader, provided that this motion and its being allowed to be debated today in no way is deemed to create a precedent for any further such motions in the Assembly, provided the motion can be discussed within the general subject of educational priorities,

and provided the motion would in no way require, directly or indirectly, any specific information regarding the 1976-77 budget.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, might I simply say that I appreciate the comments made by the Government House Leader, and certainly [within] the parameters of no precedent, the discussion of education priorities generally, and the matter of not revealing budgetary matters in the course of the debate, certainly we'd find it acceptable to carry on with the debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Then the rule against anticipation must yield to the unanimous consent of the Assembly. So if there is no objection, and as it has been pointed out on both sides of the House this is not to be taken as precedent, perhaps the debate might proceed.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, at the outset let me say to the members of the Assembly I appreciate very much the opportunity to discuss this matter at this particular time. The resolution reads:

That the Legislative Assembly urge the Government of Alberta to give a higher priority to educational grants programs within the provincial budget and to revise commitments already made by the Minister of Education with such revisions to be included in the 1976-77 Estimates of Expenditures.

As I indicated already, Mr. Speaker, we welcome very much the opportunity to have this discussion at this time.

I perhaps should take a moment or two, Mr. Speaker, and indicate why we felt it was important to have this particular motion presented today. As you so rightly pointed out, sir, the budget motion is not on the Order Paper. Secondly, if the members of the opposition were to wait until after the estimates are presented to the Assembly, they would not, in fact, be able to move a resolution that would increase some of the grants within the expenditures which are brought forward.

If I could be very specific about that, let's talk in terms of education for the handicapped. It would not be possible for the members of the opposition to, in fact, move a resolution to increase expenditures for those youngsters in our school system who are educationally handicapped. So it was for that reason, really a re-sorting out of educational priorities, that we put this motion on. Also I should add, Mr. Speaker, that there is still time for the government to make some changes with regard to its budget, still some time for the Provincial Treasurer to make some changes within that budget that will be coming down in due course.

I'd also want to say at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that I would want no member to misunderstand our point of view on this matter. We have said some time ago, and I repeat today, that we think the total expenditure in the field of education — and we're thinking primarily in the course of this debate of the foundation program itself, and the grants which affect school jurisdictions in this province — we believe they will have to live with the 11 per cent spending guidelines like other jurisdictions in the province. But

what has really concerned us is that in fact some aspects of education aren't getting 11 per cent, aren't coming close to 11 per cent. I think, when the minister spoke to the school trustees convention in Calgary and indicated that they could be looking at 11 per cent across the board, that the school trustees weren't all that upset. Now, school trustees always like additional money, and I think that's not to be unexpected. But I think there was a feeling that, okay, education at the local level can live with 11 per cent if the province is going to live with 11 per cent. But what is now happening, Mr. Speaker, is that 11 per cent is turning out to be 8 per cent, perhaps a little less than 8 per cent on the average across the province.

As I indicated yesterday in the House, the grants for pupils from Grades 1 to 12 are going up by 11 per cent. But for the first time ever, for the first time ever, school boards in this province are being asked to pick up the employers' share of the unemployment insurance. That is going to cost about \$4 to \$4.5 million. Now if one feels that \$25,000 isn't a reasonable amount per teacher, you can see that this is going to take not too far from 170 to 180 to 190 teachers out of classrooms across the province, just with that one decision having been made by the government. Let's be very conservative, if I might use that term with a small "c", and let's say 150 teachers out of classrooms across the province just because the Minister of Education has decided that school boards should pick up the cost of the employers' share of unemployment insurance. It's because of those kinds of things that we think it's important that this matter be discussed at this time.

I have to say, when I look at the announcements the minister has made since the school trustees convention, that one leaves the feeling that education is really not a high priority with this government. I think education can and should be a high priority with this government, and still live with 11 per cent. But from the announcements which have been made to date, it looks like education isn't going to get its portion of 11 per cent. Certainly some very important aspects of education aren't going to get 11 per cent.

I think, as members on both sides of the House, we might well reflect upon some of the problems that school jurisdictions, be they rural or urban jurisdictions, are facing right now. Members in the urban areas might well look at some of the problems the school systems are facing in the downtown core areas. Rural boards can make very good cases in the sparsely populated areas, the problems with busing and so on. But let's not forget for one moment that urban boards have similar kinds of problems with education in the downtown core areas or in some new parts of our urban areas also.

So for a moment or two, perhaps, we might ask ourselves, what better heritage we can leave Albertans than a well-educated society. The heritage we're going to leave, if we continue along the present lines, will be an education system which is in a state of complete disrepair, an education system which discriminates against rural Albertans, an education system which discriminates against the handicapped, and a system which does not have an open-door policy as far as postsecondary education is concerned.

I'd like to spend just a moment as far as postsec-

ondary education is concerned. When we look at the potential of this province, when we hear the Premier's comments about Alberta's great industrial dream, we must recognize that places like NAIT and SAIT and our colleges in this province are going to be simply bursting at the doors in the next number of years. And to have presidents of colleges and chairmen of boards tell us now that we're going to have to look at enrolment quotas — this is just the last time to have to do this.

From my discussions with teachers, trustees, and people involved in postsecondary education or advanced education, they are really saying to me, and I think they're saying the same thing to other members of the Assembly, we can live within 11 per cent if we've got 11 per cent. We may not like it, but we can live within 11 per cent. But for goodness' sakes let's give it 11 per cent.

The Minister of Education has already made his announcements centring around grants for special education, teaching of severely handicapped, [which] will be up only 5 per cent this year. The learning disability fund will go up 7 per cent. There will be no increase at all in grants for resource rooms and for the mildly handicapped. Early childhood services grants for regular classes will go up 10 per cent. Small school assistance grants — no increase at all. Yet if this program was valid last year and the year before — I believe it to be, and I've spoken in favor of it, in fact, have even supported the government out in the hustings on this small school grants program — the problems of small schools are just as critical now as they were two years ago, from the standpoint of living with the problems of inflation. Declining enrolment grants — and I'd have to say to the minister that in the course of my discussion with school trustees, that program was very, very well received, especially in northern Alberta. It's very difficult to justify no increase in that area this year. I've already talked about the employers' share of unemployment insurance.

What we're really talking about here is getting education up to the 11 per cent guideline that the government is employing on everyone else. In its very simplest terms, I guess what we're discussing this afternoon is how many teachers we are going to take out of the classrooms. We hear the minister and his officials saying there's going to be a declining enrolment in Alberta of some 30,000 or 40,000 students over the next number of years. It seems to me that really depends on who you talk to. If you talk to people in the business community, the ASTA, and independent groups, they'll point out that there was, I believe, something like a 1.5 per cent increase in students in the 1 to 12 system this year across the province. People who spend a large portion of their time involved in population projections, and so on, simply don't completely agree that there's going to be a reduction of 30,000 or 40,000 students across this province in the next number of years.

I guess what we're discussing here this afternoon, and urging the government to do between now and whenever the budget comes down — likely a week this coming Friday — is to go back and not just think in terms of 11 per cent for Grade 1 to 12 students under the foundation program, but to make every effort to move to 11 per cent in these other areas, these special grants, so that those programs . . .

Several of the programs started under this administration, and I give this administration credit for it, but now isn't the time to back off.

Several of the members in this Assembly have been on school boards, both urban and rural. They know far better than I do, the problems of a school board getting involved in a program, some of the special grants, and then two, three, or four years down the road having the grant completely hacked off or reduced. It puts the local school trustees, the school superintendent, the school system in a very delicate situation. The problem is much worse in rural areas, because there isn't the student population to balance the thing out against.

We really have to talk about priorities here. It seems to me that number one priority has to be teachers in the classroom, regardless of what changes the minister is going to make as far as curriculum is concerned in Alberta. That's where the action is. If we've got to decide between increasing the staff at regional offices and longer bus rides for kids — and I was the minister at the start of the regional offices thing — I'm quite prepared to say that what we should be doing is backing off the regional offices thing, and not having kids ride the school buses longer. If we're talking in terms of less support for handicapped youngsters in Alberta, and more support for ACCESS, frankly I'm quite prepared to say, let's throw ACCESS out the window. The minister blinks. After he blinks, I wish he'd check ACCESS out carefully. I would much prefer to see the money go to teachers in the classroom than see continued expansion at the rate we've seen as far as ACCESS is concerned. If we've got to say additional staff, as far as general administration is concerned in the department, or more teachers in the classroom, I think we have to opt for more teachers in the classroom at this time.

I've indicated earlier that we're not talking about 11 per cent to school boards, as I understand it from the people I've talked to pretty well across the province. We're really talking about what's close to an 8 per cent overall increase.

It's interesting, if we look for just a moment or two at what's happened to the kind of expenditure comparisons in education across Canada. In '71, when this government took over responsibilities, Alberta spent 6 per cent per pupil over the Canadian average. I have some rather unfriendly memories about 6 per cent. Perhaps that's a bad percentage. The fact is, Albertans spent 6 per cent per pupil over the Canadian average at that time. In 1974, Alberta spent only 2 per cent per pupil over the Canadian average. We're comparing Alberta, what we're spending on a Canadian average, with what they're doing in the maritimes, in the outposts of Newfoundland, in Quebec, Ontario, and the western provinces. In '74, we spent \$1 per pupil less than they are spending in Ontario in the total educational budget. Remember, ladies and gentlemen of the Assembly, whether we're proud of it or not, we have the highest expenditure per person of any province in Canada. That being the case, we should be able to live with the 11 per cent spending guidelines and at the same time go across the board with 11 per cent for education.

Mr. Speaker, I would have to say that a rather disturbing chain of events took place this winter.

Some members of the Assembly will recall that the advisory committee on school financing held meetings across the province with considerable fanfare. The officials of the department — and I think they were very sincere when they were there — asked school trustees, teachers, MLAs, and other people to give their input as far as the report of the advisory committee on school finance was concerned. I attended the meeting at Calgary, along with the Member for Calgary McCall and the Member for Highwood. I think both members would agree that there was an earnest desire on behalf of school trustees and other people there to give a pretty frank assessment as to what the revisions were and how they should be implemented. The meeting in Calgary, if I recall — I'm sorry, it wasn't last winter, it was last fall — was held on something like September 10. It was five days later, five days later, that the Treasurer announced the 11 per cent spending guidelines for education.

I can't figure out whether the minister didn't know the 11 per cent spending guidelines were coming along. If he knew they were coming along, why didn't he say to the trustees, the teachers, and the rest of us who were at these meetings, look, we're going to have to live with restraints. How best can we do it? A number of people across Alberta attended meetings in Lethbridge, Calgary, Red Deer, Edmonton, and Grande Prairie — a lot of volunteer people who aren't paid as well as we are in this Assembly, who were there to give their input. Yet five days later, five days later, they were told that regardless of what you said at this meeting, this is the way it's going to be. I think that's insensitivity at the greatest extreme.

I'd like to make just a comment or two with regard to special grants. I've alluded to special grants later. One of the real problems we face with special grants, Mr. Speaker, and we're seeing it this year, is that when the special grants aren't keeping up to the rate of assistance for students at 11 per cent, the school boards get involved, with all good intentions, in programs. Then in the next two, three, or four years down the road, they find the grant is either withdrawn, cut back, or doesn't keep up. It's the school board at the local level that has to face the music. It's the teachers at the local level who have to face the parents and try to explain to them why certain specific or special programs can't carry on.

In the course of a visit my colleague from Brooks and I made to northwestern Alberta, the point was made to us time and time again that perhaps what we should be looking at in Alberta, as far as the foundation program for basic education is concerned, and the special grants, are really two kinds of programs, two foundation programs, if we might put it that way.

I'm not so naive as to suggest to the minister or to the Assembly that that will solve all the problems. But when one recognizes the busing problems which rural areas face — one school jurisdiction in the course of that trip told us they were going to have to cut out 500 student seats, 500 student seats by the first of September, to come close to living with the new busing formula. The busing inadequacies across the province are horrendous.

Or you look at the cost of utilities, and you look at Grande Prairie, for example. If you just look at the electrical costs the Grande Prairie board faces for one

school — \$688, as opposed to Medicine Hat, which would be \$224 and Edmonton, \$426. If you look at gas, Grande Prairie is twice as high as Medicine Hat. If you look at water, Grande Prairie is almost \$160, for this particular school. Medicine Hat is \$40, and Edmonton is \$52.

The point I'm trying to make is that it may well be that we're now in a position in Alberta that we've got to look at two foundation programs, one for the urban areas and their unique problems — and they've got unique problems. I mentioned the core school problems as just one example. They've got unique problems in the urban areas, too. Then perhaps a program for rural Alberta. I'm rather reluctant to make the suggestion, because I think you get yourself into all sorts of bad comparisons down the road, perhaps, if you have two kinds of programs. You have the urban people holding up the rural program and vice versa.

I guess I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, that somehow we've got to come up with a financing program that's more sensitive to the unique problems of urban Alberta and rural Alberta too — the sparsely Separated areas, the areas where the declining enrolments are very great, just to mention two problems.

So in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I raised this motion today for the explicit purpose of providing the opportunity for members on both sides of the House to express some of their concerns, to take this opportunity to try to impress upon the front bench of the government that in fact education needs 11 per cent across the board. I say we can do that and still live within the 11 per cent spending guidelines. Have no fear of that.

I say at the same time that I — well, I wouldn't want to suggest that I recognize some of the problems the Minister of Education has, but I recognize that ministers of education don't always get the amount of money they want for programs in their department. I suspect the minister has had to go through some rather traumatic decisions in the last period of time.

If this debate this afternoon gives the Minister of Education some more ammunition to go back to his colleagues in cabinet and get some more money out of the Provincial Treasurer, it has served a very unique and a very useful purpose. That's really what we're here about, regardless of where we sit in this Assembly.

Now is the time for us to talk in terms of the need for education to get a fair shake of that 11 per cent. It doesn't do us any good to talk about that after the budget comes down, because there isn't one member in this House who could move a motion in committee or anywhere else that would increase the expenditure. The only thing you can do in committee is to vote or move a motion to vote that the expenditure be decreased. From what I've seen, as far as the education situation is concerned, we don't need any of those kinds of motions at this particular time.

The last point I'd like to make, Mr. Speaker, is simply this: yesterday the Member for Medicine Hat-Redcliff mentioned that it was during my period as minister that restrictions on education financing were first implemented. I say yes, that's right, and I take the responsibility for that. I can readily admit, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps we made a mistake on

that occasion. Perhaps we made a mistake. Hind-sight's a great vehicle.

I would point out to members that when the 6 per cent spending guidelines were imposed, as far as education was concerned, other portions of the provincial budget were living with similar kinds of restrictions. The fact is that maybe we made a mistake at that time. I'm hoping this government can admit the same thing here this afternoon, that maybe it has made a mistake, and it can rectify that mistake before the budget comes down this year.

MR. ASHTON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for bringing this resolution before us today. This is a very important topic, and I think the attitude of the Assembly in giving unanimous consent to hearing this resolution today, even though it may not have been in order, is an indication of the high priority this Assembly places on education.

I'm also pleased he brought the topic before us today. I have been concerned in the last short time over the amount of misinformation which has been spreading throughout the province about educational finance. I was wondering where all this came from, and now I'm pleased to see that the hon. member has risen and identified himself.

I should also perhaps, Mr. Speaker, disclose my personal interest in the topic. Perhaps it may even be that I should not vote, if it comes to that, because I have six children in school and a wife at university.

AN HON. MEMBER: You have a vested interest.

MR. ASHTON: In fact, my wife expects to obtain two university degrees this spring, and she tells me it's suggested that not only is she better looking, but she'll be better educated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ASHTON: There's no question, of course, that relative to many of the other members in the House I've probably created a larger tax burden for Alberta than most members here today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ASHTON: I read with interest that recently when the so-called report card on public opinion was released — as the members are aware, there were advertisements throughout the daily and weekly newspapers in the province soliciting opinions on various educational topics. One of the conclusions derived was that something like 40 per cent of the people replying indicated that spending on basic education was less than adequate. "About right" was checked by 35 per cent, and "more than adequate" by 15 per cent.

Now, it could be suggested that the results of this survey have some bias, because there would be a tendency for more of those people who have a particular interest in education to reply to the newspaper advertisements. Because of my own bias in favor of maintaining education as a priority, I will rely on that survey as support for the position that we should be spending even more on education.

However, one has to recognize one's

responsibilities to all of one's constituents, and recognize that there are also other priorities for specific people within one's constituency. I also should say that it's not my opinion that you can necessarily solve all the educational problems by throwing some money at them. That would be irresponsible. I would also clarify that I support the position of restraint which was announced by this government last September, and I make no apologies for that support. If anyone in this province has to show leadership in this area, it has to be our government, and we have done that.

It would be irresponsible to allocate moneys from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund for today's education. We are already spending 70 per cent of our natural resource revenues. Surely the least we can do is to allocate 30 per cent of that non-renewable resource to future generations. As was so eloquently explained by the hon. Member for Grande Prairie yesterday, what would we say to those subsequent children 10 or 20 years from now if we do not have sufficient funds for their education?

I believe we have a high standard in education in Alberta. This is not just because of the high per capita expenditure, but also because of my personal experience as an ex-trustee of a school board with respect to the responsibility of the boards in this province. I've had meetings with many of them in the last few years, and with my personal assessment of the high degree of professionalism in the teaching profession today — perhaps notwithstanding some of their leaders.

I should say that although I congratulated, thanked and expressed my appreciation to the hon. Leader of the Opposition for bringing this resolution before us today, I am a little amazed at his audacity. I think it was Winston Churchill who said that the highest form of flattery any politician can receive is to be quoted. On that basis I would like to quote the hon. Leader of the Opposition from the throne speech debate on February 11, 1970. The hon. leader said:

It isn't a matter of the government not wanting to make funds available to the universities: it isn't a matter of government not wanting to make funds available to the college system or to NAIT or SAIT or to the grade I-XII system — but it becomes a matter of priorities within the financial resources of the province, and certainly taking into very serious consideration the economic circumstances of the time.

Now that is from the architect of the 6 per cent freeze which blackened this province just before the 1971 elections. Further on he says:

from time to time we have to ask ourselves — can we afford to continue to have these types of increases during the present economic circumstances which we face.

Now I could read more, but I suggest that's enough flattery for today.

MR. CLARK: It's good reading.

MR. ASHTON: I would have accepted the resolution perhaps a little more sincerely if that had come from someone like the hon. Member for Clover Bar, because I understand he had no influence over the government's policies prior to the 1971 election.

DR. BUCK: How's your hospital coming, John?

MR. ASHTON: But coming from a former Minister of Education, I do find it a little hard to take.

I would like to briefly have a look at some of the things that have happened since 1971. The first book I look at is the Estimates of Expenditure for 1973-74 which indicates that rather than a 6 per cent increase which had been applied prior to that, there was a 7.5 per cent general increase in moneys to school boards in the per pupil grants. The grants to schools went up 11.9 per cent in that year. The grants to educational services for handicapped children went up a staggering 426.2 per cent. Now who is talking about priorities for handicapped children? The total Department of Education budget went up 16.3 per cent in that year. Those are the estimates.

Going now to the 1974-75 estimates, we see that the per pupil grant went up 9 per cent. Total grants to schools went up 11 per cent. Mr. Speaker, this is all at a time of decreasing enrolments. I see that the grants for educational services for handicapped children went up 36.2 per cent, and again the total budget for the department went up 14.6 per cent. This is the record that we're talking about in the last few years.

We have a look at the '75-76 estimates. There was a 15 per cent increase in the per pupil grant. Total grants to schools went up 18.6 per cent. We find that the grants to the handicapped children, educational services, went up another staggering 185.3 per cent. Now who is talking about priorities for the handicapped? The total Department of Education budget went up 20 per cent.

We come again to 1975-76, and the hon. Minister of Education revealed to the school trustees in Calgary that the elementary per pupil grants would go up 13 per cent, the junior high grants would go up 13 per cent, and the senior high grants would go up 6 per cent. Now, of course, the difference in the percentages arises because of the acceptance of this government — at least I hope it's this acceptance — that the elementary grades are just as important as the senior high grades. Therefore these vast differences in the amount of grants between the elementary grades and the senior high grades, which existed before the 1971 election, should be gradually narrowed.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition referred to the minister's advisory committee on school finance. It is clear that the Minister of Education has accepted this recommendation, Recommendation No. 2, that the weighting factors be gradually closed, and I won't go into the detail of that.

Dealing with other specific grants, as I recall the grants to private schools were \$150 per pupil when we took office. Released on February 13 of this year was a new schedule of grants to private schools: Grades 1-6, \$335 per pupil; junior high school, \$368 per pupil; senior high school, \$469 per pupil. That's a far cry from the \$150 they had to get by with before.

I've just reviewed some of the figures, but what has this meant in the classroom? Special education teaching positions in the last three years have increased from 700 to 1,100. Now that's a priority for special education. Dealing with the more severely handicapped, we find that just in the recent year, in spite of all these previous increases, the support was

still only at \$1,315 per pupil. Again, announced this February is that the grants would go up from \$1,315 to \$1,970 to \$230 per pupil, or \$1,150 per adult, for the retarded or autistic. For the severely learning disabled, the range would be from \$2,500 to \$2,800 per pupil, with \$1,400 for adults. This is the change from the 6 per cent freeze that existed in this province in the late '60s and early '70s.

The only comment I would have to make about the hon. leader's suggestion or recommendation made today is that the very concept of having two foundation programs for this province is about the most absurd suggestion I have heard from that side since I've been here the last four years.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I have a keen interest in education. I am satisfied that this government is giving it a priority, and I am satisfied that my wife and children will continue to receive the best education available in Canada.

Thank you very much.

MR. NOTLEY: I welcome the opportunity to take part in this resolution which, in my judgment, will be one of the more important resolutions to be discussed during the spring session of the Legislature.

We can talk, as I am sure many members will, about the importance of education. Perhaps we can even try to outdo one another in stressing how important we feel education is. However, Mr. Speaker, rhetoric is no substitute for dollars in the bank. When members have an opportunity to meet with school trustees around the province, they very quickly realize in their discussions that various school boards are encountering serious difficulties.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is, whether or not the government members want to debate it, education is receiving a smaller portion of the budget now than it was three years ago. In 1973-74, the education budget constituted 24.48 per cent of the budget; '74-75, that would decline to 21.57 per cent; '75-76, 21.8 per cent. Now, Mr. Speaker, the point that we are making at this time, at least that I'm making, is that members of the Assembly should be making representation to the government to ensure that there is adequate funding for education, not only to preserve the skeleton of an education system, but to allow some room for improvement as well.

Mr. Speaker, I have to compliment the Minister of Education, because he has achieved something of a first. It's very seldom that you can get school trustees and ATA members to agree on much, but the hon. minister has been able to succeed during the opening day of the Legislature. We had the president of the ATA, Miss English, going around with an armband mourning the loss of quality education. We had the president of the Alberta School Trustees' Association saying, just a few days before the opening of the Legislature, that the additional grants announced represented an intolerable situation. You have throughout the province, Mr. Speaker, a feeling of frustration among both trustees and educators alike with the government's approach to the financing of education.

Now, I was interested in listening to the hon. member who just spoke talk about the increase in funds for education and breaking down a 13 per cent increase for elementary grades, a 13 per cent increase for junior high, and a somewhat lower 6 per cent increase for high school students. In theory, I

don't disagree with narrowing that gap. But that gap should be narrowed in such a way, Mr. Speaker, that there is a cushioning effect on those divisions which have a larger number of students in higher grades.

Let me just give you one example. We supposedly have an 11 per cent increase in grants. But the Fairview school division has just had an opportunity to look over the grants for the 1976-77 year. It finds that, instead of an 11 per cent increase, there will be a 9.1 per cent increase in the basic grants under the foundation plan. Now, Mr. Speaker, members of the House will know that the cost of education in the Fairview school division is going to climb by more than 9.1 per cent. This is before we even get to the question of cutting off UIC benefits or the other grants which are increased by somewhat less than 11 per cent. Before we even begin to calculate the impact of these decisions, we have a 9.1 per cent increase.

Mr. Speaker, if you're going to narrow the gap in weighting your formula, you have to provide some cushioning so that those divisions which have a higher number of students, or a higher proportion of students in higher grades, do not have to pay the additional consequence of that shifting.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at what has happened to these other grants, I find it rather interesting to see the communication for December 31 from the Department of Education, where the EOF program was evaluated. By and large, as I read this communication, I would take it that the EOF program was more than satisfactory, that it was an excellent program. Yet the increase in funding for the next year, Mr. Speaker, is only 8 per cent, less than the 11 per cent guidelines. The learning disabilities fund increased by only 7.1 per cent. Resource room grants will be frozen at \$8,500. Grants for special education positions increased by only 4.9 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, this is presenting very real problems for local trustees. If this was not bad enough, we had the announcement, the other day, that the government was not going to pay employers' share of UIC grants. A few days before the session opened, Mr. Speaker, four of the Peace River MLAs had the opportunity to meet with the executive of the Peace River school trustees association or the Peace River branch. They made it clear that the impact of this unilateral decision to do away with the UIC payments is going to be substantial. In the Peace River division, it will cost \$24,000; in High Prairie, \$30,000; in Grande Prairie, \$24,200; in Spirit River, \$15,000. Approximately 8 teachers in those 4 divisions will lose their positions as a result of the government's decision to unilaterally disband UIC payments. Mr. Speaker, surely, if the government had this in mind, the minister should have said so to the trustees last fall, so that he might have got some opinions from the people who are in charge of education in the province.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition, who introduced the debate, talked about the problems of the rural divisions. There really is no doubt that the costs of providing instruction in rural Alberta, by and large, are higher than in the urban areas, although I would be quick to point out, as he did, that there are very special problems in the core areas of both our cities. The problems of inner city schools should not be ignored but should, in fact, be given high priority by

both the provincial government and the appropriate divisions. But, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the difficulties in rural Alberta, the general fact of the matter is that costs are higher.

Distance is a problem. The more remote the area of the province, the [more] distance becomes a factor, and costs rise. I was interested in the comparison in utilities because, again, when the Peace River trustees met the MLAs from the area, they were quick to point out the fact that there was a substantial difference between Medicine Hat and Grande Prairie. Of course, I am interested in raising this because I see that the hon. Member for Medicine Hat is now present.

It is certainly also worth observing, Mr. Speaker, that in Medicine Hat the city ownership of the utilities is one of the reasons it has the most reasonable utility rate anywhere in the province. On the other hand, in the north, we are paying the price of our so-called free enterprise system through Alberta Power, Northwestern Utilities, and those companies which are controlled by International Utilities; and we find that our rates are higher. But they would be higher even if you had public ownership of utilities, because costs are greater in northern Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, there is not a cent of allowance, not any opportunity at all to move within the school foundation plan, to permit school boards to deal with higher costs. If it is going to cost three times as much to light a school in Grande Prairie as it is in Medicine Hat, shouldn't there be some allowance in the school foundation plan? If it's going to cost more than twice as much in Grande Prairie to heat a school with natural gas as it does in Medicine Hat, shouldn't there be some allowance? Don't we consider that the maintenance costs and the operating costs of our school system should somehow be considered when we draw up a foundation plan?

Surely, Mr. Speaker, that's not unreasonable. That was a representation which was made to the members from the Peace River area and made very strongly by school trustees — trustees, I should point out, Mr. Speaker, who are all over the ballpark politically, not of one political persuasion or another. But they are, as educators concerned about the financing of education, making a strong case. I think that that case has to be made in the Legislative Assembly.

We have the new school busing program. Let's take a look at what that's going to do. There will be, no doubt, certain school divisions that will benefit from the school busing program. As a matter of fact, when I talked with the trustees in the Spirit River school division, they were pleased. They said, gee, it's a great program. We're going to get a 13.8 per cent increase. But the problem is, Mr. Minister, the cost of operating the bus fleet will go up by a good deal more than 13.8 per cent. The point is, when you consider the costs of insurance, maintenance, gasoline, and the wages that have to be paid to the employees, that 13.8 per cent isn't going to cover it.

But let's look at another division that didn't do quite so well under the new busing formula — Fairview. They have the same cost increases as Spirit River. Their increase under the new school busing formula is 2 per cent. They've got 2 per cent to spread across the price of gasoline which will increase after July 1, to cover the cost of insurance which every member

knows has skyrocketed, the cost of maintenance, the cost of paying school bus drivers' salaries. Out of 2 per cent? There's no way they're going to do it out of 2 per cent. They're going to have to take other operating revenue to subsidize their school bus system or they're going to have to cut back substantially on the service.

There's the question, Mr. Speaker, of the small school grants program. I stood in my place in the Legislature when that program was announced two years ago and supported it. I also strongly supported the two additional programs that were announced last year: the program for low assessment and the program for declining enrolment. I think that is one way in which we might work toward alleviating the problems of rural divisions with low assessment and declining enrolment, or enrolment where you have a large number of students in the higher grades.

But Mr. Speaker, we didn't get an increase in those programs this year. Those programs are going to be static. So when we look at the impact of inflation, in actual fact, there will be fewer dollars available in those three programs to provide a shield, if you like, than there were last year.

Of course, I wouldn't want to point out, Mr. Speaker, I know it would be somewhat insensitive, that last year we were being fattened up for an election. How quickly this government has moved from being Santa Claus to Ebenezer Scrooge. But I think the school trustees find that with no small sense of concern.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at what this means. The government can talk all it likes about the impact of the small school program. In the Fairview school division, we've got one school which qualifies, a little school called Bear Canyon. It is 90 miles from Fairview over a road which, quite frankly, not even the mother of the hon. Minister of Transportation could justify. It's a god-awful road. But it's an isolated rural school.

Under the rural school grant program, the division will get \$3,600 for that particular school. But the operating cost of bringing the children to and from Fairview every weekend by bus is \$7,000 — just to bring the students to Fairview on Monday and take them back Friday evening.

Now you might say, well, why not charge the parents? Mr. Speaker, if we do that, where is this whole business about the right of people to an education? Do we have to have a price tag on everything?

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm saying to the minister that if you want to deal with the problem of disparity in the school foundation plan, rather than freezing those three grants, there should have been a substantial increase in the grants to make up for some of the differences which exist.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of problems which were raised at that meeting. I think it's worth sharing some of those problems with you.

One of the most able presentations was made by the chairman of the Peace River school division, a gentleman not of my particular political persuasion. I believe he may even support the government, although I don't know how long that will be the case if they don't do something about education financing. But in any event, this gentleman made it pretty clear that one of the real problems was getting teachers in

northern areas, because right now, you've got a salary level in rural Alberta which is below the cities'.

With the constraints being applied right across the board — and when you look at those constraints they don't work out to 11 per cent in most of our rural divisions, it's something less than that, 8 or 9 per cent — the gap in some cases will probably even worsen, which, Mr. Minister, will make it difficult to attract teachers in the northern areas.

Right now, you have problems. This same gentleman brought to us the problem the divisions have in getting industrial arts teachers. Who is going to teach industrial arts at \$13,000 or \$14,000 in Peace River or Manning when he can earn \$25,000 or \$30,000 practising the trade of plumbing or pipefitting in the oil sands in McMurray? So you have a very real problem, which, if anything, is going to get worse.

This particular gentleman suggested that we needed a bonus system in order to attract people to the more remote areas of the province. But Mr. Speaker, within the present financial constraints, there's obviously not going to be any bonus system at all. What will happen inevitably is that we will lose some of our best teachers.

Now Mr. Speaker, when one talks to trustees about this matter, they are faced with really two very difficult choices. One choice is to cut back on the quality of education: cut out teachers, perhaps close down schools, but at the very least, eliminate programs. The programs eliminated first are the innovative programs, the resource rooms — if they have to go, close down a resource room, there won't be quite so many people hired. That's one choice, and no responsible division wants to make that choice.

The other choice, Mr. Speaker, is the choice that a large number of divisions made last year when they said, all right, it's up to the local taxpayers to pay a higher requisition. So we'll increase the supplementary requisition. But all you can increase the supplementary requisition by is 11 per cent. If you increase it by a dime over 11 per cent, as the minister well knows, the ratepayers can take around a petition, and there will be a referendum or a plebiscite. When one looks at what has happened in plebiscite after plebiscite, the chance of a requisition increase passing is remote, to put it mildly.

I want to tell the minister — I mentioned this last fall during discussion in the Assembly, but I want to say something about it again, because I think it's one of the most disturbing things that I have seen. I want to say that in a requisition plebiscite, the major casualty is education itself. We had two very controversial plebiscites in northern Alberta just last year. In one plebiscite the major issue became whether or not the secretary of the school division should have a salary of \$18,000 or \$22,000 a year. People went running around saying, well, why should a woman earn \$22,000 a year? She wasn't earning that — she was actually earning \$18,000 — but this was the kind of debate which occurred. There was debate on the salary of the superintendent.

But what invariably happened is that the whole concept of quality education got lost in a series of side issues. The net result is that the board in Fairview this year, Mr. Speaker, is in the position of having to say, all right, can we go for another requisition

increase? Probably not. It will be voted down. It was voted down by about 75 per cent last time. So the only other choice is to cut back on services.

Mr. Speaker, I say to the members of the Assembly, this is not just the view of one member. Nor were the views expressed by the Leader of the Opposition his views. These are the opinions strongly held and being expressed, in an increasingly vocal way, by school trustees throughout the province. We should be listening to them. We can't just sit back in a smug way and say, oh, we've all got to tighten our belts, and battle against inflation even if it means cutting back on the quality of our most important investment, our children.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest that what this province should do in a positive sense is, first of all, reorganize the foundation plan. I don't agree with the proposition of two foundation plans for the simple reason that I believe that would create a rural-urban gulf, even though I recognize the validity of the arguments the Leader of the Opposition has made that there are important differences. But I suspect that the controversy two separate plans would create would make it not worth following that route.

What I think we should do instead, Mr. Speaker, is to completely restructure our foundation plan. We can begin with a per pupil basis to start. But that should only be one of the components. Then we should build into that foundation plan allowances for the differences in cost that exist all the way from heating to light to school bus — the whole shooting match throughout the operation of the school system. I think, Mr. Speaker, that kind of approach to reorganizing the foundation plan would go a long way toward remedying some of the very serious disparities which exist.

[Dr. McCrimmon in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, there is always going to be a certain portion of the cost of education that will undoubtedly have to be met through supplementary requisitions, and I would suggest that here we have to take the bull by the horns. I'm sorry the Member for Edmonton Strathcona, or who represents a good part of Strathcona county, has left, but we're going to have to get to the point where we recognize the need of sharing industrial assessment. When you look at what a small rural division can obtain in supplementary requisition when they increase their mill rate by one mill, and you compare what that would bring in in Strathcona county, there is no comparison at all. So at some point we're going to have to move to sharing industrial assessment.

I think that the school busing program — I see the hon. minister is waving his head. I hope that means that we're going to have some action in that field. I think we're going to have to make some additional changes in the school busing program. The 85 per cent loading factor really represents problems for divisions that already have a fleet of larger buses. Right now, as hon. members from rural areas would know, the 85 per cent loading factor penalizes those divisions that have larger buses. If you get less than 85 per cent, you have 1 per cent deducted for every seat that isn't being used.

Mr. Speaker, I think in addition to that we have to look at the funding provided from the school buildings

branch. I don't believe that the school buildings branch is providing a level of support which is really adequate today. The level of support five or six years ago was fine. In 1970, a new high school was built in Spirit River. The level of support from the school buildings branch was \$18 a square foot, and the bid came in at \$18.31 a square foot. So there was 31 cents unapproved cost, which was not a serious problem. But this last year, Mr. Speaker, we had an addition to a school in the same division where the unapproved cost was some \$18 a square foot. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's a pretty substantial increase. I would say at this stage of the game that we should make some changes in the funding for school building through the school buildings branch, and take into account the fact that in certain areas of the province you have problems because there are fewer contractors to bid on contracts, and because the farther you get away from the larger cities, the larger your costs are going to be.

It just happens to be a fact of life that whether you're building a public building, a school, or a private home, building costs in the more remote areas of the province are substantially higher, and there is no real provision. I know the minister can say, yes there is, because there is a slight escalation in the regulations as they presently stand. But that slight regulation, Mr. Minister, is not adequate to deal with the disparities that exist in actual building costs.

In addition, I think we have to say that we really mean it when we talk about local autonomy. We must take away the restriction on school boards increasing supplementary requisitions. I say that quite honestly. I think that locally elected trustees, in the final analysis, should be given that right and obligation. It's a right but it's also an obligation, Mr. Speaker, to increase the supplementary requisition. This business of having referendums and plebiscites in effect destroys local autonomy, and increasingly, Mr. Speaker, will take away from locally elected authorities the right that they should properly be able to exercise.

I think it would be rather interesting, Mr. Speaker, if every decision that we made in this House was subject to the right of people to petition so that we would have a referendum. As a matter of fact, I think we used to have recall legislation in Alberta which was done away with some 35 years ago. We could recall any member who people didn't like, providing a certain number of people signed a petition, and lo and behold that was soon changed. But, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that just as we, as legislators in this House, would object to having a petition going around the province, to have a plebiscite on how we spend the money, similarly local school trustees, once they strike their budgets — and they must be responsible to their electorate every three years just as we are responsible to ours — it seems to me that having this business of the right to petition for plebiscite is looking over the trustees' shoulders and seriously eroding genuine local autonomy.

In the minute or two left to me, Mr. Speaker, I want to say a word about advanced education. I know very few of the members in this House would support the principle of eliminating tuition fees. But I say quite bluntly that if the taxpayer is going to pay, as we already do, some 85 per cent of the costs of operating our institutions of advanced education, we

should not have any barriers at all. There should not be a price tag. We can either go that route, or if we want to say that we should have a price tag, let us be logical and say that that price tag should pay for the whole thing. But the worst of both worlds is for the taxpayers, poor and rich alike, to put up almost all the money, but still to have a tuition fee which is large enough to act as a barrier.

Mr. Speaker, I happen to agree with the student organizations in their opposition to the 25 per cent increase. I am sorry that the Minister of Advanced Education is not here, because it would be interesting to see just what the government plans to do with Grande Prairie College. They have made it clear that they don't want to increase fees by any more than 12.5 per cent, and I hope they can stick with it. But I gather there is no small amount of pressure from this government, that believes in institutional autonomy on occasion, to increase the fees by 25 per cent to bring them into relationship with the rest of the province. In any event, Mr. Speaker, I think that is going in the wrong direction. We should be recognizing the basic right of every person to advance as far as possible in the education system on the basis of his ability and interest in learning, rather than the amount of money he has in the bank.

I just want to draw my remarks to a close by saying again that throughout the province there is a concern among teachers and trustees about the quality of education, a genuine concern about what is going to happen if they have to live within the constraints of the predictions or the estimates already announced by the minister. I would simply say that it's a little ridiculous, when we're sitting on \$1.5 billion in a heritage trust fund, to overlook education as an investment in itself. I think Dr. Hanson of the university has made the point, and made it well, that education is an investment, not an expense. It's the kind of investment that should be given top priority, not 11 per cent less 2 or 3 per cent, not frozen grants in this area and cutting out UIC benefits, employers' share in other areas, but the kind of priority which would keep it where it should be: as our most important single investment.

MR. DIACHUK: Mr. Speaker, if I may borrow a phrase from my colleague from Lacombe, I feel a speech coming on.

At the same time I'm a little troubled about the wailing and the bemoaning, and possibly my colleague from Calgary Buffalo would almost feel that this is the wall in the land where his forefathers came from. He's often said that was his wall, nobody else's.

I've often said that I have really been pleased with the educational system in this province. I have been pleased with the success, I do say that the role the former government played was a good role. They gave it the priority they could and that it needed. As a member of this government I feel we haven't belittled the role or the share of education one iota.

I therefore welcome this opportunity to speak on the motion, because maybe we should get some of the cards on the table, and some of the innuendoes and accusations we hear, because bad news always seems to travel a lot faster than good news.

It is interesting to note that the Leader of the Opposition does support the 11 per cent guideline,

but he has his priorities, Mr. Speaker, in other areas than possibly I do. He had no problem with possibly ruling out or even phasing out ACCESS or regional offices or maybe some other programs; however, he did want to place the priorities of the expenditure on some other areas that we may not agree on.

It's always interesting to play with figures. Some people will say that 11 per cent, when it gets back to the school board, ends up less. But I think my colleague from Edmonton Ottewell pointed out and reviewed quite well and extensively how favorable our government has given education the priority and the support.

The question of rural versus urban, urban versus rural in expenditures is one that is always considered. As a former member of the Alberta School Trustees' executive, and a member of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' executive, I know we wrestled with that constantly. They tell me some of my predecessors who served on the trustees' associations 10 and 15 years earlier wrestled with it. I sincerely hope that one of these days we'll stop wrestling and can resolve it.

But rural areas are rural areas. When you have a school 90 miles away from the nearest high school and the sacrifice of parents that the children have to possibly live in a town rather than at home every day, how can you really provide equal opportunities, unless there is some sacrifice from the parents? When you speak of parents, I have the privilege of representing a constituency where I have a real sacrificing group of parents. I have two independent Christian schools. Those people never really complain. They're pleased. As a matter of fact, for the benefit of the members and the minister, when the recent announcements were made for support to independent schools, they were quite pleased. They don't want full support. They don't want total support. As a matter of fact, they want to continue to have their own direction and the direction they intend to take in their school system, without too much interference from the government. They're doing a very great job of educating Albertans in their schools.

The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview made reference to the fact that members of this Legislature should make representation to the government. Possibly as a one-member caucus he has never had the opportunity of sitting in a caucus and realizing the representation that is made to the Minister of Education and the other members of government. I can assure him that the members of the Government of Alberta are always making representation, and are concerned about the education opportunities in their constituency.

It was rather interesting to see the president of the ATA he made reference to, the courtesy that was extended to the president of the ATA to come to the Assembly. Whether it was by accident, or whether it was the courtesy extended to the president of the ATA, the gentleman father of our Minister of Education paid the courtesy of sitting next to her and keeping her company. That's the kind of respect we even give to the president of the ATA. We could have possibly moved the Minister of Education, but that wouldn't be proper. He'd have to sit in his own place. But the father sat next to her here in the Assembly.

MR. NOTLEY: She'd still rather have the money, Bill.

MR. DIACHUK: They did discuss money, because I know the gentleman well, and I know he is financially a very successful man. I hope that, off the cuff, he did give Miss English some lessons in possibly what money really is, but I didn't ask him, and I don't imagine the minister did either.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Ottewell made reference to an address made by the former Minister of Education, our Leader of the Opposition now. I, too, want to just make one little reference to an address the hon. member made on March 18, 1971. You know, I agree with him. I just hope he agrees today with what he said then. He then said:

Education now has to become more accountable, that in fact education must find itself in a situation now where it has to compete more vigorously than ever before for the funds that I think it needs.

Sometimes we are haunted by what we say, but I think that was a good statement the Leader of the Opposition made in 1971, and I hope he still believes in that.

My good wife serves on a committee in the school our children attend, and she carries out a role as a volunteer in the school. She mentioned to me the other day that in the discussion in the parent-teachers' committee she couldn't understand why knitting and crocheting had to be taught in the school on a Friday afternoon. You know, we do have some frills that, in a time when that 11 per cent becomes a little less — it depends on what mathematics you use, or what priority you place.

If there are some [such] programs in each school, I think the boards, the trustees, and I believe the teachers more than anybody, must be more accountable for what programs they're going to give priority to. I don't think knitting is wrong. I still believe the art of crocheting is fine, and maybe even beauty culture, welding, and everything else. But as a member of the school board I remember that those were the kind of hang-ups I had. I believe that the 11 per cent guideline that is placed, recommended, suggested, will still provide the three R's I think we have to get back to.

Mr. Speaker, with these few comments, I feel our educational system is still doing a remarkable job. I don't want to wail and moan about the black days, and wear a black band. As a matter of fact, for the hon. members, I think we still have a fine system. Some of us must sometimes take a look at the systems we have in other parts of the country, and even where the members of the ATA bring guest speakers from, south of the border. They sure don't get the dollars toward their educational system that we get here in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words on the resolution. The first thought that comes to my mind when I read the resolution and read "higher priority . . . educational grants" is, if this is done, which departments are going to get a lower percentage? If we're going to give higher to one, we're going to have to give lower to others. I think it follows that we would want to know — at least I would want to know — which departments are going

to have a reduction, if we're going to give an increase to educational grants.

Now, there are a few things I'd like to say about the educational system. We talk about the quality of education. I don't know exactly what this means anymore. I think it means something different to almost everybody. Quality education, to me, means a boy or a girl receiving a basic education in which they can move on from one area to another area, increase their opportunity, their facilities, their thinking, and so on, until they reach the point where they graduate from a university or a technical school or an art school, whichever way their abilities happen to run. But quality education to many people means something different entirely. It means gold doorknobs. It includes fancy windows, fancy carpeting, and extra special things in the schoolhouse. It means extra salaries and increased numbers of teachers, so that teachers are handling 10, 11, 12, or 13 pupils. No wonder the costs of education are going up when we are continually adding frills that, in my view, are not necessary.

Now let's take that teacher-pupil ratio. I think the Department of Education of the former government and of the present government, in agreeing with the continual reduction in teacher-pupil ratio, are adding unnecessary costs to education. I heard a very knowledgeable person in the county of Wheatland the other night at a school meeting say that the teacher-pupil ratio in one of their schools is now one teacher to 13 pupils. He said, if we had that up to one teacher to 18 or 19 pupils, we could make a go of it, but we've reduced this to a ridiculously low figure. I say that, and I'm prepared to argue that with teachers anywhere in the province, because I know what I'm talking about.

I taught in schools where I had as many as 45 pupils in one grade. I had five grades with 45 pupils, and those pupils today are holding responsible positions all over this country. Their education didn't suffer because they had one teacher to 45 pupils, teaching one subject. When I first started teaching, I was teaching 10 grades and 35 pupils. Certainly, it was a heavy load. It meant a lot of overtime on weekends and nights and early mornings, but those pupils for the most part are today holding responsible positions in this country.

We didn't have top-notch school buildings. We didn't have gold doorknobs. There was a hole here and there in the floor. One of the schools leaked a little. I lived in a granary for a teacherage. But the quality of education didn't suffer on those accounts. The quality of education was just as good there as it was in the beautiful new building.

We've mixed up our values in this day. We put everything on how nice the school building is, how much salary we're getting, how many extra teachers we have. When we talk about teacher-pupil ratio, it makes me tired when I hear some teacher saying the teacher-pupil ratio in our school is 1:15 or 1:17. Then when I start making a check, they've added the school psychologist, the school nurse, the vice-principal who doesn't conduct any classes, the principal who doesn't conduct any classes, and so on. That's not fair, kidding the people that you have a teacher-pupil ratio when you are counting people who aren't even teaching in the school. I think that's a misnomer. I think it's kidding the people; when we

give them that type of information.

Mr. Speaker, I'm satisfied that we could make a tremendous inroad in the cost of education today if we insisted, wherever possible, that the teacher-pupil ratio be at least 1:18 and, better still, 1:21. I challenge any qualified teacher in this province to say that a qualified teacher can't teach 21 normal boys and girls and do a good job at it. This idea of having it down to 13 is ridiculous, completely ridiculous. No wonder we're costing the people money. No wonder our educational bill is getting so high.

The teachers may argue that they want a lower pupil ratio, but I'm not satisfied they do a better job with a lower teacher-pupil ratio. I can understand a low teacher-pupil ratio where you are teaching handicapped children, or subnormal boys and girls. Then I think you have to spend more time with each individual. If it gets that bad, maybe a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:1 is essential on that type of pupil. But I'm talking about the normal, average Canadian boy and girl whom we find in our schools. With these, one teacher can easily handle 18 or 21 pupils.

The teachers today are allegedly better qualified than they ever were before. I'm not going to dispute that. We've raised our requirements for qualification. At one time in this province, there was a great number of teachers holding second-class certificates. I might say that one of the best teachers I ever had when I went to school was a teacher who held a second-class certificate. He graduated in the province of New Brunswick. He came out here, and the authorities accepted his certificate. He was an excellent teacher, far better than some I went to who had an M.A., in putting across the lesson.

But I'm not degrading or depreciating the fact of degrees, not at all. All things being equal, a teacher with additional educational training should become a better teacher. But all things aren't equal with teachers. There are teachers with high ability for transmitting information to boys and girls. Some of them hold a second- or first-class certificate, and in many cases they do a better job of teaching than teachers with degrees. So, let's not think that you have to have a degree in order to be a good teacher. A degree is an asset, but it's not absolutely essential.

Again, I'm not in favor of many of the salary negotiations that give the greatest salary to the teacher who has the highest degree, the highest academic standing. That isn't sound at all. Let's give the higher salary or at least an equal salary to a teacher who is qualified to be a teacher in this province, who has passed the requirements to be a teacher, and is able to teach. Why shouldn't that teacher get just as much salary as someone else who took an additional two or three years in university, if he is able to teach and do a good job of teaching? Surely our school superintendents can ascertain that.

The salary negotiations in this province many times have simply been one school board and one group of teachers vying with the school board and another group of teachers in the next district to see who can get the higher. That goes on all over this province. There's a continual fight to get as high as the other school. I think this is going to have to change one of these years. I think a teacher who is doing a job at Indianhead, if there is a school there, and teaching boys and girls in that area, in say Grades 1 to 6, and is qualified according to the requirements of this

province, should surely get an equal salary with those who live in the bright lights, those who live where living conditions are much better.

But the trend has always been the other way. Pay the big salaries to those who enjoy the most amenities, those who have universities, Jubilee Auditoriums, and the latest in theatre, the best plays, the best speakers coming to that area. Give those teachers the highest salary. The teacher who goes out in the sticks, where the only entertainment he has is the entertainment he puts on himself, and who does an equally good job in teaching boys and girls, that teacher is being underpaid.

In my view, many of the teachers in the bright lights are highly overpaid. When we talk about a provincial salary schedule, if we ever get that, the teachers — and I happen to be a teacher, or was a teacher — the whole trend is, let's make sure nobody gets any lower salary; everybody has to get a higher salary. We've argued this from the day I left normal school, whether teachers should be paid for their ability to teach, or paid according to the academic standing they happen to have, or the place in which they happen to teach.

Well, there are a lot of things that should be changed, but these are difficult things to change, because both teachers and school boards value their right of negotiating their salaries. But negotiations lead to some pretty weird things. You have school boards vying with each other, not for a better system of teaching the boys and girls, but for a better salary for the teachers — a salary as high in one district as in the highest district in the province. So they bring in their best negotiators in order to get more money, more money to do the same job. Many of them are doing it well, and dedicated teachers won't change one iota, whether they get a \$2,000 increase, or whether they get an increase at all.

I think teachers should be paid, and paid well, and I believe that most of them are being paid well. Some of them are being overpaid. Some are being underpaid. But I suppose you have that whatever way you look at it.

Now, I can't agree with the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview when he deplors the fact that we shouldn't go to the people, the ratepayers, in order to find out what they think. It's their money we're spending. Why shouldn't they have a say in the supplementary requisitions? In this country we've gone far too far in getting away from the people, in centralizing things, in saying to the people, it's none of your business, except you pay the bill. That's where you come in. But you have nothing to say about how we spend your money.

This isn't democracy. We're getting too far away from the original principles of representation according to population, and having the right to say something if you're going to be required to pay the bill. The Department of Education has provided, in its supplementary requisitions, an increase of up to 11 per cent without a plebiscite, without referring it to the people. And if any school board feels it can't meet the needs of the people of that area within that limit, then it goes to the people and says, will you pay more? Well, why shouldn't they? Should we simply tell the people they're going to pay more, and tell them it's none of their business how much, except when they get their assessment notice or their tax

bill? We're getting far too far away from democracy.

Let's not do away with any more of this referring to the people. When we talk about it being done in other governments, I don't think that's sound at all. If the federal government today would take a referendum on capital punishment, we'd have a different type of law going on in Ottawa today than what we see there. Cabinet ministers stand up and say, I know my people don't want this, but . . . But! Who are they? The lords of this land? They're elected representatives. Democracy was for them to be the mouthpiece of the people who sent them there, not the all-powerful god telling the people what's good for them. Yes, we're getting too far away from this, and let's not do away with it in education. Let's keep the right to go to the ratepayer. If he doesn't want it, then let's not go ahead with it. He's the fellow who's going to have to pay. It's his money he's voting on.

I'm talking for the people and the pupils. I'm not talking for the teachers and the school boards. I think there's a big difference in that. The school boards should be carrying out the thinking of the people who elected them.

I was very, very happy when the school board in my own division, the county of Wheatland, this year conducted meetings in central areas throughout that county for the purpose of finding out from the people what they wanted in education. That's democracy. And the people told them what they wanted. One man said, if this type of thing is going to cost more money, tell us. We're not averse to paying more money for the things we want, but we don't want to pay more money on something you think we have to have and that we don't want at all.

I've got a couple of other things I'd like to speak about too. The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview mentioned busing, the 85 per cent loading factor and the large bus. If that rule is going to be firm, that they have to have 85 per cent loading in a bus before they will pay the stipulated fee, this is going to lead to a lot of hardships. Many of our school districts have invested in large buses over the years because it was advantageous to do so. They never knew when they were going to get extra youngsters, so they bought the bigger buses. Now they're stuck with bigger buses. You can't put them on the market today. Nobody wants a bigger bus, in view of the new busing regulations.

What difference does it make to the Department of Education if a man with a 60-passenger bus has 40 pupils in it, or 85 per cent of that 60-passenger bus, if he then uses that on a 120-passenger bus? He's paid for bus that would be required. If a 60-passenger bus is required and he has a 100-passenger bus and doesn't have the 85 per cent number of pupils, why couldn't he be paid on the ratio of the 60-passenger bus? This makes sense to me. That's all — I wouldn't say all, because I haven't spoken to all. In my pre-session meetings, I was interviewed the other day by a man who was very knowledgeable. He said, if we can do that, we're on the road again. He said, we're not going to run into grave difficulties. That shouldn't make any difference to the Department of Education. What size bus — let's pay for the number of pupils and the bus that's required on that basis, and forget about the size of the bus the school division happens to have. I think that will be a factor that's going to help in this financing too.

In regard to this number of teachers, our system has led a number of our school boards to overstaff. At one time, we had one superintendent for one school division in our areas. How many do we have today? The school board appoints them, the province appoints them. Some appoint a superintendent and an assistant superintendent. We're getting too many chiefs and not enough Indians, far too many chiefs. We're getting top-heavy in this educational system. What I want to see is more teachers in the classroom, not more administrators, more principals, more vice-principals, more school superintendents. We've got too many school superintendents now. Let's cut those in half. We'd never notice the difference in this province if we cut out half the school superintendents tomorrow. Not a child in the province would notice a difference. It would make a lot more teachers available for the classrooms if there's a shortage. I didn't know there was a shortage.

Another thing I would like to suggest — and it's not in the Department of Education, but it's costing Education a lot of money, and that's vandalism in our schools. Vandalism is getting to a point where people think they can simply destroy school property and all they get is a fine or a jail term. I like the sentiments of one of the judges — I believe it was in Calgary the other day. He said, we'll start charging the people, make them pay for the damage they've done. If they did \$2,000 damage to a school, let's make them pay. Let's make them pay.

I was horrified a few years ago when one of the stores in Gleichen was broken into by three young lads. The provincial judge said, I'm not going to put you in jail; I'm going to put you on probation. Within one year I want every cent of the damage done to that store paid by you. Get out and get a job. Pay for the damage you've done. They appealed, and the next judge said no, they don't have to pay for the damage. We'll just send them to jail. It costs the taxpayers a little bit more, but send them to jail for a month. This is ridiculous. This isn't justice. I like the idea of the judge saying, if I do damage to somebody else's property, I pay — or else. But let's say I pay. Most of our people would then get out of the habit of doing damage to other people's property, whether it is school property or public property of any other type.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not saying everything is so rosy in education. I think the educational system in Alberta will stand up with that of any province in Canada, and perhaps go beyond. I think the teachers' salaries in this province will stand up with those in any other province, and ahead of most of them. Ahead of most of them. I think our school buildings have gone way beyond anything I've seen in schools in other provinces. In my view, our quality of education is not much better, because we're putting our emphasis on the wrong things. We're putting our emphasis on frills, seeing how many boys and girls we can cut out to give the teacher a lower ratio, as if that's something wonderful. I don't think that is wonderful at all. Surely a highly qualified teacher today can teach 21 pupils. If they can't, they had better go into something else. Tell them to go into law, or some other profession, with all respect to the lawyers here. They shouldn't be in the classroom if they can't teach 21 pupils. Teachers a few years ago could teach, it was quite common, 30 to 45 pupils in one grade. You sometimes taught 10 grades in one rural school — 10

grades with 35 pupils. Surely to goodness, with the increased qualifications of teachers today, the increased facilities in our universities and normal schools and colleges — surely to goodness the teachers today can't, without blushing bright red, say they can't teach as well as the teachers of 20 years ago, who didn't have that highly qualified training yet taught 30 pupils in a classroom. Surely they can teach 21.

Mr. Speaker, I would vouch that if we could get the classroom average of teacher-pupil ratio up to 21 in this province, our financing costs would disappear. We wouldn't have to worry about the educational costs today. As a matter of fact, we might even be able to reduce the budget. Yes, we could. Just figure out how many teachers you're saving. Of course, there would be teachers out of work. But they could go into other avenues of employment. If our object is to hire as many teachers as possible, we are going to keep on getting more and more troublesome. That is why I say I am speaking for the pupils and for the parents, the ratepayers, the people who have to pay. The people of my constituency tell me we want more kids in our classrooms under each teacher. There's no reason why they can't get just as good an education. They say, we don't want new gold doorknobs on our schools. We just want a habitable, safely constructed school. They say, we don't want all these frills in education. We want the sound three R's that are going to give our boys and girls a chance to advance to their greatest potential.

MR. GHITTER: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member would permit a question before he retires. It was always my understanding that if you couldn't get into law, you went into education. I assume that's not the case.

MR. ZANDER: I thought it was the other way around. If you couldn't get into law and you couldn't get into education, you would go into politics.

DR. BUCK: A good example.

MR. ZANDER: Mr. Speaker, certainly if I am trying to protect the former Minister of Education, the former government, and now the Leader of the Opposition, it is purely coincidental. But I think at the time when I was a school trustee, when the brakes were applied by the former government and the former Minister of Education, we welcomed the brakes, because somebody in government must put the brakes on. Education is a valid reason to spend more money, but I think the Member for Drumheller who has just spoken has put his finger on the pulse. I think we're trying to move too fast. We get too many chiefs in there and not enough Indians.

We have in most cases since, and it's only a short period of about four and a half years — we have in some jurisdictions the superintendent, an assistant superintendent, an assistant to the superintendent, another assistant to the assistant. If we continue to carry the load — and they're not classed as teachers, yet the costs continue from year to year. I can only congratulate the minister that he, too, has taken the stand that we will adhere to the 11 per cent guidelines.

True enough, it may not fit every jurisdiction in the

province of Alberta. It may not fit every school, maybe not in the rural areas. But in the overall picture somebody has to apply the brakes in spending for education.

It's easy for the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview, who was an urban member, lived in the city of Edmonton, and after four and a half years becomes an expert on rural education.

AN HON. MEMBER: Agreed.

MR. ZANDER: It's simple, you know. You look out there and you find a school that is remotely removed from the area, but it does get grants, and it also gets roads from the Minister of Transportation. Maybe not as good in the northern part of the province, and maybe you could argue that it also doesn't get the roads out in the Arctic Circle. But somewhere down the line we have to be treated as equals.

Now what I got from the remarks of the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview was that we were spending too much on the mentally retarded or the physically handicapped. I could only come to that conclusion because we were putting our priorities in the wrong places. [interjections] Well, I can only say to the hon. member that unless he clarifies that position, I can only take that from his remarks. If he feels that the mentally retarded or the handicapped should not have equal treatment with all the children of this province, then I'm sure he didn't really mean what he said.

DR. BUCK: Read *Hansard*.

MR. ZANDER: I'll read *Hansard* tomorrow.

When we're talking about the unemployment insurance costs, and true enough, we have, I have met with a number of jurisdictions, and it does create a very costly item for them. It amounts to about 2 to 4 mills.

But surely in the overall picture, they find ways and means to cover those costs. We've talked about the 85 per cent loading capacity of the buses. To my knowledge, in talking to the jurisdictions that I have talked to, the only people that find it very difficult are in the rural areas where they carry the children on early childhood education. I hope that the minister — and he has said he'll look into that part of it.

Mr. Speaker, may I adjourn debate please?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: May the hon. member have leave to adjourn the debate?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. FOSTER: Mr. Speaker, I move this House do now adjourn until tomorrow afternoon at 2:30 o'clock.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House stands adjourned until 2:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[The House rose at 5:30 p.m.]

