

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTATitle: **Tuesday, March 22, 1977 2:30 p.m.**

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MRS. CHICHAK: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of personal privilege. It has been brought to my attention that as a result of the wording of a government news release dated March 9, 1977, relating to Order in Council No. 253/77, wherein the appointment of members to the Alberta Hospital Visitors Committee was announced indicating the remuneration provided, it is being construed by the public that as a member of that committee I am receiving \$100 per day remuneration. Mr. Speaker, I wish to dispel completely any such misinterpretation and to set the record straight.

As the remuneration does not apply to MLAs, I have not to date received, nor do I qualify for, any remuneration as a result of my appointment to the Alberta Hospital Visitors Committee. I'm only able to recover any out-of-pocket expenses in the course of visits I make with or on behalf of the committee within the province. I wish to state for the record that since my initial appointment to this committee in the fall of 1975 I have made numerous visits with other committee members to the health institutions that come under the act, but to date I have not filed any claim for out-of-pocket expenses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. KUSHNER. Mr. Speaker, on the very same point if I may, being one of the members on the hospital visiting committee, I too want to make my point at this time that I don't receive the \$100 gratuity or whatever they call it.

AN HON. MEMBER: You could sure use it though, John, couldn't you?

MR. KUSHNER: I sure could.

head: INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 24
The Election Finances
and Contributions Disclosure Act

MR. CHAMBERS: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill No. 24, being The Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. I wish to note briefly for the benefit of members eight basic provisions of this act.

These are first of all disclosure. A basic principle of this bill is that the people of Alberta have a right to know. Therefore all contributions over \$250 from any source, including individuals, corporations, trade unions, et cetera, are to be disclosed as to the

amount, and the name and address of the donor.

The second provision is intended to restrict outside influence in Alberta. Contributions to the Alberta political process are restricted to those by Alberta residents, Alberta corporations, Alberta trade unions, and Alberta employee organizations that are registered and doing business in this province. Transfer of funds from federal parties to provincial parties is also limited to the sum of \$100 for each registered provincial candidate during election campaigns only.

Thirdly, this bill proposes no limitations on expenditures. The government feels that the disclosure provisions, along with the new short 28-day campaign period, will provide adequate control on spending during election campaigns.

Fourthly, it is intended that there be no direct payment or contribution of public funds to cover election expenses.

The fifth provision concerns tax credit. It is proposed that through consequential amendments to The Alberta Income Tax Act, Alberta contributors to the political process receive tax credits paralleling those provided for by federal legislation.

The sixth major provision of this bill will limit the amount of money that may be contributed to a party, a constituency association, or a candidate, both annually and during election campaigns.

Seventh, Bill 24 provides for the registration of political parties, their constituency associations, and candidates for election.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, it is proposed that through an amendment to the Alberta Election Act the position of chief electoral officer be established. His duties will include administration of both The Election Act and The Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. He will be required to submit an annual report to you, Mr. Speaker.

[Leave granted; Bill 24 read a first time]

head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. FARRAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table the reply to Motion for a Return 113.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, it's a unique pleasure today for me to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly some 30 enthusiastic young ladies and gentlemen from the Glenora elementary school, grade 5, in the constituency of Edmonton Glenora. They're accompanied by their teacher Mrs. Pelensky and six interested parents. The class has been studying government. I had a brief chance to talk with them and found their knowledge of what government is all about very high, I suppose partly because they've been using a document with which MLAs are familiar, a pamphlet called *Working Together*.

Mr. Speaker, there are three MLAs in this Assembly who, if I could say, have a personal interest in three of the young fellows in the class. They are the MLA on my left, the gentleman on my right, and me. I'd ask that they rise at this time and be recognized by the Legislative Assembly.

MR. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to introduce 40 junior high school students from Lloydminster. They are accompanied by their teachers Mr. Butcher and Mr. Tradewell. They are seated in the members gallery, and I ask at this time that they stand and be recognized by the Assembly.

MR. DIACHUK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly 21 grades 5 and 6 students from the St. Nicholas school in the constituency of Edmonton Beverly. They are accompanied by two teachers, Mr. Syrnyk and Mr. Lacroix, and two parents, Mrs. Kubrak and Mrs. Szutiak. I ask that they rise and be recognized by the Assembly in the usual manner.

MR. APPLEBY: Mr. Speaker, this seems to be a very popular day for visitors from the schools of this province. It's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and the other members of the Assembly 27 grade 9 students from Grassland school in the Athabasca constituency. They are with their teacher Mr. Roberts, two of their parents, Mrs. Shymoniak and Mrs. Chamzuk, and their bus driver Mr. Jess Johnson. They're in the public gallery, and I ask them to stand and be welcomed to the House.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to have leave to revert to Introduction of Bills in order to put Bill 24 on the Order Paper under Government Bills.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS** (*reversion*)

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 24, The Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

Civil Servants' Political Activity

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, in line with the theme of teamwork and working together, I would like to ask the Premier if he can confirm that the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta is using the government phone number 427-2944 as the information number of the publicity committee for the 1977 convention of the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta.

MR. NOTLEY: Oh, shame, shame.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, they may be. If they are, I'm sure they'll get the facts. I'll have to check and let the hon. member know. But there is wide interest in the province about the event.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, just for the Premier's information, that happens to be the number of the broad-

cast supervisor in the audio-visual services branch of the Department of Education.

My question, Mr. Speaker: is it a policy of the provincial government to use government personnel to publicize a political convention, be it any political convention?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, no such intention. It may be that that has happened. I'll have to look into it. But as I say, we get flooded with these inquiries and it could well be that that has happened. [interjections]

DR. BUCK: The Premier is very nicely skating around the question.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know from the hon. Premier if the government has guidelines set out as to what, if any, political involvement civil servants can take part in during working hours? Is there a government policy?

MR. LOUGHEED: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that matter has been well accepted. When they are involved in their normal working hours, we would not expect them to be involved in political activity.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, then for the information of all the House I would just like to table these three letters so the record can indicate that the publicity committee for the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta is in fact using a government phone number.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the Premier. In light of the information and circumstances, will the Premier request the civil servant involved to stop being involved in political activity during working hours?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, quite obviously I have to look at the documentation before I can respond to that question.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Premier. Has the government a general policy with respect to disciplinary action against civil servants who in fact promote a particular political party during the course of their working hours? [interjections]

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I think I'd have to respond that I would like to see the documents first and ascertain their veracity. I'm sure there is a tremendous amount of enthusiasm within our party, and they may have gotten carried away.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Premier, in view of the possibility of people getting carried away. [interjections] I'm not sure whether or not this particular civil servant will be carried away.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, in light of this unofficial change of policy where civil servants can now apparently take political action, is it the government's view that we are going to change the statute so in fact it will codify the right of civil servants to take political action, run for public office, et cetera?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, no such policy changes are contemplated.

DR. WALKER: A supplementary to the Member for Spirit River-Fairview. Does the member take political phone calls in his government office? [laughter]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, it's quite obvious why we need 25 more members on this side of the House. It's more than obvious.

AN HON. MEMBER: It sure is.

MR. TAYLOR: We don't need any more phone calls.

MR. NOTLEY: That's why we need more members on this side.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, it is more than appalling to see the attitude of the government when a civil servant is taking publicity [interjections] . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. member would have every right to debate this topic if he were to give proper notice on the Order Paper.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, supplementary to the Premier in light of the attitude and I think the urgency of the matter. I understand the convention we're talking about is this coming weekend. I'm not too well informed on the matter, as I haven't phoned this number yet.

My question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker: would the Premier take it upon himself, following question period today, to check the number and report back to the House by the end of today's sitting so we can clarify this matter and get the correct information before the public?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure I'd be able to be that expeditious, but I'll be back tomorrow with the information for the hon. member.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I have a second question, but in the meantime I'll tell the Premier that if he'd just pick up the phone and ring that number, he'd find out it's a government number. It's that simple.

Rural Gas Co-ops

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I have a question to the Minister of Utilities and Telephones, a follow-up to a question asked previously. I'd like to know if the minister or the government has reconsidered the position on rural gas co-operatives that they not receive any further consideration in terms of gas pricing.

DR. WARRACK: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will know from listening carefully to my speech last week that indeed a major portion of the gas rate involved with rural gas co-ops involves capital amortization. Now, the fact that we have put close to \$70 million in financial assistance to support the rural gas construction program means that those costs need not go in the gas rate, because in fact they're paid by the

provincial government rather than by those individual gas co-ops and their members. So the answer is, quite clearly, that there's been very special consideration of a very large magnitude in the gas program, including the rates for gas to rural gas co-ops, in a manner most different from how it was handled in the previous . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, supplementary to the minister. In light of the concern by the Federation of Gas Co-ops, has the minister planned any meetings with the gas co-ops to discuss the point of view he has just made, or any other point of view, or to hear the point of view of the Federation of Gas Co-ops with regard to gas pricing?

DR. WARRACK: Once again, Mr. Speaker, we're ahead of the hon. member, just as we were in establishing the program. A meeting discussing a large number of items, including that item, was held on March 7.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Can the minister advise the House whether it is true that with the 10 per cent increase in the cost of the operation of Gas Alberta, gas co-ops as of April 1 will be paying an additional 15 cents per MCF for gas compared to 13.5 cents for other utilities, when those utilities get okays from the Public Utilities Board?

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. It would appear the hon. member is asking the minister to confirm the results of a calculation he has undoubtedly made.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister, then. Is it not true that in fact gas co-ops will be paying more than the 13.5 cents increase in the shield announced by the minister last week?

DR. WARRACK: Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what I said in my remarks last week. If the hon. member had been listening, he would know that's indeed the case. If you add the two numbers together, which might be helpful for the hon. member, the precise figure is 15.04.

Travel Alberta Advertising

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Business Development and Tourism and relates to a booklet called *Adventure Guide Travel Alberta*. In past weeks we've asked questions with regard to a ski lodge that has burnt down, a ski slope that isn't being used, and other such activities. I noticed that on page 68 of this booklet, referring to Medicine Hat, it says: "The city is situated on top of a huge reservoir of natural gas. Just drill and — voila! No heating bills!"

Mr. Speaker, my question is: could the minister indicate when the citizens of Medicine Hat stopped paying heating bills, and whether or not this free gas program is going to be available to all Albertans?

MR. DOWLING: I can't answer that question, Mr. Speaker. But I can acquaint the hon. member, for his edification, with some additional information on the West Castle problem.

Travel Alberta asked all ski areas to participate in an advertising campaign. Twenty indicated they would do that, and the costs were split between the entrepreneur and Travel Alberta. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, that's not what I asked about. My question was very clear. I said, at the present time and according to this government brochure, when do the city of Medicine Hat and the people there receive free gas. [whereby] they have to pay no gas bills? That's what this brochure is saying to all Canadians.

MR. DOWLING: I answered the question, Mr. Speaker.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, supplementary to the minister. Will the minister clarify this particular statement in the magazine? When will he do that? Also, as notice to the minister, would he provide for this Assembly the cost of printing a misleading brochure, and other details?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member has a list of questions there. Possibly he'd like to select one to ask and put some on the Order Paper. [laughter]

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact, but I get a little concerned with the lack of answers.

Mr. Speaker, would the minister clarify the steps he will follow to clarify this matter in this brochure?

MR. DOWLING: I'm not sure what confuses the hon. member. If it's use of a French word, I can clarify that for him.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, it says very clearly about Medicine Hat: "The city is situated on top of a huge reservoir of natural gas. Just drill and — voila! No heating bills!" That's what concerns me. How can the government make a statement like that in a brochure when the heating bills are doubling and tripling?

MR. DOWLING: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's input to perhaps clarifying the matter in our next addition of that particular brochure. Of course the hon. member understands we are trying very hard and doing an excellent job in Travel Alberta, I believe, in promoting this province as one of the . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. DOWLING: . . . best vacation areas in Canada.

MR. R. SPEAKER: My question to the minister was very clear. Will the minister clarify this matter for the public of Alberta?

MR. SPEAKER: With respect, I believe the hon. minister has answered that.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I didn't hear him say yes.

MR. NOTLEY: Supplementary question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In light of the questionable phraseology in this Travel Alberta document, is the government of Alberta going to consider investigating Travel Alberta for misleading advertising? [laughter]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. BRADLEY: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to direct my question to the hon. Minister of Business Development and Tourism. Is he aware that there was an excellent snowfall in southern Alberta last weekend, in fact that skiing conditions at West Castle are excellent and the ski hill . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order please.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Most likely that's some more misleading information. [laughter]

DR. BUCK: How's the ski lodge, Fred?

Cardiac Rehabilitation Centres

DR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, a question to the hon. Premier regarding the Premier's recent visit to one of Edmonton's cardiac rehabilitation centres. Incidentally and importantly, Mr. Speaker, he was declared A-1 — physically fit.

Mr. Speaker, is the Premier considering or planning any change in policy regarding support for such centres, and has the Premier's visit reaffirmed the importance of such centres?

MR. LOUGHEED: Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe during the debate last fall with regard to the capital projects division of the heritage savings trust fund, the hon. Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care made it clear that we were involved in a renewed emphasis with regard to applied research in cardiac care. I believe the hon. minister outlined in some detail that it was going to be support in cardiac care, not just in terms of the areas of surgery and preventive care but in terms of rehabilitation. So quite obviously one of the reasons both the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care and I visited this institute was to get an understanding of what was going on there.

I'm not sure whether the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care is presently in a position to respond directly to the question the hon. member raises. He may wish to.

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, just very briefly, the Premier has put it very accurately. Incidentally, I might say I think our Premier has set an example for all of us to follow in the results of the stress test.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to consider cardiac rehabilitation as part of the development of balanced and comprehensive overall programming for heart disease patients in Alberta now and in the future.

DR. PAPROSKI: One supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. In his planning and policy direction, will the minister con-

sider expanding such centres to rural areas or smaller centres?

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, I think that will certainly be something one would look to in the future. But at the present time those details are not at that stage of development.

At this stage, we are basically looking at the different components of balanced heart disease programming to meet the overall needs of heart patients in the province of Alberta. Those components are, Mr. Speaker: in addition to rehabilitation, we're examining surgery and medical treatment; a possibility of a specialized rehabilitation centre or referral centre, perhaps starting with northern Alberta, that would tie in as a referral centre for other hospitals. The further extension of that — I would see down the road some examination of ties with other rural hospitals throughout northern Alberta.

But those are details, Mr. Speaker, which require further examination. In due course we will be making announcements to the Legislature and to the citizens of Alberta.

MR. MUSGREAVE: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to know if the minister is considering introducing or adopting programs that would lead to fewer heart problems in the first place. Rather than be concerned with rehabilitation, I would hope he is going to be more concerned with prevention in the future and is going to direct more money in that regard.

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, that's a very important question. I'm glad the hon. member has raised it, because too frequently we confuse prevention [as] being something isolated unto itself.

All the programs we're examining with respect to heart disease have a potential element of prevention to them, Mr. Speaker. It's important as legislators that the elements of the research that has been provided and done to this point on heart disease programming, as well as the applied research in cancer . . . A good example is cardiac rehabilitation. The evidence would appear to indicate to this point that cardiac rehabilitation is not just a treatment component but has the potential of prevention of heart disease as well. So it's important that we don't go black and white in terms of different forms of treatment. Elements of prevention are involved in that as well.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the hon. minister. To the minister's knowledge, is the cardiac fitness institute endorsed and financially supported [through] the Alberta heart fund?

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. This does not come within the official duties or responsibilities of the minister.

Rail Passenger Service

MR. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I would direct my question to the Minister of Transportation. It's in regard to a report I received this morning from the Railway Transport Committee. In the report of Commissioner H. Griffin, the abandoning of rail passenger service between North Battleford and Edmonton is to take

place on May 24, 1977. Is this the final word, or have we some input to keep that service in operation?

DR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should respond by saying that the CTC orders have asked Canadian National to continue its passenger service between Edmonton and Drumheller and between Jasper, Prince George, and Prince Rupert. They have said that two lines in northern Alberta could discontinue, Edmonton-Grand Centre and Edmonton-North Battleford.

In my view, as the new creature VIA Rail is expanded into western Canada, I would hope that in these regional passenger situations we would certainly want them to have another look at it on two grounds. One, it's still our firm belief that the railways themselves have caused the decrease in the number of passengers carried and have done this deliberately to get out of the business of carrying passengers. Inasmuch as VIA Rail is supposed to be a corporation which is going to concentrate on the business of passengers, I would expect them to have a look at these runs in the future.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I want to go on record as saying I don't accept the Canadian Transport Commission figures for losses they claim are sustained on these various routes. Indeed if we take the ratio of losses, as Mr. Snavely did on the question of grain, the losses are perhaps overstated by at least 30 per cent.

MR. NOTLEY: Supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Transportation. Can any further representation be made to the CTC before the two lines are abandoned?

DR. HORNER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the decision came out yesterday. I suppose additional political representation can be made, and I will be discussing with my counterpart in Ottawa the views I've just expressed: that, once VIA Rail extends into our area, it look not only at the intercity, if you like, or the transcontinental passenger systems, but relook at the regional passenger systems that could be useful in our province.

Library Grants

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Culture. Is the minister planning regulations regarding the proposed library grants?

MR. SCHMID: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are preparing regulations regarding the proposed library grants.

MR. TAYLOR: Supplementary. Will the regulations be out prior to forwarding of the grants to the various municipalities and libraries?

MR. SCHMID: Yes, Mr. Speaker. In fact we propose to have the regulations approved as soon as possible, then forward the regulations as well as the application forms to the libraries.

MR. TAYLOR: One further supplementary. Did the hon. minister or the government intend the library grants to replace civic grants, or supplement civic grants?

MR. SCHMID: Mr. Speaker, without any question, one of the main reasons the library system is as well run as it is, even with the low support it has been given in the past . . . We of course hope to continue the co-operative system we have in Alberta where municipalities, cities, or hamlets, as well as the province, provide help to the libraries.

Lamb Processors Co-op

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Agriculture whether he could perhaps report on his meeting this morning with the Lamb Processors Co-op, I think at the plant in Innisfail.

MR. SPEAKER: I would have to leave it to the hon. minister to decide whether that question could be answered sufficiently briefly to fit properly into the question period.

MR. MOORE: The only thing I could say, Mr. Speaker, is that I attended a meeting of about 200 producers who are shareholders, members of the board of directors of the Lamb Processors Co-op in Innisfail, from about 12:30 to 2 o'clock today; explained to them the government's proposal; and answered a number of questions. They then broke for lunch. The meeting is continuing this afternoon. It will not be known until later today whether the shareholders and board of directors of the Lamb Processors Co-op have accepted the government's proposal.

Pay TV

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the Minister of Utilities and Telephones. It concerns the question of closed circuit pay television. Is the minister in a position to report to the House whether or not there have been discussions with private cable operators concerning the introduction of closed circuit pay TV in Alberta?

DR. WARRACK: Mr. Speaker, two parts to the question. I've had only relatively general discussions with the cable operators in Alberta as far as pay TV is concerned, which is not necessarily the same thing as the CATV or cable TV system. This is one of the matters that is open for debate and discussion and will be considered at a hearing by CRTC, I believe in the month of May if my memory serves me correctly.

I might add though for the House that we have taken a position with respect to the jurisdiction of pay TV. Subject to discussions later on, including next week at the federal/provincial communications conference that will be held in Edmonton, it's our feeling that pay TV in fact ought to be regarded as provincial rather than federal jurisdiction.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Can the minister advise whether any studies have been undertaken concerning the feasibility of a province-wide coaxial cable network similar to the one being developed now by Saskatchewan telephones?

DR. WARRACK: Mr. Speaker, I understand there have been ongoing discussions in recent weeks and months with the operators of the systems and Alberta

Government Telephones. As matter of fact I recall reviewing with the minister from Saskatchewan the approach we had in Alberta. He seemed quite intrigued with the possibility that they should perhaps consider doing the same thing.

I should have added to my previous answer, Mr. Speaker, that I do have a meeting scheduled on Friday I believe, because it's before the communications conference next week, with the cable TV operators.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Can the minister outline what specific initiatives are being undertaken at this point to ensure that smaller centres in the province will be serviced by cable or closed circuit television networks?

DR. WARRACK: I understand, Mr. Speaker, that's part of the discussion that's been going on between cable operators and Alberta Government Telephones. It might be helpful to explain that basically AGT is involved in the long-haul of the necessary signals that are involved, and the actual cable operators are involved in the short-haul or the distribution functions. So all of it has to piece together in a harmonized system, and of course the economics have to work. Those are the discussions that are going on at the present time.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Minister in charge of Travel Alberta guides and brochures. Is the Minister of Business Development and Tourism in a position to advise the Assembly whether any specific efforts have been undertaken, including loans from the AOC, to encourage locally controlled co-ops to provide cable and/or closed circuit TV?

MR. DOWLING: No, Mr. Speaker, the Opportunity Company operates at arm's length, and they can do their promotion as they wish. I understand now they have an advertising campaign under way which not only involves the newspapers throughout all of Alberta, but I have on occasion heard some radio broadcasts. So it's an autonomous, arm's length body. They can promote to whom or with whom they wish.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Utilities and Telephones. Is the minister in a position to outline to the Assembly what role, if any, the government sees for locally controlled co-ops in this field, as is now being encouraged on a wide scale in our neighboring province of Saskatchewan?

DR. WARRACK: Mr. Speaker, I know of no restriction on co-operatives getting together on a co-operative enterprise basis and developing proposals that might be workable and economically viable. If they wanted to do that, I see no reason that that would [not] be a very real possibility.

MR. NOTLEY: One final supplementary question to the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. It flows from the first answer from the Minister of Utilities and Telephones regarding Alberta's general position in favor of provincial jurisdiction in this

area of pay TV. As I understood the minister's answer, there is some uncertainty as yet. Is the government formally taking a position at this point in time that this area should be exclusively [under] provincial jurisdiction as opposed to federal control?

MR. HYNDMAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that is formally the position of the government of Alberta at this time.

Rent Control — Public Housing

MR. KUSHNER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct my question to the Minister of Housing and Public Works or the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Early in December an order in council was passed by cabinet that rent control be removed from public housing. It would be effective January 1, 1977. I wonder if the minister could clarify or inform this House if these people who live in public housing have received adequate notice of 60 days.

MR. YURKO: Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge the Calgary public housing authority conducts its business entirely in accordance with the laws of the province of Alberta.

MR. KUSHNER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. I wonder if the minister can inform this House if in fact the housing authority has given 60 days notice to the people who live in public housing.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member's question should perhaps be addressed directly to the authority, unless he can in some way tie this in with the official duties of the minister.

MR. KUSHNER: Supplementary question, then. May I ask the minister, or whoever is concerned, who requested such an order?

DR. PAPROSKI: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the Minister of Housing and Public Works would indicate whether public housing . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Would the hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway just hold for a moment while we get this last question clarified.

MR. KUSHNER: My question to the Minister of Housing and Public Works is: who has requested that rent control be removed from public housing? I appreciate that to get into public housing now, they only charge 25 per cent of your income. But who in fact requested this change?

MR. YURKO: Mr. Speaker, when this government passed The Temporary Rent Regulation Measures Act, all forms of housing were included under the act. There are some forms of housing in which the rent is regulated by other means, for example geared to income. This type of housing involves public housing, government staff housing, senior citizen self-contained, lodge rates, and so forth.

So in the course of the administration of The Temporary Rent Regulation Measures Act, which is under the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, late last fall the provincial government made a decision to remove the type of housing that was

presently regulated in regard to its rent by some other rent regulation system such as income. The provincial government made a decision by order in council to remove that type of housing from The Temporary Rent Regulation Measures Act.

MR. MANDEVILLE: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Has the minister received any complaints from tenants in public housing who have had excessive increases in their rent since January 1?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, in a general way I could say no. Obviously I've heard of the dispute referred to by the hon. member who asked the first question.

DR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the Minister of Housing and Public Works. Regarding the public housing rentals presently in force, would the minister confirm that it is still a policy of the government to maintain that level of rent well below the average of a similar unit on the open market?

MR. YURKO: Mr. Speaker, the rent charged in public housing is generally related to 25 per cent of the family's income. I should indicate the rental scale is being reviewed, particularly in the range of tenants in public housing units who have high incomes.

DR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, for final clarification. From the statistics the minister has, are these rates for public housing below the level of rental on the open market?

MR. YURKO: Mr. Speaker, that is certainly correct. The rental rates in public housing are very reasonable indeed and well below those on the private market.

Gas Co-ops — Consultants' Report

MR. MANDEVILLE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Utilities and Telephones. Could the minister indicate what consideration is being given to the recommendation by Reid, Crowther and Partners to set up an advisory body to provide technical services to rural gas co-ops?

DR. WARRACK: Mr. Speaker, there are a large number of recommendations in that report which, by the way, I did table in the House. Some of these relate strictly to the Department of Utilities and Telephones, some to other agencies of the provincial government, some to the Federation of Gas Co-ops, and some to individual co-ops. That, among a large number of other recommendations, is being discussed and assessed in a series of meetings around the province. It will take some time for all these recommendations to be assessed. We've essentially regarded the Federation of Gas Co-ops and its board as an advisory board in terms of the opportunity to consult on ideas we might have and get ideas from them on how we might improve the system.

MR. MANDEVILLE: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister indicate what period of time we are looking at for the implementation of some of the recommendations in this report?

DR. WARRACK: Mr. Speaker, a large number of the recommendations have been implemented already and a number are being implemented right now. As a matter of fact the handbooks I tabled in the Legislature were part of those essential recommendations, as are the series of meetings going on. A number of other aspects have been implemented already as well. So it's in the process right now.

Rents — Fort McMurray

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, this is a follow-up question to the hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs re the application in Fort McMurray for rent increases that are well over 20 per cent. Can the minister indicate how many tenants have filed protests to the minister's office in relation to the rents escalating as [much] as they were going to?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, the statements of interest are not of course filed with the minister's office. The rent regulation officers have received statements of interest from 74 tenants.

DR. BUCK: Can the minister indicate to the Legislature when the decision of the rent regulation officer will be made?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, I hope it will be made by April 21. I understand the rent regulation officers are in Fort McMurray today.

Mental Patients' Records

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health with regard to a recent report from the Canadian Mental Health Association regarding confidentiality of information. I was wondering if the minister has received the report, and whether there will be reconsideration of our present regulations and legislation with regard to confidentiality of information.

MISS HUNLEY: I checked this morning, Mr. Speaker, having read probably the same article the hon. member read. I have not received that report. When I receive it I will certainly read it with interest, and will be consulting the Mental Health Advisory Council to give me some recommendations concerning the comments made in that report.

Rail Line Authority

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Transportation. Has any progress resulted in the recommendation for single rail authority for all rail lines in northern Alberta?

DR. HORNER: Not yet, Mr. Speaker. That matter was placed before the Hall Commission, and we're not yet aware of when that report will be coming forward.

Eastern Slopes Zoning

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, who has been left out of the question

period for the last several days. I hate to see that happen.

Is the minister in a position to outline to the Assembly at what stage it is planned that the public will be involved in the work of the Eastern Slopes Interdepartmental Planning Committee to develop a zoning system for land in that region?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it's pleasant that the hon. member wanted to involve me in the question period, but in aiming his question he directed it to the wrong minister. The matter of the Eastern Slopes Planning Committee is being handled by the Associate Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, my colleague Mr. Schmidt.

MR. NOTLEY: Left out again.

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Associate Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. Can he inform the House where and when the public input will take place in this process?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, the public to date has had input in the eastern slopes through the hearings held some three years ago. At the present time, the document on the establishment of a zoning procedure for the eastern slopes is still a working document. No decision as to whether it will go back to the public for hearings has been made at this time.

MR. NOTLEY: A supplementary question to the hon. Associate Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. Is the minister in a position to give the people of Alberta a timetable as to when a decision will be made with respect to the question of whether or not additional public hearings will be held on this important issue?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, it would be difficult at this time to establish a timetable. It is my hope that the working document being presented to my colleagues will be finalized in the next month or six weeks.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Is the minister in a position to outline when he sees policy changes — when in fact the zoning will go into effect?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, it would depend on acceptance or rejection, or if amendments were made to the working document being studied at the present time.

Hog Industry

MR. MANDEVILLE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. Has the department been monitoring the number of hogs being processed in Alberta?

MR. MOORE: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, could the hon. member repeat that question?

MR. MANDEVILLE: Mr. Speaker, could the minister indicate whether the department is carrying on any monitoring on the number of hogs processed in Alberta?

MR. MOORE: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have an accurate count of the number of hogs processed in this province by way of the selling system implemented through the Alberta Hog Producers' Marketing Board.

MR. MANDEVILLE: Could the minister indicate whether there is a large decrease in the amount of hog slaughter in the province of Alberta for the last year?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact over the course of the last three years there's been a considerable decrease. I don't have the figures with me.

I can say to hon. members though, Mr. Speaker, that the farrowing intentions as they presently exist are up considerably over a year ago. It would indeed appear there is some movement back into hogs, part of which is undoubtedly a result of lower grain prices and the outlook for grain incomes not being as good as it was a year ago.

MR. MANDEVILLE: One final supplementary question then, Mr. Speaker. In view of the decline in the number of hogs in Alberta, does the minister plan to make representation to Ottawa in the future with regard to the high freight rates charged for pork products?

MR. MOORE: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is not currently a problem in that the traditional supply of Alberta hogs has been to the Alberta and British Columbia markets. In terms of our production, the situation today is that we're not capable of producing to the fullest extent for those markets, let alone shipping to eastern Canada.

Our more serious problem is the continued imbalance between Toronto and Edmonton hog prices. On average the Toronto price has been a fair amount, anywhere from \$3 to \$6 a hundred above Edmonton prices. While we were on a basis of exporting part of our product to eastern Canada, it was reasonable to consider that that may have existed. However during the course of the last year or two, when we've really been on a net import basis in British Columbia and Alberta as far as hogs are concerned — no reason at all for that kind of price spread to be there.

The Alberta Hog Producers' Marketing Board, in working with me as Minister of Agriculture and the other two western hog producers' marketing boards in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, have been meeting to try to tackle that problem of the continued price spread between Toronto and Winnipeg. It's our view that if there was a way prices in this province could be brought up to those in Toronto, we would increase hog production by a considerable amount.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Beyond the obvious move on the question of the price differential, in which I concur with the minister, is the government giving any specific consideration to other incentives to increase hog production, such as some of the incentives that have occurred in the past in this province?

MR. MOORE: Yes, indeed we are. I've met with the Alberta pork industry council, the Hog Producers' Marketing Board, packers, and so on, in an effort to

see in what way producers, processors, the Hog Producers' Marketing Board, and the government might work together to ensure that we have an increased supply of hogs.

Quite frankly, one of our problems is a secure long-term price with respect to new producers who might go into a hog operation. In that regard, meetings chaired by officials of my department have been set up among the Hog Producers' Marketing Board, interested producers, and a number of packers in Alberta relative to discussing ways we might move at least some distance toward domestic contracts similar to the Japanese contract. So in fact the new producer who goes into operation would know some time in advance that he'll get a return for his hogs in addition to his production costs.

One of those meetings was held two or three weeks ago. Another will be held in April to follow up on those kinds of discussions. I'm hopeful that among the parties I mentioned, which include the government of Alberta, we can come to some resolution of the problem of the ups and downs in hog prices that make it difficult for a young farmer in particular to borrow a lot of money to go into the hog business.

Mr. Speaker, it is not a total responsibility of the government of Alberta. I think we have to take some leadership, as we are. It has to involve producers themselves, their marketing board, feed companies, and packers, all of whom have a vital interest in ensuring the continuation of our hog industry.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

head: MOTIONS FOR RETURNS

MR. FOSTER: Mr. Speaker, I move that the following motions for returns stand and retain their place on the Order Paper: 101, 115, 127, and 128.

[Motion carried]

124. Mr. Notley moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

A list of the total grants to be paid under each grant program to each school jurisdiction, listed separately, for the 1977-78 fiscal year, with comparative figures forecast for 1976-77.

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, on March 30 last year a similar motion was presented by the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview. At that time I indicated to the Assembly that the motion in that form was not acceptable because the information was not available. The situation exists equally today, and the answer I gave on March 30 last year applies equally today: the motion is not acceptable.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I just rise to express my disappointment at the decision of the government not to accept this motion for a return. I read over the

explanation the hon. Minister gave last year. Reading it in retrospect I find it really isn't satisfactory. That was the reason I put the motion for a return again this year.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that basically what's involved in this motion for a return is information that is necessary if we're going to be able to consider the estimates of the Department of Education in a sensible light. I find it very difficult to understand how the Education budget can be set if it doesn't have any estimate of the grants that must be paid to each school board during the course of the year. I really suggest, Mr. Speaker, both from the viewpoint of efficient management of the department as well as the impact these grants will have on school divisions, that it just isn't good enough to say, we just have this information on a province-wide basis, and we have no idea of how it will relate to the individual school boards or counties or city boards in the province of Alberta.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that what is involved here is a simple request for information that is necessary for us to properly analyse the estimates. It is a request that examines this issue from the perspective of how it affects the different divisions in the province. In my view, if we're going to assess the estimates sensibly, we have to know the impact at the other end. We have to know what it means in school division X, Y, or Z.

It's fine to say we have an 11 per cent increase. But last year we found out after the estimates that in many divisions it wasn't anything like 11 per cent. It was 5 per cent, 6 per cent, what have you. So, Mr. Speaker, the request for information here is an effort to obtain information that I suggest all hon. members need if they're to be able to intelligently analyse the estimates of the Department of Education.

[Motion lost]

125. Mr. Notley moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

A list which gives, for each program and subprogram in the 1977-78 estimates, the estimated total payments under object of expenditure code 430 — Professional, Technical and Labour Service — with comparative forecast data for 1976-77.

[Motion carried]

126. Mr. Notley moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

A list which gives, for each program and subprogram in the 1977-78 estimates, the estimated total payments under object of expenditure code 730 — Grants to Business — with comparative forecast data for 1976-77.

[Motion carried]

head: **GOVERNMENT DESIGNATED BUSINESS**

1. Moved by Mr. Shaben:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta urge the government to implement the recommendations contained in the Environment Conservation

Authority report on erosion of land in northwestern Alberta.

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like first of all to express my congratulations to the members of the Environment Conservation Authority who prepared this excellent report. Some of those members are no longer with the authority, but the report has been carefully read by many of my constituents and people in northern Alberta. They are impressed with their work, particularly the way in which those representations made by the citizens of northwestern Alberta were received and acknowledged in the report.

The subject of the study, Mr. Speaker, the region concerned, is well over 100,000 square miles. So it must be of interest to Albertans other than those who live in the north, because this represents more than 40 per cent of our land area. Additionally, our agricultural potential in northern Alberta can range anywhere from 4 million to 10 million acres of agricultural land, that is land that is not presently being used for agriculture but has that potential. This study is of utmost importance in moving toward a proper use of this tremendous resource we have in Alberta.

There are well over 70 recommendations in this report, but I would like to read one on page 23. The Environment Conservation Authority recommends:

That Northwestern Alberta be recognized as an area that differs from the rest of Alberta in characteristics and conditions related to erosion susceptibility and that agricultural practices and land use and water management systems specifically suited to the area be developed and adopted.

It's most important, Mr. Speaker, that we recognize this difference, this fragility of the northern part of our province.

Another recommendation I would like to read would lend interest to all members in the Assembly and apply to other parts of the province. Recommendations within the report do just that. On page 69, recommendation No. 1 by the ECA:

That the need to employ the concept of integrated land use and water management for effective erosion control be emphasized at all levels, the family farm, the Land Use Assignment Committee, and Government departments and agencies with responsibilities for land or water use or management.

That recommendation, Mr. Speaker, would apply to all parts of the province in the way the government deals with matters of erosion or water management. We are growing more and more aware of the importance of water in all of North America, as evidenced by this winter. The lack of moisture in some parts of the United States and Canada has brought to our attention very firmly the importance of proper water use and management.

I would like in my remarks to deal primarily with the part of the study dealing with the Swan Hills watershed area and the Lesser Slave Lake water basin, because these two areas lie either in my constituency or adjacent to it and the problems we are experiencing affect my constituents. I look forward in the afternoon to hearing other members express their views on specific matters within the report or on general recommendations contained therein.

The Swan Hills and Lesser Slave Lake areas were

first developed for agriculture at the turn of the century, and the clearing of land was a slow, careful process. But in later years this clearing process has speeded up. Also, in 1957 the first oil was found in the Swan Hills. It resulted in a great deal of activity. There is now a large number of oil and gas wells in the Swan Hills, some 1,200. This has resulted in the denuding, by way of road construction, well sites, and other activities, of up to 18 per cent of the Swan Hills.

Now, the Swan Hills is the largest watershed area fully within the province of Alberta. The heights of the hills range to almost 5,000 feet. In other parts of the world they may even be considered mountains. It's a beautiful, rugged area, and it provides oil and natural resources. There is a great deal of forest resource within the Swan Hills.

The development of these resources has caused some of the difficulties being experienced in the Slave Lake basin. In other words the denuding of the hills has caused more rapid run-off, which has increased erosion in the rivers and caused silting in the Lesser Slave Lake which, incidentally, is the largest lake in Alberta.

In 1967 the previous government undertook a cost/benefit analysis to examine the possibilities of correcting some of the problems that had arisen from rapid development within the Swan Hills. Under the terms of that cost/benefit analysis they were limited to dealing with known factors. In other words they used about 55,000 acres of agricultural land. Since then, however, it's been discovered that a far greater amount of land has been affected by the problems that were experienced, probably an additional 100,000 acres as a result of high water tables, quick run-offs, and additional clearing.

This does not include the Indian reserve lands of Drift Pile and Sucker Creek, which in the '40s produced an abundance of hay, a lot of it shipped to southern Alberta. Their agricultural base has been practically lost as a result of the continued high lake levels and the high water table.

The effect has also been felt in the commercial fishing industry. Many commercial fishermen in the '60s, '50s, and '40s derived a good living from commercial fishing in Lesser Slave Lake and in the surrounding lakes. The catch totalled in the millions of pounds. There were processing plants along the lake.

The quota now is down to about 400,000 pounds. Biologists do not have an exact answer, nor are they certain of why the fish population [has been] reduced, nor are they sure why the time required for the fish to reach the age of maturity has increased. But they are aware that the population has been reduced. As a result it has affected the livelihood of many commercial fishermen. There is considerable evidence that the enormous amount of erosion and silting have affected the spawning areas of the lake, and as a result affected the livelihood of a number of people in that part of the province.

Another area of difficulty is with the village of Kinuso. It's a small village on the delta of the Swan River, and each year they suffer the threat of flood because of the rapid run-off from the Swan River. That delta of course has been built up over a long period of time, over thousands of years, and some people contend that the process of erosion goes on at all times. There's certainly no argument with that.

The argument I would present to members of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, is that this process of erosion has speeded up and that the rate of increase has been tremendous. It has caused the water to come out of the Swan Hills at a very rapid pace, ripping away the river banks. It has caused losses of cattle during high flood levels. It threatens the village. Each year they are faced with diking to protect the village.

Another area affected is tourism. Tourism in the north is in its infancy. However, I believe that the continued high lake levels and the fouling of the beaches have a definite deterrent effect on potential tourist development on that great lake of ours. We cannot, Mr. Speaker, use the cost/benefit criteria that were used in 1967, because there are other factors. There are human factors involved in preserving that lake, preserving the livelihood and increasing the economic opportunities for the people in that part of the province of Alberta.

This situation in northern Alberta is of importance because, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, a huge land area is affected either directly or indirectly, and the future growth of this province depends on the wise use of our land. There is a growing awareness within government and an awareness by the citizens of the area, and their awareness is increasing. The Minister of the Environment and I have had many discussions, and we have had meetings with constituents. I feel there is a heightening awareness of the difficulties. The citizens have been aware of the problems since the '60s, and they are becoming a little bit frustrated about the lack of action. There have certainly been a lot of studies, evaluations, and cost/benefit analyses done, but the action thus far has been minimal.

The Northern Alberta Development Council, of which I'm a member, has received many briefs from people in the area on the problems I outlined earlier, including briefs from commercial fishermen, the agricultural community, and the Indian reserves. I would think one of the steps, and it's partially there, is that a local advisory committee be properly constituted by order in council, and that this advisory council work closely with the department and the minister to see that reasonable and proper priorities are set in order to move toward a solution to some of the problems we face. I would also urge that the matter of soil erosion and flooding problems in northwestern Alberta, raised in this study, attain a position of high priority within the Department of the Environment.

I would also suggest that the Department of the Environment work closely with the other departments of government — that is, Transportation, Agriculture, and Energy and Natural Resources — in assuring that the kinds of things that happened in the past do not continue to happen. Until 1975 a joint project to reclaim oil sites was under way between the Department of the Environment and the Department of Energy, working with the oil companies to clean up and restore those oil sites contributing to erosion. A project like this could be revived. I recognize the problem cannot be solved in a short time, but it's imperative that this priority be set for the area and that the departments of government work together.

Another area for co-operation that would be worth while pursuing is with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The Indian bands

affected by the problem are prepared to make representation, and have in fact, to the federal minister responsible to work with the province in order to alleviate the problem. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that more effort could be undertaken in this direction.

Last November, in the heritage fund capital projects division, the government set aside \$2.5 million for reclamation under the Department of the Environment. However, this was largely targeted for other areas. I hope we would consider a reclamation project that might include a proposal similar to that advanced by a group titled Kannachie. The group proposed that Indians, Metis, and native people be involved in the handwork — and there's a great deal of handwork that could be done in Swan Hills — in correcting erosion problems, and that a proposal such as this be considered since it would provide much needed employment as well as helping to solve some of the problems. There's no doubt in my mind about the need and urgency of giving this problem a high priority within the Department of the Environment and the government.

I would like to just outline the benefits. I think there would be four in number.

First of all, the social benefits. If the government attached a high priority to correcting some of the difficulties in northwestern Alberta, a great deal of the uncertainty would be removed from the agricultural community. Many farmers have sold their land as a result of the policy put in place by the previous government in 1967; that rather than correcting the problem, they would buy up the affected lands from the farmers. So this would be an immediate benefit in that it would remove the uncertainty for the agricultural community and give them some feeling of future in the agricultural potential of the area.

The economic benefits would be tremendous. Again in the area of agriculture, it would free tens of thousands of acres of land for useful agricultural production. It could lead and would lead, hopefully, to the rejuvenation of the commercial fishing industry.

In the future and in the present, it would provide for a growth in tourism. It's been said in the House over and over again how crowded our parks are, but this vast area of northern Alberta with its beautiful beaches and marvellous wilderness areas would be accessible and attractive to all Albertans and to people outside Alberta.

Environmentally it's just plain good sense to have a healthy environment. It's good sense to clean up our rivers and lakes for a balanced sort of ecology, a balance between agriculture, industry, and a healthy environment.

Mr. Speaker, those are the four areas. In the future, what better legacy could we leave to the citizens of Alberta, and specifically the citizens of northern Alberta, than a healthy environment?

Thank you very much.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, first of all let me congratulate the hon. Member from Slave Lake for introducing resolution 1 on the Order Paper, and for government for designating it government business today. It's not very often that I congratulate members on the other side of the House, but in my judgment it would really be unfortunate if members didn't have an opportunity to discuss this extremely important ECA report on erosion in northwestern Alberta. Mr. Speaker, I hope

there will be another opportunity before the end of the session, knowing we have only an hour to debate this matter today, and that the government will call this motion again.

In reading over the recommendations of the ECA, I would have to say that in general I agree with the recommendations contained in the report. There are going to be some specific areas where there would be nuances of disagreement. The philosophy of the report is dead-on in my judgment, but some of the specific proposals are subject to debate.

It's important to recall, Mr. Speaker, that 469 people and 69 briefs were presented to the ECA during the hearings held throughout the Lesser Slave Lake and Peace River country. The report deals with erosion problems in the Peace River area as well as the special problems in the Swan Hills/Slave Lake district of the province.

Mr. Speaker, turning to the recommendation on page 23 that northwestern Alberta be recognized as an area with special erosion problems and that agricultural land use and water management be adapted to that fact, it seems to me we really can't argue with that particular recommendation. I would just underline the importance of the recommendation by suggesting we're going to have to follow that up with funds for research.

Wherever you go in the north, people make the argument — and in my judgment it's a valid argument — that if we can invest \$200 million in heritage money to expand irrigation in the south — and no one in northwestern Alberta quarrels with that proposition — then the same argument can be used for erosion control in northwestern Alberta. If we're going to spend heritage money to bring new agricultural production into place as a result of irrigation, then we can also invest heritage money to reclaim land which is frequently flooded or to deal with the problem of erosion, which is a continuous problem for all hon. members from northwestern Alberta. I can't imagine any other department of government that I have to deal with more frequently than water resources. I'm sure the Member for Lesser Slave Lake would agree that if you're representing a rural constituency in northwestern Alberta, invariably you come up against one case after another of water resource problems.

Mr. Speaker, as is pointed out in the report, there is presently an arrangement under the water resources program for 50-50 capital cost sharing of water resource projects. The proposal made in the ECA report is that that be changed from 50-50 to 75-25. Let me just take a moment to set out some of the arguments for a change in the funding structure. I think most people who are dealing with water resource projects would quickly accept the proposition that there must be some local cost sharing of water resource projects. If 100 per cent of the cost were to be assumed by the provincial government, you know we would have water resource projects all over the place. It's very easy to say yes if there are unlimited supplies of money to develop water resource projects.

But there has to be some sort of cost/benefit analysis on whether a water resource project makes sense. If it makes sense it should proceed. However the difficulty is that the present 50-50 cost-sharing arrangement leaves the local government with the

responsibility of digging up 50 per cent of the capital cost of a project. In many cases, particularly in the improvement districts, 50 per cent is just beyond the question. One can say, well, why don't you just relate that back to the farmer. That's one possibility, I suppose. But frequently 50 per cent is just too high a level of local responsibility.

The suggestion here is that we change the 50-50 cost-sharing arrangement to 75-25. Another proposal has been made by the northern improvement districts. Their suggestion is that rather than going to the 75-25 split proposed by the ECA, perhaps another alternative might be to set a common mill rate for improvement districts in the north. That would cost-share the local part. That specific proposal was brought to my attention by the president of the improvement districts association in Alberta.

Whether we go that route or change the structure of cost-sharing, I think two things are fairly obvious. Point number one, we do need a better break between the provincial and local level. Point number two, there has to be some local responsibility left if we are going to have responsible water resource management and development in the province.

I can just simply point out to members of the Legislature that there is really nothing more frustrating, from the standpoint of either the water resource people or a local MLA, than dealing with water resource problems. I recall after I was first elected, I got a call from some people in Worsley. They were very concerned that a culvert had been plugged. As a result of this culvert being plugged, water had backed over this individual's quarter section. He suddenly found he had a lake on the quarter section. So pressure was brought to bear. I was contacted, and I talked to the local district engineer. They unplugged the culvert. As a matter of fact they dug the culvert out. Unfortunately water has a tendency to run downhill, so suddenly we had this entire quarter section of a lake sweeping down [on] about four or five other farmers. Instead of the Department of Highways, the water resource people, and myself having one angry farmer, we suddenly found ourselves with about six angry farmers. So the problem of dealing with water resources is something which quite frankly would challenge the diplomacy of, I wouldn't say Henry Kissinger, but at least one of the best in the business.

There are several other important recommendations in the ECA report, Mr. Speaker, that I'd like to underline. On page 33 of the report they raise the question of the impact of clear cutting on drainage patterns. This has been brought to my attention, again in the Worsley area, by a number of the smaller sawmill operators who look at a large outfit like Canfor and see clear cutting tactics being used. No question it's more efficient from the viewpoint of the large corporation, but from the standpoint of what it does to the drainage patterns, all of a sudden you have a much larger amount of water sweeping downhill. That can't help but increase erosion.

One of the suggestions in the ECA report is that we move toward better control of forestry practices, particularly in sensitive areas; hills that represent watersheds can create real hazard for massive erosion if stripped of the forestry cover.

Of course, in northern Alberta everybody is concerned about roads. I have to register a caveat on the

recommendation on page 35 that there is an impact of roads on flooding; no question about that. But on the other hand we still need an awful lot of roads in northwestern Alberta, so I wouldn't want the Minister of Transportation to become too perplexed with these recommendations. We'll go up to the Canfors and the oil companies, but the Department of Highways had better carry on with the job of building those roads. But there are problems from time to time. Some of the recommendations in the report about road building are practical though, and in my judgment could probably be implemented to the mutual benefit of the farmers in the area and the Department of Transportation.

On page 37 of the report the ECA makes reference again to another problem one comes across in rural areas: the flooding created by our national animal the beaver. The beavers are indeed busy little animals, but they can be pesky pests at times when they create dikes which, particularly in slow-moving streams, can back up water over a good deal of valuable farmland. The ECA report deals with that, although I think in substance it generally comes down on the side of the department as opposed to fully recognizing some of the concerns of the farmers in the area.

I find it pretty hard to justify, for example, losing probably as much as 2,000 acres of creek bottom farmland east of Fairview as a result of the activity of beavers in a very sluggish, slow moving stream. You know we are all very proud of our national symbol, but it seems to me one has to balance the impact these animals have when a lot of valuable land is under water.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move from there to look very briefly at some of the concerns expressed about the general problem in the Lesser Slave Lake/Swan Hills area. Just before the Legislature began I had the opportunity of spending some time in the Lesser Slave Lake region and met with the village council in Kinuso and with a number of farmers around that area. I couldn't help but be impressed with the information they brought to my attention.

One gentleman's father had homesteaded in the Kinuso area right after the turn of the century. He told me that between 1900 and 1960 there were only three major floods in the delta area. The Kinuso district is really quite a good farming section of Alberta — only three floods. He claimed those floods were caused by natural events — forest fires I believe on at least two occasions. Well, since we had the enormous oil development in the Swan Hills in 1960 and cut lines have been pushed through the bush, they have had floods every year. This particular gentleman advised me he had been flooded out three times in 1976. Of course we all know we had very high rainfall in northern Alberta, much higher than average. Nevertheless, to be flooded out on three occasions — and he showed me a picture where he was knee-deep in water in front of his farm.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is a good deal of concern around the Kinuso area about recurring floods. They argue this is in large part due to the practices of the oil companies in Swan Hills.

The report points out that a committee was apparently organized in the late '60s of officials and oil companies which would look into the flooding problems, and that for several years they had meet-

ings on how the problem could be alleviated. But for some strange reason, and I haven't been able to figure this out yet, the committee has not been active for some time. The ECA recommends it should be reactivated. No question about that.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the balance, there is really no doubt that Alberta as a whole has gained enormously in royalty revenue alone from the vast amounts of oil and natural gas produced in the Swan Hills area. But I would argue that as we have benefited from this revenue we also have a concurrent responsibility to make sure the people in the areas affected are not just left to try to solve these problems by themselves.

One of the points the ECA makes rather well in the report is that between buying back land on one hand and just putting it into public reserve, or bringing in programs that would contribute to flood control so the land can remain in production, where possible we should choose the latter. In other words we should be developing flood control programs and putting in the dollars necessary to make sure this land can remain in production.

I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that the situation around Kinuso is probably the classic dichotomy between industrial development on one hand, which has very tangible benefits for the entire province, and the impact of that industrial development on the surrounding communities.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake also mentioned the question of water management in Lesser Slave Lake itself, and the enormous opportunities in that region for tourist development. There really are very few places in Canada more beautiful than the Lesser Slave Lake region. When one travels along Lesser Slave Lake, one can't help but be moved by two things: the natural beauty of the area on one hand, and on the other the very severe problems that exist for many of the people who are living there.

I can readily see why people who have been born and raised in that area would want to stay in a place like Kinuso, why they would resist the government coming along and saying, look you're in a flood plain, we're going to buy you out and move you to some other place. Or why people in a little community like Faust, after the sawmills and fishing have shut down — incidentally one of the important points in this report is that they've at least some evidence to indicate that industrial development in Swan Hills had an unfavorable impact on fishing in Slave Lake — would want to live in this community and stay there.

So when the Member for Lesser Slave Lake mentions the tourist potential, there is no doubt in my mind this is certainly a very real opening in northern Alberta. The entire region has fantastic tourist potential, but particularly the Lesser Slave Lake area of the province.

In general, Mr. Speaker, the ECA report is a sensitive, thoughtful document. While some of the specific recommendations can be quarreled with, one really can't quarrel with the overall philosophy which in my view merits the support of members of the Legislature and, as quickly as feasible, action by the government.

MR. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, erosion is erosion wherever it occurs. Once it does occur it may take

years, and in some cases it's impossible to bring the land back to its original condition. In many cases it is very costly to prevent water erosion, but if you consider the long-term effects of erosion it puts the cost in a better perspective. In other words, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. I have seen the results of water erosion in my own constituency, and it is not a pretty sight. We have a peculiar situation which seems to happen every 10 or 11 years in the Oldman River basin, which I would like to outline to the Assembly.

First, there is a drop of 4,000 feet in 50 miles on this watershed. In normal or dry years like this one, we have no problems. However, if we have a heavy snow pack in the mountains, combined with a late, cold spring, we have potential for trouble. The trouble comes if we get a heavy rainstorm lasting four or five days in June. I have some figures to show what can happen.

June is the peak month of the year for the maximum daily flow during this period on this watershed. The rivers in this area are in flood, and some minimal damage is done by flooding and erosion during this period. From 1912 to 1976, the average rate of flow was 12,500 cubic feet per second. In 1953 the maximum peak flow was on June 10, when 102,000 cubic feet per second went down this river system. This is over eight times the normal June rate of flow. The average for the entire month was 39,000 cubic feet per second, or over three times the normal rate of flow.

To show that this could happen again, 11 years later on June 10, 1964, the maximum flow was 70,000 cubic feet per second, or 5.6 times the daily average. Again, 11 years later on June 21, 1975, the peak flow was 86,000 cubic feet per second, which was 6.9 times the average daily flow. And during the entire month, more than twice the normal flow was recorded.

With regard to the region mentioned in the resolution, personally I know very little about the area. I read the report entitled Erosion of Land in Northwestern Alberta. I would urge hon. members who have not read this report to read it, as it brings into focus a very serious problem.

I was struck by the concern the residents of this part of the province showed about water erosion. The ECA received a petition from 200 citizens to hold these hearings. I was also impressed by the area of about 100,000 square miles to be studied. There were 115 briefs submitted to these hearings, and 469 people attended them, which gives some idea of the interest generated in this subject.

There were 77 recommendations that flowed from this study. One that I thought was appropriate was on page 40.

That the role of the Land Use Assignment Committee be strengthened in its advisory capacity on the assignment of Crown lands to specific uses.

The reason I thought that was appropriate is that there's so much Crown land in this area. I also agree with the Member for Spirit River-Fairview, for the same reason, that cost sharing should be on a 75-25 per cent basis.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to sum up by saying water erosion is a very serious problem province-wide. It is a problem we must come to grips with. Therefore I hope the members of the Legisla-

ture will support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

DR. BACKUS: Mr. Speaker, I think this is an excellent motion, and I'm delighted that the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake brought it forward. I've enjoyed reading this report, and found it very educational and certainly something I can recommend to all members to read. As a person living in this area for the last 21 years, I can certainly appreciate the problems dealt with in the report.

I think maybe some of their reporting is indicative of a very scientific approach to the thing. When they talk about "disposition of the unsorted and unstratified material frequently called till", and "In the lower elevations, sedimentary layers composed of" et cetera, to most of us up there, they're talking about gumbo. To differentiate it from the gumbo which I'm sure most constituents claim is part of the property of their soil, the gumbo up there is often referred to as Peace River gumbo, or Grande Prairie gumbo. I think it bears certain fairly unique qualities, in that when it's wet it's very, very slippery; as it dries it becomes very adherent; and as it becomes completely dry it forms a water-impervious hardpan, which certainly is contributory to creating the problems experienced there.

I think the concept of the unique soil problems in this area is brought out very well in the report. I think too the point that there has been a pressure of development up there — that land was open to develop, and agricultural development occurred very rapidly in the area — has been brought out well in the report and certainly is a factor contributing to this whole problem. What I don't think was brought out so well in the report is the relatively short growing season we have in that country.

I think these three points — the unique soil, the pressure of farming development and other developments in the area, and the relatively short growing season — are the three factors that have led to the erosion problems in the area.

I think the way this soil retains water on its surface when it's level, or allows the overlying soil to slide off it when it's wet, is probably a very significant part of the problem. The high retention of moisture or water in the area was well illustrated to me in my early days in Grande Prairie, when we had only two of our roads paved. All the rest were gumbo when it was wet. After a particularly heavy rain I was going down the street and I saw a hat lying on top of a puddle just by the sidewalk. It looked like a fairly good hat so I bent down and picked it up and I found there was a head underneath it. After apologizing for removing his hat so unceremoniously, I asked him if he could be helped. He said, well actually he wasn't so worried about himself, it was his wife in the cab of the truck that he was standing on.

Certainly we do have problems of water retention there. I think when you go there in the period of spring run-off and see the masses of water lying in fields, you can't altogether blame the farmer for wanting to get rid of that water so he can get onto his field as early as possible and get the seed in. Therefore it's not surprising that he seeks ways of draining off as much of that water as he can into the nearest ditch, as quickly as he can. If not done properly of course, this leads to the water running off that field

taking some of the soil with it, and ending up in the field of somebody else, who then repeats the process until the soil from the area gradually finds its way down to the rivers.

If we are to get the farmers in the area to undertake programs that will prevent this erosion — the maintenance of shelter belts not with the idea of preventing the wind, although that can be a problem too, but [with] the idea of retaining either bush or grass along the sides of fields so the soil is not carried away by the run-off — I think we are going to have to go in for a very major educational job for the farmers there and, I'm afraid, to some extent introduce controls and regulations to get them not to try to get all their fields dry at the earliest possible opportunity.

I don't think the individual farmers are necessarily the only people to blame. When you get this run-off and lying of water along the fields and roads, local government bodies get anxious to get the water away from the roads so they won't be too damaged. And some of the meandering little streams that run gently across the countryside get straightened so the water will run off more easily. This is a very practical measure when you think of it: just straighten out the pipe and the water runs through it much quicker, therefore you get rid of it much quicker. But you also get rid of a good deal of the topsoil. Along with this you pile up the water farther downstream, so the next county or municipal government has a problem sorting out the flooding in its area.

It's been very interesting to watch this in practice in relation to Bear Lake and Bear Creek. Bear Lake, which 30 years ago was a great recreational area, used to be a very nice lake with a lovely sandy bottom. Because the city wanted to have its water supply from the lake, it put a weir at the outlet of the lake. Because all the farmers in the area wanted to get their fields drained early, they straightened all the ditches and run-off streams into the lake. The result is that although it still has a lovely sandy bottom, you have to wiggle your toes through a foot of mud before you get to it. The lake itself has deteriorated from a good recreational lake to something not much more than a high-class slough.

Bear Creek, running from this lake and winding through the county, tended to hold up the water. Various farmers and various roads in the county frequently had flood problems. They've now straightened Bear Creek so the water drains through that area much more easily. The result is that all the farms have been carried down into the city's reservoir. We now have a real problem of excessive water coming into the reservoir, resulting in weakening of the dam. It has cost the city and the province considerable funds to reinforce this. It's also caused a good deal of silting. So the city has had to go down to the Wapiti River to get its water supply.

Of course it led to flooding within the city below the dam. Because of the pressure, they had to keep the gate open and let the water rush through. The result was that it flooded all the low-lying area along the side of the creek below, where again the creek wound gently through the countryside and made a very attractive valley, but not very attractive if it was flooded. So they straightened that creek, and now we don't have flooding problems there. But of course farther down stream they are getting problems of more flooding.

This is how it tends to go. Probably the most significant recommendations in this report are the ones that recommend more careful joint planning between the water resources people, the highways people, the various municipalities, the agricultural people, and individuals in the area.

I was interested in the way the Member for Spirit River-Fairview rather obliquely suggested that Procter & Gamble's clear cut program was setting a bad example for the farmers — how they tended to hold up Procter & Gamble as an example of the most economical way of doing things, therefore why shouldn't they clear cut too. Mind you, clear cutting was going on long before Procter & Gamble ever moved into the area. I think it should be noted that Procter & Gamble in fact introduced a system of contour cutting instead of the block cutting previously used in clearing pulpwood down towards Hinton.

They have in fact developed a conservation program to prevent erosion that I think is an extremely good example of the type of work and co-operation that can be done with the forest industry in trying to prevent this problem of erosion. I think North Canadian Forest Industry, another big firm in the area, has also been working in this direction. Although it's only in more recent years that they have, both these firms are an excellent example to everybody of the way forest industry can co-operate with the needs in the area, recognize the problems, and give leadership in developing methods of avoiding this very serious problem.

The other recommendation I think was well worth while was the suggestion that an erosion index be established. I think this is something that could be looked at throughout the province. I was delighted that a member from the south of the province also got into this debate, because I'm sure this is a problem throughout the province. If we could develop an erosion index which would indicate the danger of erosion in the various areas, it might at least provide a red flag for people to avoid doing the sorts of things that might lead to erosion.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention the beavers. I spoke to the members of the environment conservation board, and they were certainly very concerned. I think they could still hear the echoes in this House of the time some bears were eliminated and the poor minister at the time was accused of all sorts of terrible behavior in eliminating bears that were a real nuisance. So they were very concerned that they not suggest similar treatment for the beavers. In their report, I think they have done a very noble job of trying to balance the need for conservation and the elimination of problems caused by the beavers and, at the same time, the preservation of our national animal.

Thank you.

MR. ZANDER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few minutes to speak on this motion . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but the allotted time for this designated business has just passed.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous leave of the Assembly to continue with this motion. There appears to be considerable interest in it. If

members would agree that, notwithstanding temporary Standing Order 8(2)(e), we could continue, I would ask for leave at this time.

MR. SPEAKER: May the hon. Government House Leader have the requested unanimous consent?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ZANDER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and also members of the Assembly. I think it is a very important motion. For this reason, I think most of us from rural areas and some of the urban areas are very much concerned about the environment today.

I would however, Mr. Speaker, like to broaden the motion without making an amendment. I think the hon. members who have spoken have also spoken to this effect, that we're not only dealing with the northwestern part of the province but also with the eastern watershed of the Rocky Mountains. I believe that most of the members in the Legislature are familiar to some degree with the watershed and the fast run-off now occurring because of the roads and [because of] the clearing that has occurred over the years in the area. It can only be expected that the run-off will be that much faster.

This brings me to the subject of the management of our water resources, Mr. Speaker. I'm thinking of the water resources of the North Saskatchewan watershed which runs through my constituency and is beneficial to most of the province, the city of Edmonton in particular. I think we find that in many years, looking back to '54 and '64, we had an exceptional run-off. There was no means of storage of water in my constituency at that time except on the Brazeau Dam, which was a joint effort by the government of that day and Calgary Power. While I'm on that subject, Mr. Speaker, I think had we and the government of that day both been more conscious of the conditions when that dam was constructed — it was left to flood an area with all the trees and everything else in it — we certainly wouldn't allow that to happen today. But since it is there, and it's going to take perhaps another 50 years before it's going to disappear — and may never disappear — we have to manage our water resources for leaner years. One is occurring right now, with very light snowfall in the mountains. We can expect the quality of water that is going to be used by people in the city of Edmonton not to be as good. Many of the people further downstream from Edmonton are going to find the quality of water less acceptable than it is when we have a larger run-off.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to the area of the forested and also the agricultural parts of my constituency. In the constituency of Drayton Valley, in the immediate area we have in excess of 4,000 oil and gas wells, and new wells are being drilled every day. We accept the fact that we have to have new resources; the oil and gas has to be explored, this is true. We need the resources, at least we need an inventory of resources available to us. Over the past number of years I think the oil industry, particularly exploration and drilling, has shown a marked improvement over what occurred in the late '40s and early '50s. I think they're becoming more conscious that we must leave some heritage for our children and generations to come to enjoy. It is to this extent

that I wish to congratulate the oil industry for the type of exploration they're doing now. It is not related to [what was] done back in 1947 and '50 where seismic crews went through the forested and agricultural areas and cleared the lines off. There was no field management at that time to take care of the run-off that would occur. Today in the forested area we still have marks of the kind of erosion that occurred. But many of the companies have gone back into areas that have to a large degree been devastated by washouts. They have at least made improvements, made diversions, and have put debris in to slow down the water of these various streams.

In agriculture in the same area, Mr. Speaker, we find that much of the agricultural land, in my area at least, is of gray-wooded soil. The hon. member from Grande Prairie doesn't really know what gumbo is. Because during the early discovery of the Pembina field, we referred to rubber gum boots as "Drayton Valley oxfords". At times, many times, you could not get through the area unless you went by a track caterpillar or something like that.

The clearing of this land, which lends itself well to the production of forage crops and the cattle industries, has to be managed in an entirely different manner. I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker, if somehow the Department of Agriculture through the agricultural committees throughout the province, since agriculture and soil vary so from one area to another... that more attention is not paid to some of these areas which lend themselves to huge erosions such as occurred in the western part of my constituency, where the municipalities after a number of years have gone back through grants with government matching dollars to try to stop the erosion, to decrease or impede the flow of water so it would not erode, especially closer to the Pembina River and the North Saskatchewan.

It is with these comments, Mr. Speaker, that I would have to conclude. I believe, in the construction of roads — and this can occur in any part of the province where water is carried to a greater distance down the roadways in ditches before it is crossed over and then crossed back again in order to slow down the water — many times the ditches are not properly grassed by the municipalities — and I think the government is probably as guilty — and probably [they] wouldn't have a chance to grass-in soon enough before the erosion occurs.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that more attention be placed on the construction of roads and highways, especially in areas subject to erosion. It is much easier to pay \$200, \$300, or \$400 for a culvert to cross the water over and slow it down than to turn around and run it another quarter mile down the road.

Then we find at many times in construction of roads, most farmers want the water off their fields as fast as they can. Then of course they come to the municipalities or the government, as the case may be, and ask for better drainage to get the water away from the roads and the fields. In fact some of them have asked that municipalities be permitted to place ditches in their farmland so they can get the water off their land much sooner.

It's the terrain, Mr. Speaker, that I'm really worried about in my area, because we have rolling lands to the east, rolling lands to the west, and flat lands in

the middle. We have seen, as aerial photographs will testify, that when huge floods occur in the area, they take with them acres upon acres of good river-bottom land. In one case, Mr. Speaker, over the past number of the years the river has ultimately changed and widened to almost three-quarters of a mile because of the erosion of the banks of the North Saskatchewan River.

Silting has to occur. The Department of Highways then has to move the ferries. So there must be a way we can control the water in some of our major rivers, the Pembina and the North Saskatchewan. Today we have the Big Horn, and we have the Brazeau Dam which lends itself to some degree of control of the North Saskatchewan River.

But I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if in the future another area could be looked at: perhaps a low dam which could back up the water slowly for miles up a river, so we could hold back this water so desperately needed by other people down the streams. Why let it all go into the north, into the Arctic Circle, when we can make use of it in years to come?

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I think management of our soils, our environment, and our water has to be of utmost importance, not only to members in the Legislature but to all the people in industry and in the farming community. All of us have to lend a hand in the best way to manage our resources for the enjoyment of future generations.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to offer just a few comments on this resolution on behalf of the Department of the Environment and perhaps also on behalf of the Environment Conservation Authority. I too would like to compliment the mover of the resolution for bringing the matter before the Legislature.

As hon. members are aware, the matter was investigated through public hearings held by the Environment Conservation Authority. A report, which is very easy to read and contains a very comprehensive list of recommendations, was submitted some time ago. Since then the department has had those recommendations under consideration in order to work out a plan of response to the ECA report. Therefore I think it's very timely and useful that the members of the Legislature, particularly those from constituencies that may be affected, and other members who also cope with erosion problems in their parts of the province, might have a chance to comment on it.

You know from reading the report the history of erosion in the Peace River and northwest parts of the province; [it] is not new. They make reference to it as early as 1917. Of course some of the activities, first by way of homesteaders and later the transportation and natural resource industries in the Swan Hills area, have added to the problems.

I was particularly interested today in the House in listening to the members' comments on problems they're all facing with respect to damage or annoyances which have accrued to their constituents as a result of the forces of water. I suppose if we let nature take its course throughout the province, the face and make-up of the province would continually be changed due to the working force of water. We've all seen the strength of that resource when it's out of control.

The recommendations in the ECA report number 67. Very few of them really have a heavy financial

commitment attached to them, Mr. Speaker, and this is interesting. Going through them, I think we could break them down into three broad groups: we'd have resolutions dealing with management techniques, another set dealing with technological matters, and a third set dealing with administrative or legislative matters.

The first 34 in fact deal with management kinds of recommendations. For example, I noticed one of the members spoke about the possibility of changing the cost-sharing formula with respect to drainage projects as part of that management kind of recommendation that the Legislature may want to consider.

I think hon. members are probably aware of the land purchase policy in effect around Lesser Slave Lake, where there are so many problems as a result of sedimentation, changes in watercourses, and the flooding that goes with those kinds of things. That land purchase policy was initiated in 1968 by the government of that time and had attached to it a principle of paying for relocation of farmers who were dislocated as a result of this program. The second part of the policy dealt with the matter of simply buying people out who are below a certain contour of elevation and therefore subject to flooding.

Over the years, and particularly in the last couple of years, this policy has come in for some careful review. We're finding in fact that as a result of the changing watercourse and the heavy sedimentation, the original contour line that was set is no longer what might be called, I suppose, a valid bench mark to which the land purchase policy might be applied. We're just wondering — perhaps many years from now some future government would still be looking at some newly defined contour line and still buying out farms that are being flooded.

So perhaps the land purchase principle is one that needs review. We are undertaking that review. It's under way by Hu Harries and Associates, working directly with the Department of the Environment.

Just to give you some idea of what's involved though, to date about 75 per cent of the farms below the 1,902-foot contour have either been purchased or acquired through The Tax Recovery Act. This has affected 58 farmers. I think we'd all want to reflect on what that means: if a method of flood control is really effective when you buy out 58 farmers. You wonder how long this process can go on without having a fairly important effect on the local economy. Those 58 farmers, Mr. Speaker, represent some 15,500 acres of land. To date the government has acquired that for just over \$900,000. So it hasn't been what might be called a cheap program either in the dollar sense, the area, or the human factor sense.

I think it's unfortunate that 2,800 of those acres were acquired through the tax recovery process. All members of the House appreciate what an unpleasant process, and usually painful to the family involved, the tax recovery process is.

Our latest estimates tell us that there are still about 5,200 acres of farmland to acquire below that 1,902-foot contour. I must confess I'm not completely happy or satisfied with the prospect of buying that much more land and dislocating that many more farmers. So I hope a better method might be found.

That deals only with the particular area around Lesser Slave Lake. I think some of the other speakers ahead of me have commented very well on the par-

ticular problems within their own constituencies. Water everywhere has been mentioned, beavers, various industries. I know even some of our own government departments like Transportation could probably pay more sensitive attention to some of the problems their construction work is causing.

So in summary I want to say that both the Environment Conservation Authority and the Department of the Environment have been very concerned about the erosion problem in northwestern Alberta now. They're looking for logical and good ways to control that erosion and, at the same time, to try to safeguard the homes and farms of people there, recognize the rights of groups of persons who may be there, and still permit economical development of the area. I'm simply here today, Mr. Speaker, to lend my support to what I believe is a very good resolution and one I hope the members of the Legislature will endorse.

MR. KIDD: Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a few brief remarks about this report. I suppose the report should have been entitled "Water Erosion of Land in Northwestern Alberta", because of course in my view the greatest erosion force we have in all Alberta is wind, not water. In fact it has been the greatest erosion force on farmlands in all North America for some great period of time. So I'd like to support what has been said so well here, but just make a few remarks that might add a little to the discussion.

First of all when talking about erosion, we're talking about a process we cannot reverse. We can dam the river and stop the flow, but as long as the rain comes down and the wind blows and some rivers flow, we will have erosion. When I was taking geology someone asked our professor, where are the mountains that used to be in the Crownsnest Pass? It was all mountains at one time. He said, why they're in the Mississippi delta. And they certainly are. So we can't stop erosion. We can control it. But it's a geological fact of life that we're going to have erosion. This building will erode because of wind and we'll repair it.

So I fully agree that man should make every effort he can to prevent erosion, as has been said so well today. But when man is doing that, we should take some lessons from what has happened in the rest of the world. In Egypt the building of the Aswan Dam was a great project. The theory was that they would then be able to have a great supply of water to irrigate the delta of the Nile. In fact the thought was fine, but some things really happened when the Aswan Dam was built. First of all, while it controlled the water flow, and irrigation was possible in a sensible and systematic way, it stopped the great floods and the silt that used to spread out over the delta and revived that area from time immemorial. Another thing it did was reduce the flow of fresh water into the Mediterranean Sea, and the salinity of that sea is increasing, maybe to a dangerous degree. It also created a great body of fresh water around which snails grew, and those snails spread that terrible disease, bilharzia.

AN HON. MEMBER: Say it again?

MR. KIDD: Bilharzia.

The only point I'm making there is: when man starts to control the environment I hope he will look

at all possible side effects. We've seen some of them here in Alberta: the building of the Peace River dam, and the cries from the people trapping muskrats down in the delta. So I believe we have to be very careful when man interferes with God.

Now just one other point here. The report is entitled *Erosion of Land in Northwestern Alberta*. And as I say, I agree with what it says. But it didn't go far enough. They should have put in another recommendation saying, as time goes on you're going to be faced with that real eroder, wind. That's what's happening in southern Alberta.

AN HON. MEMBER: There's a lot of wind down there.

MR. KIDD: There's a lot of wind here too. But farmers who know better in southern Alberta, and some of them are sitting on the other side of the room, hopefully still with us, know that farmers are very forgetful. Because it's been wet in the last few years, people have not left the fields in stubble. I think there could have been some addendum to the report to make it broader, to point out the problems that will occur in northwestern Alberta as you get more agriculture and as the wind blows, as it will, on and on.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I'm just saying when man starts to fool around with what nature made, let him be very careful; and secondly, I think we could have added wind to that. I will not provide any more right now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, my remarks are going to be very few on this particular resolution, not because I don't consider the resolution very, very important but because so much has already been said on it, and I don't want to repeat.

I agree with the hon. Member for Cardston that erosion is erosion wherever it occurs. I have a little difficulty accepting that all erosion is the responsibility of God. I think much of the erosion taking place along our rivers and creek beds today is because of what man, not God, has done. Be that as it may, the man who is losing a lot of land and may lose his homesite isn't particularly concerned about whether God or man caused the erosion. But he is very, very much concerned about the banks falling in and eventually maybe his home falling into the stream too. I, and I suppose all other members, have been in homes where this is a real threat. I believe today our environmental laws and our stricter supervision of tree cutting in the foothills are retarding to some degree the great amount of erosion that has been taking place. All of that is to the good.

I am also not convinced that erosion must have huge sums of money, to be corrected in all instances. Certainly in some cases this is so. I recall erosion on the banks of the Red Deer River in the north side of the Drumheller valley in the Midlandvale district some 10 or 15 years ago. This erosion became very bad following a spring thaw where the ice came in and, between the river and the ice hitting the banks, there was a tremendous loss of land. It threatened the road along the banks of the river, and the homes were just immediately north of the banks of the river. The sums of money quoted by some engineers to correct that were gigantic and almost impossible even to consider.

I remember speaking to an engineer who holds quite a high and responsible position in the Department of Transportation now, asking him if he would go down and take a look at it and see, with his knowledge of water, if something couldn't be done in a more economical way to arrest that erosion and save the road and the homes. He did this and came back with a very simple solution compared to the previous one; namely, hauling in rocks and rip-rapping the banks. The way the river was flowing, he felt that would stop the erosion and save the homes and the road. To lose the road would have meant a great deal, and to lose the homes would have meant a tremendous expense for many people. So in a winter work program we authorized the hauling of the rock, and it was rip-rapped under an engineer's supervision for about a quarter of a mile.

Mr. Speaker, that cost a relatively small sum of money. But that rip-rap is still in place today some 12 or 15 years later in spite of a number of floods, and the Red Deer can become a very vicious body of water during floods. I was delighted and the people were delighted because they saw the erosion arrested, and there's been little erosion there since that time.

I don't think we have to go to engineering projects of gigantic cost to stop erosion in all cases. We have erosion now in many places along the banks of the Red Deer. As a matter of fact, the other day I believe the authority and the hon. minister received a brief from the people of Cambria, who have become alarmed at the rate the south bank of the Red Deer River is eroding in that area. Some have calculated the number of years before their homes go tumbling into the river, if it goes that far. They were quite happy with the response of the hon. Minister of the Environment, who sent a top-notch engineer to look at this. The Authority is now checking it as well.

I'm satisfied the engineers of the departments of the Environment, Transportation, et cetera, can come up with a relatively cheap solution that's going to arrest the erosion there. In my mind, rip-rapping of rock is one of the easier ways of stopping erosion along the banks of some of our rivers. When we consider the erosion taking place in probably thousands of acres of arable land, affecting highways, roads, and homes, it becomes a gigantic and enormously costly program.

I remember saying to the cabinet of which I was a part at one time that I was not happy and the people were not happy with our program of dealing with erosion only if it affected a highway or a road, and not if it affected private property or the property on which homes were built. This was a cruel policy in many respects. I remember the Premier of the province at that time saying, it's unfortunate, but if we open the door once, there's no stopping the expenditure for erosion; it would be an almost impossible thing to control. So for many years we simply followed the policy that if a road was affected, we could do something about it; if no road was affected, we could not.

I'm glad to see that policy has been changed. I realize the decisions made will have to be based on the amount of money available. But I'm satisfied that much of our good arable land, much of our land upon which people have built their homes, and much of the land where highways and roads run can be saved with a reasonable expenditure if we don't try to cure

the whole thing, but simply provide rip-rapping so the water and ice are not going to take away good, arable land.

People are concerned and worried about the loss of land today. I think we as legislators should be worried too. I understand that the resolution deals with one part of the province where erosion is vicious and of vital concern. But to almost the same degree in some places in the southern part of this province, we have the same problem and we need to deal with it. I'm hoping we can have a reasonable amount of money spent each year so we can at least do rip-rapping to arrest the erosion until some major engineering project can be secured to stop it altogether.

There's one other point I would like to mention. Rightly or wrongly many people feel that when we do something in a river or creek, many times we encourage erosion in another part of that river or creek. I have looked at this from time to time over the last 20 or 30 years, and as a layman I too became convinced that what we had done to solve one problem had created another problem of erosion, not for the people as a whole but for the individuals who were affected.

In cases like that I don't think those people should be expected to bear the whole brunt of that erosion. I think a cautionary note should be given to our engineers, even though they're highly trained in hydraulics and water flow and so on, to take extra-special precautions when they're changing the flow of water, to study carefully what the change will do before they carry out the particular project.

I think man can prevent a lot of the erosion that he has caused. By rip-rapping and other devices like that, I think we can save a tremendous amount of the good land that's going to be a valuable resource in the years ahead.

MR. APPLEBY: Mr. Speaker, I was quite intrigued by the remarks of many of the members this afternoon. I know we're discussing a subject that I think we're quite in agreement on; that a problem does exist. I think the remarks made by the Member for Cardston are very, very appropriate when he says that erosion is erosion no matter where it is. Because we do have that problem throughout the whole province.

The Member for Lesser Slave Lake and the Member for Spirit River-Fairview have given you quite a picturesque account of the rugged beauty and natural wilderness area in the Lesser Slave Lake region. And this is so. But I was a little bit surprised they didn't also bring in the fact that there is an area in the Swan Hills where we have the last known habitat of the plains grizzly.

Of course the discovery of this came about quite by accident. An elderly Indian lady was out picking berries at Fawcett Lake, somewhat east of Lesser Slave Lake. She had a single-shot .22 rifle with her when she met one of these plains grizzlies. With one shot, a brain shot, she killed this grizzly bear. This was in the 1940s.

When some of the wildlife officers in the area found it and took the measurements and so on, they brought the skull in here to the university and it was found to be what was thought an extinct species of grizzly bear. They wondered where it came from. It wasn't till some years later, when the oil discoveries came about in Swan Hills, that they found this was

the habitat of the plains grizzly. They're still in existence there. I think that is a fact these members from that area probably didn't really take notice of. That's another attraction they could have mentioned, as making it worthy of keeping the beauty and retaining ruggedness there.

MR. NOTLEY: Depends where you meet him.

MR. APPLEBY: So besides gas and oil and forestry, you have big game hunting and grizzly bears too.

The Member for Lesser Slave Lake certainly brought this subject before us in a very informative manner. I understand from talking to him and from what he said this afternoon that he certainly has a thorough understanding of the problem in that area. He's very well acquainted with it. He's thoroughly cognizant of all the factors involved, particularly with the Slave Lake watershed and the Swan Hills drainage into that area.

I have some knowledge of that area myself. For several years I worked there for the Social Credit government . . .

ANHON.MEMBER: Terrible.

MR. APPLEBY: . . . as a land assessor and later as a wildlife officer, and I operated sawmills in that area. I well recall some of the difficulties even in those times when we saw some of the rivers in flood, the Swan River, the Driftpile River. You only had to travel along the shores of Lesser Slave Lake in the Driftpile area or Kinuso area, and you only had to have an elementary knowledge of geography to understand that the alluvial plains built up in that area were brought about by sedimentation that had come down through the ages through the drainage from the Swan Hills area.

Even in those times I worked there, I remember quite well one occasion when the whole area was in flood, approaching the bridge to cross the Swan River at Kinuso you crossed it at your own risk. A couple of days later when you came along and saw that same bridge, there was a half inch of sedimentation all over it. You had to wonder, Mr. Speaker, how much there was further down on the flat lands or the flood plain area closer to the lake.

Mr. Speaker, they had to move the railroad because of the flooding conditions in Lesser Slave Lake country. They had to move the highway. In fact, they had to move the whole town of Slave Lake two or three miles because of these flood conditions. So flooding became quite a problem.

And of course with flooding we have erosion. I have great respect for the remarks made by the Member for Drumheller, who brought out the possibility of using rip-rap to control some of the erosion and flooding. But I have to inform the House, Mr. Speaker, that we have very few rocks in that part of the country. So it would present a problem to try to use rip-rap to control water in our part of the country.

I would like to emphasize that these conditions I'm talking about were prior to the 1956 era when the oil and gas exploration began in the Swan Hills area. So what I'm trying to say, Mr. Speaker, is that there was a flooding problem before the exploration for gas and oil took [place] in that area. Certainly I'm not denying this has accentuated or accelerated the condition. It

has made it worse. But it was there for many, many years — I don't know for how long, but for as long as I can remember. That was some years before the oil exploration took place.

So I think what we are looking at in this resolution, when we think of what kind of controls we have to anticipate, is a thorough water management policy for the area. That is a pretty comprehensive sort of thing to be looking at, Mr. Speaker. I feel that is the only way we will have any opportunity to control the condition and bring about the necessary soil mechanics.

But another factor, Mr. Speaker, that we have to be concerned about — and this applies to those in agriculture, the farming people — is that the methods of clearing land have changed radically over the last two or three decades. This is understandably so, because nobody is going out with a team of horses and a grub hoe or an axe to chop stumps and pull roots like they used to do.

With the modern ways of clearing land using bulldozers, in that area of Alberta we're talking about today — the gray-wooded soil area, the gray soil area, and this applies in other areas of Alberta too — what is happening is that the land is being stripped off. Along with the brush, trees, and shrubs a great deal of topsoil is taken off too. When those brush piles are burned, Mr. Speaker, a lot of that soil containing a considerable amount of fibre is destroyed along with the plant nutrients in it, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus. I don't think we have ever surveyed the situation seriously enough to try to emphasize to people farming in those areas how much they are destroying in the way of natural fertilizers — which they will have to replace in later years — when they burn those brush piles.

Other methods of clearing this land can be looked at: using blades that have teeth, piling the brush carefully, trying not to strip that topsoil. Once that topsoil is gone, we are subject certainly to water erosion in that part of the country, and in some cases to wind erosion too. If that brush is piled and left to decay for a few years, it can be re-piled and the wood sections can be burned. Afterwards the topsoil can be spread out.

I think this is one area where we can really do some work with the human power and the facilities we have available today. People doing that type of land clearing can be made to recognize the problem they are creating for themselves, and the actual loss of thousands and thousands of dollars they are causing themselves in the way of plant nutrients to the soil. I think that has to be looked at.

Another thing that was already mentioned here today by the Member for Spirit River-Fairview is the matter — on pages 32 and 33 of this report — of clear cutting in forest areas. There's a great deal of contention about that. You need to get only two or three sawmill operators or timber operators together and you get an argument as to the merits of clear cutting of timber.

Some feel that selective cutting — where you take the timber down to a certain diameter of stump, then leave some of it and allow conditions of sunshine and moisture to accentuate and accelerate the growth — is the best way to do it. Others say we should clear it right off, reforest it, and take it from there.

But then you have [such] factors to consider as how

the reforestation is to be brought about. Is it going to be done by natural means? If so, how long do you wait to find out whether or not it's going to happen by natural means? Otherwise, it will have to be done by hand. And after you've waited six or seven years to see if it's going to be reforested by natural means, you've lost that amount of time.

We have certain forest areas in Alberta of overmature timber. They're of small diameter and they have to be cleared out in order that they can be reforested. Even if you thinned them out, the trees are so old they wouldn't grow much more anyway. So that has to be done in certain areas.

But this matter of clear cutting in forest areas is still a problem. It also creates an erosion problem in many areas. I think this is something that should be looked at very, very carefully.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that these people have done a tremendous amount of work in this report. They have pinpointed very carefully the problems as they exist. I know they've talked to a lot of people, and they've come to their conclusions with some very valid foundations on which to base them.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have to express some very strong reservations on the type of recommendations they have come up with. With the resources they had available and the time they spent compiling this report — and it's pretty comprehensive — I think the Authority, in its 70-odd recommendations, might have come up with some super recommendations after that was all done, and said: these are the most urgent ones, and these should be dealt with first. I think they could have been more specific.

So, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that some of these recommendations are rather vague. I would hesitate very much — in fact I would be very, very careful in saying, let's go ahead and implement this report and the recommendations as they exist. I say, let's have some very specific goals, let's have some very specific programs, let's know what we're going to have in the way of cost estimates. In other words, Mr. Speaker, I'd say there is a problem, and it's been identified. We acknowledge that. But let's define our objectives before we say, go ahead and do it. Let's set our goals, both the short-term and long-term ones. Let's list our priorities and take it from there.

Thank you.

[Motion carried]

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow afternoon we will move, as a government, the motion with respect to continuation of The Alberta Temporary Anti-Inflation Measures Act and continue the debate for the afternoon.

I move the Assembly do now adjourn until tomorrow afternoon at 2:30.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: The Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at half past 2.

[The House adjourned at 5:25 p.m.]

