

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Monday, May 5, 1980 2:30 p.m.**

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

Bill 221**The Adoptee's Origins Act**

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce private member's Bill No. 221, The Adoptee's Origins Act. Very briefly, The Adoptee's Origins Act would allow adopted children, by going through a special process, to obtain information on their natural parents, upon mutual agreement.

[Leave granted; Bill 221 read a first time]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the 1979 annual report for Alberta Government Telephones.

MR. KROEGER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the '78-79 annual report of Alberta Transportation.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. MUSGREAVE: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to introduce to you, and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, over 125 students from Colonel Irvine school, grades 7 and 8, situated in Calgary McKnight, one of the fastest growing constituencies in the province. I would also like to mention that some of these students reside in Calgary Foothills, which is a neighboring constituency of mine, represented by the hon. minister Mr. McCrae. I believe these students are primarily in the public gallery, but some may be in the members gallery. I would ask them now to stand and receive the applause of the House.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

Quebec Referendum

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question today to the Premier, and ask what the involvement of the province of Alberta will be between now and the date of the referendum in the province of Quebec. We're now within two weeks of the referendum, or close to that. What involvement, if any, will there be in the referendum by officials of the Alberta government between now and the date?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, as I believe I have said on a number of occasions, it's been the view and the strategy of the provincial government that the views with regard to this issue be communicated over the course of a number of months, and not within the intensity and to some extent emotional atmosphere that now exists, quite naturally, within the province of Quebec. It's been our judgment that the best approach for us to take is to be part of the communiques — which have been tabled in this Legislature — with regard to sovereignty association which arose from the recently concluded western premiers' conference in Lethbridge, where the four western premiers took a united and common position on the issues.

In addition to that, specifically, I was in the province of Quebec in early March and had an extensive news conference after a lengthy visit in Montreal with the leader, I believe is the appropriate phrase, of the "no" forces — that is, Mr. Claude Ryan — and at that time dealt with a number of matters that were of interest to him in terms of the Alberta position on issues arising from the referendum. As I made evident when I was in Montreal in March at the time of the press conference, and as discussed with Mr. Ryan, it was his view that there was probably not a position where we could be more helpful during the course of the referendum debate, other than a strong position from the western premiers' conference. He was specifically asked that question in the news conference, and he responded on the basis that he didn't see a role being played during the course of the referendum, unless some of the issues that developed in the referendum involved such matters as energy. It was then left between Mr. Ryan and myself for him to get in touch with me in the event he felt there was some way I could participate that would be constructive during the course of the referendum debate. To this stage, I have not heard from him.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question either to the Premier or to the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. What kind of monitoring is the province of Alberta doing as far as the referendum itself is concerned? I realize one thing is to be actively involved in the campaign, but obviously — and it's somewhat hypothetical, Mr. Speaker — the day after the referendum, if the "yes" people have won, it will be incumbent upon Alberta, as on all other provinces in Canada, to respond in a manner that will be very clearly thought out before.

My question to the Premier or to the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs centres on the kind of monitoring or contingency plans that Alberta either has developed or is in the process of developing, leading up to what we hope will be a "no" vote. But we must be prepared for both possibilities.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs may respond to the monitoring, but really all that can be monitored at this stage are the ongoing discussions, attempting to ascertain whether there are any issues that might specifically arise in the course of the referendum debate, such as issues of energy, that need to be responded to in Alberta by the government of Alberta. As I said, that has not arisen. The monitoring is of course the monitoring all citizens are doing, relative to public opinion polls and other views that are expressed with regard to the referendum debate.

As for the question the hon. leader raises as to contingency plans as to positions of the government of Alberta when the results are known on May 20, I think those questions were clearly answered during the Lethbridge conference, when we had a number of news conferences and were specifically asked questions of that nature. In other words, we were asked specifically what would be the position of the western provinces in the event of a "yes" vote, and with regard to a "no" vote. Now if the hon. Leader of the Opposition wishes me to elaborate on what I said at that time, I'd be pleased to do so.

Hog Marketing

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the second question to the Minister of Agriculture, and ask the same kind of question I've asked on several other occasions in the Assembly. What progress is the government of Alberta making towards a stop-loss program as far as hog producers of the province are concerned?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, having replied to the hon. Leader of the Opposition of the interest indeed of the province in the short-term problem that exists in the hog marketing position in this province, we have been monitoring the activities, both price and numbers, with regard to the producers. Of course the announcement today by Agriculture Canada, and the issuance under the Agricultural Stabilization Act of a subsidization of about \$4.07 a hog, which will be available to all eligible producers within the province, is one bearing, and certainly one of the aspects we will have to consider. But the monitoring of the problem that exists with regard to the industry here is still ongoing and under review at the present time.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Mr. Minister, the term now being used is "ongoing monitoring by the government". Does that mean that the government has now ruled out the possibility of a stop-loss program such as that which was committed at Red Deer to the producers by yourself, Mr. Minister?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, the commitment made to the industry to look at a short-term commitment with regard to the industry still stands. The monitoring and review of the actual prices as they exist from day to day and, indeed, of the cost factors involved for the industry across the province are of course of prime concern and part of the program that one must consider.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Mr. Minister, is this government still committed to doing something in the short-term future for hog producers in this province, of a nature which was outlined at Red Deer to the producers there some three weeks ago? The reason I pose the question is that there is now getting to be a feeling out there, rightly or wrongly, that there's some backing off from what I took to be a very firm commitment made in Red Deer that evening by yourself, Mr. Minister.

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, the commitment that was made to the hog industry in this province, both short-term and long-term, recognizing the needs in the future — the commitment made to review the short-term problem that exists in this province is a commitment that we're still looking at and still honor.

Forest Fires

MR. NOTLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. In light of the serious forest fire situation in much of the province, is the minister in a position to advise the Assembly this afternoon how many fires are now actively being fought and how many are being left on their own at this stage?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of any fires that are not being fought. So far as I'm aware, action is being taken in an effort to bring under control all fires burning in the province.

MR. NOTLEY: Supplementary question to the hon. minister. Is the minister in a position to outline to the Assembly what steps, if any, the government has been able to take to deal with reported manpower shortages as far as fighting forest fires in the province is concerned at this time?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, with respect to manpower available for fighting fires, I'd have to check the actual number we have in the forests at the moment as compared with other years, including last year when we had a very serious fire situation. I'm sure there will be a shortage, in the sense that when you have a severe fire situation, you would wish to have more people than you're actually able to put into the field at any particular time. But apart from expressing the shortage in that sense, I wouldn't want to concur in the hon. member's suggestion that we had a shortage of fire-fighting personnel.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Is the minister in a position to advise the Assembly what steps have been taken to consult with both the Saskatchewan and Northwest Territories governments, and to co-ordinate activities?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't be able to give the details of that. I will make inquiries and provide them to the House at a later date. I know there is considerable liaison between our government and the governments of the areas adjacent to Alberta to ensure an exchange of equipment and things of that nature, to have the most effective fire control system we can have in these areas. But I will get the actual details and report to the House at a later date.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Is the minister able to advise the Assembly what considerations led the government to reduce the budget for fire operations from \$13.2 million last year to \$4.2 million this year?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry the hon. member appears not to have been in the House when this item was going through Committee of Supply. I assume he is referring to the funds that were available for forest fire-fighting operations. If that is correct, and had he been present, he would have learned that we normally provide funds for fire-fighting by picking a number that we think is reasonable and putting that in the estimates, because obviously it's impossible to forecast what expenditures we may need to incur fighting forest fires in any given year. In the event that that number is not adequate, we provide additional funds for fire-fighting services. The larger

number that shows up in the forecast in the estimates will of course include what was originally in the estimates for that year, plus the funds that were provided by special warrant.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. What steps has the government taken, either through training by professional foresters or otherwise, to safeguard those people who are now seconded in fighting fires, so that we don't have a situation similar to the tragedy in Ontario last summer where a number of young people fighting forest fires became victims of a forest fire themselves? What steps has the government taken with respect to training so that those people seconded are not injured?

MR. SPEAKER: I would have to leave it to the hon. minister, of course, to be aware of which of these questions refer to matters already covered in discussion of the estimates. If there are such matters, perhaps the hon. member would like to refer to *Hansard* before asking further questions on the topic.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I don't think there's any question about that matter being brought up in the estimates. So I would put to the minister whether there has been any training, or what assessment has been made, in view of the rather unfortunate tragedy in the province of Ontario last year.

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that that question is difficult to answer within the constraints of the question period, because it really involves a review of the forestry training operations and all the protective measures the forestry service takes in respect of personnel who are fighting fires. If there's a particular element of detail that the hon. member wishes, if he could be more specific in his question, I'd certainly be happy to provide that information for him.

MR. NOTLEY: My question, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister is: have there been any special training procedures for people who are in fact seconded to fight forest fires?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I don't know that there are any special training procedures in those instances. My memory of the procedure, and my understanding, is that they are normally placed under the direction of experienced fire-fighting personnel to ensure that undue risks are not taken. But again, I'll check on that, and amplify my answer if the facts warrant it.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, just one final supplementary question to the associate minister. What steps will the department be taking to assess the impact of the present widespread fires on the income and livelihood of trappers in northern Alberta? Will there be any particular move to undertake an appraisal of the impact of the fires?

MR. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, undoubtedly the fires in some of these areas will have a definite impact on the wildlife habitat. I should point out that, although it is a devastating thing when we have a forest fire, there are some advantages in the long term. The regrowth will stimulate the production of game over a period of time. But in the short term, there will definitely be some serious dislocation of the trappers. For those who are directly

affected, we will be looking at other areas where we might be able to give them trap line rights.

University Programs — Quotas

MR. HIEBERT: Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower. In light of the increased funding for the universities under the spring budget of Advanced Education and Manpower, and the concern expressed by the Alberta chartered accountants last year, could the minister advise the House of the position of the University of Alberta on the possible expansion of quotas in the Faculty of Business Administration and Commerce?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, the information I had just recently was that at the last regular meeting of the board of governors of the University of Alberta, they allocated the resources made available to them, including a substantial increase to the Faculty of Business Administration and Commerce which will permit them to expand their quota by, I believe, 75 students in their first year, which is a fairly substantial increase.

MRS. EMBURY: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. A concern was also expressed in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta regarding the post-basic nursing degree program. Could the minister please indicate if there has been an expansion in the number of spaces in that program?

MR. HORSMAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding as well that that program, which we had reviewed previously, will be doubled to meet the requests advanced to me last year by the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses, as well as by the Faculty of Nursing to the board of governors at the university. So there will now be 144 places in that program.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower. Will the minister indicate to the Assembly if, as a result of the increased financing for commerce and for nursing, the University of Alberta will be able to take the large bulk of students who have high enough academic accomplishments to go into those two faculties? Or in fact will there still be a sizable number of students in nursing and commerce who will not be able to get into those faculties this year?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, requests from the various faculties to the board of governors for quotas are of course based upon a number of factors, not only on the number of students applying to get in. In fact, it is well known that many students apply to many universities in order to obtain admission to one or the other. That tends to distort the number of students applying to the faculties.

But with regard to nursing in particular, the amount that has been allocated by the board, as I understand, will meet the requests of the Faculty of Nursing with respect to their assessment of the number of students who are required or could logically go into that program.

As to the Faculty of Business Administration and Commerce, I couldn't answer the question whether that will meet entirely the number of requests for expansion that have been put before the board by the faculty itself. But it certainly will be a major step forward.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, one further supplementary question to the minister. Mr. Minister, would it be possible to indicate to the Assembly what progress we're making in the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Alberta in once again meeting the demands from the faculty and the valid requests for admission into that faculty from Alberta students who have the academic accomplishments?

MR. HORSMAN: Of course that particular faculty has a number of parts; some programs are overextended and some are undersubscribed. I think I would have to take the question as notice in order to determine the level of quotas within the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Alberta.

MRS. FYFE: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower could advise the Assembly if the increase in quotas in these two faculties will mean that there is a general reduction in quotas in other faculties at the University of Alberta?

MR. HORSMAN: No, Mr. Speaker. If I understood the question correctly, I would suggest that the increase in quotas in the individual faculties will not impact significantly on any other faculty. I hope I got the question correctly.

MRS. FYFE: Just a supplementary. Recognizing that the University of Alberta does have global funding, I wanted to be sure that these increases did not have a significant impact on other faculties. I think the question was answered. Thank you.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, if I could just make certain that my answer is as clear as the question now is. These additional numbers of students who will be admitted to the quota faculties came about as a result of increased funding over and above the global funding, as a result of requests received to expand in the professional faculties. That amount of \$810,000 in this year's budget provides for those additional spaces.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, one further question to the minister. Mr. Minister, when the decision was made to add the \$810,000 that applied to the faculties the minister just mentioned, was there an agreement between the universities and the Alberta government that in fact this is where the money would be spent, or was it left to the universities to determine in which faculties they would increase the enrolment?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, it was left to the university to make the allocations to the professional faculties of their choice. However, they had made it clear that they were requesting funding from the government for professional faculty enrolment expansion.

Treasury Branch Loans

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Provincial Treasurer is with regard to loans and interest rates at the treasury branches. When a new customer comes to the bank, I wonder if the minister could indicate whether the customer must bring all his accounts to the treasury branch to be dealt with; in other words, transfer to the treasury branch prior to getting a new loan or

making financial arrangements with the treasury institution?

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I suppose it would depend on the individual circumstance, and the number and range of accounts of the possible new customer. I'll have to look into that in more detail and get back to the hon. member.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister with regard to interest rates. Will it be the continued policy of the treasury branches to have the interest rates track the national prime rate?

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, at the moment and over past months, in order to provide assistance to those who have been suffering the most difficulty, particularly farmers and small businessmen, there has been a preferred rate, approximately 0.5 per cent under the prime rate of the banks. That will continue for the time being.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary to the minister. Could the minister indicate, as information, the policy of the treasury branches where a loan is being made and the customer understands that the rate of interest will be 0.5 per cent less than prime, but in the contract drawn up between the customer and the bank, the bank rate indicated is above the prime rate rather than below, as was the policy just indicated by the minister.

MR. HYNDMAN: I'll have to check on that and report back. I'll be happy to do so, Mr. Speaker.

Rapeseed Moisture Levels

MR. BORSTAD: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture. The Canadian Grain Commission's decision to lower the accepted level of moisture content in rapeseed from 10.5 to 10 per cent will have a costly impact on our growers. Has the minister made representation to the Grain Commission to have this ruling rescinded?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, in light of safeguarding the storage of rapeseed, the Canadian Grain Commission of course has instituted the drop from 10.5 to 10 — it's my understanding that will be done in stages to the 10 — and over the period ahead is trying to arrive eventually at a 9 per cent moisture content factor. In meeting with the representatives of the rapeseed growers, they felt they could possibly live with the 10 per cent, but felt that any lowering beyond that would make it very, very difficult and indeed add to the initial costs of the product itself. They made their submission, and we as a government agreed and supported their approach that any change from 10.5 to 10 should be guarded. Indeed, from 10 to 9 was almost impossible from the producer's point of view, and we gave them that assurance and support.

75th Anniversary — Pins and Medallions

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Government Services, responsible for the 75th Anniversary pin program. Can the minister indicate the reason for the shortage of plastic and metal pins? The constituents and Albertans seem to be demanding them,

but there seems to be a shortage. Can the minister indicate what the problem is?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, I think it's just a question of such high demand. There's so much enthusiasm for the pins that they're being given out at a tremendous rate.

MR. NOTLEY: Pretty weak answer.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, the supplier of the pins is, I believe, in eastern Canada. Can the minister indicate what correspondence or communication he has had with the supplier in eastern Canada to ascertain when the full quota of pins will be delivered to Alberta?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, could I take that under advisement and report back.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, when the minister's looking for that information, maybe he could indicate if the pins are made in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I have another question to the minister. Can the minister indicate if the medallions will be minted in Alberta at Sherritt Gordon Mines? Will the gold and silver medallions be minted here in the province?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, very much so. They will be minted at the Sherritt Gordon plant here.

On the last question about the pins being made in Canada: yes, very much so.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, then maybe the minister can check with the commissioner, because that's the information given to us. If the minister looks closely, I think he'll see they're made in Taiwan. Can the minister indicate if that is a fact?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, as I've said, I will inquire and report back. I won't contradict the member, for a moment at least.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister, on the gold medallion program. Can the minister indicate if the gold has already been bought for the gold medallions?

MR. NOTLEY: It was bought when it was at the highest.

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's interest in the purchases of gold. Suffice to say that we will purchase enough gold that there will be enough to make the medallions we are expecting to mint.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, did the minister say "will" or "has"?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, I think I indicated some days back that some 70,000 questionnaires or forms went out. They have not all been returned yet, although there has been a great and a good response. So we're still trying to determine the exact, or close to the exact, number required. We are purchasing enough gold to mint what we believe will be the required number of medallions.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate if the dies and the design have already been done for the medallion?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, the design is under way right now, I believe. I don't really know what stage it is at at the mint. But it is being done and will be available about September 1, we think, for delivery to the excited and expectant recipients.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Can the minister indicate if the medallions will be ready to be presented after September 1? I'd just like to know from the minister: does "about" mean this year, next year, the 15th, the 1st?

MR. NOTLEY: They're going to have it for the 100th anniversary.

MR. McCRAE: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I tried to indicate is that we believe the medallions will be ready on September 1. They're being done by a private firm. We have plenty of assurances that they should be available, but if their plant blows up or something, we don't absolutely guarantee it. We simply say that is our reasonable expectation. Delivery will be about September 1.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the hon. minister.

MR. MAGEE: Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I believe we still have another supplementary on this tour of a manufacturing process that we've been going through. [laughter]

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Government Services. What considerations led the government to the conclusion that it should be September 1 — on, or about, or you believe we'll have them ready by September 1, hopefully. Why was September 1 chosen as opposed to January 1, so that presentations could have been made throughout the celebrations that are taking place this year?

DR. BUCK: Because they weren't ready.

MR. McCRAE: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess that's the kind of judgment that has to be made. September 1 was the date on which the province became a province, and it seemed to us to be a very auspicious day to present the medallions or have them delivered. I can't think of a better day. The hon. member suggested January 1; I presume he meant 1980. That would have made it very difficult to do any great deal of planning in terms of the different programs we had available for the 75th.

Nurses' Strike — Costs

MR. MAGEE: Mr. Speaker, my question is directed the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. Now that the nurses are back to work and the hospitals have resumed normal operations, could the minister elaborate on some of the expenses associated with this strike? I'm referring specifically to the persons who had to be moved from the hospitals that were struck to places like Calgary and Edmonton.

MR. SPEAKER: With great respect to the hon. member, it would seem to me that that kind of information would best be sought by means of the Order Paper.

**Construction Industry —
Labor Negotiations**

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Minister of Labour. As in all likelihood tomorrow will be Tuesday, and that's the day that . . . [laughter] On a more serious note, that's the date that a number of people in the construction industry in the province may be facing very serious labor problems. I ask the minister if he would report to the Assembly on what progress has been made in the course of those negotiations over the weekend so that, hopefully, we'll be able to avoid a work stoppage.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Tomorrow will be Tuesday, according to the calendars supplied to us.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the collective bargaining progress in the construction industry, there have been discussions for some period of time, as I had indicated. Those discussions continue today, negotiations at a mediation level. Beyond that, I am reluctant to indicate what progress has been made. I would only say that some progress has been made. I remain cautiously optimistic, but because of the nature of the discussions, I do not think it in the public interest to disclose the particular positions of the parties at the present time.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister: is the deadline that has been imposed by both groups still Tuesday?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I could indicate that one deadline passed last Friday. One deadline is tomorrow morning. There are some other deadlines later this week.

MR. R. CLARK: One last supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Last week in answering a question in the House, I believe the minister indicated that the major question at hand was, in fact, wages. Without trying to impinge upon the progress of negotiations, have the matters other than dollars been resolved?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I indicated last week that, to the best of my information, there were very few items left on the table other than wages. I stand by that statement today.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, has the minister been able to get an assurance from the contractors' association — that isn't the exact name for the organization — that there will in fact be no lockout?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, there's no way in the world that I would ask one party or the other to make a commitment that would be binding upon them, and would interfere with the collective bargaining process in the way that a request of that nature would certainly do to the Alberta Construction Labour Relations Association.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. There's been no discussion at the ministerial level with the Alberta Construction Labour Relations Association about the deadline they've set as far as a lockout is concerned?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, both parties in this series of disputes are quite well aware of their respective positions

and the strategies they've been following. Last fall, with the presence of government staff as a third party to the table, both parties agreed upon a procedure for bargaining this spring which hopefully would see a conclusion of collective bargaining by the termination of the collective agreements, which occurred last Wednesday, with one exception.

Mr. Speaker, while they are modifying their positions somewhat in that agreement, they seem to be doing it with an understanding, which I could perhaps characterize as a gentlemen's agreement, which moves along slowly on the part of both sides. They are abiding by that agreement as best they can, without precipitating a crisis which I think neither party wishes. Given that situation, I think they are conducting a most responsible set of negotiations, and I believe both sides of the bargaining table wish to have their negotiations completed at the earliest possible date, without a work stoppage.

Alfalfa Processing Plant — Boyle

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, if I may direct a question to either the hon. Minister of Agriculture or the hon. Minister of Tourism and Small Business. It concerns Boyle Forage Processors Ltd., which has encountered some difficulty. Is either hon. minister able to report to the Legislature whether there has been a resolution of the problems encountered by that company, and whether it will in fact be operating this summer?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I'll start that question; the Minister of Agriculture may want to supplement it. The Boyle alfalfa processing plant was placed in receivership some time in March, mid-March I believe, the idea being that they would possibly be able to get a new set of owners to take in this crop year. The deadline for applicants to the receiver was April 30.

MR. NOTLEY: A supplementary question to the hon. minister. In view of the April 30 deadline, has the minister had an opportunity to review this with the receiver to determine whether the government is in a position to advise the Assembly whether the plant will in fact remain open this year?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, not at this particular moment. I've been in touch with the receiver, who's looking over the applications, talking to the people involved, and will be getting back to us as quickly as he can.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. It's my understanding that the conditions of the request for bids were with respect to two options, either a sale of the plant in total or a dismantling of it. Is the minister in a position to advise the Assembly whether a wholesale dismantling of the plant and moving it to other places was in fact one of the options?

MR. ADAIR: Not at this time, Mr. Speaker. I understand that they are looking at the options of opening the plant and operating it with one of the applicants, if successful, as an operation whole and in the community of Boyle.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Is the minister in a position to advise

the Assembly what instructions have been given to the receiver with respect to the outstanding AOC and ADC loans? Will they have to be discharged before money owing local people will be paid, or has the government, in fact, made any decision with respect to the priority, as it were, of AOC and ADC money owing?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I would have to take that question as notice. I can't give the actual position of — I assume you're speaking of the sharecroppers, in essence — those who had accounts payable from alfalfa that was provided to the plant. In talking with AOC, my understanding was that first of all, they had the obligations to their particular loan and to ADC's loan, and should the settlement be sufficient, they would then possibly be able to look at some payment for those growers. But I'm not sure which position it was, first or second.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question then, if I may, to the hon. Minister of Agriculture with respect to ADC involvement, as I understand it. Is the hon. Minister of Agriculture able to advise the Assembly whether there has been any judgment at this stage as to the priority, whether money owed to farmers who contracted to the plant will have to await total discharging of the loans to ADC and AOC?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, with regard to the interest shown, first, by the department and, of course, the financial interest by the Agricultural Development Corporation, we have indicated our interest to the receiver in dealing with the Alberta Opportunity Company: first of all, interests on behalf of the producers themselves and, secondly, an interest in the plant itself collectively, in the part it plays within the community and also the part it plays in part of the agricultural production. It's too early at this time, but to assure the hon. member that we're interested in reviewing before any disposition is made of the plant itself — an opportunity on behalf of ADC and of the Department of Agriculture to review and view the interests of both the producer and the future of the plant.

MR. NOTLEY: Just one final supplementary question to either hon. gentleman. At this stage, has the government developed any time line for evaluating the bids made, I gather, by April 30? They're in now. At this stage, do we have at least an unofficial time line as to when a decision will be made about the future of this operation?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I might respond to that. I've instructed AOC and the receiver to get back to us at the earliest possible moment.

MR. APPLEBY: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the hon. Minister of Tourism and Small Business has had any representations from the alfalfa growers themselves regarding their concern about the future of the plant?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I've had a number of representations from some of the alfalfa growers, from two of the members of the board of directors, and from the MLA for Athabasca.

75th Anniversary — Pins and Medallions (continued)

Mr. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might supple-

ment an answer I gave a moment back, to say that the plastic pins are made in Mississauga, Ontario. If I could also respond to the question about why the medallions might be given out on the September 1 weekend, really I was digging too deeply for a good answer. The simple answer is: what better day to celebrate a birthday than the birthday?

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Minister of Government Services. Can the hon. minister indicate where the metal pins are made? The Taiwan pins, does he ...

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, I didn't understand that he was talking about the metal pins. Certainly we will review that and advise him in due course.

MR. KOZIAK: Walt, those are the instructions.

DR. BUCK: It's so small you can't read "Taiwan" on the back.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. SPEAKER: May the hon. Minister of Environment revert to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS (reversion)

MR. COOKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure this afternoon to introduce a large group of young people from the James S. McCormick school in my constituency. They have with them Mrs. Thompson, Mr. Damant, and Mrs. McLaughlan. It's a pleasure to introduce a distinguished gentleman by the name of Charlie Webber, who happens to be very closely related to the hon. Associate Minister of Telephones, the Hon. Neil Webber. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

II. Moved by Mr. Hyndman:

Be it resolved that the messages of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant-Governor, the Supplementary Estimates (A), and all matters connected therewith, be referred to the Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried]

head: Committee of Supply

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would the Committee of Supply please come to order.

Department of Social Services and Community Health

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, as I recall our discussion on Wednesday of last week, we had begun to review this

question of ministerial responsibility. I might just review some of the arguments presented. We have the hon. minister saying on page 687 of *Hansard*:

Very clearly, Mr. Chairman, we go back to the basic point on ministerial responsibility, from my point of view: separation between policy and administrative matters.

That, of course, is an interesting view of ministerial responsibility, but frankly one which is not consistent with any of the precedents I've been able to uncover.

Mr. Chairman, so that we can debate this matter — because I think this is clearly the most important question that has to be addressed before we come to the minister's salary — one has to look not only at what is happening in this province but put it in the context of our parliamentary system.

In 1977, Mr. Chairman, the federal government released a green paper. It made a number of comments on this business of ministerial responsibility. I'd just like to read some of those comments into the record, because I think they are crucial:

If advisers are to remain anonymous and protected, those who take decisions must bear the brunt of public scrutiny and public responsibility. Since a major function of democratic political institutions is to ensure accountability, the focal point for exercising control is through ministerial function.

Ministers are accountable for their decisions — to Parliament and to the public. Public servants are accountable in the first instance to Ministers.

Ministerial responsibility implies, very simply, the answerability of Ministers to Parliament for the actions by them or by public servants responsible to them. It is this convention or doctrine which provides the basis for the questioning and criticism of Ministers which is undertaken by their parliamentary colleagues. This convention ensures the systematic and general calling to account of the government for its administrative actions and executive decisions.

Mr. Chairman, it says: "... for its administrative actions and executive decisions". Now the minister is attempting to tell the committee that there is a distinction between policy and administration. But when one looks at the federal precedent, it's very clear: "... for its administrative actions and executive decisions". That's the federal government, Mr. Chairman.

If we look back over some of the things that have been said in this House, members may recall the debate that occurred in the Assembly in 1975. There had been an investigation into the operation of the Department of Agriculture. At that time, the then Minister of Agriculture said — and this is on pages 1212 and 1213 of *Hansard* in 1975: "I accept the accountability for any actions I took ...". I would argue that ministerial responsibility indeed goes somewhat beyond the bounds of just being responsible for general policy decisions and not administration.

Mr. Chairman, if we look at the British parliamentary tradition — I've done a little research in that, and I'll table any of this that members find of value. The following quotes are from *Some Problems of the Constitution*, by Geoffrey Marshall and Graeme Moodie, professor of politics, University of York:

Ministers, it is said, are responsible to Parliament as individuals for the work of their departments and the sanction for mismanagement is the House's demand for the resignation of the Minister.

One example cited in this particular study is the resigna-

tion of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in Great Britain in 1947, following an improper though trivial disclosure of a budget proposal. Nevertheless, however inadvertent it was, it led to Mr. Dalton's resignation.

Perhaps more relevant and more famous, Mr. Chairman, was the Crichton Downs affair, in 1954. There, some improper methods were used by the Department of Agriculture in Great Britain in acquiring public lands. There was no question about the minister being culpable in any way. There was no question about the minister knowing the event took place; he didn't. Nevertheless, Mr. Chairman, the minister took full responsibility in the House of Commons in Great Britain in 1954. I think this quotation underscores what I mean:

The Home Secretary, speaking in the debate after the Minister's resignation, referred to the Minister's duty to "render an account of his stewardship", and Sir Thomas himself said: "I have told the House of the action which has been taken ... to make a recurrence of the present case impossible. ... Having now had this opportunity of rendering account to Parliament of the actions which I thought fit to take, I have, as the Minister responsible during this period, tendered my resignation to the Prime Minister.

While the minister's speech in the House of Commons at the time was a strong defence of his policy, nevertheless, the administrative failing led to his resignation.

Sir Ivor Jennings, in his *Cabinet Government*, speaks of "the responsibility of the Minister for every act done in his department". In the words of Sir Herbert Morrison, one of the famous parliamentarians of Great Britain: "There can be no question whatever that Ministers are responsible for everything that their officers do". The minister "is responsible for every stamp stuck on an envelope". With regard to Crichton Downs, Mr. Morrison took part in the debate and said that the consequences "may be rather hard on the Minister from time to time"; nevertheless he must "accept responsibility as if the act were his own".

Mr. Chairman, in the Crichton Downs case, the one area where British parliamentarians agreed there should perhaps be a waiver of the question of ministerial responsibility would be if a public servant deliberately disobeyed an order of the minister. Mr. Chairman, as I look at the events we are questioning at this time, I see no evidence at all of a deliberate act of disobedience on the part of any public servant.

Mr. Chairman, in reviewing the precedents of the Canadian government and of the Mother of Parliaments, I just have to come to the conclusion that there is absolutely no precedent at all for this interesting distinction that everything that is policy the minister will take the credit for, but when it comes to administration, we'll shuffle that off onto someone else.

Mr. Chairman, as I look over *Hansard* on page 687, I had outlined four areas that I thought basically required the buck's stopping at the minister's desk. The first is any deficiency in policies. If the minister is going to stand up and say, I take responsibility for policy matters, then if there is a deficiency in that policy, surely the minister must accept responsibility.

Now, in his argument, the minister said:

Saskatchewan doesn't have an assured income for the severely handicapped. ... So under that criterion, I suppose [the minister in Saskatchewan] should resign.

Well, that's not really the point. That's side-stepping the issue entirely. If there's no denticare program in Alberta, I'm not going to stand up and say the minister should resign. But if there are problems with the denticare program in Saskatchewan, then members of the House have every reason — as Conservative members in the House have had reason — to stand up in the Saskatchewan Legislature and call the minister to account.

The crucial point is that somebody, Mr. Minister, has to take responsibility when things go wrong with the policy. If there are deficiencies in the policy, if the policy is inadequate, then the responsibility must rest at the minister's desk. Surely he can't shuffle that off on the public servants of the province or the professionals, and say to the professional organization — the Alberta social workers, the Alberta Medical Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, or whatever — you're to blame. No, Mr. Chairman. If there are deficiencies in policy, it is clearly the responsibility of the government and the minister, beyond any shadow of a doubt, to accept whatever flak comes their way.

The second area is with respect to problems with the budget. The minister says:

I guess the question could be asked of my colleague the Minister of Education: what's the proper ratio in the schools? You could ask 10 people and get 10 different views. Or in hospitals: how many nurses do we need per patient? The whole list of things — value judgments.

Yes, Mr. Minister; no question about that. Budgeting often comes down to balancing things that people would like to do and making choices, value judgments — sometimes objective, sometimes very subjective. But clearly the responsibility for those value judgments has to rest with the government and the minister. If there are problems that accrue from budgeting, you can't blame that on the civil servants. You can't blame that on the professional organizations. That again has to be something directly attributable to ministerial responsibility.

Then we have the question of errors in communication. I'd raised that because if there's a very serious error in communication, I think that too is something the minister has to be responsible for. But here's what the minister says:

But to suggest that if there's an error in communicating something from a regional office to the office in Edmonton, it is the minister's responsibility ...

The minister is very upset about that.

The policy of how the communication takes place, Mr. Chairman, is very important. The actual communication? An administrative matter.

Now, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, in dealing with this issue we are looking at something rather more significant than, you know, just a minor problem in administration. When the meeting took place on November 16, there was no communication with the minister. When the Hesses finally went to the provincial Ombudsman and the director of child welfare was informed, we had an order from that director to every child care facility in the province; we had the decision to appoint the Thompson inquiry.

Mr. Chairman, to suggest that no notification of the minister on the 16th was just a minor slip-up — in fact it was a matter of some considerable consequence. How do we know? Because of the actions that were finally taken when the government found out about it. But they didn't find out about it because of reasonable methods of communication within the department. They found out

about it completely by happenstance because a young couple, instead of just letting things stop at the office in Peace River, wrote a letter to the Ombudsman. To his great credit, the Ombudsman said: all right; I'm not going to leave this unattended to; I'm going to refer it to the responsible person in the department.

Mr. Chairman, we cannot expect the Ombudsman to be a conduit for information in the Department of Social Services and Community Health. In this particular instance it worked. But how many times hasn't it worked? When communication doesn't work properly, who's to take responsibility for that? Surely that is a question of policy. In his answers on March 21, the minister talked about the Cavanagh Board of Review. I don't think there's a member of this committee who isn't very, very much in favor of the board of review carrying out vital work. But in all likelihood, you know, that board of review would not even have been appointed had it not been for the fact that the Ombudsman picked up the ball. Had it been the normal methods of communication in the department, the information wouldn't have come to the director's desk, wouldn't have come to the minister's desk, would not have led to the appointment of the Cavanagh Board of Review.

For the minister to say, well, the question of the administration itself, the communication, is an administrative matter — when that communication breaks down on a matter that is crucial and vital, Mr. Minister, that is your responsibility. That strikes right at the heart of any democratic government's responsibility to the people and to the elected Assembly.

I want to deal with just one other point; that is, the question of a major breach of what one might call public standards. Here the minister slides out of that by saying it's a "catchall" phrase. Well, Mr. Chairman, there are issues and there are issues. But I don't think I need to tell the minister that right across this country and throughout the province of Alberta, the people were outraged that a child had to eat dog food. That's not something which is a matter of conjecture or debate. It may be among a small number of professionals, but not among the vast majority of the people of Alberta or the people of Canada. No, Mr. Minister, I think that ultimately when one ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: I regret having to interrupt the hon. member. There has been a growing tendency within the committee to by-pass the Chair, and to carry on a direct address to a minister or even to another member. Besides in the committee, this has happened sometimes in the Assembly. It's unfortunate that it's been growing. It seems to be escalating during this session more than ever. So I would ask all hon. members to address the Chair please. If they're speaking with regard to one of the ministers, please keep in mind that it is not a direct form of address.

MR. NOTLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's fine; I certainly will direct everything through you.

Mr. Chairman, I think the point is simply this: at issue in this debate is ministerial responsibility. However much the minister might like to have this new definition — a definition that is inconsistent with Canadian tradition, inconsistent with British tradition, inconsistent with any kind of logic or common sense ... Well, I don't blame him for trying, Mr. Chairman. But for this Assembly to be part and parcel of rewriting the entire system of British parliamentary government so that we have a situation

where the minister can be responsible for every good thing, every announcement that is positive — that's policy and the minister can announce it with a happy, smiling face — but every time there's a problem, that's an administrative matter; no, Mr. Chairman, that simply won't do. It won't do.

In my judgment, as members of this committee we have to get a clear commitment from the government, not just from the Minister of Social Services and Community Health but indeed from all members, that in fact ministerial accountability in this Legislature is going to be consistent with ministerial accountability elsewhere in the Commonwealth. Surely we are not so parochial and inward looking that we are going to reject the experience of other jurisdictions.

No, Mr. Chairman, and to the minister: very clearly the answers we saw last week in *Hansard* simply won't do. They simply won't do. They are inconsistent with our whole system of parliamentary government. I for one certainly have no intention of voting for any appropriation for the minister's salary as long as we have this kind of loose, sloppy definition of ministerial responsibility.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, since our review last Wednesday and the discussion we had, I'd like to make some comments with regard to ministerial responsibility and some of the communication that I feel has either broken down or maybe misdirected within the Department of Social Services and Community Health. One of the areas that concerned me some was a comment made by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley with regard to the statements and the "telling out of school" of some departmental employees. I recall making the comment at that time that no employees are making statements to us in the opposition or leaking things in the department, and as far as I'm concerned the minister and the deputy minister have the full trust of those employees.

Since that time I've had the opportunity of going back and reviewing some of our files, letters, and information. One of the letters that came from the minister outlines the present policy with regard to the communication through which an MLA, whether in the opposition or, I suppose, as a backbencher in the Conservative Party, must work to deal with the civil servants of the Department of Social Services and Community Health. In the concluding paragraph of this letter from the minister, the hon. Mr. Bogle, to our office and to our leader, Mr. Clark, states:

It is my intention, therefore, to continue requesting that all M.L.A.'s direct their questions to, and requests for information from the Department of Social Services and Community Health in writing through the Office of the Minister, and request your cooperation in this procedure.

Mr. Chairman, what concerns me with regard to a policy such as that is that there is a basic mistrust of the general employees of the department, a mistrust that they will say something to the elected representatives that shouldn't be said, may say something that may be politically embarrassing to the minister, may give out some kind of information they think is confidential. If we look at the Act administered by the minister for personnel in the government, it states very clearly that any employee of government who deals with confidential information is not allowed under oath to give that information out. And they know that; it's part of their contract in the civil service. So why should it be screened by the minister, by the deputy minister, by executive assistants, before it comes back to us as MLAs? Mr. Chairman, I just can't

understand that. I can only say that it is a symptom of mistrust of the employees of the department.

I think it symbolizes something about the communication system within the Department of Social Services and Community Health. I think that's an item we should discuss here in the Legislature. I don't know of other departments of government that are doing the same thing. Maybe some other people are aware of it. I've had the opportunity of phoning employees in other departments, and they have given me the information. If it's consistent across government, I think that says something about this whole government and its policy of mistrust of the people who serve the people of Alberta through the civil service. Mr. Chairman, that's one of the points I wanted to make.

Also in my review since last Wednesday, I looked at some other areas that I felt symbolize this whole lack of communication within the department, or communication that isn't as healthy as it should be, and I'm sure relate to the whole concept of ministerial responsibility and this division the minister has made between policy making and administrative responsibility. The point we in the opposition want to make here is that the two are interrelated; one goes hand in hand with the other.

What are some items I've noted in the last while? Well, let's look at the relationship of the minister and his department, Mr. Chairman. First of all, the whole Peace River incident. If we look at that historically, we see delays in information coming through to the minister. You ask, why did that happen? If you look at the situation where mentally ill persons were being incarcerated in the Peace River area, even though mental health officials had been raising the concerns over a period of time and the matter was raised to several MLAs at a legislative event days before it was raised here in the Assembly — and then the minister finally found out. Why is this communication gap in the department?

Another example I noted: the employment opportunities social workers were asking for more flexibility in policy administration to provide support services for employable people. This refers specifically to mothers with dependent children and the policy in effect for those persons. What about the lack of communication that I see between the minister and the general community, and some things that I feel have broken down this communication link that is so necessary? First of all, the MLA joint handicap committee that was in effect for some time has now been disbanded. Why? I thought it was one of the most objective committees. It had representatives of the NDP, the Socred Party, and the Conservative Party, and we were able to sit down with the minister, deputy ministers, other officials, and jointly discuss the concerns of the handicapped. Well, that's been disbanded.

The second area I saw as a negative: a number of women's groups across the province have been calling for more support services for employed single women. They are just not being heard. At the present time, the minister in his responsibility is asking the employed single ladies to go out and get employment. But during that transition period, they are faced with many difficulties. They are faced with a reduction in their income, a lack of an automobile because they can't buy insurance with the money that's made available to them. In some instances they are faced with the lack of a telephone, and this is not being communicated to the minister as a problem.

The situation last Friday with regard to the health care facilities that were announced in southern Alberta: the Association for the Mentally Retarded just didn't feel

they had communicated their message to the minister, nor had the opportunity to do so. They're very concerned about that. Child care groups in the province feel they have not been consulted in the decision to locate a juvenile centre in Strathmore. Why the communication breakdown? The failure to consult some of the child care groups in forming a day care policy: some of the MLAs in the Conservative back bench were asked to go out and find that kind of information. Some of the groups felt they really didn't get a good hearing. Nor did they get a hearing from the minister. The Mental Health Association felt they were not consulted with regard to the appropriateness of the funding formulas for the group homes. Why the breakdown in communication?

The last one I had was the failure to introduce amendments to The Dependent Adults Act, which have been presented by various groups including the Association for the Mentally Retarded. Again, an example of where they felt communication had broken down. Something in ministerial responsibility had failed to meet the needs and wishes and to hear the desires of these grass roots groups across the province of Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, those are concerns I have. I think the communication system must work well, must be well oiled, must be open, must be a two-way street, and must be given time to work at all times. We feel that just hasn't happened. I think the minister should be able to explain to us why there have been those shortcomings in his administration.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, just before the minister responds, there are really three areas that I'd like to touch on in supplementing the comments made by my colleague the Member for Little Bow. I say this with no personal malice to the minister at all but, Mr. Minister, last week when we started the estimates I was frankly shocked when you indicated to us that you had ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Leader of the Opposition is having the same difficulty as the Member for Spirit River-Fairview in by-passing the Chair. I would really request that they try to avoid that.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, I'm quite prepared to abide by that. I know your ruling is accurate. Mr. Chairman, might I simply say this: it's amazing how sometimes the Chair gets involved in that kind of ruling with some ministers and not with others.

Now with regard to the question at hand, Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Mr. Minister, last week the minister indicated to the committee that he'd finally sat down with some of his regional directors. When my colleague the Member for Little Bow was the minister responsible, one of the very first things he did was get out and meet with regional directors all across the province. Mr. Minister, what the minister needs to do ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Leader of the Opposition is still by-passing the Chair.

MR. R. CLARK: And I may a few more times this afternoon, too. [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I regret that the hon. leader ...

MR. R. CLARK: I apologize, sir. But, Mr. Chairman, let me simply say this: in the course of the kind of feeling there is on an issue like this, it's just very difficult always

to recognize the Chair when one is trying to make a point to the minister on issues that are basically issues of human decency. So I apologize to you for my comments, but let me ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would say to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that I regret he feels it necessary to by-pass the Chair, but I am concerned that this is becoming contagious within this committee. Other members are picking up that sort of address and, unfortunately, that is not the proper form of address. I would hope that he would try to address his remarks to the Chair.

MR. R. CLARK: I will, sir.

Now, Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Mr. Minister, what we're talking about here very basically gets down to a matter of human decency. The minister indicated the other day that he had finally got to the stage, some year into the minister's term, where he'd sat down with some of the regional directors across the province. Mr. Minister, through the Chairman, I could have much more compassion for the minister, Mr. Chairman, if the minister had got off his backside and got to Peace River the day after the Ombudsman advised his office of what was going on up there. Or if two days after, Mr. Chairman, the minister had said there would be an investigation, and three days after, if he had axed some of the people who were responsible. Mr. Chairman, I could have much more compassion for what's going on here today and for the minister if, after the Metis files were raided, two days later the minister had got up and apologized to those people. But last year during the estimates, we had a great wrangle as to whether the minister was responsible and whether this really happened, which was idiotic. We had the discussion here in the House. The Ombudsman went through the investigation, and the Ombudsman told the minister that what we'd been telling him was right. Then, Mr. Chairman, in a great show of decency the minister sent letters to the various colonies.

Now it would seem to me that what the minister has got to do is get out of his office, get away from those advisors in that office, and get out to where the problems are. What took place up in Peace River, the minister should have been there the day after. And he should can the people in his office, who tried to tell the people of Alberta that it was acceptable to feed some people dog food. One of his executive assistants did that. That's grounds for release as far as I'm concerned, with no disrespect to the individual involved.

Mr. Chairman, when we talk about ministerial responsibility, in this case why is it that when serious matters take place, we've always got to drag the minister into an investigation? The government and the people of Alberta — it wasn't the opposition — the people of Alberta forced the government into the Cavanagh review because the minister's office indicated initially there would be no review of what took place up north. Mr. Chairman, it's this type of total lack of sensitivity in the office that's reflected through in the minister.

The third point I want to make, Mr. Chairman, is simply this: last week I asked the minister seriously to consider this question of ministerial responsibility. I even asked that the minister may want to reconsider the matter over the weekend and come back and give us a broader, more complete and thorough definition of ministerial responsibility. Frankly, I was surprised today that the minister didn't expand or certainly develop more fully the explanation of ministerial responsibility as he sees it.

Mr. Chairman, we're concerned about the decorum in this committee, about everyone using the proper terminology in the committee — and that's important. But the basis of this whole system that allows any of us to have the opportunity of sitting here is ministerial responsibility. Mr. Chairman, for a moment we should perhaps weigh the two, as to whether we use the proper wording in the committee — and I apologize to you for being wrong — as opposed to an issue that I think is far more important; that is, the question of ministerial accountability. When we have a minister who stands here in the House and, to restate what the minister said: the minister has the responsibility for policy, but the day to day administration isn't an area of responsibility.

Mr. Chairman, the reason there are the communication problems that my colleague referred to in that department is because the senior people in that department, with the greatest of respect, know very well the minister doesn't feel that he is responsible. So they've had to take these things into their own hands. That's why we have the kind of communication problems that my colleague from Little Bow referred to here today.

I just ask the minister once again to rethink his view of ministerial responsibility, which in essence says that the minister is responsible for policy, but really no one is responsible for administration. That really appears to be what's happening in this department. No one is responsible for administration, Mr. Chairman.

I simply can't make the point too often to the Chairman and the minister. It's so reminiscent of the debate we had last year, debate that I don't particularly like. But it isn't a debate just on the Metis files. Now we're on at least the third major issue in the course of less than a year. We get back to this idea that really no one is responsible for the administration of the department. Certainly that isn't the way other ministers handle the situation. Mr. Chairman, to you and to the minister: these kinds of problems are going to continue in the future in this department unless the lines of communication of the department are firmly established and the senior people in the department know what is expected of them from the minister.

Mr. Minister, in a department the size of the one you're responsible for, there are going to be problems. That point has been made by the minister, Mr. Chairman; it's been made by others on the government side in defence. I can accept that if in the next day or two these matters are straightened up, dealt with, and steps are taken. But when we see the kind of action we've seen in these three areas, clearly what my colleague from Little Bow said when he talked about communications and ministerial responsibility just has to be right on. I urge members of the committee: I know it's easy simply to sit there and not think about what's involved in ministerial responsibility, but if the concept as explained by this minister is accepted by this government, then the administration by 40,000 to 45,000 civil servants in Alberta is not responsible to anyone. That, in essence, is what we're being told by this minister; the minister is not responsible for the administration.

Dr. Horner said, in essence, I'll take responsibility for what goes on in my department. We're having a total change from that approach. And if this approach to ministerial responsibility is to become the norm in Alberta, we will have hit a new low as far as the meaningfulness of this Assembly is concerned, because then ministers will not be responsible in the Assembly for administration. No one is responsible for administration. No one.

Ministers then become responsible for policy, and no one is responsible for administration. Now any average, fair-thinking Albertan would recognize that in the long term, that will get us into horrendous problems in this province. It gnaws away at the whole basis of our system.

DR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Chairman, I rose and spoke on this item of responsibility last Friday. In view of the fact that opposition members have risen again to make comments, I feel it's very important that the citizens of Alberta hear the other side again. At that time I indicated in all sincerity — and I know hon. opposition members feel quite sincerely, as we all do, about the importance of this specific item and the responsibility of the minister to the Legislature and to the citizens of Alberta.

There is no doubt in my mind, Mr. Chairman, that the minister is responsible to account to the Legislature and, through the Legislature, to the citizens of Alberta. He is responsible to explain, and he has done that abundantly clearly. He is responsible to correct, and he's done that. He's responsible to modify, and he's done that. He's responsible to provide programs and policies wherever necessary for people programs, considering his Department of Social Services and Community Health, specifically with respect to child care. He's responsible to correct deficiencies, if there are deficiencies. He's doing that now by the review and whatever will come from that review, and act accordingly. Indeed, he's responsible to provide a budget to this Legislature. This Legislature will either vote for or against, augment or decrease that budget, as the case may be. And truly, he's responsible to provide that policy.

Surely, Mr. Chairman, what else can one expect from a human being, a minister of any department? Here we have the policies. He's in the House literally every day, in addition to monitoring all the various problems that occur in his department, specifically people programs. He answers questions, both written and oral. He responds to motions for returns. He doesn't deny these things. If anybody can stand up — and I hope opposition members are listening very carefully — and say the minister has not answered a question on the topic, I would like to hear that. As I recall, the minister has answered every question as adequately as possible under the circumstances. If there was more information, I'm sure he would have given it to the Legislature and to citizens, who are indeed keenly interested and very hurt by this event in the northern regional treatment centre.

The question is very simple, but very important: did the minister sanction such an activity? Well, hon. opposition members heard the answer in this Legislature. I'm sure it was also quoted outside the Legislature in the press. But hon. opposition members obviously want to lose sight of the central point: the minister indicated he did not and does not sanction such an activity. To suggest the minister did, Mr. Chairman and hon. members of the Legislature, is at best ludicrous and at worst very silly. I'm sure the minister will indicate to the Legislature again today that he did not — I repeat, did not — sanction such an activity and would not; I don't believe he would. With respect to the minister not necessarily being an expert in the field of child care — most ministers are not necessarily experts in their fields, and we don't expect them to be under our parliamentary system of government — he still would not sanction such an activity.

Yes, Mr. Chairman, we question. To question the minister, to ask the minister to explain, to ask the minister if he directed such activities, is fair game; it's fair ball, if

you wish. Indeed, opposition members and some government members have, either privately or in this House. And the answers are there. If he did direct such an activity, I think the answer would be obvious. I challenge opposition members to show that kind of situation.

Mr. Chairman, the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview raised the Ombudsman. He said he should not be a buffer or a conduit for citizens' concerns. Well, I disagree with him, not a hundred per cent but a hundred and ten per cent. That is exactly one of the reasons the Ombudsman is there: to protect citizens, where there may be miscommunication or even if the communication is direct and in fact the minister did not respond. But that wasn't the case here. Surely the Ombudsman has a responsibility to defend citizens, to bring attention to citizens' concerns if the minister did not get that information in advance. In the case in point, and properly so, the Ombudsman referred the information to the minister, and the minister in fact responded, and was prepared to respond in either case.

So, Mr. Chairman, very simply put: in this case regarding the northern regional treatment centre, did the minister direct and carry out such an objectionable activity? The answer is an emphatic no. The next question: did the minister establish a review to assure that such activities and related activities for our children in child care facilities would not be done? Did he establish such a review? The answer is yes.

Mr. Chairman, if both these things are answered — and they have been repeatedly — then I just don't see what the great difficulty is, except for the fact that it happened. As a legislator, as a citizen of Alberta, I'm upset that it happened; we're all upset. We wish it wouldn't have happened. But hon. opposition members have become very naive to believe that the minister can be everywhere and directing every professional and non-professional activity. Unfortunately, other errors will be made in that department and other departments.

So the question again, Mr. Chairman: did the policy of his department intend to result in an act to feed a child dog food? The answer again, in my opinion — and I ask members of the Legislature to rise if they think otherwise — is not only no but an emphatic no. Would the minister have sanctioned such an activity if he had known? Again, it's no, an emphatic no.

Mr. Chairman, regarding the mentally ill: hon. opposition members raise that to color the waters again regarding ministerial responsibility. The minister was asked whether a mentally ill patient who poses a danger to himself or others should be incarcerated in a jail. One of the opposition, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, or whoever asked the question, knows very well that that does happen and will continue to happen, because of the time, the situation, and so forth. One case in point is where police officers might have to carry out the activity themselves and bring the mentally ill patient to a police station for a period of time, then call the doctor to have him certified and transferred to a mental facility.

The answers were provided in this House by the minister. They were clear, and I don't understand why the hon. opposition members want to muddy the water again. If you ask any relative of a mentally ill patient who poses a danger to himself or others, I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that they plead for something to be done right now, and not be waiting for whether there is a bed in a mental facility. I agree of course, as the minister indicated, that within 24 hours the doctor is usually called if he's available, and within 72 hours he's usually transferred, if

that is at all possible.

Police officers know the situation very clearly. They're certainly responding appropriately to our citizens' needs. This is not a pleasant task for them. It's not a pleasant task for our citizens who have relatives with that kind of problem. But to raise that and drag it here in front of the minister at this time, after he answered all the questions — I just can't buy that.

The other question is whether the minister is responsible and accountable to this House, to the Legislature, and through this Legislature, to the citizens. Mr. Chairman, the other day I asked a question regarding an injured individual in Michener Centre. Was the answer adequate? If the opposition members were not satisfied, they should rise and ask the question again. I thought the answer was not only adequate, it was more than adequate. It's being investigated by the health care review committee and, in addition to that, a report will be going to the Ombudsman.

Mr. Chairman, these are the comments I want to make. I wouldn't hesitate to stand up and repeat them again, because somehow it's difficult to get through to the opposition members. I hope the citizens out there — and I know they listen to many of these debates; unfortunately, not as many listen as probably should — hear this debate very clearly and clearly understand what the situation is. In summary, the question is very fundamental: did the minister act appropriately when he knew the problem was there? My bottom line comment is yes, emphatically yes.

Thank you.

MR. MAGEE: Mr. Chairman, as one of the backbenchers, if you will, I would like to refute the statements made by the Leader of the Opposition about lack of effort on the part of this minister. When he makes allegations about this minister's not paying attention to his duties, I certainly have to take exception to it.

For instance, I can tell this Assembly that this minister spent a full day with me in attendance at the Michener Centre, which is only one of the institutions he has within his responsibility. In that day he had all manner of staff and executive members with him on that tour. He made statements that he wanted to see everything in that institution. He didn't just want to see the good parts of it; he wanted to tour the older sections, the newer sections, and the various types of operations that go on in that centre. Since that time, the staff and the executives of that institution have told me that never in the history of their being involved with that institution has someone paid as much attention to digging into their concerns, their affairs, and the operation of that particular facility. Certainly the minister has always responded to the concerns this member might have had in his day to day operation between constituents and his particular operation.

I ask members: how can a minister be everywhere at one time, be in all places, and be knowledgeable about all the details? I suggest to you that this particular minister is making a big, big effort to get on top of that gigantic job he has to do in this department. For the Leader of the Opposition to go on and on with implications of dereliction of responsibility is ludicrous.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I've sat and listened now for what seems like an eternity, and I question whether we're dealing with the estimates of the minister or the committee on privileges and elections. I tend to get a little concerned, as I'm sure other members do.

Mr. Chairman, the only comments I'd like to make with reference to comments made by some members about the minister getting around the province. Between sittings of the House, I find that most of my time is spent meeting ministers coming from Edmonton to the constituency. I hadn't realized just how mobile the front bench was. I think it might be appropriate to designate it "the flying cabinet", because they seem to be all over the province. So I would take issue with the member who made the comments that the ministers of this government don't take the time and don't have the time to go around the province and see first hand what the departments are doing, because I think that is absolutely wrong.

Speaking with reference to the estimates at hand, Mr. Chairman, I've attended I don't know how many meetings with the Minister of Social Services and Community Health in the constituency of Lethbridge West. If he's spending that much time there — and we don't have problems in that constituency — you can imagine how much time he's spending in others. So I'd certainly recommend that we listen to the words of the Member for Calgary North West, that in estimates we're dealing with the future and should not spend too much time on history.

As the Member for Vegreville put it so eloquently last week, there are two types of people, the doers and the doubters. I'm proud to be associated with a minister who's a doer. You don't make mistakes unless you do something. So I would certainly urge that we accept the minister's estimates.

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I just want to respond to a couple of observations that were made. First of all the hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway raised the question: did the minister sanction such activity? The answer is no. No one in this House or in this committee has suggested that the minister sanctioned the activity.

But if one looks at ministerial responsibility, Mr. Chairman, the fact of the matter is that a "no" answer to that question does not allow the government or the minister off the hook. Without retracing British history, the minister I referred to in the Cichel Downs case most definitely didn't sanction the activity. He knew nothing about it. He was in exactly the same position as this minister was: he knew nothing about it. But the fact is that he still resigned. And that's in the Mother of Parliaments. The Cichel Downs case sets a very clear precedent that, where there is a major problem that can, in fact, be attributed to government policy, deficiencies in policy, deficiencies in communication, deficiencies in budgeting, then the minister must accept responsibility.

No one in this committee is suggesting that we have as a minister some sort of ogre who would sit back and smile at the thought of children eating dog food. That's not the point, Mr. Chairman. The issue is: when it occurs, what kind of action is taken? Well, if the minister's response to learning of this was, as the Leader of the Opposition has indicated, to go immediately to Peace River, to sit down with the regional administrator at that time and say, all right, what are we going to do, how are we going to resolve this, I think many of us would have been somewhat happier about the way this entire issue was handled.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, that didn't occur. The much talked about Cavanagh Board of Review is an excellent step in the right direction, but a

step that did not occur until March 17. There's a lot of time between December 11 and March 17. If this government had moved more quickly . . . But as I look at the Thompson report, it is dated February 29. The minister apparently didn't have a chance to see it until March 10. It wasn't until March 17 that we had the announcement of the Cavanagh Board of Review. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, that's hardly a case of springing into action. It's hardly a case of moving quickly, when the first complaint had been given to the Peace River regional office on November 13. Here it is March 17 that we finally have the decision to proceed with the Cavanagh Board of Review.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, somebody has to accept responsibility for what appeared to be, in the most generous way I could put it, a rather sluggish response on the part of this government to what was clearly an outrageous event. An outrageous event. Regardless of how the government members wish to deflect it, it has to rest at the doorstep of the minister and the government.

The Member for Edmonton Kingsway made one other point. He made reference to my observation about the provincial Ombudsman. Let me make it clear, Mr. Chairman, that the comment I made about Dr. Ivany's involvement was totally positive with respect to Dr. Ivany. When the matter was brought to his attention, the Ombudsman acted quickly and decisively, as he should, and conveyed his concern to the department, which was totally appropriate. But one should not confuse — as perhaps the member from Kingsway did — the right of the individual citizen to the extra protection afforded by the office of Ombudsman with the normal avenues of communication, which should never have caused this kind of lack of information in the first place. You really have to separate the two things.

Mr. Chairman, if the young couple in question had gone to the Ombudsman but the minister had already known because the Peace River regional office had sent the information to the director, then I would really say the avenues of communication are working within the department. But that didn't happen. The entire issue was a consequence of an unlikely event, because most people who feel a sense of injustice don't go to the Ombudsman. About a thousand people a year do, but most people don't. So we have the happenstance of a young couple feeling strongly enough about the issue that after first going to the department and the department not relaying the information to the minister, they then took the next step — which some people do, but most people don't — of going to the Ombudsman. It was at this point that the minister found out about it.

Mr. Chairman, there's no way that any member of this Assembly can suggest to me that avenues of communication that, work in that manner are even within shooting distance of being efficient. It's one thing not to communicate every single detail of administrative policy, but when you get an event that has even led this government to appoint the Cavanagh Board of Review to look at the total issue of child welfare legislation in this province and the limits of behavior modification, when you get a matter of this magnitude and it isn't communicated, then we're dealing with a rather more important matter. It's not a sort of simple administrative slip-up between the Peace River office and the minister.

I notice that other members of the Legislature — the Member for Red Deer indicates that the minister has gone to Michener Centre. Fine; I think that's excellent.

But the fact that the minister has gone to Michener Centre, however laudable that may be, doesn't mitigate the minister's responsibility for this particular event, as well as for some of the other events we could go into, such as the Metis raid and Westfield, but particularly this event. The Member for Red Deer says, how can the minister be everywhere? Our system of government is based on the simple proposition that major matters of administration and policy are intertwined, and the minister must be responsible.

Mr. Chairman, I know that some members may say, well, we're way ahead of everybody, way ahead of the rest of the people of Canada, way ahead of the Mother of Parliaments. You know, they can have a very clear rule that says the minister must accept responsibility for administration and policy, but we don't need it in Alberta. The federal government can have a pretty clear policy, but we don't need it in Alberta. But, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, the people of Alberta don't feel that way. If one finds one predominant feeling throughout this province, including that of many, many people I've talked to in the minister's own political party, I think there is a feeling that ministerial responsibility must apply in this instance, and that the minister must accept full responsibility for this unfortunate event, as well as for some of the other events that have occurred in the minister's department that have been the subject of some considerable controversy, and may be debated later in discussion of these estimates.

Mr. Chairman, I would just underline again that it would be a complete abdication of the responsibilities of all of us as members of the Legislature if we allowed what is a clearly inadequate definition of ministerial responsibility to stand without being properly challenged. It is inadequate, and it simply won't do.

MR. OMAN: Mr. Chairman, I don't feel any great need to defend the minister, because I think he can do that quite easily himself. In my view, he's handled the situation in a manner that's circumspect. Rather than spinning wheels on an old issue — I think this has been mentioned — that's been predigested, digested, regurgitated, and swallowed again, I recall that in a car when you spin your wheels in a rut, you wear out your own tires and pretty soon you aren't moving very much at all. So let me leave that.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to inquire of the minister in another area. The minister knows I have some concern with regard to some of the agencies other than government agencies involved in people services for the handicapped. I think he has done well on some of the steps he has taken with regard to day care. But I have some suggestions or concerns about funding of private agencies, church agencies, and so on which are looking after handicapped children and other people who need care, and whose level of funding, it seems to me, does not allow them to pay their staff adequate salaries. Therefore they are finding that there's an unusually high attrition rate to other agencies, whether private or government, and it's difficult for them to carry on. I'm wondering if the minister could indicate to the House what plans his department may have to correct what I think is an imbalance in the system, to bring salary levels in some of the other-than-government agencies up to a standard whereby they can retain their staff.

MR. MACK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too do not feel that I would make any attempt to defend the minis-

ter. I think he's very capable of doing the same. However, I thought I would like to respond and perhaps make one or two observations with regard to some of the comments advanced by the members of the opposition.

I concur with members of the opposition as it would relate to ministerial responsibility. There's no question in my mind where that particular aspect lies. I think the minister is responsible for what occurs in his department. Having said that, recognizing that when you have a large staff who actually carry out those responsibilities which flow under policy — and perhaps there may be some merit in reviewing and updating policies, which we haven't really been addressing. As far as updating policies, to this point we've been critical of the existing policies.

In an area such as health and social services, where we are dealing not with the average, the norm, but in most instances with the abnormal kind of situation — and not every situation is alike. Perhaps you might have three, four, or five people in an institution, and each of them would require a somewhat different type of treatment depending on what their problems are. Therein lies the very, very difficult challenge. I would view it as a challenge as opposed perhaps to a duty or a job. These are challenges for us all, not only for the minister and his staff.

Being an advocate for so many years in the area of labor relations and having, I think, a very broad and varied experience in being able to determine what is the real issue and what is imaginary and ultimately finding those out, I believe I can relate to some of this with a sense of real empathy for those who are receiving the treatment. I view with some degree of concern and perhaps regret that rather than coming up with suggestions as to how we might initiate remedial action, that we might limit if not eliminate — and I think desirably and ideally it would be to eliminate all the bad side effects that from time to time some of those patients experience. It would appear we are majoring in an area of trying to gather political gain. That sort of upsets me a little. What are we trying to do in this Legislature? We are attempting to provide services to Albertans who, in many cases, are less fortunate than we are, to the extent that their own homes could not cope with them, their own parents couldn't cope with them, or children couldn't cope with their parents, and so areas the government then must provide.

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

Funding is probably one of the easiest things to provide, but it's all those other elements that human beings require that money can't buy. Quite often we depend on professional or quasi-professional people. I suppose if they were all-wise in all things, we might be able to establish and probably create a perfect kind of situation. But I haven't found it.

I wonder whether that is the real issue, whether the real issue we are discussing today is to try to provide a more sophisticated and humane place of residence and atmosphere for those whom we are supposedly so concerned about. Rather, in listening I suspect it's nothing more than political advantage. I would suggest that that is the most despicable form of advantage that I would certainly want. What I would want and suggest that we address ourselves, all of us — how we might improve and how we might be able to overcome these pitfalls that from time to time are brought to our attention. They are not there by design. In most instances they are there because of lack of

true appreciation and perhaps knowledge of how to come to grips with some of the very difficult situations that arise.

I am no professional insofar as behavioral modification is concerned. I guess we have people who attend many years of university to attempt to gain that expertise. At times I wonder if even they are fully satisfied that they have attained that type of expertise that they might be able to respond to any situation that may come before them and that they might face.

With respect, to blow a regrettable instance completely out of proportion is, in my judgment, irresponsible. I think we should address the subject in a way that we would provide the kind of legislation and the type of resources that would limit, if not eliminate, those types of recurrences. I'm not hearing that. I'm hearing how terrible it is. We agree; it is terrible. I'm wondering and am concerned by an overreacting by the minister.

Having been an advocate — and still am — for employees, I have some concerns with them as well. They may have discharged their responsibility in good faith, even though one of their number may err. I have concern that unfair aspersions are cast at those good employees. For them to be able to discharge their responsibilities with any degree of confidence presents extreme difficulty. There is an additional dimension that is brought into a very difficult situation.

So I would certainly not support that the minister immediately go witch hunting when a problem arises, and attempt to see who he can cut down in order to . . . One of the first criticisms I would make of him is: is he attempting to cover up and place or shift the blame on an employee? I think a proper evaluation must be made in all of these kinds of situations in order that no further wrong be committed in attempting to resolve a wrong.

So it is a very, very difficult task. I believe all of us must shoulder the responsibility insofar as providing suggestions and, particularly where we are dealing with areas within our own constituencies, to become acquainted with those constituencies, not in a sense of witch hunting but in a sense of trying to enhance all those facilities that are provided for the betterment of Albertans and, more importantly, for those Albertans who are disadvantaged. Rather than attempting to politicize a very serious area, an area that is extremely emotional, we lose the perspective of objectivity.

That gives me some real concern, because unless we have objectivity, we will never have the kinds of programs that would in fact provide the kind of care, the maximum type of care, these people deserve and that in fact it is humanly possible for us to provide. I'm sure if it were an easy task, these people would be in the family setting. But they are not within the family setting, because the family is not capable of coping. I would suggest that we attempt to place these areas in their proper perspective. In the name of providing the services that these, our disadvantaged Albertans, deserve, I suggest that we pool our resources as opposed to trying to get political gain.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. COOK: Mr. Chairman, frankly I am quite disturbed by some of the remarks that have been made by the opposition members today. I'm not going to rise in my place to defend the minister; he needs no defence. But I do want to deal with some of the arguments on ministerial accountability and responsibility on a theoretical or constitutional level.

I think what we're witnessing, Mr. Chairman, is theatre

of the absurd. We have the opposition members playing to the press gallery, not because of any fundamental policy differences but because of short-term political advantage. I think we have to put the discussion this afternoon in that frame.

It's important, Mr. Chairman, to define the concept of ministerial responsibility; not in the terms of the Member for Spirit River-Fairview, who last week offered some specious arguments on communication and a few other suggestions that he thought would fulfil the definition of ministerial responsibility, but we should go back to the theory of the responsible governmental system. Going back there, a minister is both a member of the Executive Council — in that sense, he and his colleagues set the broad parameters of governmental policy — and a minister responsible for a department. I think it's important we recognize that in that function a minister has a responsibility to determine the basic principles upon which public policy in that department is established. He takes those to his colleagues in Executive Council and, with them, develops a policy position. The minister then goes back to his department and works with his senior administrative staff in a way that influences them.

Max Weber, the sociologist of the late 1800s, outlined the administrative model that followed in the German governmental system, where decisions flowed from the top down. In that sense, Mr. Chairman, I think today in the British system the minister is the feedback mechanism who constantly informs the political body of the state about the administrative quality of the programming, tries to upgrade the administration, and makes policy changes and decision that reflect the problems of the time. In every sense of that concept, I think the minister is doing an admirable job.

I think we also have to recognize that ministerial responsibility is fundamentally a political and not a legal responsibility. It's a political responsibility, and in that sense the members opposite are playing political games today. It makes good press, I suppose. I'm sure we'll see the opposition members sounding noble. I think they have a sort of *pravda* syndrome, Mr. Chairman. The *pravda* syndrome is a sort of single truth: there is only one truth and they have it; if there is any other point of view, it's not correct. I suppose the *pravda* syndrome particularly appeals to the Member for Spirit River-Fairview.

What we're looking at today is value judgments. It's not possible to be objective. It's not possible, Mr. Chairman, because there is more than one single answer to a political problem. Matters of public policy are not simple matters to resolve; there are many conflicting values and problems. So when the minister comes and puts before the House his policy statements and estimates, I think the concept of ministerial responsibility falls basically on the House, to determine whether or not it wants to support him. It's quite clear that this House is more than satisfied with the gentleman who has brought forward estimates that allow for some 8,000 civil servants in his department to be the largest single department in the government, which suggests something of the priorities of this government. It's important that we recognize there is a variety of ways of dealing with social problems. The province is experiencing burgeoning growth. There are problems on all sides, and it's basically the responsibility of the minister and the Executive Council to try to deal with them in as fair and compassionate a way as possible, given the resources available. I think the minister does that very, very well.

Just to sum up, Mr. Chairman, we have before us a

specious debate brought forward by the members of the opposition for political gamesmanship, in the best example of the *pravda* syndrome I think we've had in the session thus far. They are trying to suggest that they are the only people in the Chamber who have a handle on the truth. In Russian, *pravda* means truth. It's evident that what they're trying to do is play to the press galleries and get some press.

I am reminded that my hon. friend from Spirit River-Fairview keeps a daily record — or did last year, anyway — of the days he performed well and thought the government did not do well. It's sort of like a notch on the butt of a revolver. [interjections] I guess he's trying to chalk up more notches than the government. In that sense, Mr. Chairman, perhaps that's why he has only one seat in the House. It's a very narrow and short-term view of politics, as opposed to the long-term view the Executive Council and the minister are bringing before the House. It's not day to day notching on a revolver, Member for Spirit River-Fairview, but the long-term welfare of the community that we're all responsible for.

So frankly I am appalled and concerned at the performance of the opposition. They have a responsibility in this House as well to have intelligent criticism of the government, and they're not doing it. It's a sad day for Alberta.

DR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Chairman, very briefly in response to the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview. I'm really pleased — and I want it for the record — that he agrees that the minister did not sanction such activity. He agrees with that. But I think he also implied that I indicated he was off the hook. No way, Mr. Chairman. No way. I did not say he was off the hook. He is responsible to account, to correct, to stop the activity, which he did; to review the activity, which he's doing; and offer further corrections. He is doing that. So in no way did I say he was off the hook, and I'd not think any member of the Legislature here would indicate that or would want that in the record. I don't think the Minister of Social Services and Community Health would want that.

Regarding the Ombudsman: indeed, the Ombudsman did bring this to the attention of the minister, because there was probably — and, I would say, was — difficulty or a breakdown in relaying information to the minister. There is a need for correction in that department with respect to that kind of activity. I agree with that. But my comments regarding the importance of the Ombudsman stand. The Ombudsman and his office, serving as an important action centre for citizens versus government, is critical — the very reason this Legislature supports that kind of office. That has to be underlined again. If there are going to be deficiencies in the future, I hope the citizens, the MLA, whoever out there, will indeed use the Ombudsman's office to relay that information and challenge the government, for the very essence of that office is to increase the assurance of citizens being represented appropriately.

I want to make one final comment, Mr. Chairman, because of the comments that have been made. If the press plays a role to expose inappropriate activity, so be it. They're to be congratulated if they do that. It's like any citizen who exposes such activity. That is part of the democratic system, and I hope that never changes.

Thank you.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to respond with regard to the discussion on political advantage, poli-

ticizing, or acting with political gamesmanship. It's been raised by the Member for Edmonton Belmont and the Member for Edmonton Glengarry.

Mr. Chairman, what must be understood in the debate at the present time is that we in the opposition, whether partisan or non-partisan, have a responsibility to ensure for ourselves as well as for many, many people we represent across this province that responsible action is taking place within whatever department. In this instance it happens to be the responsibilities of the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. In order to play our role in this discussion of good government, of bringing better government to the people of Alberta, and responsible government, we feel we have a responsibility to raise whatever issue is at hand or whatever issue is of concern to the people of Alberta. In raising that particular issue, we act as the control or the governor of the item at hand. And the only way we can bring it to the floor of this Legislature, through committee at this point, is by raising it with as much concern as we can, indicating we are concerned about it and that something must be done or that a pattern of actions must change.

At this point in our debate, I think that's what we're talking about. We're raising the concern about the minister and his actions. We look at past performance with regard to three specific areas we have raised at the present time: the Peace River situation; the Metis situation, which was the first one; and the Westfield situation. I could name some others. In each of those situations, the concern we raised was the lack of immediate action by the minister. We felt that when the situation came to the minister's attention, there was a time span before action took place. That's already been explained in this Assembly. In our responsibility we feel that we must, one, make it clear that we don't accept that kind of action.

Secondly, before this debate is ended we must assure ourselves that in any other situation that occurs, communication is performed between the departmental officials and the minister, the public and the minister; and that any type of situation we deem — as these three — to be emergent will be dealt with as quickly as possible. Because in each situation, the lives of people, the rights of people, were being threatened, and needed emergent attention, Mr. Chairman, we feel it's our responsibility to raise those situations, whether or not the press is in the gallery. We must raise that to our satisfaction. If we let it go and don't raise it in this public forum, no one else is going to do it. It's not going to get raised in the government caucus. We've heard a lot of members here today telling about how good things are at the present time: they're not bad; everything's going along well; leave it in our hands, and things will work out.

Mr. Chairman, in our responsibility in the opposition, we just can't do that. One, it's to raise the problem. That looks negative, but it's where you start. Two, it's to assure ourselves that actions or programs will change and, three, that the program or action change by the minister answers the problems and meets the needs of Albertans in the future.

MR. NOTLEY: Before the minister answers, I want to respond to the hon. Member for Edmonton Belmont and the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry. First of all, dealing with the question of political advantage, I thought that one question the Member for Edmonton Belmont asked was very appropriate; that is, how might we overcome the pitfalls? Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, that's what this debate is all about: how

we overcome the pitfalls. Unless we have a clear definition of ministerial responsibility, unless we know where the lines of communication are — who is going to accept the ultimate responsibility when things go wrong in major areas of decision or policy — then in fact all we are doing is setting this province, and the department, up for all sorts of pitfalls in the future. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, how we might overcome the pitfalls is very definitely related to the question of ministerial responsibility. No question about that.

In this debate we've heard the assertion, in a gentle way from the Member for Edmonton Belmont and in a rather more amateurish way from the Member for Edmonton Glengarry, that in actual fact the opposition is simply playing to the press gallery, and that we have a *pravda* syndrome. Well, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, in this entire debate it wasn't any member of the opposition who got up and called anybody any names. We haven't attempted to label members on the government side with any kind of names. We've differed strongly over the question of how you define ministerial responsibility. That's clear and proper. That's our responsibility as members of the opposition. But it wasn't any member of the opposition who got up and insinuated that somehow the opposition is next door to being reds because we were talking about a *pravda* syndrome. Really, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, that kind of debate by the Member for Edmonton Glengarry is, if I can use the expression, a red herring.

That's not really where it's at, Mr. Chairman. It is where things sit in this House and in this province on the question of ministerial responsibility. We have the Member for Edmonton Glengarry outlining his views, and the Member for Edmonton Glengarry is perfectly entitled to his views. But I would just say by contrast that the opposition, which he accuses of being narrow-minded in this debate, cited precedents from the government of Canada, from the British Parliament, from scholars in political science dealing with ministerial responsibility. It's not a question of just coming in here glibly saying this, that, or the other thing, but a case that's been made. The member may not agree with it, and he's entitled not to agree with it.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Chairman: when is this government going to realize that whatever is decided in caucus isn't necessarily right; that elsewhere in the country and in the Commonwealth, people have views; that we have established precedents. When one looks at the question of ministerial responsibility, I say with great respect to all members of the committee that the assertions that have made by opposition members in this House, in this committee, are borne out by the precedents. Mr. Chairman, we have yet to hear any definitive speech by any member of the government caucus that would defend the proposition advanced in this House by the minister. We'll hear from him in a moment or two, but clearly the fact of the matter is that ministerial accountability is basically what is at stake. Whether it gets on the front page of the newspaper or the back page, or isn't reported at all, is totally irrelevant. What is reported is the *Hansard* in this House, and members of the opposition have a responsibility to query, argue, and debate this issue.

To go back to the hon. Member for Edmonton Belmont — most of whose speech was very well put; I didn't agree with all of it, but I thought it was very well put — if we are going to avoid the pitfalls, then we have to have a clear definition. This is where it all starts. Unless we have a clear definition of that, Mr. Chairman, this province

and the department are going to face one pitfall after another. And every few weeks, or every few months at most, the minister is going to have explain yet another problem that has hit the headlines and makes the government look bad. The question is really: where does ministerial accountability start? Looking over the record, Mr. Chairman, clearly we have to have a better definition than the one we've got to date from the minister in charge of this department.

MR. COOK: Mr. Chairman, if I could reply a little bit. With regard to the precedents the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview cites, it's interesting to note that in almost all cases, they were in times in British parliamentary history when governments were vulnerable: where they had slim majorities; if not majorities, they were minority governments. It's all very well for the member to be so glib and to cite times in history when that was the case. But it is also possible to cite other times in British parliamentary history when governments were in firmer control of the House and able to give a little more direction to government policy. The member is citing those aberrations in parliamentary history when ministers were literally thrown to the wolves for political expediency. That is what the member is suggesting we now do, not on the basis of justice or anything like that, but simply because he would like to notch his revolver one more time. I think that's an irresponsible attitude.

Ministerial responsibility is a political, not a legal, concept that is at its strongest and most perverse, in a sense, when governments are their most vulnerable. If the member wants to cite those cases, he's welcome to do it. A better case, I think, is when governments are in a position like this government. When they have the overwhelming support of the people and something serious goes wrong, then yes. I'd like the member to cite some examples like that.

Basically, ministerial responsibility falls on the concept that the minister is responsible for the execution of a policy of the House and of the government. Where the department has not met those responsibilities, it is not the minister's responsibility to be responsible for every single one of the actions of 8,000 civil servants. For example, because I was delayed in getting my licence plate tabs this year in a line-up does not mean that the Solicitor General should be held accountable for that action.

I think the member is simply trying to notch his revolver. I was suggesting that he views the operations of the Legislature on a notching basis — points for him or points for the government. At the end of the session he adds them up, and he's a good guy if he's won more points. That's ridiculous. It's characteristic of the member, but it's still not characteristic of good government. I think that he should go back to his constitutional law books, go back to the foundations of British parliamentary government, and see that the concept is political not legal. He's playing politics, and he's playing it to our friends up in the press gallery.

MR. MACK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, just very briefly. I was delighted to hear the hon. Member for Little Bow give me some definition as to his function. There again, we're speaking of definitions, definitive action, definitive interpretations, and so on. I think I have some experience working with the deficiencies within definitions, and there are many of them. Sometimes a comma would create a deficiency in a definition. I would just like to assure the Member for Little Bow that I consider

myself an elected official and also respond to the needs of Albertans in general. I just make that as a passing comment. I appreciated your comments. I think they were very, very positive, and perhaps would reflect a much greater appreciation, because when one is putting a point across, you perhaps exaggerate the point to get a point across or at least to get attention. So that was greatly appreciated.

With regard to minister's responsibility, just very briefly, I am sure there is no question or hesitation in the mind of the minister that the responsibility for his department is his, without question and without any equivocation. I think, too, that where there may be a lack of adequate definitions of policies, I am certain, as I stated earlier, this is an ongoing thing. It'll never stop at any action that has been taken, any initiative that has been put into place. It will be an ongoing thing. I think that we ought to remember that and place it in the kind of perspective and appreciation of what is actually before us, what we are going to have to be addressing continually. Perhaps if we have any shortfalls, it's because we may lose the perspective, or perhaps at times we can't see the forest for the trees.

So new initiatives in fact are in place. You can rest assured other initiatives will be put into place on an ongoing basis, in order to circumvent the kind of thing we have experienced. It's a regret to us all. It's a shame to us all if we don't come up with positive remedial action. To suggest what is wrong — we already know what went wrong, when it is brought to our attention. But what is required . . . If you have any brainstorm, tell us. Tell me, if you don't want to tell all of us. I'll see that it's initiated. We need it.

It's that kind of thing that we have to address in order to provide the kind of standards that we as individuals would want for ourselves. If we have that kind of motivation and that kind of spirit, I think we can achieve it. But it'll take a lot more than the Minister of Social Services and Community Health to do it. You can rest assured of that. But having said that, I tell the minister, I have no difficulty in recognizing the responsibility and where it lies. It's in his office.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, at the beginning of this discussion, you quite properly drew me to order because I was referring to the minister as opposed to referring to the Chairman. A few minutes later, you quite properly drew the Leader of the Opposition to order for referring to the minister directly instead of speaking through the Chair. You were quite in order to do so. You were in order to do so, Mr. Chairman, because those are the rules. Those are the rules that have developed over the years in our parliamentary system. Now, just as it's important that we conduct ourselves in committee according to the rules — and you were correct in reprimanding both the Leader of the Opposition and me — so it is important, Mr. Chairman, to look at the precedents when we come to examine this question of ministerial responsibility. We can't just sort of dismiss the precedents.

The Member for Edmonton Glengarry suggests that the precedents I cited are all irrelevant because they occurred at a time of weak government. For a moment or two let me just cite a little bit of history for the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry. He's young, and I can't expect him to remember this. The first incident I referred to, the case of Hugh Dalton, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1947, was at a time when the Labour

Party had the largest majority in Great Britain's history from 1935 to the present time. So it wasn't a time of weak government, Mr. Chairman. There were more than twice as many Labour Party members in the House of Commons at the time as there were Conservatives. But that didn't stop the Prime Minister from quite properly saying to Mr. Dalton, you've broken the rules, Mr. Dalton. Naughty, naughty, must resign.

We have the case of the Crichton Downs affair. When did that occur? In 1954. Was there a minority government in 1954? There wasn't, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Churchill had regained power, and he regained power not with a minority but with a majority government. So the suggestion that you've somehow got apples and oranges is just not quite relevant. Mr. Chairman and hon. member, I don't want to dwell on the case, but I think it's important that we look carefully at the precedents, because as you properly indicated to us, we have to follow the precedents in committee, and the government has to follow the precedents when it comes to accounting to people.

The member quite properly asked me a question. I want to answer that question. He said, is there an example in Canadian history where a government with a large majority forced a minister to resign? I would remind the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry that indeed there is. In 1955 when Leslie Frost was Premier of Ontario, three construction companies were fined a total of \$215,000 on charges of conspiracy to defraud the government. Six Department of Highways employees were jailed or fined. The minister at the time, the hon. Mr. Doucett, subsequently resigned from the Cabinet. But, and this is important, there was no suggestion at any time that the minister knew what was going on or was party to what was going on, to cite the question the Member for Edmonton Kingsway attempted to raise. No time, just occurred. And he resigned in 1955. Was 1955 a time in Ontario when those nasty New Democrats and those nasty Liberals almost had a majority and forced the poor old government of Leslie Frost to cave in? It wasn't. You know at that time, Mr. Chairman . . .

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if you could tell us what vote we're on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We are on the introductory comments to Vote 1, to my knowledge.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I was answering a question from the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry. It is on Vote 1. I am glad the Minister of Environment is with us. I'm sure he'll be educated as a result of the discussion.

At the time, the government of Ontario had virtually every seat in the Ontario Legislature. It was the most analogous situation to the present Legislature that you can find in recent Canadian history, with exception of the 1973 election in the province of Quebec.

Mr. Chairman, when one looks at the examples, this government is going to have to find some better way to establish its new philosophical position here on the boundaries of ministerial accountability. No, the Member for Edmonton Glengarry has not been able to put Humpty Dumpty back together again. It was a good try, but the case is still there. This minister has not satisfied me, at least, as a member of this committee, that we have a clear definition of ministerial responsibility that is consistent with our parliamentary system.

MR. COOK: Mr. Chairman, if I just might refer the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview to a little political reading. I know how well he enjoys this. Some cold evening up in Spirit River he can dwell on a few items that I think should be drawn to his attention. About 25 years ago Professor Laski wrote in a journal called *Politics* an article that I think should be drawn to the member's attention. He basically said that there is a threefold assurance to powers of the executive, ministerial responsibility. First, the executive should not exceed the original delegation of responsibility given by the House. Quite clearly, the minister has not done that. Second, those who are to be affected by the exercise of discretionary power should be consulted. Third, the Legislature should be fully informed as to the uses to which such discretionary powers it confers are put. Quite clearly, the minister has met all three points, bringing to the House both his policies and his estimates, and consulting with the people involved.

Another point I would draw to the attention of the hon. member is an article written by a Mr. Hewart called *The New Despotism*. I guess the point basically is that in a modern bureaucratic state — and I'm assured that the hon. member would have an even greater bureaucracy if he had government and an even greater difficult time trying to control it. But many modern states are having a problem in that the bureaucrats are in fact executing the powers of the legislator. They have so much discretionary power left to them that the minister cannot possibly be responsible for that. He sets policy, not administrative decisions. In the interaction of the bureaucrat with the people, in a myriad of ways — and I pointed out in my original notes that there are some 8,000 civil servants in the minister's department — we have reached the point where we are not the simple agrarian state of the 1930s, '40s, or '50s that maybe the member would like to return to. Unfortunately those times have passed, and life isn't quite so simple any more.

I'd simply suggest that the minister should continue in the fashion he has and that the member should perhaps come back into the 1980s. With a Progressive Conservative administration at the helm, we have a good, sophisticated civil service that has some problems. No one is perfect. Again I point back — and the member has not dealt with this argument — that ministerial responsibility is a political, not a legal, definition.

The politics of it are very simple. The minister has done nothing wrong. We are not going to throw him to the wolves, as he would wish, for a little blood and guts on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, for him to notch his pistol. That would be very wonderful for him, I suppose, in his legislative career. He's not going to aspire to many more heights than that. I just simply suggest that he shouldn't be quite so self-righteous and should be a little more practical.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would the hon. minister like to speak?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, much of the debate this afternoon has centred on the singular question of ministerial responsibility. Before commenting on the comments made by the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview, as he led the debate, I'd like to draw the attention of hon. members of the House back approximately two and a half years. At that time you may well recall that the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview rather jokingly challenged me to a debate in Milk River on constitutional

reform. I accepted that challenge, and the hon. member joined me in Milk River. At that time I can well recall the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview using certain excerpts from a former Prime Minister of this country, John Diefenbaker. I well recall the arguments put forward, the very careful pasting together of bits and pieces of information, statements made by the former Prime Minister over a period of time. On the surface, it actually appeared that John A. Macdonald's later successor John George Diefenbaker was in favor of a strongly centralized Canada, not one that recognizes the regions with strong input.

I remind our colleagues this afternoon, Mr. Chairman, that the same approach must be watched very carefully. When I look at some of the comments made by the hon. member — first, the bringing to the floor of this Assembly a federal government position paper of some years ago and quotations given us by a former federal Minister of Agriculture that any actions taken by that minister, the minister felt responsible for. He went on to mention another minister "as if the act were his own" — actions taken as if I took them and the actions were his own.

Mr. Chairman, it's important that we pause on those remarks for a moment because quite clearly, if actions are taken through the directives of a minister and later those actions clearly violate government policy, then I agree; the minister has no choice but to resign. If I as the minister responsible for this particular department had issued instructions that behavioral modification such as that which was described should have been used, no one would have been asking for my resignation; it would have been offered.

Mr. Chairman, the key point is that I did not issue such instructions, nor did senior officials in my department. When we get to that vote, I'll be pleased to discuss and answer questions hon. members have on that or any other issue.

When we're looking at examples used of past ministers who have resigned, I think it's important that we not forget, that we not merely look at the piece presented to us today but go beyond that and look at all the factors. I have some difficulty believing that the case presented from Ontario in 1955 is all as innocent as the hon. member has suggested. In recent years I can recall two resignations by federal ministers. I well recall a former Minister of Labour resigning when a judge made public that he felt compromised because the ultimate decision he was about to make regarding a scandal case, a fraud, was being influenced by a member of cabinet; a similar activity relating to a member from Quebec. The other incident I well recall is the Solicitor General of the day who had actually forged the name of a lover's husband so that an abortion could be performed. Yes, all three individuals resigned. And I would expect any person in this Assembly to follow a similar approach.

Coming to the heart of it, Mr. Chairman, if there's a difference between theory and actual practice — and, I wonder, does the hon. member suggest that the policy of very strict accountability he's put forward is one which party leaders should follow as well? After all, it seems that if a minister is ultimately responsible for all the activities of officials within his department, then a leader of a political party is responsible for the actions taken by, first, his candidates and, secondly, other party members. If that is so, Mr. Chairman, I ask the hon. member why he did not resign as party leader of the Alberta New Democratic Party when several of his colleagues failed to comply with an Act, the financial disclosures Act. It

didn't happen. It's the difference between theory and practice.

A number of MLAs from the opposition have spoken of communication, the need to communicate. Yes, it's accurate, as pointed out by hon. Member for Little Bow, that I did circulate a letter. As the request came from an executive assistant to one of the members, not from the member himself, I did suggest that information obtained on a general policy basis should be obtained through the minister's office, notwithstanding my long-standing view, reiterated last Wednesday as I stood in my place, when I indicated that I would expect members of this Assembly on constituency matters to deal with local regional offices. That's certainly been done in the past; I would expect it to be done in the future. I also recall mentioning that during my meeting with regional administrators I encouraged that process, not on policy issues, not on issues which may be confidential, but certainly in terms of an MLA trying to assist one of the constituents to obtain the right branch of the department or the right service. That's to be expected.

Mr. Chairman, when examples are cited — the example regarding a person being detained in a jail who has not been charged but is there under The Mental Health Act — it's important that we go back and refresh our memories. That's not a practice that started this year. It didn't begin because of, at one particular time, a shortage of beds at Alberta Hospital, Ponoka, or a lack of beds in the Grande Prairie area. No. That's something that has happened over many years, including the time when the hon. Member for Little Bow was the minister of this department. I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that it will happen in the future, for a variety of reasons. What is clear is that the Legislature, through legislation, clearly sets the parameters, and to my information the parameters have not been violated in any case. Under The Mental Health Act an individual may be detained for up to 72 hours. In no case has that happened for a period longer than that. In the vast majority of cases, the period of time has not exceeded 24 hours.

Reference was made to a joint MLA committee with a handicap group. That's right. That committee has suspended its operations. Why? Because the government has moved in a new approach. We now have very active caucus committees which, from the government's point of view, meet with many, many organizations and groups. Our colleague the hon. Member for Calgary North West very ably chairs the health and social services caucus committee. I want to point out, Mr. Chairman, that I have personally, as have a number of my colleagues including the chairman of the caucus committee, advised the members of this organization and others that they should by all means contact members of the opposition and arrange for similar meetings. There's an appropriate dialogue that should take place.

On communication, we again had reference made to the announcement on Friday or the decisions, the offer which was made to a couple of hospital boards regarding Baker Centre and the relocation. The hon. Member for Little Bow may not have been in his place on Friday when I answered a question in this Assembly and indicated that on four separate occasions, starting on February 7, 1980, I met with representatives of a variety of groups, five in total, and dialogued. Some of the recommendations were implemented in the final proposal; some were not. But certainly communication did take place. I've indicated very clearly that we were not able to accept all the recommendations made by all the groups. That's true.

But I want to make it very clear that that consultation did take place.

Then there is the matter of Strathmore, the new youth development centre being located at Strathmore. When we get to that particular vote, I'm going to be pleased to talk about why this government caucus made the decision to be bold, why we decided that Strathmore was the ideal community for such a facility. I'm pleased with the policy of this government to decentralize wherever possible. That's what we're doing, and I'll be pleased to talk about it.

I'll be pleased also, later on in Vote 1, to talk about The Dependent Adults Act, as the matter has been raised by the hon. member. The matter was raised last year. I indicated at that time that certain matters were under consideration, and that's accurate. It's certainly the intention of this government to see amendments to The Dependent Adults Act introduced during this spring session. At a recent meeting I had with the Canadian Mental Health Association, during a frank discussion with a former president of that association, who now lives in Ontario and who mentioned some of his concerns because of what appears to be a backing away from responsibility of government in Ontario to the issue of sterilization, I shared some of the discussions which had been held here, the comments made by the hon. Member for Clover Bar. I said that in a matter of a few weeks we hoped to have amendments made to our legislation in a variety of ways.

The question of moving around the province: there should be no misunderstanding with the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Yes, I have been moving around the province, and I'm pleased to do that. I have met with a number of regional administrators during that process, some very fine people, as pointed out by the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview. He mentioned Reg Scotney, the administrator in Peace River; a fine young man. In the same sense, after praising the efforts, the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview went on to be very critical of the lack of communication. I'm assuming he's referring again to that regional office for not communicating. Well, we'll be pleased to discuss that when we get to the proper vote.

I'll continue to move around this province and continue to meet with the officials who operate the various facilities. It's an exciting and challenging role we've got in this department. The officials aren't backing away from it, nor am I. Yes, I will continue to follow the example I cited of meeting with regional directors here in Edmonton from time to time. The difference in the two approaches is that rather than waiting to meet them when I'm in that particular part of the province, we'll meet at an appropriate time here in Edmonton in addition to those regional visits.

Some reference was made to my executive assistants, two of the hardest working people in this building and very dedicated individuals. They have my full confidence. There should be no misunderstanding. Executive assistants do not speak for their ministers, at least in the government. The hon. Leader of the Opposition laughs. Maybe his executive assistant speaks for him. Mine certainly doesn't speak for me, but we work as a team. I'm very pleased to have them with me.

Three specific issues, Mr. Chairman, have been raised: the Metis issue, Westfield, and Peace River. In talking about accountability and whether or not someone within the department was held accountable, hon. members in the opposition should not lose sight of both the Metis

issue and Westfield, where the Ombudsman did report. Before we regroup tonight, it might do well for the hon. members to go back and read the Ombudsman report. They'll see that in both cases the Ombudsman went out of his way to comment that no action should be taken against the officials — no action.

And Peace River: there seems to be a misconception, Mr. Chairman, in the minds of some of the hon. members opposite. When the story broke on March 5, the very offensive practices were not taking place. Those practices had ceased on November 13, the year before. We'll talk about those later.

Due to the hour, Mr. Chairman, I will conclude my remarks for the moment and be pleased to come back to this point at 8 o'clock.

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

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. APPLEBY: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, the Assembly will be in Committee of Supply again at 8 o'clock.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree that when hon. members reconvene at 8 o'clock, they will be in Committee of Supply?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

[The Committee of Supply resumed at 8 p.m.]

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

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

**Department of
Social Services and Community Health
(continued)**

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. minister has some remarks to conclude.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Of the three issues pointed to by hon. members in the opposition — the Metis files, Westfield, and Peace River — I concluded my remarks before we broke for supper by indicating that if the hon. members — because they went to some length to mention ministerial accountability in these items and the need for accountability, for clarity as to who was

responsible. I asked the hon. members to take the opportunity to go back and look at the Ombudsman's report on both the Metis files incident and Westfield. Hon. members will very clearly see in the Ombudsman's recommendations: the point made by the Ombudsman that no action should be taken against officials in the department regarding the Metis files issue. With regard to Westfield, the incidents which were distasteful, unacceptable from my point of view — the use of milk cartons as an example — were altered as soon as they were uncovered. Notwithstanding those points, Mr. Chairman, the Ombudsman indicated that the director should not be held responsible and no action should be taken against the director or anyone else at that facility. Those recommendations were followed in both cases.

Mr. Chairman, I went on briefly to draw a separation between the Peace River centre, which was privately operated but under contract with the department, and the former issues. At Peace River — and I'd be pleased to get into that in some detail when we get to Vote 3 — we find that appropriate action was taken by the department late in 1979, and as soon as officials in the department became aware of certain activities. From my point of view the issue, when raised in March 1980, had a very different tone to it, a very different approach than Westfield for example. When Westfield first came to light, as all hon. members will recall, the department conducted an investigation and the results of that investigation were immediately turned over to the Ombudsman. In fact the concluding sentences in the report indicated that if the Ombudsman wished to investigate the matter further, from the department's point of view he was certainly welcome to do so and department officials would co-operate fully with the Ombudsman. That, of course, is actually what happened.

Other matters were raised during discussion this afternoon, Mr. Chairman. Some very good points were raised by hon. members regarding funding of private agencies in the province, the important role that's played by a variety of organizations. The hon. Member for Calgary North Hill raised concern regarding such agencies. Other members have alluded to the same during their comments. Whether they're agencies that are funded under child welfare or mental health, vocational rehabilitation, or one of the other sections of the department, a very important role is played by funded agencies. It's an ongoing challenge for all of us in this Assembly to ensure that funded agencies are given adequate tools to do the job, to carry out their responsibilities, to provide an adequate level of care.

I want to conclude my remarks, Mr. Chairman, by going back to that central theme of ministerial responsibility. It seems to me that if there's a concern about a budget deficiency in a program, that's the sort of thing we discuss here, and ultimately any government in any part of the country is held accountable to the electorate. They in turn have the option, usually every four years, to decide whether the fiscal accountability of the government is sound, whether the programs in place are adequate to meet needs. That's a responsibility and a choice of all the people; not one person standing, pointing a finger from an idealistic point of view as to what is accountability, not someone who has had no experience running a business of his own or meeting a pay roll, and certainly not from an idealistic stance.

Mr. Chairman, again on the failure to communicate within a department, the suggestion was made by an hon. member that if there's a failure to communicate within a

department — regardless of the level, I assume, whether in the field, at middle management, or within senior management — that is automatically the responsibility of the minister. How ludicrous. To me that really means that if someone in middle management or in the field has an axe to grind against his particular minister, following this particular rule all he has to do is ensure that an important communication is mishandled, misrepresented, or misplaced. Ultimately the responsibility comes back to the minister and, according to the definition from one learned colleague, that's the minister's fault. I can't think of a less practical approach.

I ask hon. members to think back to the time when they were ministers, to incidents in their portfolios. Think about it. Think about it very carefully, because what we're talking about is a system. Yes, accountability: accountability as a policy-maker for the decisions made by government caucus, expressed first in the Speech from the Throne, secondly, through ministerial statements and, third, by ministers outside the House. Yes, that is ministerial accountability, on policy decisions made on an ongoing basis. But surely the administrative matters, areas covered in terms of enacting and carrying out policy directives, are in a different category and are dealt with in a different way.

Mr. Chairman, a number of other comments were made by members of the Assembly from various constituencies. I've had an opportunity to visit facilities in some of their constituencies. In a number of cases, I've been very pleased to see MLAs taking a very actively interested role in the affairs of the facilities in their constituencies. An example is the hon. Member for Red Deer, who has spent a great deal of time at Michener Centre, working with the senior staff, and providing me with another source of information, in addition to the department. That kind of input is invaluable for anyone in elected office. The same issue can be made with a number of members in this Assembly. It's a case of elected representatives doing their part in representing their constituents and ensuring that the concerns of the area are brought to the appropriate minister.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, in responding to the comments the minister has just made, I'd like to make three comments. First of all, the minister has encouraged members on this side of the House who were ministers at one time to reflect back. I'm going to do that for a moment or two. I want to start from the preface that when I was minister, I made lots of mistakes, and I said so at the time. Members who were in the House on those occasions will recall. But, Mr. Minister, let me give an example of one of the kinds of things we're trying to get at. The other day, one of the members from Calgary raised a question in the House about the O'Byrne report, which dealt with SAIT, the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, in Calgary. The member from one of the ridings wanted to know what had happened to the recommendations. Basically the recommendations were that after a period of three years, which would have been 1972, SAIT and NAIT should get their own board of governors.

I recall coming to my office one morning and picking up a newspaper that will remain nameless, but it comes out of Calgary in the morning. The headlines in that paper were: Staff and Students Walk Out at SAIT. I'd just like to say two things, Mr. Minister. Within three days, rightly or wrongly, the minister of that time was at

SAIT. Within a week a committee was set up, one of people on it being Bishop Paul O'Byrne of Calgary, and another being the former president of Calgary Power in Calgary. Definite actions were taken very, very quickly. Now, Mr. Minister, I don't use that as an example of something that was handled perfectly. But, Mr. Minister, you asked me to reflect upon the situation when I was minister. I see the Chairman shaking his head; I apologize, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, let me give another example. Last Friday, the minister asked me how I would handle a situation at a school west of Edmonton. I suspect the minister asked the question because one of his constituents wrote to me, telling me that the way I handled a situation out at Evansburg or Entwistle — one of the two communities. Without getting involved in a long harangue and arguing about the difference between a divisional board being involved as opposed to the department, and so on, let me say this, Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister: not long after that took place, I appeared at that school at 9:15 a.m. If it's the school I think it is, and I believe it is, I'll be a bit explicit and tell exactly what happened, Mr. Chairman. I went to the desk at the school and asked if I could look around the school; I'd heard all sorts of things were going wrong. The secretary said, "I'm sorry, we just don't let anybody look around the school". I spent a bit longer and said, "Would you please tell the principal I'd like to have a look around the school". After a certain amount of prodding, the secretary went in and got the principal out. The principal's head came around the corner, and he went back in. He came back out again and said, "Aren't you the minister?" I said, "Yes". He said, "Well, why didn't you tell me you were coming?" Then we went on and looked at the school. The school situation was bad, and was rectified sooner or later, as I recall. I hope sooner.

Mr. Chairman, the minister asked me how I thought these kind of things should be handled. I use those two examples, not to stand in this Assembly as an authority in any way, shape, or form as to how a minister handles his responsibility, but at least to point out, Mr. Chairman, that a minister has to take those responsibilities and accept them. Part of the responsibilities deal with the administration. That becomes the central issue as far as what we're talking about, the other afternoon, this afternoon, and here again this evening. You can cut it any way we want, Mr. Chairman.

As I survey the views of various members in the Assembly, there's no argument about ministers being responsible for policy. But it seems to me, if we all keep our eye on the ball, that the difference is who takes the responsibility for the overall administration of the department. My submission to you, Mr. Chairman, is that if the minister doesn't take that ultimate responsibility, then no one is responsible and our system breaks down. We move to a rather presidential kind of government, the kind which, knowingly or otherwise, the hon. minister referred to when he talked about the electorate making a decision every four years. That's pretty foreign to the kind of process we go through in this Assembly yearly when we approve a budget, and supposedly have ministerial responsibility. Mr. Chairman, if I can be so frank as to zero in on a major difference in point of view between my colleagues here and the minister — and, I assume, the government — it is that we all agree a minister is responsible for policy initiation, but there seems to be a very major disagreement as to where the responsibility lies for the day to day, ongoing administration of the

department.

My submission to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the minister of the department is that clearly, any way you slice it, ultimately the minister has to be responsible for the administration. After about five hours of this debate, I have come to the conclusion that we've made little progress in convincing the minister and his colleagues that if the minister is not responsible for the administration, then we have an administration which runs wild, which isn't accountable to anyplace, other than once every four years. I'm sure members, regardless of where they sit in the Assembly, wouldn't want that kind of situation wished upon the people of the province.

The second point I want to make, Mr. Chairman, is that members on both sides of the House will recall that last year during similar estimates, we spent a great length of time dealing with the question of ministerial accountability and responsibility on the Metis raids. We went through a great argument at that time: whether it happened or didn't happen, and all the things that took place. The minister finally admitted to us on that occasion that if the Ombudsman recommended or suggested — I'm paraphrasing somewhat, Mr. Chairman — that an apology was in order, an apology would go out. It did later on in writing, as I understand.

Mr. Chairman, one of the points my colleague from Little Bow made during that debate a year ago was that one of the areas where we were most critical of the minister was the minister not being on top of what was happening — not saying the minister could check every action of officials in the department, but once something like the Metis raid happened, to take immediate, quick steps so, one, the minister knew what was going on; secondly, he could assure us it wouldn't happen again; and thirdly, the minister appeared to be in charge of the situation. It was on that basis a year ago that we moved a motion that the minister's salary be cut to \$1. If members go back and check the points of reference made, that was one of the pivotal arguments in the proposition put to the House last year.

What's happened in a year? We've had the Westfield situation. Yes, there was an internal view of things by the department. The department said the Ombudsman could look at it if the Ombudsman wanted to, although obviously the Ombudsman has that responsibility anyway. I would just remind members that the Ombudsman had to go some distance to get this government to move on some of the recommendations when it came to making money available. Once again, after the Westfield thing came to the public's attention, we didn't have the minister and his department people at the senior level getting on top of the situation and taking the initiative.

Now we come to the Peace River thing, the third example — the second example since the estimates went through last year. We have a situation where it was brought to the attention of the people in the department late in 1979. Even in March, when the story broke in the *Edmonton Journal*, there still had been no commitment by this government to look at the whole area of child care services in Alberta. Now, Mr. Chairman, I suggest that when this despicable matter was brought to the minister's attention, had he come forward within a week or 10 days, broke the matter himself and then said, as minister I'm determined that these kinds of things should not happen again, we've set up the Cavanagh Board of Review — Mr. Minister, I would not be standing in my place this evening, being critical of the way the minister has handled his ministerial responsibility. But that didn't happen in

late November, or in December, January, or February. It happened a couple of days before the House started.

Mr. Chairman, a year ago we moved a motion that the minister's salary should be reduced to a dollar because he wasn't on top of the situation once the Metis raid thing happened. Frankly, we hoped the minister would have learned a lesson in the course of that experience. Obviously he didn't. Obviously the minister didn't — I apologize, Mr. Chairman. Because in the course of this year, we've had these two rather glaring examples, and we're back to the argument about ministerial responsibility and who's accountable.

So, Mr. Chairman, rather than have us go on for a long period of time, even before we get to Vote 1, I move that in Vote 1, section 1.1.1 be reduced by an amount of \$31,519.00. I have copies for you. In essence, that moves that the minister's salary be cut to a dollar.

Mr. Chairman, I want to be very, very frank. I have no false expectations of the government supporting this amendment. But it's the last means available to us to show we simply are not prepared to accept ministerial accountability of that sort. We've spent two days trying to get, I think, a somewhat better understanding of what's involved. I conclude that there's agreement in this Chamber that a minister is responsible for policy. But from the standpoint of administration, if we take the minister's interpretation of ministerial responsibility, we would have the administration in this province running completely unaccountable to this Assembly. I for one simply can't accept that, Mr. Chairman. So I move the motion, clearly knowing it's not going to be passed, but taking this opportunity to simply say we can't continue to have this kind of thing carry on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before we continue, Vote 1.1.1, under Departmental Support Services, has not been called yet. If the committee would agree, I will call that vote. Then we can have the amendment entered and discuss it. Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

Vote 1.1.1 — Minister's Office

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have the amendment moved by the hon. Leader of the Opposition:

Moved that the Social Services and Community Health budget, Vote 1, Section 1.1.1, be reduced by the amount of \$31,519.00.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, in rising to take part in this debate, I don't intend to go over all the arguments we've discussed over what will now be almost five hours. But I do want to deal with one that I think was quite important. It was an observation the minister made this evening, when he indicated that government is held accountable to the electorate. That's true. No question about that, Mr. Chairman. But in our parliamentary system of government, we don't have a plebiscitarian form of democracy where every four years the public renders a judgment, and then we leave government up to the experts or the cabinet for the four years in between. We have a representative type of government, where the minister must be held accountable on a regular basis between elections, and where the entire debate as to whether the government is doing a good, bad, or medium job, or whatever the case may be, is not something which occurs once every four years but is an ongoing process of

a free and democratic people.

Mr. Chairman, the argument for plebiscitarian democracy has been made by some political scientists, but it's certainly not consistent with the parliamentary system of government. The system of government we have inherited places a premium on the responsibility of cabinet ministers to the House, and the responsibility of the House to the public at large. That being the case, I cannot do other than vote for this proposed amendment.

We have not gotten a clear commitment from the minister as to anything other than the fuzziest definition of ministerial accountability. Mr. Chairman, if we are to separate policy from administration, as has already been said but must be said again in summary, who in fact is going to take responsibility for the host of things that go seriously wrong — sometimes as a deficiency in policy, as I mentioned, sometimes as a consequence of budgetary restrictions, sometimes a failure of communication, sometimes something that is offensive to what the general public considers public decency. In our system, who is to take responsibility, if it isn't the minister? We're not talking about the U.S. Congress, where there is separation of powers. We are talking about the parliamentary system, where the responsibility is to this House. If the minister isn't going to take responsibility, who will? Are we going to shuffle it off on the public servants? Surely not, Mr. Chairman. Are we going to shuffle it off on the professional organizations? Surely not. The responsibility must rest with the minister. Because if it doesn't, then it doesn't rest with anybody, and that's a formula for chaos. No government can seriously . . . Members in this House have talked about being practical. You can't have a practical application of that kind of theory. It makes no sense at all.

Mr. Chairman, very clearly, in my view this motion has to be supported for no other reason than that we haven't gotten a clear definition from the minister. We didn't get one last year; we haven't had one this year. And while the majority in this House can do anything they want with a motion put forward from this side, that's quite irrelevant. What is at stake here, I think, is that we in opposition have a clear responsibility to state the case for the traditional concept of ministerial responsibility, a concept that wasn't developed just in Alberta but has been developed as a consequence of many years of practice in our parliamentary system. By any yardstick, Mr. Chairman, the minister has failed to present us with a definition consistent with the parliamentary system of government.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question on the amendment?

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Chairman, if it's in order, I'd like your ruling: an amendment to the amendment that maybe we could cut the salary of the Leader of the Opposition to \$1. I don't think he's contributed more than a dollar's worth this year. [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Did the hon. member have printed copies of his amendment?

MR. BATIUK: I wanted your ruling, if I would be able to get it very quickly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll proceed with the amendment introduced by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I'll read it again:

Moved that the Social Services and Community

Health budget, Vote 1, Section 1.1.1, be reduced by the amount of \$31,519.00.

[Mr. Chairman declared the resolution lost. Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung]

[Three minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Buck	Notley	Speaker, R.
Clark, R.		

Against the motion:

Adair	Hiebert	Musgreave
Anderson, C.	Horsman	Osterman
Batiuk	Hyland	Paproski
Bogle	Isley	Pengelly
Borstad	Knaak	Planche
Bradley	Kowalski	Purdy
Campbell	Koziak	Reid
Carter	Kroeger	Russell
Chichak	Kushner	Schmid
Clark, L.	Leitch	Schmidt
Cook	LeMessurier	Shaben
Cookson	Little	Sindlinger
Crawford	Lysons	Stevens
Cripps	Mack	Thompson
Embury	Magee	Topolnisky
Fjordbotten	McCrae	Trynchy
Fyfe	McCrimmon	Webber
Gogo	Miller	Wolstenholme
Harle	Moore	Young

Totals:	Ayes - 4	Noes - 57
---------	----------	-----------

Agreed to:

1.1.1 — Minister's Office	\$211,070
1.1.2 — Executive Management	\$935,980
1.1.3 — Departmental Financial Services	\$3,168,100

1.1.4 — Research and Planning

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, I see we have a 19 per cent increase in this particular vote. Mr. Minister, could we ask you what new projects are going to be included this year? Secondly, what major projects are under research now; thirdly, when will they be completed; and fourthly, will the results be made public?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, the primary project under review at the present time is the Fort McMurray coordinator project, looking at the possibility of an Alsands project as well as the work being done in the Cold Lake area. The attempt is to learn from the experiences of Fort McMurray, when the initial plant was built in the '60s, as well as the Syncrude plant in the middle '70s. It is our attempt, through research and planning, to co-ordinate with other departments of government an orderly development within that region. Therefore the primary work, as I've indicated, is for co-ordination in those two areas. As well, there are some additional funds for computer time for the new Alberta aids to daily living program.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Minister, before you answer the other three questions, are we then to assume that basic-

ly the computer time for the aids to daily living project and this co-ordinator who's looking at heavy oil development, are going to cost us \$2.7 million? Let's have a breakdown, study by study.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, we're not going to have a breakdown study by study. But if the hon. member wants, I will be pleased to provide further background as to what's involved in research and planning. I understood the question was where the increase was taking place; why an increase of 19 per cent? I've provided the basic reason for that, Mr. Chairman.

In addition, we can look at professional fees and data processing costs that will be required. I've mentioned the research work that will be done in the co-ordination of the Fort McMurray area — an additional typist is also required in that; the computer time in the Alberta aids to daily living program: those are the primary reasons for the increase in the program.

If the hon. member is interested in the kinds of things that are done in research and planning in general . . . I use as an example the work being done in the Fort McMurray area in terms of research. In addition to the new thrust that we're making there's a small branch of the department, under an assistant deputy minister who co-ordinates activities on new programs. The Alberta aids to daily living is an example of such a thrust, where we're looking at the kinds of things that are required. Research work is done to help prepare senior management of the department to assist the minister in his discussions with cabinet and caucus colleagues on future forecasts for population growth, increased demands on services provided by the department: a variety of things in that general area.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Going back to the heavy oil project, what amount of money do we expect to spend on that this year, and what's the duration of the project?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, in that area for the fiscal year — and that's not necessarily the duration of the project, because the planning of a possible facility in the Fort McMurray area as well as the additional demands which will be placed on the communities in the Cold Lake area will cover more than any one fiscal year — we're looking at professional fees and data processing costing approximately \$136,000. Is that the kind of information the hon. member wants? Fine. The additional research officer, the clerk and the wage help for increased workload, and a clerk typist, \$65,000; computer requirements for the newly developed Alberta aids to daily living program, \$50,000; fixed assets and increase in supplies and services, \$36,000; in addition, the filling of other positions, \$32,000, which accounts for the 19.1 per cent increase over last year's estimate.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. I take it the \$136,000 is the amount that will be spent on the study during this fiscal year. What is the projected total cost of this study, talking in terms of Cold Lake or heavy oil projects, from the standpoint of looking at people problems, which I understand is what the minister is talking about? What are we looking at in terms of total cost? I'd be very interested in knowing, Mr. Minister, if the contract has been let, who has it? If it hasn't been let, what procedure are we going about to get it? Or is it going to be done in-house?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, the total amount of the contract is something I cannot give a definitive answer to at this time. We don't know what kind of project, if any, will be approved. We're putting dollars in place to be prepared to move in that area, if and when the need arises. Some in-house work has taken place to this present time, but the dollars may not be used. That will depend on a number of factors, one of which is whether certain projects do go ahead.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, so I clearly understand the situation: this money is included in the budget on the basis of either the Cold Lake or the Alsands projects going ahead. Is that an accurate assessment, Mr. Minister?

MR. BOGLE: Well, normal standard procedure — and I'm sure it was followed when the hon. member was in Executive Council — is that you provide certain funds in votes in anticipation of programs. If those do not go ahead, the funds are returned to general revenue. That will be the case.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Minister, are there a number of other allocations of funds in the course of the estimates through the whole department that really deal with preparing the department for the eventuality of the Cold Lake or the Alsands project going ahead? Sometime before we get finished with the total estimates, perhaps the minister's officials could put together a package or total and where we'd find those funds, if there are funds in other appropriations.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, the proper vote and subsection for research and planning is Vote 1.14. That's here. Therefore, we will not find in other parts of the department similar funds being set aside or planned for this kind of planning.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Minister, perhaps I didn't make the point clear. What I'm trying to ascertain is: is there included in other places in the estimates money specifically for preventative schemes, which will be spent if Alsands or Cold Lake goes ahead? Or, in fact, is this the only money in this department's budget that would deal with and be available for those plants going ahead?

MR. BOGLE: I thought I was clear on that, Mr. Chairman. This is the only part of any of the votes that deals specifically with this particular issue.

MR. R. CLARK: I'm sorry to be so persistent, but the last three words, that deal with this specific issue . . . Mr. Minister, I want it to be very clear: we're not talking about research and planning; what I'm talking about is any contingency funds we'd find anywhere in the budget. Is the answer to that still no?

MR. BOGLE: Yes, Mr. Chairman. If I may use an example that may help the hon. Leader of the Opposition understand better: in Vote 10 we deal with community health and community social services. PSS comes under community social services. Mr. Chairman, to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, you will not find any contingency set aside under PSS in Vote 10 for any proposed or possible plants in northeastern Alberta. The money that has been set aside, in terms of research and planning, the funding that has been requested by the department

through myself to this Legislature, is right here in Vote 1.1.4.

Agreed to:

1.1.4 — Research and Planning	\$2,704,590
1.1.5 — Senior Citizens' Bureau	\$451,930

1.1.6 — Personnel and Staff Development

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, before we move away from that one. On page 285, if we look under departmental support services, payment to contract employees has increased by about 180 per cent and consultants by 64 per cent. What will these people be primarily involved in? I get those figures from page 285, under departmental support services, as a total figure.

MR. BOGLE: On page 285, we're looking at supplies and services ... Which section was the hon. member looking at?

MR. R. CLARK: Departmental support services [inaudible] the print-out. There's a sizable increase in contract employees — 183 per cent — and 64 per cent to consultants.

MR. BOGLE: I'll come back to that, Mr. Chairman. On page 285, under departmental support services, I can go through the listings. I'll come back to that point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll hold 1.1.6 then.

1.1.7 — Public Communications

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, on public communications, we have a fairly substantial increase. Would the minister like to outline for the Assembly the reasons for the increase, please?

MR. BOGLE: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Hon. members may well recall that last year during the estimates, I was asked a question as to some of my priorities, by the hon. Member for Little Bow — I referred to it last Wednesday. I mentioned prevention, and cited a number of specific examples: preventive dental care for children, which we're implementing through our health units. I mentioned Rosecrest, a facility here in Edmonton which accommodates very unfortunate young people who are there for no reason of their own.

The primary growth in public communication is a result of a B budget, or new program, which has been approved. It's for a public awareness campaign on children. It's really a program designed to educate the public about children's needs and the way the department can respond to meeting those needs; also about things such as abuse of children and the need for expectant mothers to take care of themselves, in particular to be very cautious of the overuse of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, which might cause harm to the unborn child. In that program itself, we're looking at in excess of \$100,000 in the first year. It's a three-year plan that's being proposed, in addition to some other expenses related to the public awareness program.

Agreed to:

1.1.7 — Public Communications	\$584,980
1.1.8 — Departmental Administrative	

Services

\$3,674,470

1.1.9 — Management Audit

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Has this anything to do with the Auditor General's report and this whole question of getting money from Ottawa that the Auditor General, at least, felt we should've got? If it hasn't, then what's the 20 per cent increase?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, it has nothing to do with auditing in a financial sense, but rather in the management sense. The purpose of the program is to assist funded agencies and organizations, as well as branches of the department, in terms of better assistance — a kind of assistance the department has not had available until a couple of years ago.

If I may use a specific example, we are currently working with a private organization in Calgary, which has a contract with the department in excess of \$2.5 million. We've responded to a request for some extra funding by that organization to help in a capital way. One of the offers we've made to the organization, and it has been picked up in a very positive way by the executive, is that we will send in a team of our management experts to assist with the managerial organization. As I've indicated, it's a very new part of the department, and an extremely successful one from our point of view.

Agreed to:

1.1.9 — Management Audit	\$436,840
--------------------------	-----------

1.2 — Social Services District Offices

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, could the minister indicate what type of formula is being used for caseloads at the regional offices, and what type of reassessment is being done? What seems to be the object of the department in this coming year, to try to change some of the working conditions for social workers and revise some of their caseloads?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, as I'm sure the hon. member is aware from his experience in this department, there are a variety of circumstances in different parts of the province. For instance, a social worker who has a heavier caseload of child welfare clients has a lower total number than one who is dealing primarily with people who are unemployable and receiving assistance from the government. A variety of formulas are used, depending again on the area of the province, the area within the regional office itself, and the type of clientele the various social workers are dealing with.

If we're looking at this particular vote, for instance, we'll see that we are bringing on 13 new positions in connection with the assured income for the severely handicapped program. That accounts for part of the rise in the budget. There's also an increase in manpower to provide for merit increments and upgrading, and increasing the employer contributions for the ancillary costs associated with it.

As I've indicated, we now have 42 offices in the province. One or two more sites are being considered for district offices. That's an ongoing assessment, which is usually made two to three times a year.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, the minister indicated several days ago that he had held a meeting with the 42 district administrators. Is the minister in a position to advise us how many such meetings have been held with the district administrators since the Legislature last passed the estimates?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I indicated very clearly, and I'm sure *Hansard* will show, that I did not meet with all 42. I met with approximately 11 of the 42. It was the first such meeting I've had where 11 administrators came specifically to my office. I indicated further, on Wednesday last, that the meeting lasted approximately an hour. I found it a very good dialogue between the regional administrators and me. I'm looking forward to further such meetings. That is in addition to the ongoing meetings I've had and will continue to have as I travel around the province and visit the various offices. But in those cases, you're meeting one regional administrator at a time rather than a group to discuss a particular area.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, just to follow that up. Has there been at any time a general meeting of all district administrators, not necessarily with the minister present but with senior public servants, to review the problems in different regions and to look at practical changes that could be made in social services programs as a consequence? Has there been such a meeting?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, the question of communication within the department is one that a number of members commented on earlier this evening. A number of meetings have been held with various groups of administrators. I'm not aware of any meeting — certainly I have not suggested to the chief deputy minister or to the management team, nor would I, how they should carry out those meetings. But there have been a number of meetings I'm aware of, with groups of officials discussing the primary issue of communication and the back and forth flow of information.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, perhaps the minister can answer this question under this particular vote. We could wait until we get to Vote No. 3, but it seems to me that the question of communication between Peace River and the chief deputy minister, or at least a Director of Child Welfare, would be as applicable under this vote as later on. It's up to the minister where he'd like to discuss the question of communication. I have a number of questions relating to that. Does the minister want to discuss it here or later on?

MR. BOGLE: If it relates specifically to Peace River, I think it should be dealt with in Vote 3.

Agreed to:

121 — Social Service District Offices	\$26,025,730
122 — Family Maintenance and Court Services	\$469,450
123 — Administration of District Offices	\$461,410

131 — Public Guardian's Office

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. I noted from the computer print-out that in the section

dealing with the guardianship of dependent adults, there's a 40 per cent increase in permanent positions and a 34 per cent increase in salaries. I wonder if there is any shift towards more clerical staff to meet some of the needs within that department and, if so, maybe the reasons for it.

Could the minister give some type of idea of the volume of cases being handled under The Dependent Adults Act at the present time? Will most of these new positions that are put in place be used towards handling plenary guardianship in maybe a better manner? The last question I had was with regard to the Act itself and some of the amendments we talked about. I think the minister mentioned earlier in our discussion this afternoon that The Dependent Adults Act will be brought into this session of the Legislature for discussion.

MR. BOGLE: Yes, Mr. Chairman, it is certainly my intention to bring the Act before the House. Currently some amendments are being considered by the Provincial Mental Health Advisory Council, and there have been some discussions on the Bill with that body. It would not be appropriate tonight to go into the proposed amendments to the Bill, but certainly when the Bill is introduced we'll have ample opportunity to do that.

As may be noted by hon. members, the growth which has taken place in the Public Guardian's office has been quite astonishing. But again we must keep in mind that The Dependent Adults Act is a relatively new piece of legislation. It's been in operation for a little more than a year now. The growth in the budget in this particular area is due to a number of factors. The honoraria and travel funds required for the appeal panels to assess the certificates of incapacity within two years, are examples. There is over \$400,000 increase in that area alone. I think it's very important, and I'm sure hon. members in the House appreciate the need for appeal panels, for the committees which exist, which contain a mix of professional lay people to assist the Public Guardian in his important endeavors.

In addition, three social workers and a clerk typist are required for increased Public Guardian caseload. That accounts for about \$61,000 in the program. Increased travel by the Public Guardian himself to various parts of the province. A number of organizations have requested information from the guardian's office as to the role of the Public Guardian, the interaction with the Public Trustee, interaction with private guardians and private trustees. That accounts for some \$26,000. Supplies and services and fixed assets for the new positions, approximately \$24,000. The growth of a little more than \$500,000 is represented in the items I've outlined, Mr. Chairman.

I don't have at hand the statistic as to the exact caseload. If the hon. member would like, I can provide it later in the evening or at a later time. I can say very clearly that the workload of the Public Guardian has been greater than either the present Public Guardian or officials in the department anticipated a year ago. Although it's costing more, it's very good because it shows the need for the office, the appreciation, and the service being provided through the office.

Agreed to:

131 — Public Guardian's Office	\$925,490
--------------------------------	-----------

MR. CHAIRMAN: We held 1.1.6. Are you prepared to go with that?

MR. BOGLE: Because I'm not sure what the hon. member is going on, I wonder if I could get a little more clarification as to what the hon. member wanted. Page 285?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, the figure my colleague gave is from the print-out. I haven't got it. I sent it to your executive assistant, and it will be coming to you in a moment.

MR. BOGLE: Possibly we can hold that and deal with it later in another vote, if that's appropriate.

Agreed to:

Vote 2 — Social Allowance

2.1 — Program Support \$1,834,460

2.2 — Public Assistance for Aged

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, before we move on that, there's a 10 per cent reduction. Is the minister able to outline the reason for that?

MR. BOGLE: The primary reason the reductions occur, not only in public assistance for the aged but also in public assistance for physically handicapped and public assistance for mentally handicapped, is the transfer of clients from social assistance to the Alberta assured income for the severely handicapped program. Some clients still require public assistance in addition to the assured income for the severely handicapped program. On the other hand, a number of Albertans are sustaining themselves on the income from that program and other sources, and do not require public assistance. That's the primary reason for the reductions in the amounts listed, and of course that's true with public assistance for the aged.

Agreed to:

2.2 — Public Assistance for Aged \$14,160,000

2.3 — Public Assistance for Single Parent Families

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to get some kind of statement of intention or statement of philosophy by the minister with regard to Vote 2.3. About two years ago when Miss Hunley was the minister, an announcement was made that there would be a rather sizable move by the government to — well, to be very frank about it — cut off a number of single-parent families from any kind of social assistance. If my figures are accurate, I believe this initiative, if I can use it that way, has led to \$25 million, primarily in cutting single mothers off assistance. I must say that on one hand I'm amazed the amount would be that sizable. I'd appreciate some indication from the minister as to the program and if that \$25 million figure is accurate.

Mr. Minister, I'd also be very interested in knowing what kind of assessment the department is doing or has contracted out to look at the impact on single mothers. We may have some difference of opinion in the House with regard to whether it should be four months, six months, or six years. But it seems to me that a very important fact we have to look at is: is there a link between what we're doing here and the whole area of child abuse and neglect? I'm not suggesting there is

automatically, Mr. Minister, but I must say that I've had a number of very heart-rending experiences brought to my attention by single mothers attempting to keep a family together, whom one has to salute rather than put in the typical position we so often do, just saying they're trying to abuse the system.

Then, Mr. Minister, I'd like to know the assessment of the arbitrary ages of 4 months and 12 years. I understand that if a youngster is over 4 months old, the basic policy of the department is that the mother should get out and work. How successful are we in being able to meet the costs of mothers through day care, and so on? I've had some come to me with the problem that by the time they get a job — and not always, but on some occasions, those people aren't as well trained as some people, and have to take jobs with rather difficult hours. There aren't day care facilities close by, and they end up having to go halfway across the city or something like this. By the time you add up the day care, the travelling costs, and all this, it's a pretty marginal kind of thing.

Could the minister respond to those three areas: the magnitude of the program, what kind of ongoing assessment the department is doing, and the 4-month guideline and what kind of reassessment is being done there.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I'll attempt to respond to the questions. If I miss a point, would the hon. member please ask at the end.

First of all, on the magnitude. I think it's important that we remind ourselves that although approximately \$24 million was saved two fiscal years ago, in the fiscal year prior to that a special warrant was drawn for something like \$30 million. What happened one year was that the department badly underestimated what it would require. The following year, based upon earlier trends and indications — and those decisions were both made prior to the 1979 election — the department overestimated what it would require. Therefore there was actually an overrun in one year and a shortfall in the year prior to that. That's the primary reason for the large changes.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, could I ask the minister: what's an actual comparison, then, over the past three or four years? Could the minister get for us the dollars? The caseload would be helpful, too.

MR. BOGLE: I'll attempt to get those when some other questions are coming, because I don't have them at my fingertips. The caseload figures can be obtained very easily.

Before we leave the question — and it's a very important one — of the single parent going back into the work force and the reasons for that decision, it was and is the feeling of a number of professional organizations that a single mother is better off working than being locked into the home situation. I think it's important that we all recognize that any rule must be built in such a way that exceptions may be permissible. This is a good example of that. Through the appeal committee process, if a single parent feels there's a unique situation, and there's a reason the mother should be home with the child — and it could be for a variety of reasons — then the individual has the right to go to an appeal committee and make that case. The appeal committee, which is made up of our peers — not the department, but our peers; that was the key issue, as you recall, with one of the officials in the department in the decision of an appeal committee. Then the decision of that appeal committee stands.

There's one more way that the mother may stay in the home if she so chooses, other than going through the appeal route. That's to provide a babysitting service in her own home: the day home program really allows a mother to operate like a mini-day care centre. The family subsidy program applies, just as it does in day care centres. So a mother could bring in two or three kiddies from the neighborhood and again be self-sufficient.

The key to the program is to assist the individual out of the welfare syndrome, back into society. In a number of cases the department has assisted with training programs, through employment opportunities. I had an excellent conversation one day with the wife of one of our colleagues in this Assembly, who had attended a course at one of the community colleges. A woman sitting next to her was a single mother who was there because of assistance she was getting from the department. That particular woman was very appreciative, because she didn't want to be locked into that situation in the home.

But I want to emphasize again that if there are some very special and unique circumstances, the single parent has the right to appeal through the appeal committee. If the appeal committee can be so convinced — and appeal committees have made some very interesting precedents during my short term in this office — then the decision of the department can be either modified or overturned.

On the question of how the figures of 4 months for the first child and 6 years, I believe, for two children or more, were derived: that all works out to the cost of maintaining the mother and the child or children. I'm not totally satisfied with that explanation. It's the guideline which has been used to date. I did give assurances to one individual I met with about three months ago that we would review that process, because I would not in any way want the program to be used by any individual who has one youngster and has the view: well, if I have one more child I can stay at home, and my children will allow me to stay on social assistance until the youngest is 6 years old. That would be a tragic situation. So I'm reassessing with the department and will report to government caucus whether there should be any amendments to that aspect. I'll be pleased in a few moments to provide caseloads for the hon. member.

One of the concerns I had was with regard to shelter guidelines. If we're moving into a time when there could be and is increased pressure on low-income families in general, people on social assistance, are we responding? This is a concern I have as minister of this department. Are we responding adequately to the needs of individuals who require our assistance?

I'll be pleased to give the formula we follow, if the hon. member wishes. For the single parent with one child at home, it basically allows a maximum of \$370 to cover rent, fuel, and utilities. Anything above that is cost shared with the individual on a 50:50 basis. If there's an individual and two children, or a couple and one child, the figure is \$440. It goes to \$475 if there are four individuals in the home. So it's a formula based on the number of individuals in the family unit and the amount of space required.

One of the concerns we have, and it's a reason to reassess the formula and the need, is the changes around the province. In some areas — Grande Prairie — \$440 will not go nearly as far as it will in Enchant or in Milk River. That's one of the concerns we have with the overall program, but we are closely monitoring that aspect.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Minister, one of the questions I asked was: any kind of ongoing assessment as to the effect — and I assume that assessment would be done outside the department, out at the university or someplace — on this question of the change in policy and any effects on children?

MR. BOGLE: Not at this time, Mr. Chairman. The program is relatively new. I'm monitoring it with the department at the present time. I believe that sometime within the current fiscal year we should be in a position to sit down and reassess whether that time has come. There have been several studies by organizations outside the province. One was a national social welfare council, I believe, from eastern Canada, which did a study of the system in Alberta and was favorably disposed toward what's happening. That's not the kind of detailed study that I'm sure the hon. member is looking for or that we would want. On the other hand, I think it's important that we have two to three years of operation as experience, notwithstanding the ongoing review which takes place and has been taking place internally over that period of time. Once we've got that in place, I'm sure we can go on with the review.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, a couple of questions on this particular appropriation. Mr. Minister, first of all on the question of the rents: I would hope we would be flexible enough to at least be prepared to review the ceiling every three months. With landlords having the right, under The Landlord and Tenant Act, to increase rent every three months, it seems to me that with some of the increases that have occurred in our growth centres, you're going to find people in a good deal of trouble. That \$370 basic — albeit somewhat higher, depending on the number of people in the family — could change quite quickly as a result of pressure in our growth areas.

I'm pleased to see the government reviewing it, but I would hope we would be flexible enough to be able to keep fairly close to market conditions. It seems to me rather unfair, in a sense, that a person living in one community can, in fact, get all of their rent paid, whereas a person living in another community is going to have to cost share. Of course, cost sharing comes out of other elements of the budget, which means that whether it's necessities or that little bit of extra money that makes life liveable, it has to be sacrificed in order to cost share on the rent.

The question of encouraging people to work: I don't think there's any doubt that that's an objective that members share, regardless of where they sit in the House. I'm not sure, however, that four months is a reasonable step. I'm a little concerned at the explanation the minister gave, which really has to do with financial assessment by the department, or for financial reasons within the department. It would seem to me that we should be looking at things on a slightly different perspective, on something as important as when a young mother has to go out to work.

I raise this, Mr. Chairman, because the minister will know that the legislative committee on workers' compensation has recommended important changes for widows' pensions. The proposal the committee made — and I think it fair to say it was a consensus of the committee — was that there should be a descending pension, but it should be based on the widow receiving it until the child has finished school. Obviously, that may not be workable when it comes to social allowance, but I question whether

four months is a reasonable place to draw the line.

The third area is with respect to training. The minister indicated that people have benefited from training; no question about that. However, as I understand it — correct me if I'm wrong — in 1976 the former policy of the department, which allowed people to go not only to NAIT, SAIT, Alberta Vocational [Centre], or what have you, but in fact to university, was modified. If my memory serves me right, it was changed to a maximum of two years. I raise that, Mr. Minister and Mr. Chairman, because it seems to me that there are a number, especially of single-parent women, in a position where the opportunity to go to university is going to pay dividends many times over. In a sense, it seems to me we're being penny-wise and pound-foolish by not encouraging people to seek professional training if, in fact, they are capable of obtaining it.

I think of one particular woman in this city who is now a lawyer. She was on public assistance, was able to go through university, and is now in a position where she is paying back through the tax system many times the cost of her education. I know we had some discussion on this matter when Miss Hunley brought it in. But when the government is evaluating the total approach to public assistance for single-parent families, I would ask whether any consideration is being given to reinstituting the former policy.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, just to go back to the caseload figures. For 1977-78, the year before the change was made ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would this be back in Vote 1?

MR. BOGLE: No, Mr. Chairman. I'm providing figures on the caseload for single parents in the province.

In 1977-78, the year before the change in policy, the caseload had increased by 7 per cent, to some 14,563. In 1978-79, following the policy change, the caseload decreased by 4 per cent, to 13,982. By February 1980, the caseload had decreased a further 5.2 per cent, to 13,261.

I might also clarify the figures. The actual \$25 million saving was made up of a number of factors. The single-parent policy was the largest of the factors, but only one of them. It accounted for about \$15.7 million. In other words, of the \$24 million surplus that the hon. member asked about in an earlier question — and I responded by indicating that was accurate, but that the year before, we had approximately a \$30 million special warrant — \$15.7 million was for our single-parent budget. The rest, if the hon. member would like: the program for the aged, those between 60 and 65, amounted to just under \$1 million; assistance for the physically handicapped was \$4.7 million; for the mentally handicapped, about \$0.5 million; for employables, about \$9.2 million; and single parents, \$15.7 million, as I indicated earlier.

I might also clarify the policy. If there's one child, it's four months, as previously indicated. I was inaccurate, and so was the hon. Leader of the Opposition, in feeling that it was six years for two children or more. It's 12 years for two children or more, which doesn't help the argument but it is part of the statistical background, and we should be conducting our discussions on that basis.

MR. R. SPEAKER: A couple of questions to the minister. When single mothers are out looking for employment and they gain employment, at that point in time the social allowance is reduced. But for some of them the difficulty

that has been raised with me is that they pay their rent at the beginning of the month and don't receive their employment cheque until the end. Their social allowance has been cut, and there's a difficult period of time there. Has that been brought to the minister's attention, and is there enough flexibility in the program to adapt to that kind of arrangement?

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

The second thing I want to know is whether this program is worked in conjunction with the employment opportunity program, or is it a substitute? How does it fit into the whole employment opportunity area, and are there employment opportunity officers or workers who work along with the single mothers?

MR. BOGLE: To the last part of the question first — and I thought I made this clear earlier — yes, it is part of the employment opportunity program within the department. It's primarily through that program that assistance is provided for single mothers, and they do work very closely with individuals.

In terms of flexibility in the program, I have not heard of that particular instance until this evening. I am somewhat disturbed by it because, (a), there should be the flexibility with the social worker, working with the single parent attempting to get on his or her feet to find employment opportunities; (b), if the flexibility does not appear to be there and cannot be gained through the district office, then certainly it can and should be through the appeal committee mechanism.

One of the things we've looked at in the department is a way to increase the awareness of clients of the department of the appeal mechanism route, to ensure that individuals know they have the right, under the legislation, to request an assessment by an appeal committee if they feel that in any way they are not receiving the kinds of services from the department they're entitled to, as anyone else is.

MR. NOTLEY: Before we conclude, the minister didn't answer the question I asked with respect to university training.

MR. BOGLE: As with all programs, there has to be a point at which the government stops assistance. The program is designed to assist the single parent to gain a basic education, and two years is deemed to be the appropriate limit. For anything after that, the individual should use the normal route anyone else uses within the province: student loans. If the marks are sufficient in the first two years, a number of grants and bursaries are available — other programs like that. There must be a point in any program, if the government is providing the assistance, at which the assistance through the department ceases and the normal avenues are applied, as they are with all other Albertans.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, just on that for a moment. I realize there must be a point. However, as I understand the program before the change was made three or four years ago, there was the capacity within the program for people to go on to university. It seems to me that this very matter was discussed when we reviewed The Workers' Compensation Act. One of the things we looked at was an undergraduate degree as the place where one draws the line.

One could argue two years, three years, but it seems to me, in a sense, that for people who have academic ability and could benefit from a university education, that would be a more reasonable and flexible approach. If a person can go to NAIT or SAIT and take a year or two-year program, fair enough. But if it's a three-year undergraduate degree or a four-year Bachelor of Education degree, it seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that society as a whole benefits if that person is given the opportunity. We're really talking about single parents here. We're talking about a rehabilitative approach, about shifting from a custodial approach to one where people are able to stand on their own feet, especially for single mothers. I felt the program, as it applied, was useful. While everybody acknowledges some place to draw the line, I would simply suggest for the government's consideration that the recommendations contained in the Workers' Compensation Board report for pensions might well be worth pursuing when the government reviews this question.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I'll look at that in consultation with the discussions government caucus will be having in the overall review of student financing at our postsecondary institutions in the province.

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The question I had related to the social allowance and the citizen appeal committees located in each regional office. My experience has been — and I can only speak for the constituency where I come from. I think the regional office is run extremely well under Mr. Merchant. People are interviewed. I recognize that by its nature, the minister's department has to lay down not only regulations and guidelines. I want to emphasize that regardless of the decision by the department at the regional level, citizens applying for social assistance have the right to the citizen appeal committee within those communities. In the Lethbridge region, indeed, when the case is disposed of at the social worker level, if they disagree with the decision and, I suggest, of necessity the regulations the social workers implement, they're encouraged to lodge an appeal, and they're shown how to make out the appeal form.

My question to the minister would be the composition of the citizen appeal committees in those communities; if, for example, as well as average citizens being asked to serve on those committees, the committee makes provision for a person on assistance sitting on that committee. Perhaps no one has a greater appreciation for those making or lodging appeals than those who have gone through the system themselves. So I'd ask the minister to comment on that.

Finally — it may not be in this vote, but I'd like to pose the question now. Albertans under 65 who of necessity, through health, have to be in nursing homes — as I understand it, Mr. Chairman, we pay them a comfort allowance. When you recognize that many of these are female, they like to try to be as normal as possible and get such things as hair stylings and so on once a month and take a daily paper. With ever-increasing costs, they've found it extremely difficult on the comfort allowance they receive. Could the minister indicate in his budget estimates this evening whether provision is made to increase that comfort allowance and, if so, how much it might be?

MR. BOGLE: I'm responding to the question of the appeal committees at this point in time, and on the comfort allowance at a later point in our estimates — it was a very valid point.

Yes, we try very hard in the selection of appeal committees to ensure that there's a good mix of individuals. The hon. Member for Lethbridge West has raised the point with regard to the committee serving the Lethbridge region. I believe three of the four members on the regular social assistance committee are from the city of Lethbridge and one is from a rural community around that area. I'd like to see one more person from the rural area around Lethbridge. Over a period of time, hopefully that can be accommodated. We've basically used the same committees for our assured income for the severely handicapped program by adding one person to each committee, and that is still in process in some parts of the province, with the exception of Calgary and Edmonton, where the caseload is sufficient to warrant separate committees for each. We've tried to ensure that one additional person is on each committee, preferably someone who is handicapped, because no one knows the concerns of a handicapped person better than one who is living with that situation himself.

The same is true with a person on social assistance. If we're able to select individuals — and I welcome nominations from members of the Assembly — some of whom have received social assistance at one time or another, they can bring to that table experience that no degree or experience in a formal sense could assist with. So it's a very positive approach, and one we are trying to implement. Again, I welcome any nominations from MLAs of people in their communities or particular parts of their constituencies.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. I'm not sure whether this fits under this vote, but the question is often raised with me about the wife who is less than 65 years of age and the pensioner 65 or over. They're receiving the supplement and certain provincial benefits, but if the husband dies, the wife doesn't get them. It's the responsibility of both the federal and provincial governments. I wonder if any negotiations have gone on with the federal government with regard to its present position. Is the province looking at any kind of adjustments in that area?

MR. BOGLE: To my knowledge, no discussions are going on at the present time. We are aware of certain initiatives the federal government has made regarding its programs. Of course, the hon. member is aware of the dilemma created when a benefit is extended by the federal government to a spouse between the ages of 60 and 65. The federal government is primarily making that problem. We are aware that they are attempting to work their way out of it.

As the hon. member knows, for individuals 65 and older, as of last Wednesday we've introduced a substantial support increase for those who require it most. Individuals between the ages of 60 and 65, although they do not qualify for the Alberta income program, may receive social assistance without some of the requirements that individuals below the age of 65 would have to fulfil.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, going back to the figures the minister gave us. In '77-78, approximately 14,000 single families; in '78-79, 13,900; 1980 projected, 13,260. Mr. Minister, I still don't understand, and perhaps a memo might clear this up: if we move from 14,000 families in '77-78 to 13,900 in '78-79, how do we get a saving of, let's say, \$15 million? Either a quick explanation or a memo might clear that up.

The second point, Mr. Minister, and I think it's important: how long does the minister see these numbers continuing to decline? When the government made the announcement in '77-78, I got the very definite impression that there was a feeling that a great number of single-parent families shouldn't have been there. I see we're now in a situation some two years later with about 900 fewer single-parent families on social assistance than there were previously, keeping in mind that a significant number of people have also been coming into the province. Mr. Minister, what do we see as far as projections for these particular areas?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, if I can't explain it to the hon. member's satisfaction, I will send a letter to him. Basically it's a matter of the department, through its minister, making estimates. The estimates were for a higher caseload than actually materialized. Therefore, approximately \$14.5 million went unexpended. That's the reason in that sense.

MR. R. CLARK: [Inaudible] were cut off?

MR. BOGLE: No, it wasn't a matter of people being cut off. Looking back at the trends prior to the new policy and the growth that was taking place, if that growth had continued unchecked, the other \$14.5 million would have been required.

On the other part, it's very difficult to try to judge ahead and look into the future as to what will happen. As long as we're able to implement our policy in a humane way, as long as we're able to look at those special circumstances where mothers, in fact, belong in their homes and not outside: for a variety of reasons, depending on social conditions and other factors, the figures could go up or down, or stay the same. My main concern, rather than whether they go up or down, is to try to ensure that the program assists people to get off social assistance, wherever possible, and become very productive members of the work force again, contributing individuals who are happier and require less assistance from government.

MR. BATIUK: I wonder if I could ask the minister whether this would have any effect — the Leader of the Opposition says, that the projected number will be smaller than it was. I recall that when the Attorney General had the portfolio a number of years ago, he brought in a preventive social incentive program which would provide that those who had been totally on social assistance could earn a certain amount, but would not lose their social assistance. I know for a fact that there were some in the constituency who took advantage of it and in time got off social assistance totally. I was just wondering whether that program is still in effect and whether it has worked, that less are expected to be on social assistance.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I'm not aware of any initiatives taken in that way. They may have been short-term initiatives to overcome a particular problem back at that particular time. I'll certainly check. If the information I'm providing is not accurate, I'll provide the answer to the member.

MR. BATIUK: I'm sorry the Attorney General wasn't listening right now — he still isn't — but maybe he would have been able to respond.

Agreed to:

2.3 — Public Assistance for Single Parent Families	\$110,647,000
2.4 — Public Assistance for Physically Handicapped	\$18,939,000
2.5 — Public Assistance for Mentally Handicapped	\$6,080,000

2.6 — Public Assistance for Employables

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, perhaps this is as good a place as any to raise the question of numbers of people as far as social workers are concerned. The Member for Spirit River-Fairview alluded to it earlier. What does the department plan to add in that area this year?

Mr. Minister, I understand the department is giving some rather serious thought to moving away from hiring additional social workers, and employing people who, if my memory is correct, are termed "social brokers", which would be something less than a social worker, but would take on several of the responsibilities of social workers. I raise the question, Mr. Minister, because I think there has been acknowledgement on both sides of the House of the rather heavy caseload here. I'm not one who often advocates that we balloon the public service, and that's not what I'm advocating here. But on the other hand, Mr. Minister, would it be possible to give the committee, perhaps for the last three years, a breakdown of the average caseload per social worker, so we could see what's happened for the last three years? Could the minister also respond to the department moving in the direction of social brokers; people who, as I understand it, are not educated as social workers in the universities but would take on some of those responsibilities.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I'm not aware of any such new position being contemplated, of brokers. In any event, some additional positions are coming on stream in the department. I've indicated some of them at other points. On 2.6, Public Assistance for Employables, they're not covered in this particular area of course.

If the hon. member would like some information on general caseloads, I'll be pleased to provide it, with the understanding that the information I'll be providing is generalized. As I indicated in response to the Member for Spirit River-Fairview earlier, it depends on a number of factors: the number of child welfare clients in the caseload, who in most cases require a great deal of attention, vis-a-vis unemployable individuals who have been on the caseload for some period of time and do not require that degree of assistance. I'll provide it in a general sense.

On 6.2, did the hon. member raise it here because of the increase of approximately 21 per cent? Was there a relevance between the two, or was it just being raised before we got through Vote 2?

MR. R. CLARK: It was being raised primarily because this is where we find the largest number of social workers employed by the department, as a result of administering the social allowance programs.

MR. BOGLE: In this particular section of the vote, Mr. Chairman, we're not dealing with individuals; we're dealing with support for employables. The primary reason for the increase shown here is the new regulations and unemployment insurance guidelines from Ottawa on when an individual may draw unemployment insurance.

So we're anticipating that although the numbers will not go up significantly, the support ... The numbers would not go up for the ordinary reasons. Because of the changes, because of turning off the tap on the unemployment insurance program, more individuals will require assistance who are deemed to be employable. They will be assisted as best we can.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, just following up this question for a moment. I'm not sure the term the Leader of the Opposition used, "social broker", is correct. We can discuss this either under 2.6 or the general heading of the vote. Mr. Chairman, to the minister: is it correct that in fact the government is giving some consideration to a shift in personnel from the use of qualified social workers, who have university degrees, and that some of the work which normally has been undertaken by qualified social workers would be undertaken by people who have less training — several years' college training compared to a social worker with a university degree as well as social work? Is there any consideration by the government in its personnel planning to shift some of the essentially repetitive types of work from qualified social workers to other personnel?

MR. BOGLE: No, Mr. Chairman.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. In that vote, Public Assistance for Employables, are payments to municipalities just a token amount of money to pick up some remnants, or is there a purpose for that? Under this area of employables, I believe the municipality paid it at one time, then it was reimbursed by the department. There's been a change in policy in that area. What is the \$60,000 for?

MR. BOGLE: That's accurate, Mr. Chairman. At the present time the Barons-Eureka health and social services unit, which happens to cover parts of the hon. member's constituency and my own, is the only area in the province that still maintains any social assistance at the local level. The reference here is to communities which provide emergency shelter and support. There is a reimbursement opportunity so that those municipalities are not out of pocket. On the other hand, if an individual winds up in a situation, in dire straits, and there's no one else to assist, we're very pleased to get that kind of co-operation from local government.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I'd sort of like to combine a question with the next group — special groups, transients, and employables. Could the minister indicate what kinds of problems that's creating at the present time, with people coming in from other provinces across Canada? At the same time, if the transient persons are not employable, do we ship some of them back to their home province, or do we let them stay here for so long? What's the policy at the present time?

MR. BOGLE: That can best be handled in the way we deal with our hostels, because most of the individuals wind up in the hostels. As the hon. member is aware, we've got a policy in place whereby assistance is provided for two weeks for an individual who arrives — and I'll use Calgary as an example — on the doorstep of a hostel and does not have a job, does not have any money. If at the end of that period of time the individual still does not have a job, and apparently has not made an attempt to

find one, the assistance is removed and the individual is sent on his way and often either goes on to the coast or back to where he came from.

On the other hand, if the individual has gone out and sought employment and been able to find a job, but still has not received a pay cheque, the director of the hostel has the authority to allow the individual to stay an extra two weeks until the first pay cheque comes through and the individual can get on his own feet and go on and make his own accommodations. So there's some flexibility for the directors of the hostels in Calgary and Edmonton, and the system is working very well.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, has the minister any numbers of persons like those we're dealing with at the present time in the hostels of Calgary and Edmonton? Back in the 1970s, I recall there were about 800 in Calgary and about 900 in Edmonton. Is the number greater or less than that at the present time?

MR. BOGLE: The number of individuals using our hostels has dropped rather significantly. There was great concern in Calgary a year ago, that we were required to turn some people away, and some were literally sleeping in the hall. That has turned around with this new policy, and we now have vacant beds. The last written report I saw on the hostel was about six weeks ago. At that time, things were moving along very smoothly, and I've had no indication of any change since that time.

In response to the question of the hon. Member for Vegreville's, I wonder if he was speaking of some earning exemptions so that an individual might earn money and not be penalized in the social assistance?

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Chairman, if I may just add to that. The time the Attorney General was Minister of Health and Social Development, he brought in a program that, say, for instance, somebody was on \$300 social assistance. If they earned \$100, they would have \$100 cut off their social assistance, and nobody wanted to work. But there was a prorated withdrawal. If somebody made \$100, they may lose \$25. On the next \$100, they may lose \$50. Once they reached X number of dollars, they lost totally. I think it was a good incentive program at that time.

MR. BOGLE: It was the title the hon. member used that threw me off. There certainly is a program whereby individuals who receive social allowance are allowed to earn some additional dollars. The program is that up to the first \$50, there's a total exemption. In other words, the social allowance recipient may earn \$50 and retain it all. Between \$50 and \$100, there is a 50 per cent tax back, if you like, or 50 per cent of what is earned may be saved and 50 per cent is deducted. From \$100 to \$200, there is a 25 per cent tax back, and over \$200 there's none. So there is an incentive to encourage the individual to have part-time work or, if they're able to do some small jobs, to earn a few extra dollars to supplement their income.

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Chairman, that was the question to the minister: whether he feels this program has gone to the extent that the projected number on social assistance in the future will be declining. I was wondering how the minister looks at the amount, whether those figures should be looked at. It's about six years since that program came on. I was wondering whether you've had a chance to look at the figures.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I'm sure those figures were adjusted a little more than a year ago. I'll go back and check that, but it's the kind of program that needs to be adjusted, or at least looked at, annually, to determine what adjustments should be made to take inflation and other such factors into account. I will check to determine — I believe a change was made a little more than a year ago, and I'll assess that.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Minister, two specific questions. First of all, I think it would be helpful to the committee if we could hear what the department is doing as far as encouraging or helping people get jobs is concerned. There is the problem — it may sound like a very mundane problem, if I could put it that way — helping people redevelop or develop, the work ethic. I know my colleague from Little Bow was involved in a program a number of years ago, when specific people in the department had the responsibility of working with unemployed employables. Mr. Minister, I'd like to know if that program is continuing, to what extent, and some indication of its success. As Alberta is seen more and more as a boom area in comparison to the rest of Canada, there is the great likelihood that we'll attract a number of people to the province — there's no question; we are now — many with skills, and some who aren't as well equipped to take part in the growth of the province.

That leads to my second question, Mr. Minister. What are we doing to let people in other parts of Canada know there are job opportunities in Alberta, but only in specific areas? I recognize the ultimate responsibility doesn't rest with the minister's department. On the other hand, it would seem to me the minister's department has a very important role to play. Because if we're not successful in getting to people in other provinces the word on job opportunities in this province, then before very long the numbers start to show up in the minister's department.

MR. BOGLE: Fair questions, Mr. Chairman. On the first one, a very special and unique program is in operation in Calgary to assist individuals who may be deemed unemployable to get back into the work force. There has been some very encouraging success with that program, to the point where we're now looking at putting together a long-term program that would reach other communities in Alberta. If we're looking for success in terms of a 75 per cent turnover, no, it's not there, and I don't think we should anticipate such a ratio of three out of four. However, the program is encouraging to a point that leads me to believe we have an opportunity to build on the successes of some very dedicated individuals in the department who have worked on developing the program in Calgary and putting together the main mechanics to make it work, so that we can look at what might be done in a similar way in other regions of the province, primarily to help those who have been on social assistance for many, many years and have lost that initiative and drive. That's being investigated at the present time.

As to what we're doing in other jurisdictions, the message is really twofold. The formal way is through my colleague the Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower, who is responsible for job training. I know that from time to time his department has worked in conjunction with other jurisdictions. We're trying to ensure that when advertisements are placed in newspapers or where have you, it's clearly understood that, yes, there are a number of jobs in Alberta, but for skilled individuals. The most tragic thing is to see or hear the story of an

individual in Alberta under the hope or false dream of having a job, and when he arrives there's nothing.

In one of our metropolitan centres, we had a situation recently where a group was encouraged and actually paid money into a company in Quebec to come out here, with a guarantee they would have jobs when they arrived. In that particular case, we gave an exemption at the hostel beyond the four weeks, because the individuals arrived, anticipated there would be work, were here, and no work. The company that had brought them out was long gone. That's being pursued legally now. Those individuals were assisted. A number of them are going back to Quebec, and they'll carry a very disappointing feeling about Alberta. That's very unfortunate, because that's not the feeling we would want them to have about our province. So we're trying very hard, through the channels of our sister department, to communicate that, yes, there are a number of job opportunities, but for skilled, not unskilled people.

The other way we've tried is through our own communications with departments in other provinces. Whether I'm speaking with my colleague the Minister of Social Services from Nova Scotia, or officials in the department are speaking with other officials, it's one of the messages we try to take, to ensure that no false impressions are left, so the feeling is not that our streets are paved with gold. There are not opportunities for everyone, skilled or unskilled. I can't think of anything more tragic in a country like ours than to see someone come with those feelings.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, the minister indicated that the employment opportunity program was only in Calgary. If memory serves me right, in 1969 we initiated the employment opportunity program. We had employment placement officers in Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie. After the first year of operation of that program, I can recall a net saving, after costs, of about a million dollars. I also recall some of your predecessors mentioning certain savings, and that the employment opportunity program was in place. What happened in those 10 years. What happened to those employment placement officers? Were they transferred to some other function? Was the program stopped for one, two, or three years in the meantime?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I'm not referring to the employment opportunity program, which is still operating in a number of centres. I'm referring to a special, unique program that deals with unemployables. It's an attempt to assist those individuals back into the work force. But that should not be confused with the employment opportunities program.

Agreed to:

2.6 — Public Assistance for Employables	\$31,084,000
2.7 — Public Assistance for Special Groups	\$4,889,000

Total Vote 2 — Social Allowance

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, before you move that. Earlier in the Legislature, the minister mentioned the matter of an institute of gerontology. I didn't raise it under the right vote. I wonder if the minister has anything further to report on that at the present time.

MR. BOGLE: The hon. member may recall that I did table a study last fall on a proposed institute of gerontology. I indicated at the time that the study would be circulated to a variety of organizations within the province. That has been done. In addition to those we had on our mailing list, a number of individuals and organizations requested copies of the study. Input is currently being gathered on the results of the recommendations made by the group. Once those have been compiled, we'll be in a better position to sit down with the Senior Citizens' Advisory Council, for example, and possibly some other groups, and decide how to proceed with the overall proposal.

Agreed to:

Total Vote 2 — Social Allowance

\$187,633,460

31 — Program Support

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, before we conclude this particular vote, it would seem to me that this is the area where we should ask some questions about the communications that occurred. Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, on March 21 a number of questions were posed to the minister in *Hansard*. I still have several questions that I would like the minister to respond to in estimates. The first is with respect to the sequence of events. The Hesses talked to their social worker on the 13th, I believe. Then on the 16th there was a meeting in Peace River with the regional administrator.

MR. BOGLE: No, you're already off.

MR. NOTLEY: Pardon?

MR. BOGLE: I could add to your information; it's not quite accurate.

MR. NOTLEY: I'll outline the three questions I have, Mr. Minister, then you can probably answer all three at the same time. At the point that the regional administrator heard about the — for want of a better expression — allegations; but perhaps that wouldn't be correct — the concern expressed by the Hesses, Mr. Scotney ordered that the practices stop. However, it would appear that after the 16th there was no formal communication with senior people above the regional level. The matter was brought to the government's attention by the Ombudsman through the director of child welfare, about whom on page 12 of *Hansard*, March 21, the minister says:

Mr. Speaker, had the director of child welfare known of practices such as those, which at the time were still alleged, he would have moved immediately to ensure that those practices would be terminated immediately. One report did come in. It was dealt with in an appropriate way by the director of child welfare.

Mr. Chairman, we realize that the department had stopped the practices.

My question, however, is: what orders, if any, went from the minister's office to the district offices with respect to reporting procedures as a consequence of this incident? I'm not talking about the termination; no question about that, that's clear in *Hansard*. I'm talking about the orders, if any, that went out from the minister's office to the regional offices concerning the communication of major items to the deputy minister or to the minister.

Because at this time, the minister made it very clear on page 12 that had the director of child welfare known, he would have terminated it forthwith. It would seem to me, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, that at this point we would have had a very clear communication from the minister, not only to the Peace River regional office but to all district offices, that issues of this consequence should be reported to the minister's office. I'd like a response on that.

Secondly, also on page 12, Mr. Chairman, a question was asked with respect to the \$8,000 shortfall. This was the shortfall that caused some problems at NRTR. The minister answers, on the bottom of page 12:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is correct in stating that a clerical error had been made. He should go on to note that the error occurred by the applicants ...

The minister goes on to say:

That's one of the issues which concerned not only me but my colleagues in government. If you note in the Cavanagh Board of Review, the first of the nine terms of reference is to report on changes, if any, that should be made

Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, while this is clearly an area that is being examined by the Cavanagh Board of Review, and I have no quarrel with that as a term of reference, my question is: have there been any interim changes in policy by the department which would allow flexibility so that we don't get into the situation that occurred at NRTR, where according to my information, one of the real problems for the people running the centre — to be fair to the two women running the centre — was that they were operating under a budgetary problem in part due to their own mistake, but a clerical error none the less. It seems to me fair enough that the overall subject is going to be reviewed by the Cavanagh board. But what interim changes have we made so that this kind of situation won't occur in the next however many months it will take for the Cavanagh Board of Review to report?

Mr. Chairman, the third question is with respect to page 13. As I understand, after conversations I held with the young couple in question, the Hesses from Peace River, on the 16th they were invited to be foster parents. That was the information they gave me, and I have no reason to disbelieve them. But subsequently that invitation was rescinded. That question was posed on page 13, Mr. Minister. You indicated you weren't aware of the concern; you'd look into it and advise the hon. member.

Perhaps we could deal with those three questions: (a), what orders, if any, went out concerning communication; (b), any interim flexibility in budgeting, pending a final report from the Cavanagh Board of Review; and (c), the government's response with respect to the foster parent question?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, the response to the first question as to what instructions, if any, have gone out regarding the area of communication: instructions regarding the issue of communication did go out during the week of March 10 from the chief deputy minister and the director of child welfare to the regional offices. It's quite clear that the actions taken by, first, the social worker — not by Mr. Scotney but the actual social worker who visited the farm home outside Peace River on November 13. When the social worker became aware of the activities, the social worker instructed the two operators to terminate those practices immediately, and reported back

to the regional administrator Mr. Scotney, who in turn called a meeting for the 16th.

So we're clear that the first action was taken by the social worker in the field. The second action was taken by the regional administrator himself, Mr. Scotney, on November 16. That was dealt with at a meeting with the two operators of the centre along with the four members of the advisory board.

Of course the question is: why was the matter not passed on? From the point of view of the regional administrator, the issue had been resolved. He was satisfied that the questionable practices, the offensive practices, were halted. He was assured they would not be reinstated. From his point of view, that was the end of the issue. Because of the concerns senior staff members and I had with regard to that item and other such items which might occur, the orders I've referred to did go out during the week of March 10. You will recall that I returned to Edmonton on March 9.

With regard to the second question, the shortfall in the budget, approximately \$7,000 that's been referred to: it should be clear that the \$7,000 error was made by the applicants of the centre, as has been pointed out. From the information I've been given, the department was never made aware that there was such an error, that there was such a shortfall. I want to assure the hon. member that now on this particular case and all others, long before Mr. Justice Cavanagh was asked to conduct such a review, there was this flexibility within the department. I'm sure there was when the hon. Member for Little Bow was the minister. I know the flexibility was there when my colleague the Attorney General was the minister. I've discussed it openly with the individual I succeeded, the hon. Helen Hunley.

So if a legitimate error occurs in budgeting, there is the flexibility, by the director of child welfare in this case, to deal with the matter promptly and ensure that individuals do not suffer because of a clerical error made by someone in the field or someone making an application for a grant. That has to be guarded very carefully, to ensure the system is not abused, that a general increase is not obtained for extra benefits for possibly increasing the director's salary, and then a request is made for a shortfall in the food budget. But that flexibility is in place.

I think the last point is a very, very vital issue: the question of the Hesses' application, or suggested application, that they accept a foster child. It is my very clear understanding that some inquiries were made by the Hesses, and an application form was provided to Mrs. Hess. It's also my understanding that the discussions were between Mrs. Hess and a social worker — not two social workers; not Mr. and Mrs. Hess. It was a one-on-one discussion. The application forms were provided and never returned.

There have been conflicting stories as to what happened after that. The hon. member may draw his own conclusions. From my point of view, the key thing is that when I was asked the question on March 21 in this Assembly, I had no knowledge, because the question came to me as to whether the Hesses had applied to adopt. I had not heard of that and took the question as notice. I can't recall if it was after question period on the 21st or on the 24th, but I recall very clearly indicating to one reporter, when asked, that any individuals in Alberta who wish to adopt a child — and the first step is to become foster parents — certainly have the right to make application; that the Hesses's application would be treated no differently from anyone else's; and that if the

individuals felt that because of adverse publicity in the Peace River area, their application might not be treated in the way it should be, then I made the invitation that they should apply either through the office in Edmonton or directly through my office. Again I made the point that no special favors would be granted, but on the other hand, that certainly nothing would be held against the individuals on their application, and that they would be treated just as anyone else would.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, if I could just follow that along for a moment. Dealing first of all with the question of the foster program, my understanding in talking to Mrs. Hess is that at the meeting on the 16th, in fact an application form was given to Mrs. Hess, and that at the time, the Hesses, after going through what was to both of them a rather painful experience at NRTR, were really of two minds as to whether they wished to be foster parents. Subsequent to that, they communicated with the department in Peace River that, in fact, they would like to be foster parents, at which time they were advised that things had changed. That is the understanding I have been given by the Hesses.

If that isn't the case, I would certainly like to be assured of that. But, Mr. Minister and Mr. Chairman, that's the information I've been given. When I asked the question in the first place, I should have mentioned that there was a period — I forget how many days — when, after the invitation had been made by the department to act as foster parents, the Hesses were uncertain as to whether they wanted to do so. But after having some opportunity to think it over — and I think any of us could certainly understand this; it's not unusual — they decided that, yes, they would. Then they were given the information that that wasn't going to be the case.

Mr. Chairman, the only other comment I would make — getting back to the action of the social worker and Mr. Scotney, I want to make it clear that I think the social worker acted properly on the 13th, no question about that; and Mr. Scotney acted properly by convening the meeting on the 16th, no question about that. Where I think there is some real concern, as I indicated in the debate that took place before — and we won't go over that again — is in the failure to communicate this problem to the minister. The minister responds by saying the matter had been dealt with at the local level to the best of Mr. Scotney's judgment. Knowing Mr. Scotney, I respect his sincerity in that. But sometimes sincere people are wrong. In this particular instance what was at stake, in my submission, is a practice which, in itself, was sufficiently serious that it should have been communicated to the minister. Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, it's pretty hard to have any handle on the question of behavior modification if we have a practice of this kind which goes on and is not at least reported to the minister. With great respect to a public servant with whom, over the past four years — and I want to say this — I've had occasion to deal, and in every way has acted in a totally professional way, as far as I'm concerned as a member representing part of the area that that particular gentleman serves, he's been an excellent public servant. But I say with respect, by not communicating this matter to the minister, he was wrong. It was a mistake, a very serious mistake.

Mr. Chairman, to the minister, I guess the concern I would have is that it wasn't really until the 10th that instructions went out. It would seem to me that when this matter was brought to the minister's attention, on or about the 11th if my chronology is correct, shortly

thereafter there should have been some initiative to indicate to all district administrators that matters of this kind should be communicated to the minister. What we see, Mr. Chairman, is a period of almost three months after the receipt of the Thompson report. [interjections] Well, the Thompson report was on February 29, was it not? So the communication didn't go out until after the Thompson report was received.

Now, Mr. Chairman, if this were the kind of iffy situation where there were pluses and minuses, and one had to evaluate carefully the pluses and minuses, I could understand the minister not moving until after the Thompson report had been filed with the minister. I could understand that. But, Mr. Chairman, I don't really think any member of this Assembly needed the Thompson report to reach the conclusion that the practices at NRTR should have been reported to the minister.

So we have this troubling delay. I'm glad to see the communication went out, but I submit, Mr. Minister, three months late.

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

MR. BOGLE: In response to that. First with regard to the Hesses, I've clearly indicated my understanding of the discussions that took place between Mrs. Hess and the social worker. The important thing to remember is the comments I made on or about March 21, where I indicated the way any application received by the Hesses will be treated. If the Hesses now have a desire to become foster parents or to adopt a child, their application will be dealt with in the normal way. That's the best reassurance of fair treatment that I as a minister can give. There's no way we can go back and put the pieces together, based on what one person said the other said, or vice versa.

I think we should be very clear, and not lose sight of the comments. The hon. member has read some of the comments I made and read into *Hansard* on March 21. On December 11, as I indicated, a memo was written by the director of child welfare, based on a telephone call he'd had from the Ombudsman's office. The conversation between the Ombudsman's office and the director of child welfare, as I understand it, was that a complaint had been lodged and the matter should be looked into. It was that basic. The director of child welfare called the regional director in Peace River and, if memory serves me correctly, at least the paraphrasing of the statement is: there was an incident about a boy who wet his bed and was forced to sleep in it, which certainly did not convey to me when I read a copy of the memo the incident which actually took place. Rather, the message conveyed to me, and my chief deputy minister read it in the same way, was that a youngster wet his bed in the middle of the night and was not allowed to have a change of sheets that evening, that he was forced to sleep in it for the remainder of the evening.

On or about December 14, the memo written on the 11th reached my office. Again, it was the memo from the director of child welfare to the chief deputy minister of the department, and it contained the information I've referred to. In addition, it indicated that two actions had been taken by the director of child welfare. One, he had issued an order to cease and desist, so that, notwithstanding the actions already taken by the advisory board and the regional director, under The Child Welfare Act and the responsibility vested in the director, he would ensure that no such offensive acts would be repeated. Secondly, Dr. Gus Thompson, a psychologist from Grande Prairie,

was asked to investigate the matter fully. Dr. Thompson did.

We can speculate all we like as to what would have happened had that report been submitted on February 15 rather than dated the 29th. That's mere speculation at this point in time. There's been some suggestion in the Assembly by the hon. member that the report was actually submitted earlier than that. The date on the document is the 29th. It reached my office on March 5. I happened to be in the constituency at the time, doing a pre-session tour. Any members who wonder as to the legitimacy of that may check with the papers in my constituency for the two weeks preceding that date, and they'll find the advertisements clearly state where I would be on each of the given days, notwithstanding I was here in Edmonton on the Tuesday for cabinet.

The report reached my desk the day the story broke in one of the daily newspapers here in Edmonton. The matter was relayed to me via telephone by one of my executive assistants. I held a news conference in Taber. I expressed my shock and anger at the allegations, but went on to say that they were allegations at that point in time, that I had not had an opportunity to read the report. I returned to Edmonton.

I read the report on Sunday, March 9. On Monday, March 10, I indicated there would be an internal review. I was asked repeatedly whether there would be an external review, whether the Ombudsman would be invited to come in. I said, no, not at that point; we were conducting an internal review within the department. Subsequent actions were taken by this government in the appointment of the Cavanagh Board of Review to investigate the whole area.

I think the sequence of events which took place has to be very clear. Although the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview may leave the suggestion that there was considerable delay between December 14 and March 10, fair enough. Fair enough. But the memo of December 11 clearly indicated the action taken by the department, and clearly indicated that once the Thompson report was completed — and there was no completion date put on the report — the results would be forwarded to my office and the matter discussed by senior management of the department and myself. The appropriate action was taken following our meetings upon my return. Communications went out from the chief deputy minister, as well as from the director of child welfare, to our regional offices.

I further indicated a step we've initiated of meeting with regional directors from time to time. We've had one such meeting to date. I believe a second is being put together at the present time, fitting those meetings with other reasons for the directors to get together in the city — either a workshop or what have you. So there is a clear understanding.

Yes, value judgments are made. From time to time, mistakes will be made. What's important to me — it's the same as the social worker working in the field. The social worker is not going to be perfect, no matter how much education that individual has. Mistakes are going to be made, because they are working in a human area. The key is to try to continually refine the system. When discovering an error, a bug in the system, work it out, fine-tune the system so it can meet the needs of people today, recognizing that the needs of people are constantly changing. Those are the circumstances which I think are important and should be clearly stated for the record as part of the *Hansard* history.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If I might make an announcement here: somebody suggesting there's an M.L.A. car—I'm not sure how they identified it—with its lights on. It's a green Volkswagen Rabbit. There's a note here at the bottom. They feel that by 2 a.m. it's bound to have a dead battery.

MR. R. CLARK: It isn't my car, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Minister, I'd like to ask a number of questions. I'd like to start by saying: in retrospect, if the unfortunate events were to take place again—if I recall the sequence of events properly, the minister found out about the situation at Peace River about December 10 or 11. Is that accurate?

AN HON. MEMBER: December 14.

MR. R. CLARK: December 14. I would appreciate very much hearing what steps the minister would take now, had this thing happened today?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Actually, that's a hypothetical question. I don't think it should be part of the proceedings.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, speaking to your ruling, I appreciate that it is. But one of the things we've tried to get at here in the course of the discussion is that, okay, we've had a pretty major difference of opinion in the committee as to how the matter should be handled. But I submit to you, sir, that if we could look at the situation and hear from the minister that if the thing were to happen today, these are the steps I would see taking place, I think it would do two things: it would provide the opportunity for the minister to set out the situation as he would like to see it handled; and secondly, for those of us who have had some pretty major questions about how that matter was handled, I think it would provide us with an opportunity to hear from the minister how he feels it might be handled in the future. I say it clearly from the standpoint that all of us can make mistakes, or hindsight is much better than foresight on occasion. Mr. Chairman, that's why I ask the question of the minister. I earnestly request the minister to respond.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think that in retrospect, many of us might have different ideas about things that have gone by in the past. The minister is at liberty to make a comment if he wishes. But to conjecture or pass an opinion in a circumstance like this really isn't part of the committee hearings.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, then let me put it this way to the minister: what new procedures is the minister now going to put in place, in light of the experience which started on December 13 or 14, so that this kind of thing won't happen again?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, the hon. Leader of the Opposition anticipated the answer I was about to give, so he rephrased his question. It would not be proper to go back and rehash "what if". What if we knew? But more important, what did we do about it? I've outlined what has been done, and what is being done now. Let's be very clear: in a department like Social Services and Community Health, with the multitude of problems we are dealing with, there are going to be—not maybe, not possibly, but there will be—issues from time to time that are going to be very sensitive, sensational to some. That's

part of the nature of the work we're doing. There will continue to be human errors, as I refer to. The key is to ensure that policy directives are being followed: directives in terms of communication, in terms of how we ensure that information is passed on—again, we're looking at value judgments which will be made in the field—but I believe a better understanding by some very dedicated people in the field across the province as to the sensitivity of our work, as to the need to report issues. I suppose to suggest we have a foolproof system would be folly, would not be responsible on my part, and I'm not going to do it. That's just not the nature of work we're involved in. But to ensure that information is passed on, to ensure that communication within the department is flowing freely: yes, that's the issue based on the question of communication which we discussed earlier, which we've addressed, which was the subject of a couple of memos I referred to earlier. It was one of about four subjects that I've discussed personally with regional administrators, and will discuss with others during the course of the next few months.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, then to the minister. As a result of the experience that took place during November, December, January, February, and March, directives have gone out to officials in the department. I take it from what the minister has said that the lines of communication within the department have been, let's say, more clearly set out so that a situation such as happened in Peace River, if it were to happen again—and I concede, Mr. Minister, that it's a department where there are going to be problems; there's no question about that. But I take it the communication lines have now been sufficiently unclogged or reorganized, or whatever term one wants to use, that that kind of information will get to the minister very, very quickly if events of that nature take place again.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask the minister if he can confirm that the department is now, from time to time, calling together numbers of social workers and giving to social workers and regional office people more extensive background information on various therapy approaches. It's my information and understanding, by means of information that has come to my office, that the department is in the process of holding a number of seminars across the province with social workers and regional office directors to spell out clearly the attitude of the department in this whole area of therapy.

MR. BOGLE: That's part of the internal awareness program we are working on, Mr. Chairman.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to move on to the question of responsibility of the social workers who were, in this case—going back to the Peace River incident—the legal guardians of the children in the institution at Peace River. I'm not asking for the names; that would be improper. But I'd like assurance from the minister that the department's view was that one of the social workers in Peace River had the responsibility of being the legal guardian, as it were, of the six young people in the treatment centre.

MR. BOGLE: To be clear, Mr. Chairman, the social workers in Peace River made regular visits to the facility. At no time when they were there was there any evidence of the offensive practices. That wasn't mentioned at all. What is very important is that when it was made known

to the social workers, they acted immediately. It wasn't a case of calling a lawyer to get an opinion or calling anywhere else. They acted, very promptly and properly, in ordering the two operators of the facility to terminate the practices immediately. They subsequently reported to their senior official in Peace River, who arranged for a meeting with the board and the operators three days later, and further action was taken to ensure that those practices would halt. So the role of the social workers in the case was very clear. Notwithstanding the fact that a psychologist had been involved with the behavior modification techniques, in the view of the social workers it was not acceptable, and they put an end to it immediately.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, perhaps I didn't make the question very clear to the minister. Mr. Minister, what I want to ascertain is: who were the legal guardians, or guardian, of the youngsters in the Peace River home?

MR. BOGLE: The way The Child Welfare Act is worded, I believe the director of child welfare is deemed to be the legal guardian. Therefore, the social workers acting on behalf of the director would carry out that responsibility for him.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Minister, then it would be fair to deduce from that statement that the social workers in Peace River would, for the sake of The Child Welfare Act, be the legal guardians of the youngsters under their care, as it were, at the group home in Peace River?

MR. BOGLE: My understanding, Mr. Chairman, is that they act on behalf of the director.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. I think this becomes a very important point because — and I've been advised by lawyers I've spoken to on the matter — The Child Welfare Act gives that responsibility to the director, but the practice is that in virtually every case, the director then delegates that to the social worker in the area. In this case it would be Peace River.

The point, Mr. Minister is this: as legal guardians those social workers are responsible to the court, either on a permanent or temporary ward basis, for the care that these young people are getting. As I understand the case at Peace River, there was no consultation at all between the psychologist who had prescribed the treatment and the legal guardians of these six children.

MR. NOTLEY: That's right.

MR. R. CLARK: I've listened very carefully this evening, Mr. Minister, for the minister to indicate to the committee that that very important matter has been resolved in the course of the changes that have been made since March. Unless I've missed something, I've heard no reference to that. What becomes a very central issue, Mr. Minister, in my judgment anyway, is that if therapy of any sort is to be embarked upon, that first has to be cleared by the legal guardian of those youngsters. In the Peace River case, Mr. Minister, just a few moments ago we were advised by you, sir, that the social workers didn't even know this kind of therapy was going on.

MR. NOTLEY: That's right. How could that happen?

MR. R. CLARK: How could that happen? That seems to me to be totally contrary to the fact that the social

workers in Peace River were the legal guardians and, from a very legal point of view, are responsible to the courts of this province for the kind of treatment those youngsters had imposed upon them.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, in earlier questions, the question was not put in the direct way the hon. member has just put it. Very clearly — and I recall on March 24 being asked by the hon. member a number of questions on this very point. The week prior to that, the communication from the director of child welfare clearly indicated their responsibility to social workers in the field. It's accurate that the social workers were not aware of the therapy being prescribed and administered to the youngsters. It's also accurate that as soon as they became aware of it, they reacted quickly, not by consulting anyone else but by acting on the spot. That matter was further clarified in the memo which went from the director of child welfare on this matter. That happened during the time preceding March 24, when the questions were raised.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Minister, so that I understand the situation rather clearly: it took from December until the middle of March for a directive to go out from the department to individuals who were prescribing therapy for wards of the court, to insist upon approval by the guardians of the treatment that wards of the province were getting. Is that accurate, Mr. Minister?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, for clarity, I'll put it in a different way for the hon. member. The offensive practices were terminated on November 13. The Thompson report, which was requested on December 11, was taking place not while offensive practices were under way, no; those practices had been terminated some time earlier, a month earlier, to be clear. Therefore, once the Thompson report was received and reviewed, I had an opportunity to go over the same with senior officials in the department. One of the concerns expressed by the director of child welfare at that time was the lack of clarity. He in turn was instructed by the chief deputy minister to issue a memo to clarify the role of the social workers in the field, which he did.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Minister, I guess I'm not making the point very clearly. No one is questioning that the practices at Peace River were stopped the moment the social workers found out about them. That's what we'd expect from social workers in the province. They act in the most commendable manner. But, Mr. Minister, how long had this practice been going on across the province? How long have we had this practice across the province where we had individuals prescribing therapy for wards of the province, without ever sitting down and getting approval from their guardians, the social workers in the various regional offices across the province?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, the first thing done when I returned on March 9 — and subsequently the meeting on March 10, and part of the department's internal review — was to determine whether in either government-operated or government-funded facilities across the province any other such offensive practices were being condoned and/or permitted. The initial reaction from the various facilities was no. Pardon me, that's been followed up with written correspondence from various points in the province.

So from my understanding, this was a unique situation

that happened in the facility outside Peace River. As I've indicated, part of the reason for that is very clear. I indicated on March 10 — that day I questioned very sincerely whether we had not gone too far, whether we had taken youngsters and the kinds of problems that the youngsters at the centre near Peace River have, severely emotionally disturbed youngsters, and put them into a setting where they're dealt with primarily by lay people, with very limited professional experience available. There were five individuals in the centre at the time, but it was licensed to handle a maximum of six. I seriously questioned whether or not we'd gone too far in our approach.

Therefore I put forward the idea that day that some further thought should be given to the idea of clustering small facilities, possibly in the Grande Prairie area as an example, where we have several other professionals who could work in a team approach, so you're not relying solely on one person and one person's ideas, as was the case with the Peace River facility. That's part of the assessment which took place. The review followed on March 10 to ensure that those practices were not in fact happening or being condoned anywhere else in the province. They were not.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Can the minister assure the committee tonight that there was no other situation across the province where wards of the province were receiving therapy which had not been approved by the social workers who were their legal guardians? Is this the only case that's happened in Alberta in the past two years, five years, 10 years?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I would have some difficulty going back two years and more when I was not the minister. I can certainly assure him that as of March 10, when the review was conducted in the department, from all the responses that came back from the various parts of the province, both government-operated as well as government-funded facilities, practices such as that mentioned at Peace River were certainly not being condoned or permitted.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry to take the time of the committee, but I think it's very essential that we find out this evening once and for all — or tomorrow, or whenever we come back to the matter; as long as it takes — how this situation could happen at Peace River, where the person responsible for the therapy was administering therapy without any consultation or approval from the guardian of these youngsters who were permanent or temporary wards of the province. Mr. Minister, I'm trying to ascertain: is this the only place in Alberta where this has happened? Or does the director of child welfare know, and has he passed on to the minister, examples in other parts of the province where therapy — be it good therapy or the wretched kind of stuff that was called therapy at Peace River, but whatever kind of therapy it is — is being carried on without the approval of the social workers who are the legal guardians?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I've tried to indicate the response which followed in the memo which went from the director of child welfare, with copies to the social workers across the province, to reinforce the position, the understanding of their responsibility — not to question, any more than the hon. member would question his physician — but certainly the rights and responsibility of the child welfare workers in terms of the children in their

care; to ensure that the kind of treatment being prescribed and administered was satisfactory from their point of view, notwithstanding the fact that they're not questioning the professional competence of the individual who is involved in the actual therapy.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, then to the minister, perhaps the last question on that specific point. Mr. Minister, I take it then that as of March 10, if that's the date the memo went out ...

MR. BOGLE: Excuse me. For clarification, the discussion took place on March 10; the memo followed shortly thereafter.

MR. R. CLARK: Shortly after March 10, whenever the memo got out. From then on, no therapy will be administered to wards of the province unless that therapy has the approval of the legal guardian?

MR. BOGLE: I'll check the exact wording in the memo, Mr. Chairman, but that's certainly the gist of the memo: to ensure that the social workers were reminded of their legal responsibility for the children in their care and to exercise that responsibility, and not get into a confrontation with a professional person as to therapy; but surely, in protecting the rights of the individual client, if the actions are questionable, to remove the client from that situation pending a further review.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I don't think any of us quarrels with the fact that on the 10th the memo went out and, as the minister indicated, the social workers, who have to act as legal guardians, will be properly notified. I still find it difficult that we had a period of almost three months.

Now the minister says that to the best of his knowledge there were no offensive practices. But I suppose that really depends, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, on what one calls offensive practices. Because frankly, when I read the Thompson report, there were features of it that rather caused me to read again. Because in his report Dr. Thompson seemed rather *blase* about several of the procedures that disturbed me. So I guess it's a question of how one defines objectionable behavior modification techniques.

My question, though, Mr. Chairman, to the minister is that while Westfield was a slightly different question — we're going to come to that in a moment — why, when on page 5 of the Ombudsman's report the red lights were flashing, the warning bells were jangling, was something not done to follow this up? I'd just like to cite page 5 of the Ombudsman's report:

While this report focuses primarily on the Westfield Diagnostic and Treatment Centre, its use of "thinking rooms," and policies in respect to their use, and related matters; many of the observations and recommendations made have a general application and importance to residential treatment. . . .

Mr. Chairman, to the minister. I realize that we are talking about a slightly different thing, but it would seem to me that this concern expressed by the Ombudsman in the Westfield report should have created in the department the kind of climate where in fact there would have been a review.

Getting back to the point the Leader of the Opposition raised: at that juncture, why did we not look at the question of the responsibilities of the social workers as

legal guardians with respect to wards of the province. Mr. Chairman, I go back not just to the event in Peace River. It strikes me that one of the lessons the department should have learned from the Ombudsman's review of Westfield is that, by George, there are problems in this area.

It's a very iffy area, as the minister well knows. People have different views on how far you can legitimately take behavior modification and the kind of disciplinary procedures undertaken, for example, in Westfield. It seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that on the part of the department, there wasn't the kind of reaction I would have thought after the Westfield report. I realize we're talking about slightly different things, but it seems to me the overall area of concern is one — as I say, with the red lights blinking and the bells clanging — where the department should have taken note.

Agreed to:

3.1 — Program Support \$1,230,270

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. On 3.2, could we get an outline from the minister as to what changes have taken place at Westfield since the Ombudsman's report.

MR. BOGLE: It's actually under 3.4, if you want to hold it until then.

Agreed to:

3.2 — Community and Family

Services

\$22,642,290

3.3 — Contracted Residences

\$17,811,000

3.4 Residence and Treatment in Institutions

MR. BOGLE: In fairness, the hon. member did ask a question as to Westfield and other such facilities. The increases in residential and treatment services may be broken down in a number of ways. Number one, we've got the new youth development centre which will be coming on stream at Strathmore. I'll be pleased to discuss that at some length, if hon. members are interested in it or have questions on the facility proposed for Strathmore.

In addition, you'll note that we have new positions at Westfield, Grande Prairie, Lac La Biche, Medicine Hat, High Prairie, Fort McMurray, also Sifton centre in Lethbridge. These positions are in part due to the Ombudsman's report and his recommendations for additional staff, in particular that we replace the sleep-ins and that there be staff members awake at all times. As I've indicated, that was one of the recommendations the Ombudsman did make, and we accepted it.

In total there were 33 new positions for those facilities which I've outlined. The breakdown, if the hon. members are interested: six houseparents at Westfield; two child care counsellors at the youth assessment centres in Grande Prairie, Lac La Biche, and Medicine Hat, for a total of six, as well as two each at High Prairie and Fort McMurray; and three child care counsellors at Sifton House in Lethbridge and the YC in Grande Prairie. In addition, there are three new group homes, each with a six-bed capacity, at Fort McMurray, Wainwright, and Hinton. Those are included in the budget as well. There's also some additional support for relief and vacation pay. That covers the staffing positions.

In terms of capital improvements made to the facilities, I think hon. members are aware of those. If you want any detail on that, I'll be pleased to provide some at this time. All right.

The thinking rooms were changed rather dramatically, as hon. members may be aware. I should mention that although we have not implemented the Ombudsman's recommendation that use of the rooms be reduced to 45 minutes, we have reinforced our policy to ensure that the thinking rooms are not used as a form of punishment. The primary purpose is to ensure that the individual who is out of control and a danger to himself and/or others will not hurt himself. In addition, one of the thinking rooms was converted to a small medical unit. After one of the discussions with the Ombudsman, it became very apparent to me that he was not suggesting a small emergency unit, but rather that an area of the facility be designated for the youngster who is in need of some medical attention for a variety of reasons, but not a thinking room *per se*.

All in all, I think it's fair to say that about a third of the Ombudsman's recommendations had been implemented or were being implemented by the department when the report actually came down. In addition, a good number of the recommendations have been accepted and implemented. Some have not. Some of the staff/child ratios which were recommended have not. I've mentioned that as a department we are seriously reassessing the need for at least one facility in the province to handle the hard-core delinquents; a place, a facility . . . I think that description would define it accurately.

So those are the overall improvements which have been made at Westfield, and the impact on the other facilities within the province that provide a similar service.

MR. NOTLEY: On Westfield for a moment. On page 54 of the Ombudsman's report, Mr. Minister, the Ombudsman makes this observation:

Finally, the question of staff cannot be left without the issue of salaries being examined. Pay and benefits are questions that naturally arise in efforts to recruit highly qualified and experienced staff.

The minister indicated something with respect to benefits, but what has been done about the salary of staff at Westfield, or facilities of a like nature?

When I had the opportunity to tour Westfield, in talking with some of the personnel at the time and getting some information on the salaries being paid — frankly, I agree with the Ombudsman's conclusion. It's very difficult work, the kind of work where people are under a tremendous amount of emotional pressure, dealing with young people in Westfield. Have we made any moves at all to deal specifically with the question of salaries?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member will recall that the recommendations the Ombudsman made with regard to salary increases and so on were referred to the Public Service Commissioner and the minister responsible. Those are under consideration by my colleague's office, along with other positions, not only in our department but other parts of government.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, if what we're dealing with is the general negotiations, that's a rather different thing. Because we have the observation contained in . . . Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, it seems to me we're not going to be very successful in keeping people in institutions like Westfield unless we do something fairly sub-

stantial on the salary. It's my understanding that there's a fairly high turnover rate, generally about 34 per cent for child care personnel, if my statistics are correct. Unless the Minister responsible for Personnel Administration wants to supplement the minister's answer, I think it would be useful for the committee to have a little more definitive answer on this question, because it is very specifically referred to in the Ombudsman's report.

MR. BOGLE: Just to be clear — and other questions on bargaining in general may be referred when my hon. colleague's estimates are up — the question goes much further than salary alone. The burnout question referred to by the Ombudsman in his report is one. We think some of the improvements which have been made might relate to that area. Child care workers in general, not just Westfield: it's a problem we have because of the sensitivity of the area. Because of the kind of work the individuals are doing, there is a turnover. It's very difficult to find a dedicated person who has the feelings, and is not affected by the tragedies the individual sees from day to day in contacts with the caseload. It's an ongoing problem that we assess and attempt to wrestle with. As I've indicated, the questions of salary, of course, may be dealt with by my colleague during his estimates.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Just looking at Westfield, perhaps just stepping back for a moment, I think the most charitable thing we could say is that the youngsters there are really victims of indifference and economic belt-tightening by Alberta, not only this government but by all of us as Albertans. Mr. Chairman, I'd have to say to the minister that it's okay to say there's the burnout factor which the Ombudsman referred to — certainly that is a factor — and to pay more wages. But what steps are we going to take to increase the child care courses at our postsecondary educational institutions? The impetus for that kind of thing has to come from this department. It isn't something that's going to come from the chambers of commerce across the province or other groups like that. Mr. Minister, has there been some impetus by the department to move in that direction?

Secondly, Mr. Minister, I was rather intrigued by the remarks made that at long last the government has realized we're going to have to have some institution that's going to look after, as regrettable as it is, those hard-core young offenders. For a number of years now in this province, we have been in the most idiotic situation where we've attempted to put hard-core young offenders, if I can use that term advisedly, into places like Westfield and other child care institutions. On the other hand, we've had a large number of them out at Fort Saskatchewan and in Spy Hill. We used to be told by the former minister how they were segregated, but the kind of segregation you could have in a place like that is — at the very best — very, very minimal.

Mr. Minister, from the comments that have been made as far as Strathmore is concerned, I take it that Strathmore may meet that need. If Strathmore isn't to meet that need, what kinds of plans does the department have to meet the needs of what I would refer to as these hard-core young offenders?

MR. BOGLE: Before going on to that, a comment was made regarding budget. I think it's imperative that we not lose sight of actually what we are investing — not spending, investing — in young people in an attempt to assist and rehabilitate. The total budget for Westfield amounts

to something like \$2,185,000, and the facility has a capacity of 98. The occupancy is running about 95 per cent, so at the current time there are about 85 individuals in it, and we have a staff of about 82. So it's roughly one staff for every one individual. The *per diem* cost of the facility is about \$64 per youngster. That's a sizable investment we're making — not begrudging that, but it is important that we not lose sight of the fact, either.

The new youth assessment centre in Strathmore, to serve southern Alberta, will not deal with the hard-core delinquents we're referring to. We're looking at two things: first, another Enviro's type of program, a wilderness adventure, that may be established in the north; and one facility — again we're still at the planning stages, because prior to last summer there was no contemplation on the part of the officials within the department to move in this direction. It's a desire by some of my colleagues and myself to reassess the need. I'm pleased the hon. Leader of the Opposition shares that general concern. My concern as a former teacher, as that of the hon. members may be, is that in the classroom if you put the delinquent next to the slow learner, it's the slow learner who is constantly in trouble, not the delinquent.

We've got youngsters in some of our youth assessment and youth development centres today who do have some problems, and we're trying to help them and rehabilitate them. On the other hand, we've got some pretty hard-core delinquents who are making life miserable not only for themselves but their neighbors and others in the facility. So it's a matter of separating, if you like, some of the most difficult cases, segregating them into a training school concept that most other provinces have, and recognizing that there is a clear need for such a facility. If we're going to meet the Ombudsman's objective of not using thinking rooms as forms of punishment, there clearly must be some way to control the activities of those who are extremely obstructive and are causing a great many problems for others in the facility.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister with regard to the Strathmore assessment centre. There were a number of groups that were concerned with regard to the location in Strathmore. I was wondering if the minister could comment on the consultation with those groups: the Alberta Association of Child Care Centres, the Regional Mental Health Planning Council of Calgary, the Children's Services Council, the Alberta Association of Social Workers, and the Child Welfare Workers Association of Alberta. They were concerned about the location in Strathmore. One of the concerns, as I understand it, was with regard to emergency medical facilities, vocational training facilities, and major recreational facilities that may not give access to the program or work along with them. I was wondering how the minister has dealt with the concerns and also with the groups.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, first to discuss with the hon. members of the opposition how the government caucus arrived at its very bold and imaginative decision, we looked at three possible alternatives. One was to locate the new facility to be built to serve Calgary and southern Alberta. We looked at the possibility of locating it within the city of Calgary, within commuting distance of Calgary, or at some community farther out. Various alternatives were put forward as to the advantages and disadvantages of each.

It was the decision of caucus and the decentralization committee that the facility should in fact be placed within

commuting distance of Calgary; that certain services were available in Calgary; that the clients of the facility would be deprived of certain services or least there would be some hardship in terms of communication and transportation if the facility were located in a community farther out, such as Drumheller or Olds. Therefore, the decision was made to look at communities within the Calgary region. Quite frankly, I'm excited by the prospects of Strathmore as a site.

An offer was made by this government to the school board and to the community of Strathmore. Had that offer not been accepted — and it is consistent with our approach — we would have looked elsewhere. I well recall the Leader of the Opposition sending a memo to me asking about Strathmore as a site, and that was some five or six months ago. So the matter of Strathmore as a site has been out before the public for at least half a year. That was the proposal. During that period of time, some organizations did make their views known. Correspondence passed back to those organizations, and an invitation to consult further.

Now that Strathmore has accepted — and the hon. members will note that the Speech from the Throne clearly indicates that Strathmore is the site — yet other groups have come forward with concerns. That's understandable. We feel that we've weighed those possibilities and prospects. As long as the people of Strathmore and community are prepared to take on their responsibility, I think it's an exciting challenge.

In terms of the accessibility to services, it's true that Strathmore does not have an active treatment hospital. They've been attempting to get one. This may help. I do know that depending on where you live within the city of Calgary, your distance to the nearest active treatment hospital may be as far or as near as Strathmore is from an active treatment hospital, because of some of the transportation concerns within the city.

Recreational facilities: the town of Strathmore has a number of very fine facilities now, and more are in the planning stages. In lieu of taxes, with the added grants which will go to the town of Strathmore, I hope they will be able to build yet more facilities which will be shared by the citizens of Strathmore and district, as well as by the residents of our facility, to ensure that the facility is well received in the community.

It's part of an overall proposal and complex. It's something that belongs to Strathmore, and Strathmore is proud of it. It's not a stigma; it's something that is part of the community and, again, a very bold approach by the government.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. I wonder if the minister could outline very briefly some of the regulations that will take place with regard to the operation of the Strathmore facility, as well as the type of programming, the type of objectives the Strathmore facility would have that may be different from other facilities in the province at the present time?

MR. BOGLE: Basically, Mr. Chairman, the Strathmore facility is intended to be like the youth development centres in other parts of the province. It's intended to deal with those youngsters. If we do go ahead with our plans or with the study and the ultimate result is to build a facility for hard-core delinquents, then that obviously would take some of those individuals who will be in Strathmore. But the facility is to handle caseloads from Calgary and other points in southern Alberta, and to

provide basically the same kind of care that is provided by the Youth Development Centre in Edmonton and the other facilities around the province.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. The minister mentioned the schools in Strathmore. Would there be an integration of youth into the schools? Does it serve both male and female persons?

MR. BOGLE: I believe the facility is designed for both male and female. I think the current capacity would be 48 youngsters, with some room for expansion. The plan is to work with the school board on a contractual basis.

Mr. Chairman, some of the groups expressing concerns are of the view that because Strathmore does not have special education teachers to work with these youngsters today, Strathmore is a bad site. Well, if we were building the facility in Calgary, additional teachers would have to be hired with the very special training and the special patience that are necessary to deal with these youngsters. Hopefully, some of the youngsters will attend school right in the community. A site has been selected close to one of the schools. Some may require their educational programming right in the facility itself. But the teachers would be provided on a contractual basis with the county of Wheatland school board.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, for the specialized teachers necessary, you say the department will contract with the school division and pay the extra costs, and so on?

MR. BOGLE: That's one of the points the hon. Member for Drumheller was very adamant on quite early in the game in protecting the interests of the people in the school jurisdiction in his constituency to ensure that there would not be a hardship on them. That's a fair comment. No, it will be on a fee-for-service basis, whereby in some cases the ratio is one teacher to four students. That's well beyond the normal situation. The hon. member was aware of that as a former school board member, and wanted to ensure that there would be no hardship in his community, and there won't be.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Would the facility have a sort of open-door type of policy, or would there be restrictions with regard to coming and going of the persons involved?

MR. BOGLE: As with most of the youth development centres, Mr. Chairman, the facility will have a maximum flexibility. There will be some closed units, and there will be a certain amount of flexibility depending on the attitude, the development of the youngster, and the particular point the individual is at. There are a number of alternatives the staff and the director of the facility may make in dealing with that individual. So it's intended that they're development centres. If the individual can be rehabilitated through the steps and eventually back into a group home in a community out of the institutionalized setting, that's the ideal situation.

MR. L. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to add this to what the minister said about Strathmore. A little over 1,200 students in Strathmore are now going to school. They're building their third school. They do have resource teachers, but as he said, they don't have the number that would be necessary. But they would be

hired.

I'm really a little surprised at the member for being so critical of a decentralization program which this government is committed to and which has been so very popular, especially in the rural areas like he's from. It's been an extremely popular program to decentralize some of the government facilities and put them out in the rural areas. It's made the country really grow, compared to what it did before. I would just like to say thanks to the minister and congratulate him on picking Strathmore.

Thank you.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Going back to Westfield in Edmonton for a moment or two, if the figures I wrote down are accurate, 98 or 95 young people are in there now. Of that number, Mr. Minister, how many would be the kind of people you would see us getting at Strathmore? And how many of them would be the kind of young people one would be looking at as — if I might use that rather loose phraseology; I used the term earlier — rather hard-core delinquents? What's the breakdown?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I believe there are 85 individuals in Westfield at present. It has capacity for 98. Those are the figures I have; they don't add up to 95 per cent. I'll check that, at any rate, and find out why they're not on.

Westfield is a residential treatment centre for emotionally disturbed children 8 to 14 years of age. The facility at Strathmore will be more akin to the Youth Development Centre in Edmonton which handles young offenders aged 14 to 16. So there is a difference between the two. Quite frankly, Westfield is dealing with more difficult cases than most of our youth development centres. That main fact is reflected in the budget, which is higher than some others. So they're in slightly different areas. I think the concern we have is that there should be at least one facility with a completely separate mandate and separate terms of reference, so there's no misunderstanding as to the client it should serve.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Minister, of the breakdown of the 85 young people at Westfield now, how many would fit into the category of being rather hard-core young offenders?

MR. BOGLE: I can't give that figure, Mr. Chairman. I don't have it. I'm not sure that tomorrow I could accurately give a figure for hard-core delinquents across the province. I think the key is that if there is a facility that has a capacity to handle some of the most difficult cases, there be some mobility in and out of that facility from other facilities. I might be able to get a 'guesstimate' for the hon. member at a later time, but I certainly don't have it on the tip of my tongue.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Minister, I appreciate that. When the minister is getting the information, might I refer him to Public Accounts about three to four years ago when we discussed the Youth Development Centre here in Edmonton and the problems they were having at the YDC at that particular time. I would say to the good Member for Drumheller that while I'm sure the Strathmore community is enthusiastic about this program, it would be essential that the Strathmore community also be somewhat prepared for what's involved. Because if we look at the experience of YDC here in Edmonton, and if

this is going to be the counterpart as far as Calgary is concerned, it isn't going to be without problems in the community, just like the YDC hasn't been without problems here in Edmonton.

So I would ask the minister to have for the committee tomorrow, or whenever we get finished, some kind of breakdown, the percentage or number, whichever is easiest, of young people in YDC and Westfield who would fit into that category of delinquents as opposed to young people with emotional problems.

I raise the question because it's one of the matters the Ombudsman addressed himself to: the question of really mixing the two groups in the same kind of institutional setting. If they're not at Westfield and they're not at the YDCs, then they end up at Spy Hill and Fort Saskatchewan. My understanding is that the toughest of the tough go to those two centres.

MR. BOGLE: Just to be clear on one aspect with regard to Strathmore, I'm sure the hon. member representing the Drumheller constituency, the town council, and the school board know what they're getting into. I commend them for being good citizens. But there's no misunderstanding, and it would not be fair to suggest — in fact, I recall one resident of Strathmore wrote the Leader of the Opposition, copy to myself, expressing concern. That's to be expected. I'm not aware of a facility we're building any place in this province where there's not a concern. We've got one in Calgary with the proposed new Wood's Christian Home by a community association which has concerns about the facility being located in their area. So that's to be expected.

I will attempt — attempt — to come back with a ballpark figure. I cannot go beyond that, because it depends on definition. Like so many other things, wouldn't it be nice if there were black and white cases? There are some black, there are some white, and there are many gray. I'll attempt to give a ballpark figure as to what we're looking at or what's being contemplated in that area. But the hon. member will have to appreciate that all it will be is a ballpark figure.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Mr. Minister, can we also get some kind of indication of what's happened as far as educational programs — perhaps educational programs might be — let's say more youth development programs for the youngsters at Westfield? I raise the question because once again one of the concerns the Ombudsman had was the question of the kind of opportunity these youngsters had, other than a rather custodial environment. What's happened since the Ombudsman's report to broaden out — I use the term broadly — the educational aspect of what goes on at Westfield?

MR. BOGLE: As the hon. member may be aware, in addition to having the classrooms right in the facility, Westfield has a pool attached, which is used. In addition to residents at Westfield, there is some community use of the pool. In keeping with one of the concerns which was discussed with senior members of the department, the question of activities for the youngsters, we're trying very hard to ensure that there is an increase in physical activity at all our facilities. When I was at Sifton House in Lethbridge, I was encouraged to see the use of the coulees that are made by the staff of Sifton House. The Enviro program, of course, has a very heavy emphasis on that outdoor activity.

Mr. Chairman, I think the bottom line is that certain situations work well for some individuals and not well for others. Rather than saying there will be X number of hours of activity for all individuals in all centres, we try very hard to match up some of the individuals with the various centres. If that doesn't work, then there's a process of trying another facility. It's a matter of the kinds of facilities available in each of the areas, and what seems to work with the client, what seems to work with the youngster in helping that person in the rehabilitative process.

Agreed to:

3.4 — Residence and Treatment in Institutions	\$10,400,090
Total Vote 3 — Child Welfare Services	\$52,083,650

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, before we leave this, I wanted to ask some questions with regard to the High Prairie, Peace River, and Westlock difficulties. I'm of the opinion that some of the difficulties that occurred in those particular areas could have been prevented if supervision had been more adequate. I wonder if the minister could comment: when responsibility for children in care of the department is subdelegated, what specific guidelines are given to houseparents to aid them in the selection of temporary replacements?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, the three communities that the hon. member has mentioned have a number of things in common, I guess. The only connection I can think of is with related activities within the department. If the hon. member is referring to Westlock and the very tragic death of a young foster child, as the hon. member knows, that issue is currently under investigation under The Public Inquiries Act. The matter will come back. I believe there was an adjournment for several weeks to allow for more information.

The hon. member will note, though, that one of the B budget items — and it was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne — is our increased support for foster parent training, because this is such a critical area. We have difficulty, first, finding good foster parents and, secondly, holding them. One of the reasons for that is the increasing legal responsibilities of foster parents. So there's an attempt to improve the program we have for a number of very dedicated Albertans.

With regard to High Prairie, I don't think it would be appropriate to comment on that. I'm not aware that any charges have been laid. If they have, I'm sure the issue can be dealt with in a different way. If charges have not been laid, we're certainly at some handicap in dealing with the issue, other than to say that, as I've indicated, the general responsibility for the selection of part-time houseparents or sub-houseparents is the responsibility of the houseparents with whom the department has a contract. As I've indicated, the substitute houseparents must be approved or acceptable, whichever you like, to the social worker in charge. If the hon. member is asking if there's a manual which is followed in that particular case, no; but some guidelines are followed, and I'll be pleased to make a copy of those available to the member.

We've dealt with Peace River at some length. I'm not sure of the tie-in at this point in time, other than to say that it's certainly my hope that the information we'll learn from Mr. Justice Cavanagh and his board of review, in addition to the social care facilities review committee, will

assist us tremendously in overcoming difficulties in that area.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, just before we leave this vote, we have discussed this in question period, but I understand there is no formal time line for the Cavanagh Board of Review. However, in discussions the minister has held with the people carrying on the board of review, is the minister in any position to give us some indication as to when we can expect a report?

MR. BOGLE: I'm not in a position to do that at this time, Mr. Chairman. I did indicate to the Assembly that we would certainly welcome an interim report or reports from Mr. Justice Cavanagh and members of his board of review. It's my understanding that they've had their first organizational meeting and, I believe, a second meeting. They're into their responsibilities now. The chief deputy minister of the department has met with them. We are now gathering a series of information, primarily statistical information, to respond to certain requests made by the commissioners. They've got a mammoth task. No doubt there will be some areas that we would want them to report on earlier. I don't think it would be appropriate if I were to go into that at this time, because my thoughts are not completely crystallized on the matter. I think the board might need a few more months of work in gathering information, so they have a better idea, as well, as to what they think they should be reporting on earlier. Therefore, although I can't comment on it at this time, I certainly hope to be in a position to make some further comments in the fall sitting.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, presumably there will be public sessions of the board of review. Have we any indication yet when those may be scheduled so that, for want of a better expression, stakeholder groups — professional social workers, what have you — would have some indication as to when it will be possible to make submissions to the board of review?

Also, while I'm on my feet, will the board of review be assessing moves in other jurisdictions as well? I specifically raised the children's Bill of rights, for example, which is now being considered in the province of Saskatchewan.

MR. BOGLE: I'm sure the hon. member is aware that in the nine points in the terms of reference of the Cavanagh Board of Review, point 2 is to investigate current practices, procedures, and policies in other provinces in Canada. Surely if a province, such as Ontario, British Columbia, or what have you, is contemplating any major changes, the commission members would become aware of that at that time.

I certainly don't have a schedule as to when they will be holding meetings. In keeping with Mr. Justice Kirby and the Kirby Board of Review, I would anticipate a similar practice to be followed. When the members of the board of review feel that they're in a position to announce, I'm sure we'll see, through various media, a schedule of how they intend to handle those activities. There's certainly nothing wrong with various organizations preparing their briefs in advance.

As an example, in discussions I've had with Gail James, president of the Association of Social Workers, we've discussed that matter. I know she has various members of her association actively engaged in research right now. I think that's good advice for any other group that wishes to make a submission: to gather its thoughts

together and organize them in a prudent way, so that their presentation may be made.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, just one additional question. I realize that under the circumstances, it's difficult to give a specific time line at this point in time. The minister has indicated that's not possible. But in general, would we be looking at approximately the same time line as the Kirby Board of Review, which — if my memory serves me right — was approximately three years before its completion?

MR. BOGLE: The hon. member should not forget that Mr. Justice Kirby and his board of review issued, I believe, four separate reports, very comprehensive reports, dealing with a variety of issues on the court system in this province. It would certainly not be prudent on my part to suggest how Mr. Justice Cavanagh or his board of review should either organize their time or divide their responsibilities. That's something they will do in due course and let the hon. member, me, and other Albertans know.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister with regard to the Cavanagh report, whether interim or final. Will either one be made public, or available to the members of the Legislature: one, on an interim basis and, secondly, will the final report be made public?

MR. BOGLE: In keeping with the tradition of Mr. Justice Kirby and the Kirby Board of Review, I anticipate that all reports made by Mr. Justice Cavanagh and members of the Cavanagh Board of Review will be made public, and government will have a period of time to assess them and respond accordingly.

MR. NOTLEY: On that question, perhaps the minister could give us some indication as to what we can expect from the government itself. First of all, we're looking at a very comprehensive board of review which will make perhaps one or a number of interim reports. I appreciate that. However, I would think that the interesting choice the government would have to make — and I think we should have some indication as to the minister's thinking tonight — would be whether action on interim reports would be taken selectively by the government, or whether it would be the position that no major changes would be made in either the social care licensing Act or the child welfare legislation until such time as the entire report is completed, so that those changes are made in the context of the entire report. Are we looking at the possibility then, of some legislative changes that will be contingent upon interim reports, or will the matter await the final report?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I can't announce changes which will be made based upon recommendations which have not yet been received. But certainly, if the hon. member will glean from his memory the way the government dealt and is dealing with the Kirby Board of Review, certain recommendations were put forward in reports. Those recommendations are being dealt with as the reports are submitted. In other words, the government did not wait for Kirby 4, the fourth of the four reports, before acting on the first reports that Mr. Justice Kirby and his board of review made.

So I would anticipate following a similar procedure. But to try to second guess the hon. member or Mr.

Justice Kirby or anyone else on what those recommendations might be and what our response would be to those possible recommendations would be purely hypothetical at this point in time. I can certainly give the assurance it would be our intention to follow the example set with Mr. Justice Kirby.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. I'd like to return to the subdelegation with regard to contract parents. Were the subdelegated parents in High Prairie approved by the department? I have some other questions too.

MR. BOGLE: Yes.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, are the social workers who are in charge of the children given directives to make special visits to homes where subdelegation has occurred during the tenure of subdelegated parents?

MR. BOGLE: What does the hon. member mean, Mr. Chairman?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, what I'm concerned about is that the social workers may not have a constant surveillance of what is going on in the contracted homes of subdelegated parents. Is there some directive from the department to social workers to make regular visits and maintain a constant surveillance over the activities of subdelegated parents? In other words, from the minister, do the social workers who really are looking after these children come whenever they wish, on a hit-and-miss basis, once a year, once a month, or are there no regular visits at all?

MR. BOGLE: To be clear, Mr. Chairman, I understood the hon. member's question relating to the selection of substitute parents. If that was gist of the hon. member's question — I think he's nodding his head it was — then clearly, as I've indicated, the responsibility for selecting substitute parents lies with the group home parents with whom we have a contract. The substitute parents must be approved by the supervising social worker within the region. Obviously, there is some contact within the community as to the substitute group parents, as there are with other members of the community. But to ask whether we do anything extraordinary before using that screening process — if that's the proper terminology to use — it would certainly not be our practice.

We try very hard to assist the group parents, to ensure there are substitute group parents so that group parents can get away, and have a weekend or some holiday time and the like. They're entitled to that; they're not asked to work seven days a week, 52 weeks of the year, any more than anyone else is. That's part of the process which is followed.

From time to time, the social workers drop in on the contracted group home, sometimes announced, sometimes not announced — part of policy. I would be remiss if I didn't suggest that the social workers try to be ever aware of activities of contracted parents and substitute parents throughout communities.

If you're at a social function and you're not working, and you hear conversation that relates to someone who is working as a substitute parent, that's bound to have an effect. The same is true with the officials, the authorities in the community, who have a responsibility if they feel there is something wrong. I'm sure the hon. member was

not suggesting that we would be checking up on these people in any unscrupulous way, beyond a normal check or review to try to ensure that the substitute group parents who have been selected meet certain standards and criteria, and will provide good care for the children in that group home.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. As I understand from earlier discussion here, the social workers are the legal guardians of the children. During the visits of the social worker to the substitute parents and the homes, I was wondering whether the children themselves have the opportunity of talking to the social worker alone or being interviewed alone, so that they also realize they have a contact outside the home, and there's a check in that manner.

MR. BOGLE: By all means, Mr. Chairman. In fact, the particular incident referred to at High Prairie was first brought to the attention of the social worker when a young girl, upon returning to the home, refused to speak with anyone other than the social worker. So that bond is there and is maintained between the social workers and the various youngsters in the homes.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Chairman, as we approach the witching hour — perhaps other hon. members have noted that we are doing that — rather than running the risk of having one of my hon. friends turn into a bumpkin in a few minutes, I think we should move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. APPLEBY: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, begs to report progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow afternoon, with unanimous consent, we would propose to spend an hour on government business in the afternoon. We've discussed that with the Leader of the Opposition, and eventualities tomorrow will no doubt show whether consent to that is unanimous. If it is, we would continue in Committee of Supply with the Department of Social Services and Community Health, and after that wrap up the Department of Tourism and Small Business and such other items as I may bring to hon. members' attention before the end of the hour. It's not proposed that the House sit tomorrow night, but on Wednesday we'd be continuing in Committee of Supply.

[At 11:49 p.m., on motion, the House adjourned to Tuesday at 2:30 p.m.]