

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: Tuesday, May 6, 1980 2:30 p.m.

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 48

The Election Amendment Act, 1980

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill No. 48, The Election Amendment Act, 1980. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant-Governor, having been informed of the contents of the Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very straightforward Bill. It is simply a matter of increasing the Chief Electoral Officer's salary effective April 1, 1980, as recommended by the select standing committee that dealt with the question of his reappointment.

[Leave granted; Bill 48 read a first time]

Bill 49

The Trust Companies Amendment Act, 1980

MR. PAHL: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill No. 49, The Trust Companies Amendment Act, 1980. The purpose of this Bill is twofold: to improve the operational and regulatory climate in which trust companies are operating within the province of Alberta, reflecting increased financial depth and diversity in Alberta; secondly, and perhaps more laudable, to cut some red tape in the area of loans from trust companies.

[Leave granted; Bill 49 read a first time]

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 49, The Trust Companies Amendment Act, 1980, be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

Bill 222

An Act to Amend

The Alberta Health Care Insurance Act

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill No. 222, An Act to Amend The Alberta Health Care Insurance Act. Very briefly, the basic principle behind Bill 222 would be to eliminate the practice of balance billing within the Alberta health care insurance system.

[Leave granted; Bill 222 read a first time]

head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file with the Legislature Library the annual report of the Superintendent of Insurance and Real Estate, which sets out the business for the 1978 calendar year.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

MR. PURDY: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you, and to the members of the Assembly, 90 grade 5 students from the Brookwood school in the town of Spruce Grove. They are accompanied by their teacher Miss Scholer, and by Mrs. Markstrom and Mrs. Akins. They are in both galleries. I ask them to rise and receive the welcome of the House.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you, and through you to the members of the Assembly, 20 grade 11 students from Hughenden central high school. They are accompanied by their teacher Mr. Johnson. I would ask that they rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Recreational Facilities — Calgary

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the Premier. It really flows from the recommendations of the Calgary Sports Facilities Advisory Committee. What is the anticipated procedure the government will follow, now that the report has been made public, in dealing with the very major recommendation, or least a very major feeling coming out of that report that the province would have to play a very significant role if a coliseum type of complex were to go ahead quickly in Calgary?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, the procedure would be, as we see it, that obviously the Calgary city council would consider the report of their advisory committee and then evaluate it, and presumably would be making some recommendations to us. For our part, we would be looking at projects that involve Calgary's bid for the 1988 Winter Olympic Games, which we've given support to, as I mentioned in the Legislature on April 30. So the approach would be first an evaluation by the Calgary caucus Members of the Legislative Assembly, then by an appropriate cabinet committee. In this case, it would probably be the social planning committee of cabinet.

MR. ZAOZIRNY: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that professional hockey in such a facility would assist its financial viability, and given the fact that a transfer of the NHL Atlanta Flames would be preconditioned on a commitment to build a coliseum and that such a commitment is required by June 1, can the Premier assure the Assembly that a decision will be made by the provincial government prior to that deadline?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I very much doubt that we can do that. There's no question that the financing of a coliseum can probably be significantly improved if the community has a National Hockey League franchise. But our objective, if we do make a decision supportive of the

coliseum, would be in relationship to amateur sport, in particular to an Olympic bid or any involvement of Hockey Canada that might flow from such an Olympic bid.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the Premier. Has the Calgary caucus commenced their deliberation on the recommendations?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, they have had discussions on a number of occasions through the chairman, the Member for Calgary North Hill, on sports facilities and events in southern Alberta. I think the general feeling of most citizens of the province is that the Commonwealth Games were a great success for the province in total and provided some very important facilities, and that the Olympic Games in southern Alberta might be very important as well in terms of facilities. So the Calgary Members of the Legislative Assembly in caucus have in fact been discussing the various thoughts that involve support, particularly for the 1988 Winter Olympic Games, and the need to show our support to strengthen the bid. But they have not as yet dealt with the specific matter of the advisory committee report, which I sense forms the basic thrust of the hon. leader's question.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the Premier. It flows from the — I might refer to it this way — tail end of the Premier's comments to the Member for Calgary Forest Lawn, when reference was made to Hockey Canada. My question to the Premier is: would the government of Alberta look more favorably upon financing a portion of the coliseum in Calgary if there were a long term commitment that Canada's national hockey team would continue to be centred in Calgary and have the opportunity to use that new facility? Would that be a positive move as far as moving the project along?

MR. SPEAKER: This is a hypothetical question, but of course like most hypothetical questions, it could be rephrased in an unobjectionable way. So if the hon. Premier wishes to answer it, I think we should assume it's been properly put. [laughter]

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, you have me with some difficulty considering how I'm now going to answer the question, having regard to your remark.

I'd say this: yes, definitely, the Hockey Canada concept, if tied to a coliseum and to an Olympic bid, would be a significantly favorable factor relative to financing by the provincial government.

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. Could the Premier advise the Assembly what steps still need to be taken by the city of Calgary to assist the provincial government in arriving at a decision at the earliest possible date, hopefully by June 1?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I think a confirmation of priorities by the city of Calgary; a view by the city of Calgary that a project of this nature would assist the bid in a definitive way; some further data with regard to the Hockey Canada concept discussed in the previous question; and some view, either negative or at least some response from the federal government as to whether they're interested in sports facilities in western Canada.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, one last question to the Premier. As of now, have there been discussions between Calgary's Mayor Alger, the chairman of the Calgary Sports Facilities Advisory Committee, and the Premier or members of the cabinet?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I haven't been a party to those discussions, but my understanding is that there have been tentative discussions of that nature involving the chairman of the Calgary caucus, the Minister of Government Services, and the Minister of Recreation and Parks. But they have been tentative discussions, again awaiting a response from the city of Calgary.

Hog Marketing

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the second question to the Minister of Agriculture. Will the minister match the federal government's newly announced payments to hog producers, since a nation-wide program simply maintains the different market position of Alberta producers because of the support that other provinces give to their producers?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, in replying to a similar question yesterday, I believe the statement was made that the payment of stabilization by the federal government certainly would be taken into consideration, but would not necessarily be a prime change or mood in the review of the short-term program we have looked at.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Is the minister aware of the hog marketing board's position on the price relative to the Toronto market and the implications this has for hog marketing in Alberta? In essence, we're now into a situation very similar to what took place prior to the bringing in of Regulation 99/80.

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, aware of the differential in the pricing across Canada and indeed the United States, and as the prices compare, and in the daily monitoring of prices — of course, part of the overall aspect in the review of a short-term program.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Is the minister in a position to assure the Assembly and, more important, I guess, the hog marketing board that after a few days of the kind of situation the board now finds itself in, where it is in fact setting a minimum range, the agricultural marketing council will not once again step in?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, the opportunity for the hog marketing board to assume the flexibility that has already been stated has existed for some time. As long as that is the basis of marketing, no complete assurance that the marketing board have that opportunity to press on, as they always have in the past.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Mr. Minister, in the last few days the board has in fact been marketing in the manner of setting a range. Can the minister assure the Assembly that as long as the board continues to act in the manner it has during the last few days, the agricultural marketing council will not impose itself upon the board?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, it has been the prerogative of the hog marketing board to set the range and not

to accept a low bid. So the marketing going on today is under the same terms of reference that have been ongoing for some time.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, then to the minister. Mr. Minister, we have an assurance that the minister can assure the Assembly that the marketing council will not step in and undercut the board once again?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify. The marketing council is there to assist marketing boards in carrying out their duties. If marketing under those terms of reference is part of the duties, they would certainly get assistance and not hindrance from the marketing council.

MR. NOTLEY: Supplementary question to the hon. minister. With respect to the short-term assistance from the province of Alberta, is the minister in a position to be any more definitive as to a timetable? This matter has been under review now for almost two months. Is the minister able to advise the Assembly of any objective as to an announcement date for further provincial assistance to enrich the federal program?

MR. SCHMIDT: No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. R. CLARK: Having regard to the fact that some three years ago, the Harries report told the government that if no action were taken, we would in fact be in the kind of situation we are today, and keeping in mind that the government has had that report for three years now, what specific programs does the minister have ready to assist Alberta producers to regain their strength as producers within the Canadian production field? I ask the question, Mr. Minister, because the most recent figures from the minister's department point out that production in Alberta is down 26 per cent. If a federal stabilization program comes along before very long, it'll be based on 26 per cent less production now than we had previously in Alberta . . .

MR. SPEAKER: With great respect to the hon. leader, it would seem to me that the question is being lost in a fairly large amount of debate.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister then, putting a supplementary question. I assume that despite having had the Harries report three years ago, despite the fact that production is down 26 per cent in Alberta within the last several months, the government . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. R. CLARK: The supplementary question is: has the government no immediate plan in place to help producers?

MR. SCHMIDT: In a very general way, Mr. Speaker, I think we have stated on many occasions in this House, both to the producers of this province and to the members in this Legislature, that we are certainly assuming the responsibility of looking at a short-term program. We have not stated the exact date and time. We will continue to assume and accept that responsibility of reviewing and monitoring the short-term aspect as it would affect the producers of this province.

MR. NOTLEY: Supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Assembly whether it is the government's intention to announce this program prior to the fall sitting of the Legislature, or is the short-term program to be delayed another three years?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, the only assurance we can give to this House is that on the completion of the total review — and if a program is to be announced, it would be done at that time.

Private Air Lines

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to either the hon. Minister of Economic Development or the hon. Minister of Transportation. It concerns reports emanating from Calgary with respect to the future of Time Air in Alberta, and the indication that that company would like to sell its assets. My question to either hon. gentleman: have any discussions taken place between any officials of the government of Alberta and Time Air concerning this matter?

MR. PLANCHE: No, Mr. Speaker, not to my knowledge.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Economic Development. Have any discussions taken place with respect to the capital problems of Time Air, which I gather is the reason being given at the moment for the decision of the company to announce it wishes to sell its assets?

MR. PLANCHE: Yes, Mr. Speaker, from time to time, in an ongoing way, we've had discussions with Time Air. I think their problems are not unlike those of other operators of third-level air lines: financing is very difficult to come by, because profit projections are difficult.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to either hon. gentleman. Has the government of Alberta given any consideration to contingency plans in the event that Time Air pursues its objective? For example, would the government favor acquisition of Time Air by PWA?

MR. PLANCHE: Well, Mr. Speaker, that question is speculative. But I can say that in the past this government has responded to Time Air's financial difficulties with guarantees at the bank.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Is it the position of the government of Alberta at this stage that it would recommend some financial package to Time Air in order to maintain the company in business as a viable third-level carrier, as opposed to favoring that it's really up to the Time Air people whether they want to sell? Would it be the position of the government of Alberta that a financial package should be offered to preclude that sale, if arrangements can be made?

MR. PLANCHE: Well, Mr. Speaker, the initiative for people who want funding generally comes from those people. We don't sit in judgment on how they run their business affairs. If Time Air came to us and indicated they wanted some kind of guarantees or to discuss various ways of ongoing financing, I'm sure they'd get a good hearing, as they have in the past.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Could the minister indicate whether the funds for the three new airplanes on order at the present time — they're going to be delivered in 1980 — were guaranteed by the government of Alberta?

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, I believe two airplanes are in question, not three. We have had some discussion with Time Air in that area, but it's not conclusive yet.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a further question to the minister responsible for the Alberta Opportunity Company. Have discussions taken place with the minister's department, officials of the Alberta Opportunity Company, and Time Air with regard to any acquisition of the AOC loan by either the Alberta government or some other air line?

MR. ADAIR: Not to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to either the hon. Minister of Economic Development or the hon. Minister of Transportation. Has the government formulated a contingency plan with respect to future ownership of Time Air, should that particular company decide to sell its assets to a firm not based in Alberta? The obvious possibility would be CP.

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, we don't address our time to what might happen, in terms of who buys what in the private sector.

Early Childhood Services

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Mr. Speaker, my question to the hon. Minister of Education arises from concerns expressed recently by operators of early childhood services programs that the proposed rent increase by the Calgary Board of Education, from \$1 per month to \$150 per month, is going to render their programs economically unviable. Can the minister advise the Assembly what steps he is taking to try to ensure that these programs won't have to close their doors come September?

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, two things are in progress. First of all, on Thursday afternoon I will be meeting with the chairman and the superintendent of the Calgary Board of Education. One of the items which will be discussed at that time will be the rent charged by the Calgary Board of Education to community ECS operators.

Secondly, as I indicated to my hon. colleague about 10 days ago, we have under consideration in the department some modifications to the program of financial support for ECS operators which are designed to recognize the peculiar problems of community ECS operators and to provide, if possible, the necessary assistance to them, particularly with respect to rentals.

MR. ZAOZIRNY: A supplementary question to the minister. Given the fact that the operators must complete their planning for September and proceed with enrolment in the immediate future, can the minister assure the Assembly that the plan of which he speaks will be announced prior to the end of the spring sitting of this Legislature?

MR. KING: I sometimes feel as though the hon. Member for Calgary Forest Lawn is my alter ego.

I am not able to give that assurance to the member or to the community operators, although it is certainly my hope that I will be able to make such an announcement before the end of the session. Mind you, it's also my hope that the session will be able to adjourn relatively quickly. To the extent that the one wish is realized, it will not be possible to realize the other. [interjections]

Calgary LRT — Access for Handicapped

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Labour is with regard to changing the building code requirements with regard to the accessibility and capability of the handicapped using the LRT in Calgary. I was wondering if the minister could indicate whether he has been involved in those discussions, and whether there is anything new to report on the matter.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I can report that I believe the office of the Minister of Labour was involved in those discussions. In more recent days, I have received some additional information. I think the position is this: Calgary city council has made a decision with respect to their form of transportation system, which is entirely within their jurisdiction to make. Some ancillary questions relating to parts of the access to the LRT system in Calgary have been put before officials of the building standards branch. But I believe it's been determined that because they form such a small portion of the overall package and are totally dependent upon decisions which are uniquely those of the city of Calgary, the wishes of the city should prevail. That's the decision which has been taken.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the Minister of Labour. Can the minister indicate whether the same policy will apply to the new extensions? I understand that two new legs to the Calgary LRT system will be built. Would the same policy apply with regard to the new part?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, no one has yet advanced questions to me about the proposed legs to the transportation system. Until that debate has come to my attention, with the argument on both sides, I wouldn't be able to say whether that would be placed in a different context than the previous decisions were. But I think that decision would have to take into account the earlier decisions.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. Two groups, the Calgary Action Groups of the Disabled and the Cerebral Palsy Association, felt there was no means by which to make an appeal of the decision of the Department of Labour. I was wondering if the minister is looking at implementing an appeal procedure. Whereas city council can make the decision, groups in the community at the present time can't appeal that decision. Is the minister looking at any possible routes at the present time?

MR. YOUNG: Well, Mr. Speaker, my understanding of the matter is that the concern being advanced, particularly by the Cerebral Palsy Association — it has relatively recently come to attention — is that it is desirable that there be an ability to appeal a decision taken by the director of building standards. That's quite a different question from the original decision which was taken by

the city of Calgary and over which the director of building standards had no authority and no control.

With respect to the decision of the director of building standards, on some preliminary examination I think there was an appeal route, perhaps unknown to the association. One has to have regard that the recent concern in this matter arose, I believe within the last month, and the original decision was taken more than a year ago; in fact, it must be close to 16 or 18 months ago. So to come back to the point about the appeal capacity, if that does not now exist — and I believe it does exist — I believe the structure in question would have been appealable to the Alberta Building Standards Council. That will be examined to make sure that there is that type of appeal.

Secondly, as the throne speech indicated this spring, we are endeavoring through an advisory committee to involve a number of these groups which have concerns about persons who have problems with mobility. We're endeavoring to involve a number of these in an advisory committee capacity. Some of the correspondence to set that group in place has already been issued.

Oil Sands Development — Engineering

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my question to the hon. Minister of Economic Development has to do with the Canadian/Alberta content of engineering and engineering consultants on the megaprojects. Can the minister indicate if he has in his possession the criteria the department uses in evaluating the amount of Canadian content on the megaprojects?

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, I don't know that I could answer the question in the context of criteria. Before a development permit is issued, we request that the applicant provide us with a pretty comprehensive list of materials that will be required and where he intends to source them. It isn't our purpose in this exercise to cause the applicant an economic hardship, so the criteria are sort of empirical, to the extent that we try to balance what we consider to be a reasonable effort on his part to buy Alberta and Canadian products wherever available.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. In light of the fact that there were never any plants built any place in the world until these first two, can the minister indicate what evaluation has been done by his department to ascertain if there is sufficient expertise and engineering manpower available in Canada to do it by Canadians only?

MR. PLANCHE: First of all, Mr. Speaker, the plant isn't bought as a unit; it's bought as components. So at the risk of offending the Member for Clover Bar, the fact is that the components are built for use elsewhere in almost every case. But having said that, we have two people in the department who spend their time monitoring that kind of material, in terms of both a manpower context and a materiel context. If it happened that a specific piece of material for a project were built elsewhere and the engineering were already in place, we would probably insist that Canadians were sent down to develop that technology at that plant. So the next time that piece of equipment were required here, we would have the expertise to engineer it here.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. Can the minister indicate if it's the position of the Alberta government, when the government is negotiating with devel-

opers of the two tar sands plants we are looking at in the future, that any thought has been given to saying there must be X percentage of Canadian and Alberta engineers working on those projects?

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, that's a dangerous thing to do because, in the first place, that could work an economic hardship that would affect the international competitive capability of the applicant. In the second place, that varies according to what he's trying to do. In general terms, what we would like to do is have the plant, after these two, done totally in Canada; failing that one, for sure the one after that. Just in terms of engineering, our information is that the engineering disciplines available in Canada in a specific way for those plants, the manpower in Canada in place now, doesn't handle that kind of requirement. So in any event, some people would have to be brought in. We judge an increasing content for materiel and labor on each plant, tending toward self-sufficiency in manpower and materiel on the next one or certainly the one after that.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Has the minister had any studies done to look at the fact that the higher paying engineering jobs have been going to engineers outside Canada, and that Canadian/Alberta engineers are getting the secondary line work?

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, that's not exactly the way this thing works. In fact, before an industrial development permit is let, we look at the manpower management charts. In our opinion, wherever there is a Canadian who has the capability of replacing a non-Canadian in those charts, we make every effort to see that that happens.

Lamb Processing Plant

MR. MANDEVILLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. Is the Innisfail lamb plant still being advertised for sale?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, I'm not too sure that it was ever advertised in the true sense of being advertised, but certainly negotiations had been ongoing with an interested prospective buyer. No negotiations are presently going on, but interest is being shown again by another group of individuals.

MR. MANDEVILLE: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister indicate whether the lamb plant is operating at a profit or a loss at the present time?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, from memory it seems to me that the last month was back on a profit base, and the last few months of operation have been very close. But last month, I believe it was again in the black.

MR. MANDEVILLE: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Are lambs being imported from Canada or the United States to be processed at the plant at this time?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, we have taken care of the total slaughter within the province, the availability of all Alberta lambs; have contracted and utilized the facility for lambs that are brought in for slaughter; and have done some custom work in other areas of slaughter. The plant has a very flexible capability of meeting a number of demands.

MR. MANDEVILLE: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. The minister indicated that they are doing some work other than processing lamb. Has any consideration been given to boxing red meats at the plant, diversifying the operation to boxing meats?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, consideration — yes, I think it has that capability. There are perhaps other areas that have been suggested. Of course, to alter slightly the capability of that plant would only be done if we could guarantee a future ongoing market and the availability of the raw material to make any major changes. But it has the flexibility, a very modern plant — and with very slight modifications if necessary to handle areas and off-shoots of the livestock industry that are not being handled at the present time.

Highway Clean-up

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Transportation. On May 3, the 4-H clubs of Alberta participated in the annual highway clean-up. Certainly anyone driving Alberta's roads couldn't miss the bright orange vests worn by those members. Can the minister inform the Legislative Assembly how many miles of highway were involved and the success of the program?

MR. KROEGER: Mr. Speaker, I did have a preliminary report yesterday morning indicating that in excess of 6,000 4-H members were involved, as well as supported by their leaders. They had covered something in excess of 4,000 miles. I guess we do a bit of littering. They accounted for over 50,000 bags. There was some interruption — apparently there were some showers around — and the balance of the program will be finished next Saturday.

MR. BATIUK: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Despite the safety precautions of the 4-H'ers wearing bright jackets, and signs along the highway that there's a clean-up, could the minister advise the Assembly whether this function this year was casualty free?

MR. KROEGER: Yes, Mr. Speaker, totally.

MR. BATIUK: A supplementary to the minister. Could the minister advise whether the participation by the 4-H'ers increased over the last years?

MR. KROEGER: Mr. Speaker, since I don't have the final tabulation, I wouldn't like to guess. But the sense that I had in just checking on it, I believe that's correct.

Banff and Jasper — Municipal Status

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question, if I may, to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. It follows from his tabling last Friday of the options for local government at Banff and Jasper. In the introductory letter the minister indicates that the enormous increase in the lease rentals undertaken by the federal government constitutes a barrier; I certainly agree with that. Is it the view of the government of Alberta that the increase in those lease rentals should be rescinded in total, back to the old arrangement? Or is it the view of the government of Alberta that there should in fact be a somewhat higher level than was formerly the case, but not nearly as high as was arbitrarily decided by the government of Canada?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I think I made it quite clear last week that the increases proposed by the federal government would make it impossible to move into a form of local self-government, as the report indicates might be a possibility. I wouldn't want to comment on whether there is room for discussion between the new proposed lease rates and the old ones which were in existence. I think the residents of the towns of Jasper and Banff should have an opportunity, after reviewing very carefully the report provided to them and discussed with them by the MLAs for Banff-Cochrane and for Edson last Saturday, to discuss among themselves and with the federal government what they might reasonably be expected to pay in terms of lease rates after providing funds for other services that a normal community of that size has to pay from its property tax dollars.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. What timetable is the government setting for community review? I believe the lease increases have been deferred until, if my memory serves me right, April 1, 1981. What timetable is the government of Alberta operating on in terms of obtaining feedback from the people in the communities affected?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, we have no fixed timetable. Having just issued the report to the people of the community, I think we have to view the matter as one of their having sufficient opportunity to review that thoroughly. One would hope, however, that the matter of the lease arrangements with the federal government could be established and firm for some time before the new lease rates for residential property are scheduled to go into effect a year from now.

I should say, Mr. Speaker, that while the hon. member suggests lease rates have been deferred, I understand that that is true with respect to residential property but may well not be true with respect to commercial property in those two towns. I should say as well that the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs will be co-ordinating our approach in terms of the provincial government's involvement with the federal government on these matters. He may have something to add to my remarks.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. In addition to providing this background material, will the government of Alberta, through either the department that the minister leads or Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs, be providing any assistance to the residents of Banff and Jasper in evaluating the question of the lease increase and what, in fact, would be a reasonable lease rental? It has been brought to my attention by some people in the area that the old rates may be too low, but that the rates proposed by the federal government are completely and totally ridiculous. Is any expert assistance going to be provided by any department of the provincial government to either of the communities, to the town committees, to review options which the communities will want to consider over the next period of time?

MR. MOORE: First of all, Mr. Speaker, one must take into consideration that whether the old rates were too low or the new ones are too high — they certainly are too high. With respect to the old level of rates, it depends largely on what services are provided to the residents of the community. If you move into a municipal form of

government, as the report suggests you might be, with all the advantages that other towns of that size receive from the government of the province of Alberta, it may well be that they could afford to pay a little higher lease rates than they were paying previously. But that involves a discussion that centres on what form of government we're going to have for the future in those two communities. I don't think anyone can prejudge that.

As far as experts and assistance are concerned, I think the report in itself, with the background material, is of a great deal of assistance to those communities. We will provide additional technical assistance from the Department of Municipal Affairs and elsewhere. I should say, Mr. Speaker, that the expert assistance of two MLAs that began last Saturday, and was carried on much more before that, is of assistance to the residents as well.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. With the release of this report, what steps does the government of Alberta plan to take now with respect to making formal representation to the federal authorities on the lease increase question?

Also, Mr. Speaker, what review has the department made of what would appear to be inconsistent increases in leases? I compare lease increases in the town of Jasper, which are quite high, with a very, very modest increase for Jasper Park Lodge. The concern has been expressed of what appear to be inconsistent procedures in increasing the leases.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, it should be on the record that the question of tenancy of land in Banff and Jasper townsites has been under consideration for at least two years, with extensive correspondence back and forth between the province and the federal government, attempting to deal with the question of excisement or ways in which the land can be held. So while this study deals with the municipal side and whether there is a viable municipal entity, the question of tenancy of land or the question of ways in which the lease will continue has been under discussion for some time.

In recent times, however, we have had the opportunity to discuss with the MP from the Jasper area the question of the attitude of the then government on Banff-Jasper. We have now officially, of course, communicated directly to the minister, Mr. Roberts, our concerns with respect to the lease rentals. At the same time, at the officials' level we had a meeting last week to deliver to them the Banff-Jasper study, not just setting out our principles with respect to the townsite autonomy question, but covering in those debates the question of excisement and what the position of the federal government would be. Really I think it rests on whether the federal government is willing to extend to the people of Banff and Jasper the opportunity for autonomy and for a fair and equitable settlement on land.

Moisture Conditions

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture. I've hesitated for a week or two to ask this question. But it has been raised in the Manitoba and Saskatchewan legislatures, and rural people are concerned at the present time. I wonder if I could ask the minister whether the department is in any initial planning stages with regard to a contingency plan to deal

with a potential drought in the farming area of Alberta this year.

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, it's perhaps a little too early to consider that there will be a drought in the province of Alberta. The spring being early and exceptionally warm, of course, there are areas in the province that are indeed dry and certainly of some concern. Starting Monday, we will have ongoing crop reports across the province. The indication at the present time is that although some areas are drier than others, it would appear perhaps a normal year if we have the usual spring rains, considering the early spring and the time factor that's involved. We would be in a much better position on the first reports of the crop year. At present we have not considered it a disaster, nor have we established that there will be a drought in the province. But certainly we will monitor the moisture conditions on an ongoing basis.

MR. SPEAKER: I believe the hon. Minister for Government Services wishes to supplement an answer.

75th Anniversary — Pins

MR. McCRAE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity of adding to the answers I gave yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, if I appear to be leaning slightly to the left today, it is because of the weight of evidence I have on my left lapel, which is a full range of Alberta 75th pin offerings.

DR. BUCK: Any Taiwans?

MR. McCRAE: If I could just step the members through them one at a time: the first one, the plastic model, is manufactured in Ontario. The second one, the enamel model, is again manufactured in Ontario. Then we come to the *piece de resistance*: a smaller pin contracted to a firm in Alberta, which then subcontracted a portion of the contract to a Regina firm known as Artiss, I believe, which did what is termed the die work. The contract was subsequently subcontracted again to a firm in Taiwan which apparently does a die metallic process which results in this beautiful little metallic pin. That is the full story of the three pins. [interjections]

DR. BUCK: The story of the Taiwan pins.

MR. McCRAE: The major number of pins, sir, will be plastic. Something in excess of 2 million of those are on order, many of them already received. There were 10,000 of these initially ordered, subsequently increased by another 25,000 because of popular demand, and an initial order of 10,000 for the small, could we say, made-in-Taiwan pins. Because of increasing demand from the members on this side of the House, particularly the member there, we have ordered another 100 apiece for the members, plus some extras. They will be delivered in a few weeks.

In response, Mr. Speaker, to a second question — that is, why there appeared to be a shortage of the plastic pins — as I said yesterday, it is because of the energetic, enthusiastic response of the members and others in handing them out to happy recipients. I was pleased this morning that the Member for Clover Bar was in for — I don't know whether it was his second, third, or fifth handful to give out.

DR. BUCK: A hundred and twenty.

MR. McCRAE: So I'm really happy that he is participating so fully in the proceedings.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to see the minister is really on top of the pin department.

My supplementary question to the minister is: in light of the fact that the minister's department seems to be having some trouble with the plastic pins from Ontario — he said they will be coming. But we are practically halfway through the anniversary year. When are the pins going to be coming in sufficient volume, Mr. Minister, that all Albertans who request them can have them? [interjections]

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, if I could just respond to that again, we have something in the range of 600,000 already delivered. There was a problem with the manufacturing process. It is a complex die process, and I think the only place it is done in North America is in Mississauga. We think they have now corrected the die process. We are anticipating 100,000 a week coming through, so hopefully there should be no further holdups.

DR. BUCK: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, on a point of clarification. Is Mississauga in Alberta?

AN HON. MEMBER: B.C.

AN HON. MEMBER: Well done.

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, he should have referred that to my hon. friend in the front row, the Minister of Education, and it should have been part of the education debate. [interjections]

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for not sending you the customary note indicating that I might like to do what my hon. colleague has just done in the sense of supplementing or providing information. With leave, I would like to answer a question asked on April 24 by the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

Metis Settlements — Surface Rights

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, the question related to the negotiation of surface rights in Metis settlements in Alberta, where oil companies required access to the settlements for exploration or production purposes.

The situation is evidently not free from difficulty. Negotiations are in fact continuing in order to try to work out an overall system that will serve the purpose of all parties in resolving differences. This is a matter that is presently being negotiated between legal counsel for the Metis settlement associations and legal counsel for government.

The way these matters were initially handled was solely by the Surface Rights Board. But about three years ago the policy was changed in order that the Metis, either through the settlement association — which was the presumption, I think — or perhaps through the individual, would become part of the negotiating process. At that time, I think it was presumed that the compensation being sought would still be dealt with by depositing it in the trust fund which is under The Metis Betterment Act.

However, in actual fact there are really three parties to any such negotiation: the trust fund, as represented by the Crown; the settlement association, with the overall interests of the community involved; and the individual settler. The present procedure is that the settler is involved in the negotiations, but the agreement is regarded as separate in that the Crown does not formally represent the settler in entering into any agreement.

The result of all this is that there are some 50 agreements outstanding, and perhaps as many as 100 Surface Rights Board orders. The amount of compensation thought to be available when those agreements have been concluded is approximately \$250,000, or a little more. Some have been outstanding for approximately one year, and some of the right-of-entry orders predate that.

Continuous efforts have been made to resolve the matter since the middle of last year, but without success, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned originally, the negotiations are being conducted between the legal counsel for the parties involved, and would have to be looked upon at this time as something that is still under negotiation.

MR. SPEAKER: May the hon. Member for Redwater-Andrew revert to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS (*reversion*)

MR. TOPOLNISKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take a great deal of pleasure in introducing to you, and to members of the Assembly, 21 grades 11 and 12 students from the H.A. Kostash school in Smoky Lake in the Redwater-Andrew constituency. They are accompanied by their principal Mr. Roshko, and Mr. Lotosky the bus driver. I commend them for their interest in observing democracy in action. They are seated in the members gallery. I ask that they rise and receive the customary welcome of the Assembly.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would move that Question 114 and motions for a return 115 and 116 stand and retain their places on the Order Paper.

[Motion carried]

head: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

117. Mr. R. Clark asked the government the following question:

- (1) What action did the Solicitor General take regarding changes in personnel after he was informed by the Auditor General that officials in the Solicitor General's Department deliberately charged costs for support services to another program when the moneys voted by the Assembly for support services were found to be inadequate for the fiscal year 1978-79?
- (2) Were the three officials who left the department subsequent to the Auditor General's discovery of the irregularities dismissed?
- (3) Are any of the persons responsible for the deliberate

misallocation of funds voted by the Assembly still employed by the Solicitor General's Department?

MR. HARLE: I'd like to table the answer, Mr. Speaker.

head: **MOTIONS FOR RETURNS**

113. Mr. R. Clark moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all agreements for any services between the government of Alberta and Mr. James L. Foster of Red Deer, from April 1, 1979, to March 31, 1980, and the amount paid, or to be paid, for such services.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the response to that motion now.

CLERK: Motions other than Government Motions. Motion No. 202.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, it was my understanding, subject to the government changing its position, that in fact the government was going to use the first hour this afternoon to get back at the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. [laughter] Seriously, though, to get on to the estimates.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I think the way the hon. leader has put it is very near the mark. With the unanimous agreement of all members, we had intended that Committee of Supply be called for the next hour.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: So ordered.

head: **GOVERNMENT MOTIONS** 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

Vote 3 — Child Welfare Services

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, just before we conclude Vote 3, I think this would be the appropriate place to deal with some of the implications of the rather tragic case of Miranda Phipps. Perhaps I could just take a moment or two to put some questions to the minister, through you, Mr. Chairman, on this matter.

As I understand the chronology of events, on January 24, 1978, temporary wardship was given to the grandmother. A judge gave two six-month extensions to the original order. The child was with the grandmother for a period of about one and a half years. On June 6, 1979, the judge ordered that the child be returned to her natural mother's care and that there be supervision by the department. During June, July, and August there were three visits by the social worker. The social worker in

Calgary was unable to reach the mother on one other occasion. During this time, the grandmother called concerning the mother's occupation. September 5, 1979, was the court hearing in which the judge, on the social worker's recommendation, gave custody to the mother. Shortly thereafter, the mother went to jail for one week, while retaining custody of the child.

Mr. Chairman, there are two or three questions that come to my mind out of this rather tragic case. The first is with respect to the caseload. It's my understanding that the preferable caseload for child welfare workers should be no more than 50 clients, but that the average in dealing with child welfare cases can be as high as 80. During the question period, the minister indicated we'd have some comment on the client/staff ratio. Mr. Chairman, to the minister: I would like not only to get the average — I think it's important to get the average — but I think it would be useful if we had an idea of the range too. The range is really quite important here. If, as I'm given to understand, part of the problem in this tragic case was that the worker in question had too many cases, then it seems to me that is a matter of some real concern to us.

Mr. Chairman, the second question that flows from this case is with respect to the kind of information made available by the worker to the judge when the judge had to render a decision. I think it's worth taking just a moment on this, because judges are not experts in this field by any means. They know the law, but to a very large extent they have to rely heavily on the advice given by the caseworker.

Mr. Chairman, on April 10, in response to a question I posed to the minister, the minister said:

Mr. Speaker, that was the other question asked yesterday that I took as notice, and I am pleased to give an answer to it today. During the period of the supervision order, from June to September 1979, there were no specific complaints from the grandmother regarding neglect or abuse. On several occasions the grandmother did express concern for the occupation of her stepdaughter and the effect that might have on the granddaughter. However, no complaints were registered as to abuse or neglect.

Mr. Chairman, to the minister. While no complaints were registered with respect to abuse or neglect, in my view that does not in any way mitigate the responsibility of the department to make clear the department's concern when this matter came before the judge. Looking at The Child Welfare Act, it says very clearly:

... a child where the person in whose charge he is cannot, by reason of disease or infirmity or misfortune or incompetence or imprisonment or any combination thereof, care properly for him ...

Shortly thereafter, the mother in this particular incident was imprisoned for a short period of time.

... a child who is living in an unfit or improper place; a child found associating with an unfit or improper person ...

And then section (xii):

... a child whose life, health or morals may be endangered by the conduct of the person in whose charge he is ...

Mr. Chairman, it would seem to me that what we're doing here is looking at the definition of child abuse in a physical sense. It's probably quite correct to say that as of the time this issue came before the judge, there was no evidence of physical abuse. But I would put to the minister the question of psychological and emotional abuse, in

the context of the Act that the minister is entrusted with administering, which, very clearly raises specifically some of these points I've cited. It seems to me that under these circumstances, what we heard on April 10 was essentially no complaints as to abuse or neglect. But the grandmother had very clearly indicated to the department her concern about the morals, the question of unfit or improper people, any of those subclauses under Section 14 of the Act, that tragically turned out to be all too true.

I raise this not to say that we can bring a young child back to life, but to very clearly put to the minister the question as to the sort of information that is presented when custody hearings are held. It seems to me that we have to go somewhat beyond the objective assessment of physical conditions, to review clearly the mental and psychological factors which the Act spells out.

Mr. Chairman, in order to do that, we have to have a sufficiently — I shouldn't say light — but a staff/client ratio which will allow that worker to be able to render not just the objective assessment of whether the child was physically abused, but some subjective information which a professional person with that kind of training can make available to a judge when a judge has to render a decision on custody. So I would put those questions to the minister.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, as I indicated yesterday, I will provide to hon. members a ballpark figure in terms of caseload, keeping in mind that the caseload figures will vary depending on the kinds of clients the various social workers deal with. The mix is so very important. If there are a number of young people under The Child Welfare Act who require more attention, if there are single-parent mothers who are attempting to help themselves, if there are employable individuals, those are all clients who require more attention than, say, someone between the ages of 60 and 65 receiving assistance, where they are not required to seek employment even if they're able to, or those who are deemed unemployable due to physical ailments or other such circumstances. Without that kind of example, the figures might be misunderstood. I will attempt to provide several examples of mixes for hon. members of the Assembly.

The chronology, the circumstances, and the *Hansard* record as the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview has reviewed the situation, are basically correct. I think it important that we keep in mind some statements I also made at that time that I'm sure were inadvertently missed by the hon. member. I well recall mentioning that the social worker did in fact bring to the judge's attention some concern with regard to the suspected occupation of the mother, and notwithstanding that, a decision was made.

I think it's important, Mr. Chairman, that we briefly review the way The Child Welfare Act works. If the Act isn't right, surely that's one of the things we've asked Mr. Justice Cavanagh and his board of review to look at, and it's something we as legislators have a responsibility to look at. But a social worker has the authority to move in an emergency situation, to remove a youngster from a situation where, in the judgment of the social worker, the individual may be harmed or may be in a dangerous position. They have that right. But that's a very temporary action that may be taken. A judge, through the judicial system, must either reinforce that decision by making the youngster a temporary or permanent ward of the province, or return the child to its natural setting, whether the home of the parents, grandparents, other

relatives, or whomever.

So we become involved as a legal custodian. We become involved as a process through the judicial system, and only the judicial system may relieve us, as a department, of that responsibility, whether through permanent or temporary wardship. The system isn't perfect. There are mistakes; there are tragedies. But it's the best system we know of. I have yet to see a jurisdiction in Canada, or North America as a matter of fact, that has come up with a foolproof system that can guarantee there won't be tragedies.

It must be pointed out that, yes, when the decision was made by the judge some eight months ago to return the little girl to her natural mother, the circumstances at that time were quite different from the circumstances in early April of this year. Very different. Individuals were involved in April who were not on the scene a year ago. The question of value judgments, of moral judgments, is a very important issue which we must approach with a great deal of caution. I'm sure the hon. member is not suggesting for a moment that we or the social workers should be passing judgment on other people without a lot of evidence. We must be assured that there is in fact that concern.

Mr. Chairman, in concluding my comments on this matter, I can only add that we felt it of significant importance that if something may be learned from this tragedy, by re-examining both the caseload history in the department as well as the transcripts of the court hearings — we feel that should be part of the overall investigation that Mr. Justice Cavanagh and his board of review are doing. We referred the matter to the board of review for that reason. I think it's very important we do that. Hindsight is always better than foresight. We can look back: if we had only known; if circumstances had been different.

As a department and as a government, we will continue to do our best to develop laws through our policies and regulations which adequately reflect our desire as a society for the protection and care of individuals we are responsible for. I would expect, as it is a growing process, that fine tuning will be required from time to time. It may be that major surgery will be required on The Child Welfare Act; that's a possibility as well. However, I don't think it would be productive to the situation to speculate beyond that at this point.

MR. MACK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I feel compelled to make one or two observations at this point in time, perhaps to bring into proper focus the sequence of events as they related to that tragic situation. I think the minister very forthrightly, in detail, presented the case that the caseworker clearly indicated to the judge the circumstances in that particular instance.

It was the judicial system that acted. I think there should be a clear understanding and appreciation as to the responsibilities of the minister's department as opposed to when the judiciary takes charge. Just a day or so ago there was a situation, again involving a young child, where the child is going to be taken away from the grandmother and sent some 3,000 miles to England to be with the natural mother.

I think it's important for us to note these kinds of things. When the judiciary gets into the act — of course, they have the mechanisms and the capability, or at least it is their responsibility to ensure that the kind of information they make judgments on is adequately supplied. Certainly, there's no question in my mind that the minis-

ter's department and his people acted responsibly. They indicated in this particular instance that in their judgment the mother had not altered her lifestyle a great deal; however, as tragic as it is today, the judge saw fit to return the child to the mother. But I think we must recognize that the minister does not, or should not, interfere with the courts of law. When they make a decision, there are the proper appeal procedures to the courts. But judges make decisions based on relevant facts presented to them.

Thank you.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Last evening I missed a couple of specifics in Vote 3. In expenditures for consultants in community and family services, there was a 25.3 per cent increase. I was wondering what new things the minister had in mind there, or what the purpose of the consultants would be.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, I didn't get that particular reference. To which vote was that?

MR. R. SPEAKER: I was just trying to locate it as well. Under community and family services.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those votes have been approved, right down to the total vote.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Right. I just indicated I had missed it last evening.

MR. BOGLE: I'll try to give a brief response, Mr. Chairman. The primary emphasis in that area is on foster homes, foster training. We've got some increased payments for foster homes. In addition, there's a slight increase in the number of children. The number of children in our care in that area is reflected in that portion of the vote. The increase in grants to meet the needs of the Alberta Foster Parent Association is part of it as well, Mr. Chairman.

Agreed to:

Total Vote 3 — Child Welfare Services	\$52,083,650
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Vote 4 — Specialized Social Services:

4.1 — Purchased Services and Agency Grants for Adults	\$697,830
4.2 — Residential Accommodation in Institutions and Hostels for Adults	\$3,728,300

4.3 — Development Projects for Metis

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, with regard to the vote on the Metis, there were recommendations in the Ombudsman's report of August 15, 1979, with regard to the Metis settlement files. I was wondering if the minister could bring us up to date on some of the actions. One of the recommendations was with regard to the apology, and I guess that action has been taken. I was wondering if written guidelines have been prepared and circulated since then, so that a repeat of what occurred on the Metis settlement on June 18, 1979, would not occur. And do the minister's departmental officials know clearly in writing at this point in time, what they are and are not permitted to do under such questionable circumstances as the file situation?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, a number of recommendations were made by the Ombudsman, eight in all. Some of the recommendations were implemented immediately, others are in the process of being implemented, still others cannot be implemented until one of the recommendations I previously referred to — which is currently under implementation — is in fact in place and we have some results. I'm referring to amendments to the legislation, and that will result from discussions with the Metis people.

As I'm sure the hon. member is aware, the Ombudsman did not address the legal questions of ownership. He referred more to what I believe he commented on as being moral. From the viewpoint of the office of the Ombudsman, it was morally wrong. What we've done since then, because of the ambiguity of the legal responsibilities — keeping in mind that we have officials on the settlements, working next to the settlement council offices in buildings, who are paid by the department. They are employees of the department. Through our correspondence, we've tried to ensure in a formal way that there not be any misunderstanding, that files not be mixed. In some settlements, for instance, there was only one filing cabinet. It was a government filing cabinet, and it was being used by both parties. We've ensured there's a separation of that sort of thing, so hopefully we won't have a recurrence of the mixing of files or any kind of problem.

More generally, discussions have taken place over the past year between members of government caucus — some of whom represent Metis settlements in their constituencies — myself as minister, along with representatives from the settlements and their federation. In fact, from the end of June until March 14 this year, there have been seven meetings to discuss ways of improving conditions and circumstances on the settlements.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. One of the recommendations was with regard to a joint committee of six members. Has that been put in place? There was concern with regard to an independent chairman being appointed. Could the minister elaborate on that?

MR. BOGLE: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I have responded to that question, and it is in *Hansard*. The original recommendation of the Ombudsman, I believe, was that there be a five-member committee; that two nominees be presented to the government by the Metis federation, that the government add two of its nominees, and the minister appoint the four individuals plus an independent chairman acceptable to both sides. It was a decision of the government that a more appropriate way to go would be with our original recommendation: simply a four-member committee co-chaired by the president of the Federation of Metis Settlements and an MLA from this Assembly.

During a meeting that a number of MLAs and I had with representatives of the federation and the settlements on January 28 this year, the proposal was placed on the table that the four-member committee be expanded to six members. That appeared to be agreeable to both parties at the time. A meeting followed on March 14, when I signed a ministerial order. I filed a copy with the library of the Assembly, and the terms of reference of the committee are very clearly laid out. As hon. members will note, the committee is co-chaired by Dr. Charles Anderson, MLA for St. Paul, and Mr. Adrian Hope, vice-president of the Federation of Metis Settlements, standing in the place of the president, Maurice L'Hirondelle,

who is unable to assume that responsibility because of other activities. In addition, two Metis individuals, who were nominated by the federation and accepted by myself, are named in the order: Lawrence Cunningham and Elmer Ghostkeeper. Two additional nominees were put forward by government: Mrs. Ami Armit, from the Department of Social Services and Community Health; and Mr. Bill Donahue, a member of the native secretariat staff, under my colleague the Minister responsible for Native Affairs.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the hon. minister. One of the concerns, and this has been historic, is with regard to autonomy on the Metis colonies with regard to various areas. Certainly the legal process is on, but have there been any new changes in that particular area that could be done maybe under the clause, without prejudice, that would be for the good of the Metis colonies? Have some new steps been taken in that area?

MR. BOGLE: There are two ways we can approach that matter. The first is through a series of meetings, and I've indicated that I've personally been involved in seven meetings from June 23, 1979, through March 14, 1980, in addition to a series of correspondence between the settlements and ourselves. There's a great deal of concern. I know that hon. members who represent Metis settlements can bear this out, and so might the hon. member as a former minister responsible. There's a great deal of concern by some members of the settlements as to their autonomy, as to their unique position in this province, and a fear that they don't want to do anything that might jeopardize that position. So we've been cautioned on a number of occasions, in both a verbal sense at meetings as well as written correspondence, not to move too quickly.

Therefore, the process is one of delicacy and one that we're moving on, but really at the pace of the Metis people. The most recent correspondence I had suggested that the new executive director for the federation, Mr. Miller, meet with a senior official within the department. I believe that meeting is being arranged at the present time.

Another way that we think we as a government can move — I've briefly mentioned the matter with representatives of the settlements — is by further decentralizing our Metis betterment branch office from Edmonton, possibly to two locations: one to serve the more eastern settlements in the province and the other to serve the more northerly settlements. That would not require a legislative or regulatory change; it's a matter of procedure. That's something we're progressing with at the present time. When we have a proposal firmly in place. I hope to be in a position to sit down with representatives of the settlements and make an offer as to how we might achieve that goal of decentralizing and, in turn, achieve some of the objectives of the Ombudsman in terms of greater employment opportunities for members of settlements who might want to work in the Metis betterment branch.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. The financial assistance to the Metis areas in the 1980-81 estimates has increased by about 0.1 per cent from the comparable 1979-80 forecast. If we take into consideration an inflation rate of 9 per cent, this is a decrease of close to 8.5 to 8.9 per cent. I wonder if the minister could indicate why the small increase at the present time?

MR. BOGLE: Where is the hon. member getting that statistic from?

MR. R. SPEAKER: It's from the print-out, Mr. Minister.

MR. BOGLE: It may be that the hon. member's on it. In the Supplementary Information Element Details book there was an error, and we brought it to the attention of Treasury. The figure for the comparable 1979-80 forecast should not have been \$791,760. That figure should in fact be \$748,760, for financial assistance to Metis areas. I've done a very rough calculation as to what that works out to in terms of each resident on a settlement. As there are approximately 3,000 residents on the eight Metis settlements, it works out to approximately \$2,660 per settler.

Now there are a number of programs if the settlements were organized so they could receive assistance similar to that received by other municipalities. Road grants could be forthcoming from Municipal Affairs. There are grants through Agriculture that might be forthcoming. There are a number of options we could look at. But again, all those must await changes to the legislation.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. If the area has been covered in the course of the comments, I just expect the minister to indicate that to me and I can check in *Hansard*.

Mr. Chairman, I'm interested in exploring with the minister the area of really a rewriting of The Metis Betterment Act. If I recall last year during the study of the estimates, there was some indication at that time that if the legal problems could be sorted out — and I regret they haven't been to date — that even before that was finished the government would look seriously at major revisions to The Metis Betterment Act; in fact, if my memory is accurate, going further than that and really looking at a new deal as far as Metis people in this province were concerned.

Mr. Chairman, to the minister. I'd be very interested in finding out what progress has been made in that area. Even if it takes a few minutes to give that information, I think it would be very, very helpful.

MR. BOGLE: If your hon. colleague is satisfied, I did give an explanation of the process we've gone through. It certainly is an objective we have. I might add to what I've previously answered that if — and the offer has been made to the Metis settlements — they feel we should not proceed with the six-member committee as outlined in the ministerial order dated March 14, 1980, if after some consideration there's an uneasiness about that approach, recognizing that the secretary and whatever research work is required might be contracted by the six members themselves, that's part of the responsibility of the committee. If the settlers would like to sit down themselves, review the legislation, looking at ways of making the settlement councils legitimate in the eyes of the law — because they're not today. Anyone might wish to play games with that. But the hard, cold fact is they're not legal entities at this point in time.

If the settlement councils would like to review the legislation and come forward with recommendations, we'll certainly consider them. No one would be more pleased than me — and I know I speak for my predecessor, who had the same concerns — because of the legal tightrope that we're on because of the legislation. The whole matter is one we'll address in that way, if that is the wish of the

settlement councils.

I further made the offer, Mr. Chairman, that if recommendations are made by the six-member committee, I've outlined the process by which those recommendations would be dealt with by government. First, the recommendations — and they'd be principle recommendations — would be forwarded to me as the minister responsible. A government caucus committee would examine them. Certain recommendations would be put forward to full caucus. Legislative review would have to go through those recommendations. But before a Bill would be introduced in this Assembly, I would again ensure that a copy would be shared with the representatives of the settlements. They in turn could go through it with their legal advisors to determine what concerns, if any, they might have. They would have ample opportunity to make their recommendations prior to introduction of new legislation in this Assembly.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Mr. Minister, my colleague and I were just conversing here. Where does the impetus come from for a complete rewrite of The Metis Betterment Act, or a new deal, if I might put it that way, for the Metis people in Alberta?

I ask the question — where does the impetus come from — because it seems to me that what the minister has just told the committee is that if the Metis people themselves get together and then can make some, I think the minister used the term, principle recommendations, which might be involved in a rewriting of the Act . . . While I can appreciate the minister's willingness to do that, it seems to me that given where the ultimate responsibility for the Metis settlements now rests, the minister's department, some way could be found around the legal difficulties for the minister himself to convene a one- or two-day session with the leaders of the various colonies across the province. I'm not taking the legal entanglements lightly. But it seems to me that if that were done, that would be a demonstration of real intent by the government to move on this particular question.

I don't deny that, as the minister said, if the settlements get together and make some principle recommendations to the government, and they go to the government caucus and finally get here to the Assembly, that route could work. But I'd ask if the minister himself has considered taking the initiative — I'm not married to having a one- or two-day session on it — at Slave Lake or someplace like that, where the Metis people would feel more at home themselves, and get down to the pretty serious business of trying to do a major revision in an area that I think is long overdue, and members on both sides of the House agree to that.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, as the hon. member has pointed out himself, he did miss part of the debate. I did clearly indicate at that time the number of meetings which have been held over approximately the past 10 months — seven meetings that I've held, not officials in the department alone and not something that was delegated or relegated anyplace else. That's what I've been involved in personally, in addition to a number of meetings by officials within the department with officials from the settlements or the settlement councillors themselves.

That's a possibility. I would hope that the ministerial order which appointed as co-chairman a member of this Assembly, and as the hon. member has pointed out on a number of occasions, and rightly so, the highest court in the land — one of our colleagues, a member of this

Assembly, to act as co-chairman. I had made the offer to the president of the Federation of Metis Settlements, as the highest officer for that body. That offer was declined because of other activities and referred to the vice-president, Mr. Adrian Hope, a well-known and respected individual with many years of knowledge and history behind him. The very purpose of the six-member committee was to spend many hours looking at the legislation, looking at the policy issues underlining the matter. The committee would have the right to obtain whatever research material might be required. If they wished to hire on a contract basis a researcher to do work for them in a particular area, that could be accomplished. No difficulty.

I was asked earlier during question period — and the Speaker of the Assembly suggested to the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview that the question might wait for the estimates — as to budget. As is the case with ministerial orders, you will not find a budget other than fee schedules and travel allowance for the members of the committee. I wouldn't want to leave the impression that it's a bottomless pit completely open-ended, but certainly the resources would be made available so that the joint committee, made up of representatives of the settlements and representatives of this government, could achieve their desired goal of looking at ways to move ahead and assist in the reassessment of The Metis Betterment Act and making proposed changes for that legislation.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I was out for a few minutes, so if this question has been answered, I would apologize to other members of the committee. I wanted to raise the question of the Ombudsman's report, which as I understood it called for the creation of a committee, but there would be a neutral chairman. What prompted the government to decide that in fact there had to be two co-chairpeople as opposed to one neutral chairman?

I would just add, Mr. Chairman, that I'm pleased to hear the minister today. I think the assurance he's given on the funding for adequate research will go some distance to allay concerns that have been brought to my attention. At first there was some feeling that we were just talking about a secretary, but if funds will be made available for consultants to go into the question in a more detailed way, I think that will be excellent.

On the question of the municipal debt reduction plan: this came up in the question period, but I would like just a little more information as to how the government concluded that the tactic would be either public meetings or plebiscites, and what steps, if any . . . I guess I would simply say that it would seem to me that the reason the government is going this route is because a general without-prejudice agreement hasn't been signed. I'd be glad to hear the minister's answer on that question, then I'll respond.

MR. BOGLE: When the question was posed, my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs did respond in this way: most municipalities in the province were given the opportunity to take the money, the \$500 per capita municipal debt reduction funding, and invest those funds or apply them toward debts as they saw fit. Generally speaking, there are two exceptions to the rule: first, the special areas, the improvement districts in the province; and secondly, the Metis settlements. The reasoning for both is the same. The Minister of Municipal Affairs is the trustee for the improvement districts. The Minister of Social Services and Community Health is the trustee for the eight Metis settlements. Legally there's no way under

the present legislation that the funds may be transferred to the settlement councils.

A recommendation came from one of my colleagues, I believe the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-McMurray. The recommendation was: if the settlements themselves are not legal entities, cannot all the individuals on a given settlement vote and request that the money be transferred from the responsibility or care and trusteeship of the minister to the settlement council? It would be fair to say that our legal advisors had some concerns with that because of the litigation before us. But, yes, it was deemed to be one possibility. Therefore the offer was made. A further offer made was that if the settlement councils wished to put forward such a motion, the expenses of the plebiscite would be borne by the government. The plebiscite would be conducted, we would hope, through our sister Department of Municipal Affairs in a similar way that it would in any other community.

A further question was put by a member for the Paddle Prairie settlement, because the people in that settlement are not that familiar with plebiscites. It's a new and novel approach. Could we get some special assistance to help in an education program? The response to that was also positive. So the offer is there. But certainly it's nothing more than an offer. If the settlements wish to have the money remain in trust, it will continue to grow, continue to draw interest, and the funds may be drawn in a very cumbersome way directly through the minister's office. That's possible, as it is through the Minister of Municipal Affairs on the improvement districts. On the other hand, if there's that request for a plebiscite, that will be accepted in the ways I've mentioned.

There's only one other point, Mr. Chairman, that I want to make sure is perfectly clear with the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview. That's the matter of secretarial and research assistance. That offer was made very clearly on March 14 — very clearly. It has been out there since that time. In fact that was the basis upon which the ministerial order was signed. Once there appeared to be an understanding, an agreement, as to the process which would be followed, I signed the ministerial order in front of the six members of the newly appointed ministerial committee, as well as the president of the Federation of Metis Settlements.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, just to follow that along for a moment. My understanding is that there has at least been some discussion among the settlements that one method of dealing with the municipal debt reduction grant might be the establishment of some kind of development fund, a sort of mini trust fund where all the grants for all the settlements would be pooled for development purposes. Is the minister in a position to advise whether that option was considered? And apart from the suggestion from the Member for Lac La Biche-McMurray that the minister alluded to with respect to how we might transmit the money that would be coming to the people on the settlements, were any other options considered?

MR. BOGLE: The matter of options and ways — the hon. member has suggested that the money could be put in one economic development pool, and drawn on. Certainly it can, but under the present legislation the only way that might happen is the plebiscite route.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, were any other options considered in reviewing how we might deal with this

question? I realize there is something of a legal problem. If I heard him correctly, the minister indicated that legal counsel for the government still had some concerns about it. I've been trying to consider the implications of it, and it would seem to me that even if you had a plebiscite there still might be some reason to challenge it. I guess what I would put to the minister: were any other methods considered that might be a little less cumbersome than going through a plebiscite? As the minister has already indicated, one of the settlements in question felt that many of the people living in the settlement were unfamiliar with the procedure.

In talking to some of the people from the settlements, I certainly have had that point made fairly forcibly to me, that it does put the settlements in a fairly tricky position in a sense, because money paid out after this referendum would presumably go to the council in some way. I would assume it would go to the council. But if you gave every municipality in this province the right to vote on what they do with the municipal debt reduction plan, you'd get the same sort of situation we almost had in the city of Edmonton with Mr. Leger, who wanted the money used to cut taxes, bango! Don't put any money in anything else; just cut taxes. So you have a whole variety of problems that settlement people have brought to my attention. They're no different from the residents of Edmonton or anywhere else. You've got the same sort of . . . [interjection] Well, legally in terms of their settlement council, that's true. [interjection] I agree, that's an important point. I'm saying to the minister: are there any other avenues that we as a committee might explore, in considering the estimates of the minister, in order to deal with what I presume is obviously an objective of every member of the committee, which is the transferral of this money in the most expeditious way possible? Were other options on the table, apart from going the plebiscite route?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, the only viable option I am familiar with or can recall is the one that has been put forward. I know the hon. member appreciates the difference between municipalities which operate under The Municipal Government Act — no question about the legitimacy, the validity of the councils representing those communities. If the hon. member had been in his place earlier, he would have heard me refer to other municipalities in the province and improvement districts. It's a matter of the kind of legislation we're dealing with and the fact that it's antiquated. It does not meet the needs of the situation today.

In discussion with the Member for Little Bow, we exchanged ideas on how that might be improved. If the hon. member has some ideas on how he thinks the money may be legally transferred in another way, then I'd be pleased to hear it. I'm sure my colleagues in the Assembly would be pleased.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, we could go into a long discussion, let me assure you. I think that we really must move a little more quickly than we have on this question of a general without-prejudice agreement. I look back in *Hansard* and see the Premier on, I believe, June 29 indicating that — if my memory serves me right — the Premier himself would be prepared to go to a meeting with the Metis settlements. The minister has indicated that he has met seven times with representatives from the settlements, and that's certainly worth while. But surely we can move a little more quickly in the process of achieving a general without-prejudice agreement, so that

we can set aside this minerals case and say, all right, when it comes to recognition of the settlement councils and to amendments to the Act — so that we can formally recognize those settlements and move quickly on it.

To the minister: surely, no one could accuse this government of rushing on the matter. It's been a long, long haul. I've had an opportunity to discuss this matter with Mr. Hope. I have tremendous respect for that particular gentleman, and quite frankly I think you couldn't find a better co-chairperson of this committee than Adrian Hope. Whether it's Mr. L'Hirondelle or Mr. Hope, you've got two very, very capable people to represent the settlement side of the ledger. But, Mr. Minister, the frustration I sense in talking to the settlement people is, for heaven's sake how long is this thing going to drag on? We've got the joint committee being appointed, but it's not as if the matter just occurred in the last few months. It's been there a long time.

The minister asked for suggestions. Mr. Minister, I'll just frankly say in the House what I've said outside the House. I think the order in council which was passed in '59 or '60 very clearly specifies what we have a moral obligation to do. I think it really does, even though that means an awful lot of money. We have people here talking about \$45 million or \$50 million to build a coliseum in Calgary. Mr. Minister, when I read that order in council back in 1960, there's no doubt in my mind about our moral obligation. Yet we have this long, drawn-out legal battle. Admittedly, it's a legal battle, Mr. Chairman. The minister will say, yes, but it was the people of the settlements who launched a suit. Of course it was, because they weren't getting the money under what was to them, and as I read it, at least a moral commitment by the government of Alberta. I don't see how we can restore the kind of relations we would like to see until we move a little more quickly on at least the recognition of the settlement councils.

This afternoon in the question period we had the Attorney General answer something as simple and elementary as who gets the settlements from the oil companies on surface rights, something every other Alberta landowner can get without any major problem. We're even going to be making changes to the surface rights legislation later on in this session. Yet this matter seems to be drawn in, and heaven knows how long it's going to be bogged down. The Attorney General told us today that he hopes it is going to be resolved shortly. But we've got legal counsel for the settlement and legal counsel for the government, and God knows whether it's going to be six months or six years before we get this \$250,000 of surface rights settlement. It has nothing to do with the mineral claims. The whole thing just gets intertwined and bogged down and bogged down and bogged down. With great respect to the minister, it seems to me that we just have to push ahead a little faster.

While the joint committee is a good idea, I would just have to say — since I gather this matter was discussed when I was out — that as my own personal view, we should have explicitly followed the Ombudsman's report, and there should have been representation from the settlements and from the government, with a neutral chairman. What's going to happen with this committee if we get the thing tied on issue after issue? That could happen. Is there any way of breaking the tie? Suppose we get a whole series of major issues where there are in fact just two distinct points of view. What are we going to do in a case like that? Are we going to have recommendations coming back? Of course we can't. You are only going to

be able to get recommendations on the basis of consensus, as opposed to a majority recommendation.

At times, Mr. Minister, we are going to have to take responsibility for what in fact is a majority position. Or how long are we going to wait? If we say the objective will be consensus and we'll wait until hell freezes over until we get the consensus, Mr. Minister, there are not going to be too many of those Metis senior citizens around who can tell what happened and go into some detail. They're not going to be around by the time we get through this long, drawn-out process which has dragged on month after month, year after year.

MR. BOGLE: Briefly, Mr. Chairman, before we conclude the hour, I just make the comment . . . I will be pleased to look at *Hansard*, but I don't recall the hon. member telling us how we might get around the legal problem of providing the funding to the settlements, the municipal debt reduction funding.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, since I have a number of additional comments, I'm sure we could make them now if we get unanimous consent to deal with government business all afternoon. But in fairness to other members, perhaps we will let the minister off the hook until tomorrow. [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member has raised a matter that I hadn't been asked to consider until now; that is, whether government business might continue. If I could have the view of the Acting Leader of the Opposition, we could deal with the matter.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, we would be prepared to proceed with the study of supply.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are we agreed, then, to carry on with estimates?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So ordered.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I don't think any of us are in a position, and I'm not going to give the minister any legal advice off the top of my head. I'm just saying that what we have at the moment is a pattern that, in my judgment, has led to a very serious breakdown in communication. Last spring in the House, I remember this minister saying in the most self-righteous way possible: these are government documents in government files in government buildings. The Ombudsman says that basically, while you can talk any way you like in a hypothetical sense, these in fact were Metis files, Metis documents in Metis buildings, with Metis people working, as far as the people were concerned. The minister backed off and apologized, and rightly so. I'm pleased he did.

Why do we have to go through this procedure? You know, I would say to the minister . . . He asked me for some suggestions. We are in this position, Mr. Chairman, because we're bound and determined we're going to win that case on the mineral question. That's why we're in this position.

If we were to honor the order in council that was passed in '59 or '60, we would be able to move very quickly to resolve the question. I know there's a lot of

money involved, but it seems to me there is also an important principle involved. It's a principle that throughout the settlements in northern Alberta, without qualification — and I visited most of the settlements in this province — not only the people on the settlement councils but settlers themselves make it very clear, to me at least, and I'm sure to the minister too, that they feel in fact there had been a commitment by the previous government. The reason we have the suit is because that money was not paid out as the federation people felt it should be.

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

We can talk about various legal manoeuvres, but I suggest to the minister through you, Mr. Chairman, that it's not a question of playing cute games and undertaking legal manoeuvres. It is a question of honoring what was a pretty straightforward order in council. That would probably do more to restore a sense of confidence and trust than anything else. If the government of Alberta were to drop that case, it would be able to proceed. Even if we decide not to take that course — which is my frank recommendation to the minister, and I'm sure he is not going to take my advice — even if we don't do that, let's at least get on with the negotiations. The minister says he has met seven times. If we want to push on with a without-prejudice agreement . . . I look back on June 29. It should be the Premier of the province, along with the Minister of Social Services and Community Health, the minister in charge of Native Affairs, and the Attorney General, sitting down with the Federation of Metis Settlements to say: all right, we're not just going to merely make these statements in the Legislature; we're going to follow through on them. The Premier himself has to take the initiative. Otherwise, I frankly just see the thing dragging on and on and on and on. How much more are we going to put these people through?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister on the point that's being discussed. I wonder if the minister would comment on whether there has been reconsideration of the situation since the legal discussions have been initiated, as to looking at some kind of settlement, or negotiated settlement, or commitment being met. If I recall correctly, the initial sum of money was something like \$5 million. In today's terms, I'm not sure what the sum of money we're looking at would be. Could the minister comment on: one, has there been reconsideration or some thought in that area? Secondly, if so, what are the long-term implications? Does it mean that if some type of settlement is made out of court there are longer term implications that bind the government to continued responsibility of providing moneys to the settlements from resource revenue? I wonder if the minister could comment on the circumstances at present.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I'm certainly not trying to evade this very important matter, but we are into the legal ramifications. Those are under the general responsibility of my colleague the Attorney General and the legal advisors for that department, a sister department of ours. Therefore, I'm really not in a position to comment on the legal ramifications of the matter.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. The intent, at this point in time, by the government and the Attorney General in carrying out the responsibilities is to

determine the legal position of both parties. Then at that point, based on that legal interpretation, a judgment will be made. That's the procedure that's being followed at present.

MR. BOGLE: Yes, that's accurate, Mr. Chairman. I'm sure the hon. member is aware the legal fees on both sides are being paid by the province, because of the hardship that might otherwise cause the Metis people.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. On July 19, 1979, the minister wrote to Mr. L'Hirondelle, the President of the Federation of Metis Settlements:

Your letter to Premier Lougheed of July 16th in which you indicate you expect a meeting in the very near future arrived yesterday. Officials from the Premier's office will not be contacting you to arrange a meeting. As I have indicated in my letter of July 17th, as we progress with our joint deliberations, a meeting will be scheduled between the Premier, appropriate Ministers of the Government, and representatives from the Federation of Metis Settlements.

Mr. Chairman, in view of the fact that this was July 19, almost 10 months ago, I would ask: when does the minister intend to arrange the meeting with the Premier, as he very clearly indicated he intended to do?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member will recall that a meeting did take place within the last year between the Premier, myself, I believe our colleague the Minister responsible for Native Affairs, and representatives from the Metis settlements. The question of a follow-up meeting came to the table at that first meeting, as a request by the federation. Yes, it's deemed that a follow-up meeting will be held with the federation, as is our procedure with our caucus committees, to meet on an annual basis with a variety of organizations. We bring together members of caucus, members of cabinet, and from time to time the Premier is also involved in those discussions.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, the Premier will be present at this follow-up meeting?

MR. BOGLE: No discussions have taken place between me and the president of the Federation of Metis Settlements. I'm not sure if my hon. colleague has had that contact. It would be premature to talk about it, but that's quite possible. I've indicated that the Premier was involved in one such meeting during the past year.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Looking at the print-out with regard to permanent positions in the department, the permanent positions have maintained position at 25, but the salary and wage employees have been reduced from 74 to 52 man-years. What happened? What occurred in that switch?

MR. BOGLE: I can't respond to that at this time, because I don't have that information. I'll certainly get it before the afternoon is over and provide it to the hon. member.

Agreed to:

4.3 — Development Projects for Metis	\$2,528,360
Total Vote 4 — Specialized Social Services	\$6,954,490

Vote 51 — Senior Citizens' Supplementary Benefits

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I asked a question in the Assembly the other day about whether senior citizens, aged 60 to 65, going back to 1975, would automatically receive the provinces assured income plan, given that federal legislation was passed to reinstate spouse allowance back to 1975 for widows and widowers between the ages of 60 and 65. My question is: does the province intend to follow the same pattern as the federal government?

MR. BOGLE: No, Mr. Chairman. I think the question was raised yesterday during our discussions. It is not our intention at this time to follow the example of the federal government in that matter.

MR. NOTLEY: On 5.1, before we proceed. We've received quite an increase in the assured income. I take it that will be dealt with by supplementary estimates. And are we going to be dealing with that along with this, or waiting until we get to supplementary estimates, when all the other estimates are completed? Okay, that's fair enough.

MR. BOGLE: Was the hon. member asking about the estimate appearing on page 293, the 202 per cent increase? We should deal with the figures that are in the Legislative Assembly estimates book at this time, and deal with the supplementary estimates at a later time.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, on the question of the assured income. I realize we've budgeted this year for a substantial increase, and I welcome that. But it seems to me . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Member for Spirit River-Fairview, are you on 5.1 or 5.2?

MR. NOTLEY: Really 5.2.

Agreed to:

5.1 — Senior Citizens'
Supplementary Benefits

\$35,959,000

52 — Pensions and Allowances

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, on 5.2. I made this proposal when we began the discussion, and I really want to make it again. I know the Member for Edmonton Kingsway indicated that the increase was greater than might have been the case if it had been indexed. I don't know; I haven't done the arithmetic. My rule of thumb would lead me to the conclusion that it would be about the same as if we had it indexed to the cost of living.

I would say to the minister that now that we have increased the assured income to a level that I think everyone in this committee supports, it seems to me we have to look at some method of periodic review. We could look at the federal method, which is straightforward, or we could look at other somewhat more arbitrary methods. But frankly I think the sort of thing this government should consider is some periodic adjustment of the assured income for senior citizens, so it goes up as the cost of living rises, so the purchasing power that is in place today is going to be there a year from now or two years from now. Whether the mechanism is a review

committee similar to the committee the Minister responsible for Workers' Health, Safety and Compensation has, or whether it's a yearly approach or periodic, every three months, as I believe the federal government does, there should be some kind of provision for adjustment.

MR. BOGLE: That's an issue which has been discussed with the senior citizens' advisory council and other bodies. Inote in this particular year, and I'm sure the response by the federal government is due at least in part to the higher rental prices, an increase in the guaranteed income supplement of \$35, the increase in Alberta of nearly \$30 — the maximum, a very substantial increase. We recognize that much of that will go toward rental accommodation for a good number of senior citizens. That's a matter which I will review again with the senior citizens' advisory council, the council on aging, and other such organizations, to gain their input. There are arguments on both sides on that particular matter, and we'll continue to review it.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to move to the topic of the Alberta assured income for the severely handicapped. Can we move to that at the present time? That's 5.2.1.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We indicated earlier that we were going to come back to the supplementary estimates at the end of the departmental vote.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I think I can do it under pensions and allowances. I'm sorry. I was looking at the estimate element details, so I had it broken down a little further.

Mr. Chairman, to the minister. When the program with regard to the severely handicapped was announced, three criteria were established: one, that a person has a severe physical or mental handicap that substantially limits the ability to earn a livelihood. This permanent condition must be beyond remedial therapy now available in Alberta that could substantially lessen the impairment. Thirdly, the applicant must be at his maximum employment potential within the province of Alberta.

One of the things we are finding — and I think I raised this with the minister earlier is that the spouse's net earnings are considered in the criteria for determining the amount of money a person will get. Our concern at this point is that that should be reviewed and some greater consideration should be given. We find there are times when the spouse's income, or financial obligations they have, take all the funds available. Some of the special types of things that are needs of the severely handicapped can't be met when the obligations of the healthier spouse are taken into consideration.

I wonder if the minister has had an opportunity to review that policy and look at the number of applications that have come to the office to date. How many applications have been refused because the spouse has had assets or income that's too great? Has the minister had an opportunity to look at it?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, on October 12, 1979, I did make a commitment to the hon. Member for Little Bow that an ongoing review of the Alberta assured income program was being undertaken on a current basis, as the program is totally new and very exciting because there's not another province in this country that has anything approaching the benefits under this program. The hon. members may see by the growth of 202 per cent in the

program itself the magnitude of dollars involved. But because the program is so very new — it was implemented late in 1979 — we're now moving ahead. There are approximately 4,000 individuals who are currently in the program. We anticipate that during the 1980-81 fiscal year, approximately 14,000 Albertans should be in the program.

The two restraints, the two areas of concern for me, for members of our caucus, and for members of the opposition, as has been reflected through discussions in and outside this Assembly, is firstly with the external limitations in the program, income of spouse or the individual applicant; secondly, the internal criteria themselves, whether we're being too rigid with those criteria. I believe that within the very near future I'll be in a position, based on the number of applications received, the number approved. We've had about 6,300 applications received to date. I've indicated that about 4,000 have been approved, about 1,500 have been rejected, and the remaining 1,200 or 1,300 are currently being processed. So more people are applying on an ongoing basis. But I'm particularly concerned, and will be reviewing the rejected applications, looking at the reasons they are rejected. I think that will give us a good basis in terms of any fine-tuning we want to do to the program.

I know hon. members of the Assembly will be aware that it's always easy to open up a program. Once it's open, it's pretty difficult to begin to close those doors again. On the other hand, we want to make sure the program is meeting the need it was originally intended to meet; that those individuals who cannot help themselves, or are in a very awkward position, are assisted through this Alberta assured income program.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Just from the preliminary review the minister has done, is the main concern with the program at the present time with regard to the amount the spouse or the person themselves can earn? Is it the income question that is the biggest concern? Or is it the ability of the program to meet the health condition or the physical needs of that particular individual that is the biggest concern?

MR. BOGLE: Two issues, Mr. Chairman, at the present time. And that might change as more applications are received and some additional applications rejected. The two main concerns: the external criteria factors; secondly, those individuals who meet a number of criteria internally but are turned down because of ability to work or other factors. It's a combination of the two things we're looking at at the present time.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, speaking on . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Let the Member for Little Bow continue.

MR. R. SPEAKER: How soon do you see the review completed? Are you looking at this fall to look at revisions? Are we looking at next year's 1981-82 budget?

MR. BOGLE: I would certainly hope that by October 12, 1980, and the first anniversary of the question posed by the hon. member we will be in a position either to have made some very minor changes, some substantial changes or, if the information comes forward, to suggest that no changes should be made. We will be in a position to make that clear.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, speaking to Vote 5, the Member for Spirit River-Fairview made some comments relative to senior citizens' incomes being indexed and so on. I wanted to make a couple of observations relative to Vote 5, then a question or two to the minister. First of all . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Does the Member for Lethbridge West care to do that at the end of the vote? We're still on 5.2.

MR. GOGO: I'll do it at any time.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, in fairness to the member, is he going to deal with it now? Because if we want to go to 5.2, I have several detailed questions on 5.2 I'd like to put. But I'll defer to the Member for Lethbridge West if he'd like to ask his questions under 5.2.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We are on 5.2 now, and I made my ruling that if the Member for Lethbridge West wishes he can ask his questions at the call of Vote 5, at the end when I've called the total amount.

MR. NOTLEY: Well in that case, Mr. Chairman, to the minister on supplementary element details, page 143. Mr. Minister, I'd just like you to outline the reasons for 5.2.3, 5.2.4, 5.2.5, and 5.2.6. I presume what we're dealing with are the small number of cases of pensions still in place prior to the Canada Assistance Plan. But just so I am clear in my own mind, I'd like to know how many people are still receiving assistance under those four separate items. As I say, I presume these are old pension warrants.

MR. BOGLE: Yes, Mr. Chairman, there are the older pension plans. We've encouraged individuals to transfer over to the Alberta assured income program. There's no compulsion, and some individuals have chosen to stay on existing plans. But no new applicants are being received on any of these plans, therefore the number of people served and the dollars reflected will continue to decrease over a period of time.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Do we have any number of people? I presume we do. If we don't have that handy, I would ask the minister to send it to me or perhaps make it available later on in committee.

MR. BOGLE: I'll be pleased to provide that information to the hon. member in written correspondence, if that is satisfactory.

Agreed to:

5.2 — Pensions and Allowances

\$62,073,000

Total Vote 5

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I have some comments I want to make and a couple of questions directed to the minister. First of all I think it's a mistake when we looked at Vote 5 relative to senior citizens that we get caught up in the concept that this only deals with their income. Surely, Mr. Chairman, when we deal with the fact that there are no health care premiums even for the millionaires of this province when they are over 65, surely the fact that we make provision for dental care, glasses . . . I think we effectively pay about five to six months'

rent for those in government-supported accommodation. Perhaps we should be addressing ourselves not to the needs of the senior citizens in terms of pure income — which I think is very healthy when you consider the subsidies in effect for the province.

We should also consider those who aren't, let's say, fortunate enough to be senior citizens.

I would like to ask the minister if it's appropriate on the one hand for the comfort allowance that I asked about last night, if this is in Vote 5.2 for those on assistance living in nursing homes — what the policy is with regard to expanding that. Finally, Mr. Chairman, all of us as members are frequently asked about those people in Alberta, particularly widows, who are beyond the point of working but are in the age group 55 to 65, who as a result of a lifestyle are accustomed to living in their own accommodation. They are neither fish nor fowl in terms of the health care Act; in terms of the old age security, they don't qualify. If the government has considered some form of supplementary income to those without perhaps the stigma — the word is not appropriate — of social welfare. I think in Alberta — particularly Calgary and Edmonton — we are seeing the needs more and more because of the expensive cost of living, the high cost of living. These people are having great difficulty. Is there any thought given by the minister's department to coming out perhaps with some type of program to assist those Albertans between the ages of 55 and 65?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, first on the question of the comfort allowance. That will be addressed during Vote 7, and I'll be pleased to respond to the hon. member's question at that time.

The broader question of assistance to individuals, whether between the ages of 55 and 65 or 60 and 65, gets a considerable amount of attention by members of the Assembly, the department, and myself as minister. I can only say that at the present time our policy for individuals between 60 and 65 who require assistance is to provide it. That's social assistance. There's no other way to camouflage it. But one of the key elements to the program is that, notwithstanding that the applicant may be physically able to work, we do not apply the rigorous tests for those employable individuals to seek employment or be taken off the rolls. An extra compassion is provided through the social workers and through the regional offices in the carrying out of their responsibilities. I think that's an important factor to bring to the attention of the hon. member.

In addition, through the senior citizens' lodges around the province, which are not full — if an individual applies who is not yet a senior citizen, not yet 60 years of age, and there are vacancies, I'm aware of cases where individuals have been admitted, are residents, and are benefiting from the subsidized rates in our senior citizens' lodges. Once the lodge fills and there's someone 65 or 66 who wishes a home in that particular lodge, they're not required to move on. So some consideration is given in that area through the Department of Housing and Public Works.

To the hon. member, Mr. Chairman, my main concern would be, where do you draw the line? We are trying, by giving special consideration to those individuals between the ages of 60 and 65. Concern and consideration is given in Housing and Public Works. I'd be very leery, and I wouldn't want to leave the impression with the Assembly today that I'd favor going beyond that limit. I think there are some real cautions with it, Mr. Chairman.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I'm very pleased to hear the minister say that they're prepared to look at individual situations through the province. I guess one difficulty I have each year is seeing senior citizen millionaires of Alberta in Phoenix and other parts of the world, and still not paying premiums and receiving all the benefits. That's undoubtedly a policy question. I'm not arguing that. When we see groups who are, for the accident of birth, one or two years under 65 — it's sometimes very difficult for them, on the one hand, to apply for social assistance when they see other programs almost by virtue of right being given to those who have that magic age.

In concluding, I want to commend the minister for saying that they recognize they deal with the individual; if the space is available, his department would encourage those places in lodges being occupied. Finally, Mr. Chairman, I just want to reiterate that we sometimes get so hung up on the monthly cheques that are being mailed out to get a full realization that the way we're assisting senior Albertans is the total net package; that is, without the health care premium, without the dental care bills they have to pay, and so on. I think without a doubt the Alberta senior citizen is probably far and above most senior citizens in Canada.

MRS. CRIPPS: I'd just like to reiterate the concern of the Member for Lethbridge West. It's a crucial concern of rural Alberta, as well as the urban centres, because these people do not have any chance of employment. Maybe a retraining program would be of benefit to them.

MR. BOGLE: Just for clarification, Mr. Chairman. If the individual between the ages of 60 and 65 is able to work, if that individual is interested in some kind of retraining, then certainly our employment opportunity programs would be applicable, and we'd welcome the opportunity to assist them in that way. I did not want to leave the wrong impression that we're applying rigid rules that we try to follow, in terms of individuals between 60 and 65 who are deemed to be employable. Special consideration is given because of their age.

MR. BORSTAD: Could I follow up just for a minute on that retraining program the minister mentioned? I've had several calls today from people living in Grande Prairie because of the high rents. A couple of them just under 60 years old, working for about \$600 a month — unfortunately, there is no accommodation in the city they can get that they can live on. You mentioned a retraining program. In this particular case, would these people classify for that retraining program? A single mother, now that the family and the husband are gone; she's by herself.

MR. BOGLE: For clarification, is this particular individual receiving social assistance at the present time?

MR. BORSTAD: No.

MR. BOGLE: Then our department would not be able to respond through the employment opportunity program I've outlined. I believe some assistance would be available through retraining in Advanced Education and Manpower in the way that assistance is available to all Albertans. But the assistance we're providing is primarily for those individuals who have reached a point where they require social assistance. It's an attempt to get them back on their feet, back into a productive, meaningful job opportunity

situation, so they can continue to develop and help themselves.

MR. MANDEVILLE: Mr. Chairman, I've missed most of the estimates on Social Services and Community Health. But I've had a concern and did ask the minister some questions here in the fall session with regard to the widow's allowance legislation that was changed in Ottawa. I understand my colleague from Little Bow has brought up the subject. But I think it's an area where we certainly should take a look at giving some assistance.

I'm sure many members are faced with a problem where they lose their provider or spouse, and if they're from 60 to 65 there's no assistance for them. I was certainly pleased when I saw the changes in the federal legislation, where they were going back, I think, to 1976 to put them on assistance. I would certainly like the minister to take a look at coming up with some program to help these widows in that situation. It could be in several areas. They could be incorporated in renters' assistance or through our senior citizens' home improvement program. So I certainly hope this area will be looked at. I don't think it is necessary for the minister to comment, because he has commented on the situation. But it's an area that sure concerns me.

Total Vote 5 — Benefits and Income Support	\$98,032,000
6.1 — Program Support	\$183,880
6.2 — Regional Delivery Services	\$1,706,080

63 — Agency Grants and Purchased Services

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to raise some questions with regard to vocational training. Maybe I could just list the questions, and the minister can respond to them. I was wondering what steps the minister has taken to establish a joint task force with the Alberta Association for the Mentally Retarded to assess existing vocational services, programs, and funding provisions, with a view to establishing a comprehensive continuum of vocational services for the handicapped across the province. Has the minister raised the amount in the budget for vocational training grants for handicapped people? I understand present grants are sufficient to provide the work space, but not particularly for other types of programs. And has money been allotted to a vocational assessment and placement unit to do testing to determine whether the intellectual and productive capabilities and attitudes are such that they could fit into a regular work situation? I understand at the present time that most of it is done by observation in work situations rather than formal types of testing.

MR. BOGLE: First, Mr. Chairman, the answer to the last question is no. No move has been made in that particular area. I have the first and the third question. The second question was?

MR. R. SPEAKER: With regard to the raising of the vocational training grants.

MR. BOGLE: One of the things I'm currently aware of are some difficulties several of our sheltered workshops are facing. However, in looking at the matter more closely, we find that some of the funding which has been

provided for the administration has in fact been rechannelled to do other things not directly related to the workshop, to do educational programming and so on for the society.

Over the summer, early fall, I intend to have at least one workshop session with representatives from the various organizations across the province. I had an opportunity last Saturday to go through a rehabilitation facility of one of the societies in the province and see some of the things they were doing: bottle sorting, cans, paper. It's quite an exciting endeavor.

But, Mr. Chairman, a concern we have is that if money is taken from its originally designated purpose to provide the administration — for the sheltered workshop, as an example — and rechannelled to do some other work for the society, then we're in a situation where we're robbing Peter to pay Paul. That's not the answer. Generally speaking, yes, the matter is under consideration and review. I'll be following up with representatives from the organizations sometime during the late summer/early fall.

I'd like to add that as a result of some direct input given to me, I believe there is a need — and you won't find it reflected in our budget — for some additional assistance to ensure that the various organizations from across the province are better able to communicate and share information than they are now. Therefore, that may be one of the topics for consideration during a workshop that we would have later in the year.

The first question asked was with regard to a joint review by, I believe, the Alberta Association for the Mentally Retarded and the government. I've had one meeting with the new president and the two vice-presidents of the association. We've agreed to discuss a number of questions at a later time, one of which centres around their funding. As I'm sure the hon. member is aware, at the present time we provide funding to the Alberta association on a core-funding basis. I'm exploring a change in funding with the association at the present time so we could provide more of the funding directly to the 35 regional associations for the mentally retarded across the province. They in turn can fund their parent association. That's a matter which is under consideration. There won't be any moves made on that in the next few months.

But I did indicate and share my feelings with the president that when the province provides funding to organizations where there are regional or local organizations or councils and a provincial body, the provincial body in all cases should reflect the views of those local regional groups. The best way to ensure that is the funding accountability. Therefore, we've discussed that matter. In addition, we've discussed other areas of concern: the request for a review of Michener Centre and other such things. I anticipate that in the future Mrs. Pam Friesen and I, along with other members of her executive, will be addressing this question further.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, in another area, the people of Lac La Biche and district and their association for the handicapped have wanted to establish a vocational training centre. It's my understanding that there isn't money in this budget for their vocational training centre. I was wondering what the status of that decision is at the present time.

MR. BOGLE: I cannot respond positively to the request at the present time. The hon. member will note in 6.3 a

very substantial increase in the funding we're providing, a 25.5 per cent increase. I don't want to leave the impression, Mr. Chairman, that that will meet all the requests around the province. We are growing in that part of our department at a very dramatic rate. We'll reassess it over the year. That's the best I can offer at this time.

Agreed to:

6.3 — Agency Grants and Purchased Services	\$6,892,400
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64 — Vocational Opportunities for Disadvantaged Adults

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, to the minister on 6.4. First of all, a question of detail on the elements, page 144, 6.4.6. The administration has gone up by approximately 25 per cent. Perhaps the minister could outline why we have an increase in the administration.

Secondly, I'd like the minister to advise the committee what relationship there is between the Alberta Opportunity Corps on one hand and some of the services provided by Advanced Education and Manpower, particularly with respect to manpower training. In northern Alberta, the operation of the CVCs, the community vocational centres — which are technically under the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower — it would seem to me would be complemented by, or at least blend into, the function of the Alberta Opportunity Corps.

MR. BOGLE: The first question relating to the administration of the Opportunity Corps: as the hon. member is aware, we're operating now in a number of communities across northern Alberta. A fair number of possible expansions are under consideration. In fact, I think we're now in 14 communities in all, with something like 175 trainees.

The question of the relationship to the community vocational centres as an offshoot through the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower and their program: it's fair to say that there is a close working relationship between the two. From my point of view, the Opportunity Corps is a very exciting and challenging program. I've had the opportunity to visit several on-site projects in various communities in northern Alberta. I think the dollars that are being invested are extremely well spent in assisting with the people in those particular areas. Again, the administration costs can be reflected back to the expanse, the territory covered, and the cost of administering programs in 14 separate communities.

Agreed to:

6.4 — Vocational Opportunities for Disadvantaged Adults	\$2,775,350
Total Vote 6 — Vocational Rehabilitation Services	\$11,557,710

Vote 7 — Services for the Handicapped:

7.1 — Program Support	\$504,930
7.2 — Community Development and Referral	\$1,937,120
7.3 — Agency Grants and Purchased Services	\$11,484,810

74 — Residence and Treatment in Institutions

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to raise the matter I raised in the Assembly the other day with regard

to the transfer from Baker Centre and the future of the 44 young people who will be moved out of Christine Meikle school because of the school board decision in Calgary. I was wondering if the minister has had an opportunity to meet with the school board and a chance to look at some of the plans ahead for these young people. Is there a meeting to be established with the parents who represent these 44 young people? What type of plans has the minister in mind and what action should the parents take in assisting him in dealing with the matter?

MR. BOGLE: If I recall correctly, the first day the question was raised I was caught off guard. I was not familiar with the work done by the Christine Meikle school. I took the question as notice. The following day I reported that in fact the school had advised the parents that as of September 1, 1980, they would not be dealing with those individuals over the age of 18. Therefore, approximately 44 young adults would not be dealt with at the school. I believe I further indicated in *Hansard*, and I think *Hansard* will bear this out, Mr. Chairman, that a meeting was planned for the first full week of May — that's this week — between representatives of our department and the public school board in Calgary and the Christine Meikle school. I have not had an update on that meeting. I'm very cognizant of the fact that the clock is ticking; it's now May. As of September 1, 1980, 44 individuals will not be accommodated in the school. We will look at the needs of those individuals and of the situation and do the very best we can in terms of filling the gap.

MR. MAGEE: Mr. Chairman, in this vote there is a total increase in funding for Michener Centre in the constituency of Red Deer of some \$1,216,330. I would like some elaboration from the minister along these lines: while it has been an often expressed policy of the department to move ambulatory patients into group homes throughout the province as much as possible — and I certainly concur with that very laudatory move to put these people in close proximity to their families and move them away from the large institutions such as Michener Centre — could the minister advise what the plans are for large institutions such as Michener Centre.

In addition, there is a large number of jobs at this centre at this time. Some concerns have been expressed to me on the part of numerous people employed at this institution, which incidentally is the largest employer of people in the city of Red Deer or surrounding towns. Mr. Chairman, could the minister indicate whether this increase in funding for this institution indicates a continued high use for this facility. It's my observation that this institution has grown up through the years from the previous government's administration, and was designed with the ideas prevalent at that time for institutions, which in those days was to have few wards and many, many people in them, large day rooms for exercise and recreational purposes, and large dormitories for a considerable number of residents all grouped together. Are there plans for the minister and his group to redesign these large wards and reduce the number of patients in each area?

Finally, Mr. Chairman, because of my closeness to this location and to its functions, I'm aware that there's a considerable turnover in staff, because it takes a special kind of person to deal with the day to day supervision of some of these unfortunate people who, in many cases, are incontinent. Of course in-service training becomes an

important element of the operation of this institution. Mr. Chairman, could the minister advise on this important aspect of the operation, and if this vote provides the funding necessary to keep in-service training at a high level despite the fact that the population of residents is dropping even though the numbers of non-ambulatory patients are on the increase.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Could we have some order in the Assembly please.

MR. BOGLE: Just before responding to the questions posed by the hon. Member for Red Deer, I'd like to respond to the earlier question by the hon. Member for Lethbridge West as to comfort allowances, as it is covered in 7.4. The comfort allowances are being increased from \$25 to \$35 per month. That's being done in two stages. That's in keeping with the hon. member's concern that some funding be provided to individuals who may be wards of the province and, as such, do not qualify for the Alberta assured income for the severely handicapped or other programs. In some cases this is the only spending money those individuals have. So the lady can have her hair done a couple of times a month, or other comforts, other out-of-pocket expenses the individual requires: that's the purpose of this fund. I hope that's an adequate response to the hon. member's question as to the comfort allowance.

On the matter of Michener Centre and the long-term plan for the facility, Mr. Chairman, this is not a popular statement to make and I don't intend it to offend anyone, but from my point of view there will always be the need for institutions and some institutional beds. I do not believe, as some people do, that all individuals can function properly in a group home setting. Therefore, I see the need for facilities like Michener Centre. The exact use could be changed. I believe there are currently 1,600 clients at Michener Centre. That's a considerable drop over the past 10 years. As the number of clients has dropped and more individuals, particularly higher functioning individuals, have gone into group home settings, the mix of clients at Michener Centre has changed. At the present time we are working on some long-term plans for Michener Centre.

Those dedicated individuals who work at the facility should not be alarmed by my comments, should not feel that their jobs are in jeopardy. That is not the case. As I've indicated, there will always be the need for Michener Centre. As changes take place and new programs are developed, I would assume that the staff/client ratio will change accordingly. That's an important aspect. I've made a public commitment with the president of the Alberta Association for the Mentally Retarded that I wish to review with their association the long-term plans the government has for Michener Centre and for clients now housed in that facility. I would intend to do the same thing, through the MLA for Red Deer, with the employees of the department who work in that facility and provide such fine care.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I don't think we're going to finish this vote, but I would just like to ask the minister one question with regard to the announcement the other day on the mini-institutions and the care facilities we're going to be establishing in the province. I

wonder if the minister is considering that type of facility for the city of Edmonton. I was asked to make a special effort to ask the minister that question.

MR. BOGLE: Yes, Mr. Chairman, in the long term. As the hon. member knows, the counterpart to Baker Centre in Calgary is the Eric Cormack Centre here in Edmonton, the old Misericordia site just a few blocks to the west of us. As that is really a temporary location, in the longer term nothing's on paper at this point in time, but I'm very excited by the challenge of rather than building one new large free-standing facility in Edmonton, housing all the clients currently in the Eric Cormack Centre, or even allowing some to go into group homes but keeping those who are medically dependent and fragile in a large facility. I'd be more excited by the prospects of one facility in Edmonton and possibly two smaller facilities, one in northern Alberta and one in eastern Alberta, to follow the example we're using in the south in terms of bringing clients closer to their homes.

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. PURDY: 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, if hon. members agree, I would like the record of the Assembly to show that the consent that was gained in Committee of Supply, in regard to the continuation beyond the designated one hour this afternoon, is in fact a consent of the Assembly. I would ask Your Honour to confirm that to the House.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CRAWFORD: Before adjourning until tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, maybe I could just add that we propose to continue in Committee of Supply tomorrow afternoon. The departments under consideration would be Social Services and Community Health, followed by Tourism and Small Business and, potentially, Municipal Affairs, and Hospitals and Medical Care.

MR. SPEAKER: It may be of interest to hon. members that today is the 100th anniversary of the institution of *Hansard* in the House of Commons in Ottawa. It wasn't the first *Hansard* in Canada. The one in Halifax, I think, preceded it. But it is the 100th anniversary of the Dominion *Hansard*, although I would rather question whether it was as efficient as our *Hansard*. Nevertheless, it is an anniversary.

[At 5:31 p.m., on motion, the House adjourned to Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.]