

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA**

Title: **Wednesday, October 28, 1981 2:30 p.m.**

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

**PRAYERS**

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 242**

**An Act to Amend**

**The Agricultural Development Act**

**Bill 243**

**An Act to Amend**

**The Alberta Opportunity Fund Act**

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce two Bills: Bill No. 242, An Act to Amend The Agricultural Development Act; and Bill No. 243, An Act to Amend The Alberta Opportunity Fund Act.

Very briefly, in both cases the objective, consistent with Small Business Week, would be to remove the lender of last resort feature of both Bills.

I move first reading of Bill No. 242.

[Motion carried; Bill 242 read a first time]

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill No. 243, An Act to Amend The Alberta Opportunity Fund Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 243 read a first time]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the annual report of the Department of the Solicitor General for the year ended March 31, 1981.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, nine members of Branch 55, the Foothills Hospital, Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. I believe all but one now live in the beautiful constituency of Calgary Bow. They're in the members gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. MACK: Mr. Speaker, it's my distinct pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly 27 grade 6 students from the North Edmonton Christian school. They are accompanied today by their teacher Mr. Stolte, and their bus driver Mr. Harry Bas. They are seated in the members gallery, and I would like them to rise now and receive the cordial welcome of the Assembly.

MR. LITTLE: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you, and through you to the members of this Assembly, 90 students from the Strathcona Tweedsmuir school in the constituency of Calgary West. Forty-five of the students are seated in the members gallery and 45 in the public gallery. This trip was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Calgary South. They are accompanied by their group leader Don Hildt, teacher Jerry Blais, and assistant principal Peter Ditchburn. I request that the students rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

MRS. LeMESSURIER: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me today to introduce to you and to this Assembly 14 students from the Alberta Vocational College situated in Edmonton Centre. They are here today with their leader Ada Nanning and are seated in the public gallery. I ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

**Social Care Facilities Review Committee**

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health and is with regard to the Social Care Facilities Review Committee and its terms of reference in investigating various needs and reviewing the activities of various social services across the province. In light of the fact that a number of reviews by this committee have taken place and, following the reviews, the Ombudsman in turn had to review the matters and raised a number of allegations and concerns, and there was patient abuse, I wonder if the minister is considering either abandoning the use of this committee or changing the terms of reference.

MR. BOGLE: No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, could the minister indicate that this committee has toured an adequate number of social care facilities across this province and that the minister is satisfied that those investigations carried out were competent?

MR. BOGLE: I certainly can, Mr. Speaker. If the hon. member would care to read the annual report of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee, he will see a full report of the visitations made by the committee during that period of time. The responsibilities of the committee are clearly outlined in the legislation passed in this Assembly last year, and the responsibilities are being carried out in a very prudent and meaningful way.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. I don't think the facts present themselves to that effect when you read the reports [interjections] and recognize what the Ombudsman found upon investigation. Could the minister indicate whether the committee is required, or has been able, to visit all the social care facilities or institutions across the province?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, I'd first like to ask for some clarification. Twice the hon. member has made reference to the Ombudsman. Would he clarify exactly what he is referring to?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd certainly like to talk about the Ombudsman. Now that I have the opportunity, I'd like to proceed, if that's at all within the guidelines at this point in time.

My question was certainly very clear: how many facilities across the province has the review committee visited? Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say that there are some 903, and I know they visited a very small percentage of those 903.

Secondly, with regard to a question about the Ombudsman.

MR. SPEAKER: Possibly we could deal with one question at a time.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker allowed the minister to ask a question, and I was only answering it. Now that we have that established, we can proceed to the next question with regard to the Ombudsman.

Could the minister indicate whether there will be any type of change in the format of the Alberta Hospital or the hospital at Ponoka with regard to administration, in terms of placing the hospitals under a board of directors, which may eliminate the possibility of the Ombudsman reviewing within those institutions matters with regard to care that is adequate for the patients therein?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, through indirect comments, the hon. member has left in this Assembly an impression with regard to the Ombudsman and his role vis-a-vis the Social Care Facilities Review Committee which I believe needs to be clarified. I believe it important that the hon. member clarify what he's referring to through innuendo, because I am not aware of any matter investigated by the Ombudsman of this province that refutes or in any way challenges the credibility of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee. I would like that clarification, Mr. Speaker.

With regard to the question as to how many facilities have been visited by the Social Care Facilities Review Committee, as of September 11 this year, approximately 497 facilities were visited by members of the committee, a very remarkable track record considering the fact that we have a committee of citizens of this province who are dedicated to assisting in this government's desire and obligation to provide the best kind of quality care possible.

Mr. Speaker, the last question asked by the member referred to the matter currently contained in Bill No. 70, the amendments to The Mental Health Act. I look for the hon. member's comments on that legislation, when it is debated in second reading.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a further question. I'd like to raise with the hon. minister the visit of the committee to Alberta Hospital. That was one visit in 15 months. At that point, there were no reported problems. Following that visit, we find that in August 1981 there was a second visit to view a handicraft exhibition. That time the review committee didn't enter the facility. It was more important to look at the handicraft exhibition. But following that we find, with further review, that the Ombudsman . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. I fail to detect anything which might end in a question mark. Is the hon. leader reviewing a report point by point, or does he want to get some information?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, the minister would ask another question and I thought, well, it may be a good time to answer that question.

The Ombudsman being involved, could the minister comment on that particular situation with regard to the activities of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee? Were they satisfactory?

MR. BOGLE: I've already answered that question, Mr. Speaker. They certainly were. The fact that members of the committee made two visits to the Alberta Hospital Edmonton and, during those visits, found conditions to be in order, is no different from the fact that members of the general public have visited the facilities; I have myself on a number of occasions, as have senior members of the department.

If the hon. member is suggesting that on a visit you would automatically identify concerns which may be held, that's not always the case. Very clearly, there are matters which can and often do come to the attention of committees which visit facilities, in terms of the cleanliness, the preparation of food, the services provided by staff members, and how various members of that facility feel about the kinds of services they are receiving.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. I have already established that the minister isn't considering reviewing the terms of reference, but is he considering increasing the powers of the committee to review the techniques used with regard to counselling and with regard to the care of the patients beyond just cleaning, beyond just observations of the facility?

MR. BOGLE: The hon. member may wish to elaborate further on the import of this question but, very clearly, the purpose of the committee is to provide another set of eyes and ears for the people of Alberta, to ensure that the facilities which the Department of Social Services and Community Health operates and/or funds, either totally or in part, are in fact providing the best quality care to Albertans. I'm fully satisfied with the information we've been given and the assistance by the dedicated Albertans who make up the Social Care Facilities Review Committee. It is money very well invested by the people of this province, through the government, to carry out that mandate.

#### **Air Travel by Cabinet Ministers**

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my second question to the Minister of Government Services. It's with regard to a matter tabled in the Legislature yesterday, in terms of the use of government aircraft. I'd like to ask the minister whether there is a written set of guidelines, and would the minister table those guidelines in the Legislature?

MR. McCRAE: No, Mr. Speaker, and therefore I cannot table them.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Could the minister indicate whether the use of aircraft by ministers is cleared through the minister's department? If not, does the minister keep a running record of the use of aircraft in this province by ministers?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to give a short answer. Do I keep a running record? Yes, and yes, because we table it in the Legislature each year.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my first question was whether the ministers cleared the use of aircraft through the minister's department or through some official in the minister's department. I'm not sure the minister answered that question.

As well, could the minister indicate whether one of the priority uses of aircraft is in instances when chartered aircraft are not travelling a certain passenger route?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, I think perhaps the best way to deal with the two questions would be to explain the system we use.

First of all, as to whether I or someone else in the Executive Council has the responsibility for approving individual flights by ministers or other staff, I would say no, we don't, because the ministers all use their own discretion. We have a certain understanding, a certain rule of thumb, if you would, or set of guidelines that are generally agreed to. If there is a commercial flight going from point A to point B, then normally, with a few exceptions which I will come to, the ministers, or whoever, would use the commercial flight.

If the trip being undertaken is a business trip requiring confidential or other discussions, or a working meeting, so to speak, between ministers and officials or others, then it is appropriate to have a non-commercial aircraft. The aircraft in question may be a government aircraft. However, because of the busy schedules of government and recognizing that we try to keep a balance between government aircraft we use and private sector aircraft, if in fact all the government aircraft are in use, then commercial aircraft would be used if a private aircraft or private flight is required. Again, Mr. Speaker, that is within the discretion of the individual minister.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. In his responsibility for these flights, could the minister indicate the use of the Bell 206B helicopter on April 25, 1981, for four ministers around Edmonton, just in Edmonton local, for \$1,422.39, and another one by the Premier, \$769.95. I was wondering if there was any type of commercial vehicle that could substitute, for that cost.

MR. NOTLEY: Like a car.

MR. SPEAKER: I realize that the hon. leader's question rather flatters the minister's memory of detail, perhaps, since it's a question that would be very much suited for the Order Paper. If the minister happens to have the information, I suppose we could deal with it. But I wouldn't want to get into the custom, during question period, of having questions of that kind of detail asked. As we know, our *Standing Orders* make other provisions for that type of question.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, rewording the question to the minister more directly: is a helicopter used to transport ministers between the Legislature Building and the municipal or the international airport? Is this some \$700 one way for that type of expense?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, to answer the question. Apparently, if that is the information that resulted from the tabling yesterday, yes, the aircraft or helicopter could

be used for that.

Mr. Speaker, if I might respond to the first question, which I think was: was there not a private sector or commercial flight available? That was the very thing included in the tabling: that was a commercial flight on a helicopter.

Mr. Speaker, the justification for that is the need. I can't get into the details of individual flights without talking to the ministers in question, but if four of them were in a helicopter or an aircraft, I think the justification for that is abundantly obvious. There are so many things going on that require not necessarily a ground approach but an air approach.

MR. R. CLARK: Are you serious?

MR. McCRAE: If members opposite are about to give up their flight time, or whatever, I'm sure we'd certainly consider that an appropriate move.

From time to time, government members do have need to fly in both government and commercial aircraft, and I am persuaded that the use of aircraft is not only conservative but appropriate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, if I could briefly supplement the answers of the hon. Minister of Government Services. One of the trips by helicopter — and I'm not sure if it's the one the hon. member is referring to — was made in connection with the review of the Edmonton annexation application. The reason for using a helicopter was that we found it difficult to get a car up to that altitude. [interjections]

MR. R. CLARK: On that trip, the minister wasn't involved.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my only comment is that if the ministers are up in the air, they're certainly untouchable; it removes them from any position of conflict of interest.

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Government Services. Could the minister confirm that the helicopter is used between the Legislature Building and the airport, and that in his rule of thumb, or unwritten rules, would it not be good advice to the ministers to use a taxi, which is only \$7 and 15 minutes of time?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, that needs responding to. In the material I tabled, there's no evidence that the use of a helicopter between this building and the airport is a common occurrence. The information apparently reveals that on one occasion, a flight of that nature took place. I'm entirely satisfied that if one were to examine the reason for the trip in the past years, and so on, the justification would be there. It isn't a thing that's abused, and it isn't a thing of great joy for any member to board a helicopter here and fly off to the international airport. If it requires to be done, it requires to be done.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary. In the review of these flights by the minister and the minister responsible for setting policy, are ministers required to outline reasons for a flight on a chartered route from, say, Edmonton to Toronto or I believe one from Edmonton to San Francisco? Does the minister require

other ministers to indicate the reason, so that the policy as to the use of aircraft can be reviewed?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, we've gone into the policy, guidelines, or rule of thumb, and the understanding we all have. As to whether or not I insist on individual ministers justifying their trip to me, the answer is no. They all have a good deal of discretion, most of them probably as much or more than I have. Having to substitute my judgment for theirs would be an imprudence or an impudence that really we haven't visited on them.

Mr. Speaker, the amount spent in a three-year period — I have the same material the member has right now — has been kindly estimated by a member of the press at something like \$200,000, and really is not an inordinate amount. When you compare the use of private or commercial aircraft to the use of government aircraft, I would think it really is not a matter of great financial magnitude.

#### **Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

DR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, the question is to the Provincial Treasurer. I wonder if the minister would indicate to the House whether any funds in the Heritage Savings Trust Fund are not accounted for to date. Mr. Speaker, I ask that question hopefully to do away with any impression or indication that approximately \$60 million was not accounted for.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't want the impression left that any moneys have been unaccounted for or mislaid with respect to any aspect of the heritage fund. The facts, as supported by the Auditor General of the province, are that every single dollar has been accounted for, that not one dime has been mislaid, that there's no evidence of collusion or fraud, and that there's no evidence of mismanagement with respect to investment policy. Those are facts supported by the Auditor General.

#### **Federal Budget**

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Provincial Treasurer. In view of the announcement by federal authorities that the budget is to be announced on November 12, has Canada's Minister of Finance requested a meeting with the provincial treasurers and finance ministers prior to that?

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, no he has not. In fact, over the past five or six months, the finance ministers of the 10 provinces have been actively seeking a meeting with Mr. MacEachen with respect to fiscal relations. I would think that Albertans generally would be, and have been, waiting for some weeks in seeking from the federal government, through the budget, some positive signals and evidence of the fact that they intend to come to grips with the interest rate problem and begin a program of economic recovery. Unfortunately, the federal government continues to delay and procrastinate with the federal budget.

MR. GOGO: A supplementary question for clarification, Mr. Speaker. Is it correct that the minister has indicated that, in view of the statements made by the federal minister of housing and Canada's Finance Minister that they're prepared to do something with regard to mortgage

rates for Canadians, the Provincial Treasurer has not been asked for suggestions as to how that might be carried out?

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the House some days ago, when a meeting was held a number of weeks ago now with the federal Minister of Finance, we actively put forward suggestions with respect to the serious problems the interest rate policy of the federal government was causing in western Canada in general, and Alberta in particular, and set forth a number of solutions and ways in which they didn't have to track the American interest rates to bring down the real problem, which is the high level of interest rates in the country. That has been a constant and continual piece of advice from this government, certainly, to the federal government over past months. We'll have to wait and see the extent to which they react to it.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. For the information of this Assembly, could the Provincial Treasurer table the document provided to the federal Minister of Finance?

MR. HYNDMAN: There wasn't a document, Mr. Speaker. We were using our best verbal persuasive powers on a large number of occasions at meetings around the table.

MR. NOTLEY: Rule of thumb.

#### **Livestock Industry Study**

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, perhaps we could go from the rule-of-thumb, back-of-the-envelope approach and ask the government, through the Minister of Agriculture, if the minister is in a position to advise the Assembly today what response the government proposes with respect to the release of the Horner report on the meat industry review.

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, it's our understanding that Dr. Horner released his study today. I've had the opportunity to have that study for about four or five days, and I've gone through the total study once. One has to recognize that it's a report and some recommendations that cover the total industry, starting from land use, going through production, marketing, the upgrading of the industry — its past, present, and future. I would suggest to the hon. member that it's going to take more than a couple of days' review and study, recognizing some of the sweeping recommendations that cover the province, the federal government, western Canada and, indeed, as it affects the industry in North America. It'll take some time, and I wouldn't want to pass comment on any part of the study at this time.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. I certainly wouldn't want the hon. minister to rush. But in view of the fact that we've had representations from cattlemen across the province and the Alberta Cattle Commission, and now the Horner report that there should in fact be a one-time payment, on an equitable basis, to cattle production sectors, what specific response is the minister prepared to give to this Assembly today to Dr. Horner's recommendation with respect to that one-time payment, in view of the fact that

it is so broadly supported, especially by the Alberta Cattle Commission?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, I recognize the comments by Dr. Horner in presenting the recommendation on his views as to what should happen to the livestock industry in the short term, and at this time could say that that recommendation will be considered with the other suggestions presented on behalf of the livestock industry as to the short-term answer. Recognizing the background of material and the opportunity over the summer and fall for Dr. Horner to touch base with many aspects of the industry, one would have to consider the recommendation in that light.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. In view of the fact that cattle prices in the Peace River country have reached very low levels — 42 cents a pound for heifer calves — is the minister in a position to advise the Assembly whether any change has been made in the time frame for considering the short-term proposal of the Alberta Cattle Commission, now endorsed by Dr. Horner, to assist hard-pressed cattlemen who need some kind of one-time, short-term assistance?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, the opportunity for the market place, the indicators for livestock prices in northern Alberta: in fact, Fairview shows the average running from 65 to 71. I only mention that as it's the average for that particular week, which happens to be last week, through the auction marts.

The time frame hasn't changed, recognizing that the Cattle Commission is nicely under way, and I don't think quite halfway through the total meetings being held throughout the province. I understand those meetings should be concluded by mid-November. The conclusion of those meetings would in no way indicate a time frame which would tie the government to making any decision, but certainly the outcome of those meetings will provide a certain amount of background to add to the request originally made on behalf of the Cattle Commission for government to make some decision at that time.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Is the minister in a position to advise the House of the specific obstacles at this stage to the government reaching a conclusion? The minister indicates that a time frame isn't possible. We have the recommendations of the Alberta Cattle Commission; we have the recommendation of Dr. Horner. What specific obstacles preclude the government from giving to Alberta cattle producers assurance that there will be a yea or nay decision in the next two or three weeks?

MR. SCHMIDT: I know of no physical obstacle, Mr. Speaker. We're still in the process of meeting and receiving submissions, on behalf of all segments of the industry, as to what direction the government should go. To date, although getting closer to an agreement on what the short-term policy should be, one also has to tie the initial short term with some long-term solutions if we're going to benefit the industry collectively.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. In view of the fact that the Alberta Cattle Commission represents the overwhelming majority of cattle producers in this province and in view of the fact that we now have a fairly straightforward position being advanced

throughout the province by the Alberta Cattle Commission, is the minister in a position to indicate what problems exist in terms of agreement among cattle producers?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, we keep talking about obstacles — no obstacles that I'm aware of, other than that we happen to be in the latter phase of the total livestock industry; in other words, the key to the cow-calf industry. We're about centre of the main movement of replacement cattle that normally occurs at this time. In fact, for this particular time, Mr. Speaker, we are about a week or two behind the main flow. I guess that's the key one is looking at.

We're having the opportunity to work with the industry in watching the returns for replacement cattle, watching for the destinations to see if there are any changes, and sharing the information coming back from zone meetings which will give us the total indication as to what each segment of the industry and each geographic location of the province feels is the direction one should go.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. During the government's very, very careful evaluation, one that is taking all sorts of time, could the minister advise the Assembly whether at this stage the government has any target date at all for a policy statement? The end of the year; the end of the fiscal year? Will any target date be given as to when this agonizing process of appraisal — when we have widespread support for short-term policy — when, in fact, the government will make up its mind?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, I believe that answer is being given both in and, indeed, out of the House. Recognizing that the close of the latter part of the last portion of the livestock industry will probably fall into place by the latter part of November, government certainly would be in a position to make whatever moves are necessary before the close of this year.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a further supplementary question . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Might this be the last supplementary, followed by a further supplementary by the hon. Member for Bow Valley.

MR. NOTLEY: . . . to the Associate Minister of Public Lands and Wildlife. What assessment has the minister's department made of the Horner proposal with respect to a "pioneer two" lands commission which would massively increase the amount of new agricultural land opened up in this province? When will we hear a formal response from the minister's department to what, in my judgment, is a very good proposal?

MR. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I haven't seen the proposal yet.

MR. MANDEVILLE: A supplementary question to the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that the minister just got the report today, but has he made a decision? Just how is he going to handle the report to implement some of the recommendations? Will he be setting up a committee to review the recommendations in the report?

There's one recommendation in the report for setting up a provincial Crown corporation called Alberta meats.

Could the minister indicate his feeling on setting up a Crown corporation in this area?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, about mid-summer, when several meetings had been held with the fat-cattle people and it appeared that one would have to have some background material and work closely with the industry, a committee was established with representation from both the industry and government. That committee has been working full time since that time.

It's my intention to add to that committee, if necessary, recognizing that other departments would be involved in the total review. I see no reason to start another committee, when we have a very knowledgeable group that represents a total cross-section. At the present time, it's my intention just to add to that, and charge them with the responsibility of doing some of the work in the review and an opportunity to come back with some suggestions, recognizing their close tie with the past history and the operation of the industry as it has shown up during the summer and fall.

MR. NOTLEY: One supplementary question . . .

MR. SPEAKER: With great respect, we've had six supplementaries from the hon. member, in addition to his first question. If there's time, we can come back to this topic.

#### **Water Quality — Bow River**

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Environment. It arises as a result of recent reports of levels of polychlorinated biphenyls, better known as PCBs, being discovered in the bodies of fish pulled from the Bow River and other rivers in southern Alberta. Can the minister advise the Assembly what specific steps are being taken by his department to determine the source of the polychlorinated biphenyls?

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Speaker, I really haven't had an opportunity to search through the department to see what progress is being made with regard to the question the Member for Calgary Lawn asks.

For the information of the Legislature, polychlorinated biphenyls are materials that in the past have been used primarily in transformers throughout the province. They have subsequently been banned from use for this particular purpose. In terms of analysis, they have been traced to some possible carcinogenic effect, certainly in the animal kingdom. As a result, of course, they have been banned from use. At the present time, all the major companies that use this particular material are withdrawing them from use and replacing them with other materials.

I'll take the question as notice and report further on the situation the member refers to.

MR. ZAOZIRNY: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. It is reported that a member of the department in fact has indicated that no study will be done to determine the source of the polychlorinated biphenyls. Could the minister also advise the Assembly whether or not that is the official position of his department? Specifically, could he determine what kind of measures are taken to police and ensure that polychlorinated biphenyls or materials contaminated by them are not being illegally dumped into our waterways? In the course of his investigation, could he also advise the Assembly on those matters?

MR. COOKSON: I could do that, Mr. Speaker. I think a decision with regard to further research would be made by me, not by the officials. They may have made a judgment on the basis of the minimal quantities found in a particular species or some nature like that. But the final decision on that issue would rest with me. I'll review it further.

#### **Feed Freight Assistance Program**

MR. MANDEVILLE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. Could the minister indicate what the response has been for the feed freight assistance program announced earlier in the fall?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, I think I've had two comments from areas where they feel the program will be of some assistance to them; in other words, although they harvested some grain, they are short of hay. In fact, I think I've had more comments from some of the areas that have a surplus of hay, reporting that it's moving into the hay-deficient areas — perhaps a greater number of those than I've heard from those involved in the areas that suffered some drought. To all intents and purposes the program seems to be meeting the needs that are there and is well accepted.

MR. MANDEVILLE: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister had any requests from other areas? I appreciate that municipalities can apply. Has he had any requests to extend the program to other areas in the province?

MR. SCHMIDT: No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MANDEVILLE: One further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister considered extending the program of freight assistance to fat-cattle feed?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, the feed freight assistance program has always been directly tied to the basic industry; in other words, the wintering of basic herds. We haven't given any thought to changing that approach.

MR. MANDEVILLE: Just one final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In the announcement, they pay 14 cents a ton/mile on hay and straw, 6 cents for silage, and 9 cents for pellets. Could the minister indicate why there's more assistance for hay and straw than for cubed hay?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, I think it's basically a matter of weight, volume, and tonnage.

#### **Highway Safety**

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Solicitor General flows from the answer he gave in the House yesterday, when he talked in terms of decriminalization of traffic violations and the Kirby report. My initial question is: what steps has the department taken with regard to the Kirby recommendation that minor traffic and parking offences should be removed from the criminal context?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, we're well along the road of developing a capacity to implement the recommendation by Mr. Justice Kirby. As I described yesterday, that is co-ordinating the informa-

tion flow through a computer system which ties in the court information from the Attorney General's Department, and the Solicitor General's Department as far as motor vehicle registrations and licences are concerned. The officials are now in phase three, I believe, of carrying forward that program.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Are we in phase three of a four-phase program or of a 10-phase program? I ask the question very, very candidly, because there's a growing feeling that as a result of this move towards decriminalization of traffic offences, less pressure is in fact being put on people to shape up in their driving habits.

MR. HARLE: I don't think that's the case at all, Mr. Speaker. When dealing with computers, it's very difficult for me as a layman to be able to predict whether it's going to be four phases or more. I say that because it's a very complicated system, and it must be a very accurate system in order to produce the expected results as a result of those recommendations. The work is ongoing at the present time.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister, dealing with this attitudinal thing once again. One of the recommendations Kirby made was that people wouldn't be guilty or not guilty but would either admit or dispute. Now, it's simply a question of attitude. My question clearly to the minister is: have we moved on that, and in fact are people now no longer guilty of traffic offences? Do they simply admit they've had a traffic offence? It's all a question of attitude again.

MR. HARLE: Yes, I think the hon. member was in the Assembly when we passed the legislation that created the traffic tag system. Certain offences are of course dealt with by traffic tags; others, more serious, are dealt with by a summons and a required court appearance. It is co-ordinating that system so that we can hopefully get away from — as Kirby implied in his recommendations — having to arrest, on outstanding warrants, people who have not paid the fines or the tags.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. What steps is the minister's department or the government taking to impress upon Albertans that it's still very, very serious when you go through a red light or you have a minor traffic violation? I raise the question in light of the fact that eight out of every 10 accidents in this province are a direct result of minor traffic accidents but, in fact, that's where people are being hurt. That's why we have the tremendous increase in fatalities and very serious accidents.

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of programs. Currently, I believe, some material on that is appearing on radio and TV. Perhaps the question should be directed to my colleague the Minister of Transportation.

MR. R. CLARK: I'd like to continue the questioning to the Solicitor General. It's as a result of the changing attitude in that department that people have this attitude that it isn't serious if you have these minor violations. Don't try to drag in the Minister of Transportation.

Specifically, what things is the Solicitor General's De-

partment doing to impress upon Albertans the importance of traffic violations?

MR. HARLE: At the present time, the consequence of not paying a traffic tag or failing to pay a fine is an arrest. That is the present system. We now have a very efficient method when a vehicle is stopped by a policeman. It takes about 5 minutes for that policeman to check the records in the Department of the Solicitor General, motor vehicles branch. Information is immediately available to the police officer. There is also a tie-in between the department's records and the CPIC system across Canada, so that police forces not only in this province but across Canada can pick up the same information. We are seeing the arrests. There has been some notoriety associated with arrests of people who have been picked up for what has been described in the press as relatively minor offences.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. It is quite obvious the minister is following, not leading. Can the minister indicate if he has any statistics to indicate . . . [interjection]. That's right, Don. He is following, not leading.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

DR. BUCK: Just wait. You'll get the question. Don't be impatient, boys. Mr. Speaker, I suppose if we went out and bought all the people in the province an airplane, instead of the Tory cabinet ministers, nobody would run into each other in cars.

Is the Solicitor General in a position to indicate if the number of drivers who have had their licences suspended because of demerit points or other reasons and uninsured drivers has risen significantly in the last year?

MR. HARLE: I indicated yesterday that there was a significant increase in the number of suspended drivers. For example, I just tabled the annual report of the department. As of December 31, 1980, there were 31,077 suspended drivers; by July 30, 1981, 39,905. So I think the conclusion can be drawn that a great amount of effort is being applied to enforcement of the highway traffic laws.

As far as the implication of how many of those may be driving is concerned, I can't give you any figures because obviously we don't know. We do have figures, which I don't have at the present time, on the number of people stopped in the Check Stop program, and how many offences of driving while suspended resulted from that process.

MR. SPEAKER: We've exceeded the time for the question period by several minutes. Since I've recognized the hon. Member for Cardston, if he has something that can be dealt with briefly, would the Assembly agree to deal with that?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

#### **Air Travel by Cabinet Ministers** (continued)

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Minister of Government Services arises from the sudden interest in the helicopter trips. Could the

minister inform the House of the name of the government official who was transported to the international airport?

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Speaker, that's a very important question, and the answer is probably even more important. It also would demonstrate the merits of the common-sense approach this government has taken to the use of aircraft, whether charter or in-house government aircraft. It would also show the difficulty in using a response that responds precisely to the question asked by the member of the opposition, in that it is not an adequate information base to get the full picture out there.

Mr. Speaker, the reference was to a March 25, 1980, helicopter flight from downtown Edmonton to the international airport. If it had been the member's wish, I suppose we could have sent the visitor by taxicab, by VIA Rail, by bus, by whatever. But the hon. gentleman did have a very important connection to make, and it was deemed imperative that we send him by helicopter. So Mr. Pepin, the federal Minister of Transport, flew in a helicopter on March 25, 1980. [laughter]

MR. NOTLEY: It should have been by VIA Rail, Stu.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, before going to Committee of Supply, I wonder if the House would allow me to give some information respecting a question asked some time ago.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

#### **School Bus Regulations**

MR. CRAWFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The late Member for Clover Bar asked this question of the Solicitor General on October 14. The Solicitor General undertook to check with officials for certain information.

DR. BUCK: [Inaudible] at least here, Mr. Speaker.

MR. CRAWFORD: It turns out the information was available through the records of the Attorney General's Department, and I thought I would refer briefly to it and provide the hon. member with a short sheet of statistical information. The question had to do with whether or not there are significant prosecutions for people violating and passing, coming and going, school buses that have flashing lights on. My understanding is that those prosecutions are under Section 87 of The Highway Traffic Act.

This year, they are running at about the same rate as the last two years. Two years ago, they appeared to increase significantly over the previous year, which is as far back as the statistical information goes. In 1980, the total number of voluntary payments under all subsections of that section were 230; for the first six months of 1981, 109. I think the level is similar. In the docket cases, which would be the more serious ones: 165 in 1980, and 83 for the first six months of 1981. So it seems fairly consistent, Mr. Speaker. I'll provide a copy of this to the hon. member.

#### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

MR. SPEAKER: Last week, the hon. Member for Spirit-River Fairview was going to ask a question in question

period, concerning a person who is a civil servant of this government. At the time, I expressed concern about whether the matter was sub judice. The hon. member asked me to defer dealing with it further until he might be in the House.

Having looked into the facts with regard to the letter of August 27, 1981, which is what the hon. member was asking about, I am now able to say that that particular matter and that letter are not before the courts, although it may well be that they may be if the proceedings on the other matters continue, because they are closely related; they involve the same person. Therefore I would say that questions with regard to the letter of August 27 should be allowed, assuming of course that they are of an appropriate nature.

#### **head: COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

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

#### **ALBERTA HERITAGE SAVINGS TRUST FUND CAPITAL PROJECTS DIVISION 1982-83 ESTIMATES OF PROPOSED INVESTMENTS**

#### **Department of Environment**

#### **4 — Land Reclamation**

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. When we left this subject on Monday, the minister was just about to elaborate on his response to an earlier question of mine in regard to an expenditure of \$185,000 at Cardiff. At the time, we rose and the minister was interrupted in the middle of his response. Perhaps he might take up from there.

MR. COOKSON: I can do that, Mr. Chairman. The question had to do with the high cost in the case of Cardiff, where we were considerably above the average figure the member presented. The information I have on the Cardiff case is that there was a large underground mine cave-in, which was unknown at the time. As a result of the reclamation of that, including reclamation of fairly substantially sized spoil piles, both areas were dealt with in the costs. In addition, there was reclamation of an old landfill site.

A question was asked, too, about the relative expenditure on research. The estimate is that about 20 per cent of the research is done in-house by our people, based on their expertise, and the balance, or about 80 per cent, is contracted out. The research work we're doing is done by application. For example, universities will ask to have a proposal assessed or evaluated. We will fund if we accept the terms of reference. There are some private consulting companies that make submissions to us, and a fairly substantial amount of research work is done by the Research Council of Alberta.

The Member for Olds-Didsbury asked a question, I think, about the use of trees for sites, replanting and so on. We do supply these as part of the total project. There was also a question, I think, about the Carstairs situation, insofar as landfill is concerned. This may help to answer that question. At the present time, we have in front of us

a number of requests from counties, municipal districts, and towns, to be dealt with in our '82-83 budget. Without going into detail on all that are before us at this time, there is an application from Carstairs. We'll process them, take them in order of the speed at which we can process the requests, and contract the work on the basis of the fund that's allocated from the trust fund this year. [interjection] As I said, I have a list of about 25 applications. They will be processed on the basis of first come, first served, based on the speed at which we can draft a contract with the municipalities. So it depends where it is in the peck order.

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Also on the last day we were discussing this particular item, the minister read through a document that dealt with the research that had gone on for the first five years of the program. Near the conclusion, the minister indicated that the document from which he was quoting would be made available to the members. Does the minister have that document available for members today?

MR. COOKSON: In the area of research, the document I covered last day dealt with projects that are still in the process of being researched or have been completed. This document contains other information. I haven't got a separate document, but I would be happy to provide that to the member; that is to say, the document would contain the present research work being done. Perhaps we can also provide the applications that are before us at present, that will be processed for the '82-83 year.

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Again, the last day we discussed this particular item, it was noted that over the last five years, or the full period of the program, less than 50 per cent of the appropriation had actually been expended. I wonder if the minister might perhaps address that in a little different way; that is, indicate to the Assembly how much land will be reclaimed as a result of the expenditure of the \$3.5 million that is estimated for land reclamation, and how much land has been reclaimed through the expenditures over the life of the program.

MR. COOKSON: I'll try to get that information for the member. I just can't place my hands on ... The two questions you would like answered would be the amount of acres or hectares of land that were reclaimed last year — perhaps you could clarify the year, and whether dealing with land reclamation with regard to landfills and/or lagoons, or a total. If you could just clarify that, I'll see if I can pull that together for you.

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, for greater certainty for the minister, my first question is specifically in regard to this vote: \$3.5 million being requested for land reclamation. My question is: how much land is this amount of money intended to reclaim? Is one acre being reclaimed and, if so, is that an expenditure of \$3.5 million for one acre, or are there 3.5 million acres, which means the expenditure is \$1 for each acre. Certainly in the preparation of the estimates, when the material was brought together, I think somebody must have said this is the amount of land we intend to reclaim with the \$3.5 million.

The reason I've gone back to the previous years is that several times throughout the discussion on Monday afternoon, the minister referred to previous years. As a

matter of fact, the first question I asked this afternoon was in response to the minister's iteration of all the research programs undertaken over the five years of the program. And again, Mr. Chairman, the minister says the estimate for the coming year is primarily based on expenditure from the year before. That's where we come up with the figure.

Aside from my first question — specifically, how many acres is it intended to reclaim with the \$3.5 million — my second question is, how much land has in fact been reclaimed over the five years of the program? The reason I'm asking that again is because over the last five years we've only spent one half of the appropriations the Legislature has approved. If we want to go on past experience, that the target was X number of acres over those years but we came in at only one half or 50 per cent of X, then perhaps that has relevance to what we're asking today.

MR. COOKSON: Well, Mr. Chairman, we might be able to give you a ballpark figure as to the acreage or hectares that will be reclaimed in the '82-83 year. As I indicated just a minute ago, we have about 30 applications in now. These applications are simply requests from local authorities as to whether funds will be available and what they have to do in order to qualify for the program. We don't necessarily take into consideration the acreages so much as the number of applications initially.

When we start going through the process, once we've received these applications, we draft a contract with the municipality, and that permits us to go in and contract out to complete the project. We simply continue throughout the year, and we will in '82-83. If we expend the funds and there's still demand for continuous work, we would like to come back to ask for additional funds. We process these as rapidly as possible, and we contract them out. In a sense we are at the mercy of weather conditions, and we simply proceed on that basis.

I suppose it is not difficult to run through the system on the basis of the expenditure incurred in past years, say in '80-81, look through the contracts, use a calculation, and determine the actual acreages that were done. But I don't think the acreage has much bearing totally on how much we complete in a year. A lot of it will hinge on the speed at which we process the applications, tender the projects, and get them done, based on weather conditions.

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. I don't think it's unreasonable to ask how much land will be reclaimed under this appropriation. For example, when the Minister of Economic Development has come before the House with a request for money for hopper cars, that minister has said to the House that if this Legislature approves a \$50 million expenditure, you're going to get 1,000 hopper cars. The only question I'm posing to the minister is, what will we get in return for the expenditure of \$5 million. Now the ballpark number the minister has referred to is adequate, provided we could get the information prior to the vote. All I'm asking is, what do we get for what we pay?

I wonder if the minister might be prepared to answer some other questions, please, if I may put them to him. I just ask the indulgence of the Chair to list the questions first and then get the response of the minister in regard to his ability to respond to the questions. In regard to this vote, I wonder if the minister could provide to us: one, details of the original estimated cost and scope of each project; two, the cost and scope revisions; three, the cost

incurred to the end of the previous fiscal year; four, the current year forecast; five, expenditures to be appropriated for the next fiscal year; six, estimated future year cost to completion; and, seven, the total estimated cost for each project.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask those seven questions in regard to each of the projects the minister has outlined to us, specifically referring to Monday when the minister read out the projects being undertaken. Reference was made to the Fort Vermilion Settlement dump, \$2,517; the Vermilion dump itself, a further \$3,900; Hythe, \$9,000; Cardiff, \$185,000; Swan Hills, over \$9,000; Fisher, \$2,400; Charron, \$2,100; Lac La Biche, \$5,700; St. Paul, \$1,400; Leduc, \$1,000; Thorsby, \$2,300; Davison, \$6,000; New Norway, \$7,500; Ferintosh, \$1,000; Edberg, \$1,300; Beiseker, \$6,500; Rosebud, \$3,200; Chancellor, \$11,000; Wheatland, \$7,000; Rockyford, \$4,700; Glenwood, \$1,700; Bassano, \$3,900.

MR. COOKSON: The member is asking for a lot of specific detail, and it's going to take some time to pull this together. I was going to say that perhaps he should put it on the Order Paper and we'll spend the rest of the fall looking up the information for him.

DR. BUCK: We want it before next year.

MR. COOKSON: You want it before next year.

It may be of some assistance to the member and to the public in general, in exploring what I would consider one of the more worth-while projects out of the heritage trust fund. All the people of the province benefit in some way or other from the reclamation going on through the trust fund, to review this extremely important expenditure. It is not a respecter of any part of the province, but covers pretty well all the province from north to south to east to west. Of course, it has been excellently received by the municipalities. It's unfortunate, though, that we don't get a chance as often as we should to project the work being done. This gives me an excellent opportunity to do this.

I don't know whether the member can get any specific information out of the material I have in front of me, but I think it's important that we recognize the expenditures that have been incurred. The land reclamation projects from 1976 to 1981, which also include some projects prior to the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, are as follows — and I'd like to give the breakdown to the members and the number of sites. While these figures do not deal with hectares specifically, they do give the relative expenditures.

For municipalities, we have improved 12 access roads, for an expenditure of about \$246,000. We've also improved 67 access roads in green areas — those are Crown lands. We've improved eight sites in what are called public lands, for an expenditure of \$75,000. So in terms of access roads, the trust fund has improved 87 access road sites, for a total of \$770,000. This gives the number of sites and the expenditures. If the member is interested in calculating the average, that shouldn't be a problem. It does not give the acreage, because we have so many different types of reclamation areas that it's pretty hard to divide them.

In the area of sewage lagoons, when one takes the total of municipal, public, and green areas that have been improved, we have improved 76 sewage lagoon sites to date, for a total cost of \$1,300,000. Again, it doesn't give the member a breakdown on acreage. I'm not even sure I can put that together for the member, but I'll do the best

I can. In the area of garbage dumps, the trust fund has improved 156 sites across the province. They've cost almost \$1 million.

We do include mine hazards in some of the reclamation work we're doing. We have improved about 93 classified mine hazards throughout the province, at a cost of about \$900,000. Sand and gravel pits — which I'm greatly interested in, because I have this sort of problem in my own constituency — are scattered throughout the province. We have worked on 127 sand and gravel pits, based on submissions from municipal, and in Crown lands — this includes Crown lands. We've spent over \$600,000 of trust money towards improvement of them.

The members might be interested to know that we've also improved about 20 mine sites throughout the province, at a cost of approximately \$1.4 million. Again, it would be extremely difficult to get the acreages on these kinds of figures. But they are something of extreme importance. They are in areas such as of the Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest. I think some of them are in the area of the Member for Camrose, and other areas throughout the province. In addition, the province has dealt with about 38 sites dealing with seismic lines and coal exploration trails. The cost there has been \$138,000 for the seismic lines and about \$66,000 for the coal exploration trails.

Water storage sites: these could be applications from municipal government to do some further work on a site which is used for water storage. At least 10 sites have been worked on, for a total of \$410,000. Then, abandoned recreational sites, about three of those. We have a classification of borrow pits, of which we've dealt with about three. That has involved about \$43,000. We have asked to deal with certain industrial sites in the province. Over 313 of these have been handled in one way or another by the department, for a cost of \$647,000 from the heritage trust. We've done some work on abandoned bridges.

Of course since the inception of the program, and work prior too, the department has expended a considerable amount of money on reclamation research. I think I alluded to some of the projects, which totalled about \$3.5 million in the figures here. Over the years, we have worked on at least two airstrips, with a small expenditure. We've worked on about 10 streambank crossings, and on about four communication sites. We worked on about two erosion sites in the province; however, one has to keep in mind that some of our major expenditures from the general expenditure of the department deal with erosion, and are separate from the trust fund expenditure. We've worked on one oil sands site, to a total of \$45,000, mineral leases, some well sites, and some tower sites.

So, all in all, from 1976 to '81, since the inception of the program, and including some projects prior to the trust fund, I think we have accomplished a great deal. It indicates the interest in the program. As I say, we have a number of applications in now for '82-83. In terms of acreage, as I say, that's very difficult. Based on the average cost and the applications that have come before us in prior years, we simply take a 'guesstimate' as close as we can that we need \$5 million for the '82-83 year.

MR. L. CLARK: Mr. Minister, I noticed that the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo was saying about some reclamation areas done in my area. He named a lot of the towns in my district. I was wondering if this could possibly be the reclamation of landfill sites for the health and unsightly condition of these old landfill sites when your

new regional waste management system went into effect in that area?

MR. COOKSON: That's correct. A fair number of the sanitary landfills we're dealing with now are being accelerated because of the regional program. In the area of the Member for Drumheller in particular, we have combined possibly 15 to 20 different garbage dumps, for lack of a better term, into one large regional system. We try to do about one of these a year, and those projects are carried on by our regular budget. However, the reclamation and re-establishment of these sites would come out of the proposed \$5 million from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. So the member is correct. The more we move toward regional, the greater the demand for the fund, primarily for reclamation of old garbage dumps. We rely on municipalities to make their requests known.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are there any further questions?

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, the minister still hasn't responded to my request to answer the seven questions I outlined. Would he be prepared to do that?

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Chairman, it's whatever the Legislature wishes. There's no way I can pull together that massive amount of material here. It would certainly take some time. I can assure the member that I can have my people do a comprehensive review of his total requests and submit as much as possible of the material for his information. I think that's really all I can do at this time.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I would request, then, that the Member for Calgary Buffalo capsule in writing to the minister, and we'll hold this vote until such time as the minister is able to get the information together.

#### 5 — Lesser Slave Lake Outlet

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the minister could indicate specifically the kinds of things that will be done in the fiscal year '82-83. I recall walking quite a distance over this particular area and observing the needed facility sometime ago. I'd be very interested to know what is to be done in terms of the drainage outlet: whether it will be straightened, whether land will be reclaimed in doing that, whether there will be control of the water table in the area to any extent, and whether this will solve the problem of controlling the level of water in the lake.

MR. COOKSON: Yes, I could do that, Mr. Chairman. Again, an extremely important project for the people in the north. Lesser Slave Lake has been a problem for some time, and it was asked earlier that the committee on the heritage savings trust take a further look to see if we could come up with a solution.

A huge part of the west end of Lesser Slave Lake has been subject to flooding, off and on, throughout the years. Residents of the area have been concerned about the productivity of the land and the fact that the lake is too high at times, which results in unpredictable flooding. It's a major lake in the area, and on the basis of that we took into consideration that we would have to do something to stabilize the lake, in a sense, so that we could handle those unpredictable back floodings.

The drainage is on the east end, and the delta is on the

west end of the lake. I've had a chance to fly over the area and observe first-hand what we're attempting to do there. There are one to two rivers that come in on the west end of the lake, and that area is a natural delta. There's high siltation in the area, and so the problem is how to deal with the massive amount of silt that flows down from the river system, which will eventually deposit itself somewhere in the delta area.

The theory behind the original concept is that by allowing the river system, as it slows, to meander through the area, the delta will eventually be built up and put into production. It will become high enough that one can safely perform agricultural production on it. Keep in mind that highly productive soil is finding its way into the delta area.

The intent was to look at the outlet on the east end, in addition to the problem at the west, and see if we could stabilize the height of the lake in such a way that we could prevent back-flooding of the area. The problem has been with us as far back as 1920. On July 21, 1978, the then Minister of Environment announced that the government would proceed with the project to stabilize these levels. The intent is to eliminate the flooding of about 30,000 acres of agricultural land, as well as benefiting agriculture, stabilizing the level of the lake, and permitting expanded use of excellent beach and park facilities.

The natural drainage outlet from the Slave Lake basin is the Lesser Slave River, and it flows towards the Athabasca River at Smith. The problem with the river is that, like most rivers, it tends to seek the line of least resistance and to meander. This particular river developed a series of meanderings that has resulted in a very slow escape of water, particularly in the spring, and consequently the problem of back-flooding.

The original concept was to construct a control weir, and the cost of the project was then estimated to be fairly substantial. Since then, we have changed the design and the present plan is to accomplish the same thing at about half the original estimated cost. We're now simply cutting through the meanderings from point A to point B, and directing the water through in a straight line rather than its wandering around in a circle.

At the present time, we have completed a number of the cutoffs. In '82-83 the plan is, one, to landscape and seed the spoil sites from previous construction; to tender and construct a low-level weir, with cutoff number two; and to evaluate the effects of changing water levels on critical fish breeding in the Buffalo Bay area at the west end.

The work has proceeded well. Excellent contract work has been done and, with a little luck and weather conditions, we should be able to accomplish pretty well what we're attempting to do there. I would say that after '82-83, a minimal cost should complete the project. At that point, the lake level will be allowed to drop quite rapidly in the spring run-off. But at the same time, with a control weir, it won't be allowed to drop to the point where it would unnecessarily create a counter-problem for residents in the area. That's really where the project is at the present time.

MR. COOK: Mr. Chairman, may I ask a question of the minister. It relates to why the lake is silting up. It seems the minister's department is developing a program to control silt once it has developed and is creating meanders on the river and difficulties with run-off. What is the cause of the silt? Is it the farming practice of the people in

the area? Could we be doing something in that area, to try to reduce the silt going into the river system?

MR. COOKSON: It's one of the natures of the particular area. As the member probably knows, we are allocating much more money from the general revenue of the province to handle problems of erosion in the north. Their particular kind of soil erodes very readily. It has very little compactability compared to the area where I reside, for example. Wherever you disturb that soil, the water will cut very readily through. The result is that the river systems flowing into Slave Lake tend to be high in silt. Insofar as we can see, the solution is to make sure the river slows down fast enough that it's down to a certain point that silt settles out.

In this huge agricultural area on the west end of the lake, some 30,000 acres, the river finds its way into that total area and does lots of meandering. It reroutes itself often. The silt will build up, and it will change course. A common practice in other countries of the world has been that one can build up, actually improve, and still control the silt going into the lake system by allowing this to happen.

Insofar as I know, none of the trust money is involved — I could stand corrected on that — I don't think any of the trust money is being used to handle that problem at the west end. But the work that has been done there, as I say, is to slow the river up as much as possible and allow that silt to build up. Theoretically, in 10, 20, 30, 40 years down the road, we should have some of the richest agricultural land in the area, something similar to the Fraser valley delta. That's a long, slow process, but that's the theory behind the situation on the west end.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I wonder if the minister could detail it in terms of the subprojects: design, construction, planning. Then we'd get an idea of how the expenditures are being allocated.

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Chairman, on the Lesser Slave, perhaps I can give a little further breakdown of the expenditures I have here. That might help the hon. member. The 1982-83 estimate is \$640,000 for design and construction. This work is primarily tendered. We'll likely have several cutoffs yet in the '82-83 year to deal with this. We base that essentially on the cost incurred so far in cutting off the meanderings of the river. Included in that is the planning. Most of the planning is done by our department. In other words, we would subcontract it to consultants or whatever, and more or less supervise the kind of work taking place there.

In the planning, we're doing two studies. We're doing a fish habitat study at the west end of the lake. There's the Buffalo — it has a name — at the west end of Lesser Slave Lake. It's an extremely important area for fishing habitat.

AN HON. MEMBER: Buffalo Bay.

MR. COOKSON: Buffalo Bay. So the planning part of the program will study the fish habitat to determine if any mitigative measures are necessary. It's believed that that large area is extremely important to the fishing industry. Also in the Buffalo Bay area, we'll do some further work on the siltation problem. When I was in the area with the member concerned, we met with a group that had some concerns about the progress dealing with the siltation. So we'll do some further work in that area.

In this total figure, we have about \$50,000 for land assembly. This deals with appraisals and so on. Then we have about \$40,000 for technical services, legal surveys. This also includes river engineering. So of the \$180,000 for land assembly, \$50,000 would be appraisals and the balance would be land purchase. The total of \$40,000 on the technical deals with legal surveys and river engineering. We have a figure of \$130,000 for fixed assets. Most of that is for land assembly, some private land in the area classified as fixed assets.

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister, just for clarification. When going through the subprojects, item 3 land assembly, the minister indicated that \$150,000 would be for land purchase. But I heard the minister also say, under summary by object of expenditure, that most of the item purchase of fixed assets, \$130,000, was for land purchase. The two don't reconcile; first of all, the land assembly, \$150,000 for land purchase; second, the purchase of fixed assets, only \$130,000. What happened to the other \$20,000?

MR. COOKSON: Maybe I should just run through these figures again. Of the \$930,000 listed under supplies and services, \$640,000 is design and construction. Of that, \$200,000 is planning, which includes the fish habitat study and the siltation.

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. The way I see that, there is \$640,000 for design and construction specifically. Then you've gone on to say that \$200,000 of that is for planning. But I see planning as the next item there. Perhaps you might clear that up. They are distinct and separate items, and one isn't inclusive of the other.

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Chairman, if we go down to the summary by object of expenditure, we have a figure of \$1,060,000. Of the \$1,060,000, \$930,000 is for supplies and services. Now let me give you the breakdown on the \$930,000: \$640,000 is for design construction; \$200,000 is for the planning. Under that planning, we deal with a fish habitat study and siltation study. In addition, we have \$50,000 set aside for appraisal work. That's not actual purchase of land, but land appraisal. We also have \$40,000 for technical services, which involves legal surveys and river engineering. That is the breakdown on the \$930,000 for supplies and services. In addition, the \$130,000 set aside for purchase of fixed assets will be used for purchase of land. If you total the two of them, you have \$1,060,000.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I just want to ask the minister — and I apologize, I was out for a few minutes when this particular subject came up. With respect to the allocation of funds on the project, what will the impact be on the flooding in the Kinuso area? Will the work we're doing on the east end of the lake alleviate it? I know this has been a problem with the industrial development in the Swan Hills. What had been a case of floods every number of years has become a more serious problem of more frequent flooding. My understanding of this project in the first place was that it was to be helpful in dealing with the flooding in the Kinuso area. I wonder if the minister could report on just what the impact will be there? What impact will it have on making usable agricultural land which has not been used to its best capacity over the last decade or two because of frequent flooding?

MR. COOKSON: Perhaps the member wasn't in when I mentioned the original objective of the project, and it bears repeating. On July 21, 1978, the then minister announced the project. The intent was to eliminate flooding of about 30,000 acres of agricultural land. As well as benefiting agriculture, it would stabilize the lake level and permit expanded use of excellent beach and parks facilities. In a nutshell, that was the objective of the project as it was set down in 1978. The majority of the agricultural land, of course, is on the west end of the lake. It is a huge delta area which could become very productive, providing we can control the levels of the lake. That's really the objective of the work.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to relate it specifically to the Kinuso area, which is basically in the southern part of the lake and about halfway between the east and west sides. Having had an opportunity to meet farmers in the area several times, it would seem to me that that is one of the most significant areas for agricultural production in that part of the province, and much of it very, very valuable land at that. I wonder if we have any information at this stage as to the number of acres that would be impacted positively in the Kinuso area.

MR. COOKSON: No, I don't have that information. I could perhaps get a split of the 30,000 acres for the member, if he'd like that. The 30,000 would represent the total picture. The Kinuso area would just be one of the areas. I know the member for High Prairie would probably have that information right at his fingertips. It's extremely important to his constituency.

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. In regard to Subproject 1, design and construction, the minister has referred to this, but I haven't heard a breakdown between design and construction. How much of the \$640,000 is for design, and how much is for construction? Perhaps the minister might be able to compare that to the 1981-82 estimates alongside it. How much of that was for design and how much for construction?

MR. COOKSON: Again, I would have to go into more detail than I have here. I might be able to get that information for the member. Much of the design is done through my own department. The construction is tendered out, and I don't know whether or not there's a relationship between the two. As I say, I might be able to get the breakdown.

So far, I think we've had just one contractor doing most of the cutoff work. The area is very boggy, as one would realize, because of the outlet area. Much of the work is done after freeze-up — if that can be worked at all — because of the soft nature of the total area. But I'm not sure just what work, if any, has yet to be done during the '81-82 construction year, or whether the work has been completed for the year. I could check that information for the member and get the relationship between design and construction. I might be able to get that back to the member before we vote on the vote.

MR. SINDLINGER: A supplementary, please, to the minister. When these numbers are compiled, does the department start with a number — for example, in this case \$640,000 — and, if that is improved, does it then decide how much would be allocated for design and how much for construction? Or, in preparing the estimates,

does the department start out in the first instance and say that in regard to design this has to be done, in regard to construction this has to be done, and then having identified those two needs, add the two together to get the final number, the \$640,000?

MR. COOKSON: Well, we have our own engineers in the department. On the basis of their expertise, they may employ a consultant to do the design work, for example. That's usually a contract. It is charged out at the rate of so much per hour for design. When you're working with the profession of engineers, they have certain rate structures for the work they do. In the case of some of our design work or dam construction — in the case of the Dickson dam, we have a project manager. Then we have a major consultant who oversees the total project — Underwood McLellan in this case. In turn, they are responsible through the project manager for the total project. They do the master design, and the project manager then reports to the department. Then contracts are let on the various stages of construction.

Those contracts are tendered. We approve or reject; sometimes they may have to be retendered. We generally take the low tender. Then it's the responsibility of . . . In some cases, we have a committee of review. In the case of the Dickson dam, we have a board of review of top-notch engineers, who may want to change the design. They may say that in their view, the project may have to be shifted a little. Of course, we don't tamper too much with that decision, because of their expertise and knowledge.

We use different systems for different projects. That's the way the Dickson dam is operated. The Paddle River is operated a little differently. On smaller projects like this, some of our own people do the design work, set the slopes and the calculation of the amount of dirt removal, and so on. They may tender directly, based on our own expertise. We accept or reject the tender, and then they proceed. We in turn supervise, to make sure the province is getting money for the costs incurred.

It is interesting to note that in the one at Lesser Slave Lake, not only have we saved considerable money by changing the design, we have also had our tendering come in, I would say, almost to the point where we have some hesitation about accepting the tenders because in some cases our estimates are higher than the tenders coming in, which means that the tenderers, whoever they may be, are depending on the demand for their services. Some of them are tendering pretty tight. That is always a worry to us, because we don't want anyone to go broke on an operation. So we work as closely as possible to make sure there is no misunderstanding as to the kind of work that has to be done.

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, my initial question was: of the \$640,000 in the '82-83 estimates under subprojects, No. 1, design and construction, how much was for design and how much for construction? The minister has indicated that he will attempt to get that information to us prior to our voting on that particular item.

Another question I would like to ask the minister in regard to this vote is item 3, land assembly. Of the \$180,000, \$150,000 is slated for land purchase. How much land is it intended to purchase with that \$150,000?

MR. COOKSON: I'll have to have my errand boy run that down for the member.

To answer an earlier question, the \$640,000 is primarily for construction. The figure is largely construction —

design and construction. A lot of the design work is done within our department.

In terms of land purchase, the \$150,000, I know we are now in the process of trying to purchase some land from a group of three or four individuals, and we're having some difficulty. Most of the land we purchase in that outlet area is of very little agricultural value, and anything we do there will actually improve on it. So land should not be an expensive item in the total cost. But some feel their land is worth more than we're prepared to pay. We usually have one or two independent appraisals on land. In most cases, we seem to be able to satisfy the seller. Hopefully, we don't have to go to an expropriation procedure, but sometimes we do. We do our best to negotiate a fair price for those concerned.

I think the land in question has been in the \$250-\$300 bracket. Again, that hinges a lot on the problems we run into. If it's an expropriation, we're faced with costs over and above the land cost. When we put this estimate in, we tried to predict as accurately as we could what sort of thing we would be faced with in the '82-83 budget.

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, supplementary to the minister. I take it the minister was speaking in the past tense when he referred to a purchase price of about \$300 per acre. I'm assuming that that payment was made under the '81-82 estimates. I notice \$160,000 under the same sub-item for land assembly. If I do a little division, it indicates that, in a ballpark area, 533 acres were acquired in that period. How many more acres does the minister intend to acquire this year with the \$180,000? Is that the same question I asked earlier, and is that the one the minister said he would attempt to get the information for prior to the vote?

MR. COOKSON: Yes. I'll try to get the information for the member. I just thought that with the rapid calculation, one can assume that, if we're allowing \$130,000 for land at \$300 an acre, you're looking at a little over 400 acres, based on that figure.

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, of the 1981-82 estimates or appropriations, could the minister indicate how much was actually expended? The minister will recall that in the previous vote, it was determined that less than 50 per cent of the total appropriation was in fact expended over the five years of the project. Is there something analogous in this situation as well?

MR. COOKSON: I didn't quite get the import of the question, Mr. Chairman. The estimate for '82-83 is that we'll spend \$1 million. The knowledge I now have of the work in '81-82 includes landscape spoil sites from winter construction; tender and construction of cutoffs two, three, and seven, once land negotiations are completed; and design for the low-level weir. We asked for 19 million. At the present time, we forecast an expenditure of 19 million. So on that basis, there should be very little if any variance for '81-82.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Minister, on our water management tour we viewed the outlet from Slave Lake. Is the land in question the land through which that outlet runs? Do you intend to do some straightening of that outlet to increase the water flow?

MR. COOKSON: That's correct. The area we're working on with the heritage trust money is the outlet area of

Lesser Slave Lake. At the present time, I think about eight cutoffs have to be completed in order to straighten the river at the outlet. Each year we do a number of these cutoffs, based on weather conditions and which ones we should do first. That's based a lot on land negotiations.

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

So the land required is in this particular area. When it's all finished, there will be approximately eight cutoffs and there will also be a low-level weir, which will stabilize the lake so it doesn't drop below a certain point. When it's finished, which should be in '84, we will have designed the lake so water can escape rapidly during the spring, when there are high run-offs. Also the lake will not drop below a certain point later in the summer, because of construction of a low-level weir. Hopefully, if old Mother Nature works with us, that will be a completed project.

MRS. CRIPPS: Supplementary to the minister. Much of that land had a very, very high water table. What do you expect will be the result of your project with regard to the land after the drainage project is done? Do you expect it to improve the water table of the land, I think it's east of the lake?

MR. COOKSON: When the project is completed, we hope about 30,000 acres of agricultural land will be improved. I think it's important that the members in the area understand the original objective. Some would like to hasten this process of delta-building, but I think we have to keep in mind the objectives. This will take some time. But when it's completed, I would like to think this area will even be in competition for food production with the Drayton Valley area.

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, I would like to pose to the minister a series of questions in regard to this project. They are the same seven questions I posed in regard to the last vote, and ask the minister for consideration. I'll list the questions again, as I did for the last project, and wait to see what response the minister has.

For this particular vote, could the minister please provide the following information: one, details of the original estimated cost and scope of this project; two, the cost and scope revisions; three, the cost incurred to the end of the previous fiscal year; four, the current year forecast; five, expenditures to be appropriated for the next fiscal year; six, estimated future year costs to completion; and, seven, the total estimated cost for the project?

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Chairman, I haven't got all the questions down. But perhaps as I run through them, the member can get some answers for the questions he's asked. In 1979-80, the original cost estimate was \$8.8 million.

In 1982-83, we went through a redesign exercise based on our own engineering. The change in design concept, from a parallel channel to meander cutoffs, will essentially provide the same benefits at approximately half the original estimated cost. When we changed the design in '82-83, the estimated cost was reduced to \$4,411,000. Based on that estimated cost — and we have to keep in mind that we're dealing with '79-80 dollars, so there's no confusion there — the dollar change in total cost estimate was about \$4,389,000. If I could follow through, keeping in mind that we're talking in '79-80 dollars, some of the work commenced in '79-80. A lot of the work was survey-

ing and engineering, and an environmental impact assessment was done. That year, the actual expenditure was \$0.2 million.

In '80-81, we were looking at redesign of the river. Because of that, we did some design on the Lesser Slave River cutoff, some tendering on the first stage of construction, some cutoffs in the river itself, and we continued to purchase land. So in '80-81, because of the now redesign, our expenditure was \$1 million.

In '81-82, the work continued: the landscaping of spoil sites for winter construction, and tendering and construction of cutoffs two, three, and seven. Again, these cutoffs are done depending on how our land negotiations go. If we have troubles, we try to work as closely with the people as we can. So sometimes there's a delay in the process. We did the design on the low-level weir. By the end of fiscal year 1981-82, we anticipate our expenditure will be \$1.9 million.

If everything works, again based on the problems of Mother Nature, we expect an expenditure of \$1 million in '82-83. If you total the figure and realize the project should be winding down then, we have some further evaluation to do on the effects of the project on the fishery areas of Buffalo Bay, and studies of the negative impact if any on the surrounding area. Mr. Chairman, I think that may answer the member's questions as to the estimated cost in '79-80, the costs so far, and what we estimate to complete the project.

MR. NOTLEY: One supplementary question. The minister indicated that the initial estimate was 8.8 million '79-80 dollars and, as a result of a redesign, it came in at \$4.4 million. Of course, we would all applaud that. My concern, though, is that the original concept included an \$8.8 million design. If we find out a year down the road that in fact we can achieve the same result for one-half the cost, I have to ask myself what was wrong with our planning in the first place, that we proposed a scheme that is double the cost. Now, fortunately in this case we were able to catch it in time and make the adjustments and save money. What review of the planning process has taken place as a consequence of the information that we had a proposal which was publicly announced, presented to the Legislature, and then we find that redesign could achieve the same thing at half the cost?

MR. COOKSON: It would sound to me as if it's darned good business, Mr. Chairman, on the basis of an original cost estimate of \$8.8 million, to then find we can accomplish the same thing for half the amount of money. The design was changed. Based on the early work, which was surveys and engineering, I would think that the further information the department had, indicated the project could be done for about half the original cost.

The original plan proposed an open channel which would parallel the existing river. I would think that would mean one would have to purchase considerably more right of way. By doing that, the intent was not to interfere with the natural flow of the river during the construction process. In further analysis, it was determined by our engineers that we could start at the low point and accomplish the same thing, simply by cutting directly through from one meander to another rather than construction in the parallel sense. I suppose the original concept was that one could construct parallel without any interference at all with the natural river flow. But further engineering indicated they could do the same thing by cutting through the meanders and still not inter-

fere with the river flow. It was on that basis that they proceeded in this manner.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I certainly think that would be sensible. I'm sure there's no question that members of the committee would be pleased that we were able to make this adjustment. The only thing that troubles me is that it would seem to me that the kind of information which allowed us to do the better plan — I shouldn't say the Volkswagen version of the Cadillac job, because the end result is the same — came after the project was announced. What I'm getting at is whether or not the planning process at the beginning was adequate.

I raise that, Mr. Minister, because in northern Alberta we have various water resource projects of one kind or another, and one of the major factors local governments have to look at is the total estimated cost of these projects. The reason I wanted to know what had come along in the intervening time was to find out from you, sir, whether both you as minister and the government were fully satisfied that the changes were reasonable, and that we would not have been in a position to know that in the planning process prior to the development of the project. We've got all sorts of other very worthy schemes — some of the water resource projects I can think of — where, if we could bring the total capital costs down, we'd have those projects under way very quickly, and with a good deal of support for the local share. So that's the reason I raise the question.

MR. COOKSON: Does the member want an answer?

AN HON. MEMBER: [Inaudible] . . . fair enough.

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, earlier this afternoon the minister took a great deal of time and also exhibited some patience in explaining to us the review process for approving these projects. The minister indicated that first of all there is a committee of review of in-house engineers, and went on to make an analogy to the Dickson dam, where in fact there is not only an in-house review by government engineers, but independent engineers were brought in as well. And the government was very responsive to suggestions they made and acted accordingly. The question I would put to the minister is, specifically how did that review committee function with regard to the change in design, whereby the initial estimate was \$8.8 million and the subsequent change in scope and design resulted in an estimated cost of \$4.4 million?

MR. COOKSON: The project I referred to earlier, of course, is an unfunded project by the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. It was a judgment decision as to how that project would proceed. Insofar as the Lesser Slave Lake outlet, our department is doing similar kinds of projects in varying degrees of complexity in many parts of the province. We're now working on large-scale projects in irrigation areas in the southern part of the province. If we are not satisfied with the expertise of engineers within our own department, then we tender for a consultant who would oversee the total project. It is my understanding it wasn't felt that a project such as the Lesser Slave Lake drainage project was sufficiently complex that we couldn't handle it within the department. On that basis, we continued to review, based on our earlier estimates and lack of knowledge of the terrain at the time, the feasibility of cutting through meanders. Based on all of that, we

reassessed the way we would handle the program. So, I would say it was really an internal judgment by the department to change the design in such a nature. One has to look at the estimates, then, and realize that we made adjustments to the funding we would require as closely as possible because of that design change. As I say, the original estimate was \$8.8 million; the revision is \$4.4 million. The important thing is that we hope to accomplish this worth-while project from heritage money within the 1979-80 dollar value.

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister, an observation first, before my question. The other day, when we looked at this land reclamation project and reviewed the five years of expenditures, we found that over the total five years, less than 50 per cent of the total appropriation had been expended. We noted that over 50 per cent of the total appropriation lapsed. I agree with the minister that the money is not lost; it just goes back into the system. But it creates a budgeting problem.

In this vote, we see the same thing again. The original estimate of \$8.8 million has been halved to \$4.4 million. What appears to be developing here is a trend, where the minister's department is making estimates and then developing them, in terms of its request to the Legislature for its appropriation from the heritage fund. In defence of that, the minister has indicated that it's just darned good business to estimate on the high side and to demonstrate that the project has been cut from \$8.8 million to \$4.4 million.

Certainly, it's prudent management to save money wherever that's possible. But on the other hand, I suggest to the minister that overestimating by a factor of two on all these projects causes problems within the total budgetary system. If I were one of the minister's colleagues, I might start asking if that is a prudent thing to do, because I might have certain programs I desire to undertake but am unable to because there aren't enough funds in the total budget. Funds would be tied up in an unnecessary fashion in these particular projects. So, if I may make an observation, I would suggest that perhaps in future years, when appropriations are sought from the heritage fund, a greater effort be extended to ensure that the estimates are more in line with reality.

I did ask a series of seven questions, and most of them have been answered. The minister has told us what the original cost was intended to be. The minister has now identified the change in cost, due to change in scope and design, and given us the expenditures by year. The final question wasn't completely addressed, though, and that was in regard to the total cost of the project and when it was intended to complete that.

I know that the minister did indicate that by this appropriation of \$1,060,000, we would be close to completion in 1982-83. On the other hand, it was also indicated by the minister that there would be a further evaluation of the effects, particularly negative impact studies that would be completed or undertaken in the near future. Could the minister please advise the Assembly what the schedule is for those impact studies; secondly, what they are specifically intended to address; and, finally, what their total cost is, in regard to the project, so that we could have a total completion number for the project.

MR. COOKSON: I notice the member is very careful in his statement, that he doesn't necessarily suggest we're doubling up and then cutting back. I want to make sure it's perfectly clear, Mr. Chairman, that it is never the

intent to double the budget and subsequently cut it back. In this project, it's very clear that the original design was \$8.8 million. Because of subsequent thrifty work in the department, reassessing what they originally considered an \$8.8 million project, based on our own expertise, we were able to reduce that estimated cost to about \$4.4 million. I want to make sure there's no misunderstanding about the procedure we go through.

I don't think the public would be critical of any attempt on the part of government to improve with an efficiency of operation. I'm quite proud of the work my own department does. We've got some extremely bright people in the department, a very dedicated civil service. I want to put it on record, so there's no misunderstanding about the way the project is designed.

To answer the member's question with regard to estimated future costs, there are the two projects. First of all, the weather conditions: all things being equal. I think we should be through with the project in the 1983-84 budget, providing we can meet our deadlines with the '82-83. We then estimate that in future years we again have to do an assessment of the impact on the Buffalo Bay area, which is probably a sensitive fishing area for the total lake. We plan on doing some further work to see if there's any negative impact on the surrounding area as a result of the stabilization, and so on. We again estimate that that would probably require a further \$0.3 million in '83-84. So the total cost of the project in the '79-80 dollar figure should come in pretty well on a new cost estimate of about \$4.4 million.

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. I concur with you. I would like to ensure that there is no misunderstanding in the public mind about what has occurred here. Perhaps the minister could expand on this a little bit more. The minister has indicated that because of subsequent thrifty work on the project, the estimate was decreased from \$8.8 million to \$4.4 million. The minister went on to say that this was based on the expertise of the members of the department. But I submit that it was the expertise of the minister's department that came up with the \$8.8 million in the first place. Now, after the fact, the minister is telling us that their expertise has reduced that from \$8.8 to \$4.4 million. So perhaps the minister might elaborate on what that subsequent thrifty work in the project was precisely, to enable them to get to one-half of the original estimate.

MR. COOKSON: What I'm really referring to is the 1979-80 work done by the department, which involved surveys and further engineering studies to do away with the necessity of paralleling the river for about 8 kilometres downstream, in effect, and then establish a series of cutoffs. Again, that information on the 8.8 was based on knowledge they had at the time. This further departmental work indicated that it could be done in a different way. When I refer to expertise and the efficiency and capability of the department, that's what I'm referring to.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, one of the points being made by the minister is the use of departmental personnel. In terms of projects established because of the funding of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, I was wondering whether more personnel are hired, whether there's a special contingency or a special task force group put together with employees from the department. I was wondering how the minister handles the new assignment

that is provided through the Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

MR. COOKSON: We have three assistant deputies in the department, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Peter Melnychuk's primary responsibility is the administration of The Water Resources Act and all the work we do in that area: dam construction, and so on. Of course personnel comes under his supervision. In other words, the chain of command flows from Mr. Melnychuk.

In view of the tremendous load we carry just from administering the general revenue of the department across the province, we use our own people as much as we can. However, it is a worth-while question in the respect that it does load us with extra responsibility to handle the heritage savings trust. In that respect, we have to tender out for engineers. So we contract out a fair amount of the work, and base our pay-out on the established rates for engineering. But we continue to be involved in the total project. In other words, in this case a consultant would still come under the supervision of the assistant deputy minister, then in turn to the deputy minister, and then to me.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, for clarification from the minister. Is the minister saying that no new staff is added to the staff establishment, so that when this project is completed — I believe the minister indicated 1985 — we wouldn't have a number of persons on staff who would need a new project to be created by government so we could employ them. Is that the current situation?

MR. COOKSON: That's as I understand it, Mr. Chairman. We have assigned one of our people as project manager on the Heritage Savings Trust Fund Paddle River project. It's a large construction project, and that individual is under the assistant deputy.

You raise the question as to what happens when that project is completed. It wouldn't be the intention to knowingly go out and find another project for that individual. Under the controls of the Provincial Treasurer, we're allowed so many new positions each year to handle the additional load we acquire as years go on. In that particular case, that individual would likely come back. His position is still classified in the Department of Environment; he's simply been assigned that special project. He's back under the department when that's completed.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, are the agreements that are made with various consultants and engineers signed at the present time? Do they last until 1985, so that there's a predictable workload for the engineer? Are they one-year projects, one-year contracts? What is the practice in that area?

MR. COOKSON: I think we should really confine the question to the Lesser Slave Lake project. That total project comes under the supervision of our department, and we tendered. I think both tenders in the area have been accepted from the same individual as the low tenders received. If we have further work when that job's done, we retender.

MR. SINDLINGER: Mr. Chairman, a supplementary to the minister on this question of manpower. I note that in the '82-83 estimates, there isn't an allocation for manpower. In the year before, there was \$40,000. Is there in

this project something similar to that of the Paddle River? Is there a project manager who's been seconded by the department to that particular project?

MR. COOKSON: I see there's no requirement for expenditure for manpower in the '82-83 estimate, and a requirement of \$40,000 in '81-82. I don't know whether I could answer specifically why there would be \$40,000 in '81-82. It could very well be that we've employed someone, or ones, to supervise the contract work in the area. That's something I'd have to check. A lot of the cutoff work was or is being done in '81-82, and no doubt we've had to have some on-site supervision. Likely that will be minimal in '82-83. We're then getting down to some of the studies, and so requirements in terms of manpower would be minimal. They would all be contract.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister, relative to the general budget of the department and to the budget through the Heritage Savings Trust Fund relative to the Lesser Slave Lake outlet. When this program was initiated, or put into effect, or accepted first of all by the government and then the Legislature, if I recall correctly, at that time there was a budget within one of the departments to support and initiate some work with regard to a project such as this, specifically in terms of study of the lake level and, I believe, in terms of fisheries as well. I was wondering if those general revenue budgets were reduced accordingly at that time, and whether the minister can assure us here in the Legislature that there isn't another departmental budget supporting this project, so that all the expenditures we're trying to examine now are really not here, but part of them may be in the general budget.

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Chairman, we're reviewing the '82-83 expenditure, and part of the \$1 million will deal with the problem with the fish-breeding area in Buffalo Bay. We don't have the '82-83 expenditure out of my regular budget before us as yet. The only thing I can do with regard to that question is take note of it, and it will probably arise in March when we go through our regular budgets. I would like to think, though, that we aren't duplicating in any way the work that's being done through the Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Chairman, can the minister just repeat the part about Buffalo Bay? What did he say about that?

MR. COOKSON: Part of the \$1 million requested for '82-83 will be to evaluate the effects of changed water levels on critical fish-breeding area in Buffalo Bay. That's essentially the study that will be taking place in '82-83.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. It seems to me we're doing things a little backwards. I've just been waiting to get the opportunity to ask the minister: when we're looking at a project such as this, where we're going to be doing a stabilization program, surely the impact on the native fish and what will happen to that fishery — is the minister telling us now that they're just going to do that study after they decided to do it? Is this what the minister is trying to tell us, Mr. Chairman?

MR. COOKSON: Not really, Mr. Chairman. Studies have gone on before this, with regard — and it was certainly before my time as minister. But no doubt like most things, they're studied to death. In this case, the

evaluation could be extremely important.

The Buffalo Bay area is a delta area, and this Buffalo Bay part is quite a large body of water, which is believed to be a major natural hatchery for fish supply. There is no question that even after the lake has been stabilized, things can be done to improve the habitat, if in fact it's proven that there has been any damage to fish production in the lake. It's a huge area that is very level. The level of the water compared to the level of the land is minimal, maybe only a foot or two in places. The area in question receives water from the river system. As the lake level increases, it flows back into Buffalo Bay. It has a fairly narrow inlet, and a number of things could be done after the lake stabilized if it was felt necessary. The study may not indicate a problem at all, but that's something we can't determine at this time.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Chairman, surely the minister — he's a farm boy, as most of us are — knows that when you go into the spawning areas, the levels maintained in these lakes are very critical to the different species of fish. I just can't understand the minister's reasoning when he's saying we're going to go ahead, and we've decided we're going to control the level of the lake.

It may be that we cause a problem in one, two, or three species of native fish because, as the minister knows, it's a highly productive lake. It has the capacity to keep renewing itself as far as certain species of fish go. And I'm really quite concerned, Mr. Chairman, if the minister is now saying we are doing studies to see what happens if we raise it and lower it. It may be upsetting that very, very delicate balance that nature has established over the years.

I know that as young boys, we knew which species of fish were going up which creek at what time of year. And they don't all go at the same time. Some years more pike can get up than pickerel. Other years, the whitefish can't get up to their spawning grounds. So, I'm really quite concerned that we're going to be doing studies after we've already decided to go ahead with the project. I think the minister should go back and talk to some of the people in the department involved with fisheries and talk to some of the local people. They can probably tell you without having too many high-priced fisheries biologists and engineers go out there and try to convince the local fishermen that they may be helping them, whereas they may really be causing harm to a natural fishery. I'd certainly like the minister to give some comments.

MR. COOKSON: That's a great speech. As I say, at this time we don't know. It may very well be that the adjustments made at the lower end of the lake will improve the fishing. The hon. member is jumping to conclusions when he says it may destroy the whole fishing activity in the area. No doubt, studies have been done before on the fish capacity of the lake. By stabilizing the lake, it may very well be that we may actually improve the total fish habitat.

Lakes that have very little control levels can be very disruptive to the habitat in the lake, and we deal with them all the time in the province. I have probably a dozen lakes that the locals either want higher or else they want it drained. The fact is that if a lake gets too low — for example, without the control weir, I could see some possible risk because the Buffalo Bay area may just dry up. But that weir is designed to make sure it doesn't drop to that level. So I'm not too excited about the issue the hon. member raises ...

DR. BUCK: But the fish are, Jack.

MR. COOKSON: ... it could be very positive.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Chairman, the minister may not be too excited, but the minister should be excited because he's the one who's going to be controlling the level. I appreciated the minister's little speech that it "may" be better if the levels are raised or lowered; on the other hand, it may cause a problem. As I say, in all the years I've fished in this province, some of it even when you weren't supposed to be doing it — you know, in the old days you went out there with a snare ... [interjections] I think everybody in this House probably snared the odd fish when they were a youngster.

But the levels vary so much every year, and sometimes the fish have quite a time going their natural routes. In that case, an elevation of the level would help them migrate. On the other hand, if the water is too deep, sometimes that causes problems because you don't have natural spawning areas. Any of the fellows who have been doing that — the hon. Member for Lloydminster and some of the fellows who have fished — know that that's a fact. Pike spawn in relatively shallow areas. So if you raise the level, it may cause problems with the spawning areas. Surely with all the help the minister has behind him from all these bright people, he would know exactly what will happen.

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

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. APPLEBY: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, 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, it's proposed that the House sit tomorrow evening. The business would be on an either/or basis, if I can put it that way: possibly some second readings of Bills and, if not that, Committee of Supply again. That would be the business as far as Thursday is concerned. As far as Friday is concerned, I can't give any indication on that until tomorrow.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, prior to the House Leader adjourning the debate, in terms of the Bills, will it be as listed on the Order Paper, or would there be preferred Bills the government would like to discuss?

MR. CRAWFORD: I don't think preferred Bills, Mr. Speaker. I would say, though, that the usual understanding by which, if the Bill has not been on for very long and there is a request from any member to hold it for a while, we'd be glad to accommodate that. Otherwise, based on the presence of the sponsors of the Bills in each case, we would probably just be going down the list.

[At 5:32 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 5, the House adjourned to Thursday at 2:30 p.m.]

