

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA**

Title: **Tuesday, March 16, 1982 2:30 p.m.**

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

**PRAYERS**

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 213****Alberta Public Affairs Institute Act**

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 213, the Alberta Public Affairs Institute Act.

Basically the Bill would provide at one of the universities an institute of public policy, as a research group that each year would make available a report to the Legislative Assembly on its findings or undertake special tasks and report to the general public. It should come up for debate later, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: That's a very tidy arrangement.

[Leave granted; Bill 213 read a first time]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table two documents with the Legislature: Sessional Paper No. 90, required under the blind persons' Act, and Sessional Paper No. 91, required under the disabled persons Act.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Section 10 of the Government Land Purchases Act, I wish to provide the Assembly with a report on the activities of the Act and the audited financial statements for the Land Purchase Fund, both for the year ended March 31, 1981.

MR. MUSGREAVE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the annual report of the Alberta Research Council for the year ended March 31, 1981.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, it is my opportunity this afternoon to introduce some visitors to you, to our Legislature, and to our province. There are 35 sea cadets from RSCC *Nelson*, Halifax, Nova Scotia. They are accompanied this afternoon by Captain Wes Mitchell, from Wainwright. Also with them are Carol Hay, an instructor from Wainwright, their bus driver, and three people who accompanied them from Halifax: Bonita Patterson, Deborah Patterson, and Ted Breadlemon. I ask that they rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is my very real pleasure today to introduce to you and members of the Assembly 32 alert grade 6 students from Parkview school, one of the key schools in the Edmonton Glenora consti-

tuency. They are in the members gallery, accompanied by their teacher Mr. Larbalestier. I ask that they stand and that the members of the Assembly accord them the usual welcome.

MR. CHAMBERS: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce to you, and through you to the members of the House, 49 grade 6 students from Bishop Savaryn school in the Edmonton Calder constituency. This school is in the Castle Downs area of the city. It's located at about 162nd Avenue and 109th Street, so they have come a fair distance to observe the parliamentary process. They are accompanied by their teachers Mr. Kowalczyk and Mr. Adamoski and are seated in the public gallery. I would like them to stand and be recognized by the members.

MRS. LeMESSURIER: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce to you, and through you to members of this Assembly, 26 students from the Alberta Vocational School in the constituency of Edmonton Centre. They are accompanied by their teacher Mr. Rendene Rutkowski and are seated in the public gallery. I ask that the students rise and that the Assembly give them the very warm welcome of the House.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to the Legislature four persons from my constituency, elected representatives of the county of Vulcan as well as the town council: Mr. Stan Munton, town of Vulcan councillor; Don McNiven, county reeve; Carson McKay, chairman of the Vulcan Hospital Board; and Dr. Proudfoot. I ask them to stand and be recognized by the Legislature.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

**Oil Sands Production**

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, with regard to the Alsands consortium. Could the minister indicate what meetings, if any, have been held with Mr. Lalonde, what is the schedule of meetings, and what is the present status of that negotiation?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, a meeting, on which I earlier reported to the Assembly, was held. I will be meeting with Mr. Lalonde tomorrow in Winnipeg. I think that answers the first two portions of the question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

The third, as to the status: we left the last meeting saying that alternatives were being considered. The province of Alberta has been considering alternatives, because we are of course interested in that project proceeding for a variety of reasons. I expect there will be further discussions tomorrow between Mr. Lalonde and me on those possible alternatives. I don't feel that I can usefully give the Assembly any additional information today as to what they might be or the particulars of those discussions.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Premier. Because the negotiations certainly could reflect on the budget if some agreements are made, could the Premier indicate whether the negotiations on Alsands at the present time was one of the major factors

in juggling the date of the budget coming down in this province, or are there others?

MR. NOTLEY: Just Tory planning.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, none at all.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, with regard to the equity position of the government. Could the minister indicate, with any further substance than was indicated the other day, whether the government is considering sinking a substantial amount of provincial moneys into the Alsands project? Is that still one of the alternatives?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I don't feel I can give any additional information on that issue, other than what I earlier gave the Assembly. I am sure all members of the Assembly are aware of our position, that this project ought to have a very significant private-sector participation and, of course, an even larger role for the private sector in respect of the management.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Could the minister indicate whether other private-sector groups or groups such as other governments have made inquiries as to their participation in the development of the Alsands project?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I can only respond with respect to discussions in which I have been involved or of which I have been informed. As I indicated earlier to the Assembly, I have had discussions with various companies. I have not had any discussions with other governments. But I'm not able to say that I have knowledge of all discussions that may have taken place between companies now in the Alsands consortium and other companies or even other governments.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. Is the decision on Cold Lake being held in abeyance until a decision is made on Alsands, or are negotiations going on with Esso as to the project in the Cold Lake area going ahead?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, the two are not connected, at least insofar as we're concerned. I have not been in any discussions with respect to Cold Lake for some time.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. The minister indicated that the government preferred significant private-enterprise participation. Is the minister in a position to advise the Assembly whether, in light of speculation with respect to Shell and its involvement, the government is of the view that there must be at least 50 per cent or more private-sector participation? Or is the government considering, as an option, sharing with the federal government what could be in excess of 50 per cent of the project?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I don't feel I can be any more precise than saying that it was our view that there needs to be very significant private-sector participation in both the equity — that is, in the ownership — and the management of the project.

MR. NOTLEY: A supplementary question to the minister. Has the government put any ceiling on the participation? I think comments of 25 per cent have been attributed to one of the ministers. Has any ceiling been put on participation by the province at this stage?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I lost some of the hon. member's words in the middle portion of his question. I wonder if he could repeat it.

MR. NOTLEY: I believe statements have been attributed to one of the ministers that the government was looking at as much as 25 per cent equity. Mr. Speaker, is the minister in a position to advise whether the government of Alberta has arrived at a ceiling, in terms of participation on an equity basis? Is that figure, in terms of the outer limit, approximately 25 per cent?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, no we haven't.

DR. PAPROSKI: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. With respect, to the hon. member, I previously recognized the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury.

MR. KESLER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. With respect to the negotiations that will be taking place between the federal and provincial representatives, has the industry been consulted, and will they have representation in those negotiations at this critical time?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, the industry has been consulted in a number of meetings we have held with the private-sector participants in Alsands and, as I indicated earlier, with other parties who might be interested in becoming involved in Alsands. But there will not be any industry representation at the particular meeting tomorrow. In my view, these discussions move forward better if we have these meetings, as I've indicated we've had, with the private sector — both who are now in Alsands and those who might be there — and then separate meetings with the federal government.

DR. PAPROSKI: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister indicate whether Ontario has indicated a desire to participate in this project, recognizing that Ontario would stand to benefit by way of jobs, as would all of Canada?

MR. LEITCH: They haven't to me, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NOTLEY: A supplementary question. Can the minister supply the Assembly with any updated figures as to the infrastructure costs? We've had increases in the projected costs of the project itself. Have there been parallel increases in the costs of the infrastructure? If there are, can the minister supply the House with that information?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I have two difficulties with that question. I'm not sure what the hon. member includes in "infrastructure", and I would welcome a greater definition of it. Even after he's provided it, I would then need some time to review the matter, because obviously that involves an appreciable amount of detail. After hav-

ing reviewed it, I could then perhaps respond to the question.

### **Municipal Financing**

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my second question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. It's with regard to the municipal revenue report that is to be tabled during this spring session, as I understand. I wonder if the minister could indicate the status of that tabling, and whether financing municipalities will be an item of debate during this spring session of the Legislature?

MR. MOORE: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure I understand the first part of the hon. member's question. What report is he referring to?

With regard to the second part of the member's question, my expectation is that we would be into committee study of the estimates shortly after the budget debate and the tabling of the provincial budget. That would be an excellent opportunity for any discussions the hon. member may wish to have, or any representations he may wish to make, with regard to municipal financing.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. I understand the committee set up by the minister to investigate alternate sources of municipal revenue was to report this spring. Will that committee report be made available to the Legislature and, if so, when?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, the committee the hon. member refers to, which was established about a year ago at the request of the Association of MDs and Counties and the Urban Municipalities Association, is working. No time frame was placed on their deliberations by me. Indeed, while the committee may indeed have been finally agreed to in meetings between me and the two municipal associations, it is not necessarily a committee of the government; it's a joint working committee involving some government representation, largely as resource persons. The major part of the work is being done by the two associations.

Mr. Speaker, I don't expect they'll be reporting their findings to me and the presidents of the two associations until well after the spring session has concluded, perhaps this fall. At that time, I would give consideration to the extent to which their report might be made available to the Legislative Assembly.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister, with regard to municipal financing. Did the minister have discussions with the Association of Municipal Districts and Counties and the Urban Municipalities prior to the finalization of the minister's budget, which is to come down on Thursday night? Were there thorough consultations and communications prior to the finalization of the minister's budget?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last year, on numerous occasions I have met with the executive of the Association of MDs and Counties and the executive of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. Indeed, I have attended all their general meetings, when members from municipalities from across the province were in attendance. That consultation has been ongoing and thorough.

I have not, and in my view it is not [permissible] to

discuss details of the budget that will be presented by the Provincial Treasurer on Thursday night. The aspects of provincial/municipal financing that go into the budget have been discussed, but certainly those details have not. And the hon. member knows full well why they cannot be discussed in detail prior to the presentation of the budget.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Premier. Can the Premier indicate if any consideration has been given to a consultative process, before the provincial budget comes down, with reeves and mayors of large, small, and medium-sized cities? Is any consideration being given to that process so the budget isn't a big mystery item, and people have input, as well as the provincial government?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I usually understand the questions raised by the hon. Member for Clover Bar, but I would have thought he would be fully familiar with the process. Quite obviously, various groups in this province make presentations continually with regard to their aspirations of provincial funding, be they municipal governments, educational institutions, or other groups. We take that input, and that's part of our deliberations in determining our budget position. A very large proportion of our provincial budget is obviously involved in grants to municipal governments, educational institutions, and other institutions on the receipt-of-the-grant basis. That has to be the input. I would have thought the approach taken by the Minister of Municipal Affairs would clearly be the right and proper one.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Premier. Unless my hearing has failed me, when the federal budget comes down it seems the premiers say, we haven't had an opportunity to participate. Maybe my hearing was wrong, but using that premise, would that not apply in this case, where municipal people have an opportunity to have some input into the provincial budget, as it does to the federal case?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I don't think we have ever taken the position in a broad-based approach by the premiers of Canada that we should be involved in the expenditure priorities of the federal government. The major thrust has been fiscal policy; that is, tax policy, encouragement of the risk-taker, and matters of that nature.

What has been presented and discussed at length at the premiers' conference in Victoria last summer is the view that in a country such as ours, in a federal system, if we are establishing fiscal or economic policy, it is obviously to the advantage of Canada if the federal government in Ottawa consults with the provincial governments, in terms of the directions they might be taking. For example, if the federal government is moving on a restrictive basis by way of restraint and the provincial governments feel that the economies of the provinces require a relatively expansionary situation, it's clearly in the best interests of Canadians if we're all moving in the same direction for Canada — maybe the odd exception in terms of provinces, but at least a consensus. But we're not involved, and have never suggested we should be involved, in the budgetary process with regard to expenditure priorities that directly affect matters of purely federal jurisdiction.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Transportation, with regard to the expectations of the cities, their budgeting processes, and the LRT development in Edmonton and Calgary. Could the minister indicate whether any kinds of consultations have gone on to this point in time and/or during the period of time the cities were having their budget discussions, so they could make budgetary decisions based on an expectation from the government?

MR. KROEGER: Mr. Speaker, there has been a good deal of consultation. As a matter of fact, in conjunction with the cities, last summer I set up a pretty major task force on urban transportation and gave them a lot of leeway. They covered a large number of the cities in North America and had a good deal of assistance in getting information on how their operations worked best.

The report of that task force was delivered in three parts. The mayors of the cities of Edmonton and Calgary participated in each of those three parts, so they knew exactly what the status was at any given time. The final report came in in mid-December, and they were quite aware that the recommendations in the task force report couldn't be incorporated in the 1982 budget process.

We are still working on the meaning of that task force report. As recently as the last two weeks I've had meetings with both mayors, keeping them informed on the process we're using, so there's no great mystery about it, keeping in mind that we are in the fourth year of a six-year urban transportation program. The fact is that we have reviewed that six-year program. We have supplemented it and managed to keep the cities reasonably well able to operate. At the moment, we are working, and I am still meeting with the city and getting advice from them.

#### Fatality Inquiries

DR. BUCK: My question is to the hon. Attorney General. Mr. Speaker, I gave the minister notice that I'd be asking the question. It has to do with the young lady killed in the Lamont district several years ago. Can the Attorney General indicate to the Assembly what directives go from the Attorney General's Department to the former provincial coroner, whatever his title is now, as to which cases will and which will not require an inquest into sudden deaths?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for giving me notice of his intention to ask this question. The Fatality Review Board operates under statute and, in virtually all cases, has responsibility for determining whether a fatality inquiry will be held. To be fair to the hon. member, I must say that since the death occurred a number of years ago, I can't say from memory whether it occurred before or after that legislation came into force. Nevertheless, that is the answer to the question.

Mr. Speaker, I might add that on occasion I have looked at that particular file. The conclusion of all who examined it, in the sense of senior officers of the department and of the police force, was that in that case there would be no basis for an inquiry to be held.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Attorney General. In a case such as this, where there is a sudden death, can the minister indicate what information is made available to the parents of the deceased that

could be considered confidential information only in the hands of the Attorney General and the investigating police force? Is any information not made available to the parents in a sudden-death case?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I suppose it's possible that there could be some information not made available, but I am not aware of what circumstances would lead to that or what type of information it might be. The information in the hands of the Attorney General's Department is primarily whatever information is in the hands of the police. The case in question was a death resulting from a motor-vehicle accident. My understanding is that the police involved, in this case the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, made available all information to the parents in this particular case.

DR. BUCK: A supplementary question to the Attorney General, Mr. Speaker. When the investigating officer is investigating the accident, does the officer use any background or just the actual accident site? Is there any investigation of what went on before the accident occurred?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, of necessity my response would be speculative, but it would certainly depend upon the circumstances of the individual case. If anything about the circumstances of an accident led a police officer or his superior to believe he should also examine other matters, that would certainly be done.

DR. BUCK: A final short supplementary question. Would the Attorney General consider reviewing the material, then ascertaining if an inquest could be held at this time? Would the Attorney General give that assurance to the Assembly?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I have no objection to saying that a further review can always be done. In fairness, I think I should say that several such reviews have in fact been done, and the conclusion is the one I mentioned earlier.

#### St. Paul Lakeland Gas Co-op

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Minister of Utilities and Telephones. Is he in a position to confirm the intention of the receivers of the St. Paul Lakeland Natural Gas Co-op to accept the bid by Plains-Western to purchase the co-op, and that the amount of the bid for the co-op's \$7 million to \$8 million in assets is \$1.5 million?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, as indicated by the Member for Spirit River-Fairview, the matter of the sale of the St. Paul Lakeland Gas Co-op is in the hands of the receiver. I believe the offers were placed before the court in Alberta yesterday. I haven't yet been advised of the decision of the court with respect to that matter. As soon as I am advised, I will let the members of the Assembly know.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. In efforts to save the co-op from bankruptcy, was any consideration given by the department to amalgamation with adjoining co-ops as a possible viable alternative? At any point in the last several years, was any consideration given to that option by the department?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I believe this question received considerable attention during the last fall sittings of the Alberta Legislature. We went over a number of areas with respect to St. Paul Lakeland. In view of the fact that the matter has now been placed before the courts by the receiver, I don't know what I could add further on the question, except to say that since early 1981 we worked very closely with the directors of the St. Paul Lakeland Gas Co-op and made every possible effort to see whether we could retain ownership by the members of the co-op. We were unable to do so. Now that the matter is at the stage it's at, we're not in a position to add anything further.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Could he outline to the House whether either the minister or the department was approached by any other gas co-op in the area wishing to enter a bid for the purchase of Lakeland's assets, using ADC financing? If so, was any response given by the department, in view of the fact that we have made loans to utilities in other provinces? Was any request forthcoming from a co-op, and did the department respond?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go back to the very first part of the hon. member's question, related to the value of the system, because there is a certain inference in the question that somehow the assets are lost to the farmers. I really have difficulty in accepting that sort of representation. There are a variety of co-ops in the province: those sponsored by investor-owned utility companies, those sponsored by counties, as well as those that are farmer-owned. In each case our rural gas program, which has been so successful in providing natural gas to rural Albertans, provides grants to the farmers through that entity, whether it is a county-owned system, an investor-owned utility system, or a farmer-owned system. Those assets, the pipe and the distribution systems that go with it, are in the ground for the use of the farmer. So I don't think it's fair to represent this as the assets being lost to the users. The farmers and the families in the St. Paul Lakeland area continue to have the benefit of the investment of the Legislature of Alberta in that system.

MR. NOTLEY: A supplementary question. Perhaps the minister misunderstood. My question was whether the government had received any requests from any other co-op to bid on the assets of the St. Paul Lakeland Gas Co-op.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, could I ask the minister — because the government is a major creditor — whether any consideration has been given by the government to asking the receiver to delay any decision on the bids until such time as the Ombudsman's investigation is completed? My understanding is that there is now an investigation by the Ombudsman's office, not into the operation of this particular co-op but into the government's handling of this particular question. Would the government consider asking the receiver to postpone any action until the Ombudsman's report is received?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in an earlier reply, my understanding was that the court was to deal with the offers yesterday. I have not yet received a report on whether that matter was dealt with. I'll obtain that information for the hon. member and for members of the Assembly.

I'm aware of the question of the Ombudsman examin-

ing certain actions, or allegations of actions, by members of the department, and that can go on. I think it's important to repeat the answer I provided members last fall; that is, the co-op is autonomous. They have and do run their own affairs. Three successive general meetings of the membership made a decision, and their decision is being carried through. We as a department don't have the authority to move and overrule or override a decision of the membership of an autonomous rural gas co-op.

MR. NOTLEY: A final supplementary question to the minister. My question is not with respect to overruling an annual meeting or a meeting of the membership but whether the government, as a major creditor, could ask that the matter of determining final bids be withheld until such time as the Ombudsman completes his report.

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, the government is not a major creditor in this particular case. As I indicated earlier, advancing grants to the co-op is reflected in the improvements to the system that are in the ground. There is some indebtedness to the government on natural gas purchases. I'm not as yet aware of the determination of how the proceeds will be distributed upon a decision of the court. When I am, I'll advise the members of the Assembly.

#### **Business Corporations Legislation**

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Could the minister advise the Assembly if his departmental officials are reviewing the recently proclaimed Alberta Business Corporations Act, with particular reference to the apparent omission of specific accounting and auditing standards?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, the review is not with respect to the Act but with respect to the regulations passed pursuant to the Act. I have received representations from a number of people and organizations that suggest we should add to the regulations specific provisions with respect to the nature of the documents required, when financial statements are prepared for the benefit of shareholders. Those representations suggest to me that we should include specific reference to the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants Handbook, as has been done in the regulations of other provinces that have adopted similar new corporate legislation. Mr. Speaker, I am treating those representations very seriously, and expect to reach a conclusion and decision within the next month or two.

#### **Rural Gas Co-ops**

MR. MANDEVILLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Utilities and Telephones. Could the minister indicate if he's anticipating any new programs to provide increased assistance to our gas co-ops in the province?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, over the past number of years we have made a variety of changes and improvements to assist the rural gas co-ops. Among them, a very important one was to assist by offsetting a considerable portion of the Gas Alberta charge, and that's a major budgetary item. We've also assisted by changing the 3306 pipe replacement program. We recently changed the for-

mula for gas-loss grants and increased it from 95 to 100 per cent, and this has provided considerable assistance. From time to time, we examine the regulations to see how improvements might be made, but that process goes on at all times, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MANDEVILLE: Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister given consideration to making any changes in the grant structure for the gas co-ops set up in the province?

MR. SHABEN: Not in the overall structure, Mr. Speaker. The grant structure is such that the provincial government grants provide the vast majority of the funds for the systems that have been built and, depending on the nature of the system and the cost, they range as high as 80 per cent of the cost. There is considerable flexibility in that grant process, and they are able to respond to particular problems of distance or terrain that a particular co-op experiences.

MR. KESLER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Could the hon. minister indicate whether policies are being implemented whereby those gas co-ops being affected by annexation of lands and facilities — now being confiscated without any compensation — will be reimbursed for those losses?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, we've had a number of discussions with individual co-ops and with the Federation of Alberta Gas Co-ops. The federation has made representation to us on that matter, and it relates to annexations going on in the province and certain parts of utility systems or rural gas systems falling into a municipality. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and I have had some discussions on this matter. It would require his consideration of amendments to municipal legislation, and I believe the minister is giving that matter consideration.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, might I supplement the answer provided by the hon. Minister of Utilities and Telephones. I have under consideration amendments to the Municipal Government Act which would deal with the problem of rural gas co-ops losing franchised areas because of annexation. It would be my expectation to bring forward those amendments during the fall session of the Legislature, in all likelihood. They have been discussed with the rural gas federation, and I believe it is safe to say that they agree with the procedure I've just outlined.

MR. MANDEVILLE: A further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister monitoring the number of co-ops being made available for sale to the utility companies in the province?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, we have been working very closely with the members of the Federation of Gas Co-ops and have structured a joint committee, made up of members of the federation and members of the department, which is visiting the rural gas co-ops throughout the province and discussing various issues and concerns, as well as learning from the more successful co-ops. In the course of those meetings, as well as my own, I am kept aware of plans by co-ops to consider selling their assets.

MR. MANDEVILLE: Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. A number of co-ops in the province want to amalgamate to make it more economical to operate as a large co-op. Are there any restrictions within the department to prevent co-ops from amalgamating?

MR. SHABEN: No, Mr. Speaker, there aren't. It is something we would encourage the co-ops to examine among themselves. We've indicated to them that we will assist in those sorts of discussions and in examining that kind of possibility in order to reduce operating costs.

MR. MANDEVILLE: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to either the hon. Minister of Energy and Natural Resources or the Minister of Utilities and Telephones. Has the government made representation to Ottawa to see if any relief can be given as far as the excise tax on some of the users of natural gas is concerned?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs, the Provincial Treasurer, and I have had discussions on this very important matter. It relates to the impact of the federal excise tax and Canadian ownership tax on our primary ag. producers, as it relates to heating their buildings and the feedstocks going into various agricultural commodities. We have had those discussions, and we are seriously considering making representation to the federal Minister of Finance on this matter of federal excise tax, as it affects the primary ag. producer.

#### **Farm Foreclosures**

MR. KESLER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Agriculture, in reference to a question I asked yesterday as to how many farm foreclosures have taken place in this province in the past six months and the percentage of increase over the previous six months.

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, the information available in the area of farm bankruptcies is the only information that is kept current and up to date, recognizing the difficulties in the broader base, looking at all the chartered banks and the different reasons individuals go out of production. The information available through the Superintendent of Bankruptcy within the province of Alberta, which of course lists all of the bankruptcies in agriculture across Canada, shows four bankruptcies in the province of Alberta at the beginning of this year. Based on the average number listed for the years 1979 to 1981, it would appear that in 1979 there were 16 and in 1981 there were 18. So it would appear that the numbers are holding relatively steady.

MR. KESLER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Has the hon. minister had indications from farmers, especially those locked into Agricultural Development Corporation loans, as to the conditions at the time of spring work, and whether or not people locked into those loans will be able to meet the necessary financial commitments in order to put the crops in?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of January, of those members who avail themselves of the Agricultural Development Corporation, none have found themselves in the area of bankruptcy. We have one since the 1st of January, a beginning farmer who, perhaps by choice, has had second thoughts and has gone out of

production. But other than that, the land payments themselves would indicate to us that they will follow the average of 1981, which was a normal average for the ADC.

#### ADC Loans

MR. PAHL: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Could the Minister of Agriculture indicate to this Assembly the average interest rate farmers are locked into in that program?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, at present the base rate in the Agricultural Development Corporation is 12 per cent. The beginning farmer is locked in, if you wish to use that expression, but enjoys the first five years of this program at an interest rate of 6 per cent, earning a 6 per cent rebate. Those who have advanced beyond the beginning farmer stage, and have availed themselves of a Class A loan, are entitled to a 3 per cent rebate, so they enjoy a 9 per cent interest rate for the first five years.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. This refers to a matter I raised in the fall Legislature, with regard to the repayment schedule. At the present time, a young person repays the loan at 12 per cent interest, then there is a 6 per cent rebate. In the Alberta Agricultural Development Corporation, the turnaround time of the department in returning that 6 per cent interest is sometimes more than a month or two. The effective rate of 6 per cent the minister has just talked about isn't 6 per cent. Has the minister reviewed that matter since it was raised in this Legislature? Can the minister assure us that after the money is taken from the young farmer, it's returned to him within a week or two or sooner?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, we reviewed the request, recognizing the one instance of a late return for the earned rebate, and recognizing that any period beyond a normal period would detract from the program itself. We looked at the reason, first of all. The program is designed so that the rebate gives the individual the fullest advantage possible, and the staff and the program are set up so that the rebate is available to the individual as soon as possible. We will continue to try to keep that as short a time as practical, so the full 6 per cent can be earned.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. Has a formal report been made to his office, reviewing all the situations that occur where young farmers are waiting for the return of this money after they have paid it? Can he be assured by that formal report that the matter is being well looked after? Secondly, has the minister considered dropping that part of the program and charging young farmers a straight 6 per cent? Then when there is difficulty, and the young farmer has committed a crime, maybe he can be charged the 12 per cent interest. Has the minister considered that kind of moving policy change that this government makes?

MR. NOTLEY: Have faith in the young farmer, first.

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, we have considered various aspects of how one can best provide that assistance to the beginning farmer. The earned-rebate system appears to be the best at the present time. You have to remember that the base rate is 12. The individual begin-

ning farmer has an obligation, and that's basically why it's classified as an earned rebate. Other than the administrative problem in one case, where the time element perhaps was rather long, we find that the earned rebate is working well.

MR. CLARK: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister inform the Assembly as to the percentage of capital financing by ADC, in comparison with private and chartered banks?

MR. SPEAKER: It would seem that that's probably public information. The hon. minister has made the rates known insofar as the Agricultural Development Corporation is concerned. Presumably any hon. member would be able to make a comparison between those and what other lenders charge.

MR. CLARK: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't the percentage of the rate, it was the total percentage of capital financing . . .

MR. R. SPEAKER: Don't embarrass him.

MR. CLARK: . . . carried on by the Agricultural Development Corporation, with respect to the percentage of capital financing by the ADC compared to private and chartered banks.

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, I don't have that percentage figure at my fingertips. But from the beginning farmer approach, the information we have is that the Agricultural Development Corporation is handling 100 per cent of all the applications, recognizing the interest rates and the packages available to the beginning farmer.

MR. ZAOZIRNY: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Tourism and Small Business.

MR. SPEAKER: Might this be the last supplementary on this topic?

#### AOC Loans

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Arising from this discussion of interest-rate assistance for the agricultural community, could the minister indicate to the Assembly whether consideration is being given to any new initiatives, possibly through the Alberta Opportunity Company, whereby small business men experiencing financial difficulty might have the opportunity to get locked into similar rates?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. NOTLEY: It's about time.

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, for quite some time the Alberta Opportunity Company has provided loans to the small business community at rates below the conventional lending institutions. Presently the base rate for small business in a small community is as low as 14.5 per cent. However, if a business or company is having some difficulties and is basically in good standing in its own stead and can't get additional financing from the conventional lending institutions, the Alberta Opportunity Company is looking at the aspect of refinancing on that particular basis. I might point out to the hon. member that we're

prepared to look at any suggestions any of the members may have.

MR. SPEAKER: We've gone past the time for the question period. However, the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview did indicate that he wished to ask a second question. If the Assembly agrees, perhaps we might take another short question and short answer.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

**Oil Sands Production**  
(continued)

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, my question is a supplementary question to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. The minister indicated that he wished to have my figures on what the infrastructure would be. I'd like the government to review the ERCB figures, which are \$432 million. That's about 10 per cent of the cost of the project. Has the government any updated figures, or has anyone in government done a review of what those figures would be now? Since the plant has gone from \$4.5 billion to \$13 billion, where do things relatively stand on the infrastructure costs predicted by the ERCB?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I'll review that matter and report to the Assembly later.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that motions for returns 120 and 121 stand and retain their place on the Order Paper.

[Motion carried]

head: **MOTIONS OTHER THAN  
GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

201. Moved by Mr. D. Anderson:

Be it resolved that the Assembly urge the government to consider establishing a committee or commission consisting of labor, business, and government leaders to investigate alternatives to strikes and lockouts. This body would consider labor courts, co-determination models, final offer arbitration, or any other means by which strikes and lockouts might become an obsolete way of resolving differences.

[Debate adjourned March 11: Mr. Bradley speaking]

MR. HIEBERT: Mr. Speaker, in light of the absence of my colleague the Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, and in light of the fact that we had debate on this particular motion two afternoons last week, I would like to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: It is so ordered.

202. Moved by Mrs. Embury

Be it resolved that the Assembly urge the government, through the Department of Transportation, to initiate a multimedia campaign to increase public awareness regarding traffic safety.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to introduce Motion 202 this afternoon. I'd like to limit my introductory remarks today to why I have introduced this motion at this particular time in the Assembly, a brief historical perspective, some comments on a recent driver attitude study, and then look at some of the pros and cons regarding the motion.

First of all, the reason I felt this was a timely motion to be debated in our Assembly is that I am aware that a similar type of motion, or one regarding one aspect of traffic safety, mainly driver education, has been debated in the past, but in the few years since that time there have been a lot of changes in our Alberta society, not only in the urban centres but also in the rural areas. I felt it was timely to look again at some of the problems and concerns we have in regard to traffic safety.

Another reason for choosing this motion was basically a personal concern for many years, regarding the driving habits of all of us. That refers literally to all Albertans, not only young people, who quite often are accused of bad driving habits, but right along the age spectrum. Today we see a lot more elderly people also driving and maintaining their cars. I think this is an important subject regardless of where we live, in a large fast-growing urban centre or as part of a rural community. I believe another extremely important factor to all Albertans is our changing weather conditions, and another is the rapid changes in the design of cars.

It was interesting to note one of the policemen in Calgary mentioning to me that a factor that concerned him very much was the advent of more and more small vehicles on the road. He also stated that this may not be as much a problem when most Albertans are driving the same size vehicles. But the concern today is when we have a small number of small vehicles being driven by families, yet still have a large number of much larger sized cars. This creates more severe injuries when accidents occur.

I mentioned briefly the rapidly increasing population in Calgary and all the problems that results in. I think most people are aware that Calgary has always been known as a city with a very high ratio of cars per driver. That is certainly evident in many areas of Calgary. When outside houses, you now see up to six vehicles per family, that indicates the affluence of Albertans today.

Another reason for my interest in this motion is that when I introduced my first motion in this Assembly, on the occupational health and safety foundation, I did some research into one of the problems related to occupational safety, which is driver training and what programs are offered by companies for their employees. Another reason this is important to me is that, with my background in nursing, it is a very, very sad reminder of the terrible pain and anguish suffered by so many victims of motor car accidents. Oftentimes suggestions have been floating around about the value for people who cause accidents if they could just tour some of our hospital wards and see the injuries that result from the accidents.

Finally the statistics in Alberta at least are indeed alarming, indicating that Alberta has one of the worst collision records in Canada. Interestingly enough, a recent survey revealed that Albertans tend to blame factors other than themselves for traffic collisions.



This past weekend, there was a think tank in Lethbridge for the Calgary Police Commission, senior police officers, and the director of law enforcement for the provincial government. The purpose of this think tank was to identify traffic problems, to look at the level of service of the police department, and to review legislative changes. Certainly I think there is enough evidence in our newspapers and electronic media to indicate that many citizens in our province, and the police forces — whether they be our urban police or the RCMP — are deeply concerned about driving habits.

I think last Thursday was the culmination for this motion today and my extreme urgency in having it placed on the order page. Anybody who happened to be on the road or travelling in the early evening, whether they were in Calgary or Edmonton, saw one of the terrific problems we all experience. I don't know if there is an added level of frustration in Edmonton, due to the transit workers' strike, but it was commonplace and it certainly justified one of the facts that came out of the drivers' study that most accidents occur at intersections. How well we know that one of the common activities of drivers today, is no longer to run the orange light but to run the red light. Another factor that was evident on Thursday evening was that in people's frustration with the severe weather conditions, or more motorists on the road or their anxiousness to reach their homes, they would carry on right across an intersection and block that intersection for one or more lights. Again, what are commonly known as fender-benders were evident in many intersections.

In introducing this motion in the Assembly, I certainly don't want to indicate that a lot has not been done in the past. Frankly I wish to commend our law enforcement officers in the city and on the highway. There is a terrific responsibility for a very demanding job. Given the environment today of laws, people, weather conditions, et cetera, they are performing an outstanding service to all Albertans. I also commend private driver training schools, the Alberta Motor Association, the Alberta Safety Council, and many private companies that participate in employee driver training and defensive driving programs.

Historically I would like to reflect back to 1973, when the Alberta Safety Council introduced a new program. One of the main objectives of this program was to help instil in the student an attitude of personal responsibility for his or her actions behind the wheel. I believe other speakers will be emphasizing the role of the Alberta Safety Council, and I certainly hope they will be able to bring out the positive results from 1973 or how effective that program has been.

In the last 10 years in Alberta, I don't think anybody would doubt that the statistics indicate a gradual increase in the number of deaths and injuries as a result of traffic collisions. We also know that there are more vehicle registrations and licensed drivers in Alberta. Everyone is aware of the increased level of motorization in the province since 1971.

Another interesting fact that might have an influence on driving habits in Alberta is the youthful composition of Alberta's population and, of course, the substantial rate of population growth. Eighty-three per cent of all traffic fatalities since 1975 were occupants of motor vehicles. Statistics reveal that in 1980, on an average day, Alberta's roads were the scene of 283 traffic collisions in which 66 people were injured and at least one person killed.

In Calgary, as elsewhere in the province, accidents are

on the increase in number and severity. In fact 35 per cent of all police calls for service are traffic related. Shamefully, of the five largest cities in Alberta, Calgary has the highest accident rate. That must be due to all our rural friends who use our city as a centre.

AN HON. MEMBER: Careful.

MRS. EMBURY: One of the programs that has resulted over the last few years ... [interjections] I am receiving quite a bit of static on the side from my comments, supposedly aimed at our rural friends. I just thought it was time to wake up some of the members of the Assembly; I thought I would get their attention one way or the other.

One of the most positive programs initiated over the last few years was a public awareness program regarding winter conditions. The evidence this was needed is that November and December are by far the highest collision months, with a decrease in collisions in January. So there is an indication that drivers are very slow to adjust their driving habits to our winter conditions. Another interesting factor, which I mentioned before, is that intersections are the most collision prone place in our cities.

In 1980 the Minister of Transportation established a traffic safety advisory committee. Following this, a drivers' attitude study was undertaken to assess the attitudes of Albertans towards driving, traffic safety, accident causes and prevention, and safety advertising and education. It is interesting to note the profile of the average Albertan. This is a person who thinks he is a reasonably good driver and does not think a refresher course would improve his driving a great deal. He feels that he drives at least as well, and maybe better, than most of his friends. He believes he is a safety-conscious driver. If an accident occurs, he believes it is somebody else's fault. He also believes that alcohol is a leading cause of accidents and is aware that speeding is also a leading cause of accidents. Another belief of our average Albertan is that it doesn't matter how hard he tries to avoid accidents, because invariably he will probably have at least one.

Unfortunately the average Alberta driver does not wear a seat belt. The average Albertan believes that radio is the best medium for traffic safety messages, and television is second. It was interesting to note that he felt he could be reached by radio from 7 to 9 a.m., around 12 noon, and from 4 to 6 p.m., which is certainly indicative of an urban driver. Alberta drivers blame others for traffic collisions and then seek solutions from government, police, and through the courts, rather than personal responsibility. The major conclusion of this survey was that attitude is the main problem contributing to Alberta's high traffic fatality and collision rates.

I would like very briefly to draw your attention to the word "accident". Unfortunately I think the time has come when we must change or stop using this word, because it seems to conjure in most of our minds an image of divine intervention, causes that are beyond our control. If a change in attitude is to be made, I think this is one area we should direct our attention to, and instead of using the word "accidents", use the words "caused events".

The basic goal of any driver training program is to train a driver sufficiently to pass the written and practical tests provided by the Department of Transportation to obtain a driver's licence. I think we must always continue to separate driver education from driver training. Hopefully, driver education is a program designed to influence attitudes. If you recall, many years ago in the United

States when the speed limit was dropped, the accident rate dropped approximately 24 per cent. The significant fact was not lowering the speed limit but rather an attitude of driving slower.

In speaking with young citizens and middle-aged people regarding this motion, there seems to be two prevailing concerns: time and speed. These are attitude problems. In our very comfortable, automatic cars, many people like to drive fast. There is a certain sensation of accomplishment or freedom in doing this. How often do we hear people talk about a trip from Calgary to Edmonton not in terms of the miles or the speed they will travel, how safe the road will be, or what time of day they will be travelling, but it has to be done in two and a half or three hours. They have set themselves a time goal, and regardless of what the conditions are, what happens in between or at each end of the trip, they are most upset if they haven't reached their destination in that given time.

From what young people told me, one factor that was viewed as a safe and good innovation on our cars was the idea of cruise control. At least this was one way of people still feeling comfortable driving, yet they knew their speed would be restricted at what was considered a reasonable limit. Another factor that young people mentioned to me, again because of our comfortable cars and the ease with which we can drive our automatic transmissions, was that one doesn't have to concentrate on driving. It really isn't a highly developed skill to be able to drive down a busy highway, looking ahead at the road, judging distance between the car in front of you, checking your rear-view mirror and your side mirror for cars passing you or what is happening behind you. [interjections]

I must admit that where I sit in the Legislature, I am very fortunate to be amongst members who have been in the Legislature for quite some time. I've had some very expert advice today on how one should speak and the humor one should use in introducing a motion on a Tuesday afternoon. However, the problem for me is that I really feel this is such an important motion that it's very difficult to find much humor in this topic. I am certainly looking forward to leaving the humorous aspects to some of my colleagues who, I'm sure, will want to tell us their own stories and what happens in their constituencies.

Some of the points we should look at in our debate are: first of all, how effective have our programs been in the past? Everybody would agree that a driver education program is basically made up of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The attitudes are probably the hardest to change. But teaching methods have certainly improved over the last few years. Hopefully driver schools and people who carry out these programs have looked at some of the latest methods of teaching people to be more responsible for their driving.

One suggestion that has come forward is to examine present standards regarding course content and instruction. A question raised is, what organization should establish licensing and accreditation standards? At one time when I was very concerned about this issue of traffic, particularly in a city like Calgary, I thought that every time a driver's license is renewed they should have to undergo some type of educational program, hopefully to realize the new techniques and what factors influence our driving today.

This was viewed with some horror by some of my colleagues, because they could immediately see a great expansion of bureaucratic structure. How could we possibly hire enough people to test all these drivers when their licences are renewed? However, the idea is still one

that needs merit because of rapidly growing populations in our urban centres, the number of cars there and people driving.

What I find is happening, is that it is very difficult for people to keep up on the proper way to drive. I'm sure that everybody would be well aware of driving down Highway No. 2, now with four lanes. Even when the sign clearly says, slow drivers stay in the right-hand lane, they're blocking the left-hand lane, going along at a very slow speed.

So there is a time and place for all of us. It's not just identifying the young people, our new drivers. The middle-aged people are just as guilty of not being more cognizant of their driving habits. They should become aware of new information, new driving, and how to improve their own techniques. Unfortunately that driver survey is probably very indicative of how many of us think it's always the other fellow who should be responsible.

Another concern that has been raised is, of course, should programs be [compulsory] or should they be volunteer? Who should deliver courses or examinations? One of the problems is that possibly there should be a review of the words "defensive-driving programs". While this is certainly very self-explanatory, obviously it is not a popular program to all Albertans, either because they haven't the time to take the program, the money to do it, or basically they're not interested. This would certainly be backed up by the driver survey that indicates their driving is not a problem; it's somebody else's driving. So instead of "defensive-driving", because the assumption is that if you're a good driver in Alberta you don't need to know how to drive defensively, I suggest that that one word be reviewed.

Many who speak for my motion would continue to agree that alcohol-related accidents are a problem. While our government particularly is doing a terrific job through our Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission, there's always room for a lot more in trying to impress on people the effects of drinking and driving. Of course one of the problems with this motion in Alberta today, as all across the country: we're aware of our high inflation, and we're very cognizant of spending the dollars of Alberta citizens and this government. One might say that this is a pretty expensive program to initiate at this time. However, there would be a lot of support to justify the money, although it's quite often hard to evaluate exactly how effective a program has been. Surely we would be willing to say that this would be justified in view of the lives lost, accidents caused, and people who end up permanently in many of our extended-care facilities because of accidents.

Many people would say, what type of media presentation are you looking at? I certainly wouldn't be one to say which would be more appropriate, because I know people have already looked at this and are looking at it again. As I mentioned, it primarily came out in the driver survey that radio is one of the best media.

Lastly in looking at this issue, I would like to bring to your attention that one of the problems our police forces face, particularly in our urban areas, is the low penalty when people are charged. Under the voluntary payment program, there's a \$25 charge for running a red light. This is of great concern to our police forces, because the basic incomes of most people have certainly increased over the last few years. So this is really not considered enough to make a difference in our program or for people to be more careful in their driving. I hope that provisions would be made. If one studies the statutes, one will see

that there are actually high-priced fines for many convictions, but what we need to do is have a whole study of this area. Hopefully it will prove that Albertans need to be charged much more money for their fines.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I urge all members to participate in this debate. I hope we can see many aspects debated at this time, not only the value of seat belt legislation but actually what is going on in this province through councils like the Alberta Safety Council. I urge that all members of this Assembly support my resolution.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, in rising briefly to take part in the debate, I certainly support the concerns of the hon. member presenting the resolution. I would like to say to the Minister of Transportation that as a member of a select Legislative committee about 12 years ago, that looked at the problem of highway safety, it's time that a committee of the Legislature was struck to look at all aspects of highway and driving safety, as we have had quite an interval of time elapse since that last report. It would be apropos that that committee be struck.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring one or two areas to the attention of the Assembly. I always had a pet project which I brought to the attention of both the previous minister and this one. This is the point the hon. member raised about testing people when their licences come up for renewal. We always receive notification that our licence is coming up for renewal. As Neil Armstrong said when he stepped on the moon, it's a small step. But the point I'm trying to make, Mr. Minister, is that it can be a small step to get people to read the operator's manual. When the licence renewal notice is sent out, send out the manual and a self-administered, two-page test. If the person can't read the language, they can go to their neighbor. But it will be a small step to convince people to at least read the manual.

We all know that many of us get our licence through the mail. They say of you, you're such a bad driver you must have gotten your licence through the mail. The young members of the Assembly, like the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry, don't even know that at one time all you had to do was walk in, pay your \$2, and you became a licenced driver. That's the way it used to be. Some of the people who got their license by mail have not changed their driving habits.

My pet peeve is people who think they have the right of way in an area where it says "merge". When you come from an access lane onto a two-lane divided highway, I have seen people practically shake their fist if you try to come into the merge lane. They have that lane and figure: I've paid for it, and you're not going to infringe upon that right. All the idiotic driver has to do is switch over to the left lane and let the traffic merge, and no one impedes anyone. Unless we get people to realize there are four-lane divided highways, this is how you merge, and who has the right of way, we're going to have poor drivers in this province.

It would just be a small step. We wouldn't have to have a bureaucratic jungle or enlarge the civil service. You could run the test through a computerized system. Surely if you have the book in front of you, you should be able to get at least 80 per cent on a written test. It would be a small step, Mr. Minister. It wouldn't cost any money. It would just go out and come back. Surely if you can't pass a test with the book in front of you, you shouldn't be driving. It would be a small step.

Mr. Speaker, several years ago the Alberta safety people put on a defensive driving course. They condensed it

and made it available to all members of the Assembly, because we're all busy people and we haven't time to take the 10 weeks or whatever it is. Mr. Minister, let's do that for the members of the Assembly. We can condense it at noon. It is one of the best driving courses I've ever taken, and I used to be a commercial truck driver.

We all get sloppy in our driving habits. As we get a little older, we're looking to see how Joe Doe's crop is coming, if he has his new Herefords out in the field, or if he has a new combine. We get a little careless in our driving. When I was a commercial truck driver, if someone was driving with me I wouldn't even turn on the radio. I wouldn't talk to that man. My job was to drive, not to visit or listen to the news. Many young people drive with things stuck in their ears. It reminds me of a case where a young man crossed a centre-line and killed himself and two other people, just north of St. Albert. He had his stereo turned up so high he couldn't hear the police car pursuing him. I don't know if that was the cause of the accident.

I tell my family members that your brain cannot function at two levels at one time. We all know that when you turn the radio off, you are a much more alert driver. The brain cannot function doing two things at one time. Maybe people of superior intelligence like the hon. Member for Medicine Hat can, but there aren't too many of us with that superior intelligence. The brain just doesn't function that way. In this campaign to make better drivers, we should look at not having outside distractions when driving.

Driver attitude: if we can learn anything from driving on the freeways of Los Angeles, it's to show courtesy. If you have to change six lanes there, the minute you turn on your signal light the man behind you backs off. All he has to do is take his foot off the accelerator and let you change lanes. In good old Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, what do they do? When you switch your signal light on, they speed up to cut you off. Never in my life have I seen so many discourteous drivers. I don't know if we've cornered the market on them in this city, but that's what they do.

Courtesy is contagious. I always let the man change lanes. If I see one person sitting at a stop sign and there's a line of traffic, I slow down or stop and let that man in. It's amazing how contagious courtesy becomes. I always do that when I have young people, to get them to change their driving attitudes so they're not aggressive but courteous. That rubs off on them.

Seat belts: why in the world do we have to legislate seat belts when people should know they save lives? It seems so incongruous that you have to legislate something to try to indicate to people that if you don't wear them, you get killed. Maybe we have to look at something where we encourage people to wear belts. I know that my own father spent two hours one afternoon unrigging his warning switch. When you turn the ignition on, it goes beep, beep, beep. He spent one afternoon trying to figure out how to stop that stupid thing from beeping, so he wouldn't have to put his seat belt on. And my father was a commercial truck driver as well. Why would he not wear a seat belt? I don't know. Where have we gone wrong in not educating people? I would find legislating it distasteful.

I support the use of seat belts. I know the medical statistics. I am one of those people who's wife would not be alive today if she had had a seat belt on. We were in a head-on collision. One third of the car was taken off, including both doors on the driver's side. If she had had a

seat belt on, she would have been cut in half as the doors were being sliced in half. But in spite of that, seat belts save lives. And seat belts save lives within a 25-mile radius of your home. Most people say, once I hit the highway I put the belt on. Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Transportation, the minute I turn the ignition on I put the belt on, because as you drive out of the underground parking lot, if you happen to go to sleep for a second, you could be killed 10 feet away from where you turned the ignition on. That's the message we have to get across to people: the minute you turn the switch on, you put the belt on. We've all seen instances in just a minor accident where a person gets thrown out of the car and somebody runs over him at 15 miles an hour. Why do we have to legislate? Why do we not make people understand? Why will people not understand that it saves lives?

Mr. Speaker, an area I feel very vehement about is the drinking driver. I wish the Solicitor General were here. We must not namby-pamby the drunken driver. If we have to step on toes and infringe on people's rights . . . Of course it's not a right for them to be drinking and driving. It's a privilege to drive. If we have to double and triple the patrol program, the Check Stop program, so be it. It was very interesting when I spoke to enforcement officers this year. They said, we've never seen so many people concerned about the fact that they don't know where we're going to be next. They publicized it well, they enforced it well, and you could go through a Check Stop any time of day or night. It would be interesting to find out from the Minister of Transportation what effect, statistically, that had on the drinking driver.

I also know that in the English experience, once enforcement was stepped up, there was a dramatic decrease in drunken drivers and infractions on the highways. But then people somehow seemed to become immune. So it would not bother me one iota if we went to the Swedish system, where the penalty would be so severe that you could not afford to drink and drive. Mr. Minister, I think it would be politically safe at this time that we become that tough with the drinking driver. I know there is overwhelming support for that kind of toughness at this time, because the young driver and the irresponsible driver know that the opportunity of getting caught is not too great.

At the same time, the uninsured driver knows that the chance of getting caught is not too large. So we have many people, more than we should ever have, driving with their licence and their insurance expired. We've made it compulsory that you have automobile insurance before you move a wheel. People are disregarding that. Hundreds of them are disregarding that, because they don't think they're going to get caught.

Another area I'd like to bring to the attention of the Assembly is the unsafe vehicles we have on our highways. This could all be looked at in a thorough study by a legislative committee. I don't think the Royal Canadian Mounted Police should be running around telling people, look, your headlight is burnt out. Let's get the boys in blue. When we looked at trucking in the legislative committee, our recommendation was: take that job away from the Mounties; let the boys in blue in the little blue cars do that testing, that monitoring, and that surveillance. Let's extend that to automobiles.

In speaking to law enforcement officers, they say, you'd be amazed at what we find when we stop a person to tell them their headlight is out. We find uninsured drivers, we find impaired drivers, we find unlicensed drivers, and we find thugs and criminals. This is true. But the highway

patrol people can read licence plates. They can read driving licences. They can phone that computer and get the same information. So let's keep the law enforcement officers enforcing the law, and let's let the blue patrol look after keeping people with unsafe vehicles off the highways. I don't think we want a return to the compulsory program of testing vehicles, but we should make it equally unfavorable for people who drive unsafe vehicles.

The last point I would like to touch on is uncontrolled railroad crossings. Last fall I brought to the attention of the Assembly the death of a young man, a constituent of mine. He took his father to work. After dropping his father off, he was coming back on a black highway — black tank cars, poor visibility. That young man drove right under that train, right under those tanks.

For years we've been pressing — and I think making some progress — on putting fluorescent flashes on railroad cars. When I spoke to the CNR people, I said, if you're not going to do that, and that program is taking so long to go into effect, why not do as they used to in the old days of the steam locomotive: have a brakeman standing out there with a lantern, saying that the crossing has cars in it. We're not that busy in this day and age that we can't have a brakeman with some kind of signal device standing there indicating that the crossing is blocked. In this instance it was a crossing used for switching purposes, not a crossing that has very much traffic on it. I know we can't justify putting signal lights on every crossing that has one train a month cross it. But surely in an instance such as this, the CNR is not in that big a hurry that they can't have a switchman out there indicating that a railroad car is obstructing that road.

Mr. Speaker, with those brief remarks, I certainly support the resolution. I think it's just about time that a legislative committee was struck to review highway safety programs and all related matters as far as driving attitude, putting on programs, testing drivers, et cetera, are concerned. I think it is time the whole field of automobile safety and safety on our roads and highways were reviewed.

Thank you for your courtesy, Mr. Speaker.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Speaker, I want to spend some time this afternoon on this very timely motion. I'd like to congratulate my colleague from Calgary North West for bringing the motion to the floor of the Assembly. I'm going to speak with the director's cap of the Alberta Safety Council on, because I am a director of the council. I have been on the board for three years now, I think it is, so I have some knowledge of what the Alberta Safety Council is doing, what the council is all about, and what programs are offered through the council. I wouldn't want any duplication of services, then, if this motion is adopted by the Assembly.

I think the Assembly could probably also look at increased funding to the Alberta Safety Council, so they can expand many of these available programs. Last year, through the Department of Transportation, the government increased the grant by 9.5 per cent. But I'm making a pitch on behalf of the council that we can use more dollars to do many of the programs we want to do.

The Alberta Safety Council

is a non-profit, non-governmental, public service organization, founded in 1946 and incorporated by an Act of the Legislature in 1952. The Council's aim is to reduce injuries and fatalities due to accidents.

The organization is strictly voluntary and depends upon the dedication of many individuals to serve as officers,

directors, and many committee chairmen:

Such supporters represent business, industry, government departments, volunteer organizations and many individuals concerned with the educational, engineering and enforcement aspects of safety.

The structure of the council focuses on five areas in safety: traffic, motor fleet, rural, school, and child and home safety. The objectives of the Alberta Safety Council are:

To instill in the minds of all Albertans an understanding of the accident problem and an awareness of personal responsibilities for the safety of themselves and others, to reduce death ... and economic losses.

To work closely and co-operatively with public officials and other responsible groups already actively engaged in safety activities, to stimulate and assist them in building sound programs.

To focus attention on major accident problems and generate public opinion to support necessary action that will resolve these problems.

To plan, carry out and co-ordinate safety activities that will be effective in preventing or minimizing avoidable death, injury and property damage.

We offer a number of programs under the traffic safety committee, and I'll go into those. But first of all, I'd like to share with the members of the Assembly a communication forwarded to the Minister of Transportation, further to a meeting held in the town of Spruce Grove last year. A number of concerns were discussed at this very important meeting, held on September 29, 1980. The then inspector of the RCMP, in charge of highways in the province, Inspector Hogg, now the director of the safety branch of Alberta Transportation, said: "It should be made socially unacceptable to drive improperly." I really have to agree with his statement.

At that meeting a number of items were discussed: mandatory driver education; mandatory seat belt legislation; reduced speed laws; motor helmet legislation, because it was in front of the courts at that time; safety education in the school system; and driver education in the schools. I concur in those points.

If we look at the story about the person who was visiting Alberta from a European country, while watching the heavy flow of traffic during the height of the tourist season, he was heard to remark, someone certainly had a good idea to issue all those bad drivers with yellow licence plates. This chap must have been in downtown Edmonton.

My hon. colleague from Calgary mentioned that the rural people were the ones causing accidents in downtown Calgary. Well I don't agree with that. The only reason I don't go to Calgary these days is that I don't have a horse.

AN HON. MEMBER: You've got the right half of the horse, Bill.

MR. PURDY: Right. One [thing] the traffic safety committee looked at was defensive driving. Last year a total of 12,354 people went through various private organizations for a defensive driving course.

There is the alcohol and drug abuse subcommittee of traffic safety, and it is certainly supportive of the Alberta Check Stop program. It is one of the best programs we could have, as far as I am concerned. I look at Highway 16 west of Edmonton, and last year I think over 1,000 people were charged just on Highway 16 alone, not

looking at the towns of Stony Plain, Spruce Grove, Edson, or any of those. It was just through the Check Stop program.

I have to congratulate the RCMP from Stony Plain and Evansburg, because the skiers and holidayers from the city certainly knew they were out working. If they were leaving Edmonton at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, they were bound to run into a Check Stop around Carvel Corner, another one at Evansburg, and another one in the Hinton area. Mr. Speaker, some of them got picked up three different times for illegal possession of liquor or impaired driving. Maybe the first time on the alert they only showed 0.6, so they got back in the vehicle, stopped at the Gainford bar, picked up another case of beer, and by the time they got to Edson they were well over the legal requirement. It certainly shows that ... [interjection] That's right. I have no sympathy for the person who has to drink and drive.

The other subcommittee that has been working very hard is the seat belt subcommittee. Recently the Alberta Safety Council introduced a program, the saved by the belt club. As of March 1982, 98 Albertans in one year have had their lives saved by the use of a seat belt. In Canada a number of provinces have compulsory seat belt legislation. As a result of a study done by Transport Canada in 1977 — I don't have any updated figures — the percentages of people using seat belts in various provinces are: Newfoundland, 8.2; Prince Edward Island, 15.5; Nova Scotia, 18.4; New Brunswick, 14.8; Quebec, 42.3; Ontario, 52.3; Manitoba, 54.9; Saskatchewan, 59.4; Alberta, 15.8; and British Columbia, 62.7. The ones with the high percentages are where compulsory seat belt legislation has been introduced in four legislatures across Canada.

Some interesting information:

Approximately 90% of the 3,200 drivers and passengers killed in traffic accidents [in 1979] were not wearing seat belts. If these people had been wearing lap and shoulder belts, Transport Canada estimates that 55% or 1,600 lives would have been saved.

In addition to saving lives, seat belts reduce the seriousness of an [accident]. The average medical cost is \$228.00 for those wearing a seat belt and \$419.00 for those not wearing a seat belt. Ontario is saving \$2,000,000.00 annually on the medical costs for traffic accidents [because of their legislation].

Saskatchewan recorded a 19.5% decrease in fatalities, and a 9% reduction in injuries in the year following introduction of the law.

Ejection is among the major causes of death in traffic accidents. In a study of 177 [fatal crashes] it was found that 27% of the fatally injured occupants had been ejected. Of these, 80% could have been saved by a seat belt.

There are a number of other ones here:

According to an analysis of over 15,000 car accidents in West Germany, it was found that 40% of all injuries to drivers not wearing seat belts could have been avoided [if they had been using them].

Then we have some statistics on children in vehicles. In the state of Washington a study showed that:

adequate safety restraints would have reduced fatalities in children 5 to 91% and disabling injuries by 78%.

If your children are with you in a car [in a 30 mile an hour crash] and they haven't been properly secured, you may as well have dropped them from a third-storey window and hoped for the best.

And that is statistical. I really get upset when I drive down the highway and see two or three young children playing in the back seat of an automobile. If there was a rear-end or a front-end collision, that child would act as a projectile and go through the window, or whatever the case may be. I'm very supportive of seat belts. Like my friend from Clover Bar, I wear mine all the time. The safety council has quite a campaign on for this right now.

We also sponsor a number of other courses, Mr. Speaker. We have a motorcycle training course. There were five different areas they participated in, in 1980, and it will be increasing again. I support the helmet legislation. I think it has to be there. When the helmet legislation was in the courts, a number of people were killed because of not wearing helmets.

Another aspect of the safety council that I was involved with was Operation 16. We knew of the death and carnage on that highway between Jasper and Edmonton. We started out with the RCMP in Stony Plain, Evansburg, and Edson, and had a number of meetings. Then the Minister of Transportation concurred in what the council and the RCMP in the area were doing, and supported that program through more Check Stops and a number of other things. It certainly proved beneficial on that highway.

While I'm on this, I could say that we would still decrease the accidents and the severity rate once we get the highway four-laned from Gainford to Jasper. There's a nine-year program left, and I would like to see that done at an expanded rate, because that highway is getting busier and busier by the day. We now have something like 40,000 cars per day at the Winterburn overpass — the busiest highway in the province of Alberta.

A number of other things are offered by this particular subcommittee: an accident investigation course, a recreational vehicle course and proper driving of them, commercial vehicle legislation, a public transportation subcommittee that worked with various groups, the pedal pushers club, and pedestrian safety. A 150-pound person doesn't tangle with a three-ton automobile at an intersection. I've seen it so many times. People see a car coming. For some reason, it is not stopping, and they're still walking out into the intersection saying they have the right of way. Because of mechanical failure or improper driving, at times these people will try to run a red light or whatever the case.

I have one other concern, and I think I may as well share it with the Assembly now, Mr. Speaker. It happens a lot in the rural part of the province, and I understand the Minister of Transportation is going to bring in amending legislation during the fall. This has to do with flashing lights on school buses. As the legislation is now written, we are our own worst enemies. The minister's department says that because you live in a rural subdivision in the Stony Plain constituency in the county of Parkland, the school bus driver does not have to activate his lights because the speed limit is under 50 miles an hour. I interpret the law that a rural subdivision in the county of Parkland is not in an urban area. So I have said to the school bus drivers: continue using your red lights and, if you get a ticket, I will go to court and testify on your behalf, because I think you're right. You're looking after the safety of my child, and children of my constituents, on that school bus.

I feel very strongly that the legislation has to be amended this fall, saying they shall activate their lights when they stop, making it compulsory and mandatory that the vehicle following or meeting must stop. The

information I get from the department and the minister's office is that there are intersections for these children to pass safely. There are no intersections in the Meso West subdivision in the Stony Plain constituency. It's a rural road, and that's all it is. The guys who come over the hill or who follow the school bus are abiding by the laws, as they think they should by stopping. But a number of school bus drivers are concerned.

The other concern we have — and I don't know how we're going to get around this — is vehicles passing school buses stopped on the main highways. The school bus driver activates his lights and stops, and vehicles are still going by. A school bus driver I was talking to last week said 14 vehicles passed him in one week. He turned over three or four licence numbers to the RCMP. They don't have the manpower to have a policeman on every school bus or a patrol car following every school bus. But there has to be some type of educational program for drivers in this province, that you have to stop for that yellow school bus with those flashing red lights.

I'd like to close, Mr. Speaker, by saying that regarding the fines mentioned by my hon. colleague from Calgary North West, I don't think the fines are substantial in a lot of cases. I think the best thing that could be given to the police is that when a person is picked up for careless driving, running a red light, or something like that, hit him right in the pocketbook. There are two ways to do it: with an increased fine; the second way is to take his wheels away from him. Impound it. Tow it to the nearest compound, lock it up for 24 hours. Let the guy pay \$150 to get it released. That's what hurts. The fine for running a red light is \$25; for stunting, it's \$30. It is not enough. A lot of these young people who are doing it are making pretty good wages. A \$30 ticket is nothing to them.

I think we also have to review the demerit system for our drivers' licences. Fifteen demerit points and you lose your licence for a month. As far as I'm concerned, 15 demerit points and you lose your licence for a year. That will be a deterrent. A month is nothing. The same with impaired driving. I think some of our judges are very tough on the impaired driver; some aren't. I guess the circumstances enter into the conditions. My hon. colleague from Calgary McCall wants to bring in Bill 225, where some impaired drivers may be able to get a restricted licence.

DR. BUCK: Not that again.

MR. PURDY: I said to my hon. friend last year that I certainly could not support that. The person should have thought before he got behind the wheel and drove home or wherever he or she drove in that impaired state.

Mr. Speaker, those are a few words I had to say on behalf of the safety council and my constituents.

Thank you.

[Dr. Buck in the Chair]

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise and participate in the debate on the motion presented by the hon. Member for Calgary North West this afternoon. I agree that . . . [interjection] When the hon. Member for Clover Bar was in his other seat, he mentioned that when he was a lad you could have a licence for \$2. I'm afraid that since he's got licence up there, it doesn't even cost \$2 to have licence, Mr. Speaker.

I think there are a lot of hawks in the Assembly this afternoon. I'll join them. There are a lot of problems with

carnage on the highway in Alberta. The status quo clearly isn't acceptable. We have one of the worst driving records in North America. We have a lot of young drivers. I guess I'm one of them. I'm under 30 until next Monday. We have a lot of people who are driving very fast in half-ton trucks and souped-up ...

AN HON. MEMBER: Boogie vans.

MR. COOK: ... boogie vans, yes. I don't have one of those, Mr. Speaker. [interjection] I haven't caused any accidents either in that regard.

AN HON. MEMBER: That you're aware of.

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, after all the kind advice from my colleagues, I'll get a little more serious and focus my remarks.

Basically, the point I want to make is that on a per capita basis, Alberta has one of the worst fatality records of any jurisdiction in North America. Something has to be done. There are a number of approaches. The life style advertising approach that the hon. Member for Calgary North West is proposing is useful. For example, we're seeing some progress with AADAC in their life style advertising on the dangers of abusing alcohol.

At some point, I think we also have to look at making some serious modifications to the way we run our transportation services. I'm a hawk. I think we should be imposing seat belt legislation in this province. I think the evidence is quite clear that the benefits far outweigh the philosophical argument about imposing on individual liberties. There might be some purists who would argue that it's an individual's right to drive on the highway. But it's not. In the Canadian system of government, it's not a right you have simply by virtue of being a citizen; it's a right you acquire. You're driving on the Queen's highway; it's not your highway. The Crown has the right to set terms and conditions for use of that privilege. Right now, one of those is having a driver's licence, and another is having insurance. Mr. Speaker, I think a third should be mandatory seat belt legislation.

It's interesting to note too that alcohol is involved in a large number of fatal accidents. That topic has been discussed quite thoroughly by some of my colleagues. We have to do more to make people aware of the problems of drinking and driving.

The point has been raised briefly that fines are not substantial enough in this province. It's true. A \$25 fine really doesn't make much difference to the average person these days. I was pulled over for a minor traffic infraction last month, just before the bus strike in the city of Edmonton. I drove in the bus lane, and it cost me \$25. I had a little conversation with the policeman that went something like this. He asked me for my registration and my insurance, and I provided that. Then he asked what my occupation was, and I said, I work at the Legislature. I didn't want to tell him what I was doing here, because the last time I had a policeman ask me what my occupation was and I fessed up, he threw the book at me. Basically he said, what do you do there? I said, I answer the phone and give the occasional speech.

Then we had a little chat. He basically pointed out that the paperwork he was about to initiate was going to cost the city of Edmonton and the province of Alberta almost the full \$25 that was about to be coughed up. It really didn't begin to reflect the time of processing the actual paper, if he valued time at a certain hourly rate, and the

penalty really didn't reflect the cost to society. I don't drive in bus lanes anymore, at least not when the buses are running. It was quite evident that the \$25 fine didn't even begin to cover the cost to the community of trying to impose that penalty. So the Solicitor General and the Minister of Transportation should work together and consider making it meaningful for the person who abuses his right to use the road.

[Dr. C. Anderson in the Chair]

I'd like to make one final comment. A lot of conservatives believe that individuals have to assume more responsibility for themselves. I completely concur in that. I guess part of that is trying to reflect public policy in terms like making people responsible for themselves in seat belt usage, in drinking and driving, and in taking some responsibility for a number of things. But, Mr. Speaker, I think the community is facing tremendous costs; for example, medical costs. It has the right to demand that seat belt usage or other preventive items be used by Albertans before they use the roads.

Before the nurses' strike, I was in the hospital as a visitor, not as a patient, chatting with some people on the emergency ward. An incredible number of people come in for treatment after traffic accidents. Stats show that injuries are greatly lessened — the Alberta Medical Association, the organization to which the present Acting Speaker belongs, has shown that the severity of accidents and the number of fatalities are greatly reduced when you're wearing a seat belt. It goes back to the point of making people responsible for their actions. I'm going to try to contrast that conservative view with the other conservative view in conflict with that; that is, people should have the right to decide whether they want to wear seat belts. Basically we're saying that people have the right to be irresponsible, and I don't hold with that view. If the Minister of Transportation is trying to line up support in caucus for seat belt usage, sign me up.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close my remarks. As the hon. Member for Calgary North West has suggested, I think we have to make more use of multimedia campaigns. But while we're reviewing that area of public policy, let's also put on the list a number of other preventive items: reviewing fines, seat belt usage, trying to make the mixture of alcohol and driving less attractive for Albertans. I subscribe to all those things and would be a firm supporter of the the Minister of Transportation in his effort to clean up the mess on the highways.

MR. STROMBERG: Mr. Dr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this motion, which I guess you could describe as probably the number one tragedy in Alberta. You wonder if the deaths have to be.

I would like to offer my congratulations to the Member for Calgary North West for bringing out some very interesting facts. I certainly agree with her that Calgary has the [most] traffic accidents; if not in Alberta, in all Canada. But perhaps it is not due to we rural members who visit Calgary once in a while; it's due to the women drivers in Calgary.

I recall the last time I visited that city — all those one-way streets and canyons. You can't see the sun; it's even dark there at high noon. I certainly agree with the Member for Stony Plain when he suggested that he'd only go into Calgary with a horse. But I wouldn't want to go in with a horse. I wouldn't risk good horseflesh and the life of a horse in that town. I'd go into that town with

a tank.

Mr. Speaker, I have to disagree slightly with the member who introduced this motion. Perhaps the media is not the way to get the message across. Before 1900 we had traffic accidents with horses and oxen. In my own constituency, some tremendous history books have been published, stories of horses running away. Some of the older members, such as the members for Cardston and Edmonton Beverly, certainly can remember the day when they walked barefoot behind oxen, and the trouble with oxen running away.

A few years ago, we were surprised at our local paper, *The Camrose Canadian*. It publishes a page of 10, 25, 50, and 65 years ago, where my mother was mentioned. She was driving my grandfather to a political meeting at Driedmeat Lake. It was a Liberal meeting. My grandfather had bought a 1914 Model T Ford, but he didn't know how to drive it. At that time, my mother was about 15 years old. At the top of the hill, the brakes just weren't there. This Model T started picking up speed. The hill today is a straight hill and has been cut down, but in those days it followed the coulee. That car took off. My mother made it through all those curves, but she went across the beach and out into the lake. It spooked my poor old grandfather so badly that he didn't go to that Liberal meeting after he got that car out. He became a Conservative for the rest of his life.

We talk of reading the history of the Ferintosh district. One "almost" traffic accident took place about 1910. A Mr. Frank Handel had a threshing rig. He had a really old Case tractor, a fairly large machine, and had been threshing late into the fall. It was November, the roads were all frozen, and he was bringing the threshing machine with steel wheels home. He was travelling about 1 mile per hour, and he finally made it to the top of this long hill. This hill is about half a mile long, and it was getting dark. He decided to speed things up a bit, so he kicked it out of gear. He thought this steel wheeled tractor wouldn't roll at that speed, but history records him hitting the bottom of the hill at probably 30 miles per hour. They could hear his threshing machine rattling over frozen ground for something like 15 miles away. Those were quite the accidents.

Mr. Speaker, with the coverage we now have in our press and on our TVs and radios — you pick up the paper: so many people killed today, bad traffic accident in Ontario, somebody killed in northern Alberta. No one pays any attention to it. But let somebody come home some night [inebriated] and fall in the well, or somebody gets raped, and it's the national news. So I really question if the media is the way to get at this serious problem.

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

We have ministerial announcements. The minister warns us about the dangers of driving at Christmas and winter driving. All very well. But who listens and who reads? Sometimes we have good co-operation with the radio media, where the RCMP will warn you to stay off this or that highway. I wish they were in place last Thursday night, because I spent the night in a snow bank at Hay Lakes. I didn't get back to this Legislature until about quarter to 12 the next day. Where were the RCMP? Fortunately we now have a lot of trucks with CBs, that can handle just about any kind of hazardous condition. If it weren't for the trucks on the highway warning that a vehicle is stranded, a truck is in the ditch — I think we should be working closer with the trucking

industry, the highway traffic patrol, and the RCMP, as to when a road is hazardous.

Our highway safety branch within the department does quite a job. Every accident where there has been a loss of life, they go out and actually do the measurements, check over the police reports, and try to find out if a pattern is developing. Is it because so many people are dying on that curve, or what has taken place? I recall there was a curve in the road east of Camrose, and people were always hitting the ditch at night. The highway traffic safety branch went out and looked it over, but always in daylight. They could see nothing wrong with the curve — good visibility. So they decided to go out in the evening to see why people were going off. What took place was that a yard light off the highway was at the same level as the curve of that road, so many people thought it was a one-eyed driver and swung to the right into the ditch. They spotted that.

I would like to address my remarks to fast drivers. I rather think there are two types of drivers in this Assembly: fast ones like the Minister of Transportation and slow ones like myself.

AN HON. MEMBER: With a car like yours, Gordon, that's why.

MR. STROMBERG: Maybe with a car like mine, that's why. But I hope I am recognized within my constituency and have the same reputation as the former Prime Minister of Canada, John A. Macdonald, as a driver of slow horses.

MRS. EMBURY: I thought you told me you were in the ditch the other night.

MR. STROMBERG: I can mention some of the wives of ministers telling me that when the ministers were in their younger days, they only knew how to drive with one arm.

Speed: I think it is appreciated that when you travel to B.C. or into the United States and drop down to 55 miles an hour, after about an hour it's not so bad. I especially appreciate a reasonable speed when driving on the four-lane highway from Calgary to Banff.

AN HON. MEMBER: Do you have that in kilometres?

MR. STROMBERG: I don't know. I don't figure it out that way. I go by two thumbs, four fingers — no, two thumbs, two fingers, and four fingers. I add that way. I don't add metric yet.

Mr. Speaker, once in a while on that four-lane highway, you really want to take a look at the beautiful mountains, and you don't get half a second to look at those mountains. If they're not passing you, they're going over top of you, and weaving in and out of traffic. That is one road that should be slowed down so our tourists can at least see those mountains as they approach them.

Another serious problem in highway safety that we have in the constituency is the junction of highways 13 and 21. We have several accidents there every year, and a number of people have been killed at that junction. I brought the matter up to four ministers of highways and transportation. One minister told me: Gordon, go south of Edmonton to the overpass that comes off the intersection at the north end of the Nisku airport. So I drove out there one Friday afternoon on the way home and tried to get across. I waited for three-quarters of an hour. They were coming at me two abreast. Finally, in desperation —



I had to get home to get supper and do my chores — I saw a little opening about a mile up the road. I shut my eyes and hit the gas, and I got across. I didn't complain to Dr. Horner about our need of an overpass for a couple of years.

The chamber of commerce has brought it up to the department. I appreciate that your highway traffic engineers have addressed the chamber, Mr. Minister, and have promised that we will get turning lanes and islands in there in about three years' time. But it would seem to many constituents that before we can get one of these million-dollar overpasses, we have to have a quota audit. I have been trying for years to find out what that quota is. Is it five people killed? Is it 20 people killed, 25? My argument is that before it reaches that magical quota hidden somewhere over in that department — I don't know that we're going to reach that quota — let's clean it up, put in that overpass, and save X number of lives.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make one more suggestion. In several states in the United States, the department of education displays a car that has been through a very serious wreck with loss of life. There's still blood on the upholstery; it's a heck of a mess. It goes on the back of a trailer, and one of their highway safety experts goes with the car to each high school and explains the traffic laws and what can happen if you're drinking, et cetera. I wonder if that has ever been tried by any school board or by your department.

I would like to see more police cars out there. They have a sobering effect on speeders. When you see that car up there, especially if the red light is going, it's surprising how you step off the automatic speed cruise. I have sometimes thought all they would have to do on Highway 21 is take an abandoned patrol car, set it on an approach, and leave it there year-round. People would really recognize that.

Driver training in school has really brought home the point. The students are coming out, they know the traffic laws far better than we do, and they observe them. My children are not yet taking driver training, but the message is getting across to them. When I pick my kids up on a weekend and go into Camrose: Dad, you forgot your signal lights. Every time I come close to a car they go, screech, and it just about gives me a heart attack. They certainly get the message across.

Mr. Speaker, one other area of potential hazard. On the stretch of Highway 21 from New Norway to Camrose, I know of four deaths caused by people forced into the ditch or going into the ditch and hitting an approach. The approaches on the majority of our highways were built without much back-sloping. The culvert is not sloped; it's just a square-cut culvert. Regardless of what speed a car goes into the ditch and hits the approach at, it will not jump that approach. The frame will stay, and the rest of the car go on. It is 18 miles from New Norway to Camrose. I have counted 62 potential death traps, as I call them — approaches. I realize that when you take an approach away from a farmer, there's going to be hail Columbia. He will come up with more excuses why he needs that approach, even if there is a fence across it, and he hasn't used it for 20 years. I think that public relations with the farm organizations and the farmers living directly on that road would be worth merit. Perhaps half the approaches could be dug up, with the promise to the farmer that we'll back-slope your other approaches and put a culvert in with perhaps even a grate on it that the car won't hit.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. FYFE: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to contribute to this debate on the motion this afternoon and express my concern for this matter, and agreement with other members who have spoken this afternoon and expressed very well statistics and situations across the province, where we feel we could perhaps improve the very negative traffic fatality counts we find within the province of Alberta.

In travelling on rural highways, I seldom find that you do not see at least one near collision in a 100-mile trip. Within the cities, those near collisions we see are more frequent. Unfortunately they're not all near collisions. We see an increasing number of collisions and very serious accidents. Research would show that human error accounts for approximately 80 per cent of traffic vehicle collisions. That's substantial room for improvement of human error.

There is a difference in attitude between rural and urban driving. For example, sometimes in urban situations you become conditioned to signal lights reflecting that it's time to stop. There's a red light, you must stop; a yellow light, you must slow your vehicle. The signal lights are most often on railroad crossings. Often with a driver who is tired or concentrating on something other than driving, there seems to be a tendency to rely on these signals that will somehow signal within the mind's eye that it's time to stop.

I have witnessed several near collisions and one very serious collision at railroad crossings, with vehicles that unfortunately came into contact with moving trains. I agree with the Member for Clover Bar, who expressed very serious concern about uncontrolled crossings, particularly on roadways that are used by school buses and are heavily travelled. In fact, road improvement has meant a very substantial increase in traffic flow on one roadway in the constituency I represent. Unfortunately there is a railroad crossing with a stop sign. Because of the conditioning that I referred to, there have been some situations which have caused deep concern for motorists travelling that route. I know that the Minister of Transportation is aware of the situation and has been urging the federal authorities to move as quickly as possible to have the installation of signal lights on this particular roadway. I only hope and pray they are installed before there is loss of life.

Situations involving roadways and trains bring up another concern. That's the responsibility on the part of the driver. Yesterday one of the daily newspapers covered an accident in New York state where 10 teenagers, driving in a van, ran a track and collided with a train, killing nine. We don't often get traffic reports from the state of New York. But because of the number of teenagers involved in the accident, it was covered in our local papers. Such a tragic situation as that has happened in Alberta, maybe not with the same number in one vehicle for some period of time. However, the question that comes to my mind is: what motivates the driver responsible for the passengers in that vehicle to take a chance, to race the train to try to make a crossing? One has to wonder if it's intentional to take the lives of those they're responsible for. What type of risk would any driver assume in such an action? I don't know how we can legislate the change in that type of attitude, but it's certainly a very deep concern.

I disagree with the Member for Camrose, who stated that Alberta Transportation waits for a certain quota of fatalities before action is taken. In areas where I have expressed concern, I have found that the department has been very responsive in monitoring the traffic counts, the

seriousness of accidents within the area, and putting forward priorities within budget. It's unfair to say the department responsible is sitting, waiting for a quota, when the members of the Legislature approve the estimates each year. It's up to us to ensure there are sufficient funds in situations that are priorities in certain locations within Alberta, that are very serious traffic factors.

Each year there is approximately a 10 per cent increase in the number of vehicles travelling our highways, which is an extremely significant factor. That means that each year, the same drivers utilizing those roadways must become more tolerant of the other drivers they share the roadways with. I heard of a situation recently where a driver wishing to change lanes — and this type of incident has been discussed by other members this afternoon — in very slow moving traffic approaching a signal light, signalled to move into the lane. There seemed to be sufficient space. He proceeded to move into the lane, and the car that was in the left lane accelerated, honking the horn, obviously objecting vehemently to a driver moving into the same lane. The driver who wished to change lanes, being already partly into the left lane, stopped the vehicle thus barring the honking vehicle from moving forward, got out of the vehicle, walked up to the driver, and pointed out that he also paid taxes and had as much right to drive on the road as that driver did.

Too often there seems to be an attitude that, this is my roadway, my car, and I'm going to drive on it, come whatever. Even with some of the younger people that I sometimes drive here and there, I notice that in taking time to stop to allow another driver to change lanes, allowing a driver who is not too courteous the benefit of the doubt, thinking he has probably had a bad day or giving them some latitude, youngsters will often say, why didn't you honk at them? They feel this impatience that young people sometimes feel. That's part of the education process, of encouraging them to be tolerant, that there will be more drivers on the roadway and that we do have to share. Honking, yelling and slamming on the brakes in front of someone else, does not reduce accidents but probably causes our own blood pressure to increase and becomes potentially another accident.

There's no doubt that driving on highways is a privilege; it's not a right. We have to protect that privilege. We have to share that privilege with others. It would be great if we pass a law that would ensure that all drivers were courteous and considerate, but somehow it seems very difficult to enforce. Attitude cannot be legislated. If we could influence attitude to save lives and prevent suffering, we would certainly all do so this afternoon.

The Member for Calgary North West has brought forward one suggestion that is very worthy of support. Some of the advertising we have seen in years past has been effective. If you're not involved in a particular advertising program, you do not have any motivation to remember ads or the effect of them. But I can certainly recall the television ad from years past, of the cartoon-form driver, designed as a middle-class worker who gets into his vehicle, turns on the ignition, and becomes a maniac. You can see the maniac streaming down the roadway, and I think it makes an impact. We remember some of the ads over the years, such as the weapons coming off the back of the school buses. What do we have to do to convince people that these are school buses and children are involved? Do we have to use Tommy guns in the back of the school bus to ensure that drivers are courteous and careful when school buses are stopping.

One concern I have, related to drivers, and one that frustrates me because I always seem to be in a hurry, is the slow drivers who drive side by side on a double-lane highway. I notice we have signs on the highway that request slow drivers to move to the right-hand side. Too often these drivers seem to feel that as long as they're within the speed limit, even though they're considerably below it, they have a right to drive; if it frustrates those behind, that's too bad. That seems to be just as negative as some of the other attitudes of cutting drivers off or some of the other misdemeanors we witness. As I listened to the Member for Camrose, I suddenly realized he must be one of those looking at the mountains. But I certainly hope he's not doing it in the left-hand lane, that he has pulled over to the right-hand lane.

I've mentioned it to the Minister of Transportation, and I know consideration is being given in his department to the construction of a lay-by or lane on the right-hand side that would allow slower moving traffic, perhaps heavy truck traffic or recreation vehicles, particularly during the summer months, to move over to allow the flow of traffic to pass. A significant degree of frustration appears to build up; for example, in summer on a Sunday night when many families have been out for a weekend. Returning home, they may be tired and irritable, and nothing is more frustrating than to have a whole line of traffic slowed down by one vehicle that prefers to sit out in the middle and hog the road for many miles.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

I think defensive driving courses are very important, particularly for young drivers. If you establish a pattern of being courteous and considerate when you're first driving, for most of us I'm sure it would last all our driving lives. On the whole, I have found that large truckers are some of the most courteous drivers. Most often large truckers will pull over and allow the traffic to flow. They signal, and most often set a tremendous example for other drivers on the highways. Too often the offenders are those who become very impatient. I wonder how important their time really is. I'm not speaking about situations where there seem to be certain drivers who would take advantage of slow speeds to simply slow the traffic down or not even be concerned or considerate of those who share the roadways.

I conclude my remarks this afternoon by once again complimenting the Member for Calgary North West for bringing forward this motion. I think it's extremely important. I suppose advertising has limited effect, but I think it does have some effect. If an advertising campaign could have anywhere near the degree of success the AADAC program has had, I think it's worth serious consideration.

In addition to the specifics of the motion, the debate carried on in the Assembly this afternoon is worth while. Some very positive, worth-while considerations and some very serious concerns have been brought forward by members. I know the Minister of Transportation is listening intently, and I know his department is doing what they can to improve the situation, which is a growing problem each year. I'm sure he appreciates the support of members who have brought forward their concerns this afternoon. Obviously we are all looking for some solutions to these concerns.

MR. KROEGER: Mr. Speaker, I am seldom tempted to participate in debate. I didn't realize the Member for

Calgary North West was going to do this until just before they started, although I knew the motion was going to be made. I wouldn't have missed it; it's extremely important. It's a serious thing we are talking about, and for a moment I'd like to comment on what actually happened in 1981.

If you don't like the term, I don't mean to offend you, but in 1981 we executed 644 people on our road system. Whether that was suicide or we participated, is a matter you can discuss. But they were killed on our road system. That being the case, I suppose it raises the question: is there something we as a society, as a government, or as citizens could have done to avoid all or part of that?

I guess I've spent as much time on our road system as anyone here, having done what the Member for Clover Bar mentioned he did: I drove a truck for four years. I spent a good many years on sales on the roads. And since coming into the political arena, I've discovered that a lot of driving is required. So I've been exposed to many aspects of what our drivers do, the capabilities of our cars, and so on.

We have a very effective safety branch in the department, now headed by a former member of the RCMP, a very able, conscientious person. I've had many conversations with him. We don't take lightly what is going on around us. About a year ago we set up a special safety committee, composed of the two chiefs of police from the cities of Calgary and Edmonton, and people from the insurance industry, driving schools, and anyone who had special knowledge about the problem.

At the first meeting of that group, I raised what I thought was a very simple question. At various times we get very innovative articles written about a killer highway. It doesn't much matter where it is. If some people die on it, it becomes a killer highway. So I raised the question: I'd like to have comment from this very well informed committee. I asked them to tell me: is it the road, the law, or the way we enforce the law that causes what's going on around us? I was quite surprised and somewhat disappointed that in that very well informed group of people, not one would venture a guess. Not one person would say it's this specifically.

When we were doing this, we were experiencing some extreme problems, particularly on Highway 16 west. A lot of people were being killed. I think we had 44 killed on that stretch of road just prior to setting up that committee, so it must be a very dangerous area to travel. I attended a meeting at Spruce Grove, and many interested people participated. One of the people there was a safety and communications person from Greyhound Bus Lines. I asked him: does Greyhound still have the same regulations, as they relate to your drivers, that you had 30 years ago when Greyhound used to store with us? He said, yes we do. I want to comment to you on what I was making reference to.

The regulation then, which apparently still exists, was that a driver for Greyhound is charged with an accident, whether it is his fault or not; not only when his bus is moving, but if he parks that bus and I run into it, it's his fault. Greyhound has a pretty good record, so I discussed with the Greyhound representative at that meeting what their experience was on this killer highway, Highway 16. Would he get me the statistics for the preceding 18 months. That was the time I had been involved in the Department of Transportation, and I would like to know what had happened with Greyhound on Highway 16 from Edmonton to Jasper over a period of 18 months.

He got the information for me for the period that that

highway was named as I have suggested. They ran eight trips daily each way, from Edmonton to Jasper and back, travelled half a million miles. I suggest to you that that bus takes a lot more room on the road than my car does, and probably isn't as easy to handle in an emergency situation as my car might be. They had had no accidents, killed no one, and had one minor scrape.

So that raised a question with me on the concept of what we as a government owe to society. Do we continue to build more roads and widen them and try to get around the system that way, or are there some other answers? That committee is still working and looking for answers. We initiated a survey — not a mail-out, mail-in kind of survey; a firm was hired to do one-on-one interviews. We interviewed 1,200 people. Those people generally said: I don't have a problem; I don't expect to have an accident; I don't plan to cause an accident, but I sure have a lot of people around me who will, and you should do something about those people.

I don't think there's any question that we have to improve our road systems when we recognize that there are major hazards. That's a responsibility we try to cope with. The real problem isn't that people can't drive cars. The people who create or seem to be causing accidents are probably some of the best drivers we have. We have very few accidents attributable to failure of the automobile itself; something in the order of less than 4 per cent of cars or vehicles are the cause of the accident. So that gets us into the area of people who drive, who know how to drive, who drive on roads that it's been demonstrated very clearly you can drive on safely, and we still go out and keep doing the same thing over and over.

What shocks me — because I'm charged with the responsibility for part of what's going on — is the casualness with which we approach this situation. I remember very clearly that when we heard that something called swine flu was going around in the eastern U.S. and four people died, it created a national panic; we must do something about this. We somehow think there is something very ordinary about a car accident and killing people on our road system. We are very casual about it and hear an awful lot of flippant comments.

We talk about infringement of rights. I've been kidded more than enough about seat belts for, I guess, the last three years. I didn't know the Department of Transportation was responsible for seat belt legislation, if there is seat belt legislation, until after I was appointed. The Premier informed me one day, very straight-faced: you know, you're responsible for what goes on with the seat belt thing. For some reason, the media are very interested in that, and I have been asked many questions about it. I don't know that I've ever initiated any comments about seat belts or legislation, but I've read myself quoted many times, and it begins to sound — not so much lately, but for quite a while it did — as though all I did was walk around and talk about legislation on seat belt usage.

Nevertheless, when we talk about doing that and thereby removing rights, I think we ought to think about that. As our society has matured, more rights have had to be restricted, I suppose. I remember — and I concur with the Member for Camrose on the types of vehicles we used many years ago, when you could drive down a road, and it didn't matter whether you were on the right or the left side, because no one was going anywhere very fast anyway. If there was a badger hole on the right side, you met the guy and went around him on the left side, because there weren't any roads. You were just driving on trails. But now we have infringed on people's rights and

said, you must drive on the right side of the road. We have infringed on their rights by putting up stop signs and red lights, and all these things. Now we're talking about infringing on their rights by perhaps legislating the use of a safety device called a seat belt.

I don't know that we will do that. I'm convinced, though, that they work. I'm also convinced that legislation works. If those two things are right, and if we could save one life by legislation — and I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that if we could identify the person we were going to execute tomorrow because we didn't have the legislation, we'd have people all over our front steps demanding that we do it. We used to have those kinds of demonstrations on Parliament Hill about capital punishment, when we were talking about someone who had murdered someone. We had protests saying, don't hang that person, don't execute him. But because we like to play this Russian roulette, and we didn't know who the 644 were going to be last year, and we don't know who the 700 are going to be this year, we say, oh, we won't bother about that. I'm going to leave you with that thought.

I'd just like to comment quickly in response to the Member for Camrose, who said something about approaches on highways. It might interest the member to know that in 1981, I initiated a program on Highway 9 to do exactly what he's talking about. The reason is, I live on it. You are quite right: there is static when you try to take an approach out. The average farmer yells and says, hey, I need that. Nevertheless we did it, and the Member for Drumheller is involved in a part of this. It's partly in his constituency. Initially we spent \$150,000, and either took out the approaches or back-sloped them, including the culverts. Then we went back and did some more, so that we covered the area from Drumheller to the Saskatchewan border.

The interesting thing was that while we were doing that, and the crew had just pulled away from back-sloping an approach, an 18-wheeler from Kindersley came along. He could tell us what happened because he survived. Our fellows saw the dust cloud, heard the racket, and looked around, and this truck was in the ditch.

The driver had gone to sleep, and when he felt himself going over the side of the grade he didn't upset because the slopes were gentle. But he saw the approach in front of him and knew it was game over because — you're quite right — those approaches are square shouldered, have been there for years. He hit the approach, drove over and wound up on the other side, and lived to tell about it. And it didn't even damage his vehicle very much. So while we're in the process of doing this, we have a very clear demonstration of the kind of thing that can happen. That fellow was a professional driver. He would have been killed had this not been done.

It's a program that perhaps we can look at. But far from waiting for a quota on road deaths to justify back-sloping approaches, twinning highways, or going with grade separations, Mr. Speaker, we have to carefully monitor the sore spots, the hot spots, the difficult places. We do that, and of course everything carries a price tag. I think this government has been extremely generous in funding road programs in the three years I've been directly involved.

I appreciate very much the comments from the Member for St. Albert. We're not used to too many compliments. I congratulate the Member for Calgary North West for initiating this debate.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. PAHL: Mr. Speaker, in view of the hour, I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: It is so ordered.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is not proposed that the Assembly sit this evening.

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