

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: Thursday, April 1, 1982 2:30 p.m.

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table reports today. The first is the certification of electrical workers regulation, pursuant to Section 5 of the Electrical Protection Act. The other three regulations are pursuant to the Gas Protection Act and relate to permits, inspection fees, and gas fitter certification.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. STROMBERG: Mr. Speaker, it is my opportunity and distinct pleasure to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly 33 grade 6 students from Hay Lakes school. With them today are teachers Ron Baier and Morley Dunlop, who is also filling in as the bus driver, and parent Mr. Ron Rosychuk. They are seated in the members gallery, and I ask them to stand and be recognized by this Assembly.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: Mr. Speaker, it's my distinct pleasure today to introduce to you and the members of this Assembly nine young ladies from High River. They are girl guides, who have been to a mock parliament here. They tell me they would like to see a spirited question period today. They are accompanied by their leaders Rita Storch, Ellen Hamilton, and Heather Puttee, and I ask that they stand and be recognized by the Assembly.

MRS. FYFE: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon it gives me great pleasure to introduce 28 future leaders from across Alberta, the Alberta Girls' Parliament, composed of girl guides and rangers who are meeting in Edmonton this week to learn parliamentary procedure and to further their leadership training. I regret that I was unable to meet with the group this afternoon. They are accompanied by Jean Walters, who has co-ordinated the parliament over the last number of months, and are ably assisted by Miss Helen Hunley. They are seated in the members gallery, and I ask the group to stand and be recognized by the Assembly.

MR. SCHMID: Mr. Speaker, today it's a special privilege for me to be able to introduce to you and to hon. members of this Assembly 24 exchange students from Quebec, who are hosted in our capital city by their grade 8 student twins from Kenilworth junior high school. The students are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Olive Parrott, Mme. Jocelyne Thibeault, and M. Jean Marc Maltais, as well as Mrs. Carol Lockert, a parent. *Monsieur le president, j'aimerais faire un bon accueil aux étudiants qui nous visitent d'Alma, Québec, et de leur souhaiter un bon séjour en Alberta.* I ask our visitors in

the public gallery to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS****Department of Housing and Public Works**

MR. CHAMBERS: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to provide details of the announcement that the Alberta rental investment incentive program is to be significantly enriched and extended for a two-year period, from January 1, 1982, to December 31, 1983.

The Alberta rental investment incentive program, which members will recall started in 1980, will be substantially enhanced in 1982, at a cost of approximately \$25 million. It is estimated that this initiative will stimulate the construction of some 4,000 additional new rental housing units by the private sector, for approximately 6,000 Alberta tenants. This move assists supply and helps increase the vacancy rates, therefore keeping rents down.

The two main features of the enriched program are:

1. The tax incentive has been increased for 1982 to 12.5 per cent of capital costs, up to a maximum of \$8,000 per unit. Formerly the program provided a tax incentive of 5 per cent of capital costs, up to \$3,000 per unit. The 1983 incentive level will be determined prior to the end of 1982 and will depend on interest rate levels.
2. This incentive will now be fully refundable upon application at the time an income tax return is filed, rather than over a period of years as is presently the case. This is expected to provide needed cash flow to the investor during the first year of operations, when revenues are well below costs. Individuals will continue to apply to the Department of Housing and Public Works, and corporations to Alberta Treasury.

There are three primary reasons the province of Alberta has decided to provide a significant stimulus to the rental housing industry. First, the November 12, 1981, federal budget's termination of the multiple unit residential building (MURB) tax incentives for apartment construction was a major blow to the production of new rental housing. Secondly, the high federal interest rate policies have continued to render new rental housing investment uneconomic. Thirdly, there is a need to attract more private-sector capital into the Alberta housing industry, thereby moderating the heavy demand for provincial capital.

This extension is expected to bring the total number of new rental units that will be brought onto the market in 1982 as a result of provincial housing programs to over 15,000 units. This includes the 4,000 Alberta rental investment incentive units, as well as 11,000 units to be supplied by the Alberta Housing Corporation and the Alberta Home Mortgage Corporation with funds provided by the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta rental investment incentive program, and our other initiatives, represent an unparalleled effort by our provincial government to ensure an affordable supply of rental housing for our citizens. The construction of 4,000 new rental units under this expanded program will stimulate approximately \$200 million worth of new residential investment, thereby providing about 2,500 direct new jobs for our economy.

Mr. Speaker, today I am also tabling a brief description of the program guidelines; however, members should bear in mind that these are subject to an amendment to

the Alberta Corporate Income Tax Act and the appropriate regulations to be passed this spring.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

Shut-in Oil Production

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. It's regarding Mr. Lalonde's announcement with regard to securing markets for western Canadian crude oil. I find the announcement a nothing announcement, like the answers I get from the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources in this House.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. If the hon. leader wishes to be recognized to ask questions, I'm sure he's as familiar with the rules of the question period as I am; maybe more so.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, then my question to the hon. minister: is the minister satisfied with the announcement that came from the federal minister, and [does he] concur in the content of that communiqué?

MR. SPEAKER: With great respect to the hon. leader, the question as to whether or not anybody is satisfied is always a matter of opinion and a matter of debate. Perhaps the question could be put in a different way but, as I say, the matter of satisfaction depends on opinions. The question period is a time to elicit facts; we deal with opinions in our debating time.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. What effect will the announcement have on the sale of Alberta crude oil?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition would spend more time phrasing his questions and less phrasing his tirades, I'm sure we could get along much better in this House during question period.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Whether it's tirade or question, the minister doesn't answer. So it doesn't matter.

MR. LEITCH: In my view, Mr. Speaker, the announcements today by the federal Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources with respect to the shut-in problem really will not go very far in solving that most serious and difficult problem. We have been pressing for major additional changes, particularly to the petroleum compensation program, and we will continue to press. The one note of encouragement from the statement of the hon. federal minister was that if these measures weren't successful — and in my judgment, they won't be — he would consider additional measures. Certainly we'll be pressing for those additional measures.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question with regard to the oil import compensation program. What position is the government of Alberta putting forth to the federal government, in terms of changes in that program?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, there are two key ones. We feel that the program needs to be restructured in such a

way that it does not encourage the use of foreign imports at the expense of potential Canadian production. One of the key areas is particularly the heavy crudes, where the present system provides an economic advantage to a refiner using imported heavy crude as opposed to Canadian-produced heavy crude.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. In terms of actual rate of compensation, I understand the current compensation is \$17.30 per barrel. Has the government of Alberta indicated a change, or a figure that varies from that, which would be more suitable, so Alberta crude would be put on the market rather than crude being imported from the foreign market?

MR. LEITCH: Not by figure, Mr. Speaker, because the figure would be a moving target. Our position is that the system needs to be changed, so there's no economic incentive to use imported oil versus shut-in Canadian production.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question with regard to the contracts with offshore countries. Could the hon. minister indicate what the situation is with regard to that? Are there a number of offshore contracts? For example, the figures indicate that some 400,000 barrels are being imported at the present time. Are those barrels of offshore oil committed for some time yet: six months, eight months? When will that commitment by eastern Canadian refineries terminate?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure the import contracts are restricted to refiners. For example, there is a contract to import oil from Mexico, and I believe that contract is essentially a government-to-government contract, although implemented through Petro-Canada. There may be other contracts of a similar nature.

We certainly do not have the details of all the import contracts, but my information is that those import contracts — that is, the ones that would normally be entered into by refiners — are of course subject to being renegotiated, and they have been renegotiated by a number of importing refiners in other countries. I have the feeling that the presence of the import compensation program inhibits the renegotiation of those contracts, in the sense that it removes the economic incentive on the part of a refiner to renegotiate an import contract.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question with regard to another section of the announcement. The heavy crude oil export charges for April are to be reduced from the March levels by \$12.60 per cubic metre, or about \$2.20 per barrel. Could the minister indicate what effect that would have with regard to Alberta heavy crude?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, that was a change we were pressing for. In effect, it was to change the export charge to ensure that Canadian-produced heavy oils being marketed as they traditionally have been in the United States would not, by virtue of the size of the export charge, be non-competitive with alternative sources of supply. As to the precise number that should be used, that will vary depending on the quality of the crude oil being exported.

In addition, we had also pressed for a change in the length of the export permit. That change has been made, in the sense that the National Energy Board will now give consideration to contracts of a year's duration when,

under past practice, it was for a much shorter period of time.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question with regard to the sort of laissez-faire attitude of the federal government, as well as this provincial government, with regard to these changes.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Well, that's a fact.

MR. SPEAKER: As I have mentioned on a number of occasions, [interjection] regardless of whether it appears otherwise, I'm indeed reluctant to intervene in debating time or questioning time. If the hon. leader is going to persist in making statements of that kind, it's an absolute demand of fairness that other members be permitted to enter the debate. As it is, they must sit there mum, regardless of how strong their views may be about certain statements appended, attached, or prefaced to questions. They don't have a chance to express their views, regardless of how strongly they may agree or disagree. It's simply a basic question of fairness. It's a matter of using the question period for the purpose for which it was intended.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order. The fact of the matter is that we have a very serious condition in Canada at present. Support of industries, backing up . . . All these conventional oil industries want some answers, and we have a very casual attitude . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. [interjection] Would the hon. leader please resume his seat. If the hon. leader is going to persist in what he knows is definitely out of order, I regret I won't be able to recognize him.

I realize the importance of the topic. But regardless of the importance of the topic, in dealing with them we follow certain proper procedures which, over centuries of tradition, have been found to be effective and good ways of dealing with important topics. So let's deal with them properly.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, we have a job to do for the people of Alberta. If I'm going to ask the question about . . .

MR. SPEAKER: We all have jobs to do for the people of Alberta, including me.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, under those very rigid guidelines: will the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources of this province take immediate action to confront the federal Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to bring about the changes? Has the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources any kind of strategy in place for that confrontation, to get what we in Alberta need to get this conventional industry on the road?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, the answer to that is very simple. We have confronted the federal Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. We have got changes.

MR. R. SPEAKER: These are changes?

MR. LEITCH: In my view, the changes are not sufficient. We will continue to confront them. Our strategy has in

part been successful. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition has a strategy that he suggests this government follow, at the appropriate time would he please make it public?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. minister, who is responsible and paid by the people of Alberta to [make] a strategy public, place it before the Assembly right now, so we know what it is?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, that's typical of the hon. Leader of the Opposition. He wants you to make your strategy public so that . . .

MR. R. SPEAKER: You're the minister; I'm not.

MR. LEITCH: . . . the opposition knows — the opposition in this case being the federal government — what . . .

MR. R. SPEAKER: The people want to know.

MR. LEITCH . . . it's all about, so they can more easily defend themselves against it.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Has the hon. minister informed the conventional oil industry about the strategy the government of Alberta is using? They don't know, and they are the people affected right now in Alberta.

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, as I said on a number of occasions, we have been in discussion with the conventional industry about this problem, and we'll continue to do that.

MR. R. SPEAKER: You don't even know what you're doing.

Oil Sands Development

MR. WEISS: Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct my question to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. Yesterday the Prime Minister of Canada advised the House of Commons that the Alsands project had been held up mainly by Alberta. In view of the statement by the Prime Minister, would the minister advise the Assembly if the Alsands delay was a policy decision made by the government of Alberta?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I think I can very briefly deal with that question in this way . . .

MR. R. SPEAKER: Just say yes. Do you want me to answer your question?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, there isn't anyone in this province, except perhaps the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who thought that any of the megaprojects in the oil sands would have proceeded under the terms of the national energy policy and budget of October 28. The reasons they wouldn't have proceeded were very simple. The price proposed was too low; it was \$38 per barrel, rising by the consumer price index. The second reason those projects wouldn't have proceeded — and this is partly psychological — is the federal government's breaching of the pricing provisions of the Syncrude agreement, which was clearly proposed in that budget and national energy policy and was clearly going to make future investors in Alsands sceptical about the pricing

commitments. I think it is important that we keep clear that there is no possibility of those projects proceeding under the national energy program or budget of October 28, 1980.

Mr. Speaker, some argued that we ought to have made a separate arrangement with oil sands, in respect of pricing, taxation levels, and royalty levels, and endeavored to have those projects proceed while we were in debate over the question of pricing and taxation for the conventional industry. That was discussed and debated in this Assembly, and it was a very firm policy of this government not to sign a separate agreement with respect to Alsands and abandon the conventional industry.

Mr. Speaker, the key third point I want to make: even if we had entered into a separate agreement with respect to the Alsands projects, and had those projects made the preliminary decision to proceed, we would have been in virtually the identical position we're in today. About a year and a half after they . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I wonder if the hon. minister could come directly to the essentials of the question.

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I will endeavor to do that in a sentence.

About a year and a half after the initial decision to proceed, there is a period where there is a "go, no go" decision. Had those projects proceeded in the latter part of 1980, we would have been reaching that stage about now, and we would have been in virtually the identical position with respect to the Alsands projects as we now are.

MR. WEISS: A supplementary. Would the minister advise the Assembly if the proposed developers — at that time the Alsands consortium — were at all times fully aware of Alberta's position?

MR. SPEAKER: With great respect, the purpose of the question period is to deal with current matters, not history. If the hon. member wishes to get that information, I'm sure it can be obtained by some research or inquiries of the department. It is a matter of history and consequently doesn't qualify for the question period, which is supposed to be devoted to current matters.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question relating to a comment the hon. minister made in the Legislature on March 18, about the Alsands plant and its potential future. One option that seemed to come from the minister's answer was that Alsands could potentially be of smaller design than it is at present. Could the minister comment if that is one of the options being considered during the month of April?

MR. LEITCH: Mr. Speaker, I don't recall saying anything that would have led to the impression that a smaller Alsands, as an Alsands project, was under consideration. I certainly made some remarks about the possibility of smaller projects, but I don't recall making any in the context of a smaller Alsands as a specific project. Perhaps the hon. Leader of the Opposition has misinterpreted my remarks. Alternatively, they may not have been as clear as I intended.

Grain Marketing

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to

the hon. Minister of Agriculture. I have just been alerted that inspectors from the Canadian Wheat Board have been advising feed mill operators in the Lethbridge area that it is illegal to purchase feed grain from grain dealers. Could the minister advise whether he is aware of this? What implications could it have for both grain producers and cattle feeders?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, I am aware of inspectors from the Canadian Wheat Board visiting some of the feed mills in this regard. It deals directly with the opportunity of grain companies to deal, in feed barley, directly with feed mills. The area of jurisdiction was being challenged. Within the province, that jurisdictional area for the movement of feed grain is tied directly to provincial jurisdiction. We made representation to the Canadian Wheat Board, and the practice has stopped.

MR. BATIUK: A supplementary question to the minister. Since it has been proven to be a provincial jurisdiction, can the minister advise if the Canadian Wheat Board is determined to implement the market assurance plan? Is this the first step in taking total control of grain marketing in the country?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, I have no way of knowing the intentions and the end result. I know some of the concerns, on behalf of the Canadian Wheat Board, on grain companies dealing directly with feed mills. The transfer of grain is basically tied to the opportunity of producers selling direct. The cash advance program, made on behalf of the Canadian Wheat Board, then comes into challenge. I think that is one of the greater concerns, rather than the latter.

MR. BATIUK: A supplementary. Could the minister advise whether the Wheat Board has assured him that this will not be carried further?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, the conversation we've had with the chief commissioner is that the practice will stop, and it has stopped. Also, a meeting will be held by the commissioner of the Canadian Wheat Board and the parties responsible, to see if a system can be derived to give them the answers they're trying to get; in other words, some control over the numbers of bushels of grain as it moves within the province.

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Speaker, my second question is directed to the Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower . . . [laughter]

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member is using a text that we hear nearly every day, but it hasn't been used today by anybody else. Perhaps we could come back to the hon. member. It's likely that we're going to have time.

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Speaker, I accept your ruling. There was no second question from the Leader of the Opposition, so I wanted to take advantage.

Tax Recovery Land

MR. MANDEVILLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. Could the minister indicate what progress has been made on the sale of tax recovery land in the southeastern part of the province?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I'd be pleased to get further details. To my knowledge, at the present time we haven't actually completed the transactions, although we have several hundred applications from farmers and ranchers residing in the area. The program is being very well received by those people. I believe it is fair to say that those outside the area who had expressed a concern with respect to the movement of this tax recovery land into private hands, are also satisfied now that appropriate measures are being taken to ensure that land which is environmentally sensitive or required for fish and wildlife habitat will be retained by the Special Areas Board.

MR. MANDEVILLE: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Associate Minister of Public Lands and Wildlife, with regard to the inspection of the land. Before the leaseholders can purchase the land, does the minister's department, or someone from fish and wildlife, inspect all the parcels of land for sale?

MR. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, yes they do. Any land it is considered should be reserved for habitat is noted. As well, land along streams or rivers is reserved for habitat.

MR. MANDEVILLE: A supplementary question to the hon. minister, with regard to the sale of Crown lease land. Does the government have a policy with regard to selling Crown lease, or is any Crown lease sold in the province to any extent?

MR. MILLER: Specifically in regard to grazing leases, these are not offered for sale. They are kept by the Crown.

MR. MANDEVILLE: One final supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. Are all the improvement districts in the province making this tax recovery land available to leaseholders, or is it just in the southeastern part of the province that tax recovery land is available to leaseholders?

MR. MOORE: Generally speaking, Mr. Speaker, we have little or no tax recovery land in any improvement districts in Alberta, outside of Improvement District No. 1 and, of course, the Special Areas the hon. member is familiar with. The matter simply doesn't apply, because most improvement district land that isn't deeded land is Crown land, administered by the Associate Minister of Public Lands and Wildlife, and is available to farmers and others through various provisions of the Public Lands Act, with which I'm sure the hon. member is familiar.

Emergency Planning Order

MR. KESLER: Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, as the minister in charge of Disaster Services. Yesterday the minister informed the House that the emergency planning order was a federal document that could in no way infringe upon the rights of the people of this province. Has he reviewed statements of the federal minister responsible for the emergency planning that he is prepared to act extra-legally on this planning order, which does affect this province and the rights of its people?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, no I have not. Our determination of what affects the rights of the people of this

province is based on a legal review of the facts at hand and not on statements attributed to federal ministers.

MR. KESLER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. As the federal minister would be the individual who would implement this particular order in council, has the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs taken it on himself to attack the problem through the legal system, to ensure that the order in council is not imposed upon Albertans?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat in part what I said yesterday. When a proposal was put forward on June 5, 1981, by the federal minister responsible for emergency planning, that federal legislation would be required to implement the planning order referred to, on behalf of this government and Legislature I took very strong exception to such a proposal. I've since been joined by colleagues in other provinces taking strong exception to any federal legislation that would allow the rights of individuals in this province to be altered by such a planning order. As I said yesterday, from my information at the present time the matter is not being pursued through the House of Commons by the federal government.

MR. KESLER: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I believe the communication the hon. minister speaks of was as of August 19. Would the hon. minister make new representation now, in particular to the emergency planning order, as to the position of this government?

MR. MOORE: The hon. member wasn't listening. Yesterday I said that I made verbal representation in a meeting in Ottawa on June 5, 1981. I made further written representation on August 19, a copy of which letter I tabled. Since that time, there have been further written representations by me. There have been representations, on a continuous basis, by officials working in disaster services in Alberta, to the federal government emergency planning people in Ottawa. The representations have been firm, and have been made on every occasion that is appropriate or desirable to make them. We will continue to make them, to ensure that in no way are the rights of the people of this province affected by the planning order referred to.

MR. KESLER: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Could the hon. minister take it upon himself to table that correspondence to his hon. counterpart at the federal level?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, the correspondence referred to entails correspondence from the hon. Mr. Pinard, who is the federal minister responsible. I will undertake to determine whether or not I have his permission to table such correspondence. If that permission is received, I'd be pleased to table it.

MR. R. SPEAKER: A supplementary question to the hon. minister, with regard to the question of federal legislation being necessary for the implementation of the planning order. Would the letters the minister is going to table give the background information, indicating that the federal legislation is necessary? Are there other kinds of documentation available that would indicate that federal legislation is necessary before the planning order would take effect?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, the legal opinions we have received with respect to the validity of such an order in Alberta without the federal legislation, insofar as it might interfere with the legislative authority of this province, is something that we collect in the normal fashion. As the hon. member is aware, we don't provide legal opinions in the House; the member is free to seek his own. However, I can assure the member that I'm totally convinced that the legal opinions we've obtained are based on sound legal opinions from our Attorney General's Department and from him. I see no cause for alarm.

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to hon. minister. It arises from an undertaking given on another occasion by the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. Can the minister indicate whether a legal review is going to be effected to determine the constitutional validity of such legislation, if and when it is brought into effect by the federal government?

MR. NOTLEY: That's yours, Dick.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I simply want to restate what I said before in the House. I committed to the member to check and see what we have done. I have undertaken that work, and we have a legal opinion which not only sets out the jurisdictional question but deals with other matters with respect to the order in council. Mr. Speaker, I believe I reported that to the Assembly approximately a week ago.

MR. KESLER: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is the hon. minister aware that the statement made is as follows:

And if the emergency arises when Parliament itself is dissolved, we would at present have no option but to act extra-legally.

Could you define what "extra-legally" would entail?

MR. SPEAKER: Although there has been a great deal of latitude, I think we're getting into an area that is really a bit extreme. As I've mentioned, the question period is not intended for the purpose of solving legal problems or defining terms in announcements that might have been made by ministers in another House. If the hon. member can relate his concern to a matter of fact on which he would like to ask a question, I'm sure we could deal with it.

Public Service Pension Plans

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Provincial Treasurer. It concerns the \$3.1 billion in unfunded pension liabilities by the province in the Teachers' Retirement Fund, the universities academic pension plan, the public service management pension plan, the local authorities, and the public service pension plan. Is the Treasurer in a position to advise the Assembly of the reason the government has failed to act on the recommendation by the Auditor General in the 1978-79 report and repeated twice since, including the 1981 report, to the effect that the province should record the unfunded liability arising from its various pension plans as a liability in the financial statements of the General Revenue Fund?

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, the government has acted in this matter in very recently establishing, for the first time in the history of the province, a pension funding of \$1.1 billion. That amount is less than the amount referred to by the Auditor General. In reports to the Public Accounts Committee in the fall, I think we indicated that the question of whether there should be higher amounts is under study. Members will appreciate that there are various different actuarial opinions with respect to what the amount should be with respect to funding these various pensions. As well, I think members know that moneys have to be available for other priorities, with respect to operating and capital needs which the people of Alberta would want. Those have to be borne in mind, in addition to these suggestions.

I think the financial statements of the province now go some considerable distance toward pointing out that that liability is there, because the Auditor General's report is part of that, but the matter is under continuous advisement. If there are ways we can more directly point out that there may be a liability of that amount — and there are perhaps various opinions as to what that liability is — we would look forward to doing that in the years ahead.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. I'm rather shocked at the comment that there may be a liability. Surely we propose to . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Let's come to the question.

MR. NOTLEY: . . . [inaudible] retirement funds that are listed here. My question is not with respect to the \$1.1 billion, which was dealt with in this House; it is with respect to the way this matter is recorded in the General Revenue Fund. Instead of having a surplus of \$2.3 billion in our General Revenue Fund, because of these unfunded liabilities we have an overall deficit. My question is not with respect to the billion dollars put into funded pensions but the recording of that portion which is not funded, and why that is not specifically dealt with, as recommended on three separate occasions now by the Auditor General.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, first I want to make it clear that there can be some debate with respect to the actual amount of the unfunded liability. I'm not suggesting there isn't an unfunded liability, which is the case with most public administrations in Canada and indeed most private corporations.

I'm not sure whether it might be somewhat misleading, depending on how it is expressed, to have the financial plan of the government moved to a position, as suggested by the hon. member, and put in the total amount of the unfunded liability. There are many opinions among actuaries as to what that liability is. Because it is something which will occur many, many years down the road, it's something I think we want to look at very carefully. However, I would welcome a further detailed discussion of this item in the Public Accounts Committee, when the Auditor General is present.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. I respond by saying that it's not just the opinion of this particular . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Let's come to the question. We're just so blatantly in an area of debate when

other hon. members' tongues are tied that it's totally unfair.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to remind the minister, because if one is not to entice debate . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. If the hon. member has a question, would he please ask it.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I certainly intend to answer it . . . [laughter] also ask it as well.

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you well know, the rules have to work both ways equally. That means that if a member is not to entice debate in putting a question, neither is an hon. minister in answering. If a minister entices debate in his answer, then in fairness he has contributed to debate and the questioner has to have his shot at it too. As you have said many times . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Would the hon. member kindly resume his seat. It so happens that in this case the questioner had the first shot at it. The question was definitely debate. There's no question about it. It amounted to a form of question which accused the government of not having done something which, in the perception of the hon. member, it should have done. In support of his position, he brought a reference to the Auditor General. That is clearly debate. I don't know how many members in the Assembly might wish to enter such a debate, but if the hon. member would simply confine himself to asking the questions directly, we won't have this difficulty. The hon. minister was asked for reasons. We've mentioned — and it goes back years — that asking for reasons is simply an invitation to debate, because that's what debate consists of: an exchange of reasons. Let's get back to the question, and we won't have these difficulties.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, the supplementary question I would put to the minister is: given the fact that the province's Pension Benefits Act requires the private sector to fully fund pension plan obligations, why has the government not chosen to do the same, when we have legislation that forces this obligation upon the private sector?

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to give a neutral answer to a neutral question. The fact is that the situation with respect to public entities, such as governments, is quite different from that of private corporations. For example, some years ago there was very real concern when the Studebaker automotive company went bankrupt and didn't have enough to pay its pension funds. On the other hand, governments last forever. [interjections] I mean governments at all levels, not political parties.

Governments — as do provinces, state administrations, and political administrations — generally last, and through the course of decades are able, through various taxpayers, to provide for the public service pension. So there's always been a very basic distinction and difference, as between the laws, with regard to private and public pensions.

I think pensioners from the public service in this province know and feel very happy about the fact that all their pensions are guaranteed by the General Revenue Fund of the province of Alberta. We'll continue to follow up the very important recommendations of the Auditor General.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. It's certainly obvious that the minister took law and not history at the university, if . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Would the hon. member kindly resume his seat.

Seed-cleaning Training

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower. Statistics reveal that last year eight out of every hundred train cars of grain exported to the west coast were dockage. Since there is a continuous demand for qualified seed cleaning plant operators, could the minister advise whether he is contemplating providing courses at some of the community colleges?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, a proposal from Olds College, with respect to providing training in the area of seed cleaning, is before my departmental officials at present; in fact, a very active group is involved in promoting that program. In addition to program funding, it will require some additional capital funds for construction of appropriate facilities.

This year's budget estimates do not include funds for either the capital or the operating aspects of such a program; however, I am carefully reviewing that matter at present and, within a matter of days, will be holding further meetings with interested groups and organizations to review that particular question further.

MR. BATIUK: A supplementary to the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker. Could he advise whether his department has been pressuring him to see that such courses are provided?

MR. SCHMIDT: Mr. Speaker, we've had the opportunity to dialogue with the ag. service boards, and the discussion with regard to training and upgrading of ag. fieldmen deals directly with those who are involved in the operation of seed-cleaning plants, because they fall under their jurisdiction. Yes, we have had some dialogue, and are looking forward to an opportunity to upgrade both areas.

MR. BATIUK: A supplementary to the Minister of Agriculture. Could he advise whether any grain companies have offered, without charge, elevators they had planned to demolish, so they could be remodelled and used as seed cleaning plants for training?

MR. SCHMIDT: I'm not aware of any, Mr. Speaker, but I would be pleased to look into the matter and report back to the hon. member.

MR. BATIUK: One final supplementary to the Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower, Mr. Speaker. Since grain cleaning and seed cleaning are in the interests of both the province and the country, could the minister advise whether expenditures for such courses would be provided jointly by the provincial and federal governments, since he mentioned that he had no funds for that this year?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I've had no indication that the federal government is prepared to join in such a program, the educational component of any such pro-

gram being a matter of provincial constitutional responsibility. In any such programming, there would be some federal government participation, albeit somewhat less, through established programs financing. But I would be prepared to follow up that matter with my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, keeping in mind that we are going to review the matter very carefully, as I indicated in my first answer, in the next few days.

Rental Investment Incentive Program

MR. OMAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the hon. Minister of Housing and Public Works. I'd like to thank the minister for responding to my request with regard to raising the limits on housing that could be financed under the Alberta Housing Corporation. Could the minister indicate if those rates are effective immediately?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. If the hon. member wishes to make a public statement, it's not valid in question period. I think you ruled on that earlier. When we led into preamble that had a bit of barb to the government, we were cut off. Here's a member sitting in the Legislature having a free show — a free, happy, jolly time, just going on. Stand up, Mr. Speaker, and cut him off like you do us. It's fair treatment. It's not government day every day in this House.

MR. SPEAKER: My understanding was that the hon. member was referring to a ministerial announcement made earlier. Hon. members may recall that the purpose of the change in *Standing Orders*, which shifted the time for ministerial announcements from after the question period to before the question period, was to give hon. members, especially members of the opposition, an opportunity to ask questions about those ministerial announcements.

If I missed something that I should have caught, I regret that. But I wasn't aware that the hon. member had gone beyond referring to that ministerial announcement. If he was becoming overly fulsome in praise of the government, then of course I appreciate the intervention of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. OMAN: Mr. Speaker, my question is: when do those rate increases become effective?

MR. CHAMBERS: Effective April 1, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Member for Calgary North Hill for the question he asked me a few weeks ago. His input, and that of my other colleagues, was very useful in helping us arrive at the decision to do this.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower wishes to deal with a previous question period topic.

Career Development for Women

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway asked whether information was available as to the number of women taking up the traditional male apprenticeship programs, and he named some specifically. I indicated then that I would try to provide up-to-date figures.

I can advise the Assembly very briefly that in the nine-month period from May 30, 1981, to the end of

February 1982, there has been a 47 per cent increase in female apprentices in 24 designated trades, excluding barbers and beauticians, which of course has been a field that has had a large number of female apprentices in the past. A 47 per cent increase is a very large increase and covers 24 trades. I will circulate to all hon. members of the Assembly the most current statistics in that respect.

Public Service Pension Plans

(continued)

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, by way of supplementary information on the pensions matter, on page 1.7 of the '80-81 public accounts, the net \$3.1 billion liability is disclosed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I ask that questions numbered 122 to 129 and motions for returns 120 and 121 stand and retain their places on the Order Paper.

[Motion carried]

head: MOTIONS FOR RETURNS

130. Mr. Notley moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the legal land description or descriptions of the 115-acre parcel of land referred to in item 2.2.2(1.) on page 11 of the report of the Auditor General for the year ended March 31, 1981.

MR. COOKSON: I'm prepared to accept Motion for a Return 130. I'll respond in this way: the hon. member can receive the information in the May 15, 1981, *Alberta Gazette*, Order No. 51.

MR. SPEAKER: I believe two hon. members wish to revert to the introduction of special guests, if the Assembly agrees.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS (reversion)

MRS. FYFE: Mr. Speaker, I now have their names and would like to recognize three other leaders accompanying the Alberta Girls' Parliament: Mrs. Clement, Mrs. McMillan, and Mrs. Walker. I regret that I was unable to introduce all the leaders at the same time, and I do want to pay tribute to the important volunteer work done by all these very capable leaders. I'm not sure if they're still in the Assembly, but wanted to read that into *Hansard*.

MR. MUSGREAVE: Mr. Speaker, today I have the pleasure of introducing to you and to the members of the House an alderman from the city of Calgary who represents the same part of the city that I do. Alderman Bob Hawkesworth is in the public gallery. I would like him to stand and be recognized by the House.

head: **MOTIONS OTHER THAN
GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

203. Moved by Mr. Purdy:

- Be it resolved that the Assembly urge the government to:
- (a) consider increasing the extended flat rate calling limit to 50 miles, and
 - (b) consider giving each municipality the right to decide which exchange it would be served by.

[Adjourned debate March 18: Mr. Hyland]

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, as I rise to take part in the debate, I would like to continue where I left off.

I remember being involved in a vote to see if extended flat rate calling would be available to residents of a village. As I understood the system then — and I'm not sure how much it's changed — ballots would be sent to subscribers in the village to see if they were interested in extended calling. Naturally those people will say yes, so they can get to the nearest place where most of them do business. As well, a ballot was sent to the people in the larger town saying: would you like this town to call into here; if you would, it's going to cost an extra 25 cents on your bill. I would say that, if they have a yes or no on whether they want their phone bill to increase 25 or 50 cents, most people will answer no.

This becomes a problem. In the first area, a high percentage of people are interested in extended flat rate calling; in the other area, a high percentage of people are against it. Nothing is accomplished. It just creates hard feeling. I hope that's been changed. I know it created some problems at that time.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to touch briefly on private lines, because it does have an impact on this resolution, especially if one has a private, rural line a distance of 10 miles or more from the town or exchange where the central is located. Leaving aside the construction cost, the rent of the private lines put in a number of years ago when underground construction was carried out, tends to be quite high. I know one case where a person pays more than five people on the same line would each pay for a rental rate. His rate is in excess of what would be the income on the rental rate on a party line. My understanding of most rural lines is that between four and five people are now on a party line.

I think that should be looked at, especially now that the major construction costs have been paid. Making people pay once more for private lines should be reconsidered. This particular person asked: if it's that way, give me a phone in the Quonset, one in the shop, one upstairs and downstairs in the house, and one in the barn, and I'll pay the regular rate on them all; put them all on the same line. Well, sir, we can't do that. Why not? It's cheaper for me. Why don't you just tell me that, and then I've got a private line? Well, they say they can't do that. I think that should be looked at.

To sum up, Mr. Speaker, I think that from the time the original mutuels were started, whether the very early ones with the two-by-four or sapling wired or nailed to the fence post and the wires strung above it — being torn down every time people went through with a piece of equipment and didn't look too closely — to the mutuels constructed later, when most of the work was volunteer, with the post holes being dug and the lines being constructed in that way, people tended to go to smaller central areas. Times have now changed.

We have come a certain distance with the existing

radius on extended flat rate calling, but I think it's time we consider moving farther. People are going farther to businesses. Farm machinery agencies especially tend to be centralized in order to be large enough to create the competition necessary in order to exist. I think our telephone policy should look at that, because we are indeed in an era of electronics. The Associate Minister of Telephones has often told us and answered questions in this House about how Alberta Government Telephones has led the country in electronics, in electronic updating, and in electronic advancement. I think we should look at this and attempt to bring the policy related to those calls in time with the times.

I look forward to other members' debate in this matter. Thank you.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to make a few remarks about Motion 203.

Extended area service was implemented for the first time between Blairmore, Bellevue, and Coleman, on July 8, 1950. Since that time, well over 230 extended area service routes have been established. Originally it started at 12 miles, and it's since been increased to 34.

I urge the hon. minister to consider one-way optional calling. I realize there would be a lot of problems with it. Because of the way the boundaries now are, they generally meet criteria such as an MD boundary or something like that. So I can see that if we start to make exceptions — I'll give an example of a local constituent who lives 4 miles from Nanton, but because of a municipal boundary which also happens to be the extended service boundary, has to call long-distance to the service centre 4 miles away. It's the centre for their community life, social life, and service. So in order to get in touch, they must call long-distance. I think some exceptions could be made to these boundaries, bearing in mind, as the motion says, taking into consideration the municipality and/or local authorities to remedy this situation.

I'm the last one to suggest we have more bureaucracy, but my suggestion would be that if some sort of committee was formed to look into these, it would take a big load off the minister and his department. They could get out into the field and look at the individual instead of looking at it as a matter of information on paperwork. I think the 50 miles — I suppose that in order to be correct these days we should say [81] kilometres — would certainly assist many people in the rural areas. It would assist the small urban businessman and facilitate his ability to service them properly.

I urge the minister to consider it. I'm not asking him for the impossible, because I know that in a good many cases that's basically what it would amount to. But if they had this committee to assist the minister in the field, I think it would be a great asset. I urge the minister to look into it.

Thank you.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, speaking to Resolution 203, I want to say this to the hon. minister. The hon. minister knows I have raised the matter. He has visited my constituency, and people there have a legitimate request for flat rate calling to the local town or centre. No question about it; they have a legitimate request, and the minister and I know it's there.

I'll admit that the mistake was made during our time as government. I was an MLA, and I recall that we had an excellent man starting this program at that time, but he said we must initiate the program on the old boundaries

established for telephone districts. We wanted telephones in those days, so we said, fine, let's move ahead with it. Now they all recognize it was a mistake, but the fact of the matter was that if we didn't go on the old boundaries, we wouldn't get the telephones. It was either/or; it was black and white. At that time, I don't know how we — the minister, I as an M.L.A., even the local citizens — accepted that kind of rule, but we did. It was a mistake, and I'm willing to admit that. I know it, and at this point in time we have to correct it.

What's my advice to the minister? In responding to this, the minister said that the solution is first a pilot project and we'll see if we can do something about it. That's fair enough. That's one approach to it. But the fact of the matter is that we still have some 26 districts across this province discontented with that specific answer. That's fact number one. Fact number two is: we are going to do something about it, and we'll most likely do it through the billing system. I think that's what the solution will be. I think trying to plough in a bunch of cable and set up new exchanges is expensive, and I'm sure a very simple billing system or someone doing it locally will do it at a lot less cost and with fewer complications.

I'd like to take a second incident, prior to 1971 when this government came into effect, with regard to rural gas in this province. On this side of the House, Dr. Horner was a great leader in implementing the rural gas program. He said, if we're in government we'll do it. I remember the hon. Minister of Mines and Minerals at that time standing up and saying over and over again that the price of propane is adequate, everybody's got good heating fuel, the problem can be solved. And everybody out there said, fine. We did studies and examined the material. Then 1971 came along, and we moved out of government. Somebody else took over, maybe rightly so.

What's the moral of the story? Dr. Horner came into government, made some decisions that people wanted, responded to a need right across this province, and today we have a rural gas program. He didn't stand around and wait; he got the job done. He took hold of the civil service and put it in place. I totally respect that man for that. What's the moral of the story? We now have a minimum of situations across this province that can be solved at less cost, very easily, and all it takes is the minister to say: I want that done, and direct traffic. We can have it put in place within the next two or three months, and those people out there can have the service they're asking for. That would show that the government is listening, is on top of its job, and can do something; as simple as that. But if we continue to have pilot projects, study the matter, allow M.L.A.s from all around rural Alberta pressing, pressing, and never getting answers, then the consequences in rural Alberta are natural and are going to happen — 1971 over again.

So, Mr. Speaker, my message to the minister is very clear: listen to the moral of the story, take responsibility, and make the decisions now. Because after the next election, whether the minister is in a different portfolio or there is another minister, the matter may be longer delayed. Whether the government's there or not, somebody else is going to make the decision, because it's an obvious one. I only urge the minister to take hold of the thing and do the job. Get the rewards, not the kicks, because they're there in the program right now.

MRS. FYFE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a few remarks to the motion put forward by the Member for Stony Plain. No doubt extended flat rate calling has a

higher cost factor attributed to it, but I would like to argue that if calls are made on a toll-free basis from the rural area into the large urban areas, there is an added advantage to the commercial and business firms within that large area. We have a policy of decentralization within the province of Alberta, and I think that a change in the extended flat rate system would broaden the flat rate area and would provide a better opportunity for businesses outside those urban areas to compete. The farmer who wants to check around for parts for his implements, or the homemaker who wants to do comparative shopping, in all likelihood are not going to do it through a long-distance toll charge, unless it's absolutely necessary. I would argue that while that added cost of the flat rate would certainly accrue to Alberta Government Telephones and those of us who are subscribers, there certainly would be an enhancement and a development of our policy of decentralization.

We've come a long way in communications within the world over the last 20 years. Only 21 years ago I lived in the North West Territories, and the only verbal messages I was able to receive in the first year I was there were through the Northern Messenger. CBC ran a service through Winnipeg, and you received a message through short wave. Twenty years has changed that communication so dramatically that you can now instantly see pictures flashed by television. We can see the Columbia spacecraft, or any other world event we're interested in, take place simultaneously with the event happening. Telephone communications and other forms of verbal communication also have advanced to the same point, where I can pick up a phone and dial my in-laws in Scotland. Now, I'm not suggesting to the minister that we extend the flat rate that far.

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

However, I feel that this motion would bring forward the necessity to improve communication within the province of Alberta. I don't for a second suggest that there are any free lunches, that this doesn't happen without a cost. Obviously, a cost has to be calculated into any extension of such a service. I think it would be worth while to consider this added cost in our total provincial policy of decentralization and the total policy of ensuring there is competitive fairness for communities and businesses throughout Alberta.

I close by complimenting the Member for Stony Plain for bringing this motion forward, because I feel it's worth while. It has been discussed previously in the Legislature. I believe it's worthy of consideration. I hope all members of the Assembly will support the motion, and that the minister responsible, who is listening very attentively, will consider very seriously the content of the motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I'm pleased to join in debate on Motion 203, which essentially talks about two particular items. The first and primary one deals with the whole question of extended flat rate calling limits and the question of extending the current limit of 34 miles to 50 miles. I'm also pleased to see you sitting in the Chair, sir, seeing that you were the initiator of this particular motion. It's a concern of a number of your constituents, particularly those living in the Alberta Beach area which, of course, is very proximate to the constituency of Barrhead which I represent.

I'd like to highlight a number of comments. Let me

make it very, very clear at the outset that I'm totally in favor of the motion and intend to support it. I would also suggest that this motion has been debated thoroughly. When I look at the eyes of the Associate Minister of Telephones, I know he's a dynamic fellow. Perhaps one could follow through on some of the comments made by the Member for Little Bow. If we look at the Associate Minister of Telephones today — and the aggressive approach taken by my predecessor Dr. Horner, who formerly represented Barrhead — and nickname him "little Hugh", perhaps he'll get with this whole motion and have it implemented very, very quickly. I'm sure all members of this Assembly will stand in support of it. I certainly don't know anybody who can criticize a common-sense approach that is very much in order. So with the greatest respect to the Associate Minister of Telephones, I want him to know that certainly in the part of Alberta I represent, my constituents are looking forward to seeing this Assembly endorse this motion and, secondly, to seeing the minister move on it with a rather aggressive approach.

There are some basic reasons it should be done. I know my colleagues who spoke today have already pointed out some of those reasons, but let's just highlight a few. I'm very pleased to follow the Member for St. Albert. She talked about a very important policy commitment this government made in 1971, when it became the new government of the people of Alberta. It dealt with the whole question of decentralization and the movement of government offices, goods, and services to various parts of Alberta, to allow people living in all parts of Alberta to become more proximate to those services and be more easily accessible to them.

You can now look around at a series of communities in this province that have benefited from the whole question of decentralization. Gone is the day when every individual, whether living in Bow Island or High Level, has to phone somebody in Edmonton to access a particular type of service. With a very aggressive policy of provincial buildings in all parts of Alberta, and easy access by citizens to services provided by the public service of this province, comes the need to communicate with them from time to time. On previous occasions in this Assembly, we've heard debate and discussion dealing with the RITE telephone system, and recognize there may well be citizens of this province who want to access a particular exchange, maybe only a few miles away from the destination of the telephone of call, but find they have to ring a long-distance number. Such is the case with a number of citizens living in northwestern Alberta, and the good people who live in Alberta Beach.

In the original debate on this motion on March 18, the Member for Stony Plain highlighted the large number of people who live in Alberta Beach. He also pointed out that of some 450 permanent residents, a large number are senior citizens. They want to phone government and business offices. They may have to access doctors for hospital services and facilities and the like, or they may want to talk to somebody about a recreational or cultural matter. When you live in a place like Alberta Beach, and have to phone a doctor — it's my understanding there is no doctor living in Alberta Beach — in essence, you have to phone long-distance. But if you live just a few miles away, in the village of Onoway — and it's not more than a handful of miles away — you are in a different exchange. You can access offices in Edmonton with the greatest ease, by simply hitting the seven numbers you need and you're in that particular office. Surely the good

people who live in Alberta Beach should have the same opportunity to access those particular facilities as the good residents who live in Onoway.

Mr. Speaker, those are just two examples. The Member for Drayton Valley talked about this. I know she's working very aggressively and very hard on behalf of her constituents and would certainly like to see it happen. In this day and age, I think person-to-person contact is essential. I think it's also necessary, though, to put this whole conversation this afternoon into its historic context, and note that prior to 1972 the extended flat rate calling limit was a very few miles. Since that time, this government has extended it beyond that original 12-mile limit to some 34 miles today. All the way, it has been a very progressive step, and an essential, needed improvement to communications in rural Alberta.

At this time, we're all asking the minister to go beyond the 34 miles and extend it a mere 16 miles to 50 miles. Some might say that's really a herculean approach when you consider that in 1972 the extended flat rate calling limit was only 12 miles, and now we're asking the minister to tack on 4 miles beyond the original 12. For all practical purposes, it can be done. Certainly when the world had an opportunity last Monday to watch a spacecraft come down from the high heavens and make a pinpoint landing with no error, and technology exists to carry a messenger from outer space to earth with pinpoint accuracy, surely the technology must also exist to allow flat rate calling limits to be extended from 34 miles to 50 miles.

Mr. Speaker, when commenting about this whole question of telephone service in rural Alberta, I think it's also important to ask the minister to see what he could do about reducing the number of party lines in Alberta and, in fact, be very aggressive about seeing AGT provide improved services to all people who live in rural areas. I think it's a real inconvenience to have literally thousands of business people, farmers who are conducting very important, large cash flow businesses, find they are on a party line that may have four, five, or six customers. Granted, we have to be very responsible from a fiscal point of view. We have to appreciate that these things cost money. I think most people in Alberta appreciate that our telephone service is among the cheapest in Canada, and telephone services in Canada are among the cheapest of any country in the world. Efficiency is there.

This afternoon, one doesn't really want to leave the message of being negative toward the Associate Minister of Telephones. One really wants to leave a message of being enthusiastic about the Associate Minister of Telephones and, by patting him on the back, hope he will support the motion. I hope members of this Assembly will have an opportunity to vote today, Mr. Speaker, because I don't think we have to go on debating this thing for eternity's sake. I think there's a problem we have to resolve, and that the minister will take the decision of the Assembly with eagerness and see its implementation with a minimum amount of months in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by thanking you for introducing this motion, not only on behalf of your constituents but the constituents of a large number of MLAs. Secondly, I think its identification, once again, brought a matter of concern to the minister responsible. Thirdly, it's one of those day-to-day, bread-and-butter concerns that can be resolved in this era of high technology and aggressive, positive reaction from government.

I am sure other members would like to comment on this matter this afternoon. Let's have the vote today,

approve it, and get on with the business. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TOPOLNISKY: Mr. Speaker, I want to say a word in support of the motion by the hon. Member for Stony Plain. The extended area service program has had many great improvements over the years. Since the 1960s, beginning with a 12-mile radius and increasing to 34 miles was very, very desirable.

I hope AGT can develop a program where one large exchange will accommodate several smaller exchanges. Several smaller communities, 7 to 15 miles apart in the Redwater-Andrew constituency, do not have the benefit of EFRC to go to any other centre. The communities in question are the villages of Thorhild, Radway, Waskatenau, and Andrew, and the hamlet of St. Michael. A request came recently from individuals of St. Michael to be able to call to Chipman, and from Willingdon to Andrew.

The other night the Member for Clover Bar mentioned that Lamont and Bruderheim are not treated fairly with flat rate dialing. Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the boundaries for these two centres were set prior to 1971. Why would people just 2 miles west of Lamont be under the Bruderheim exchange? These boundaries are creating much havoc today. But Bruderheim has another centre: Fort Saskatchewan. Since 1971 Lamont has had Chipman. Of course, I agree that all these centres should have flat rate dialing to Edmonton. I recommend that party lines be eliminated for private lines, at no extra cost to the users. One obstacle to the extended area program is the plebiscite. There are questionnaire and balloting processes, and it is not easy to decide which exchange they want to be connected to. There is often no clear choice for a market centre.

In past debates on EFRC, the Associate Minister of Telephones indicated that boundary changes are very, very difficult, but there are possibilities to extend the mileage limit. I am prepared to go the extra miles, from 34 to 50, and beyond. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I support Motion 203.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few comments on the motion you introduced in the Legislature a few short weeks ago, and indicate to members who participated in the debate that I appreciate their comments. They outlined the history of the program and the problems that have existed very well, in terms of resolving a number, but not all, of the problems of the flat rate calling program that have existed in rural Alberta for many years.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to indicate that we have looked at the whole question of resolving the boundary problems so people can call their market centres. The utilities committee of caucus has been very helpful in that regard. The hon. Member for Drayton Valley, who introduced a motion in the Legislature some time ago on the same topic, participated in that committee, along with a number of other rural members. We looked at a number of options that we thought would best resolve the existing problems.

We looked at the 50-mile limit. Certainly, extending it from 34 miles to 50 miles would resolve a number of the problems, but not all of them. One problem just outlined is that when maybe slightly more than 50 per cent of the people in a particular exchange vote in favor of flat rate calling to a market centre nearby and another exchange, you still have a lot of people in the exchange who really

don't want that market centre; they would like to go to another market centre. Of course, they are burdened with the costs of flat rate calling and may never phone into the market centre the majority want.

I would like to outline briefly the program we think will resolve more problems than extending the limit to 50 miles. It's called the optional calling program. As mentioned by a number of members, we have six exchanges in the province of Alberta where we will be carrying out a trial, starting June 1 of this year and lasting for one year. There are two exchanges in the south, Stavely and Standard; Holden and Mulhurst in the Edmonton area; and Wainman and Valleyview in the north. In that trial, each individual in those exchanges will be given the choice of phoning any neighboring exchange at a flat rate every month. Rather than a vote being taken for the entire exchange, where a number of people would be unhappy with the vote, each individual subscriber would have the choice whether or not they would like to phone a particular market centre. This method would be carried out through the billing system. We're hopeful that this will resolve a number of problems that exist. If the trial is successful, then of course the whole program will be instituted throughout the province, starting in 1983.

Mr. Speaker, I can see that this particular program will not resolve all the problems either. So we are looking at other alternatives, including this 50-mile limit. It may well be that we'll have to use a combination of several of these in order to resolve as many problems as possible. In looking at solutions, and looking at other provinces and countries to see what they're doing to try to resolve the same problems, we don't find much help. Certainly some provinces have flat rate calling. To my knowledge, none of them has the program we have in Alberta.

I guess if we're going to find a solution to this problem, we're going to have to find it here in Alberta. Hopefully, elsewhere they'll be able to use our solutions to solve their problems.

Two-thirds of revenues to Alberta Government Telephones come from long-distance toll, which is a profitable portion of the business. Revenues from local exchange rates account for one-third. However, the cost of providing that service is much higher than one-third. As I recall, about half the costs of the company are related to providing local exchange services. About half the total toll revenue comes from interprovincial long-distance calling, and the other half from intraprovincial calling. The problems we're trying to resolve relate to intraprovincial calling. If we are going to provide flat rate calling as extensively as possible, certainly the revenues lost from that would have to be derived from some other source.

One of the problems referred to by one member was that by extending the mileage, you by-pass certain communities. In the last two years, I've had a number of complaints indicating that once the flat rate calling program goes into place, people will be phoning a larger market centre at a further distance. Of course, the business people in the smaller market centres close-by don't want to be by-passed. The technology certainly does exist for flat rate calling. That isn't the problem. Really, the only problem is the cost. Some hon. members referred to individual line service. AGT, through the commission, has made a commitment to provide individual line service throughout rural Alberta. That program has already started.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate listening once again to the points raised by my hon. colleagues and would assure

them that, with their help, we've got to find a solution to this problem.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Motion carried]

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.

[Adjourned debate March 23: Mr. Bradley]

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate briefly in debate of the motion by the hon. Member for Calgary North West.

In my remarks today, I want to take the opportunity to discuss a particular situation in the constituency of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, which has resulted in a traffic hazard in that area. Basically, it is the severe weather conditions which occur there, particularly during the winter. The blizzards which occur frequently throughout the year, in an area of Highway 3 near Crowsnest Lake, either create severe visibility problems or amounts of drifting snow, which results in the closure of the road. Intermittently you can have good visibility and be able to drive through this stretch of probably about half a mile, and 20 minutes later tremendous gusts of wind come along, and you have very poor visibility for about half an hour. Then it will clear up again, and you're able to go through. This seems to be the normal type of condition you have there sometimes during the winter. Or you can have some very severe conditions which make it impossible for anyone to be able to see along this particular stretch where the wind blows across Crowsnest Lake, picks up the snow, and creates this severe visibility problem.

In December 1980, an accident, which included a mine bus transporting workers to work in British Columbia, occurred along this piece of road in the very early hours of the morning. The mine bus ran into a tractor trailer which had been parked on the side of the road, the bus driver not being able to see the parked tractor trailer. It resulted in the death of one individual, and a number of other individuals were very seriously injured. As a result of that accident, there was a public enquiry under the Fatality Inquiries Act, which reported and made a number of recommendations with regard to that accident. I'd like to comment on some of the recommendations from that inquiry, and make representations to the Minister of Transportation with regard to some things I think should take place with regard to that piece of road.

In particular, there's a need for improved communication between the British Columbia department of highways and the Alberta department of highways with regard to road closures. It appears that in British Columbia, the RCMP have the authority to close highways, whereas in Alberta the authority remains with the regional engineer and the department of highways, who then advise the RCMP. Given the particular history of this stretch of road, I think communications have to be improved between the department of highways on the Alberta side and the RCMP in British Columbia, to ensure that closures of roads going over the interprovincial boundary take effect at the same time in British Columbia and Alberta. We had an occasion this winter

when the road had been closed on the B.C. side but wasn't closed on the Alberta side. Vehicles proceeded west and were delayed for a number of hours in terms of getting across the border to Sparwood in British Columbia. So there's that need for improved communications.

Another suggestion has been made that there be illuminated signage in British Columbia and in Alberta, which notifies the travelling public that road conditions are such that the road has been closed. I certainly support that recommendation. This sign should be highly visible and be situated such that the travelling public become aware of it before they get into the particularly bad road situation. I believe it should be activated by either flashing lights or some lighting mechanism, so that it becomes highly visible when it's necessary to close the road.

There's also been a suggestion that permanent gates that can close the highway be established. There are some problems with that, because there are people who live west of the area in which you would necessarily place the gates, but not at the specific point where the problem occurs. It wouldn't take a great deal of thought as to where would be the best place to put these gates, recognizing that there are individuals who would have to get past the gates to get to their places of residence, but would not be travelling on the particularly dangerous piece of road where the road closure would be effected. I support the concept of a lighted sign informing the travelling public of the closure of the road.

Another thought which has come to my mind, given the shortness of this piece of road along Crowsnest Lake, is the idea of perhaps putting some high-powered beams of light, similar to the landing lights at airports, at intervals of 25 to 50 feet, which would identify and mark the sides of the road, so that when these gusts of wind that create this blinding situation come up, a person would still be able to see the definition of the road and be able to continue travel. These could probably be activated by some photo-electric cell, or as conditions would warrant.

Those are some of the solutions I see to this particular problem which affects the constituency of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest. I applaud the Member for Calgary North West for bringing this motion to the Assembly, and would support the passage of it. Thank you.

MR. HIEBERT: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to enter the debate on Motion 202, pertaining to traffic safety. It's a very timely motion in that all of us are car drivers; we're experiencing congestion on our roads and city streets. We all read the daily papers and note the carnage and waste occurring as a result of people not being conscious of what they're doing with their motor vehicles. The motion is attempting to look at initiating a multimedia campaign with regard to increasing an awareness of traffic safety. We've all seen many programs in place, such as defensive-driving courses by the Alberta Safety Council, the Check Stop program, and we have promotions such as driving safety week. Before we start entering into a multimedia campaign, I think some assessment ought to be made of some existing programs to see how effective they are in terms of trying to change driver attitudes and the consciousness of what is happening out there on the street.

I would like to relate a personal experience I had in this area, and raise the question: how many in the Assembly are aware of what was called the "traffic court clinic"? This program, sponsored by the Alberta Safety Council, was run in Edmonton. An attempt was made to offer the same program in Calgary; however, it was not as successful in that city, for reasons I don't know. I

happened to be a counsellor with the traffic court clinic in the '60s. Cal Lee, who was also a member of this Assembly before, attempted to initiate the program in Calgary. I would like to inform members about this program and some of the experiences we had with car drivers to see what their attitudes were like, and why the program existed.

The clinic existed as a four-week program, two hours per week. It enrolled about 15 drivers per session. Who made up the group? People who lost their licences through the demerit system. Generally, it entailed many drivers who had about five to 10 speeding convictions within a period of about one year, and people who lost their licences through impairment. In fact, some of them had been jailed for driving while suspended. This occurred on several occasions. We also had drivers who had an extensive accident record, and many of them were uninsurable. Consequently there was a condition for their coming to this particular program. It wasn't strictly a voluntary situation; rather, the participants were referred by magistrates. We had the court system working with the program, and the driver review board was involved. Insurance firms recommended that certain candidates participate. It was a condition that they attend the program before any consideration was given to giving their licence back. Driver records from the motor vehicle branch were made available to the counsellors, and a profile on each individual was available so the counsellor could relate to their specific problem. The program itself was developed with the support and encouragement of the former minister of highways, the hon. Gordon Taylor. Judges, magistrates, the RCMP, city police, and the Safety Council, along with the instructor-counsellors, participated.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, the process was essentially one of a group counselling session. Participants were allowed to discuss the problem in a general way and from their specific case. Many of the counsellors who worked in this program were teachers. They were selected to work with these people and were expected to have some kind of training with regard to how the sessions would operate. Extensive aids, films, overheads, displays, and information were used in the program to try to reinforce some of the conclusions and viewpoints expressed in the discussions.

The purpose of the traffic court clinic was to try to change the attitude of the driver through a carefully directed group session, and to get each driver to do a self-assessment of their driving habits, their particular problem, so they had a better understanding of themselves in relation to others when they're out on the road. If I could just go through what transpired session by session, it is rather interesting to see what happened with the driver and how he viewed his own abilities and attitudes.

The first session generally dealt with the general problem of motor vehicle traffic. Invariably, the solution to the problem became the problem. The problem was viewed from three aspects: one, the environmental aspect; two, the engineering aspect, which dealt with roads, highways, design of roads, signing, traffic controls, the engineering of the automobile itself in terms of safety; and the third was the driver. Invariably, all participants would conclude that the problem generally was with the driver. It was interesting to note that they always referred to the driver in the second person. They would talk in

terms of he, they, she — the other person, never themselves. They always perceived themselves to be safe drivers. They would talk about situations and share their viewpoints. Through the use of films, these particular concerns and viewpoints would resurface. The attempt was to try to shift the focus to themselves, so they could see themselves as others saw them. Session two would concentrate on the driver: personality factors, driver types, driver irritations and frustrations. [interjection]

I'm getting a lesson in grammar from someone here. He, she, they — the third person. Did I say the second person? Well, I wasn't talking about you.

In session two, films were again used to try to get drivers to look at the irritants they had on the road. Many times they would begin to see themselves on the film. What they were describing was the very thing they were talking about in terms of the other person. In the third session, we had the city police traffic sergeant come to listen to their concerns and questions. In the first two sessions, many of them would complain and be very negative toward the police, toward the enforcement aspect of motor vehicle traffic. When the sergeant was in attendance, somehow they melted like butter. They would never talk about the same question or problem. The traffic sergeant would try to explain the relationship between the formation of laws pertaining to motor vehicle traffic, deal with experiences they have with enforcement, and then they would get to the relationship of the interpretation of the law through the courts. It was a free opportunity for them to discuss directly with the police concerns they experience in enforcement. It was amazing to see the transformation when they had the opportunity to meet the police face to face. Somehow the problems they had in the first session — many in fact had a chip on their shoulder — seemed to subside when they were able to relate directly in a non-threatening situation.

The last session, session four, tried to tie all three sessions together and examine constructive solutions. In this particular session, such areas as seat belts, driver training, defensive driving programs, and personal goals were sought, and many of them saw the benefit of these particular safety devices.

In the evaluation of the program, many expressed the view that had they known about the program, they certainly would have participated much sooner. Why was it not available to them much sooner, before they experienced the difficulty of losing their licences? As I said at the outset, Mr. Speaker, many of them viewed Albertan drivers as poor drivers but took the position that they themselves were safe, that it was the other guy behind the wheel who was causing the problem.

Many of them also concluded that speed was a problem. Maybe it was related to the pace of life and the life style we have in Alberta. Many of them viewed the speed problem in terms of having to go from point A to point B in a certain amount of time. With the growth of our cities and more traffic on the roads, they still thought in terms of the same time line. Consequently they were often late and in a hurry, and many times were picked up. Before you know it, they were in a demerit and loss of licence situation.

The third area they identified was preoccupation and inattentiveness. They were good drivers but many times were just not conscious and attentive to what they were doing. This was often demonstrated to them in another way by film. It showed people going into buildings and elevators, and how many people will function out of the force of habit and never be conscious of what they're

doing; how they open doors, how they go to a mailbox. For example, it showed a preoccupied lady going to the mailbox and maybe stuffing the purse in instead of the actual parcel. Items like that were brought up through the films to try to reinforce what was happening with actual driving, behind the wheel of a car.

Many of them related that the program was excellent. They felt that there should be more exposure of this program to the general public. How do you reach the public? How do you get them motivated to become involved in a program such as this? Again that is the difficulty. I see this thing tying in, for example, with the hon. member's motion whereby, through a multimedia approach, possibly programs like this could be extended and made available to citizens at large before they are . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. In view of the position the clock has reached, I wonder if the hon. member could work himself up to a pause.

MR. HIEBERT: I've just suffered a demerit, and I'll adjourn at that point.

head: **PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS**
OTHER THAN
GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS
(Second Reading)

Bill 203
An Act to Amend the
Financial Administration Act to
Control Special Warrant Procedures

[Adjourned debate March 11: Mr. Hyland]

MR. HYLAND: I think this is the first time I've had a double-header, two speeches in one day. It's some sort of record for me. [interjection] One of my hon. colleagues has a double headache. I hope it's not that way after I get through speaking.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make just a short quote from the previous debate:

. . . this government allocates the money to non-productive ventures that continuously eat on the tax system and deteriorate an economy that is in trouble.

Those are the words of the hon. Leader of the Opposition during debate on his Bill.

Let us look at some of the things that were done in transportation. The economic stabilization program: ID 1, of which I represent a good portion, [received] \$200,000 from that program; the county of Forty Mile, \$200,000. Mr. Speaker, these amounts of money went towards road work in those areas that was carried out by private individuals; not equipment from the county or government equipment in the ID, but privately owned equipment. I know that a couple of operators in the county of Forty Mile were very happy to get a good portion of that program. It carried them through a time when activities with their dirt machines were not that great. It allowed the county to do a number of small jobs that otherwise would have to come out of general revenue and be tacked on to the mill rate of the county. So it helped the individual operator, and it also saved tax dollars to the rate-payers of the county. That doesn't sound like it did the same thing as the quotation I just read says.

Let's look at Advanced Education and Manpower: \$456,000 to provide funding to Grande Prairie Regional

College. Through question period and debate in this Legislature, we've heard of the problems with the supply of nurses in the province of Alberta. The Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower brings forward a special warrant in order to advance by at least one year the nursing education program in that college. Mr. Speaker, I submit that that is reacting to the wants and needs of the people. Economic Development: \$14 million to Prince Rupert terminal; a quick reaction to a problem that existed, in order to further the development of the terminal to serve farmers and other related industries that may use that terminal as time goes on.

Under Recreation and Parks, let us look at the master recreation grants. Whatever the desire of particular municipalities, they decided to go ahead with their recreational plans faster than anticipated. One example in my constituency is the urban rec centre. Of the \$21,828,000 to the major cultural/recreation program, the urban recreation centre received \$138,000. I'm sure those people who started and are in construction felt it was urgent to get the money to continue, so that the project wouldn't have to stop or the town have to borrow additional money at high interest rates to carry the project until the next year.

In my previous debate, I talked about hospital budget deficits. But let me say a few more quick words about that. Often the hospital may budget well and operate well. But because of unknown factors or because certain things may happen, a deficit occurs and there is good reason for the deficit. We look at Hospitals and Medical Care picking up \$51 million plus in hospital deficits throughout the province. I know that one of the hospitals that for many, many years had not operated at a deficit, operated at a deficit last year. We're very happy. The board was very pleased to have that deficit picked up, because part of the deficit was totally beyond their control.

We are living in a time of rapid change. I think we need a program in place where we can react to that change. With the special warrants that were passed, I believe we did react, and in a way that I believe was right. I support this program, and I urge members in the Assembly to vote against this Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say a few words on Bill 203 which, if passed, would restrict the ability of the government to use special warrants in promoting its programs.

I think you'll find that the special warrants and budget are tied closely together. A budget is a projection or estimate of the income and expenses of an organization, whether it's a local authority or a provincial government, in how it conducts its affairs for the coming year. It stands to reason that no one can anticipate all the emergencies that can arise in a year's time. The fact is that the main variable that affects this is the weather. If we could predict the weather, I'm sure we could come a lot closer to predicting the expenditures we make in a year.

I remember that a couple of years ago, when we had a good late fall, the Department of Transportation had a special warrant for \$43 million over and above its budget. But that made sense, because the weather was good. There was an opportunity to go out and complete some road programs that would not have been completed if you had to wait till next spring and guess whether you would be able to. So I think you need that type of flexibility in your budget to allow you to take advantage of

the weather when it is good.

Of course sometimes the weather is bad. In that case, you also have to have the ability to use special warrants in conducting your programs, as other members have mentioned. For instance if you have a hot, dry summer, there's no way that the government can predict in February or April how much money it's going to have to spend on fire prevention and control. Then there is freight assistance for feed. If it's a dry year, you may have to use a lot of money. If not, you can get by with very little.

So the government actually has two alternatives in a case like this. It can use special warrants, which this government does. Or it can do as we used to do on the school board down in Cardston. When you set your budget in the spring, you build in about 10 per cent extra, in what we used to call a contingency fund. That way, you were allowing for unseen events that were going to happen, that you couldn't foretell. Really the only thing bad about the contingency fund is the fact that you end up with a distorted budget of what you really expect to spend. But one way or the other, you have to have some way of actually having something set up in your budget to take care of emergencies.

The Leader of the Opposition said in his remarks on this that the year before, he brought in practically the same Bill, and at that time he wanted to limit the government to 8 per cent variation on special warrants. If you take the figures he gave in his remarks, the average has been 8.25 per cent over the last 10 years. So that's fairly close to what he thought it should have been last year. Of course when he realized this, he decided that 4 per cent would be a better figure. Really, 4 per cent is a good goal. There's nothing wrong with plus or minus 4 per cent. It's a goal to shoot for. We've made it in several years and even gone under that. So I agree with the 4 per cent, as long as it doesn't restrict the ability of the government to go above that in special cases.

Before I finish and sit down, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to comment on a few statements made in this debate by the Member for Olds-Didsbury. I'll start out in *Hansard*. One of them was:

I've had an opportunity to find out that the constituents of Olds-Didsbury are completely dissatisfied with handouts from government.

That remark puzzles me, Mr. Speaker. I can't tell whether they're dissatisfied because the handouts aren't big enough, too big, or whatever. But the constituents in Olds-Didsbury are dissatisfied.

He goes on to say, and I'm not puzzled about this:

It seems to me that subsidies are tools for the purpose of gaining votes in elections. They're not designed to help individuals, especially those subsidies of the cattle market. If we take a look at a little history, we'll realize that any time this province has given subsidies to the cattle industry of this province, the buyers from eastern Canada invariably drop the price 5 or 6 cents a pound within the next weeks or days. In fact the eastern buyers absorb those subsidies and the Alberta market never gets that dollar.

I'd like to ask the Member for Olds-Didsbury: are the people in his constituency against the farm fuel transportation allowance of 2.6 cents a litre? That's a direct subsidy to agriculture. I've had representations from many people in Alberta, not only from my constituency, that that subsidy should be increased. Then we can go to the Alberta natural gas protection plan, where the provincial government protects Alberta citizens at 65 per

cent of the border price of natural gas. No one in my constituency, or anywhere else in Alberta, has really protested against that protection plan. If anything, many of my constituents say we should do more in that area.

Let's go to the Crow rate. That is a grain subsidy. I would be very interested in hearing the member talk about whether we should abolish the Crow rate completely and have the grain farmers of Alberta pay the total cost of freight to the coast. Then the beef cattle and sheep program: there's no way this program allows eastern buyers to take that 5 or 6 cents he's talking about away from Alberta farmers, for the simple reason that that program is set up on the previous year, when the prices were already set. It does not affect today's market at all. In the near future, I'll be very interested in hearing a reply from the Member for Olds-Didsbury to these remarks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, I would like to join in debate on Bill 203, An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act to Control Special Warrant Procedures. Basically, the Bill is very simple. It has two requirements. It suggests that special warrants be urgently required, and that is in our present legislation. Secondly, it sets a ceiling of 4 per cent of the total budget being allowable for the amount of the special warrants issued in a given fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, I might just touch on a couple of points. The present Financial Administration Act was completely rewritten by the Conservative government in the mid-70s. Section 30(1)(a) of the Act states that the Provincial Treasurer may issue a special warrant when a

Minister having charge of any matter has certified that, in the public interest, an expenditure of public money is urgently required with respect to that matter . . .

The present legislation already basically requires what the proposed legislation from the hon. Member for Little Bow suggests. The minister will have to sign a certificate stating why the matter is urgent. In a sense, this section of the legislation being proposed today is somewhat redundant.

I might just touch on one point. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines urgent as "pressing, calling for immediate action or decision". That is the test our ministers must meet now, and are meeting. The suggestion by the hon. member that the ministers are not doing that seems a little strange.

Mr. Speaker, just out of curiosity I thought I'd reach into the library and get a copy of the estimates of the fiscal year April 1, 1970, to March 31, 1971, the last full year the Socreds were in office. This was the set of estimates they used under the old Financial Administration Act the Socreds had. I thought I'd get it simply to compare the detail between the two books. This is a very detailed document, outlining salaries, capital expenditures, and a host of other requirements. It compares to this thin little document the Socreds used to produce every year; this is one of the thicker ones they produced. Maybe I'll just reach under my desk and get one more thing. These are more budget details that this government produces. It goes into enormous detail on each vote produced by this government.

One reason the Financial Administration Act was a great improvement over the Socred financial administration concept was that the new legislation provided for much more detail on each vote, to be provided by the government to the Assembly. It required the government

to produce much more information, and the individual votes are voted upon and cannot be transferred. Money cannot be transferred from one heading to another, which was a possibility under the Socreds legislation. Under the Social Credit administration, a minister could transfer money from one vote in his department to another. Today that's not possible.

Their system was a little sloppy and shoddy. Ours is much more precise. It means that a minister who might have a little less money in one part of his vote but a lot more money is required in another, cannot do as the Socreds used to do, which was simply to take a pencil with an eraser and, in effect, rub out the funding from one and put it into another. That's why this little document, which was their production, contrasts so dramatically with these two. We force our ministers to be much more accountable and detailed, and they can't transfer.

Mr. Speaker, what happens when a minister has got an area of growth in his department and requires something that is urgent? He meets the test that the hon. former minister of the Crown suggests we use, and which is already provided for in our Financial Administration Act. We meet that test. We require our minister to prove it's an urgent and pressing need. Our legislation meets that test, but we're much more stringent on those financial controls. So a minister with extra responsibilities in one part of his department cannot just get out that rubber and say, well, my accountant made a mistake and I'll shift the money over, which is what they used to do under the old procedure. Mr. Speaker, that's a tremendous improvement.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that the financial administration of this province is highly controlled and very responsible, far more so than the Socreds were. That creates problems, but it forces us to be more accountable. Every time there is some growth in a certain area of responsibility in a government department, the minister has to come to the Provincial Treasurer and say, I need more money, this is why it is urgently required, and this is what I need. Then it has to come back to the Assembly as a special vote, as a supplementary requisition — far more accountable than under the old Socreds; just no question. That is why we have so many special warrants. We have special warrants because the minister has to account for every nickel and dime, and has to go back to the Provincial Treasurer, even though he or she might have a lot of money accumulated in one part of the department but needs money in another section. You can't just simply transfer. So, Mr. Speaker, we have come a long way.

The feature of the Bill that really is being suggested is that we have a 4 per cent ceiling. That's the interesting part of this Bill. A 4 per cent ceiling would mean there would be a cap, a ceiling. If we needed extra money because of a forest fire situation being provided for, and we had reached 3.999, we couldn't fight that forest fire. Under the Socred proposal, we'd just let the province go to hell. That doesn't seem very responsible, and it doesn't make sense.

But there would be another way to do it, Mr. Speaker. We could have our ministers pad all their accounts. We could have them roll in an extra 10 or 15 per cent, so we would never reach that cap. Do we want that kind of accounting procedure, where we have a little pad? I don't think so. That doesn't sound very responsible.

So we force the ministers to take a very prudent approach to their budgeting and funding. Then if they do urgently require money, they have to perform a little

procedure. They have to sign a certificate; they do that now. It has to be reviewed by the Provincial Treasurer, and he has to attest whether it's urgently required. The Provincial Treasurer does that. The full Executive Council does that. Then if there is a forest fire or similar requirement, or if in Olds-Didsbury there is some requirement for extra funding on their new recreation centre, the money is provided. It's a responsible way of budgeting.

That is way the old budget document from 1970-71 is so very interesting. It just contrasts what we're doing today with what they used to do a few years ago. Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that these documents have a great deal of control over the financial administration of this province. I think this government — I don't think I'm too biased, Mr. Speaker — is doing a great job.

Thank you very much.

DR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, I join with other members of government in opposing Bill 203, an Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act to Control Special Warrant Procedures. It's ill-conceived and insensitive. As I understand it, the Leader of the Opposition is saying in a general way that special allocation of funds will be limited — and I underline the word "limited" — to 4 per cent of the total supply granted for the fiscal year, and that an explanation shall be in writing to explain the urgency of the matter.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition wants to limit expenditure for special programs for our citizens. Clearly this is what he is saying, which affects not one group or one sector but could affect any individual member of Alberta. Special programs would be limited. They could not even be anticipated in a province we know very well is booming, vibrant, and changing on an ongoing basis. He would limit special programs regarding items needed for support now. He would limit special programs in any area of our social, health, education, and fire protection support for our senior citizens, the handicapped, and so on.

Frankly I think it's unbelievable. [interjection] It's certainly understandable why he is in opposition — and I hear giggling in the opposition members' corner. I suggest that's why they're in the opposition. They're insensitive. They disregard needed support on an urgent basis by limitation, and that's what he's suggesting. That's what he's written down: the limitation of support on a special basis for the individuals and families of this province. I just don't believe the leader of an opposition party could actually write a thing like that down. Words like "amazing" and "far out" have been stated. I concur in those.

Mr. Speaker, somehow the Leader of the Opposition has obviously lost touch with the reality of an expanding, changing province, which is fluctuating because of many things. We in this Assembly know this. The population growth, by in-migration from eastern Canada and other parts of the world, is rapid — 75,000 or 80,000 people a year. The world economy has changed — high interest rates, changing patterns of our industries, and so forth. So I'm saying that action may be needed from one budget to another. Any member in the opposition who doesn't understand that, I have great difficulty — and I suggest he doesn't understand that.

Mr. Speaker, in his opening comments he said — and I'm looking forward to his concluding comments — that it must be urgent. As the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry indicated, "urgent" is a pressing call for action; not talk, not meetings, not filibusters, not giggling, but

action. That's what we're doing by these special warrants, when the need arises. I'm afraid the opposition members forgot the word "action" a long time ago, and I suggest that's why they're opposition members.

The Leader of the Opposition says the government is not accountable. The hon. Member for Clover Bar brings that up yearly. I still have difficulty with that, because not only are we accountable, but we have guidelines. He must be confused and misinformed.

Questions could be asked, and I ask the House: are special warrants for a special important item known? The answer is obviously yes. When it comes up, it's known, and it's reported to this House. Can members ask questions regarding such expenditures? The answer is yes, in this House. Can they ask questions of the ministers? Of course. They can ask questions, written or oral, in public accounts, and so on. Again the answer is yes.

Are we in the public eye when ministers respond regarding those special warrants? The citizens of Alberta are looking at us, and they read it in *Hansard*. Incidentally, I must remind the opposition members of who brought in *Hansard* and allowed television in the House: this government. Again, it's in the public eye and the answer is yes. Is there accountability? The answer is yes. It's not only accountable here in this House, amongst all members who must vote on this, but out there on main street, in every household.

So the question is: what is he saying? Mr. Speaker, he says that if special warrants went in a certain direction, he would agree. Instead of saying, limit the special needed support for people, he should say, government members, let's go in this direction or that direction. But he offers no such suggestion. He says, if it went in a certain direction, and is completely vague. What does that mean? He says we are not helping the little guy. Well, can you believe that? Mr. Speaker, the more I read this Bill and his comments over and over again, I just can't believe it.

We have special warrants to help precisely those people, the little guy and the little gal, the average person, the lower income earner. I think it merits some repetition. Agriculture: production assistance for beef cattle, sheep, and hogs, freight rate assistance — \$153 million. Mr. Speaker, I remember the little guy, the little gal, and the average person on the farm who produces our food, not only for Alberta but for this country, is out there. There are some 26,000 applicants. They're the little guys. They needed that money to survive. That was \$153 million of special warrants for assistance. Economic Development: financing for the Prince Rupert grain terminal, \$14 million. Who is that for? It's not for the grain terminal company. It's for the little guy in Alberta, so we can get our grain, ship it out, and generate dollars for the little guy and gal on the farm, the average person, and the economy booms again.

Mr. Speaker, how about fire protection? Well, it's so obvious. There are fires, and we need a special warrant: \$105 million. What are we supposed to do? Sit here, diddle daddle, and discuss whether we should allocate this? If these other things exceeded 4 per cent, we'd have to come to the House while the fire is burning. There's a saying about Rome burning and Nero playing the violin, or whatever he was playing. So again, I have difficulty with his comments.

Municipal regional water and sewer, \$48 million. Who is that for? It's for the average individual and family. Hospitals and Medical Care, \$15 million for active acute hospital care. Mr. Speaker, that's for the young and the old, for the individual and the family, that little guy and

gal out there. Mortgage assistance, \$9.7 million. We can laugh at this, but when a young married couple gets a subsidy of \$550 a month for a first-time home purchase, it's fantastic. The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury should know about this; he just went through a by-election. When we run out of money, what are we supposed to say? No more money? Therefore the young couple now will sit at home. Mr. Speaker, how about Social Services and Community Health: aids to daily living and extended health benefits, \$6.8 million; social allowance programs for the single, the handicapped who are disadvantaged, another \$10 million. How about child welfare services, \$5 million for that little guy, really a little guy, a child. I can go on: international aid, \$2.2 million for the really needy in the third world. That's the real little guy; he's really suffering.

Mr. Speaker, he talks about the little guy who is short-changed. I can't see that. It's the average person, the below average in income who is supported here and, I suggest, the pioneers of our society.

So, Mr. Speaker, he speaks. The Leader of the Opposition brought in this Bill.

MR. COOK: Where is he?

DR. PAPROSKI: Well, apart from that — undoubtedly he is attending some meeting. The hon. member knows we don't mention those things. But there are other opposition members. Why don't they tell us which one of these — and there are others — they would cancel? Let's hear it. As a matter of fact, I'm prepared to sit down at the slightest provocation, if they would tell me they would cancel any one of these so the citizens of Alberta can wait a little longer for the support they need so drastically. There's silence, Mr. Speaker. I know they have difficulty getting up.

[A member raised his hand]

Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid this is not school yet. We have to rise. Mr. Speaker, he knows we're doing the proper thing. More importantly, the citizens know we're doing the right thing, and we're responding to people's needs. Frankly, he just can't take that.

As I stand here as the representative for Edmonton Kingsway — and I know all hon. government members feel the same way — we've got to be even more responsive, and we intend to be. But to suggest to the citizens that we can anticipate every problem that's going to occur over the next year, after passing this budget, and not be allowed to put in special warrants above 4 per cent, is just preposterous. As I said, if that isn't help for the little guy, the individual, the family, and the citizen, who are we helping? There has to be confusion in the minds of the opposition leader and opposition members, because I suggest that he represents them. They're not speaking up. He's the only one, and he represents them. So they're all thinking the same. When he closes debate, I hope he will explain himself.

Mr. Speaker, I indicated some programs, and I indicated to Ray the fact that Bill 203, which he introduced, indicates an acknowledgement that present spending practices regarding special warrants are indeed in order and needed. The 4 per cent limit he puts in the Bill is obviously too restrictive and insensitive. When the need arises, surely the government must respond. We must act — and I've indicated that — to a changing situation, population, and circumstance, and we must act immedi-

ately. I underline the word "immediately". It's not a question of waiting for another sitting of the House. If he's not satisfied with that, I'd like to hear what he has to offer. There is no time to see nothing, do nothing, hear nothing, and say we oppose this but we don't know which one we're going to oppose, whether it's agriculture, fires, municipal support, health, the little child, and so forth.

The Leader of the Opposition should clearly realize that special warrants, by their very nature, are unpredictable. I am concluding now. They occur because factors come into play that are not known, whether it's fire, drought, disaster, or a severe downturn of the economy in a general or specific way, as in agriculture. Tomorrow it may be small business. I hope there is support in that area on lower interest rates. Special warrants are in order because the Legislature — the hon. member has already indicated something I wanted to indicate — has passed the special warrant procedure. We did it as government and opposition members. If they don't like it, let's change the Act. Right now it's in order. In no way is it an abuse of the legislative process. It is brought in when it's pressing, when it's in the public interest, and when it's needed.

Mr. Speaker, after we see this so-called 4 per cent — which means he can predict what's going to happen. I suppose he is playing the role of God or a soothsayer, or whatever you call them. When it exceeds X dollars, what do you do? Are we going to come back here weekly, monthly, or when we get five special emergency needs? He doesn't even articulate that. He just sits down and walks away from it all. Well you just can't do that.

The principle of special warrants has not changed over the years. It is unpredictable, the amount changes and is variable, but the principle has not changed. It's always approved by the House. Opposition members will recall the example of \$25 million for increased salaries for nurses after the 1980 strike. Who could predict what the award would be?

Mr. Speaker, I conclude my comments by saying this Bill should be rejected in its entirety. Frankly, I would throw it to oblivion, and I do so.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill 203, an Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act to Control Special Warrant Procedures. I say I'm pleased because almost a year ago, on April 23, 1981, we had a debate in the Assembly with respect to a similar proposal. At that time, it was a proposal put forward by the real Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Bob Clark, the representative from Olds-Didsbury. He had a motion that said:

Be it resolved that this Assembly urge the government to establish a practice that where the financial requirements of the Crown exceed the money appropriated by more than 8 per cent in any fiscal year, the Lieutenant-Governor be advised to recall the Legislative Assembly for the purpose of voting on an interim supply Bill.

We had a very interesting and good debate on that. I certainly can't speak on behalf of the former Member for Olds-Didsbury, but at the conclusion of the debate it was my perception that the member essentially agreed with many of the very good arguments put forward by other members of the House and, in essence, was pleased with the arguments we put forward to point out that, in many cases, there were extenuating circumstances to look at special warrants and to recognize that from time to time they are important. I think he was swayed — obviously, after hearing debate of a number of colleagues in the

House this afternoon — about two very important factors with respect to special warrants, the first being the very important clause in the current Financial Administration Act, Section 30, which reads:

When at any time the Legislative Assembly is not in session the Provincial Treasurer

- (a) reports that the Minister having charge of any matter has certified that, in the public interest, an expenditure of public money is urgently required with respect to that matter ...

I know that a number of members have already put forward the argument this afternoon that there are two very important things: one, in the public interest, and secondly, the funds are urgently required. I am not aware of any expenditure by way of special warrant over the last decade in this Assembly that did not meet that very, very important test: public interest and urgently required.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is also very important that we look at the record of this government with respect to special warrants over the last decade. I want to read into the record the exact sums expended in each of the last 10 fiscal years, plus the percentage of total government expenditure those special warrants amounted to. In 1971-72, special warrants amounted to \$94.8 million out of a total actual expenditure of \$1.260 billion, or 7.5 per cent of the total budget. In 1972-73, special warrants amounted to \$31 million out of a total budget of \$1.369 billion, or 2.25 per cent. In 1973-74, special warrants amounted to \$97.4 million out of a total actual expenditure of \$1.504 billion, or 6.47 per cent. In 1974-75, special warrants totalled \$323 million out of a total budget of \$2.076 billion, or 15.53 per cent. In 1975-76, special warrants totalled \$287 million out of a total budget of \$2.72 billion, or 10.55 per cent.

In 1976-77 special warrants totalled \$107 million out of a \$2.92 billion budget, or 3.66 per cent. In 1977-78, special warrants totalled \$107.3 million out of a total annual expenditure of \$3.396 billion, or 3.15 per cent. In 1978-79, special warrants totalled \$141 million out of a total budget of \$3.704 billion, or 3.84 per cent. In 1979-80, \$254 million was expended by way of special warrants out of a total annual expenditure of \$4.530 billion, or 5.59 per cent. In 1980-81, special warrants amounted to \$593 million out of a budget of approximately \$5.670 billion, or 10.45 per cent. In the fiscal year 1981-82, special warrants amounted to \$637 million, about 9.5 per cent of the total provincial budget.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to have those facts before all members of the Assembly, because I want to make comments on the expenditure by way of special warrants with respect to two years when the percentage figure was fairly high. Just to reiterate, in 1974-75 and 1975-76, increases were 15.53 per cent and 10.55 per cent. If you take a look at the basic reason for a special warrant, re-emphasizing the definitions that were put forward so adequately by the Member for Edmonton Glengarry, one being "public interest" and the other "urgently required", you have to recall some pretty traumatic events that occurred in this country in the years 1974, 1975, and 1976. You will recall that Canada and Alberta found themselves in a little disagreement with respect to a fairly major oil and gas energy agreement. There were some rather negative impacts and effects on our provincial budget.

Because of the negative impact on the economy of the province of Alberta in that year, and because of a government that really doesn't come to work for just one session per year, but works 12 months of the year, it took

several series of initiatives to provide reactions to some urgent matters of public interest in this province. As a result, a series of very important things happened, essentially to turn around the negative impact on the economy existing in the province during those three years. It allowed literally hundreds of thousands of Albertans to come out from under. In my view, they were prime examples of expenditures by way of special warrant: one, in the public interest, and two, most urgently required.

Mr. Speaker, it's extremely important to re-emphasize that special warrants are a necessary vehicle. They're a necessary financial management tool that governments must have occasion to use and, secondly, must be courageous enough to implement when events demand their usage. There will always be occasions when it's absolutely impossible for any minister of the Crown, in terms of planning his budget preparations for the fiscal year 1983-84 — when he starts planning his budget for the next fiscal year, how can he or she be in a position to foretell some rather innovating situations that may just drop out of the heavens and be totally incomprehensible at this time, events we would not expect anybody even to plan for? There's no way that I as a member of this Assembly would ask a minister of the Crown to start planning at this time to have in his or her 1983-84 budget a commitment for 100-odd million dollars for forest fire protection. That would be illogical. You don't expect major forest fires to break out in this province on a year-to-year basis.

Mr. Speaker, in a few minutes I'm going to get back to the forest fire situation, because I do want to commend the government and the minister involved for being in a position to react when the MLA for the area came to him and said: look, I've got a town that's going to disappear in a matter of hours unless the government is prepared to commit resources by way of manpower, dollars and, most important of all, commitment in terms of an attitude, to say, let's get on with the job; let's put the fire out; let's worry about the public expenditure after we resolve the problem. Certainly there was no need to ask the Assembly to come back, to have all 79 MLAs come from all parts of Alberta and to sit in the Assembly and debate how we should deal with the forest fire situation in the town of Swan Hills. The town would have been gone, and heaven forbid that very unfortunate scenario ever having occurred. Fortunately, because the government does care, it's in a position to do some things.

I think that any time we talk about special warrants, we have to be specific. It's one thing for an hon. member to stand up and say, that's really not a very good expenditure, without giving specific examples of what is or isn't a good expenditure. As in all things in life, we tend to be very subjective about our evaluation and analysis of the various items we want to take a look at. When we take a look at special warrants in the last fiscal year we really have specifics for, 1981-82, it's important to take a look at all the special warrants expended, to look at the various areas, to comprehend and recognize that they're essentially very important reactive people programs.

When you talk about special warrants last year, 1981-82, I think you have to prioritize them. Of \$637 million in special warrants, the first one on the list is \$153 million for production assistance for beef cattle, sheep, and hogs, and feed freight assistance. Mr. Speaker, I was a member of this Assembly last fall — and I will be a member of this Assembly in the fall of 1983, because I am a member of a government that cares. Almost on a day-to-day basis,

we heard comments from hon. members — at that time I was sitting on the other side of the House, so I could say "across the way"; but now I'm sitting geographically on the same side as my hon. colleagues are — saying, when is this government going to do something to help the hard-pressed beef producer, when is it going to get up, when is it going to make a decision, why aren't you doing something?

I don't have the comments of all my hon. colleagues who sit in the opposition, to really read their questions into *Hansard* again. But I've got to re-amplify it, because it's extremely important. They were raising these questions many months after this Assembly had approved the budget for fiscal 1981-82. How can an hon. member say, on the one hand, why don't you do something about that, if there are no funds in the budget to do it? Of course the only solution is by way of special warrant.

It's unfortunate that my hon. colleagues did not also mention, in any of the questions, that we're prepared to defend you when we have the debate on special warrants, four, five, or six months from now. You exercise the responsibility you as a government have, to deliver the program that we, as well as a lot of colleagues on the government side, are speaking on behalf of, and we will be prepared to stand up with you when that fateful day comes on April 1, 1982, when we debate Bill 203 once again, and say that special warrants are important. I haven't heard my hon. colleagues who sit on the opposition side say that. That is a bit unfortunate. You can't have it both ways. Where I come from, there's an old saying: you can't have your cake and eat it. This is clearly one example where some hon. gentlemen would appreciate having it.

Mr. Speaker, I just pointed out that first one. That's only example number one of very important people programs, where literally thousands of producers — and I'm really pleased that the Member for Edmonton Kingsway indicated this afternoon that 26,000 rural Albertans had submitted applications under the beef and lamb assistance program. When an urban member, from the middle of Edmonton, can have that empathy with his colleagues in rural Alberta and with the people of rural Alberta, I say we have a government that is most responsible, most empathetic, and that really knows what's going on.

Number two on the list of major special warrant expenditures in fiscal 1981-82 was an item I've already mentioned but want to repeat. It was the question of forest protection, an expenditure level of \$105,398,000. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker and all hon. members, that in the middle of July last year, I got a call from the mayor of Swan Hills. He said to me: Ken, Swan Hills is liable to disappear in a matter of hours because we've got a major forest fire going 6 or 7 miles away from the town; can you get here? I was there in an hour and 10 minutes. It usually takes an hour and 20 minutes if you follow the speed limits. I thought that was one case where I might go a little faster. I made it in an hour and 10 minutes. The mayor and I found a helicopter, provided by Alberta Forestry. We went up and took a look at the situation. In a matter of hours, there was a complete contingent of people — men and women at the provincial and municipal levels, who were huddling together in the offices of the town of Swan Hills, one, to evaluate what the forest fire situation was at that time and, two, to look at a disaster implementation plan that had already been looked at by municipal officials in conjunction with provincial officials, to say what steps we would follow.

Mr. Speaker, the one concern that not one of the

residents or members of the municipal council of Swan Hills had was the question: can we do this; where will the money come from? Thousands of acres were ablaze. It was 80 above and more. The humidity factor was very, very low. There was no rain, but winds always come from the north and the west in this part of Alberta. If members are familiar with the environment of Swan Hills, they know it sits literally at the top of a mountain in the centre of the province of Alberta. It's a complete misnomer for anybody to talk about the Swan Hills; they should talk about the Swan mountains. If Swan Hills was in any other province in the country, it would be referred to as a mountainous area.

All Canada knew of and followed the developments in the town of Swan Hills on almost a day-by-day basis through July, much of August, and early into September. The flames came within 6 miles of Swan Hills. They came within 5 miles of Swan Hills. Disaster protection areas were built all around the town of Swan Hills. An embankment area was levelled and cleared. Trees were destroyed and taken out to ensure a fire blaze protective wall. Water was trucked in. Water trucks were held on stand-by. Every available piece of heavy rolling equipment in the countryside was mobilized to fight the war — the war of fire.

Crews were brought in from all parts of Alberta: excel-

lent, trained, native firefighters. You won't find a better group of firefighters anyplace in the world than the ones we have right here in the province of Alberta: some from other parts of the constituency of Barrhead, some from other parts of Alberta. They were there. Mr. Speaker, we won the war. The one thing that gave us great consolation in winning the war was the fact that we didn't have to worry that this government would not be there when we needed it to pay the bills, by way of special warrant. Our firefighters are paid. The merchants who supplied the groceries are paid. The small businesses that supplied the firefighting equipment, from hoses and nozzles to chain saws, are paid. The fire trucks are paid. Swan Hills survives.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, in view of the time I think I have to beg leave to adjourn the debate on this item.

MR. HORSMAN: It is not proposed that the Assembly sit this evening. By way of announcing tomorrow's business, I would advise the Assembly that it is proposed to move to Committee of Supply for the study of the estimates of the Department of Education and the Department of the Environment.

[At 5:30 p.m., on motion, the House adjourned to Friday at 10 a.m.]

