

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTATitle: **Monday, April 18, 1983 2:30 p.m.**

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

MR. PURDY: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon it's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and to hon. members of this Assembly a lady who served in this Assembly for 25 years. Mrs. Cornelia Wood was first elected to the Alberta Legislature in 1940 and retired from the Legislature in 1967. In her term as Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Stony Plain constituency, she also served as mayor of the town of Stony Plain for a couple of terms, from '54 to '55.

Mrs. Wood celebrated her 91st birthday on Thursday last week. At the present time, she's also honorary president of the Multicultural Centre at Stony Plain. Recently she wrote a book called *My Memories*. I'm going to file one of those today with the Legislature Library, and I also have a copy for the hon. Minister of Culture.

Mrs. Wood is accompanied today by Leona Hall, secretary of the Multicultural Centre in Stony Plain, and by Wayne Battle, the vice president. I ask the three to rise and receive the traditional welcome of this House.

head: **PRESENTING PETITIONS**

MR. STILES: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present the following petitions that have been received for private Bills:

1. the petition of the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute for the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute Amendment Act, 1983.
2. the petition of Mrs. Rose Landry for the Alexander La Fleur Minerals Title Act.
3. the petition of the Peace Hills General Insurance Company for the Edmonton Canadian Insurance Company Amendment Act, 1983.
4. the petition of the Koney Island Sporting Company (Limited) for the Koney Island Sporting Company (Limited) Continuation Act.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

Bill 45
Utilities Statutes
Amendment Act, 1983

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to introduce Bill No. 45, the Utilities Statutes Amendment Act, 1983.

The Bill would amend two statutes: the Gas Utilities Act and the Public Utilities Board Act. The Public Utilities Board Act amendment is in order to clarify the way in which expenses and payment of the expenses of the

Public Utilities Board and its members would be handled. There is a further amendment that applies to the two Acts. It enables the Public Utilities Board, in setting the fair return for a utility, to take into account work in progress in addition to work that's already been commissioned.

[Leave granted; Bill 45 read a first time]

Bill 46**Department of Housing Act**

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill No. 46, the Department of Housing Act.

This legislation is necessary in order to carry out the restructuring of the Department of Housing and the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services.

[Leave granted; Bill 46 read a first time]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, I'm tabling two reports by the office of the Auditor General. One is for the Metis Settlements Trust Fund, including the financial statements to March 31, 1982, and one is for the Special Areas Board, including financial statements for the year ended March 31, 1981.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the 1982 annual report of the Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table with the Assembly copies of a brochure entitled *The Facts on Canada's Gasoline Prices*. Recently produced by the government, this pamphlet illustrates revenue distribution from the sale of gasoline, as well as outlining the government's position with respect to the issue of crude oil price rollbacks. Commencing today and throughout the week, it will be mailed to journalists, government leaders, industry leaders, and other interested groups across the land.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, I wish to file the response to Question No. 151.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. ALEXANDER: Mr. Speaker, I request leave today to introduce to you, and through you to the Assembly, 21 grade 6 students from Rideau Park school in the constituency of Edmonton Whitemud. Accompanied by their teacher Mrs. Diane Gillespie and by parent Mrs. Jane Kim, they are located in the members gallery. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional welcome of the House.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, 30 grade 6 students from Winfield school. This is a special class in that I taught many of these students when substituting at Winfield school, so I have special pleasure in introducing them today. They are accompanied by teachers Leo Carigman and Susan Eliuk. I ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. PENGELLY: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce a group of 15 seniors from Spruce View and Markerville in the constituency of Innisfail. They are accompanied by group leader Mrs. Nielsen and by bus driver Richard Foesier. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, today it's my privilege to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, the third group from Cochrane. These are 70 young grade 8 students from the Manachaban junior high school. They are accompanied by their teacher and group leader Gaye Bonnet, teachers Diane Webster, Rose Haney, and Paul Sutcliffe, and driver John Kelly. I might add that Manachaban means "place of broken arrows". They're sitting in the public gallery. Would the members welcome them.

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to introduce to you, and through you to members of the House, a distinguished fourth-generation Calgarian, the general manager of Billingsgate fish market, the oldest family-owned business in the city of Calgary. Inasmuch as I'm the representative for Calgary Buffalo, I'm pleased to draw to the attention of the Minister of Agriculture the discovery of a new product, the buffalo fish. Members, I'm not going to table this in the House, because I'd like to consume it later. Until then, it's my privilege to introduce to you Mr. Frank Fallwell, general manager of Billingsgate fish market.

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. leader, but perhaps we could stop the clock on the question period for a moment. Last Thursday, I intervened when the hon. leader of the Independents was asking a question concerning some flooding of some land west of here, I believe. At the time, I was unable to recall a citation in support of that intervention. Since then, I have been unable to find such a citation, although I still think I read one within the last two or three years.

I must acknowledge that such questions have been asked from time to time in the past, and such a limitation would probably introduce something novel into the question period. I therefore express my regrets to the hon. leader of the Independents.

Coal Industry

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the hon. Premier. It's with respect to the major Tumbler Ridge coal development in northeastern B.C., just across the Alberta border. In view of the impact of Tumbler Ridge on coal markets for Alberta producers and given the Premier's comment last Friday about working co-operatively within the federal system, can the Premier outline to the House what discussions, if any, took place with the government of British Columbia prior to the decision of that government to proceed with Tumbler Ridge?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I'd have to refer that question to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Mr. Speaker, I advise the hon. member that I have no personal knowledge of the discussions that took place between the respective governments in respect of that particular project. I would be happy to take the question as notice and determine if there had been any discussions involving officials of the Department of Energy and Natural Resources and, further, whether or not discussions occurred prior to my assuming the responsibilities of the portfolio.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. I'll direct this question directly to the minister, with respect to his responsibilities now. What assessment has the Department of Energy and Natural Resources made of the impact of Tumbler Ridge, but more particularly the Japanese investment in the project, as it relates to the purchase intentions of the major Japanese steel consortium? Has there been any evaluation of that on the markets for Alberta coal producers?

MR. ZAOZIRNY: As I indicated, Mr. Speaker, I will have to take the specifics of that question as notice. I should hasten to inquire of the hon. member that if there is a more specific question that relates to the Alberta situation, I'd be most pleased to hear it.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Given the coal policy of 1976, is the minister saying to the House that he would have to check the record to determine whether or not there's any ongoing evaluation of the impact of a \$2.5 billion dollar project on Alberta producers?

MR. SPEAKER: Once again, the hon. member is repeating an answer.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, then let me put the question very directly to the hon. Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. What is the position of the government of Alberta today with respect to the coal policy of 1976, as it relates to "some Government adjustment of the scheduling of projects" that may be necessary, given market situation. Given this policy, has there been any review of the need for the western provinces — but particularly British Columbia and Alberta — to work together before opening new major mine properties that may affect others in existence?

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that the province is periodically involved in discussions with the other western provinces with respect to an industry overview. I should go on to say that as the hon. member would undoubtedly be aware, at the present time the Alberta coal producers, amongst others, are involved in discussions with Japanese purchasers in respect of contracts for the upcoming term, in relation to price and volumes to be purchased.

We adhere to the coal policy that was put in place some time ago. There have been some discussions with industry in respect of upgrading that policy, and those matters will be assessed in the months ahead. We believe the appropriate role for this government is to ensure a proper business climate within which decisions can be made by the private sector to proceed or otherwise with the projects they have in mind.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Given reports that Japanese purchasers

are in fact looking elsewhere, what contingency plans has the government of Alberta in place for assisting McIntyre-Porcupine in terms of renegotiating their contract, which expires on October 1, 1984? In particular, has there been any assessment of the situation of McIntyre on the community of Grande Cache, vis-à-vis the impact of Tumbler Ridge on that project?

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Mr. Speaker, on a previous occasion in the House, I indicated to the Assembly that there had been a specific request by the McIntyre Mines organization for some government involvement with respect to renewal of a contract. As a matter of fact, we tabled in the Assembly a copy of the letter by my predecessor outlining the specifics of that matter.

Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, it is the position of this government that the negotiations between buyer and seller ought to be conducted by them and without undue government interference. The McIntyre Mines situation was one where there had been a specific request by that organization and, because of that very specific request, the government did involve itself to the extent that occurred in that case.

I might say that my colleague the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs may wish to comment additionally with respect to the Grande Cache situation in particular.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Is the minister in a position to respond to concerns which have been expressed about the market outlook for Grande Cache coal? Has there been any evaluation of that outlook? And has there been any discussion specifically between the government of Alberta and McIntyre — and I relate the question to the first question. In view of the Japanese investment in Tumbler Ridge, has this government not assessed a danger that the Japanese importers will choose Tumbler Ridge coal as opposed to McIntyre-Porcupine coal produced in Grande Cache?

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Mr. Speaker, the evidence to date with respect to purchases of Canadian coal by Japanese purchasers indicates a continuing desire on the part of the Japanese to purchase coal from coal-producing properties throughout Canada. There has been a renegotiation by a number of the Canadian producers of coal products, including Alberta producers. In fact, I should mention that it appears the Canadian companies have actually done better than the Australian and U.S. producers in negotiating price in a very difficult market, which does exist today.

Mr. Speaker, I can add that I have been personally involved in meeting with representatives of the coal industry. We have discussed the world coal situation. It's clear to all that in the same fashion as exists with other energy sources, some softness presently exists in the world market. The individual companies are working very hard at maintaining and expanding their markets where possible, and I know that is very much the case with the operators of the McIntyre mine.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Given the softness of the market that the minister indicated and the coal policy of 1976 that he and I alluded to, what mechanism is in place to assure that there is orderly development of these projects, so we don't get one mine opening up and another one closing down because of the market situation? Has this government development any mechanism, particularly in concert with British Columbia

but to lesser extents with other western provinces, to assure there is some orderly development of the coal industry?

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Mr. Speaker, it appears the hon. member is once again advocating a massive government intervention into the private sector. [interjections] We have long taken the view that the best decisions as to the viability or otherwise of specific projects can be made by the private sector, and that continues to be our view.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER: Might this be the final supplementary on this topic.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary to the minister is certainly not argumentative. But in view of the fact that substantial public funds are involved in all these projects — \$1.4 billion from British Columbia in the Tumbler Ridge project — what mechanism is there to synchronize public spending vis-a-vis these projects so that we don't inadvertently open one mine just to see another mine, and the public investment in that mine, lost?

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we're re-tracing ground that has already been covered. In the normal approval process with respect to a particular mine, there is of course the requirement of a preliminary disclosure and, ultimately, a cabinet approval. But I hasten to add that that approval has to do with matters of the environment and other concerns of that nature. The decision-making process as to whether an investment is appropriate or otherwise is, and ought to remain with, the private sector.

MR. NOTLEY: Even if there's public money involved.

Crowsnest Pass Freight Rates

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the second question to the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. It's with respect to this very expensive brochure on the Crow rate put out by the federal government. Does this government intend to make representation to the federal government and back up the position of the federal Conservative Transport critic, condemning this kind of wasteful expenditure of federal funds at a time of deficits?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I haven't had the opportunity of reading the document in question. Furthermore, matters relating to representations on the Crow rate have been and continue to be — and properly so — the responsibility of my colleagues the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Economic Development.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. Will it be the intention of the government of Alberta to make formal representation to Ottawa, urging the federal government to comply with the suggestion of the hon. federal Member for Vegreville that if money is made available for this kind of brochure, then money should also be made available to farmers who are in favor of retaining the Crow rate?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I've had the privilege of looking at the document. Being that how they wish to send out information brochures is a federal responsibility, I would say that any representation with respect to that issue should be made through the federal MPs to the minister himself.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Once the Bill is introduced, is the government of Alberta going to make representation to any federal committee studying it? Will it be the intention of this government to formally communicate to the federal committee the views expressed in the House on March 11, I believe?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, it's our intention to review that issue immediately upon the Bill being introduced in the House, since it has not been introduced yet and the document that was put out by the federal government this past weekend is a statement of their policy and not a statement of exactly what's in the Bill. Until we have the opportunity to review that, we'll make that decision at that time.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Given the fact that both the Manitoba and Saskatchewan legislatures have unanimously passed resolutions opposing the Pepin plan, will the government of Alberta now review its position on this particular matter?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, on an issue that's this important, we're always reviewing and looking at the right option to protect the producers in this province for any future changes. Of course, we are not making representations the way Manitoba and Saskatchewan have. That is their right. There's a different mix of agriculture in those provinces. We have responded in a policy statement that's very definitive and is supportive, with certain caveats, and that's how our position remains.

Odyssey Project

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Associate Minister of Public Lands and Wildlife. I would like to know if the minister is in a position to indicate if there's going to be an extension on the conditional lease cancellation clause of the Odyssey resort complex. In light of the fact that the first cancellation has already expired, possibly the minister can indicate to the Assembly if there is going to be an additional extension of that lease.

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, that specific Odyssey project is under review, and the request from the owners of the Odyssey project to have it extended is at present being considered by the department. They have been held up for quite some time by legal action. The commitment to fulfil, that they would commence construction prior to this year, is being asked to be given a longer time frame, due to the legal cases that were at hand. The decision on whether or not we are going to extend the lease will be made within a short while.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Can the minister indicate if public meetings have been held in the area to indicate what the environmental impact would be on the area? What assessment has the

minister's department done as to those environmental impacts?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, quite a number of concerns have been raised over the years. On looking at the file, I understand this goes back quite a number of years. There is consideration being given to the environmental impacts in the area, prior to and after the original licence was issued.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Is the minister in a position to indicate what the new studies have shown as to the effect on ungulates in the area. This complex would be right in the centre of their migratory paths. Is the minister in a position to indicate that study?

MR. SPARROW: I would have to take that under advisement, Mr. Speaker. I haven't seen that specific study. It hasn't been brought to my attention since I've taken over the office.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Is the minister in a position to indicate if the project would require the formation of a new town? If so, what involvement would the government of Alberta have in the establishment of a new town in conjunction with the complex?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, I would have to take that under advisement. As I said earlier, the total file has not been brought to my attention, other than the extension of one part of the contract. I will take that under advisement and get back to you.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of the Environment. In light of the fact that the Eastern Slopes policy for this area has zoned this as general recreational land and not for a facility such as the one we are discussing, can the minister indicate if he is looking at changing that zoning? Or will it proceed under the original zoning plan?

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, with regard to zoning in the Eastern Slopes, that responsibility is with the resource evaluation and assessment division of the Department of Energy and Natural Resources. I couldn't respond to that question, except perhaps to suggest that the hon. Minister of Energy and Natural Resources or the associate minister may be in a position to respond.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a final question to the Premier. In light of the fact that new facilities will possibly be built in the Kananaskis area for the Olympic games, has the government had an opportunity to assess if these increased recreational facilities will be needed in the Nordegg or the Cline River areas?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I have difficulty with the question because it seems the question is more related to the decision of developers to risk their funds in a development of that nature. It is a private-sector development, and it seems to me the test of that question is whether or not the private sector is prepared to undertake that risk. So having said that, I think I would prefer to await the response from the Associate Minister of Public Lands and Wildlife on the questions that were earlier asked by the Member for Clover Bar.

Classroom Monitoring

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct this question to the Minister of Education. In view of the fact that the ATA cannot decertify a teacher, can the minister advise the Assembly what action he has taken to remove Mr. Keegstra from the educational system? Will he take away Mr. Keegstra's teaching certificate?

MR. KING: The question is under consideration at the present time, Mr. Speaker. I might add that although the hon. member is correct in the narrow sense that the Alberta Teachers' Association cannot take away a certificate from a certificated teacher in the province, he is absolutely wrong in the more general sense. It is a well-established practice — and in fact is virtually the only occasion upon which a certificate is taken by the minister — that it is done upon the recommendation of the Alberta Teachers' Association. I have not received any recommendation from the Alberta Teachers' Association that Mr. Keegstra's certificate should be rescinded.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. Is it not true that the minister has the final say in decertification?

MR. KING: Yes, Mr. Speaker. What I am saying is that as a matter of practice, the minister has not considered removing a certificate except upon the recommendation of the Alberta Teachers' Association. We are faced here with a situation in which there appears to be more than enough justification for the certificate to be removed by the minister of his own volition. The question is, how might this be done without relying upon the recommendation of the Alberta Teachers' Association? That is under consideration.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Assembly of any other cases in the province similar to Mr. Keegstra's?

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, not that we are aware of. If we were aware of them, we would obviously be dealing with them in precisely the same way this case was recently dealt with.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. Can the minister advise what monitoring mechanisms are in place to ensure that curriculum guidelines are being followed by teachers and that classrooms are not used to promote anti-Semitism or racial discrimination?

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, there is no monitoring system in place at the present time, and there has not been since the amendments to the School Act that were instituted in 1971 by the previous government. At that time, the school inspectors were done away with. Notwithstanding an editorial in a prominent local newspaper, there are no Department of Education school inspectors. The premise of the 1971 legislation was that monitoring could effectively be undertaken by local school boards and by the Alberta Teachers' Association, or by both of them together.

The question having been asked, I would like to make it clear that what is purported to have happened in Eckville classrooms is unacceptable. It is unacceptable to the local school board, the Department of Education, and the government of Alberta. There is no question that it is unacceptable. The question is whether or not what is

purported to have happened in the classroom did in fact happen.

We come, then, to some fairly important questions of natural justice as understood in this province. The question is: did the things that are said to have happened, happen? We go through a process that culminates in a hearing before a board of reference. That process is designed to ensure that natural justice is extended to the parties in the situation. In my view, Mr. Speaker, as soon as the circumstances became known the local county, as an agent of the Department of Education, acted. It acted expeditiously and appropriately. It put into motion a process that culminated in a board of reference. The teacher was given every opportunity that natural justice demands. The end of it was a finding that I as minister support. The facts having been substantiated, the judge, acting as a board of reference, concluded — as would this government — that that was unacceptable behavior and justified the termination of the teaching contract of the teacher. The system worked, Mr. Speaker. It is true that speed was sacrificed to certainty and justice but, in the end, certainty and justice prevailed.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. Because of the Keegstra case and the future possibilities, can the minister inform the Assembly as to the standards or qualifications needed to establish a Category 4 private school? I ask this specifically because I want to know whether it would be possible for a school in this category to promote anti-Semitism or racial discrimination.

MR. KING: It would not be possible, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to draw the attention of the hon. member to the preface of the elementary program of studies, which is documentation of Alberta Education.

Parents and other groups in society clearly expect teachers to encourage the growth of certain positive attitudes in students.

"Positive attitudes in students", Mr. Speaker, not negative attitudes. One of these is said to be tolerance, which is defined in this way:

... sensitive to other points of view, but able to reject extreme or unethical positions, free from undue bias and prejudice.

Those, among others, are the written statements of the expectations of Alberta Education. They apply to Category 4 schools as well as to public schools or to Category 1 schools.

What is revealed is the need to reconsider monitoring classroom and teacher activity. I might remind hon. members that about 10 days ago, in speaking to the annual representative assembly of the Alberta Teachers' Association, I told them they might expect that the focus of concern of the department this year will be with respect to the issue of teacher monitoring and teacher evaluation.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question.

MR. SPEAKER: Might this be the hon. member's final supplementary, followed by the hon. Member for Clover Bar.

MR. MARTIN: In view of the fact that we don't seem to have a monitoring system in the public [schools] at this particular time, how does he propose to monitor the class 4 private schools?

MR. KING: It is an anomaly of the 1971 School Act that at the present time, more monitoring takes place of private schools than public schools. Perhaps that's how we would expect it to be. Nevertheless, private schools are monitored annually by the Department of Education; public schools are not.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Education on the topic we're discussing. I'm sure we're all appalled at the information that came out. But the question is a two-edged sword, Mr. Minister. The question I'd like to address to the minister is to make sure that our teachers don't become mindless robots following the curriculum. Maybe the minister can enlarge a little more on just how much freedom there is in the classroom for the teacher to be staying within the curriculum and still having sufficient latitude to express different points of view to the students and let them make some decisions on their own?

MR. SPEAKER: We're getting into a topic of pretty general discussion when a member asks a minister what goes on in the classrooms of the province. If the hon. minister wishes, perhaps he might deal with it briefly.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to make it so he can indicate to the Assembly what monitoring the Department of Education has, as to following the curriculum.

MR. KING: Since the 1971 amendments to the School Act, Mr. Speaker, the expectation has been that the curriculum, certain general directives of Alberta Education — and I would include our policy statement on the treatment of controversial issues — and professional oversight would constitute monitoring of the system. In other words, we have relied upon teachers to follow the curriculum. We have relied upon them, in dealing with controversial issues, to respect the intentions of the controversial issues policy. And we have relied upon professionals and the professional association to have oversight of professional activity in the classroom. The hon. member makes the valid point that we are attempting to find and maintain a very delicate balance point, because I do not want automatons in the classroom.

What has been revealed is a very, very serious problem. If we had any reason to believe that that kind of activity was being duplicated in other classrooms in the province, we would be morally obligated to attend to the problem by whatever means are necessary. That is unacceptable behavior. As I said in response to the first question, what might be done is under consideration.

Physicians' Salaries

MR. SZWENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. It's in respect of doctors' fees and salaries and how they contribute to the soaring health costs of the province. The 1982 Hospitals and Medical Care annual report listed an average salary of \$93,000 for general practitioners in the province. Could the minister explain — and I know it's difficult — how two unnamed general practitioners were able to bill Alberta health care for approximately half a million dollars each? That is about 500 per cent above the average fees charged.

MR. RUSSELL: On this kind of issue, Mr. Speaker, I've always found it very difficult to deal in averages, for

obvious reasons. The incomes at the very bottom and top of the scale are monitored from time to time, and any that look unusual are referred to the College of Physicians and Surgeons for what is called an assessment of their income or practice profile. There is not much I can add beyond that. In the cases of the two doctors who were referred to, I believe the college is aware of them and is assured that those doctors are practising good medicine. But it does go back to the point made earlier in the House this session, that those services are available on demand. If the practitioner is there to give those services in a satisfactory way, the public of Alberta is obliged to pay for them.

MR. SZWENDER: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I've just done some brief calculations, and in order for a doctor to charge half a million dollars — I've been somewhat generous in my calculations: 12 hours a day, five days a week, four weeks a month, 12 months. I know these figures may not take everything into account, but at \$20 per visit, that adds up to about 100 patients per day. That means the doctors took no vacations, no potty breaks, no lunch breaks; nothing else. Based on these calculations, could the minister assess what quality of care the patients of these doctors may be receiving in these patient assembly lines?

MR. NOTLEY: Very expensive.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, maybe I should let the disciple of the medicare system over there who is chattering away, explain that kind of thing that happens. [interjections]

I think it's overly simplistic to go through an exercise like the hon. member just did, but it's for that very reason that these income profiles are done. If the computers turn up billings that look to be aberrations of some kind, they are referred to the college.

For example, last year it showed up that a chiropractor had billed \$450,000 worth of chiropractic treatments in nine months. So if he went the last quarter of the year, he'd be getting \$600,000 as a private chiropractor. One wonders how many manipulations you can make in a year. [interjections] That case was referred to the Canadian Chiropractic Association. They investigated their member and assured the government that the patients of that practitioner — and this applies to the others who have been brought up — were satisfied with the services they were getting. If people go to a practitioner in numbers that generate those kinds of incomes, I suppose the doctor must be doing something right.

MR. NOTLEY: Making money.

MR. SZWENDER: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Considering that these two individuals are earning half a million dollars at direct expense to the people of this province, when the Premier of this province earns only \$70,000 . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: He knows what he's worth.

MR. SZWENDER: . . . is the minister prepared to undertake an investigation into these highly questionable charges?

MR. RUSSELL: I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. The gross income varies when the doctor's expenses are netted

out of that, of course, and those expenses vary considerably among the various kinds of disciplines. We know there are overheads ranging from perhaps 20 to 60 per cent of gross, depending on the nature of the doctor's practice. I think in fairness to the doctors, we should say that the net income is probably much less than those gross figures.

The only assurance I can give the member is that we do watch those income and claim profiles. We refer any that look unusual to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which has three members of the general public as lay members on its board. We also do the same thing with respect to doctors practising extra billing.

MR. SZWENDER: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister please find out whether on top of the half a million dollars charged to Alberta health care, these two doctors also extra billed their patients, which would bring their incomes far in excess of half a million dollars?

MR. RUSSELL: Yes, I could undertake to get that information.

MR. SZWENDER: Last supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Followed by a supplementary by the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. SZWENDER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his patience and concern. Since these two particular individuals seem to have qualities enabling them to walk on water, could the minister take the position of publicly revealing the names of these doctors . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Hon. members know there is considerable latitude in the Assembly, and there is also absolute privilege in regard to what is said in the Assembly. But I think we should be very careful in using that privilege, because on occasion a remark may reflect unfavorably on a person outside the Assembly and perhaps be taken as a condemnation, without that person having received a hearing.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question to the minister is with respect to the review process, where these profiles are examined by the college. Has there been any case where refunds have been made to Alberta health care? Is there any policy in place where that could occur? Or is it simply a matter that where the college finds evidence of an expensive profile, it instructs the member to reassess future billings?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that the assessments are done on two different criteria. First of all, as a result of the appeal committee that's in place, the ones dealing with extra billing generally have resulted in refunds to the patient concerned. Secondly, the general claims profiles done by the college from time to time are done in order to assess the style or state of the practice of the doctor to make sure a doctor isn't taking on too much work, which would lessen the quality of service that goes to the patient. So it wouldn't result in a refund being given to past patients, but it certainly could result in changes to the habits of practice of that particular doctor.

Transportation of Handicapped Students

MR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address my question to the Minister of Education. Is the Department of Education contemplating changes with respect to transportation grants to school districts for the purpose of transporting severely handicapped students?

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, there has been a recent change that affects a few severely handicapped students. I have asked the department to change the regulations to provide financial support for the movement of severely handicapped students from the school to a work-experience site. Some of these students are involved in learning experiences in work places throughout the city. If transportation is a problem in getting to and from the work place, we will provide financial assistance for that.

MR. PAPROSKI: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister comment on when these proposed changes would come into effect?

MR. KING: If not sooner, we'll say April 15.

Racial Discrimination

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour, responsible for the Alberta Human Rights Commission. Is the minister in receipt of a report by two University of Calgary sociologists commissioned by the National Black Coalition, which indicates that some 25 per cent of blacks in Calgary experience job discrimination, 32 per cent experience some form of discrimination in renting or buying a house, and 43 per cent feel that discrimination has increased over the past three years?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the existence of such an alleged report, but I have not received such a report nor, to my knowledge, has the office of the Alberta Human Rights Commission.

I should say that for a different reason, I recently had occasion to check the number of complaints which would seem to indicate discrimination, or a change in the amount of discrimination, that are processed by the Alberta Human Rights Commission. For the information of hon. members, for 11 months of the fiscal year 1983 compared to 11 months for the preceding fiscal year, I believe three fewer complaints have been laid.

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. In view of the seriousness of the conclusions, would the minister indicate if he will request the Alberta Human Rights Commission to review this report, with a view to determining if any public or private sector action might be initiated to mitigate the situation?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, not only would I be pleased to review it, if I can obtain it, but the Alberta Human Rights Commission would be equally interested in reviewing it. I remind all hon. members that the Human Rights Commission does try to carry on a public consultation on such matters, as was evidenced by the public portion of their meeting last week in Calgary, in which they held discussions with the Calgary Immigrant Society.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

head: COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

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

Department of Education

MR. CHAIRMAN: I understand the minister would like to make some brief comments.

MR. KING: Mr. Chairman, your understanding is partly correct.

I'd like to begin by expressing my appreciation for the fact that we have an opportunity to consider the estimates of Alberta Education at this time. I hope and expect that participation from all members will be sufficient to satisfy their curiosity about education and to confirm the conviction that we have a good system of education in this province.

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

Mr. Chairman, since we are considering the estimates, I would like to make remarks about three closely related issues. Briefly, the first is the current economic situation that underlies the fiscal policy of the government, the second is the perspective I bring to my task as Minister of Education, and the third is the estimates as a manifestation of government policy.

Dealing first with the current economic situation and the government's fiscal policy, I can only repeat what my colleagues have said on other occasions. We are in the midst of a deep and persistent recession. It appears to be caused by two quite different conditions. First, we are living beyond our means. We have unreasonable expectations. Most important, we have deluded ourselves into believing that we need everything we want. Mr. Chairman, I don't accept that we need everything we want, either individually or in our institutions. I think that is a reality we must come to grips with. Similarly, the fact is that on the basis of performance these past 15 years, some part of the discretionary component of the income of many people is an unearned increment. Its loss may reduce our standard of consumption, but it doesn't necessarily reduce our standard of living.

The second phenomenon that contributes to our condition is that our economy, locally, nationally, and internationally, is undergoing massive structural change. In these circumstances, the government of this province is hopeful but I think not yet optimistic. We plan and act on the basis of hope. Our hope is for revitalization. But by revitalization we do not mean recovery of the status quo of 1978-79. We will not see the future by looking behind us. The way out of these economic circumstances will be found by discipline and new initiatives.

Nowhere is this more evident than in trying to overcome inflation and unemployment. Mr. Chairman, the psychology that the statements "I'll get mine" and "I'm all right, Jack" represent expresses our dishonesty with ourselves. They are the root of our debilitating malaise.

We've been getting beyond our means for most of 15 years. The time of reckoning is here. As a community, we have to give.

The annual rate of inflation for this province is projected to be less than 8 per cent in the year 1983. By year's end, the annual rate is expected to be less than 6 per cent. In these circumstances, it is disappointing that so many people with secure incomes, so many people who claim to recognize that we have been living beyond our means, still demand 5 to 8 per cent salary increases. I'm sure the farmers of Spirit River-Fairview are envious, as are the senior citizens of Edmonton Norwood, the unemployed, the underemployed, those who have taken a cut in pay, and those whose businesses have closed down.

Today's economic community is extremely complex. Decisions are made throughout the community by three levels of government, by unions, by hundreds of thousands of employers, and by each of us individually as consumers and citizens. The system has never been in perfect harmony or balance and never will be. If we take the position that we will not do what needs to be done unless and until everyone else does their bit, we abdicate our moral position and contribute to continued decline.

Whether or not it is easy, we are obliged to do what we can, where we are, whether or not we are joined in the effort by others. Ralf Dahrendorf, the outgoing director of the London School of Economics and, I might add, not a Conservative, has said:

Today, the distribution of wealth makes it impossible for the public sector to be rich.

That is true, even in Alberta. Our fiscal policy, Mr. Chairman, recognizes the reality and dictates that the next year will bring even more, perhaps even more difficult, choices.

What does this mean for education? Let me digress for just a moment, Mr. Chairman, and say how much I appreciate the Premier's decision that I should remain as Minister of Education. It is 20 years since anyone has held this portfolio for more than four years, and I see enormous opportunities in the four years ahead. I love what I'm doing. I respect the people I work with, especially classroom teachers. I believe that a lot of very good work is being done, always because of the people involved and sometimes in spite of the system they work in. In my view, Alberta has the finest educational system in Canada, probably the finest educational system in North America. It is the product of many factors. It is something of which we can often take pride. Nevertheless, we can transpose Socrates' words and say that the unexamined educational system is not worth operating.

I'd like to say some things this afternoon about the perspective that I bring to my responsibilities. On examination, I believe that education is the most important thing a community does. Without education, there is no community. Education is the means by which a community comes into existence and by which a community is maintained. By one means or another, every community must pass on three things to youngsters and newcomers: the means of communication, the knowledge of the use of the tools of the community, and the values or attitudes of the community. Communications, skills, and attitudes: this is what education is all about. Without these things there is no community.

I believe the child is, or should be, the focus of education — not the teacher, not the administrator, not the Minister of Education. The child is the focus of education. At the same time, it is important to say that education is not for the child alone. It is true that education must serve the interests of the child. It is equally true that education must serve the interests of the community. Education is not viable, in fact it is destruc-

tive, when it operates at either extreme. We do not need a system that caters to the autonomous child, another name for the spoiled brat. Neither can we survive a system that caters to the strong community that becomes the totalitarian community of eastern Europe. Balance is required between the interests of the child and the interests of the community.

In any event, it is important to acknowledge that the process this whole system is engaged in exists for the child and the community. They don't exist for the institution. Political control and direction is essential, but that doesn't make the politicians of this Assembly or local trustees owners. We are trustees.

In the process of education and in the school, the role of the classroom teacher is critical. What happens in the classroom is what counts. Then, from an institutional point of view, what the principal says and does by way of support for the classroom teacher is also critical. What is it that we want to see happen in the classroom? I think it's fair to say that we're looking for five things. We want to treat children with respect. We want to encourage children to know themselves. We want to encourage in children an awareness of what lies outside themselves. We want to encourage a sense of community, a sense of relationship beyond themselves, and a sense of responsibility. We want to encourage self-esteem, self-confidence, and a sense of personal effectiveness.

Of these five objectives, only the first — to treat children with respect — is exclusively in our control or in the control of the classroom teacher. It is always possible to treat others with respect. The other objectives, however, are of a different order. We pursue them indirectly. We deal with knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These are the three concerns of formal education.

They're generally ranked as I have just done: knowledge, most important; followed by the development of skills; followed by the development of attitudes. Perhaps the order should be reversed in this day and age. Formerly, information was ranked highest, because the need for it was greatest and it was relatively less accessible. Skills and values were pervasive in the community. Information was not so easily available. On the other hand, information is almost universally accessible today. It is skills and attitudes that are relatively inaccessible or fragile.

However we rank them, we're dealing with knowledge, skills, and attitudes. We can't force them on children. We can't pour them by a funnel into the heads of children. We can expose children to them. We can pour them over children, hoping that they will soak in. Preferably, we can enthuse, inspire, and motivate children. But the will to education — unlike conditioning, with which it is sometimes confused — lies within the learner.

What lies within the learner today? I am concerned, Mr. Chairman, that out of an excess of love for our children, we run the risk of destroying them mentally and spiritually. We love our children, and we don't want them to be hurt. So as much as we can, we insulate them from anything in which they might fail. We insulate them from being hurt by failing. We have made "to fail" a synonym for "to be a failure". So, for example, students and others are afraid of evaluation. The fear of failing undermines the basis of intelligent risk-taking. Where no one knows failure, no one knows success. Secondly, out of a concern that no one should suffer wrongly at the hands of any other, we consistently depreciate the idea of personal responsibility and replace it with the idea of responsibility lodged in the system.

The outcome of all this is children who are afraid to try

because they are afraid to fail, children afraid to assume personal responsibility, and children so convinced that the system will act responsibly toward them and all others that they are unable, on any occasion, to fight the system. I believe that in spite of all the good in the system today — or perhaps because of what is good in the system today — we must look to change where it is required, for now and for the future, for the community as well as for education. Education is a part of the community; it is not apart from the community. What we require is a process and an institution that we intend to be human, positive, reliable, accessible, responsive, and responsible.

What are the roles of the department and the government in all this? I think it's worth while to observe that we all belong simultaneously to several different communities. They surround us like concentric circles. We're part of a family, a neighborhood, a municipality — or, for our purposes, a school district — a province, and a country. Decision-making and action on decisions occur in each of these communities. From time to time, for many different reasons, it is decided that decisions formerly made at one level in one of these communities should now be made in another community at another level. Over time, there is centralization, moving the decision-making process in one direction and, decentralization, moving the decision-making process in another direction.

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

On behalf of this government, I take the position that, as much as possible, decisions should be made and implemented by the people who will have to live with the consequences of them. Let them be made as close as possible to the grass roots. As a corollary of this, I support the right of people to fail. I believe in choice, the competition of ideas as well as of products. I believe the department and the minister should prefer to lead by example. This is the perspective from which the budget is drawn.

Education isn't remote from the rest of the community. We can't preach restraint for others and largesse for ourselves. Mr. Chairman, the estimates before the House reflect an appropriate balance between the need for the careful stewardship of resources and the need to maintain the high quality of education that is offered to and expected by Albertans. In my view, this budget will maintain Alberta's position as the number one supporter of education in Canada on a per capita basis, on a per pupil basis, and on other perhaps more important bases than the financial ones.

But it is the finances of education we are considering this afternoon. The financial investment represented by this budget is sufficient to maintain the system without any loss of quality. In fact in 1983-84, I look forward to qualitative improvements. These improvements will be effected in two ways: first, by emphasizing accountability and evaluation; second, by the extension and improvement of existing services.

In the fall of 1980, the government announced that a broad range of evaluation programs would be introduced throughout the province. In our view, evaluation is an essential part of life and of education. Evaluation serves a constructive purpose, and it is developmental. The evaluation program we are in the midst of developing will have five aspects. We will be involved in student, teacher, program, school, and system evaluation. Each of these aspects will have a number of programs. Student evalua-

tion, for example, is not exclusively related to the comprehensive examinations so much discussed in recent days. Student evaluation will involve initial assessment, diagnostic testing, what educators call normative testing, and summative testing. The intention is to complement the most important evaluation of all, the evaluation that is done by the classroom teacher.

I should emphasize that we are not preoccupied with evaluation. We have no illusions that it is a panacea, that by means of evaluation we will cure all the challenges. We have no unreasonable expectations, and we make no unreasonable claims. We simply believe that evaluation and testing provide a basis for informed, constructive improvement.

Other activities aimed at improving accountability and evaluation include a review of the School Act, a major study of the secondary school program in the province, a study of private schools in Alberta, and continued simplification and deregulation of existing grants programs. We are also going to extend and improve services. This summer the Correspondence School will be relocated to a major new facility in Barrhead, and innovative new programs will be further experimented with. Funds for special education programs are being increased by 22 per cent. Decision-making is being decentralized to regional offices.

Mr. Chairman, let me conclude with these remarks. The people of this province, both locally and provincially, have historically been strong supporters of high-quality, universally accessible education. We have the finest system in Canada, and this budget will allow us to further improve it. I am proud to be the Minister of Education. I am proud to stand in this House as the advocate of education in these exciting, challenging times.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I certainly welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate on the Department of Education estimates in the Committee of Supply this afternoon. I certainly was pleased to note that the minister mentioned the good farmers in my constituency of Spirit River-Fairview. It just so happens that in a moment or two I'll get to that in a more detailed way, because I want to draw to the minister's attention this afternoon some of their observations at a very well organized meeting.

Mr. Chairman, I think there are a number of issues. Perhaps I might begin by raising certain questions with respect to retired teachers in this province. I'm talking about teachers who retired prior to 1970. I think the question of providing additional funding to supplement the pensions of those teachers who retired prior to 1970 and who were not permitted to count service before 30 for pension purposes is now before the social planning committee of cabinet. When he responds this afternoon during the first part of our discussion of his estimates, I'd like to have a response from the minister as to how long these retired teachers are going to have to wait before a decision is made on that matter.

I note that my colleague raised this issue on April 7, and the minister in his answer of April 7 indicated that all members would have "to consider its implications carefully". Perhaps the minister might also keep in mind that we're dealing here with 957 former teachers affected by this change, the youngest of whom is now 73. So I raise that in the form of two questions for the minister, and I'd like the minister to take a few moments to bring the Assembly up to date to some degree on the government's

intentions on this matter.

Mr. Chairman, I raise that by saying that there's a certain personal interest in the issue. My mother was a teacher who started her teaching career in 1928 and, like quite a number of the people here this afternoon, went through the difficult years of the Depression. She was never able to retain any pension benefits because of the teaching pattern she had. She stopped teaching for a number of years when my brother and I were young and went back teaching in the 1950s. But many of her conferees went through those difficult years, and it seems to me that one of the things we have to look at, not only objectively but with some degree of compassion, is the situation of the retired teachers who made it possible to build a strong foundation for our education system.

I think we can see — especially those of us who went to one-room schools — a system today that has changed a good deal, and our children are fortunate because of the improvements made in the educational system. But no one can look at the change that has occurred without recognizing the very significant contribution of those pioneers in the system. I leave that matter for a response from the minister. My colleague will probably make several other observations about it during the course of his remarks.

The burden of my presentation this afternoon will be to deal with the question of education finance. As one reviews the budget, I don't think there is any doubt that this province has slammed the brakes on proper funding for education, no matter how the minister may attempt to alter the rude, crude, shocking provisions of the estimates with nice words. The fact of the matter is that this year we have a budget which is simply going to leave many school divisions in this province in a very serious situation.

The other day my colleague raised the question of how many settlements had occurred so far. It's our understanding that there have been four teachers' contracts signed this year out of — how many? — 150 separate and public divisions in this province. I have no doubt that we are going to see a very stormy and difficult year ahead as far as the collective bargaining process is concerned.

This brings me directly to those farmers of Spirit River-Fairview that the minister gratuitously referred to when he began his remarks this afternoon. As a result of a ratepayers revolt, if you like, a very large meeting was called last July in the town of Fairview, which attracted, as my memory recalls, something in the neighborhood of 200 people from the municipal district of Fairview and also from the town of Fairview. They were there to look at the cost of education in the Fairview school division.

Many of them came upset at the huge increase in supplementary requisition. But as a result of the debate that occurred for almost two hours, in which the trustees, to give them immense credit, attempted to argue what had occurred in the division — the huge increase in utility and fuel costs which were not properly covered by the minister's budget in that particular fiscal year. As a result of the discussion, by the end of the evening — I think it's probably fair to say that when the evening began, the most unpopular group of people in the entire community were the school trustees. But after they had had a chance to present their arguments, the meeting unanimously endorsed the position taken by the Alberta School Trustees' Association in terms of priorities, all of which, I regret to say, the government seems to have ignored in this particular budget. I'm going to go into those priorities in a little more detail.

Mr. Chairman, the fact of the matter is that in rural Alberta at this juncture, our divisions are facing a very serious problem. How are they going to operate their school bus fleets? Well, I look at the estimates and see that the minister is making available another 3.3 per cent for the rural transportation system. That not going to go very far, particularly when you look at the shape that many of these divisional fleets throughout the province are in. Just before the Legislature convened, I had the opportunity of addressing the convention of school bus drivers in this province. I got quite an earful, not only from drivers from the north but from southern and central Alberta, about the condition of these school buses and the problems with the present transportation policy in the school divisions.

So, Mr. Chairman, we have that particular situation. We have the instructional salaries. We have the problems that divisions have to face on insurance costs or utility rates. We have a government that has allowed utility rates to go up and up and up. One of the things that really shocked people at this meeting in Fairview was the huge increase in utility costs. Unfortunately, if you have a school system, someone has to pay the heating bill; somebody has to pay for the natural gas and the power. When we allow the power and natural gas rates to go up and up and up, that has to come from someplace. If the someplace is the local tax base and that tax base isn't very secure in terms of having industrial assessment, then you have a tremendous burden placed on the local taxpayer.

The point that I want to make is that after two hours, people who came to that meeting saying something is wrong with our school board — get rid of the school board, and we'll solve all our problems — came away and began to recognize that the something wrong with rural education in Alberta is the method of financing education. The major responsibility for that method of financing has to rest with this Legislature and in particular with the Minister of Education.

Mr. Chairman, in their document entitled *Education Finance, 1907-1982, Seventy-five Years of Service to Children* — I certainly agree with that — the Alberta School Trustees' Association talks about Alberta priorities for financing education in the 1980s. It's an excellent document. The document makes a number of important observations that I want to share with members of the committee this afternoon, because it is on the basis of many of the assumptions contained in this document that I think we have to take a second look at the financing of education.

Before going into some of these proposals, let me say to the minister that I know the easy answer is that we've got a committee, or a commission, looking into educational finance in this province. But it's been such a long-standing process. It reminds me of the Frank Scott poem about Mackenzie King: the way to get around a problem is to pile a royal commission on top of a parliamentary committee; never do anything by halves that you can do by quarters.

In 1971, after I was elected, I met with the zone one trustees, and so did several other members in the Peace River country. Everyone of the concerns that are identified in this document I'm going to quote from in a moment were identified in 1971. And the problem is that we've studied and studied and studied. The only time any action was taken was in 1975, in that little Indian summer just before the election, when we had the small school grant program, the supplementary requisition program,

and the declining enrolment grant program, thrown in — announced in the fall of 1975 with great flourish. But since then we have had unimaginative, protracted restraint, and the net result is that all the problems of running especially the rural schools — I'm not in a position to comment as well on the major divisions in the two cities, but certainly keeping close track of the divisions in the Peace River country and meeting with them on an annual basis, as I have every year for the last 11 years, and meeting with the boards individually, I know the crisis that faces rural education.

Mr. Chairman, what are the trustees saying? This particular document looks at the concerns of the trustees and weights the concerns. It's quite an intricate formula. The minister, of course, has always been intrigued with these kinds of formulas, having been interested in Gallup polls and those kinds of semi-political things over the years, so I know he'd be well up on the methodology behind this ASTA report. However, let me simplify it for other members of the committee who may not be quite as interested in methodology but more interested in what the trustees are saying. They have come up with a number of major concerns:

That the province decrease the financial burden on local property taxes by increasing the provincial contribution to [the school foundation program].

Mr. Chairman, we're doing that by 2.9 per cent. But the net result is that in rural divisions, with costs going up, the choice is going to have to be made. The choice is that we lay off teachers, cut back on the program, or somehow plead with the taxpayer to increase the supplementary requisition, already at a level which is beyond the capacity of most people to meet at the local level.

Mr. Chairman, in rural areas it's not easy to shift teacher/pupil ratios. Rural members know this perfectly well. It may be possible in a giant city system to move teachers to get a more accounting point of view of teacher/pupil ratios. But what do you do in some of the smaller schools? What do you do if it means closing down the high school because suddenly the ratio is down from 20:1 to 15:1, 16:1, or 17:1? What do you do in the kind of situation where you have a little isolated school that is 50 miles away and the costs of busing are horrendous, but you're locked into a school with 35 or 40 students? These are many of the practical problems, Mr. Minister and members of the committee, that divisions, especially in the rural areas, have to wrestle with on an ongoing basis.

In fairness, I will say that in 1975, under the minister's predecessor, with those three programs that I identified, I think we had a start to providing some sense of equity in the financing of education in this province. But unfortunately instead of pursuing them, instead of expanding those programs, we have allowed them to falter.

The second major point that the trustees bring out, Mr. Chairman, is:

That the province increase funds to cover transportation costs, building quality restoration costs, capital costs, high costs of borrowing, and school debt reduction.

Let's just take a look at what we've done there. Cover transportation costs, a 3.3 per cent increase; capital costs and high costs of borrowing, we've already eliminated the interest shelter program for unapproved costs. So instead of following through on the second recommendation of the Alberta School Trustees' Association, we've pretty well set that aside.

Mr. Chairman, in fairness, I think the minister has done something on the question of special education; I

grant him that. But let's look at some of these other proposals that the school trustees have made.

That the province recognize the autonomy of school jurisdictions by merging special grants and by simplifying the associated grants regulations where this is feasible.

The minister talked about decentralization in the context of these regional offices. Mr. Chairman, there are some very able people who work in the regional offices. I would not dispute that for a moment. But if we want to emphasize local autonomy, decentralization, and education being close to the people, we don't do that through the regional office. As a matter of fact, when I look at the attitude of the trustees to the regional offices, that's close to the bottom of their concerns. The last thing they're saying is give more money to the regional offices.

At the annual meetings of Peace River MLAs, I have school trustees saying, what is the regional office doing? You don't increase autonomy by building up little parallel empires that are responsible to the minister in Edmonton. If you want to increase autonomy, you do as the trustees say: provide the funds to the local boards so they can make those decisions rather than having all kinds of consultants. Frankly, I think we almost have consultants at the regional office to consult with one another. But I really wonder whether that is a functional, effective way of providing decentralization. I say it isn't. I say it's locking everything in to the minister's department, rather than providing the real autonomy where it should be: at the school board level.

The fifth point that they make, Mr. Chairman:

That the province continue working toward its prime objective of fiscal equalization insofar as it is compatible with equalization of educational opportunity by (a) improving the system of equalized assessments throughout the province and (b) by providing additional funding to increase the Supplementary Requisition Equalization Grant.

Those are the major points that the school trustees arrived at. There are many other matters that they dealt with, but because of their weighting — some of them they considered more important than others. But those were the five major ones that they considered to be critical.

Mr. Chairman, as I look at what the school trustees are saying and review the budget this year, all I can conclude is that we are not providing the necessary funding to the education system. I agree with the minister when he says that the commitment we make to education is perhaps, if not the most important — I think health and education are the two most important areas of public expenditure; no question about that. We can't have any hope for the future unless we have a first-class education system. I agree with the minister when he says that we have an excellent education system in this province. No one would really quarrel with that.

But as I see the disparities that already exist, when I see evidence in the province that those disparities are getting worse, then I say to the minister: surely now is the time to take stock of the priorities of this government. We've got all kinds of money for certain things. We had no problem finding \$1 million to advertise the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, or whatever it was, just before the last election. We can find all kinds of money for that sort of program. But when it comes to the proper funding of education, all of a sudden we have this new approach that we must tighten our belts. I think we must; no doubt about that. We've got to make sure that we get full value for our dollar. But at the same time, Mr. Chairman, I think it clearly in-

volves setting out some of the priorities. There can't be a more fundamentally important priority for a modern society than the adequate financing of the education system.

In concluding my initial comments — I may well have occasion to want to say a few things later on — I want to again draw to the members' attention in this committee that it isn't good enough just to shuffle along with a financing system that is clearly out of date. In 1975 about 78 per cent of the cost of education came from the provincial government, about 21 per cent from other sources. By 1981, the provincial share dropped to 66 per cent; the supplementary requisition and other sources — and that other source category now includes deficits — amounted to 34 per cent. That sort of shift is wrong, because that sort of shift guarantees inequity in the financing of education. It guarantees that a system which we have at the moment, that we're proud of, will gradually deteriorate.

Mr. Chairman, in the last number of years, as a member of the House I've had occasion — every year I make a point of going to each of the high schools in my constituency and speaking to the students. It's interesting to see what's happened to the quality of many of these buildings. Yes, we have the school quality restoration program. It's been valuable; no doubt about that. But if the minister visits rural schools in particular, he knows that in order to squeeze in under approved costs, short cuts were made in the construction of many of these schools that were built in the '50s and '60s. Now we find many of them are in a fairly serious state of disrepair.

So we've got a capital problem on our hands in rural Alberta, as well as an operating problem. But the Minister of Municipal Affairs has just announced that we're taking off the interest shielding on unapproved costs, despite the fact that one of the major requests of the Alberta School Trustees' Association was that we make it easier to carry out improvements in the capital facilities of our schools. Mr. Chairman, I once again draw to the attention of members what I consider to be the really serious situation in our school system.

I know that this government is facing budgetary problems this year, but that does not obviate the necessity to come to grips with a system which isn't really able to function as well as it should in the rural areas. It didn't have the cream when we had cream in this province. We have seen an education system which has not grown fat and bloated but which has always been lean.

Since the first restraint program was announced by Mr. Leitch when he was Provincial Treasurer in 1975, we have seen severe restraints imposed on the funding of our school systems in this province. We have seen difficulties in other areas occasioned by having students drop out of the public system. They go to these Category 4 schools that my colleague talked about earlier today. When they drop out of the system, that creates problems for the school bus system, for the administration of the school division, for the teaching load in the school division. Those are all matters which I think make it very, very difficult to be a school trustee.

I urge members of the committee to take a very close look at these estimates we're voting this year, not pat ourselves on the back and say, everybody has to do their part. Those kinds of pep talks are very nice, but we're talking, first of all, about pensioners who have given their all; let's be fair to them. We're talking about an investment in the future and the proper education system for our children. Surely that has to have priority.

Most of all, it seems to me that we have to recognize

that if that system is going to work properly, this Legislature, as opposed to local taxpayers, the local tax base, has to recognize its responsibility. With the greatest respect to the minister, what I see in the budget in 1983-84 is unimaginative budgeting that will just compound the difficulties and not allow this vital service to breath, expand, and fulfil the task that it must if we are to have a heritage of a strong education system in this province.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Chairman, this afternoon I'd like to briefly get involved in the debate. As an elected person and as a parent having youngsters still in the system, there are a few areas I'd very briefly like to cover. First of all, I think we must not lose sight of the fact that there was a report tabled in 1980 called the Kratzmann report. This report seems to have just sort of got put on the shelf, and I'm not sure if we're ever going to have an opportunity to look at it in depth or if we are ever going to take any of the recommendations of this committee. I would just like the minister, with his usual brevity, to give us the status of the Kratzmann report. Is there anything that we are going to look at in the report? Are we going to take any of those recommendations? I'm sure the minister will be able to do that for the committee.

Mr. Chairman, I'm sure all people in Alberta, all members involved in education, children, and parents in the system will be looking apprehensively — I suppose the students and the educators will — at the comprehensives. I guess the most important matter I'd like to bring to the attention of the minister is: what weighting mechanism will we be using? Will the comprehensives be used as the entire yardstick for students to indicate if they are going to proceed to higher education? Or is there going to be a fifty-fifty balance, as recommended, I believe, by the Alberta Teachers' Association? I'm sure the minister will be able to indicate to us what the department's stand will be. I'd also like to know if the minister is looking at a computerized system known as item banking. Is this an alternative to comprehensives?

Also, at the time we debated the issue of the voucher system for education, that I brought to the Assembly for the sake of debate, I know the minister thought there were certain positives in looking at it. Since that time, Mr. Chairman, many people have indicated to me, especially in the area of youngsters who require rather special education — as the type of parent who had a youngster who required remedial assistance pretty well through his entire 12 years of education, I guess I appreciate much more than ordinary the assistance required and given to youngsters with learning disabilities. The parents of children in this category seem to find that they would like their children to go into a school — especially in an area where they would be going to a Christian college or school — that would give them more of a one-on-one type of education. I know we cannot have this for all students who require this type of help, but I think there is an area the minister should possibly look at to provide assistance or, in some of these special cases, that the taxes go with the child.

When we're looking at this subject, I'm sure the minister can indicate to the committee what new developments we are seeing in the area of the private Christian school. Are these schools receiving more financial support from the department? Will they be getting an increase in support for the education of the youngsters in their systems?

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has touched on education financing, and I know it's of concern to

members of school boards. My greatest concern, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, is that the local education and hospital boards may be made the scapegoats. That concerns me. When I've spoken to local school and hospital boards, I've always said that the system we run in this province is a beautiful system for us at the provincially elected level, because we are not the bad guys. If there isn't sufficient funding, the people at the local level blame the administrators at the local level, and we get off scot-free. I think the day of reckoning has come when taxpayers at the local level and the people receiving the service are finally waking up to the fact that maybe it's not the fault of the people at the local level. Maybe the school trustees, the mayors and councillors of local municipalities, the county people have trimmed as much of the fat as they can possibly trim.

So what are the alternatives? We've seen the alternatives: cutting back staff and mundane things such as supplies, cutting down on programs. Where is it going to end? Even though we are looking at restraint, I believe the expression the Leader of the Opposition used, "slamming on the brakes", is probably very apropos. I believe we could have phased in cutting back budgets, especially to education and to health. It's a matter of rearranging the government's spending priorities. We've spoken many times in this Assembly that maybe we didn't need to spend \$200 million on Kananaskis; maybe we needed to spend only \$60 million or \$70 million. Maybe we didn't need to spend so much on beautifying the Legislature Grounds. There is no doubt that some work needed to be done, but maybe we could have saved \$20 million or \$25 million.

I'm trying to say to this government, Mr. Chairman, that maybe it's time we rearranged those priorities and, instead of going ultra-Cadillac class, got down to a good, serviceable Chevrolet model. But I don't think we're going ultra-Cadillac class anymore in our educational financing. I think we should have looked at a phasing in of restrictions on educational financing, so that over a three-year period local school boards, teachers, and the taxpayer could see where education was heading, what we were asking of the system, and phase in the cutbacks. I'm sure that school trustees, school boards, superintendents, and teachers were looking at a three-year program. I can't say it any more clearly than this, Mr. Chairman: to very suddenly be cut back to 5 per cent was unrealistic and too heavy-handed.

Mr. Chairman, I asked a question in the Assembly on the task force on educational financing. The minister can indicate to the committee when that task force and the task force on the gifted are going to report. I know we've covered the area of learning disabilities, and I repeat that the government has taken some very positive steps. My child was a beneficiary of some of those programs. They should be enhanced and continued. Representation has been made to me, and I'm sure it has been made to other members of the committee, that we should also be looking at the gifted child. The cost of the comprehensive is certainly a factor when we're looking at over \$4 million. Of course this is a large increase. But when we're looking at a new program, I guess it's just an accepted fact of life that these things do cost money.

Mr. Chairman, I would like the minister to enlarge upon the teaching of the French language in the province. Representation was made to me that some of the teachers involved in the program are concerned about cutbacks in some of the programs for the continuing education of these teachers. I would like the minister to indicate to us

how many children in the province are availing themselves of the program.

I guess the strongest representation I can make to the minister is that I've always felt the major shortcoming of the federal bilingual/bicultural program is that we don't start the French program in the early years. I know that we're now looking at kindergarten and grades 1 and 2 immersion programs, and I think that's excellent. But all you have to do is have one or two children that are in grades 6, 7, or 8. They start the French program in that age group. I guess all the people who have had anything to do with education will tell you that somehow by statute they should eliminate the years between grades 6, 7, and 8 and just go automatically from grade 5 to grade 9 or 10. For the people who have had the lovely experience of teaching junior high, youngsters in that age group don't know if they're fish or fowl. They hate their teachers, they hate themselves, they hate their friends, they hate their mothers and dads — and then you put them into a French program. I just can't imagine anybody in that age group getting put into a program and wanting to accept anything that's different.

I would like to say to the minister that if we're going to be encouraging our youngsters to get involved in the French program, maybe we should be taking it out of those years and putting it into the lower grades. Had the B and B commission at the federal level just said to the ministers of education, here's your share of the funding for French programs — given the funds to the provinces and let them decide how they would spend it; hired some competent French teachers and given it to the youngsters in kindergarten and grades 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 — and then just disappeared, I think that I as a parent would have insisted that my child take the French program.

Having been a Ukrainian farm boy up to the age of 6, I have never forgotten my native language. I cannot speak it fluently, but having learned the language up to the age of 6, I never forgot it. That's exactly the way the French program would have worked if we'd started it in kindergarten and gone up to grades 2, 3, and 4. At that age youngsters take to it like ducks to water. I'm sure the minister will indicate to us that where they have French immersion programs for youngsters, they become fluent. That's an area of concern I would like the minister to express his observations on.

Mr. Chairman, we have other areas of concern, but I would just like to close by saying that I am concerned about the direction our public school system is taking. I went to our neighboring province of British Columbia purposely, shortly before the session commenced, to speak to the deputy ministers of education and advanced education, to try to compare what they're doing in their province with the system we have in our province. I believe we have a good educational system in this province, but I am concerned about the number of parents that ask me about sending their children to Christian schools. I'm using the term "Christian school" to indicate the private school system run by people who call them Christian schools. Parents who pay their taxes and then pay \$800 to \$1,500 per pupil above their taxes for tuition, must be concerned about something.

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

If I had to put my finger on one point that concerned all parents in the representations that have been made to me, I guess it is that the system is too large. I believe the minister will have some comments on the largeness of our

system. I guess that takes us back to Kratzmann: will we ever reach that ratio of one teacher to 20 children in the classroom? Maybe we're asking too much. When we talk about the one-room school, in many cases we had one teacher for 40 children. But at that time the grade 9s would help the grade 4s. The grade 8s would help the grade 3s. We were all one happy family basically trying to survive and get an education.

Now we don't want to go back to that system. But the large numbers certainly do concern me — not only the large number of pupils per teacher but the large schools as such. I guess the comment I'd like to summarize that point with comes from my own high school principal. Because of some children going to other jurisdictions and other special schools we have in the county of Strathcona, I broached this to the principal. He said, because our enrolment is down possibly about as much as 100 pupils, for the first time since I've been the principal I seem to be recognizing more and more pupils that belong to this school. Now to me, Mr. Chairman, that just summarizes the fact that maybe our schools are too large. Maybe the physical plants are too large.

I know that we talk about economies of size. I would not be quite as disturbed if we were to make the elementary schools smaller and possibly still cut back on the size of the high schools. When we take a large city school — I believe the largest school in the city has 2,400 students — I'm sure the shy child, the child who's not too aggressive and not too forward, must be just overwhelmed by an institution that large.

Mr. Chairman, these are some of the concerns I have as an elected person and a parent. I say to the minister that I appreciate his enthusiasm and dedication, because it's very important that we have a minister who really likes his job. I guess liking your job is probably one of the very important things, and I know how many hours the minister puts in. I wish the minister well. There are areas of concern. I certainly don't agree with the way he handles some things, but that's just part of the process. I'm sure the minister accepts that. I'm sure he thinks I don't have all the answers, and I'm sure I don't.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, we have to re-establish some priorities by this government. I think the 5 per cent cutback was too drastic. It should have been phased in over three years. I would like to say to the minister that I want to know very clearly what the comprehensives are meant to accomplish. Are they going to be university entrance? I would like to know what the minister is looking at as far as some move toward the taxes following the child.

With those few opening words, Mr. Chairman, I certainly look forward to clause by clause study of the estimates.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Chairman, I too would like to participate in the debate. I'd like to make some comments and then, at the end, ask the minister some specific questions. I was surprised to see the minister talk about the worry about "I'm okay, Jack", and the types of philosophies that seem to be occurring right now. I thought perhaps "I'm okay, Jack" was the ultimate in conservative philosophy. But I accept what he's saying. I hope we move in a more humane direction after that.

I'd like to come to the comprehensives a bit, because there's been a lot of discussion. I really question the minister about why we got into them in the first place. I said this before publicly, and I hope I'm wrong. I have a feeling that perhaps it had to do with politics. I had to

deal with them as a high school counsellor. When we checked with the university, NAIT, and the other institutions, we thought there must be a reason: maybe they wanted them because they were worried about the product coming to university. They said, no, we'll solve our own problems there; we'd much rather go by the teacher mark. In fact the University of Alberta went as far as to say, we're not even going to look at these things for five years, because we don't know what they're measuring.

I suggest that nobody seems to know what they're measuring. I expect we want to move back to the departmental at some point, because of the worry about standards. I don't know why the minister, if he believed in departmentals, didn't have a discussion about departmentals rather than comprehensives. I have a motion for a return about the cost of comprehensives last year. Especially in a time when we're pleading that we do not have money for programs, it seems to me that we waste a lot of money with comprehensive exams that most students don't bother to do because they don't see any relevance in doing them. I just throw that out. I ask the minister to consider whether we need departmentals to begin with, and then I'll come to another point.

Having been a student who took departmentals and a teacher who taught them, I never did see their relevance as far as good education goes. I don't blame the teachers for this; they didn't have any alternative. They were basically judged by how well their students did on the departmentals. I remember very clearly, as a grade 9 and grade 12 student, that what we inevitably did for the last three months was study old exams. Then, unfortunately, I was in the position of teaching, and I did exactly the same thing because I was afraid I was going to be judged on how good a teacher I was by the departmentals.

The minister knows that just regurgitating facts is not necessarily a good education. But I suggest to him that frankly when you get into things like comprehensives and departmentals, that's the only type of education you're looking at. We and the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry have talked about computers and computer literacy. It seems to me that moving back to comprehensives and departmentals is in fact going in exactly the opposite direction.

I expect the minister was worried — a legitimate worry, I think — about the fact that at some school boards the marks seemed to be higher and at other school boards they seemed to be lower. I think that was occurring. But frankly, Mr. Chairman, I do not see the need for spending a lot of money — and eventually we'll need another huge bureaucracy — to bring in comprehensives. We always get accused of massive government intervention. This is a good example of where the government has massive intervention. Surely if the department perceives a problem in some areas, they deal with that problem. It seems to me that you do not have to create a whole province-wide bureaucracy to deal with the problem. I really question the need for comprehensives, and I question the need to go back to the old departmentals.

We should have dealt with the problem. However, in dealing with that, it seems clear that the minister is moving in a direction of comprehensives or some type of standardized test. I think that recently the Alberta Teachers' Association said, it seems clear we're not going to change the minister's mind on this particular problem, so we will compromise. I'm sure the minister is aware they've advocated that, okay, if you want standardized tests, 50 per cent of the final mark will be on that, similar to the old departmental, and 50 per cent will be on

teacher evaluation. I say to the minister that if he's won half the battle of what he wanted, then surely that's a reasonable compromise to look at. I throw the question out: would he look at that as a legitimate compromise?

I would like to sort of philosophize a bit, as the minister does, because I'm a little worried. I know he won't have all the answers to this, and certainly he hasn't created all the problems in the educational system. I'm going to deal a bit more with the high school level at this point, Mr. Chairman. As a high school counsellor, I had a growing uneasiness about what was happening to our students as we went along. Surely we recognized that we were going into a very advanced technical society.

If people look at what computers can do — an interesting film is *Now the Chips are Down*. First of all, they talk about what computers can do, then they show some of the problems this could create in an advanced technical society. For example, a medical doctor, one of the most renowned medical researchers in the United States, says that a computer could now do something like 80 or 90 per cent of the things he does as a doctor, because he's fed it that information. When you take an area that has as much skill as a medical doctor, then you have to wonder about the rest of the jobs.

I throw this out as a philosophical thing to the minister, because I think it's something we're going to have to look at in the future. This growing uneasiness I have is, what do we do with a third of our students who come back to high school? Certainly in a recession — back in December I saw all sorts of students coming back to high school who ordinarily would have been working. These are people in the 18- to 19-year-old range. I asked them what they were going to do. Of course they were coming back to go on. I know it's not just his problem; it goes into advanced education.

Mr. Chairman, they're coming back because they want to go to NAIT, SAIT, U of C, U of A, or other postsecondary institutions in the province. When I look at what's happening in advanced education at the University of Alberta, the Faculty of Business, for example, can only take about 10 per cent of the people who apply. In many cases at NAIT, they can take only about 10, 15, or up to 50 per cent. That's all they could take last year. I'm wondering what we are going to be doing for these young people when we have an unemployment rate of around 30 to 35 per cent. This is a growing problem and one we're going to have to take a serious look at.

This leads me to the next area, the Kratzmann report, which ties into what I'm talking about. I know that the minister has rejected the monetary items, the idea that there should be a maximum of 20 students in a class and 20 hours per week. He's rejected it because he says we do not have enough money to move in that direction at this time. I would say to the minister, as honestly as I can, that certain students in this society are going to get by with good or bad teachers; they have the ability. But if we're going to have any influence on change and if we're going to deal with young people — there is a term called "the significant other". If a student has been unfortunate enough to have been brought up — and we've talked about this — in less than ideal situations at home and they come to school with an accumulative deficit, they're obviously not going to do as well in grade 1, 2, or 3. It gets worse as we get into junior high, and by high school we know the drop-out rate. If we're going to have any impact at all with those students, I suggest to you that we're going to have to have the best possible teachers.

I believe it's false economy to say that we can cut back

in education or that we can't afford 20 to 1, as Kratzmann pointed out, because I suggest to you that in the future we're going to end up paying for those. We'll be spending more money on jails, welfare, and all sorts of social disorganization.

I also know enough about good teachers that, given the time to prepare — and I think 20 to 1 is not unreasonable — and keeping class sizes down, they can have a significant impact on those students. In fact if those teachers do not have a significant impact, the point I'm making is that in the future we're still going to end up paying. I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that a preventive model of putting it into education makes much more sense than picking up the pieces afterwards in jails, welfare, and all the other sorts of social disorganization I've talked about.

The Kratzmann report is not the be-all and end-all. I think we have to have the best possible teachers around. I appreciate that the minister believes education is one of the most important things people can do. But I suggest to you — if you look at the literature — that if you do not have teachers that have a reasonable amount of time to mark and to talk to students, not just in the classrooms, you have what you call teacher burnout. Many older teachers who were very good and aggressive in their younger days, got tired of the system after a point. If the minister is not prepared to look at Kratzmann, I suggest to him that down the way we are going to lose a lot of capable teachers, as we have in the past. If the minister believes, as he says he does, that education is one of the most important things we can do, then I think we're going to have to make it possible for teachers to stay in the classroom. I suggest to him that somewhere along the line, if not this year, we get enough money to be involved with what the Kratzmann report is saying. Because we'll end up spending it in other ways. I can suggest to the government many ways they can save money, many other ways they're wasting it. They could put it into something as valuable as the Kratzmann report.

The other one — and I asked the question, so I won't labor it — is the non-money issues. The minister's answer, basically, was that it's up to the local school boards. There's a certain truth to what the minister says about that. But, Mr. Minister, you are the educational leader . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I wonder if the hon. member would revert to parliamentary language.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, I will. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, the hon. minister is the educational leader in the province and will have to take some leadership on this issue.

The other point I want to make to the hon. minister — I'm a little confused, and I'm sure he will clear it up; I tried in the last question period. I'm talking about the possibility of a longer school day and a longer school year. I get a difference, and I'd like to clear it up. When I asked that, you said in *Hansard*:

I invite the hon. member to reread *Hansard*. . .
I did. Thank you for the invitation.

. . . because I think I was quite clear in saying in this Assembly that we are not considering lengthening the school day or the school year. I think I was quite clear in saying that that suggestion has been made to us by some people — including at least one hon. member of the Legislative Assembly — and that on the basis of any greater public response, we would be prepared to consider that question, but we are not

now.

I thank the minister for sending me his famous chamber of commerce speech in Calgary. I take it you did say this:

During this year we will be considering revisions to The School Act in the hope that we can introduce an entirely new School Act to the Legislature in 1984. In the context of this revision, we will give consideration to what I would describe as reliable structure and improved productivity. Possibilities to consider include a longer school day and a longer instructional year.

So there seems to be a difference. I hope the hon. minister would clear that up.

I would like to go on to one general area. It ties into what I've been saying about Kratzmann. I know the minister is trying to save money wherever he can, but I suggest to the hon. minister that the 5 per cent guideline, at least to some boards — and my colleague has already talked about it — is really dismantling the educational system in a slow way because it is not up to the inflation rate. Inevitably it will vary from one board to another. I suggest that it has had something to do with the slowness of negotiations between trustees and teachers this year. But, Mr. Chairman, inevitably it will slowly lead to more dismantling.

If you put yourself in the position of a local school board, when you're at the end of your tether as far as money goes right now, you have two alternatives or a combination of the two. If you don't have the money, you can do one thing: go to the property tax payer and ask for more money. We all know, Mr. Chairman, how popular this is in this time of recession. It's an unfair way to go, because property tax is a regressive tax. The second alternative we have is to cut back on the standard of education, or a combination of doing both.

I've tried to lay out why I think spending on education is money well spent. I honestly believe, Mr. Chairman, that we save money in the long run. I know the minister is not going to change it overnight, but a 5 per cent guideline — and I don't know where it will lead to. Will it be 3 per cent or a cutback next year if we face more financial problems? Slowly this cuts back on the level of educational service in the province. Inevitably it has to. Or if boards have the political courage and they're going to take the flak, as the hon. Member for Clover Bar pointed out, they go to the taxpayers and ask for more money. I think the hon. minister would agree that not many of them would get elected again after doing that.

Mr. Minister, in conclusion, before I ask five or six questions along with the general comments I have made, I think I agree with you that in many ways we've had a very good educational system. I've been proud to be part of that educational system for many years. But like my colleague, I am worried about the directions we are going in the future.

I suggest to the minister — because I know he does believe in education — that he take a look at other ways of saving money. Perhaps we can borrow other money that we're wasting; we've pointed out in this Legislature that we are wasting money. But let's not begin to cut back. In fact let's look at Kratzmann seriously. If not this year, let's take a look at it in the next couple of years. Because I say to the minister that if we do not, there's still going to be a lot of money going over to the social welfare department as more people are on welfare, and to the Solicitor General's department as more people are in jails. I suggest to you that that's a false economy and one

I don't think any of us want. Maybe even the Attorney General will get a bigger budget; I'm not sure.

I'd like to conclude, Mr. Chairman, by directly asking six further questions of the minister. Number one, in the government's own report on the practicum program entitled Theory to Practice, the recommendations indicated that for a successful implementation of the practicum program — and if we want good teachers, the practicum program is absolutely crucial — the funding needs to be almost doubled.

Now I realize that this particular program overlaps two areas, Education and Advanced Education, and that the practicum budget appears under Advanced Education. But I believe the minister has some responsibilities in this area, and I think he would agree. The recommendations of the report were endorsed by all stakeholder groups. Could the minister please explain, then, why the practicum funding was increased by only 5.1 per cent?

The second question I would ask: in terms of the priorities and how they were arrived at, how does the minister explain the 14 per cent increase to the Hospitals and Medical Care budget and the Social Services and Community Health budget vis-a-vis the 7 per cent increase in Education? Surely the Minister of Education

MR. NOTLEY: Lots of clout.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, he has the clout the hon. Minister of Social Services and Community Health has. I would ask him to explain that.

Three, would the minister care to explain why funding for the public school system under the School Foundation Program Fund increased by only 5.9 per cent, whereas that for private schools increased by 10.3 per cent? Four, under Vote 2, financial assistance to schools, page 115 of government estimates: how does the minister explain a 2.9 per cent increase over forecast in per pupil grants when he has already announced a 5 per cent increase in per pupil grants?

Five, Vote 1, departmental support services, reference 1.2.2., student evaluation: the public accounts for 1981-82 indicate an expenditure of approximately \$1.5 million, and the 1983-84 estimates call for funding of well over \$4 million. That's a growth of 171 per cent over two years. I'd like an explanation of that. Six, could the minister provide us with a reconciliation of accounts to explain the integration of what was previously a four-vote appropriation into a three-vote appropriation? Where do we now find budgetary lines from 1982-83? I had seven down; I tried to find the question to this. I expect we'll find out about education — I know the minister would say he has a task force out, so I will wait on that one till we have the report in the House.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would be interested in the minister's answers to questions I have brought up and, at some point, I look forward to further questioning the minister on some of the issues.

Thank you.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to start out by agreeing with the minister. I echo his remarks in that I too feel we have a very good educational system in the province, largely, I think, because of good people working in it. Just as an aside, Mr. Chairman, I think some of our accomplishments are in spite of the system as well as because of it.

On the general topic of economic restraint, I also agree

that it's incumbent upon the educators of the province, the trustees — all involved in the system — to look for efficiencies and look realistically at requests for funds and controlling their expenditures. However, I think it's important for every member of this House to reflect upon just what purpose education serves in society, particularly at a time of some economic difficulties.

It seems to me that there are quite a few lessons in history, in that when you have new challenges facing your economy, you need to improve the efficiency of that economy; when you have new challenges facing your society, you need to use your educational system to try to tackle some of those problems. Perhaps we can become overenthused about restraining and cutting back in this particular area if in fact there are some very specific purposes, some improvements that I think we can take some security in coming about, if they provide sufficient support and funding. Mr. Chairman, I think the educational system has the potential to do a better job of addressing some of the economic challenges and societal problems facing us than is presently the case.

Mr. Chairman, when I started into estimates as a new MLA, I thought we really got down to the nitty-gritty of looking at money and dollars and cents and so on, and I can see now that perhaps that is not too good a way to proceed. But I would like to ask a few of those kinds of questions. Looking at the budget, I noticed there had been quite a bit of reorganization. I assume that is reflected in the announced reorganization of the department. As I recall, the hon. minister has referred to it as a levelling or flattening-out process of department organization. In his remarks, I wonder if the minister could, without perhaps going into too much detail, refer to some of the major changes in the organization of the department and some of the advantages which are foreseen in these changes.

As well, I couldn't help notice that some amounts of money have either shifted, been included somewhere else in the budget, or disappeared. For instance, where's the money for the learning exchange program, Mr. Chairman? I also notice a 26.5 per cent drop in incremental grants to school boards. What does that involve? I note that one of the directions of the department is to give more responsibility, more clout, so to speak, to the regional offices. I wonder, Mr. Chairman, if we could have some specific examples of what will be referred to the regional offices so they can bring decisions, services, and so on, closer to the local area.

The matter of pensions has been addressed, Mr. Chairman. There seems to be a case here, or certainly an issue. I wonder what money is required here, and what the difficulties and implications of the changes that have been suggested to the hon. minister might be.

On the matter of examinations, I note there's a substantial amount of money, a substantial increase in the budget in this particular area. There obviously will not be the need for the \$900,000 and some special warrant of last year. I think there is a definite consensus emerging on the need for compulsory end-of-school examinations, and so be it. I've long said there is a need for that particular type of examination to be in place. However, one caution here is that whether we are talking about the trustees' association, the Alberta Teachers' Association, or the Conference of Alberta School Superintendents, since there is an agreement on the general direction we should take, I hope we don't get in too much of a rush to go directly to the proposal on comprehensive examinations that's been out there for discussion. Because as I see it at least, there is

some good advice coming in on just how these examinations should be implemented, to the effect that they should be related to the subjects in the academic area at the high school level, and some consideration should be given to some factor from the teacher's marks in the final results. I hope we can take those responses into consideration. I wonder if later on the minister might comment on the degree to which that might be possible, and if he sees, as I do, any particular pattern and direction emerging from the input.

Still talking about evaluation, Mr. Chairman, but in another area, I note that through the leadership of the Department of Education, most of the school boards in the province now have a policy of teacher evaluation and, in some cases, program evaluation. They have put in place the means of implementing these policies in most cases. Providing these are well considered, with input from all sources, I think this is a good move. However, I come back to a question on the degree to which the program in particular, and staff to some degree, in the private school system of the province are being evaluated and monitored. I think there's a definite responsibility on the part of a provincial department of education to keep in touch with and, in certain essential areas, keep control over the private school categories as well.

Computers and technology have been referred to many times since this Assembly convened. I'd like to compliment the minister on a couple of directions the department apparently is going. One is in the area of providing a software evaluation service to schools. I'd also like to compliment him on the effort being made to support in-service programs in the whole area of computer technology.

Perhaps this is off the topic, but I couldn't help noticing in the budget a fantastic increase in the amount of money for computer administrative support services. I thought that was all done. I thought we had enough computers in place in the department. When money is short in other places, I hope we can explain what that is for. Mr. Chairman, I think there is a need for additional funding in specific areas — perhaps not additional funding, but the maintenance of funding that has been in place. I know that earlier in this session, the hon. minister referred to the fact that money for the implementation of a very equipment-concentrated area in business education was under consideration.

I noted, with some alarm, that the building quality restoration program moneys were ending this year. This has become a source of funds that school boards across the province depend upon very much. When the program came into existence, it recognized a very, very great need, which is not going to be there for just one, two, or five years; it's going to be an ongoing problem. The need to upgrade and maintain schools and equipment is something the department has to face in one way or another in the financing of education.

As well, I notice that the department — and I would commend them for this — is supporting a choices program, as an aid to both applying computer technology and providing for much-needed job and postsecondary information to students. However, I think that one area where quite a few additional dollars would be very, very well spent would be in supporting this particular program, expanding it, making sure it is of a quality nature, and providing support so school boards can take advantage of it.

I note in the minister's opening remarks, Mr. Chairman, that he referred to a review of the secondary school

system. I have known for some years that that is coming, and I guess it now will. But I would caution against churning up the system to any greater degree than necessary with a large number of changes and possible changes without there being adequate support, particularly in the area of in-service for teachers, if there is a major change in program. At a time of fewer dollars, I think we have to look very carefully at the changes we're going to require in program and curriculum, unless we have the money to support those changes.

I'd like to just briefly refer to the impending report on school finance. I hope we could soon have an idea of what the time line for consideration and implementation of this report might be. Before we get too far down the road into a pattern of local school boards assuming a greater percentage of the total educational costs, I hope we will be able to consider the recommendations of this particular report and what its merits for implementation might be.

I'd like to conclude my remarks, Mr. Chairman, by referring to something that I think is the crux of the whole problem of getting additional funding for education and finding public support for it. I note there's been recent publicity about the large number of functionally illiterate adults in our society, despite all the efforts we've put into the educational system. I'd like to use that as an example to make a particular point. I think such individuals inevitably become, or almost always become, a cost to society, because they have such difficulty finding jobs, maintaining jobs, and achieving adequate incomes.

For some time we've known there is a challenge there, in terms of the quality of literacy in our society. It has many causes, large classes and high pupil/teacher ratios being only one of them, another being the fact that right now, on average, people watch television much longer than they spend in schools or even in conversation. We've never fully assessed the impact that the use of television and other assorted technological devices have had on our ability to read and write properly. We know what the problem is. We know what the causes of the problem are. I think we also know what some of the solutions are.

I would like to see in the future, as educational dollars are more difficult to obtain, that we make an additional effort to put before the public not only the problems, not only the causes of these problems, but also the fact that there are some solutions available. If we put forward those solutions, put forward our commitment to tackle the problems and, as will have to be the case, attach the price tag, I think the public will have a better understanding of just what the educational system can do to take care of some of these very, very challenging matters and will be more supportive of it.

I'd like to conclude my remarks by acknowledging the minister's effort to be accessible to the education community. I think that is appreciated, although sometimes we who have been directly involved in education do not agree. But that is as it may be. I commend him on his energy and his accessibility. I hope we can continue to address some of the problems of education without raising a whole host of additional problems, but perhaps in the years ahead, concentrate on solving some of the problems that we know are there.

Thank you.

MR. SZWENDER: Mr. Chairman, I rise to participate in the debate, and would like to begin by congratulating the minister on his second term as minister. I think his enthusiasm for the job is clearly indicated and, especially

among teachers, he has brought the portfolio into much greater debate or controversy. I think that speaks for itself. When the minister's name comes up far more frequently than maybe past ministers when they're talking about it, then the minister must be doing something right.

I think I am the only active teacher in the government at this time, and that excludes administrators. I have been a teacher for the past nine years, so I am speaking from some experience.

AN HON. MEMBER: I teach too.

MR. SZWENDER: You teach too. All right.

I'd like to just add some of my own comments and questions to the minister. Being a teacher, I'm going to try to be as pragmatic as possible in my comments. In fact I may please the minister, because I will probably have some suggestions and recommendations on how he may save money, as compared to some of my colleagues who spoke before me, who all had suggestions on how to spend money. However, I realize the realities of economics. Again, I commend the minister on the approach he has had to take.

With the time remaining, I'd like to begin by indicating that teachers, especially in high school, find it very easy to pass the buck. In high school, when we receive students that we find have trouble functioning at the level we would like to see them, we can always say somebody didn't do their job in junior high. When you talk to junior high teachers, they remark that people in elementary must not be doing their jobs properly. Given that, I know there has been some condemnation or criticism of the comprehensive exams the minister is introducing. I personally support whole-heartedly the minister's proposal on comprehensive examinations. I don't like to correct the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood — being a guidance counsellor, he's probably naive on matters of classroom procedure — but in my opinion comprehensive exams are the only answer to bringing back common, province-wide standards for which we can all find accountability and responsibility, both within the classroom and from the teachers.

I think the comments I began with, about passing the buck, indicate that although the examinations are of a comprehensive nature, they are not of a departmental nature, as I was trying to point out to the Member for Edmonton Norwood, now that he's back. The minister may correct this on his own behalf. The two should not be confused. I think the departmental exams we wrote as students entailed writing one exam for grade 12 and, on that basis, a person passed or failed. The comprehensive exams take into consideration all the work the student has done, but particularly at the grades 10, 11, and 12 levels. So no teacher would be forced to teach strictly towards an exam or coach towards an exam, as quite often the criticism arose when we were students. I think the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood has to take that into consideration.

As I was mentioning earlier, these exams are only a temporary measure or solution. We can't start testing people at the end; we're going to have to go a few steps back. I think the next natural procedure would be to introduce similar types of exams for grade 9. To go even further, if the junior high teachers are claiming that the elementary schools are not preparing students adequately, maybe we will have to start some more extensive testing in the elementary grades.

My wife is also a teacher, an elementary teacher, and

it's easy for us to compare notes at the end of a teaching day. I can see that her job is much more complex in many ways than mine as a high school teacher. As a teacher of grade 5, she already begins to complain about the fact that students are not properly prepared or streamed in the very earliest grades — 1, 2, and 3. So I think that although various references were made to the Kratzmann report, if any money or priorities have to be made available, they should be to those very early grades — 1, 2, and 3 — specifically in terms of time allocation to those teachers. Their job is far more complex than the average citizen would like to recognize or maybe even understand. So at the risk of suggesting that maybe some spending is in order, I suggest that it would be at those levels, where more preparation time would be available for those teachers, and certainly some forms of testing in order that those students are not pushed ahead and given the stigma of "failure". As the minister pointed out, that is not correct.

I am glad that the minister brought up the topic of motivation. For much of the '70s — the mid-70s on — at times it was almost depressing to be a teacher, when students that you had in high school maybe quit halfway through the year, came back to visit after a while, and sort of smugly said: guess what, I got a job at the oil rigs, and I'm making three times as much money as you are; or, I've got a job stocking shelves at Safeway, and I only make twice as much money as you. But those options are no longer available to our students. In the past in our high school, an average of five students returned to do a second year of grade 12. This year we had over 60. So the realities of the economy are forcing students to stay in school longer and to become much better prepared to face the uncertainties in the real working world or the world of further education.

I have a couple of quick suggestions I'd like to make to the minister. One, I think that quite often we take very emotional positions on schools which are no longer in use. Communities become very emotional about vacating schools in their community. But I think the minister has to encourage school boards to dispose of schools which are no longer economically feasible, if other uses of course are not possible for them. This is certainly one issue that could be addressed, and I think there is a lot of potential for saving money there.

Another area the minister could address and introduce is the reintroduction of book rental fees. In the past, students were asked to put down a deposit at the beginning of the school year. At the end of the year, if the books were returned in proper condition, the money would be refunded. In the last two or three years, that has not happened. I know from personal experience that it's almost a crying shame to see what happens when students are no longer accountable for their materials. I find books sacred. As tools are to a carpenter, books are to a teacher. Any book I find damaged or destroyed disheartens me. I think we could instill a large degree of accountability in our students if we brought that step back.

Also, the hon. Member for Clover Bar brought up the expansion of the French program in Alberta. From comments I have had, there is some problem in that area. I don't know how much further the minister would like to expand that program, but I know that in many schools a certain degree of friction exists between the French teachers and the teachers of the regular English program. I think the minister should examine that problem because of various difficulties that are arising.

I can see that the time is quickly slipping by. I had a

number of other comments, but a final comment I'd like to make to the minister is that possibly, with the negotiations going as slowly as they are — and I think the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood is a bit naive if he does not know how negotiations go on between school boards and their locals. We all know how that functions. However, at the risk of being stoned, maybe we could introduce double billing in schools. If teachers don't feel they are being paid enough, maybe they could double bill their students. At 25 cents a student a day, I would make what I figure would be enough to supplement what I didn't get through negotiations. It's an idea. I don't know how seriously the minister would like to consider it.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but the time has concluded.

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

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

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

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, it is not intended that the Assembly sit this evening or tomorrow evening. Tomorrow I would hope to be able to indicate to hon. members the business for Wednesday afternoon. It will be Committee of Supply, but we'll indicate the department at a later date.

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