

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Wednesday, April 20, 1983 2:30 p.m.**

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS****Bill Pr. 5****Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute
Amendment Act, 1983**

MR. STROMBERG: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill Pr. 5, the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute Amendment Act, 1983.

The purpose of this Bill is to grant certain property tax exemptions, confer the power to grant degrees, and provide for certain internal administration changes in the management of the institution.

[Leave granted; Bill Pr. 5 read a first time]

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, on Monday of this week, I had the privilege of introducing to you three grade 8 classes from the Manachaban junior high school in Cochrane. Today there are the remaining three grade 8 classes from the school. There are 61 students here, accompanied by group leader and teacher Gaye Bonnett, teachers Vikki Reid and John Holstein, and teacher aide Dolores Hardy. I wonder if the class and teachers would stand and be welcomed by the members of the Assembly.

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly eight students from the Community Vocational Centre in Loon Lake. For those members who aren't familiar with where Loon Lake is, it's about eight miles from Red Earth Creek. The students are seated in the public gallery, and they're accompanied by their leader, Mr. Francois Prévost, and his wife Jackie. I ask that they rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. R. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you, and through you to the members of this Assembly, 60 students from the J.S. McCormick elementary school in Lacombe. They are accompanied today by parents Mrs. Myrtle Mundorf, Mrs. Benita Bannerman, and Mrs. Ann Hunt; teachers Mrs. Laurie Craigie, Mr. Norm Start, and Mrs. Margaret McLaughlin; and bus driver Mr. Lee. They are seated in the public gallery. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

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

MR. SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. leader, but I should perhaps refer briefly to a matter which arose yesterday in the Assembly, when a point of order came up in regard to questions addressed to a chairman of a committee of the House. There is no doubt that questions addressed to private members — that is to say, members who are not ministers — are exceptions. Included in those exceptions are questions to chairmen of committees, especially before the committee has reported.

Yesterday, in order to prevent a delay in the proceedings of the House and in the conduct of the question period, I indicated that without establishing any precedent, the questions might proceed, and that I would like to look up some citations which I wanted to confirm before dealing with the matter more definitely. I have since had an opportunity to do that. I'm convinced that questions of the kind that were being asked yesterday are in fact in order and may be asked.

In order not to prolong this explanation, I respectfully suggest that any hon. members who might wish to do so might refer to citations 366 and 649 of the fifth edition of *Beauchesne*. Although they do not expressly deal with the situation we had yesterday, I think there is an inescapable implication in those citations that that kind of question is in order. It would be otherwise with questions which might ask about what was going on in the committee or what sort of report the committee was preparing, because obviously those questions would have to await receipt of the committee's report. But what we had yesterday were questions addressed to a chairman in relation to preparations which were being made by the committee for the task assigned to it by the Assembly. As I mentioned, I'm able to say quite definitely that those questions were in order.

Human Rights

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question this afternoon to the hon. Minister of Labour, in that minister's capacity as being responsible for the activities of the Alberta Human Rights Commission. Has the minister given any consideration to, or the government of Alberta reviewed the option of, directing the Human Rights Commission to undertake a wide-scale campaign across the province of public information designed to dispel the repugnant doctrines of anti-Semitism and the assertion that the holocaust is a myth and that there's insufficient evidence to support its occurrence?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, in the normal course of events, I have not found it necessary to give directions to an agency which, in the manner of the Alberta Human Rights Commission, is operating with a certain degree of independence. First of all, that is not in keeping with the relationship which I understand should exist between my office and the commission. Secondly, it is repugnant to my manner of doing things in any event. And thirdly, the alacrity and attention that the commission normally brings to its matters does not require me to interfere in a process such as the hon. leader suggests.

For the hon. leader's information, I am indirectly advised that the chairman of the Alberta Human Rights Commission has in fact been in contact with the parent, I believe, who originally raised the question. Secondly, later this week there will be a meeting between myself, the chairman, and the director of the commission. I'm not sure this is a subject matter that is on the commission chairman's agenda for that meeting, but it is one of those

matters that we do normally discuss from time to time; that is, the long-term programs of the commission. I would assuredly expect that given the publicity of this particular instance, that will be a topic of conversation.

MR. NOTLEY: In the absence of the Premier, Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Government House Leader. Given the precedent in 1947, where the then Premier, Mr. Manning, divorced himself from certain positions taken by caucus members, is the government of Alberta prepared to make a clear statement at this time on the question of anti-Semitism and the publicity surrounding certain alleged statements on the holocaust, to assure Albertans who may be concerned about the position of this government on that matter?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. leader would have to be more explicit about what he considers to be the matters that have received some publicity. There's no matter before the House, of course, in that respect. As to caucus members, I've indicated that the private views of caucus members are not discussed in caucus. Obviously we discuss public matters and public business in caucus.

I'm perhaps not as well briefed on the history of 1947 as the hon. leader is. I do not know that I should purport to try to adopt practices without knowing what they are.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, just a very brief word of explanation. There were certain changes in the composition of the cabinet in 1947, due to the report that year of the Social Credit board and certain anti-Semitic statements contained in that board. Mr. Manning made it clear that the government in no way, shape, or form endorsed those statements.

My question to the Government House Leader is with respect to the publicity surrounding at least several statements, one of which is attributed to a member of the Legislature. Will the government clearly state its position on the issue of the holocaust and the suggestion that this may in fact be a myth and that there isn't sufficient evidence to back its occurrence?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, once again, we all speak for ourselves. The hon. leader does; members of the government also do on such matters. I have indicated that in my view, I couldn't understand how anyone could make such a statement that there was any absence of evidence. Mr. Speaker, I don't think it is a matter that is before the Assembly in any sense. We're talking about interpretations of history. I have my own interpretations of that. I underline the fact that I don't think anyone who looked into the matter in any serious way at all could come to any other conclusion than the well-recorded one of history. It is beyond me why the hon. leader thinks that's a matter for the Assembly.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Labour. In his discussions with the Alberta Human Rights Commission, will the minister request that the commission investigate the operations of C.H. Douglas Social Credit Supplies of Sherwood Park, to determine whether or not there may in fact be a violation of the Individual's Rights Protection Act with respect to certain publications that organization is dispensing? I'll table copies for members of the Assembly, but there are such publications as *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*; *Holocaust: Sneak Attack on Chris-*

tianity; *Anne Frank's Diary: A Hoax*; and *The Zionist Connection: What Price Peace?* I'll have the pages circulate these publications.

My question to the minister is: will there be any request of the Human Rights Commission that this kind of literature be reviewed by the commission, to determine whether or not it fits within the guidelines of not only the Charter of Rights but the two primary pieces of legislation established by this Legislature in 1972?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, on a previous occasion last year and perhaps one before that, but very recently, the Alberta Human Rights Commission has involved itself in checking certain types of hate literature, if I may use that expression. The commission is very conscious of the fine line between matters which are subject to criminal prosecution and those which fall within the ambit of its jurisdiction. In terms of the material that has been tabled, Mr. Speaker, I am of course totally unfamiliar with it and would have to make any commitments following an opportunity to review it.

The other observation I make, however, is that pursuant to the Individual's Rights Protection Act, which I presume the hon. leader has read and is familiar with, there is an opportunity for a third party to lay a complaint if the third party so wishes. Mr. Speaker, in my judgment, the hon. Leader of the Opposition would in fact be a third party, along with a million-plus other people in Alberta.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. So I hope would be the Minister of Labour. Perhaps we could make a joint representation.

In light of public concern about this matter, however, I will ask the Minister of Labour whether or not he will give the assurance that the question of the distribution of what has been termed hate literature, pursuant to section 281 of the Criminal Code, I believe — whether or not the minister will ask the commission to consider a major public information campaign and, given the importance of this issue, whether the government will make available sufficient public funding to undertake such an information campaign.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to advise the hon. member that the requests of the hon. leader to me in my capacity as minister which I am now hearing are very suggestive that I be rather directive to the Alberta Human Rights Commission. I have been involved in debate with the hon. leader when his view was quite contrary to what he is now expressing; that is, that the minister responsible for the Alberta Human Rights Commission should interfere as little as possible, if at all, in the commission's operations. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, as I expressed earlier, it has been my policy to have very thorough and reasonably frequent discussions. It is in keeping with the attitude and wish of the chairman of the commission — and, for that matter, periodically of the members of the commission — that I do meet and that we review their objectives and their budget and the adequacy or otherwise of the same.

Mr. Speaker, I am quite prepared and, as I've indicated — quite apart from any notice I have had of the line of questioning that is under way today — a meeting has been established for later this week between me and the chairman and director of the commission. I am sure that the matter will be raised at that time. But I should point out that in carrying out its duties under the Individual's

Rights Protection Act, the commission has the responsibility to address its own priorities. As the commission demonstrated in 1982, in dealing with a matter of some literature which should not have been distributed, I believe it did address its priorities and responsibilities and did in fact refer some of that literature to the police for further attention.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. I concur that if the minister is having a meeting, I'm sure it's not a question of directing. Would the minister take the opportunity to assure the Assembly and, through the Assembly, the people of Alberta that the government would in fact look favorably upon such an information campaign to acquaint people with the dangers of hate literature?

MR. YOUNG: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to reaffirm for the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the government of the province is well known for its Bills nos. 1 and 2, the first Bills of this government, in support of individual rights. I don't believe I need to elaborate on the concern the government has that there should be understanding and compassion and that persons ought to consider carefully what they write and speak about others.

In terms of the suggestion the hon. leader makes about a publicity campaign, I'm not sure all experts would agree that that is the best way to deal with that kind of literature. In fact, it seems to me — as has been reported to me by others, their opinion — that sometimes that kind of campaigning just adds further publicity to unfortunate theories and suggestions which none of us, in keeping with the Individual's Rights Protection Act, wish to see promoted.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question.

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

MR. NOTLEY: I direct this supplementary question to the hon. Attorney General. Given section 281 of the Criminal Code with respect to hate literature, has the Attorney General's Department given any consideration to investigating some of this literature to determine whether or not it is in fact a violation of the Criminal Code?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, prosecutions are considered under that section, based on complaints received. That puts the administration of that particular section of the Criminal Code in the same class as the balance of the Criminal Code. A complaint is received, and it is investigated in order to see whether there is sufficient evidence to proceed. If there is, a charge is laid. Mr. Speaker, I might add that today the hon. leader has produced for us photostats of a document which refers to some publications. I don't know offhand whether any of those publications have been brought to the attention of the police or any Crown agents. If they were, they would be looked at in that way.

I might add that since the issues raised flow to a large extent, I believe, from the recent hearing in respect of a teacher in central Alberta, with respect to which the Minister of Education made a full declaration the other day, I have asked whether the board of reference which dealt with that matter has a record or transcript of the

proceedings. If one exists, we would look at the record or transcript to see whether, in that particular situation, there is any need to give consideration to concerns about section 281 of the Criminal Code.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Attorney General. Is the accuracy of reporting the comments of members outside this Legislative Assembly a concern of this Legislature, and would those reports be considered in the same context as the Leader of the Opposition is referring to, under whatever section it is in the Criminal Code?

MR. SPEAKER: With great respect to the hon. member, she is asking for an expression of opinion, and possibly one that is like other expressions of opinion the Assembly sometimes makes in the form of adopted resolutions. It could be a subject for debate.

MR. NOTLEY: Put it on the Order Paper, Shirley.

Crowsnest Pass Freight Rates

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, my second question is to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. It concerns what appears to be a strategy paper to the Premier and government members of the Assembly, a copy of which went to my colleague but not to me — just an oversight, I'm sure — on the Crow rate. I ask if the minister intends to table in the Assembly the:

Background information for discussions with constituents, speeches or media requests with regard to the Alberta position ...

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I can't work from a document that I'm not aware of. I'm not in the habit of circulating copies of anything in the House that haven't been filed. Until I have an opportunity to review it, I would have no further comment.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Just so the minister isn't left in the dark, it's April 15, 1983. But with respect to the Crow question, I ask the minister whether the position of the government of Alberta is that there will be an attempt "to convince people who oppose any change" to the Crow. Is the intention of the government of Alberta to undertake any advertising campaign or produce brochures on this subject?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: No, Mr. Speaker, at this point it's not our intention to advertise. If a specific need arose, of course, we would look at it. All members realize that being in a time of restraint, even the document we put out with respect to the policy position was done very economically.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. One of the points this particular document makes is the advantages of trucking. My question to the minister is: what discussions have been held between the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Transportation with respect to the major increase in the maintenance budget for Alberta roads that would be required should this particular proposal be translated into future action?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of the particular proposal, but some discussion took place as

to if there were additional trucking on roads. Being a landlocked province, not having access to the river systems like they have in the United States, and being so far from tidewater, we're looking at all modes of transportation.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Is the minister in a position to outline to the Assembly what evidence was presented to the government of Alberta to demonstrate the Crow benefits if they are eliminated? What evidence has been presented to assure the government of Alberta that there are sufficient performance guarantees in the Pepin plan to ensure that higher rates will in fact find their way into identifiable commitments to improve the rail system?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, that's been a concern of ours all along. We've had a deep concern that if we are going to change the system and it is not going to be improved, why bother changing it? If we're going to change the system and have rail improvement, there have to be performance guarantees by the railroads that there will be some performance, and there has to be some way to assure that. If producers in this province will be in any way disadvantaged by a change in the system — and I would say a distinct disadvantage certainly would be not having performance guarantees by the railroads, being that we're landlocked and we're tied into that mode of transportation — I would find it completely unacceptable.

Federal Budget — Capital Works

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Provincial Treasurer is with regard to the federal budget last evening and the \$2.4 billion capital works budget. Could the minister indicate how much of this money has been allocated to Alberta? As well, have discussions gone on between Ottawa and Alberta with regard to this matter?

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the federal government's plans are; they have not shared their planning with us. The federal budget indicated that some 100 projects of a capital nature had been decided on for the country. But we have not received any information, nor have we been asked to provide information over weeks past, as to what those projects might be.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Does the minister have any indication as to what types of job opportunities will be created in Alberta by these projects? Is there any indication of a meeting with the federal government at an early date?

MR. HYNDMAN: No, Mr. Speaker. At this stage, I have not received any indication from the federal government as to the provision to us of details as to what they contemplate. I don't know whether any other minister has at this time. We hope further information will be available to this province and others as soon as possible.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Has the Minister of Finance requested a meeting with the Provincial Treasurer as a follow-up to the budget presented last night?

MR. HYNDMAN: No, he has not, Mr. Speaker.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. The budget of the province had an estimate of \$964 million in transfer revenue from the federal government. Could the minister indicate whether last night's budget will affect that in any way? The announcement in the budget was something like 4.8 per cent, and I think Alberta's percentage was 5.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, we'll have to do our homework on that and dig through the detail of some seven large documents which are available. On a preliminary reading, there's no indication of any significant change in the estimate of federal revenues which had been anticipated overall to the province of Alberta from the federal government in the existing fiscal year. Only a review of the fine print will tell us whether or not that is the case.

MR. ZIP: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Lalonde mentioned that the federal government has ready 100 projects across Canada to provide stimulus and employment to the country. How many of these are in Alberta?

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, we don't know from the federal government how many are in Alberta. We hope that information will be provided shortly.

Hospital User Fees

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question to the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. It's with regard to user fees for seniors. Why are hospital user fees to apply to senior citizens, the very people who are always exempt from making health care premium payments?

MR. RUSSELL: In order to answer that question, Mr. Speaker, we'll have to assume two things: that hospital boards will, in their discretion, bring in these user fees; and secondly, that they will apply them to senior citizens in their hospitals. In the event that that does happen, at various meetings we've had representations from a variety of private senior citizens who have pointed out the very generous aspect of programs provided through the government by way of assistance, including the full payment of their health care premiums and Alberta Blue Cross. They've said: we really can afford to pay some part of our share. It's not a legitimate conclusion to say that just because a person has reached the age of 65, they're necessarily in a low-income bracket. If they are, then they will be excused. But at their suggestion, if they can afford to pay — in this case, in many instances they made a reasonable proposition that if they can afford to pay, they should pay.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question to the minister. Has any discussion occurred with the Council on Aging regarding the proposed user fees and their effect on senior citizens? If not, will the minister undertake to have discussions with this group?

MR. RUSSELL: No, Mr. Speaker, I haven't met with the Council on Aging on that particular item. I believe there is correspondence pending with them. If they want to meet with me, of course they will.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister inform the Assembly how and why this government drew the line for user fee exemptions at lower than half the federal poverty line, a level at which many of our senior citizens live?

MR. RUSSELL: I think we previously indicated two things, Mr. Speaker. Those income levels are under review, because they apply not only to user fees but to the health care premium subsidy eligibility. We have started an advertising program with respect to that and expect to be able to make an announcement within not too many weeks. Insofar as relating that figure to some other figure developed by another government, that's something that has to be given further consideration.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the people most in need of hospital care are senior citizens — they're double the people under 65 — and user fees would have the most serious financial effect on them, will the government reconsider its position on user fees, just for seniors?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, just to put things in their proper perspective, I should repeat the story the lady phoned me with last week, whereby she said: you know, it works out to 41 cents a day; you can't even buy a cup of coffee for that; what's all the yelling about? I think that story's worth repeating, and that's why I repeated it.

Mr. Speaker, our senior citizens make up the majority of patients who are in hospitals for a long time, getting auxiliary care, or extended care via the nursing home system. They're already paying well in excess of these fees in those institutions, and we haven't had any complaints about that. In fact, in the event that a senior citizen is transferred from an auxiliary hospital or a nursing home, where the care is substantially cheaper, they actually make money and are much better off for the time they're in an active-care hospital, where the care is much more expensive. And that simply doesn't make sense, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you for the 41-cent story again.

A supplementary question. If more information is given to the minister, from the Council on Aging or other groups, that this is going to create a significant hardship on a number of senior citizens, would the government reappraise user fees for senior citizens?

MR. SPEAKER: Quite clearly, this is a hypothetical question.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I'll rephrase the question. The Council on Aging says this could create a significant impact on senior citizens. Because of that, would the minister reconsider the position?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, again I've got to repeat that those income subsidy levels are under review, and within the next few weeks I expect to be able to make an announcement with respect to those levels. So I think that in that sense, the hon. member may be jumping to a hasty conclusion. Secondly, there are exemptions; there are the annual caps, whether for a family or an individual. And thirdly, there's an appeal system. So I think senior citizens or any Alberta citizens are well protected by the guidelines of the program, as have been outlined.

MR. BATIUK: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the hon. minister advise whether a number of hospitals which have been operating deficit-free will be implementing user fees?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, the prime purpose of the discretionary user fee is to provide boards with a source of income to make up deficits in the event that their global funding received from the province is insufficient. If a hospital is not operating at a deficit, there is of course no reason for them to institute user fees. So the challenge is there for these autonomous boards to live within their means.

Constitution — Property Rights

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. Has he had a chance to assess the motion now before the House of Commons with respect to the potential inclusion of property rights in the federal constitution? Is he aware of what actions have taken place in that regard in the House of Commons today?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the Assembly yesterday, it was the intention of the government of Canada to present a resolution which would have the effect of incorporating the subject of property rights as part of the Charter of Rights. I understand that such a motion was presented to the House of Commons today, that the Official Opposition agreed to the time limitation on the debate which would take place on such a motion being one day only, and that at some future date, such a resolution may very well be introduced by the government of Canada for debate in the House of Commons.

While I have not actually seen it, I understand it differs somewhat from the wording in the Alberta Bill of Rights and in what was known as the Diefenbaker bill of rights, with regard to the "enjoyment of property, and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law", which has been replaced by some words relating to principles of fundamental justice. We will therefore have to carefully take into consideration what might be meant by the change in the wording as it has been introduced now.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to note as well that the resolution which has been suggested has not been formally introduced. It has been a matter of whether or not the Official Opposition would agree to the time limitation on the debate on that subject. I gather it has been agreed to today by the Official Opposition. I'm not sure of the position relative to the other party in the House of Commons at the present time.

MR. ANDERSON: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In reviewing the wording of the motion currently before the House of Commons, has the minister reached the conclusion that Alberta will remain opposed to the inclusion of property rights in the federal constitution, preferring the inclusion of such in the Alberta Bill of Rights?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I tried to deal with that yesterday. It is still the position of the government of Alberta that since property rights are the constitutional responsibility of the provinces pursuant to the Constitution Act, 1867, formerly known as the British North America Act — Section 92(13) makes it clear that that is a sole and clear constitutional responsibility of provincial

legislatures. Given the fact that our province has as its primacy piece of legislation the Alberta Bill of Rights, which provides therein for the "enjoyment of property, and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law", and given the amending formula in place in the constitution of Canada, it is not necessary or desirable to have the federal government assume a role in the subject of property rights, as it would do if it were to become part of the Charter of Rights and the constitution of Canada. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, our position remains the same.

MR. ANDERSON: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister indicate if he's had any information from the federal government which might tell this Assembly when the government plans to consult the provinces with respect to their constitutional rights, regarding any changes to the federal constitution?

MR. HORSMAN: No, Mr. Speaker. As I and the Premier, in his supplementary answer, indicated yesterday in the Assembly, the subject of the inclusion of property rights as part of the Charter of Rights was treated as a peripheral item — I think I can use that term — in the most recent discussions relative to the constitution, which were primarily designed to deal with the aboriginal peoples of Canada. It is true that the case for inclusion was put forward by the province of British Columbia at those meetings, but no extensive discussion took place relative to that matter. After a brief survey of the various provinces, it was clear that there was very little support by other provinces for inclusion of the subject of property rights in the charter. Therefore, it came as somewhat of a surprise to find the initiative being undertaken by the Prime Minister, since there has been no consultation with the provinces subsequent to the meeting in mid-March which resulted in the accord respecting aboriginal rights.

MR. ANDERSON: Is it the intention of the minister to ask the federal government to consult with the provinces — in fact meet with them — before they proceed further with this resolution in the House of Commons?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, such a course of action would certainly be desirable, in view of the very difficult and complex issue which has now been raised relative to the constitution. The suggestion inherent in the hon. member's question will certainly be taken under consideration.

Federal Budget — Student Assistance

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. In light of the federal government's announcement to increase assistance to students in the amount of about \$60 million over the next two years and the fact that the government indicated increased assistance to students in its throne speech, can the minister indicate to the Assembly if the minister is reconsidering his slashing of the assistance budget to students by about 18 per cent?

MR. JOHNSTON: I remember the words of the Member for Edmonton Glengarry when he said that the Member for Clover Bar continued to turn opportunity into calamity, and he's doing it again, Mr. Speaker.

But I'll attempt to deal with the issue before us, which the federal government attempted to outline in the budget

last night. First of all, the minister of state who is responsible for assistance to students has reacted positively to the recommendations of the Council of Ministers of Education, who for some time have been pursuing with the federal government the objective that the federal government should assume much greater responsibility for the cost of putting students through universities. Frankly, the reaction of the budget last evening was as a result of that argument.

In the case of Alberta, there is no question that students receive a very substantial assistance. What has happened in this case is that the federal government will attempt, by way of loan, to provide \$100 per week as opposed to the some \$50 they were providing. That will bring their ratio of support to the students in the province of Alberta up to about 35 per cent. The rest of that is being absorbed by the province in a very specific way, most of it by way of grant — that grant is not repayable — and subsequent to that, the province picks up a very substantial remission opportunity.

In a nutshell, Mr. Speaker, the federal government is reacting to requests put forward by the provinces. They really have done some tinkering with two of the objectives; that is, the extension of interest and the extension to part-time students. Frankly, the balance of the costs of students is being borne by the province. Moreover, there is in fact no cutback by this government with respect to assistance to students.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I'll ignore the minister's little pleasantries, because it's fine to be as rich and affluent as the hon. minister is, but the students are not in quite that position.

In light of the fact that the projections we have show that the student increase will be escalating but the support will remain constant, can the minister indicate if he will be looking at a special warrant this fall to raise the assistance to students so that they can go back to university?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, the member has already trapped himself, recognizing in front of the Assembly that we did bring forward a special warrant this past fall to assist the students because he demands were up. Certainly this government will continue to reassess the position of students. Every year we reassess the costs each student faces, whether it's tuition or housing, and that is incorporated in the amount of money provided by the province. I can give this Assembly the commitment that if the student numbers are up and the costs are up and my budget is not able to meet that commitment, I will certainly be going back to my colleagues to request additional assistance.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Labour or the Minister responsible for Personnel Administration. Can either of the hon. ministers indicate if the government is reconsidering its position to raise the hourly rate that students are paid for summer jobs, so they can earn sufficient funding to qualify for student assistance this fall?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the question relates to a variety of programs that the Minister of Manpower has produced. In that regard, there is a range of rates, depending upon the specific program. So I am not sure that I can reflect further upon that. I am just not sure what the hon. Member for Clover Bar has in mind.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. If students are at the minimum rate they can earn per hour, they would not be able to earn sufficient funds so they could qualify for assistance.

MR. YOUNG: Again, Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the rate for certain of the programs is different from one program to another and, to some degree, is contingent upon employer discretion as well. If we're talking about the minimum wage for students, that's another factor. Now that I understand the hon. Member for Clover Bar is talking about government employees, I will pass the question over to the Minister responsible for Personnel Administration.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe I can add much to the comments of the Minister of Labour, who has indicated, on behalf of the Minister of Manpower, the variety of programs. However, if a student is seeking and obtains government employment, the student is paid the rate that's included in the program, depending on whether it's STEP or some other program. If it's a seasonal job, then the job rates are as determined and established through the normal process.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

head: COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will the committee please come to order.

Department of Education

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, a few comments to the minister. The first one relates to the changes in curriculum that the elementary and junior and senior high schools are experiencing. In some of my meetings with various groups, especially with teachers, the question came up about these rapid changes in curriculum. Often the curriculum changes seem to be ahead of the textbooks. The newer textbooks aren't of the same quality as the old ones. They are being put together fairly quickly, and as a result many of the answers in the backs of the books are incorrect.

I wonder if the minister has some comment about the speed at which curriculum changes are introduced and how that is attempted to be co-ordinated with the availability of the supply of proper textbooks. I understand that many — maybe not all, but many — feel that the former math text used in many of the senior high grades was much better than the text they have at present.

During my remarks on the budget, Mr. Chairman, I made some comments related to the three Rs in schools. Some 10-plus years ago, I understand about 1,000 minutes a week were spent in the classroom on the basic three Rs. Now we're down to somewhere in the neighborhood of 540. A new drama course is to be introduced in grade school, which will take approximately 35 to 40 minutes, so that brings it down to just over 500 minutes a week spent on the three Rs. At least in my limited understanding of education, if you come out of elementary school without the proper background in basic education, you're going to have a tough time picking that up

in junior and senior high. So if they don't get a proper background to start with, it's going to be very difficult for students to continue on.

I wonder if the minister could make some comment about how we expect to have the three Rs properly taught to students when we keep coming in with changes, introducing such things as drama in elementary school. I question the need for that because I think many teachers work those kinds of things in with their other programs anyway at that level of schooling. How does he see the cutting of the amount of time spent on the three Rs affecting the end product of the student?

Mr. Speaker, I believe last year in the estimates I made some comments relating to the grants for handicapped and severely handicapped students who are being taught in the classrooms. I fully realize that on student ratios in the larger school districts and larger schools, it is much easier to move numbers around than it is in some of the districts that I represent, especially in Medicine Hat, No. 4 rural, and the county of Forty Mile. School division work becomes more difficult when you have one or two students in the whole school that are handicapped, in attempting to move your staff around to cope with them and the time it takes for the grants from Education to follow those handicapped students.

Mr. Chairman, I've heard varying comments about the regional offices in the department. Some groups say: get rid of the regional offices; when they changed the system of appointing superintendents, they were places for former superintendents who worked for the government to retire to. You also hear the other side, that these offices are useful. I've had some people tell me that they find the offices useful, especially those in smaller jurisdictions. They have an expert they can telephone and talk to when they have a problem in their school, whereas maybe a lot of the larger jurisdictions have those experts in house or on staff, and they don't have as much need for the regional office. So there are both sides to that story.

The one that came through with various groups was questioning the size of the department and the staff in Edmonton, even more so than the size of the staff in the regional office. I suppose that's a comment that we as MLAs always get about the numbers of civil servants we as a government employ in the province. I just forward that to the minister. There are those concerns about possible duplication, where certain people are in the regional office and indeed the same kinds of people are on staff in Edmonton. The concern of the public is that they're duplicating jobs.

The building quality restoration program, or whatever, is a good program. I think I missed some of the words in that, but I'm sure the minister knows what I mean; there are more initials to it than that. I hope it continues in some form beyond its deadline because it is important to smaller school jurisdictions in the upgrading of schools. But I must say, Mr. Chairman, that many of the problems that occur in the upgrading of the schools are caused by various other departments of government insisting on certain changes in the buildings.

In many cases, these buildings may be quite adequate to carry on the operation of the school, and indeed many people don't see too much wrong with them. But some inspector comes along and reads the rules and regulations one way, and right away you've got a list of several thousands of dollars of repairs that have to be put in immediately. Somebody else comes along and reads another set of regulations a different way and you're doing it again.

It seems you're forever trying to catch up to the regulations that we as government seem to continually make to change these buildings. Thus we have to supply a program that takes care of the changes we ask for. In some cases, we don't have a chance to do general upgrading under that. It's just a time when the amount has to be used just to upgrade because, somewhere along the way, we have decided to change our regulations.

I recall that when we put smoke detectors in hospitals, it wasn't supposed to cost us a lot of money per bed, per hospital in comparison. It was something that was going to be easy to do, and these sorts of things. It ended up costing us maybe hundreds of millions of dollars by the time we got through with a very small change and people got through writing the regulations for it.

I think the constant change in regulations is something we have to look at under the building quality restoration program, not only by the Department of Education, as I have said, Mr. Chairman, but by various other departments: the buildings branch, the fire inspectors, et cetera. We should have some sort of policy — and maybe Education should spearhead it — where we put all these people in a class and see if we can read the same regulations and get the same advice. Although, I suppose it would be like having four lawyers in a room and getting five opinions. We might be up against that.

Mr. Chairman, I'm sure the minister would be disappointed if I made some remarks on education and didn't say anything about school busing. Other members said various things about the quality of school buses in divisions, et cetera. I challenge them to go to Forty Mile county and even Medicine Hat rural school district, who have taken the free enterprise route and gone to private bus contractors. The quality and operation of those buses are top grade. Those people take pride in the operation, appearance, and mechanical quality of their buses. I know they have problems with increasing costs, with the ever-present loading factor, et cetera. There is a test case in the county relating to the loading factor and the amount of time students should be on a bus. I wonder if the minister has some comments about that.

In the previous day of estimates, we heard encouragement to spend more and more and more money on education, as if the huge amounts of money poured in are going to solve the problem. Mr. Chairman, I don't believe that just constantly pouring in large amounts of money is going to solve all the problems. The problems will be solved by the quality of teachers and, more so, the dedication of those teachers. There are some very, very dedicated teachers teaching out there. I've met with groups of them, and I know they are very dedicated people. I think they need assistance.

Maybe we're expecting our teachers to do too much. Maybe many of the parents, because of various problems, are abdicating their responsibility to their children and expecting the teachers to teach them virtually everything. I think students should go to school with a basic understanding that their parents have taught them: the basis of respect for one's self and one's friends, for other people and for other people's property, et cetera. It would very often seem that the parents are not giving their children these basic essentials of education. Thus they are expecting the teachers to teach it — and are then ever too ready to condemn the teachers and say, well, we've got a terrible bunch of teachers there; look at the product they're turning out — never considering that some of that product is a result of their lack of teaching of their family.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MRS. KOPER: Mr. Chairman, may I commend the minister on his willingness to accept the challenges of his difficult portfolio for a second term. When one in three persons in Alberta is involved in education — of course, that includes the students in our schools — it's hard to think of an area of governance that touches more people's lives. I also believe that is what makes this portfolio so difficult. Everyone feels that all schools should be run the same way as the one with which they are most familiar.

I really appreciate some of the comments of the hon. members preceding me in the discussion of the estimates. As an educator, I can understand the growing uneasiness about what is happening in the schools today, as was expressed by one hon. member. We as adults are having to face massive changes that we don't fully comprehend. We wouldn't be human if we weren't uneasy about the process itself. I heartily agree with the hon. Member for Cypress regarding the correlation of the type of teaching and the type of product that emerges from our schools.

Mr. Chairman, I have five questions regarding the estimates as they relate to program direction in Alberta Education. First, I realize that the largest proportion of the budget goes directly to salaries for people, but is there any provision in the budget specifically to assist schools to initiate the new courses mandated by the Department of Education? I realize the building quality restoration plan is in question at this point, but in courses like mathematics, if each child is to have a text, each text will cost about \$12, even at the discounted rate through the book branch. I understand that the new mandated business education course will cost about \$80,000 per classroom to enable each classroom to enter the computer age.

My second question, Mr. Chairman, concerns the program development department and was actually expressed very well by the hon. Member for Cypress. I am concerned about the duplication of program development resources, both material and human, in large urban centres. I wonder if there was any thought given in this budget to finding a way of working together with the program development personnel in larger centres, deploying them differently so they would serve urban and rural. I think this would share the expertise and ideas, and perhaps even meet one of the objectives, which is to make some sort of standard resources available to all areas of our province. I think the duplication of services could be eliminated. It appears that we only need to resolve problems in administration.

My third question is regarding the responsibility of programs such as the early childhood services and community school programs. These programs are designed to further the interests of more than one government department. I'm aware of one community school proposal at G.W. Skene school that has been approved and yet not funded. I wonder if the minister could indicate the kind of support given by the other sponsoring government departments, financially and in program administration ways, and whether the programs can be expanded or will be discontinued.

My fourth question is in regard to the Kratzmann report. Many members have addressed this and only talked about issues of pupil/teacher ratio. Few have discussed the main thrust of the report, which appears to me to be the most important move that could be made; that is, to develop a close community involvement in the schools. Many of these items do not mean added expenditures of money. I also wondered if any program initiatives and encouragement are being given to schools in order to increase this type of community involvement.

Mr. Chairman, my closing question to the minister concerns A Future of Choices; A Choice of Futures. That's the name of the report submitted to this government many years ago, possibly many years before its time. I wonder if the minister or his department ever have the opportunity to look at this document. Are we using any of these choices?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to participate in this discussion of the estimates of the Department of Education. In my preamble to some questions for the minister, I want to make some comments about a number of positive areas in this ministry. Positive, worth-while, and needed programs exist throughout the province because of this particular ministry. One can think about the initiative shown, for example, through the EOF program, the educational opportunity fund program. That fund has resulted in many new initiatives and innovative programs in school districts from one end of this province to the other.

A second accolade must be given for the work study and work experience programs that proliferate throughout this province. Mr. Chairman, some five or six years ago only hundreds of students participated in these programs. Last year, over 10,000 students participated in work study and work experience programs from one end of Alberta to the other. These programs are available to students from grades 7 to 12. Students in junior high can go out and spend some time on the worksite to receive first-hand experience and to permit some exploration for these adolescents. I know that these numbers have been increasing, and indeed that is long overdue.

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

At the high school level, many thousands of students participate in work experience and work study programs as well. Many of these students receive payment for the time they spend on the worksite. Many of them are permitted to experience not just one aspect of the world of work in a particular place of employment but many, many more. The leadership from the Minister of Education in this area, I believe, should continue. There is no question in my mind that more of these types of programs should occur to assist the student in bridging the gap between school and work.

One can also talk and give accolades to the minister with respect to the many programs for special education students. These programs and initiatives to help severely disabled and learning disabled students receive an education commensurate to their needs are vital and necessary. Many, many programs exist throughout this province through the initiative of the Minister of Education. Computer literacy, the computer in the classroom, is slowly becoming a reality. Mr. Chairman, I believe we need more initiative on behalf of all Canadians in this particular technology. It is happening slowly, but I believe that we need more and at an earlier age.

The move to new methods of examinations is welcomed, as I mentioned in my maiden speech, by many of my constituents. I'm pleased that we are moving in this direction. Another positive area is the Ben Calf Robe school in the constituency of Edmonton Kingsway, a unique school for native students which has been extremely well received by the native population. Its existence over the last three years has been very positive; indeed, the population in that school is increasing. I'm

also pleased that there has been some progress in the area of gifted education. I understand from the comments of the minister that more programs will possibly be coming in the future.

However, Mr. Chairman, there are improvements required throughout the province. First of all, I think that we are in need of more special education consultants and aides, specifically in the rural areas. Since my election, I have had a number of delegations from those involved and working with visually impaired and blind children, for example. These parents and teachers are requesting more help at an earlier age for their children. How frustrating it is for many parents to know that progress can indeed be made; however, the resources and people are not available. I would ask the minister to consider staffing the regional offices with more specialists in this particular area.

Secondly, a hard look at our vocational education programs has to occur to enable more students to learn more about different vocational, industrial, and business education programs. Can schools afford to continue to purchase the expensive machinery and tools? Do the teachers have the knowledge of tomorrow's technology? In some areas of North America, secondary schools utilize the facilities and, indeed, the staff of postsecondary institutions. Might the minister comment on the need to review vocational, industrial, and business education programming?

Career education has to become a reality if we are to give students the understanding and skills to help them survive in the society of the 1990s and beyond. Mr. Chairman, in Canada there are some 7,000 occupations for young people to choose from and some 20,000 specific jobs. Where do children and students presently learn about these occupations? Might it be in the spring of grade 12, a month or so before they graduate, perhaps in a few guidance 9 classes? Perhaps they have had a teacher from kindergarten to grade 12 in one or two of those years who has said, the world of work is important.

Mr. Chairman, I don't think we can leave this to chance any more. There is just too much need on behalf of students and children to learn about the world of work. Career education programs that have been in existence in some schools in our province and throughout Canada and North America, I believe, should be implemented from kindergarten to the grade 12 level.

Mr. Chairman, so people don't get upset and think that these programs are telling children in grades 1 or 2 that plumbers are better than lawyers or that lawyers are better than doctors of veterinary medicine, that's not the case. The goal of career education, however, is to create an awareness on behalf of the young person that work is here to stay and that advantages accrue from work. There's no question that when we talk about the development of a child, we so often talk about educational development, personal development, or emotional development, but we don't talk about career development.

It doesn't begin in the graduating year of a student. It begins when a child realizes that mom or dad has a lunch bucket or a paper bag and is leaving home and going somewhere for the whole day. To me it's a tragedy that there is such a void between kindergarten and grade 12 for the students to really indeed learn about the world of work. In essence then, career education is saying: let's do something in the schools to help students understand themselves and the world of work; let's do something in the schools to help children understand that decision-making is extremely important, and career decision-

making is not looking into a crystal ball.

As an educator and a parent, I believe we can do better in our social studies curriculum. I request more Canadian and Alberta content, more history, and more current events at all grade levels, and I stress all grade levels. I wonder if the minister could comment on that particular area.

Mr. Chairman, we have talked about the inequities experienced by women in the world of work throughout Canada, in this province, and throughout the world. Sex discrimination does exist, and occupational segregation does exist. It will not go away by burying our heads in the sand and saying that it doesn't. We need sex-equity education programs in the schools to deal with the biases — whether they be unconscious or otherwise — of teachers, parents, counsellors, administrators, workers, and employers. We can't assume women will change. It is not the problem of women; it is the problem of all members of society. And we have to start to change attitudes in the primary grades. I hope the minister will respond to this particular proposal.

I believe we should show more leadership in directing school districts to have more field trips, to visit those in the community, to let students experience and explore their world. It is unfortunate that there is a tendency to prepare our young people for the community by isolating them from the community. I must ask why field trips stop in grades 3, 4, or 5? They go like gang busters in kindergarten and in grades 1 and 2. Well again, child development theory says that a child wants to explore his world. How much opportunity do we give those students to see and explore their worlds? Would the minister consider some improved financial assistance to school districts for this particular area?

Continuing education programming is a top priority for many school districts. However, as of recent months, districts have frequently found themselves strapped for funds because of the large increase in numbers, the large increase in enrolments. Would the minister advise this Assembly if changes might be expected in funding continuing education programs?

Mr. Chairman, the provincial government's contribution to education on a per pupil basis and on a percentage basis is the highest in Canada. The percentage funded by local taxes — that is, the supplementary requisition — is the lowest in Canada. Combined provincial and local expenditure on education in Alberta are greater than in any other Canadian province. We have good quality education.

However, we must always look at change, to streamline, to deal with new problems. But changing education has been, and will continue to be, a slow, slow process. Slow because parents, students, administrators, educators, and politicians — indeed all of society — want their say and all have their personal philosophical viewpoint. It is an onerous task to listen and move fast enough but not too fast. The Minister of Education has shown excellent foresight and initiative, and I commend him for this.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Would the minister like to conclude?

MR. NOTLEY: Or set the stage.

MR. KING: Mr. Chairman, what I have tried to do since Monday afternoon is to reorganize the various questions and comments that were made so that I could deal with

those which are related and, I hope, deal with them in a related way.

AN HON. MEMBER: And briefly.

MR. KING: And briefly. First of all, I'd like to deal with the suggestion that the educational system in this province, provincially and locally, is threatened financially and that it is in imminent danger of deteriorated status, if not collapse, because of this financial threat. Very simply, I reject that suggestion outright.

I think there are a couple of points that can be made without argument. In the last four years, when we compare per capita and per pupil investment in education by this province with other Canadian provinces, the fact of the matter is that our rank order has improved. Four years ago, we were third among all Canadian provinces; today we are first among all Canadian provinces. Of course we don't have the benefit of certainty as to the position of Canadian provinces in this fiscal year. But I will say that I expect that Alberta's position on both a per capita and a per pupil basis will be maintained in this fiscal year. I expect that in '83-'84, as in '82-'83, our investment on a per capita and per pupil basis will be first in Canada.

It's also worth noting, Mr. Chairman, that in the last four or five years, the annual increases in provincial financial support have outstripped the consumer price index; that is to say, our support has risen more quickly than has the consumer price index. Last year, for example, the increase in support was in the order of 14.1 per cent; the consumer price index for the province increased in the order of 11 per cent. The increased investment outstripped inflation by approximately 25 per cent. That's last year.

I presume that this substantial support in the last four or five years has reflected itself in qualitative improvements within the system, in a developing or enhanced capacity on the part of the system to sustain itself, and in momentum. Finally I'd like to note that the supplementary requisition for schools, the local property tax support of schools, is on average the lowest in Canada.

To shift slightly in our consideration of the financing of education, Mr. Chairman, I would also like to say that I see no evidence of increasing disparity between rural and urban boards. I would invite further comment on that by any hon. member. In my view, the evidence is that disparity between rural and urban boards has been progressively reduced in the last decade, that there is less disparity now than formerly, which of course is exactly as it should be.

The suggestion, though, that there is increasing disparity merits some comment on the nature of the finance plan in this province. I have said before that I think Alberta's educational finance plan is probably the best such plan in North America. There is always room for improvement. That is why we established the task force on educational finance. But I believe that in general terms, the model for educational finance in this province is likely the best in North America.

One important reason for this is that the program is not one-dimensional; it is multidimensional. It is not exclusively pupil driven. It doesn't respond to enrolment alone, to nothing but enrolment. On the other hand, it is not exclusively program driven, and it is not exclusively equity driven. But in different parts of the plan, the total plan is driven by all three considerations: enrolment, program, and equity.

The School Foundation Program Fund per pupil/per annum grant is obviously enrolment driven. If a board's enrolment goes up, that grant goes up; if enrolment goes down, the grant goes down. On the other hand, program unit grants, many of the special education programs, are program related. You don't get the money unless you offer the program. You get the complementary support if the program is available. Finally, we have aspects of the program that are equity driven. The supplementary requisition equalization grant provides that if your average per pupil assessment is below the province-wide average, you get additional support. If your average is above the province-wide average, you get nothing.

There is constant discussion about aspects of the plan, and one hon. member referred to the position of the Alberta School Trustees' Association. There is constant disagreement about particular aspects of the plan. Positions change over time, and positions are sometimes contradictory. For example, with reference to one of the documents of the Alberta School Trustees' Association, it was observed that one recommendation was:

That the province increase existing categorical grants to assist school jurisdictions with unique circumstances and high-cost educational program needs. . .

Increase the existing categorical grants. On the other hand and, immediately thereafter, it is recommended:

That the province recognize the autonomy of school jurisdictions by merging special grants . . .

that is to say, eliminating them,

. . . and by simplifying the associated grants regulations where this is feasible.

What is a minister to do when, on one hand, he is asked to increase the number or the size of special grants and, on the other hand, it is suggested that he should reduce the number, reduce the size, or merge them. I don't make that as a criticism of the Alberta School Trustees' Association. Like the minister, they are trying to deal with a complex area. They at least recognize that. I'd appreciate the assistance of the hon. member as to which of the two courses of action I should follow.

MR. MARTIN: We'll help you, Dave.

MR. KING: Comment was made about the capital grants, and it is again important to remember that our finance plan separates capital assistance and operating assistance. It distinguishes between the two aspects of finance, and that's appropriate. The fact of the matter is that for those concerned about facilities throughout the province — and I share their concern — the capital budget represented in these estimates is increased 33 per cent over last year's budget. In these times, I think that a 33 per cent increase in the capital budget is pretty creditable.

At the same time and in the course of these remarks, the member slid over an important distinction between supported and unsupported costs. The comments were made with reference to the elimination of the interest-shielding program in future. And the fact of the matter is that, first, that program only has effect on unsupported costs and, secondly, we can demonstrate that boards are able to build elementary, junior high, and high schools in this province within the range of support provided for supported costs. If boards choose to build with bricks rather than concrete, with aluminum rather than stainless steel, if they choose to oversize, that is their responsibility. And their responsibility is to explain to their electorate why that happens.

The boards that choose to build to the common standards of the building code, the boards that choose to build to the standards of the Department of Education, can build and rely exclusively on supported costs, and we can demonstrate that. Part of decentralization, part of respect for local decision-making, is to respect the fact that the local board will live with the consequences of the decisions it makes.

There was another group of issues raised on Monday afternoon that touch directly on classroom activity. One of these was the funding of the extended practicum. The report Theory to Practice recommended that funding for the practicum should be in the order of \$2.28 million to \$3.5 million per year. The government, I might note in the estimates of another department, has provided \$1.75 million per year. That is not, as was suggested, half of the recommendation of the report Theory to Practice, unless you choose to go with the high end of the recommendation rather than with the low end.

At any rate, it's important to remember that when the extended practicum was established five years ago out of new program development fund of the Department of Education, the government's commitment was to financial support for that program during a period of implementation, with the expectation that at the end of the development period, the implementation period, the university itself would accept responsibility for the ongoing funding of the practicum. What has happened is that for whatever reason — and I'm not commenting on the circumstances — five years down the road the universities have said, we are unable to do what we originally agreed to do.

It is on that basis that the government has now undertaken something which was not part of its original undertaking; that is, a major commitment on the part of the government to the value of the extended practicum as a part of the bachelor of education program in the province. The money has been built into the base. The certainty is there, and that commitment goes beyond our original intention.

At the same time, I want to comment about teacher preparation. It has five elements: the first is recruitment and entrance, the second is instruction, the third is the practicum, the fourth is an internship, and the fifth is postcertification professional development. Generally speaking, the research concludes that these are important in the order in which I have ranked them; that in terms of what affects the ultimate success of a teacher in the classroom, recruitment and entrance is most important, followed by instruction, the practicum, the internship, and postcertification professional development.

What we have is the Alberta Teachers' Association making a significant contribution to teacher development, almost exclusively in terms of that part of teacher development which research suggests is the least important. And here we have a commitment from the provincial government to the extended practicum, which is only third on the list of important features. If all the interested parties can't share responsibility, if we can't make the practicum work with what we've got, then the government can certainly re-allocate the resources.

Another issue that was raised was with respect to evaluation. The question was asked: why comprehensives? I won't make as full an answer as I might. I'd like to comment on one thing which influenced our decision. It was not the only factor we took into consideration, but it was an important consideration. It was the policy of the Alberta Teachers' Association at the time the decision

was made. The policy of the Alberta Teachers' Association was that they were opposed to departmental examinations. I understand that the reasons for their opposition could be summarized in this way. First, they believed that the classroom teacher was best qualified to judge course work; secondly, they were opposed to departmentals because they might too easily be used by the uninformed as a means of indirectly evaluating teachers; thirdly, concern for this kind of examination would have too much impact on instruction, too much attention would be paid to the test rather than to the curriculum; and, fourthly, students would do too much cramming for the exam and not enough attending to the curriculum process in the classroom. I think those were four major arguments in the mind of the Alberta Teachers' Association when they came to the policy position that they would oppose departmentals. That was their position in the fall of 1980.

Some of those criticisms are common to any kind of external evaluation. So if you make the decision, as this government did, that we would involve ourselves with external evaluation, the question then was: what kind of external evaluation could be undertaken that would be subject as little as possible to these criticisms? That was one thing in our mind at the time we made the decision that we would go with comprehensives. The problem of the moment — and it is my problem, not the problem of the hon. Leader of the Opposition — is that in the meantime the ATA has discovered that its policy did not reflect the views of its members and was in conflict with public expectations. And so the Alberta Teachers' Association — and I would say rightly — has repudiated the policy that was extant in November 1980.

In the course of this, they have made some particular recommendations alluded to by members on Monday afternoon. One was with respect to the blending of marks from the classroom teacher and from the departmental examination, in whatever form it might take. Obviously, any comment or commitment on blending dictates what position you will take on maintaining the comprehensives, as they were written in January, or reverting to a course-based examination such as the old-style departmentals. I won't comment on that this afternoon, for that reason. But with respect to the proposal that the mark for a pass should be increased to 50 per cent, I will say that I am disposed to favor that suggestion.

Questions were asked about developing an item bank for tests, and I support that as well. Members will be interested to know that the department has signed a contract with the Edmonton Public School Board and another with the Calgary Board of Education to develop items for a test item bank.

I want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Alberta Teachers' Association task force on student evaluation. I think they worked diligently, applied themselves professionally, and defended their position admirably in the course of the debates at the annual representative assembly. I do want to go on record as expressing my appreciation to the members for the work they did on the issue. I am hopeful that the experience of the ATA on this question will result in new, more reliable, and more responsive information-gathering and decision-making processes for the Alberta Teachers' Association.

The question was asked: what is external evaluation for? It is to provide a validation of provincial standards, to provide the basis for province-wide comparability, to complement other equally valid kinds of evaluation, and

to provide a professional bench mark for classroom teachers who are concerned about the improvement of their own evaluative activities.

The Kratzmann report has been discussed. I want to remind hon. members that I have endorsed recommendations 3 through 10 of the Kratzmann report. The thing to remember about the Kratzmann report is that the process was the important issue. I think one hon. member with direct experience made that suggestion in her remarks.

The Kratzmann report arose out of a strike in Calgary during the course of which I received letters from teachers, I spoke personally to teachers, and I spoke by telephone with teachers. It is interesting that in the course of these communications, whether by letter, by telephone, or personally, the issue of 20/20 didn't come up. The issue of working conditions was raised only peripherally. Working conditions constituted the opportunity to discuss other issues that teachers thought were more important.

We'd start talking about what was called Clause 18(c) of the contract, the "working conditions clause". We quickly moved away from working conditions to a discussion of communication within the system, the respect or lack of respect that teachers felt in terms of their relationships with administrators, professional freedom and responsibility. In my view, Mr. Chairman, those questions of communications, responsibility, professional respect, the ability of teachers to work with administrators describe the underlying causes of the Calgary teachers' strike.

In that context, the government does not accept the recommendations of the report relating to instructional time and classroom load. The report itself says that the evidence is "spotty, indecisive, and often contradictory". Our estimate of additional investment done immediately after the receipt of the report suggested that the acceptance of the recommendations on instructional time and classroom load would involve an additional capital cost represented in 1981 dollars of \$420 million, and an additional operating cost per annum of \$300 million.

The challenge for the government is to consider that investment when compared to the urgent investments or investment requirements of Social Services and Community Health, Hospitals and Medical Care, Transportation, or Housing. Should the investment be made in education or in some other area of provincial government concern? If it is to be an educational investment, is it an additional investment or should it be to displace the supplementary requisition, submissions having been made that the government should invest additional money in order to reduce the supplementary requisition? If it is additional money and not displacement money, should it be used for this purpose or to improve special education, rural transportation, native peoples' education, programming for the gifted, or what?

Leaving aside that recommendation, the fact is that there are other significant opportunities to improve the classroom experience. One that I would cite by way of example would be in the area of discipline. Again, in what is reported to me, research suggests that the single most critical factor influencing classroom experience is not size, not hours of instruction, but the structure of discipline in the school, the relationship between the student and the teacher and, behind the teacher, the relationship between the teacher and the principal. Those considerations are not reflected in the recommendation of the Kratzmann report.

Turning from the Kratzmann report to some other

issues, I can advise hon. members that the report of the task force on the gifted and talented was released this afternoon and is available to those interested in it. I expect to receive the report of the task force on the application of computers to education in the very near future and expect that we will be in a position to release it as soon as printing can be accomplished, probably within four or five weeks. Both of these task force reports touch on areas of vital concern to education. I'd like to expand on that; I won't this afternoon. I want to repeat, though, that in spite of the fact that I make no additional comment at this time, future program opportunities for the gifted and talented and the use of the microcomputer in the school are both vitally important questions of concern to us all.

An hon. member asked about French language instruction. Last year, 10,133 students were receiving immersion instruction in the French language in this province. In general terms I think our policy with respect to language education — not only French language education but Ukrainian, German, Hebrew, Cree, Arabic, Chinese; all of those are used as languages of instruction in Alberta schools — can be described in this way. First of all, it will happen by choice, not in any case by coercion. Secondly, in terms of what we want this country to be — and I think of the federal government's bilingualism policy — we favor the youth option. We would rather put the money into the education of the young than the re-education of the middle-aged and elderly. The federal government has spent a billion dollars trying to teach adult civil servants one or another of Canada's two official languages. They started that process 12 years ago. If they had invested the money in the education of the young, they'd be further ahead today. We also favor immersion or bilingual programs over second language programs.

ECS is a program that continues to have the strong support of the provincial government. I might add that we are now at a stage where we are considering what is called the upward extension of the principles of ECS into the primary grades of the elementary system. The Calgary Board of Education is discussing with the department experiments with what might be called the British infant school model of primary education.

Similarly, we support the expansion throughout the province of the community school concept. Even though in this budget we are not in a position to fund any additional community schools, we will continue our financial support of existing community schools. I might add that in whatever way possible, we will continue to provide practical and moral support for those schools throughout the province that would like to go through the process of becoming, if you will, self-designated community schools.

I can only endorse the comments of the hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway with regard to special education and particularly career education. Finally, two points on organization: a question was asked about when we expect to receive the report of the task force on educational finance. I understand that a meeting of the task force has been scheduled for May 6. I hope we'd be in receipt of a response from the task force shortly thereafter, presuming their work can be accomplished in one meeting. I might be a little bit optimistic about that.

Questions were asked about decentralization, particularly to the regional offices. We have decentralized to the regional offices approval for educational opportunity fund and work experience programs. We intend to decen-

tralize to the regional offices the approval of early childhood services programs and approval of private schools. Our expectation is that when these approvals are decentralized to regional offices, it will result in more expeditious relationships for local boards.

The more important form of decentralization is to boards. I only want to assure the hon. member that that kind of decentralization continues to be not only our policy but our practice. I'll use three examples. First of all, with respect to school closures, we did not implement directive regulations; we suggested guidelines to boards for them to implement according to peculiar local circumstances. Secondly, we provided a grant of \$75,000 to the Alberta School Trustees' Association so they could work in the area of trustee development. Thirdly, we have supported experiments throughout the province, including a transportation funding experiment in the county of Forty Mile and a vocational education experiment in the county of Parkland.

The discussion today has raised just one or two other points I'd like to respond to quickly. We share the concern of the hon. Member for Cypress about the speed with which curriculum change sometimes occurs, or at least the speed with which it impacts classroom teachers. We are concerned about the affect that has, not only on the quality of the curriculum but on the quality of the instruction if change is washing over the teacher more quickly than the teacher can accommodate. I think it's fair to say that that is a phenomenon of the last five or six years, resulting in the establishment and early operation of the Curriculum Policies Board. We have a terrific amount of work behind us, and I don't expect curriculum change will continue to occur at the rate it has occurred in the last five or six years.

With respect to assistance for implementing new programs, with the exception of the social studies in-service, it hasn't been the policy of the provincial government that we would provide special assistance for implementation of new programs. I would be receptive to the comments of members as to the pros or cons of maintaining that position. With respect to Canadian content in social studies, I can assure the hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway that I share his concern.

With respect to stereotyping, of course that is reflected not only in sex stereotyping but in racial, linguistic, or religious stereotyping. Aside from the comments of the hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway — and they are valid — the events of the last few days emphasize the significance of what he is saying and, as well, emphasize the point that stereotyping is not of one kind and not acceptable however it is characterized. I think it's fair to say that the department is aware of and very concerned about the issue, and determined to respond positively in a number of different ways to the need to eliminate stereotyping.

Mr. Chairman, I believe I have answered all the questions raised by hon. members. If I have not, I'd be pleased to hear from them.

MR. MARTIN: There are some questions I believe you did miss, Mr. Minister. I'll refer to them again. One thing I would like to refer to in the comprehensives, though, is the fact that the minister said the ATA was not for departmentals. I hope I'm not misquoting him. I'm sure he will straighten me out if I am. It seemed that a choice between comprehensives and departmentals was the only thing they were looking at. I would say, why the choice to begin with? I want to know why, in the minister's mind,

we had to go back to some form of standardized testing, be it comprehensives or departmentals.

The minister quoted other figures. I don't know where he gets his figures about Alberta spending the most. I know we've had this ongoing debate about figures before. I think the minister and I should sit down someday and compare both sets of figures. Ours, that we get from Statistics Canada, don't really ring in that direction. But I'll save that for another day, and he and I can look at it.

I appreciate the words the minister gave us about the practicum. I think the only point people are making is that if they want to go into an effective practicum, they're going to need twice as much money. I also accept the minister's five stages. I think that's probably correct. If you get the best people in to be trained to begin with, it seems obvious that's the most important step. But I say to the minister that I know that's the responsibility of the university. I wonder if he's had many discussions lately with the Faculty of Education, especially now when we have more teachers being trained and there are not enough jobs. Perhaps he could look at that in a bigger direction.

On the other thing about Kratzmann, I've heard the minister before. I will say that on this issue he's been consistent. But I would say to him that I know it is a lot of money. I said that in my speech, Mr. Chairman. But I'd look at the alternatives. I suggest there is money the government is wasting — wasting very badly — and we've tried to point that out. It seems to me that if they could put this money in terms of the Kratzmann recommendations, we would have a better school system.

I also agree with the minister that the 20:1 class size is not a magic ratio. In fact if you have a very good teacher teaching 35 kids and a very poor one teaching 15, I'd rather be one of the 35 students. But surely the point is that if we do all the other things right — in terms of the practicum and of getting the best possible people into teaching — that good teacher is going to have a better impact if he's dealing with smaller classes than if he's dealing with larger classes. So I think we should look at it in that regard.

The other thing I would like to bring up is that I get a little confused from time to time. I've heard the minister speak at various functions, and I've heard him philosophize a bit in the House from time to time. I just wonder, because I think it has a basis in what we're doing here — I've heard the term "back to the basics". I've never totally understood what that means. I wonder if he believes in that particular philosophy, and how would that go into what the Member for Edmonton Kingsway is talking about in terms of career education, complimenting the government — and I would too — on vocational/technical training and community schools. I believe the minister has said that community schools are a good idea, and I wonder how that fits into the "back to the basics" we've been talking about.

The other thing I would like to bring up has to do with special education. Some estimates suggest that as many as one in 10 students suffers from some learning disability of one kind or another. Taking into account the potential damage caused by inadequate identification of such disabilities, what efforts has the department under way to prepare teachers for such problems and to help parents identify and cope with learning disabilities? I could put it another way. What studies has the department undertaken to estimate the extent of the problem? Are these figures high, or are they low? If so, what is the department doing about it?

The other question — unless I missed it, and I hope I didn't — was the one my colleague raised with regard to teachers who retired prior to 1970. Mr. Minister, can I get maybe just a nod? Did you talk about that in your summary? I wish I could get you to comment on that just to refresh people's minds. Teachers who retired prior to 1970 have been asking for funding to supplement the pensions. In 1981 I think there were 957 teachers affected, and the youngest of these is now 73 years of age. It's a problem I hope they won't sit on very long, if they're going to do something, because these people are not young.

The other questions that I think may have been missed — I added a lot at the end, and the minister probably couldn't get his pencil working fast enough, Mr. Chairman. He's referred to a couple of them, certainly the practicum. But I would like to know why funding for the public school system, under the School Foundation Program Fund, has increased by only 5.9 per cent, whereas that for private schools increased 10.3 per cent.

Then 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's already announced a 5 per cent increase in per pupil grants? I'm a little confused about that particular issue.

I think you referred to the other ones . . . No, the other one: 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 for 1982-83?

I know the minister has alluded to some of these things. I suppose part of my statements would be a philosophical disagreement between him and me philosophically on certain matters, and I wouldn't expect him to necessarily go through all that ground. I was trying to make my case on them. But there are some specific questions, if the minister wouldn't mind answering them, Mr. Chairman.

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask the minister a question with respect to Northland School Division. As a result of the report that was completed and the appointment of an official trustee, a lot of work has been done in Northland in involving citizens and parents in the operation of their schools. Locally elected school committees are now in place for the majority of the 26 schools in Northland School Division. Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the minister what his intentions are for this fall's election of school trustees for Northland, and whether he plans any changes that will allow the present structure, developed over the last year and a half, of locally elected school boards to continue.

MR. McPHERSON: Mr. Chairman, I would like to add a few brief comments to the debate on the Department of Education estimates. Before doing so, however, I would like to congratulate the hon. minister on his reappointment as Minister of Education. If I may, I would like to add a personal note. I have known the minister for a good many years. I followed his political career for some years, was actively involved in it a number of years ago, and without any question or hesitation can say that we have a Minister of Education who is truly a most dedicated individual in his profession. I congratulate him on that.

My comments to the minister are with respect to

funding for community schools. He alluded to it briefly in his remarks, and I'm sorry I was absent when the question was put. He mentioned that funding of community schools would not be available this year; however, the department certainly agrees with the concept and will provide as much moral support as it possibly can.

However, I wonder if the minister could provide for me a situation where a school — and I'm referring to a specific school in my constituency — was built specifically with the idea of being a community school. The community school concept was developed from the outset. Citizen participation was involved in the staffing process; two community members were involved in the principal selection by the committee. Right from the outset, the Pines community school people were actively involved in getting the designation from the municipality. The community has voluntarily raised over \$7,000, which is already in place, and now finds that funding is not forthcoming. That would be my only comment, Mr. Chairman. Given the circumstance that this school was on the verge of receiving funding under the department, would the minister kindly offer any answers with respect to this situation?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Would the minister like to conclude?

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

MR. KING: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the questions of the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood, because they reminded me that I had four pages of notes I hadn't touched. [interjections] You just heard the hon. Member for Red Deer say that he's one of the major reasons why I'm here. So if anybody doesn't like it, they can take it up with him.

First, to touch on the question of standardized testing: why did the provincial government make the decision to return to external evaluation? One reason was that the minister's advisory committee on student achievement recommended that there needed to be improvement in the area of student evaluation in the province. That was a representative group of reputable people, all of them concerned about education in either a professional or a lay capacity, and most of them professionals, if I remember correctly. It was chaired by Dr. Jim Hrabi, the gentleman who is now the assistant deputy minister in the department, and it included the assistant executive secretary of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

I'm phrasing my description the way I have because they didn't recommend comprehensives, and I don't want anybody to think for a moment that they recommended comprehensives. But this group of people, over a period of more than three years and at the investment of considerable time and money, studied student evaluation in the province. In 1979 they recommended that for the good of education, there had to be improvements in the system of student evaluation. Indeed they recommended that as a part of these improvements, there had to be some kind of external evaluation. They recommended that a legitimate part of the evaluative procedure would include the achievement tests — and we have implemented those — and the so-called MACOSA-type high school tests. They also recommended that we should not return to departmental examinations at that time. If I remember correctly, they said there should be another two years of consideration of that question, and that at the end of two years the need, or otherwise, for departmentals should be con-

cluded upon by the government.

I'm saying that, first of all, after considerable work by professionals and interested lay people, the conclusion was reached that student evaluation had to be improved and, as part of that, there had to be external evaluation. When it was made public, we appointed Dr. Mowat of the University of Alberta to elicit public response. In the course of that, Dr. Mowat not only received letters and briefs but contracted with the Gallup organization, which did a random sample survey of the adult population. It is quite clear from the outcome of that Gallup survey that the public expects that for purposes of public confidence, there will be a role for external evaluation in student evaluation in the province. So a second reason for our decision was related to public perception which, as a matter of public policy, has to be considered by any government. At the same time, while that is a political consideration, it is not a partisan consideration. It has nothing to do with the fact that we are Progressive Conservatives or that you are New Democrats.

The reasons, when you go behind those two conclusions, appear to be related to the fact that good evaluation depends on a range of tools. I don't want anybody to believe that we have unreasonable expectations about what can be attained with external evaluation. In my view, our expectations are not unreasonable. We are not under any illusions about what can be accomplished with external evaluation. We're certainly not under any illusions about the limits of external evaluation. I think I know full well what the limits of external evaluation are. I have no idea in my mind that external evaluation should replace a lot of other very, very valuable evaluative tools, techniques, and activities, particularly the evaluation activities of classroom teachers. I want to be very clear that we see this activity as complementing, not replacing, the work of classroom teachers.

I'd also remind the hon. member that in November 1980, when I made the announcement that we would be going to grade 12 examinations, the so-called comprehensives, I said that we would be involved in diagnostic and normative assessment as well as the comprehensives, making the point, I think, that we are not under any illusions that the comprehensives can do more than in fact they are able to do. We see it as only one part of a broad range of activities.

The practicum: I can only repeat again that Theory to Practice says we should invest twice as much as we are investing only if you take the high end of their recommendation. Why doesn't the hon. member say that Theory to Practice recommends that \$2.28 million is required, the government is investing \$1.75 million, and that's 80 per cent of what Theory to Practice recommends? He will choose the high end and I will choose the low road, and I'll be in Scotland before him. [interjections]

With respect to teacher education, the meetings that the hon. member suggests have not yet been held. They are certainly on our agenda for this year. We will be meeting with the faculties of education for the purpose of the discussions you suggest.

With respect to "back to the basics", yes, I think there should be a certain amount of "back to the basics". I don't think you can build a house until you know something about framing. If there is a problem that the system is attempting to do too much, I think the only reasonable thing to do is suggest that it give up doing some things poorly in order that it can do some other things well. Having said that I believe in "back to the basics", what basics? Without going into it in detail, I would certainly

include computer literacy. I hope that would correspond with the hon. member's idea of "back to the basics". I would also include work experience and career preparation. I think we should get back to the basics. I think it should be this community today that decides what the basics are. That decision should not be made on the basis of what was basic 20, 50, or 100 years ago.

Special education: we haven't done any studies as to the incidence in this province because, in our judgment, it has been quite appropriate to rely upon the great number of studies done in other jurisdictions. We have no reason to believe that Alberta is atypical in terms of the likely incidence of special education needs. So for the present time, rather than replicate work done in other jurisdictions, we are relying on the work done in other jurisdictions as to the likely incidence of severe and moderate learning disabilities, hearing impairment, visual impairment, or whatever, and we can provide you with statistics. In light of research done in other jurisdictions, your suggestion that 10 per cent of the population may be learning impaired is not unreasonable. As I mentioned earlier, in 1980, in the course of the ministerial statement on student evaluation, I did make the point that we would be involved in diagnostic assessment. Since that time, work has in fact been done in the department, and this year a very considerable amount of work will be done in the area of diagnostic assessment and testing.

With respect to Northland, I'd make two comments. First of all, we have provided for the replacement of 14 of the 27 schools in Northland School Division since we received the MacNeil report. I think that is a comment on our commitment that we will improve education in that school division. It addresses itself only to the capital facility. And while that's important, it's not the most important part of education. Another important part is community involvement. The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake is correct that in the longer term, improvements in education in Northland will depend upon community involvement and support. So it is my intention to introduce amendments to the Northland School Division Act this spring. It is in the nature of these amendments that they will provide for a locally elected school board for Northland School Division. Also, unique in Alberta, they will institutionalize the school committees presently in place with the schools in Northland School Division. Without going into any more detail, I think those are important features. They will support the community school boards and provide for an elected board of trustees in Northland School Division.

I can sympathize with the submission of my colleague from Red Deer. I am a supporter of the community school idea. The important point to emphasize is that what we mean by a community school is in fact an idea and an attitude. It is not a particular school building, and it's not a particular organizational structure. It's not a piece of paper hanging on the wall that says, you're a designated community school. We are not in a position to provide any financial support for additional designated community schools this year. That is the position dictated by budgetary circumstances.

Nevertheless, an awful lot can be done in terms of generating a community school spirit, even if the nice advantages provided by the money are not available. I don't mean to disparage them, but if you haven't got them, you haven't got them. Nevertheless, however we can help schools to understand and come to grips with the idea of what it means to be a community school, we will do that. As the hon. Member for Highwood suggest-

ed to me — and I think it's a very valuable suggestion — we could designate schools as community schools even though the financial support is not available at the present time. We could help them with the process, we could support them at the end of the process, and we could say, whether or not money is involved, we recognize the commitment you have made to the idea. I would like to do that. I hope that schools such as the one in Red Deer constituency respond positively to that, because whether or not they've got an additional staff person, whether or not they have this additional financial resource, in every important respect they can be operating as a community school. The kids would feel it, the staff would feel it, and the community would feel it, and I think that would be beneficial.

Now we come to some of the other questions that were asked on Monday afternoon. I'd like to just go through notes I have here in a very quick fashion. Mr. Notley asked me: what grant programs have been initiated since 1975? They include the small jurisdiction grant, the private school opening grant, the corporate assessment grant, the learning exchange program, the interdepartmental community schools program, the official language grant, English as a second language program, special education program unit grants, sensory multihandicapped program, small centre assistance grant, and native urban compensatory program.

I think I responded to the questions about the brief of the Alberta School Trustees' Association — if not to the satisfaction of the hon. member, at least to the satisfaction that is possible, given our philosophical differences. The question was, why is the grant increase for transportation only 3.3 per cent? Basically it's because the fiscal year of the provincial government is different from the grant year of the Department of Education, which runs from January to December. It in turn is different from the school year of each of the systems. If you compare them on a calendar year basis, having regard for the grant increase that came out of the budget of the last fiscal year, the increase is actually 5.8 per cent.

Dr. Buck asked, what are we doing about the voucher system? The answer is that while I have some interest in it, my position has always been that an experiment with the voucher system would depend upon the interest of a local school jurisdiction. The simple fact of the matter is that no local school jurisdiction has expressed an interest in experimenting with the voucher system.

Is the department providing additional financial support to private schools and, if not, is it planning to provide additional financial support in the near future? We do provide financial support to Category 1 private schools. We do not plan any change in the level of support, pending the outcome of a review of private schools, which will start this year and be concluded next year. The review will involve all interested parties. The Alberta Teachers' Association and the Alberta School Trustees' Association will have an opportunity for input. When that review is concluded, the government will then reconsider its policy with respect to financial support for private schools.

Are the schools up to date in the area of computer technology? — I'm paraphrasing a question asked by the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood. The answer basically is no, we are not. That's precisely why we have taken some of our recent initiatives, and precisely why we established the task force on the application of computers in the schools. I think I said earlier that I am anxious to receive that report, and I will strain the resources of the

department to act on the recommendations of that report when it is received. I consider it critically important that we act in this area.

The question was asked: could the minister let the Legislative Assembly know if he plans to consider increasing the length of the school day or the instructional year? Perhaps I should elaborate on this just a bit. In the course of speaking to groups across the province and making the argument that we should be constantly thinking about the educational system, constantly seeking to improve it, I use examples of the kinds of things that I think others have in their minds or that I think educators should have in their minds. I happen to know, from comments made to me, that some people do think about lengthening the school day or the school year. Just to consider the implications of it is a worth-while exercise, in terms of better understanding what we're doing and why we're doing it. So I undoubtedly have said, in speeches such as the chamber of commerce speech, that it is the kind of thing that might be considered. I believe I'm recalling my statement exactly when I say, possible considerations include lengthening the school day or lengthening the school year.

The Department of Education keeps a register of all the suggestions made to us for amendments to the legislation we're responsible for, particularly the School Act. If someone writes in and says that the school day should be lengthened or the school year should be lengthened, that goes into the register. We don't have it under active consideration, but it's on record. When we again think about possible amendments to the School Act, we pull out that file, we pull out that register, and we see that a letter or a suggestion has come in that the school day or the school year should be lengthened. At that time, it is an item that would be subject to consideration by me and by officials in the Department of Education.

As I said to superintendents this morning, beginning this year, we are going to undertake a review of the School Act, a process that will take about 18 months. It will be quite a thoroughgoing review, and I expect a lot of questions like this to be raised. I consider it to be a matter of my responsibility as minister that if they are raised, they have to be considered. That shouldn't suggest to anyone what might be the outcome of my consideration. But if the public suggests that it deserves consideration, I will consider it.

A question was asked about Vote 2, financial assistance to schools, the 2.9 per cent increase as opposed to the 5 per cent increase I announced in January. The answer is the same as the one I made earlier for the transportation grants. The difference is accounted for by the fact that the fiscal year under consideration here today is different from the grant year to which the announcement of January pertained. On a comparable basis, the increase is about 5.2 per cent over the 1982-83 forecast.

Could the minister provide an explanation for the 171 per cent increase in the student evaluation estimates over the '81-82 public accounts? The explanation is simply that the '81-82 public accounts are for a start-up period as opposed to a full year of operation. It takes time to hire personnel and set up the structure that can provide the services required of the branch. The 1982-83 forecast reflects a complete year of expenditures. Therefore it is the one we believe should be used for comparison. The 1983-84 estimate, as compared to the '82-83 forecast, provides for a 4.9 per cent increase.

Could the minister explain why funding for the public school system under the SFPF program increased by only

5.9 per cent, whereas funding for private schools increased by 10.3 per cent? The per pupil increase was exactly the same, 5 per cent. The difference is accounted for by the more rapid growth of the private school system. There are greater numbers of students for whom we are providing the per pupil grant. Anticipating the question of the hon. member, I'd point out to him that Category 1 private schools are still educating about 2 per cent of the students in the province and, in my view, don't pose an imminent threat to the viability of the public school system.

Could the minister provide us with a reconciliation of accounts to explain the integration of the four votes into three votes? Vote 2 remains the same. Votes 1, 3, and 4 from last year have been transformed into the two votes shown in this year's estimates. We have four subprograms under the two administrative votes, 1 and 3. The current Vote 1, presented in the '83-84 estimates, is primarily the old Vote 1 with the addition of the student evaluation branch from Vote 3, and the deletion from Vote 1, and transferral to Vote 3, of the educational exchange and special projects elements. So student evaluation has gone from the old Vote 3 into the new Vote 1 and, on the other hand, educational exchange and special projects have gone from the old Vote 1 into Vote 3. The new Vote 3, with the exception of that exchange, is basically Votes 3 and 4 of last year broken down into two subprograms. One is program development and the other is program delivery.

The rationale for the three votes is essentially as follows: Vote 1 combines what are support services provided by Alberta Education; that is, finance and administration, and planning and evaluation. Vote 2 continues to reflect transfer payments to schools, which incidentally is 96 per cent of our budget. Vote 3 combines the related functions of program development and program delivery.

The hon. Member for Ponoka asked why there was a reduction in the estimates for incremental grants in 1983 as compared to the '82-83 forecast. The reason is that the '82-83 forecast included the *ex gratia* payments made by the provincial government to municipalities surrounding the city of Edmonton as a result of annexation. Those are unique, one-time payments. They were in the '82-83 forecast. They would not be expected to be repeated this year.

I've answered the question as to where the learning exchange grants are shown. They're now in Vote 3. The reason for this is that they are essentially payments of expenses rather than payments of grants. Unless I have given the hon. member something . . . I'm sorry; I have forgotten it again, and I did not want to.

The question was asked about modifications to the Teachers' Retirement Fund for approximately 956 retired teachers, all of whom retired prior to 1970. I had previously indicated to the Alberta Retired Teachers' Association that I would make a representation to cabinet that a change in existing practice should be made. That representation has been made and, for reasons which I think are valid, cabinet has declined to accede to the suggestion. Perhaps because of the importance of the question to those 956 teachers, I could take a moment to comment on the basis of cabinet's decision.

This government has demonstrated its concern for the pioneers of the province, and we have done that consistently since 1971. The problem for the cabinet in this particular issue is that it would extend to a group of senior citizens a benefit which would not be available to many other senior citizens who are in precisely the same position. So the question then is one of equity, as to

whether or not a retroactive change should be made for the benefit of these 956 retired teachers, which benefit would not be available to many other senior citizens in the province.

There are any number of pension plans which at one time in their past operation did not allow service prior to the age of 30 to be counted, and the change would not have benefited those other senior citizens. There are many other senior citizens who provided meritorious service to the people of the province as public servants, for example, who would not have benefited from the change. In general terms, the government's conclusion was that in any case where support should be extended, it should be extended on a common basis to all the people who admittedly contributed in significant ways to the development of the province. That wasn't possible in the proposal, and on that basis the proposal couldn't be acceded to.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Chairman, I have three or four comments. I was glad to find out why we were into comprehensives or standardized testing. I was quite surprised to find that the Gallup poll had some aspect to play in deciding that we'd be into comprehensives. I suggest to the minister that I do not think that's particularly appropriate, because most of us yearn to go back to the past. My father thought he had the best educational system around, and I'm sure we all will. The idea that we should be deciding policy by a Gallup poll, in terms of something as important as comprehensives, doesn't seem right to me.

I was glad to see the minister's comment about "back to the basics". It's much broader than what I understand as "back to the basics". I can probably agree with him on that particular definition of "back to the basics".

Mr. Chairman, I respect what the minister is saying about lengthening the school day: they get items in, and people are suggesting things all the time. But I suggest to the minister that when he makes a speech to the chamber of commerce, people believe that's his position, and it causes some panic throughout the province. I think he'll have to be a little clearer in the next part, if he doesn't want to get into those sorts of controversies.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I must say that I am disappointed by cabinet's stand. I respect that the minister has done his best in terms of the particular issue. I know he's saying that you have to extend it to a lot of people. But I suggest to the government that they look again at this group in particular. And if other groups are suffering in the same case, surely the province can still afford to treat senior citizens — the youngest one here is 73. It's not an expense that's going to last for a long time, even if we extend it to public servants. Is there any idea how much of an expense it would be? Surely for teachers and other groups, it's not good enough to say, well, we don't want to support the teachers here because they'd then be put into a special group. If there is a point we're making, Mr. Chairman, if they deserve a decent pension, a pension that people now have and will have in the future, surely we owe it to our pioneers to bring in a decent pension.

If the minister says there are other groups that are suffering the same sort of injustice, rather than saying no to everybody, surely we could have been somewhat generous in spirit and looked at the problem with other groups. I point out that certainly it's an expense. But these are the people who built our country; these are the teachers who enabled us all to be here today. Rather than

saying it costs too much, I suggest to you that we should be looking at treating these people with more respect. These are the people who are defenceless in terms of inflation and all the rest of it. I would just say to the government and the cabinet, who made this decision, that they should go back. Instead of just saying no to one group, let's see what we can do for all the people who might be in this position. I see that the youngest of the teachers we're talking about is now 73. I expect it would be similar for the other groups the minister is talking about. I hope he will bring this to his colleagues. I think this is an injustice. It's a sad day when we don't treat our pioneers better than we have with this motion.

With that, I make my final comments, Mr. Chairman.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Chairman, I want to rise on the last comments the hon. member made. As the minister responsible for the private pension system and people who are covered by that system, and in relation to those covered under the public pension system, I want to say that the main issue is one of equity and fairness. The question then becomes: are those teachers in that particular position — and we sympathize with the position — in any worse position than large numbers of the public? By that I mean: are those who lived, worked, and helped to build this province to make it as strong as it is, in any different position at this point in their lives than the rest of those contributors? The conclusion clearly is that they are not in any different position in a detrimental way. As a matter of fact, the pension system for teachers and employees of government is far better than that generally available in the private sector.

While I respect the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood and am aware of the concerns that have been advanced directly to me, and to which I have had to respond, I do want to indicate that with regard to the basic question of equity, it is not so much a question of that group of teachers compared to another group of teachers, as it is a question of the treatment of that group of teachers and their pensions compared to large numbers of other persons who are in a position at least no better, and perhaps less advantageous. That is where the equity falls.

Vote 1 — Departmental Support Services

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I have a couple of remarks that haven't been covered. I don't think we'll complete this estimate today anyway. One was in the area of legislation with regard to independent schools. If the minister is reviewing the School Act over the next 18 months, I wonder whether he has made any examination — I don't think decisions at this point in time — as to whether legislation relative to independent schools, and that includes a number of different categories, would come under the revision of the School Act, or is there a possibility of a separate Act for independent schools?

The other area is with regard to the 5 per cent grant increase to the school boards across this province. I'm sure the minister is aware of the figure. Around 42 per cent of the property tax, and most likely even more in the coming fiscal year, goes towards support of education. We in this Legislature know that in 1971 and '72 the now Provincial Treasurer made a commitment that the province would pick up the greatest part of education costs. It would not be put on property taxes; property taxes would be relieved of that responsibility. It hasn't happened. The graph has moved in the opposite direction.

In terms of the review of the School Act, and also the crisis I see occurring in local governments, I wonder if the minister is contemplating some type of formal study in terms of education financing in the province. I know that a lot of that kind of work has already been done, and maybe just monitoring is necessary at this point. One of the towns phoned me today with regard to this matter. In terms of the school requisition in the town, the tax load is going to increase anywhere from 25 to 40 per cent in the coming year, and I'm sure it's also going to happen in some of the villages in my constituency. There will also be a reduction in certain local public works that are going on.

I'd like the minister to comment on those two items.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Chairman, as the member said, we aren't going to finish today anyway, but I don't expect the minister to respond to my remarks. I'm just making a plea for bright students. I believe that in schools we teach for the average student and ignore the needs of bright students. I don't think we challenge them and, in many cases, we don't even interest them, because our courses are mundane compared to their needs. I believe many of these students end up as drop-outs, because the school system doesn't fit their needs. This is a plea to somehow initiate the challenges and services needed to support these brilliant young minds.

I would also like to indicate my support for the primary teachers who, I believe, have a far more comprehensive workload than many of the other teachers in the school system. I hope the minister will look at aids in the primary grades, because individual teaching is needed there. If you have 30 students, in many cases you are repeating instructions 30 times. That kind of workload

can't compare with the workload when you give an assignment and pupils are able to go ahead and do the work. Also, reading is of primary importance in the primary grades. That can only be taught with individual attention. For that reason, I would support this support in the primary grades.

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

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

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

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow evening when the Assembly sits, we would look at committee study of Bill No. 7 and, depending on the amount of time that takes, continue to Committee of Supply. The departments would include Recreation and Parks and possibly either Transportation or Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

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

