

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTATitle: **Monday, May 16, 1983 2:30 p.m.**

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS****Bill 58****Northland School Division Act**

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill No. 58, the Northland School Division Act.

This Bill provides, first, for the continuation of the Northland School Division and, second, for the election of a board of trustees in the Northland School Division. I might say that this is the first time since the board came into existence that it will be afforded an elected board of trustees. Third, provision is made for status Indians living on reserve land to vote in the school board election. And fourth, provision is made for continuation of the local school advisory committees.

[Leave granted; Bill 58 read a first time]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file for the information of hon. members, copies of a news release presented earlier today by the Hon. Jean Chretien, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and the Hon. John Zaozirny, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. ALGER: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I'm delighted to introduce to you, and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly, a very pleasant group of senior citizens who hail from Silver Willow Lodge, situated in the vigorous town of Nanton.

They came in their community handi-bus, which was just dedicated some eight days ago. I hate to tell you this, Mr. Speaker, but it quit on them on the outskirts of Edmonton. Driver Emma Smith and two of the occupants, Shirley Shaw and Wanda Shaw, have not as yet arrived. However, the others have arrived. I'd like to present Mabel Dambrofsky, Georgina Comstock, Lila Hillard, Dorothy Kennedy, and Ruth Kerle. They are now standing in the public gallery, and I ask that you join me in making them most welcome here.

MR. WOO: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you, and through you to all hon. members, a group of 72 grade 6 students from Brentwood school, situated in Sherwood Park. They're accompanied this afternoon by three teachers, group leader Mrs. Dale Keith, Pat Hughes, and Peter Ebert, and by parent Mrs. Donna Edinga. They are seated in the public gallery, and

I ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of all members.

MR. FISCHER: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to this Assembly, 26 grade 10 students from the Provost high school. They are accompanied by teacher Mrs. Blue, bus driver Herman McMann, and supervisor Josie Werenka. They are sitting in the members gallery, and I ask them to stand and be recognized by this Assembly.

MRS. LeMESSURIER: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, 18 students from the English as a second language department of the Alberta Vocational Centre, situated in Edmonton Centre. They are here with their leader Jim Vanne and are seated in the members gallery. I ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. McPHERSON: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure today to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, seven bright and energetic students from the Hillview private school in Red Deer. The students are from grades 3, 4, 5, and 6. Accompanied today by teachers Donna Stackhouse and Linda Snell, the students are seated in the members gallery. I ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to the other members of the Legislature some new tour guides who are with us today. They are on orientation training here in Edmonton and will eventually be conducting tours in the Legislature Building, government centre, the pedway, and the Government House facility. They are summer students with the guide services section of Public Affairs. In the members gallery are Peter Jansen, Keith Millions, Susan Rowney, Charles Boberg, and Colette LeHodey. I ask them to stand now and be welcomed by the members of the Assembly.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD****Health Care Premium Arrears**

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the hon. Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. It's with respect to Bill 38, which we'll be debating in principle a little later. In the course of preparing Bill 38, did the government consult with federal officials, specifically the Minister of National Health and Welfare, to determine whether there is any danger that the principles contained in Bill 38 in any way violate our agreements with the federal government regarding the principle of universality?

MR. RUSSELL: No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NOTLEY: A supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Assembly whether the government obtained legal advice with respect to Bill 38, specifically on whether or not the principles contained therein violate section 4(b) of the government of Canada Medical Care Act?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I answered that question before. We did have legal advice from in-house staff.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. My recollection of his answer before was with respect to user fees. Is the minister saying that the government has obtained legal advice with respect to the principles contained in Bill 38 too?

MR. RUSSELL: Yes, Mr. Speaker. That's done as a matter of course.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Assembly of the approximate cost of administering a new system of arrears cards, as well as cutting off and starting up benefits? Has the minister any ballpark figures that can be shared with the Assembly?

MR. RUSSELL: No I don't, Mr. Speaker. But I'll take that question as notice, and perhaps I can get some figures for the hon. member.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Considering the importance the government places on this Bill — cutting off people who haven't paid their medicare premiums — why did the government choose not to provide this information in the annual report of the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care?

MR. RUSSELL: I don't know if there's any specific reason for that, Mr. Speaker. The figure was reported to the Legislature by myself on previous occasions and is widely known. Insofar as the legislation and system proposed, I should say that we're using exactly the same system that has been used by the government of Ontario for several years.

MR. NOTLEY: That is hardly reassuring, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the \$46 million is total arrears since 1969, could the hon. minister advise the Assembly whether the government has any figures as to the arrears for the last fiscal year?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, until about three years ago, the total accumulated arrears were in the neighborhood of \$26 million. In the last three years, the figure has jumped by an additional \$20 million. It's those more recent arrears that we believe we have the best chance of collecting, of course. I don't have at my fingertips whether or not those collected at a standard rate per year, but it would be in the neighborhood of \$6 million to \$7 million per year had that been the case.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Will the minister undertake to table in the House the breakdown, year by year, so members can have this information before the principle of Bill 38 is discussed?

MR. RUSSELL: Yes, I could do that. Members usually seek that kind of information by way of a motion for a return, but I'll take it as notice and get it.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Last week, in response to questions from my colleague, the minister indicated there had been a significant increase in utilization and costs. In reviewing the annual report of Hospitals and Medical Care, the health care insurance plan, is the increase in cost not accounted for by three things: the increase in population; the two

remuneration increases of January 1, 1982, and March 1, 1981; and the decision of this government to transfer some of the medical costs of the Workers' Compensation Board to the health care plan?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, that's partially correct. Using the components the hon. leader referred to, the population increase accounted for about 4.5 per cent of the increase. There's an unaccounted-for 12.5 per cent left from the total 17 per cent increase in utilization. Because the rates paid to doctors had gone up, the net result was a bottom-line increase of 30 per cent in the last calendar over the previous year.

Insofar as workers' compensation benefits are concerned, the intent has been to continue that as it always has been. Having the health care insurance plan pay the costs of workers' compensation claims rather than have two agencies pay, is merely an administrative improvement. The workers' compensation plan is still paying for those claimants that have been identified and, in fact, the Health Care Statutes Amendment Act on our Order Paper has in it the administrative parts to make sure that happens.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Are the figures the minister cited in his budget speech, as well as the figures he indicated last week in response to my colleague, projections for the current year? They don't seem to be contained in the annual report of the department.

MR. RUSSELL: The annual report ended March 31, 1982, Mr. Speaker. I get weekly work sheets from the health care plan weekly, and they're up to date to the end of the current week. When I spoke to the House at the end of November, I was really giving the figures almost to the end of 1982, whereas that report is almost — well, it's more than a year old now.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary question. Will the minister attempt to provide the Assembly with updated information on the figures he cited in the House from the most recent information, including the work sheets, so we have this, if not for principle discussion of Bill 38, at least for Committee of the Whole?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has the figures. I gave them to the House during my presentation in the budget speech.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. A very comprehensive breakdown of the different components of those figures is contained in the annual report. So members will have the opportunity to assess this information fully, can we get an updated filing of that information with the Assembly before we consider Bill 38, at least in committee stage?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess we're just to take it on the minister's word. That isn't good enough, but we'll debate that when we get to the Bill.

AOC Loan

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my second question to the hon. Minister of Economic Development. Is the minister in a position to inform the House as to whether the April 23 letter from Mr. Peckham with

respect to Ram Steel was the first written or verbal communication either the minister or his office had received regarding Ram Steel's financial predicaments? What other communication had there been with Ram officials?

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, I'd have to check that, in terms of whether or not he'd been in touch with the department before. If my memory serves me correctly, that written initiative was the first approach we had.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Can the minister confirm whether, at the time the minister was approached by Ram Steel proponents for public financial aid, he was given any indication of the company's dire financial difficulties? Or was the case made to the minister specifically on the general arguments of diversification?

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, the letter indicates some financing would be required by Ram Steel to continue their activities. First of all, their debt/equity ratio going into the project was satisfactory to the banks and everyone concerned. They ran into a falling market and some difficulty with start-up costing that required some additional financing. I think they came to us to explore whether or not we might be an avenue to achieve those ends.

It seemed to me that the letter was in the form of a request for a guarantee. Naturally it would follow that the department would then take over to do an investigation of their balance sheet and a pro forma statement to find out whether they could service the debt and whether we had the capacity to be of any assistance.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Did that request for a guarantee relate in any way to the Canadian Commercial Bank loan of some \$13 million to Ram Steel, which was about to be called?

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, there was no mention that the loan was about to be called, and in fact I don't think that's surfaced as yet, that on April 23 the loan was going to be called. As I remember — again I'm speaking from memory — there were two components to the Canadian Commercial Bank's loan: one was a term loan and the other was a revolving operating account. I don't think there was any indication that they'd approached the limit of either one. It was an exploratory letter looking for possible additional financing, to determine whether or not the provincial government was in a position to supply it.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Prior to October 7, when the cabinet approved in principle the AOC loan, was there any discussion by the minister or any of his officials with respect to the difficulties Ram Steel was encountering with their financing, particularly with respect to the Canadian Commercial Bank loan?

MR. PLANCHE: I don't remember any conversation coming across my desk that specifically referred to that, and it may very well have been because we were doing an ongoing assessment of Ram Steel's financial condition that we did have those kind of conversations. But certainly they were not specifically in terms of an immediacy of a loan call by the Canadian Commercial Bank.

MR. NOTLEY: A supplementary question. Is the hon. Minister of Tourism and Small Business in a position to inform the House of the date of Ram Steel's application to AOC for its loan?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I don't have the exact date, but I believe it was in July 1982.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to both hon. ministers. Given the arm's-length relationship between the government and the AOC, why was the November 25, 1982, meeting between Ram officials, the Minister of Tourism and Small Business, and the Minister of Economic Development necessary?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out some time ago, in answer to one of the questions raised by the hon. member, the meeting on the 25th was basically to go over some of the points Ram Steel was into negotiations with, with AOC, and whether they could route them to me, and through me, and that I should know that. As I stated in my previous answer, I indicated very clearly to them that their route was a negotiation process with the Alberta Opportunity Company and that that's where they should go.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Did the officials of Ram Steel indicate on November 25 that they were having certain difficulties and that there were obstacles as far as the negotiations with the AOC was concerned?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe there was any mention of obstacles. They were concerned about the conditions they were negotiating with the board of directors and the management of AOC and how they should do that. We said they were on the right track: they should be negotiating direct, and that's where they should go.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. The minister indicated that they should negotiate direct. However, was there any suggestion by officials of Ram Steel that they wished either hon. gentleman to intervene to expedite the process ...

MR. ADAIR: No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NOTLEY: ... any discussion by officials of Ram Steel that there was some urgency to the loan being approved by AOC, in view of the financial difficulties of the company?

MR. ADAIR: No more urgency than any other loan that may come to, through, or be discussed by phone call with a client to myself, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Given the minister's answers, just exactly what was the purpose of the meeting on the 25th, given the approval in principle by cabinet on October 7, some seven weeks before?

MR. ADAIR: I've already answered that, Mr. Speaker.

4-H Club Buttons

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Agriculture relates to this blue and orange

button that was distributed to 4-H groups in the eastern part of this province by the government, through the Department of Agriculture. I'd like to ask the minister — and I know this was under the auspices of his predecessor. After complaints were received that the historic colors of 4-H are green, gold, and white, they were withdrawn and taken back to some government department. I wonder if the minister could indicate how many were produced and why the colors were changed? [interjections]

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, that's a fascinating question. First of all, I would have to say that I admire their taste in colors originally.

DR. BUCK: They didn't have any choice.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Since November, there seems to be far more orange and blue across the province. I don't know why they changed their color; however, I just have to admire their taste in choosing orange and blue.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Would the minister check why the Lougheed Conservative government, and not the 4-H Clubs of Alberta, decided to make them orange and blue?

DR. BUCK: Shame, Shame.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Determine why they were going to use the 4-H people as political pawns across this province? I excuse the minister, but I don't excuse this government for this kind of nonsense. [interjections] It's all just part of the arrogance that transmits itself . . .

MR. HORSMAN: Serious question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order, Order.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Perhaps the hon. member would ask the question.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister from Lethbridge over there attempts to say: what research. When there is use of public funds for political . . . [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Could we have the question, please.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is: could the Minister of Agriculture check to see how many buttons were printed, and what has been the disposition of those buttons since the public reacted as they should have? [interjections]

MR. NOTLEY: And will we charge the Tory party for them?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I take some exception to him saying — you know, we're not the only group that uses orange and blue. The hon. leader of the Independents should be aware that they're also the colors of the Billy Graham crusade and the Oilers. [interjections] I think it's a fairly well distributed color.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I know the minister doesn't feel responsible for this. His predecessor, plus the

political manipulators in this government, are responsible. [interjections] Well, what are you? The hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs sits in indignation . . . [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Could we have the question, please.

MR. HORSMAN: A serious question.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Well, it is. Public funds used for political purposes.

DR. BUCK: It's brainwashing, Horsman.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order.

MR. NOTLEY: You've got them squirming, Ray. Keep it up.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Could the minister determine who authorized the buttons to be printed and report that back to the Legislature?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm really surprised. Politics make strange bedfellows. [interjections] It seems like both the Independents and the NDP are in the same bunk, and it's easy to say what kind of bunk that is.

Mr. Speaker, in answer to the question, I'd be happy to check into how many buttons there were and report back. [interjections]

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. As well, could the Minister of Agriculture assure this Assembly that between now and the next election, no further orange and blue buttons will appear, being handed out by government employees on behalf of the Conservative Party of this province? [interjections]

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: The way the hon. member phrased the question, that it won't be Conservative buttons passed out by any members of the government between now and the next election — I can give him that assurance.

MR. NOTLEY: I have a supplementary question. Will the minister assure the House that he or any of his cabinet colleagues had absolutely nothing to do with the selection of the colors?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I'd have to check that out, but I would not think so. [interjections]

MR. BATIUK: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister advise what color was on the former 4-H buttons and for how long that color was used?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I believe it was green. [interjections] I would have to say it's just part of the progressive change that took place in the province.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I know everybody thinks with glee that green and white are Sacred colors. But could the minister confirm that the international colors for 4-H are green, gold, and white? Is that accurate? [interjections] Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. That question is significant in this sequence of questions aris-

ing here. Could the minister confirm the colors for 4-H? [interjections]

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I . . .

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The hon. minister from Lethbridge, who never says anything, seems to have so much to say — never does any research, never does a thing in this House but interrupt. [interjections]

AN HON. MEMBER: He got you, eh?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, the buttons are certainly one thing, but there is no movement in this province that is held in higher regard than the 4-H clubs and their members across this province. I would be happy to check and provide any research to hon. members in the Assembly with respect to 4-H, because it's an exciting program. There is no way that any aspersions should be cast on 4-H because of the color of buttons or whatever. [interjections] Except, Mr. Speaker, I have to reaffirm that I admire their taste.

Crowsnest Pass Freight Rates

MR. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, now that we're finished button, button, who's got the color of the button, I would like to ask a serious question of the Minister of Agriculture. It deals with the Crow rate. Mr. Minister, I understand that a meeting was held in Jasper last weekend and that the Prime Minister was there and met with leaders of our agricultural industry. Was the minister or any of his department invited to that meeting and, if so, did they attend?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, no one from the government was invited, from the province of Alberta in particular.

MR. MILLER: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister is reported to have said that the reason the Crow benefit would be paid to the railways is because of the effect of lobbying done by Members of Parliament from Quebec. My question to the minister is: was Alberta's position relative to paying the producer related to Members of Parliament from Alberta, as well as to Minister Pepin in the federal government?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, beginning in September 1982, this government made a response to the Gilson proposal which was very clearly put out and went to each Member of Parliament in Canada. In February 1983 there also was a follow-up that reconfirmed our position. And our position hadn't changed; it was still clear on how we saw the resolution of the Crow rate issue evolve.

We also made a ministerial statement in this Assembly on March 11, in which we put out very clearly exactly what we felt. We favored the phase-in of the payment to the producer, to the original Gilson proposal. That was reaffirmed, and a copy of that was put on each Member of Parliament's desk. On April 22 a telex that reconfirmed it again went from the Premier to the Prime Minister. On May 2, 1983, we sent a telex to the Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin, with copies to his cabinet colleagues. The position we stated, which is consistent and clear, that we favored the Gilson proposal, was also distributed to

each Member of Parliament. So we can answer very affirmatively, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we made our position extremely clear.

MR. MILLER: A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I understand the Prime Minister left the door open to possible amendments in the debate on the Crow issue. Is it the intention of the minister to approach the Alberta Members of Parliament to see if they will try to make amendments, at least during the committee stage, so Alberta's position will be brought forward?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, we are certainly going to have contact with Members of Parliament in western Canada, not just in the province of Alberta. And yes, there will be some amendments proposed by the government, up to and including committee stage. That's what makes it difficult for us to respond to the Bill, because it's not complete in its context. But the Bill in its present state certainly doesn't meet the objective and principles outlined by this government, and we will be making whatever representation we feel is necessary.

We were also informed that there wouldn't be an opportunity to present briefs at the committee stage. Now we understand that's being modified, and there might be that opportunity. So in the next week or so, we will have to address the issue of whether we will present a brief, to make sure that the producers of this province — not only the grain or livestock producers but all producers and processors of agriculture products — are represented and their wishes are made known, because this is such an important issue to western Canada. I am totally dismayed that the federal government would make the type of move they're making now, because this was their opportunity to do something meaningful for western Canada.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Agriculture, and I agree with the last statement. On this important subject, could the minister confirm that he or the Premier made a request to the Prime Minister for an audience when he was here in Alberta? Was a request made from the province of Alberta to have an audience during the weekend visit?

MR. JOHNSTON: What's an audience?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I can't speak for the Premier. However, no representation was made to me, asking me to meet with him, nor did I ask to meet with the Prime Minister.

Hazardous Waste Disposal

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of the Environment has to do with the special waste management facility. The town of Swan Hills has made application — and the Yellowhead Regional Planning Commission has okayed that application — for a hazardous waste disposal centre. Can the minister indicate if all the studies on that proposed site in the Swan Hills area have been completed?

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, I have not yet received the final reports on the Swan Hills drilling.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, can the minister enlarge upon that for the information of the Assembly? How many more studies and how long will the study require before

there can be a definitive answer as to that site being feasible?

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, there are five sites in the Swan Hills area. Four have been completed, and there has been some difficulty with access to the fifth site; drilling was proceeding. At this point in time, I am not aware of the exact completion date of the drilling in Swan Hills or when I will receive such a report.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate what studies have been done as to what other transportation corridors or railroad capacity will be required for that area? Have those studies been completed?

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, in terms of the final decision, a number of different parameters are taken into consideration, one of which is transportation. That certainly will be considered in the final decision-making process.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I believe the town of Hanna has submitted a desire for that area to be used. Can the minister indicate if that proposal is being considered?

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, I received a request from the town of Hanna with regard to whether they would receive consideration for siting a special waste facility. I have not yet made a decision with regard to that.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, the issue has been before this government and this Assembly for a long time. Is the minister in a position to indicate to the people of this province when a decision will be made as to siting a hazardous waste disposal project?

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, I hope to be in a position to make that decision as soon as possible. I am awaiting the results of the drilling at Swan Hills. There are other areas in the province which have been drilled. And when I have all the information, I will be making a decision as quickly as possible.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, could the minister be more definitive? Does that mean this year, next year, or 10 years? Can the minister give us a better time frame than sometime?

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, the question of siting a special waste facility is certainly one which should be addressed as quickly as possible. I believe I indicated to the hon. member that I hope to be in a position to do that very soon.

Oil Company Payments

MR. ZIP: Mr. Speaker, I would like to address my question to the Provincial Treasurer, regarding Turbo Resources Limited. Why did the government not demand immediate payment of the \$46 million owed by Turbo for oil supplied by the Alberta petroleum marketing agency to their refinery in Balzac in December and January of this year?

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is correct in noting that some \$45 million was an account receivable by Turbo Resources to the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission, at that time, as of early Febru-

ary 1983. Since that date the company has been on a daily cash-on-delivery basis with respect to payment for oil delivered. Prior to early February, the finance and priorities committee of cabinet monitored, on a monthly basis, the situation with respect to the moneys not paid by Turbo.

In noting that Turbo Resources is a Canadian company and has significant jobs and activities in Alberta as an integrated company, we felt it was not appropriate for the government to be the entity which would precipitate a collapse of Turbo by forthwith demanding the \$45 million. That would have happened had that action been taken. I understand that some reorganization of the company is being attempted, some restructuring of the debt. Meantime, the oil is being delivered on a cash-on-delivery basis daily.

MR. ZIP: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. When does the government expect to get its \$46 million?

MR. NOTLEY: After they collect their medicare premiums.

MR. HYNDMAN: That's not predictable at the moment, Mr. Speaker. I think that would depend on the nature of the restructuring of the debt that I understand is being attempted by the principals of the company.

Social Allowance

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. It's with respect to his department's recent refusal to pay for special baby formula prescriptions. Will the minister advise the Assembly if it is the goal of his department to enforce cost-saving measures whether or not it means depriving children and babies of basic medicines and baby formula?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, there is a basic food allowance of up to \$52 a month for children 0 to 11 years of age. That basic food allowance takes into account the cost of regular baby formula, and that's determined by the University of Alberta home economics department guidelines for food allowance. Formulas such as Similac and Enfalac can be purchased without a prescription from the monthly food allowance. However, if a child has special requirements and the costs exceed \$52 a month, then a doctor can write a confirmation of that and outline the need that's there. The department or the district office will pay 100 per cent of that amount.

A large number of prescriptions for baby formula were issued by doctors, and parents were going directly to the pharmacist to obtain their baby formula. The district offices have been trying to introduce cost efficiencies where any kind of food would come out of the regular food allowance and any special considerations come out of the other, but not both, unless it's necessary.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister in a position to advise the Assembly why social allowance recipients were not given advance warning of this sudden crackdown?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, in terms of the allocation for food, all along it's been expected that individuals would get the funding out of the basic allowance and not out of both, unless there were special requirements. So I

think everyone should expect that it not come out of both when it's not necessary.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. On what basis did the department reactivate this policy? In other words, did the department have proof that these babies were abusing the system? They must have had a reason for suddenly doing this.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, in terms of responsible cost efficiency and management, it's expected that district and regional workers in Social Services and Community Health will try to make cost efficiencies wherever they can, at the same time meeting the needs of all individual Albertans but not duplicating needs when it's unnecessary to do so.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question to clear up the confusion. Is the minister prepared to indicate whether or not his department will actually honor all children's prescription requirements for children that are brought to the department by parents trying to live on social allowance?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, in terms of prescriptions identifying needs, they will be honored throughout Alberta.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. Has the minister determined how much money the department hopes to save by stringently applying a policy which has been dormant for years?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't want the series of questions to be left on the basis of thinking that there's one specific area where this is being done. This is being done relative to prescriptions across the board, whatever they might be needed for. So I think it's misleading and unfair to think that — the hon. member is trying to imply that it's related just to one specific area, which it's not.

MR. MARTIN: That makes it worse. A supplementary question. Did the minister, along with the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care, determine how much money it would cost the government in medicare payouts because these people now have to see doctors, and they in turn will have to write letters for these prescriptions? I'm sure there's a cost there.

DR. WEBBER: The hon. member is sure, but I'm not sure that's the case. In terms of identifying any financial savings, to my knowledge they haven't been broken down, and I don't think it's necessary. The necessary thing is that we try to introduce cost efficiencies wherever we can.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I'm talking about cost efficiencies. Now I'll word it this way: is it not possible that the medicare payments will cost more than they would save in administering this inhumane measure?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair would like to point out that the minister's estimates will be up for discussion later this afternoon. Those questions dealing with finance and the intimate details of department budgeting could very well be asked at that time.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, we were talking about a policy of trying to save money. He's talking about being cost efficient. I'm asking if they have looked into the comparisons.

DR. WEBBER: I think I've answered the hon. member's question, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. Will the minister ensure, through his colleague the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care, that social allowance recipients will not be extra billed by the doctors who write these letters of explanation?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to indicate briefly that this line of questioning relative to components of the social allowance — it's important that we do get questions from the opposition, providing they're reasonable. [interjections] In terms of the questioning that has occurred over the past number of weeks, the research is apparently reading a local newspaper, in terms of coming up with these silly questions. Our intent is to be responsible to the needs of Albertans, in terms of their social allowance requirements. We feel we're doing that.

MR. MARTIN: Supplementary question. We may read the newspapers, but it's obvious that the minister has been reading Charles Dickens' novels. In view of the public outcry over this move by the department, will the minister consider . . .

MR. NOTLEY: They want to know who Charles Dickens is, Ray.

MR. MARTIN: . . . letting the policy return to a dormant stage or removing the non-provision by active legislation?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, we will leave in place the policy changes we have initiated; however, we'll be monitoring all situations closely and responding if any undesirable aspects occur.

MR. MARTIN: One final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister indicate to the Assembly what other well-thought-out, humane measures his department is planning to bring in?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I would think the hon. member could wait for the estimates and then ask questions.

MRS. FYFE: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the minister could explain the policy related to the determination of food for members of a family, specifically if a member requires a special diet. Is that covered under the allowance, and is a baby treated any differently from an adult member of the family?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, individuals' special requirements for food are treated the same, whether they be babies or adults. If special requirements are necessary by prescription and reasons are given for that, then individuals' needs are met, whether they are two years old or 80 years old.

MRS. FYFE: A further clarification, Mr. Speaker. If a social assistance recipient requires a special diet, such as

one that would be sugar-free, or special foods, is there any consideration for that type of diet that is non-prescription?

DR. WEBBER: I'd have to check the details of that, Mr. Speaker. Food allowance requirements are such that social workers take into account the special needs of individuals. I'd have to check whether or not it's something other than prescription.

AOC Loan
(continued)

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Tourism and Small Business. It's with respect to the minister's answer on May 9:

Mr. Speaker, the information was requested by the Alberta Opportunity Company from a person — I haven't got his name right at hand — who was a former member of the Alberta Opportunity Company and very much involved in the manufacturing industry.

Is the minister in a position to supply the House with the name of that individual, the information that individual was requested to obtain, and when it was provided?

MR. ADAIR: The name of the individual was Mr. Leer, who was a former member of the Alberta Opportunity Company and had specific expertise in the area of manufacturing.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, what was the information he was asked to obtain, and when was it given? Was it given to the AOC so that it could be made part of the package of material Executive Council had when they rendered their decision in October 1982?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, it was a request by the Alberta Opportunity Company for information, as it was with the consulting firm that did the other request for them. It was provided to AOC and is part of the package AOC had in their review, and made recommendations to and through the board of directors of AOC to the cabinet.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time for the question period has expired. Perhaps we could have one more supplementary.

MR. NOTLEY: I'll hold it over, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would the Assembly agree that the hon. Member for St. Paul might revert to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**
(reversion)

MR. DROBOT: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Hon. Ernie Isley, I would like to introduce to you, and through you to the members of this Assembly, 22 grade 8 students

from the H.E. Bougoin school in Bonnyville. Accompanied by their teachers Ruben Naidoo and John Borders and by parent Mrs. Dietrich, they are seated in the members gallery. Would they please stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

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

Department of
Social Services and Community Health

MR. CHAIRMAN: Has the minister any opening comments?

DR. WEBBER: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to make some opening comments relative to the 1983-84 estimates for the Department of Social Services and Community Health. Following that, I believe the hon. Member for Lethbridge West would like to make some comments relating to his position as chairman of the board of AADAC, the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission.

The 1983-84 fiscal strategy of this government has four objectives, as outlined in the Budget Address. The objectives that relate directly to Social Services and Community Health are: (a) sound financial management, (b) maintenance of quality health and social services, and (c) reduction in the size of the public service. These objectives come about as the result of the economic climate changing from boom to restraint and stabilization. This change has affected the Department of Social Services and Community Health in terms of having a higher social allowance case load, which is the result of higher unemployment in the province. Since there is traditionally a time lag between economic recovery and a reduction in unemployment rates, it's expected that social allowance case loads will remain high through the 1983-84 budget year.

The mandate of Social Services and Community Health is the management of programs and institutions designed to promote the physical, mental, and social well-being of Albertans. The budgetary commitment to that is \$1.2 billion for 1983-84, which is a 14.5 per cent increase over the 1982-83 forecast. The major portion of that increase, some 73 per cent, is due to the increases in vote 2, social allowance. However, there are also substantial increases in vote 3, child welfare services and, because of the introduction of the widows' pension, in vote 5, benefits and income support. In addition there is a decrease of some 155 permanent, full-time positions, from 7,232 to 7,077.

Mr. Chairman, the budget priorities for 1983-84 are as follows. First of all, the area of social allowance. The social allowance program in Alberta has been and continues to be the most generous program in Canada: some \$472 million this year, compared with \$361 million forecast for '82-83. Mr. Chairman, that's nearly half a billion dollars for social allowance for the province of Alberta. So in terms of meeting the objectives of sound financial management and maintenance of quality social services, a package of adjustments and modifications was announced on March 25 which, in general, has been well

received by Albertans. We are closely monitoring the effects of those changes, and I encourage all MLAs to bring to my attention any concerns or individual problems, as well as other ways in which we can improve the system.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, in recognition of the case loads social workers are carrying, there is an increase in manpower costs: some 136 wage man-years to supplement social allowance staff in the field. There is a commitment to developing a more responsive computerized information system, which brings me to the next area of priority, developing an electronic information system.

The principle priorities in that particular area are better control of accounts payable and accounts receivable, and providing support to the district offices and social workers. The department is in the process of implementing a system called remote data entry, which will reduce the time taken to update information related to assisting people who require assistance. This will result in decreasing the time to adjust recipients' benefits when circumstances change. Full implementation of that is set for June 1984.

However, prior to the full implementation of the remote data entry system, steps have been taken to simplify current codes and procedures to reduce processing time. That, together with the wage staff positions, plus staff from Crown debt collection working with Social Services and Community Health staff, will assist in reducing the chance for overpayments and fraud. We feel these steps will help overcome the concerns expressed by the Auditor General.

Mr. Chairman, the third priority is the area of child welfare. This has been a difficult area. I expect it will continue to be a difficult area in the future. However, the 1980 Cavanagh Board of Review is expected to report so we have the recommendations prior to the fall session. In the meantime, an interim review is being undertaken with respect to revisions to the Child Welfare Act.

The child welfare area is certainly one where we have had considerable public debate relative to child abuse and discipline. What some people consider to be abuse, others may interpret to be discipline. Certainly, the final decision relative to a social worker or a child welfare worker acting on a particular case will, in the end, boil down to the sound judgment and common sense of the social worker, no matter what kind of legislation we have in place. However, I think it's important to try to put in place legislation and regulations that are helpful in the process. We're looking at reviewing policy: child protection registry; wardship, both temporary and permanent; parental and foster parents' rights; and adoption reunion services.

There's one service, Mr. Chairman, that I'd like to refer to briefly. A program called Wednesday's Child commenced viewing in the fall of 1981, following discussions with CFAC Calgary and CFRN Edmonton. It is a program where a child is identified as requiring an adoptive home. A great number of responses have come in as a result of this program. In fact, of some 49 children viewed on television to December 31, 1982, some 30 were placed with a view to adoption.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, another program that will be getting off the ground this Friday is a master agreement signed by the federal government, provincial government, and the Lesser Slave Lake regional council. This is an agreement whereby reserves in the Lesser Slave Lake region will ultimately provide child welfare services

in the future.

In the area of child welfare, I'd also like to add that over the past several years, we've had the American Humane Association, a non-profit agency dedicated to the advocacy of rights of children and families and to the prevention of family violence. It has a reputation for providing leadership and skills to the public re child welfare services. This particular organization has been carrying out training programs in the department for the last several years and, in fact, some 470 workers in the child welfare area have undergone some 250,000 hours of training.

Another area of priority is decentralization. This is a move my predecessor made several years ago and one that he deserves a lot of credit for. The province is divided into six regions, and regional services are offered. A number of these services have already been implemented with many others to come about.

The final area of priority I'd like to make reference to is the conversion from contracts to grants. This began in May 1982 and was completed in March of this year. Some 292 contracts were converted to grants to non-profit agencies. The reason for this conversion was to provide more flexibility to the local agencies and more community accountability. This conversion shows up in this year's estimates. Members will notice this in the estimates by noting a decrease in the supplies and services and an increase in grants.

With those few remarks, Mr. Chairman, I welcome comments and questions from my colleagues.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does the chairman of the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission want to say anything?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, speaking to Vote 11, the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission, I would like to make not long but several comments to members of the Committee. Although the problem side of alcohol and drug abuse tends to increase with adverse economic conditions, I point out a couple of very salient points. First of all, consumption of alcoholic beverages in Alberta has now surpassed some 50 million gallons a year, which is, although very significant, only the fourth in Canada and the Territories. I don't mean to say that that's not high or that problems are not attendant with that volume of consumption. It's obviously big business. There's some \$75 billion now spent among the liquor stores, lounges, and licensed premises of Alberta, and the government hopes to realize somewhat greater than \$25 billion in profit.

Mr. Chairman, we have taken some initiatives that I'm quite proud of as chairman of the commission. First of all, the impaired drivers of this province, which had hit a peak of some 30,000, or 2,500 a month, have reduced somewhat. Along with the Solicitor General's Department, perhaps the administration of justice side, AADAC would certainly like to claim some responsibility for the decrease, as a result of its education program.

One shouldn't discount for a moment, Mr. Chairman, the very positive role that the Alcoholics Anonymous and Alanon organizations in this province make on their fellow men who are afflicted with problems of alcoholism.

I would like to point out some very positive things the commission has done with regard to influencing younger people in the province, mainly through the budgetary appropriation of education and information. The most noticeable one — and I appreciate the many comments I've received from members throughout the Assembly on

the very positive advertising campaign that's gone on now since September '81. The information coming back is that now fully some 80 per cent of Albertans are aware of what AADAC is all about, compared to some 15 to 25 per cent just a few short years ago.

More important, we're aiming at that group of young Albertans aged 13 to 17. I'm very pleased to report that some 93 per cent of Alberta's young people are aware of what AADAC is all about and its program with regard to responsible behavior and responsible drinking. Members may note, because they've all received it, a very special publication we put out called *Zoot Capri*, which goes to high school and junior high school students throughout the province. The response from both the students and their parents has been extremely popular.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to point out to members of the committee that we have undertaken, along with the educational program, optional programs to be carried out throughout the various communities of Alberta. Each member of the Assembly received, I think it was in January or February — immediately following the provincial election, anyway — an update on those activities that were held within their constituencies. I think we in the Assembly can be very hopeful that the impact of alcohol abuse on Alberta's young people is lessening, particularly when one looks at some of the modes that have been chosen, such as the slogan "make the most of a good thing, make the most of you"; you're responsible in many ways for your own behavior; and the peer pressure type of advertising we've been doing.

All in all, Mr. Chairman, I'm gratified at the very positive response that AADAC, as an agency of government, has received from government through its funding. I note, for example, that this year we've been able to cut the program support but increase the funding in all the other areas; that is, treatment and rehabilitation, education, and funds to private agencies.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I would certainly endorse and ask for the support of the members of the Assembly in passing vote 11, AADAC, of Social Services and Community Health.

Thank you very much.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I suppose that if there is an area where my colleague and I differ from the philosophical perspective that members of the government caucus share, it is in the way we approach the estimates of the Department of Social Services and Community Health. I find that the decisions made subsequent to the election are, quite frankly, appalling. I am not going to be hypocritical by saying outside the House what I'm not prepared to say bluntly inside the House.

Mr. Chairman, I well remember the debates which occurred in this House from 1979 to 1980 over the issue of the operation of the Department of Social Services and Community Health. In the spring of 1979, in one of the bitterest exchanges in a long time, we had a debate over the clumsy efforts of the Department of Social Services and Community Health to seize files from Metis settlements in this province. I still remember with some regret the government defence that these were government files in government buildings. Of course, when the Ombudsman rendered his judgment, it was obvious that that kind of defence was nonsense and silly.

A few months later, we had an equally troubling event. The newspapers of Canada carried in banner headlines an incident which occurred in the Peace River country, the dog-food eating incident. Before that, we had the prob-

lems at Westfield. In the spring of 1980, we had the government announcing that there would be a comprehensive inquiry, the Cavanagh Board of Review.

Mr. Chairman, I remember during that spring that when question after question was raised about the administration of the Department of Social Services and Community Health, particularly with respect to child welfare, we were advised by the then minister that this Cavanagh Board of Review was going to look in depth at the issue, examine all the implications, and render a report which would be submitted to the government. Then, on the basis of that report, we could have major changes. As my memory recalls, we were told not to look at things in a disjointed way; in fact we would have this board of review report in order to make comprehensive changes.

Mr. Chairman, it's now more than three years since that board of review was commissioned, and we still don't have a report. It is one of the most never-ending commissions that I recollect in the history of Alberta politics. I say to members of the committee that before we look at the estimates for the current year, we have some unfinished business that has to be attended to. In a very large and important way, that unfinished business is the fact that we still do not have the kind of basis for making changes in the future which we have a right to expect as a consequence of the decision of the government to appoint the Cavanagh Board of Review in 1980.

I don't suppose there is a more accurate way of describing the morality of any society than the manner in which we treat our elderly and our young. I say to the government, Mr. Chairman, that as a result of the changes which have taken place since the Legislature reconvened, there are a number of major differences between the party I represent and the government. Members of this government caucus should not hide behind the success of the blue and gold machine.

MR. SZWENDER: Orange.

MR. NOTLEY: Orange, gold, whatever it was. We'll be able to look at the 4-H buttons now and know what the colors are.

They should not be able to hide behind their electoral success, because some of these changes which were proposed by the minister were not outlined to social allowance recipients before the election. As a matter of fact, we've had a number of people contact our office and say: if we'd known this last fall, we would not have voted Conservative. The minister tells us that these changes he announced have been well received. I don't know who they've been well received by.

MR. MARTIN: Amway.

MR. NOTLEY: Maybe by the Amway crowd. Perhaps Peter Pocklington has taken renewed vigor and given them a second lease on life, that he has some people in the Alberta Legislature who are pursuing these kinds of weird, retrogressive policies.

Mr. Chairman, the fact of the matter is that the changes, especially with respect to the shelter allowances, are absolutely scandalous. The minister stands up and defends the change and says: we reviewed the market situation; there's a very high vacancy rate in Calgary and Edmonton, and therefore it should be quite reasonable for people to move or negotiate with their landlords to bring down the rents. But the information we've received

from Canada Mortgage and Housing is that rents have not fallen in Edmonton. If rents have not fallen in Edmonton and the shelter allowances are going to be cut back, the inevitable consequence is that people are going to have to move.

Who is going to have to move? Is it that sort of conventional Tory villain, the person who is able to work but is sitting there drinking a bottle of beer, too lazy to work? Well, there may be the odd one. But as the minister well knows, the vast majority of the people on our case load list are not those types that are singled out for all kinds of common discussion and gossip. Rather, the vast majority of the people who are on social assistance are people who ... [interjection]

MR. MARTIN: Szwender's research.

MR. NOTLEY: Yes, his research. He might take a look at the government statistics. Mind you, I do have to say that there is an increase in the number of unemployables because of the massive unemployment in the province. But when one looks at the normal case load in this province, Mr. Chairman, the fact of the matter is that the shelter allowance is going to hit single parent families for the most part, especially young women, who are going to face the prospect of having to move.

I simply say to members of the committee: at what price are we going to save dollars by forcing people to move to accommodation in a different part of the city, perhaps a different part of the community, accommodation that is frankly substandard in some cases? I for one find the cutback in shelter allowance quite inexcusable. Sure we have to look at where we cut our cloth, Mr. Chairman, no question about that. But when I see some of the massive incentives given ... We had all the government members pounding their desks with great enthusiasm when the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources told us that for a period of four and half months we're going to pump another \$100 million directly into an industry — the minister himself points out that the profit picture of that industry is improving substantially. Yet we have to cut back on shelter allowances. We have a government trying to collect \$46 million in medicare premiums, some dating back 13 years, that seems to wink at Turbo Resources owing us \$45 million for oil that was delivered that they haven't paid for.

Mr. Chairman, I simply say to members of the committee that we are afflicted with a government that has double standards, and no department shows those double standards more cruelly than the Department of Social Services and Community Health. This [afternoon] my colleague raised questions about the baby formula ban. I find the minister's answers really amazing. We have Tories who are continually saying that we have to cut down the bureaucracy, get government off the backs of the people, but here we're going to massively use our medicare system to have welfare recipients chase in and get doctors' prescriptions.

I don't know whether doctors are going to be urged to second bill. I suppose not, because this is a free-enterprise government. It doesn't want to urge doctors not to second bill. They may not second bill, but there's nothing to stop them. We're going to take doctors' time, charge the medicare system. To do what, Mr. Chairman? Fill out prescriptions. I really wonder. It is the classic example of being penny-wise and pound-foolish. I don't know what kind of cost/benefit analysis could have been undertaken by any person of professional reputation in

the department. I can really only presume this is one of those policies thrust upon the department by members of the government caucus as opposed to any thoughtful in-house proposal that was presented to the minister.

Mr. Chairman, I want to very briefly outline some concerns my colleague and I have about the operation in this department. My colleague will deal with many of the programs and the deficiencies of the programs in a much more specific way. I want to initiate the discussion this afternoon by telling the minister that at a time when we have people in this province facing unparalleled pressures — people who have come as a consequence of the boom now finding themselves caught without a job, the pressures of possibly losing their home, of having to face the humiliation and sense of defeat of unemployment — all these things added together are going to place a tremendous amount of pressure on the Department of Social Services and Community Health.

We are asking a department composed of valiant workers — the problem with the Department of Social Services and Community Health is not in the people who work for the department. By and large some very fine public employees work for this department. They have case work loads which are way too high and are going to be a lot higher because of the pressures of the recession and the slowdown in the economy. As I see it, the difficulties are not so much a consequence of the well-meaning efforts of people who work for the government to do their jobs but of the failure of this government to recognize that at a time of recession the people who should be bearing the cost of fighting that recession, who should be trimming their sails, are those who can afford to do it, not the most defenceless people in our society.

Mr. Chairman, when one looks at the ministerial announcement on shelter allowances and other so-called changes in the regulations of this department, when one begins to appraise the other implications of the changes announced and understand just what is going to happen to the people who are caught in this kind of cruel effort to repeal the 20th century, I for one say that the time has come for this committee to tell the minister and the government that social services deserve a much higher priority if we are going to keep faith with the many thousands of Albertans who either permanently or as a result of the current unemployment and the economic slowdown have to temporarily seek help from the department. I think we are taking a mean-minded approach to the way in which we respond to those Albertans who have to seek help from the government at this point in time.

There is no doubt that in the long run we have to emphasize job creation. Unfortunately this government isn't doing that in a very effective way either, other than the trickle-down approach. Give oil companies \$100 million in four months and hope that that annualized amount of \$300 million will trickle down. Mr. Chairman, the trickling down, which was to have started a year ago in April when the economic resurgence program was announced — one of the most expensive programs in the history of any provincial government — has been extremely modest to date.

We have all kinds of universal programs for the rich, and specific, performance-related programs for the poor. I think we have our priorities all mixed up. The changes which have been announced by the minister over the course of the last six months illustrate more clearly than almost anything else why I think this government's position on social services is fundamentally unsound, why it is

unfair and inequitable, and why I for one will continue without any apology whatsoever to oppose a budget which in my judgment is going to hurt a lot of individual Albertans.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Chairman, I'm surprised to get in right away. I thought many government members would be interested in this particular issue. Let me just make a few comments, then I have a number of questions for the minister. I think we can probably take five or six weeks here in estimates, and go at it.

Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to reinforce what my colleague has said. To me, the mark of a civilized society is not how well they can protect the rich and powerful — the rich and the powerful can always look after themselves — but how we look after the most defenceless in that society. Of course, because of the straits they're in — lack of education and a number of reasons — the defenceless often don't carry very much political clout. They're usually easy to step on, and they don't lose many votes. Surely a government that's elected to represent all the people should be able to do better.

I have to admit that I am somewhat disappointed in the hon. minister. When the new minister came in with the new government, I was encouraged by some of his statements and the things he did at the start. The fact that he was able to talk to Dr. Solomon and the group concerned with the bereavement program, and back off, was rather refreshing in this government. Whether or not they are the minister's policies, I expected a little more of a red Tory, if you like, in the Social Services and Community Health Department than we had the last time. I now find that we have Attila the Hun administering the department.

I'm not sure if it's the minister's ideas or, again, if it's being pushed to the right by Amway, the right wing of the Conservative Party. I'm not sure. Only the minister can tell me. I don't honestly believe that he believes everything he's doing in this department is correct. I am sure the minister, having come from a humanist background, would recognize what he's doing is wrong. I can only take it that he's being pushed and, again, is taking the can for what the government's doing. Needless to say, he is still the minister of the government, and he has to take the blame. As I say, if you look at a civilized society — this government is going to be judged very harshly, because they are treating their defenceless very badly.

I know they hope, and I know they are playing to the lowest common denominator. I also know there is that feeling out there that you can bring in a Bill 44, because you can poll and decide right now in the recession that labor unions are powerful, so it's time to get them. I also know that there is that stereotype of a welfare person abusing the system, that my colleague talked about. Mind you, I think we would agree that there are all sorts of people who abuse the system — the rich and powerful. There are many examples of that. But it's a stereotype. I suggest to the minister that the figures do not back that up, and the minister knows that. The vast majority of people on welfare are women and children. Mind you, if we keep up the economic policies of this government, we may all be on welfare at some point because we have increased unemployment.

The time people need the services, Mr. Chairman, is the time we seem to be backing off. I suggest that people are being punished in two ways; I say this honestly. By official figures, there are 136,000 unemployed. This may come as a shock to the right, but most of them want to

work, and they want to work badly. For the odd abuse, you see 100 who aren't abusing the system. I think the minister knows this.

At a time of high unemployment, we actually see a cutting back in terms of services. I know the minister will say we're spending more and we are spending a lot. The reason we're spending a lot is that we have to keep throwing more on welfare because there is no job creation. A \$200 million increase for welfare payments; nothing for job creation. I don't blame the minister there but, as I said, people are caught between a rock and a hard place. That \$200 million with less support staff makes no sense at all. What you do to people when they are unemployed and finally end up on welfare — I think we would all agree, Mr. Chairman, that if you're on welfare long enough, it is going to affect you drastically. You are probably going to end up staying on welfare unless there is some change in your pattern of behavior with help through social workers for job retraining or some of the necessary back-up services that go into it.

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

We know there are examples of families that go through three generations on welfare because they've had no back-up, no encouragement. Those are the values they learn. But we do not help people by stripping away their dignity even more, as we're attempting to do in many of the programs. The minister says we want to be cost effective. Nobody would argue with cost effectiveness. In everything we do, we want to get the best bang for the buck. But if we don't pay it here, we ultimately end up paying it — are jails any better? Are all the other social factors that occur with unemployment better? Are a higher suicide rate and alcoholism better? This is what happens. You strip away people's dignity long enough, and that's the type of reaction you're going to get. Anybody who spends any time at all studying sociology knows this. I know the minister does too.

You can save a few bucks here and there. I'm sure before question period today they hadn't even thought about the increase in medicare payments. Is it cost effective? The minister said it was silly to ask. It's not silly. If you have to run to a doctor, their time is money and they have to write up prescriptions. They are going to charge the medicare system, which comes out of government coffers. From the answers to the questions, I'm sure there was no answer to that today. I don't think they'd even thought about it. When we look at cost effective, let's look at what we're doing when we try to cut back at that particular time.

The other thing the minister says is that some people think abuse is discipline. That statement rather bothers me. Abuse is abuse. The term means abuse; it's not discipline. Mr. Chairman, I believe that sort of statement shows where the minister is coming from. How can some people think abuse is discipline? I suppose if you took that to the logical [end], then a child abuser just thinks he's disciplining his child. Where does it stop? [interjection] When the term is "abuse", that's exactly what it means. If you recall, that's what people were charged with at [Woodcroft].

Mr. Minister, the point I want to make — we've made it in the House, and I don't expect the government is going to change. I say to the minister, let's stop dealing just with facts and figures. We're dealing with real people. Maybe my riding is different from his, but I expect I know his riding in Calgary fairly well. Some of the poli-

cies are affecting those people very directly. I'm sure he's getting some feedback. I know I am from my riding. There are a number of examples of how we deal with it. I know he knows about the chronic asthmatic. I'm not going to go into that; it's been well documented. Does that make any sense at all? Absolutely not. We get other letters coming in, day in, day out. Another woman, who saved all her life — she's a working poor, not on welfare but partial welfare — is trying to work, trying to maintain her dignity. They are going to take away her home, the only investment she's ever made. That makes no sense at all. You're stripping people of their dignity. If she can maintain the pride of owning and keeping that home, that's going to be encouragement to get off welfare, not the other way around.

In all due respect to the minister, these policies are encouraging people to be more dependent on the government, not the other way around. If you study anything about human development, if you strip away their dignity and their pride long enough and they're not working a lot, not doing anything for job retraining, you are going to have a welfare class forever. Those policies are psychologically stupid. There's no rationale for them. I think the minister knows that. I can only go by the fact again that the minister is appealing to the right-wing element that wants to go after the people.

There are a number of other questions. But just to be slightly positive here, I would say the AADAC program is an excellent program. And I said this during the election; I think the Minister of Labour was at a debate we were having. I think it should be extended; I think they're doing a good job. As a high school counsellor, I even had the posters up in my office. I think the advertising is the right attack; it's the type that will appeal to people. If we're serious about cutting costs, that's the type of preventive service we need more of. In my riding the Norwood centre is a good example. Single parents — and there are a number of them in my riding — can take their children and get some type of education. I think the way to go is a lot of preventive social services. If we can prevent some of the problems that occur later, we actually save money. I suggest to the minister, and I think he would agree, that one way we can look at saving money over the long run, which the minister seems to be preoccupied with, is to do more in preventive social services. But we don't seem to be. I have some questions about it. That's where you end up saving money, Mr. Minister. You don't save money by being punitive, because we'll end up with a higher crime rate and more jails. The Solicitor General is having to build more jails all the time. That's not cost effective. Besides being inhumane, it's not cost effective.

Frankly, Mr. Chairman, I think we have to go back to the drawing board and decide what our priorities are. I know the government is facing money problems now; it's clear to me that they are. But they're going the wrong way in terms of saving money, because what they're doing will end up costing more money in the long run, besides being inhumane. The point we as politicians always have to remember is that the policies are not in isolation here in this Legislature. We are affecting real people out there with real needs. Especially in your department, we are dealing with them in a very direct way, much more than perhaps some other departments. I would advise the minister — in fact, I throw this out — that when we get through the session, maybe he and I can take a little tour; the two of us will go out together and discuss it. If he's willing to do that, I'm certainly willing to spend the time

and go out to some of the people I know. If the minister is interested, I promise that I will take the time and go out with him, and we'll talk about it. I think that's a reasonable suggestion to the minister.

MR. BATIUK: Will you wear your orange button?

MR. MARTIN: No, I won't wear my orange button; I can't do that. I will have a different colored button, but we'll forget about buttons.

Besides a few remarks, I do have some questions though. I don't know how many other people are on. I will ask three or four at a time and then come back, because there are a number of them. I know the minister wants a full opportunity to go through as many questions as he can. I was talking about preventive health care. The Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care says that people are abusing active treatment institutions. I wonder if he has had any discussion about using community-based health care. That could come out of this minister's budget. We don't need massive buildings; we could use nurses, social workers, psychologists, and whoever is needed, right out of the community health centre. If people are having some sort of psychological problems, it's all in one area. It's been tried in many parts of the world and seems to be working fairly well. Again, it seems to be cost effective. I wonder if the minister would care to comment on that.

My colleague talked about the Cavanagh report, and we've had discussions about it. I am still a little curious why it's taking two years. Will it not be tabled before the end of this session? It will not be. I will ask the minister then, does he have a rough time? Will it be three or four years, is he looking at the fall session, or can he give us an idea of when it will be tabled?

DR. WEBBER: You didn't listen to my remarks.

MR. MARTIN: I tried to listen, Mr. Minister, but I still haven't got an idea when it's coming. I'm trying to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would the hon. member please address his remarks through the Chair?

MR. MARTIN: The minister was commenting to me, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Don't direct them in the first person, please.

MR. MARTIN: Then I would suggest that he do it too. If you're going to be fair, I think you should suggest that.

The other point I would like to make is that — I will ask about four questions; I have a number of them here. That's the second; I'll ask four more just to begin with.

Can the minister summarize the effect of the elimination of 80 full-time positions on clients of child welfare services, when it is estimated that there will be a 10 per cent increase in the case load in the next year? I wonder if he can justify that. I am going back to my comments. It seems to me rather pointless, when we have a \$200 million increase in the welfare budget and people need the back-up services more, that we in fact eliminate 80 full-time positions. So we would be giving out money to people without any social work help that might be able to get them off welfare, if you like. The same for social allowances, where 10 full-time jobs are cut but the budget estimates a 31 per cent increase in social allowance

payments, as well as new paperwork inherent in implementing recent changes. I wonder about the rationale for that.

The third question: how can the minister justify a 600 per cent increase in the budget of information systems services to \$6 million? Information systems — the ones that cut the paper and that; I guess that's what they do. Was it their intention at one time to computerize the lists of those who wrote letters to the editors, if it hadn't been brought up in the House?

Fourth, according to our figures, over 50,000 Albertans — the minister may want to correct that — now receive social allowance. The greatest increase, 77 per cent, was in the category of employables. How can the minister justify a paltry 2 per cent increase, to a total of \$2.3 million, for the employment opportunities program designed to help social allowance recipients find work? In other words, we have 50,000 people. Surely the goal of the minister, Mr. Chairman, should be to get people off welfare; get them retrained and back to work. How is he going to do this when we have a total of \$2.3 million, a 2 per cent increase, for over 50,000 people? It makes no sense at all in this day and age.

So I leave those four questions. I will certainly take the opportunity to come back after I have the answers to those.

MR. ALEXANDER: Mr. Chairman, I find that following in the wake of hon. members of the opposition always presents a special challenge, since one looks at one's notes and finds what one thinks one knows stood on its head. For example, I think I just heard one of the hon. members say that if you study anything about human development, you know that if you strip away their dignity, they become more dependent. My studies of human development — which I suggest have been some 30-odd years worth — indicate to me that it's not possible to strip away dignity. If you have it, you have it, and it isn't stripable, especially not through taking away dependency-creating programs.

Mr. Chairman, I want to compliment the minister and just make a few remarks, because an overview of the area is needed. I think this minister is moving in the right direction, has done an excellent job, and is beginning to introduce some discipline in an area in which discipline is long overdue. The problem he finds himself faced with is happening on a worldwide basis and, in my view, it must be brought under control sometime soon, including in Alberta. Our financial position is deteriorating as quickly as in many of the overseas constituencies which have experimented with these programs for a great many years longer than we have. I would like to just indicate some of the things that are happening with them.

Social policy in Canada has seen progressive travel towards cradle-to-grave security. This thoroughgoing welfare state we find ourselves in could be termed, if you like, the British scenario, in which government's social commitments in the vested interest of that growth has led to a crushing burden of taxes and regulation that seriously damages the economy and its competitive position in the world and corrupts the national will to work. It always amazes me that at the same time we're talking about these kinds of things, about how badly people are treated, with tears running down our faces, we are demanding more employment.

Do such developments as the welfare state seem plausible for Canada in the next decade? Do they in fact point toward a happy ending, Mr. Minister, or toward econom-

ic and political collapse? In briefly considering the question, we need to adopt a larger perspective in which everything is talked about. The question needs to be asked: what really is social policy? This term is used in various ways, and all of its usages relate to activities of government which supplement or modify the productive and distributive actions of the private sector in the name of public interest. There are questions that arise from this process. The exercise of such functions has always been motivated by a mixture of compassion, ideology, and self-interest. It's also been true that the limits to aiding, protecting, and improving one's fellow men have been determined haphazardly by resource limitations and cultural traditions.

What happens when these functions are assumed by the state? Well, it seems to me that decision-makers can no longer deal with the problems at an individual level, which I consider to be one of its gravest weaknesses, but are dealt with in aggregates and in groups by governments. Social policy expenditures create their own constituency. The vested interests so created combine to virtually rule out significant spending cutbacks. It seems to me that the price of a successful, expansive social policy for Canada is continuing high inflation and, of necessity, policies to contain it. It's not at all clear that Canadians are willing to pay the price. Yet it would seem essential to check inflation to sustain our competitive position in world markets. Otherwise, we can't have employment. The implications for social policy seem fairly clear. Continuing inflationary pressure will be the factor limiting further growth. If we return to a relatively prosperous economy in the future, Canadians may be less inclined to push for the kind of rapidly expanding social programs that have characterized the last decade. Well, that's our share.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to share some of the things that have happened in other welfare states recently and what's happening in the world. I must say at the outset too that I'm primarily addressing myself to this matter of social assistance, which no one is proposing to dismantle. I might add that throughout western Europe, there's a growing realization that what was once a virtually limitless bounty has suddenly reached some very real limits. Pressure is mounting to prune and reform the whole apparatus of welfare and redefine its purpose. The public mood behind it is not at all unlike a surge of recent conservative interest.

At present levels, the welfare apparatus has simply become too expensive for most governments and their taxpayers. Across the European continent, social security systems are grappling with fiscal crisis, in part because ponderous, costly bureaucracies have mushroomed to administer a vast array of programs, sometimes neglecting the essential to serve up what is merely desirable. In Britain and France, rent subsidies have done little to alleviate chronic housing shortages and overcrowding. Generous sick leave payments in Sweden are blamed for a debilitating rise in worker absenteeism. One official West German pamphlet giving citizens a simplified version of their social rights runs to merely 300 pages.

Bloated beyond its architect's intent, welfarism is threatening bankruptcy in some countries. Attempts to curb its excesses are beginning to cause political disruption and social unrest. Those of you who have been watching television from Paris in the last couple of weeks will know what I mean. A bankrupt country attempting to slightly reduce its commitments to education is faced with riots in the streets. A Dutch public finance expert in

this area said we must have a reshuffling of our economies to provide more funds for investment and less money for public consumption. That's the bottom line.

I think part of the inequity of the system is clear. Just as an example: in 1980, social assistance recipients received a 14 per cent increase in their cheques; in that year, workers received a pay increase of 9.2 per cent. The differential itself is instructive enough. The social assistance recipients received their increase tax-free. The working population not only paid taxes on the 9 per cent increase but paid taxes at a higher rate because of inflation bracket creep. The indexation is then a double whammy. The taxpayer is not protected by indexation; the social assistance recipient is. The net effect is to polarize. As things get harder and harder for the worker, they seem to get relatively better for the recipient of social assistance.

Canadian federal and provincial governments have a de facto guaranteed minimum income which embraces family allowances, a comprehensive social welfare program including widows and persons with disabilities, enriched employment insurance benefits, manpower training allowances, a greatly expanded postsecondary education program, and old age pensions. Since the session began, this government has introduced a Widows' Pension Act. We have additional universal contributory pension programs, subsidized housing, and complete hospital/medical protection. Mr. Chairman, if one were to stand in his place in this House and simply read off all the programs put in place by this government to support people on a safety-net basis in this economy, I doubt that it would be done within the confines of the session.

We are approaching a very difficult situation in terms of our debt. One might even call it uncontrollable. According to the Conference Board of Canada, the total provincial budget deficits for this fiscal year are forecast to reach \$50.4 billion. Mr. Chairman, I said provincial budget deficits. This brings the total provincial debt in Canada to \$125 billion. The federal debt, according to the Tax Foundation, stands at \$134.2 billion at the beginning of the current fiscal year. To this can be added the current federal shortfall of around \$27 billion, for a federal total of \$162 billion. Federal and provincial shares combined result in a grand debt of \$286.2 billion at the end of this fiscal year. Interestingly enough, Canada's gross national product this year is forecast to be \$347 billion. Thus we have a debt that is approaching our gross national product. If that is not a sufficient indication of the difficulty, then I can't think of one that would be.

I address this to the minister, Mr. Chairman. Given the fact that this system has reached the limits at which the economy is able to bear it, to carry it, the limits of the taxpayers' ability to pay, the hard question is what are we getting for the money? I guess I find that to be the most bothersome question of all. One may argue and debate about financial conditions, about what's happening all around the world. But what are we getting for the money?

Herman Kahn of the Hudson Institute recently described what we have now as the failure of prosperity. In what sense the failure of prosperity? Well, the impact of the system on the four participants is negative. The giver, the taxpayer, is now giving almost 50 per cent of his income to government for redistribution. He resents that because he doesn't think he's getting value. The transfer agent, the government, is growing larger and larger and, as the minister has quite wisely said, less efficient, and needs to be dealt with. The people who dispense welfare,

social assistance, cannot do so personally and with charity, with which this sort of assistance was originally designed to be given. They do so as their job. The welfare recipient himself is a victim. What is his response?

In a booklet published by the department, *A Guide to Social Assistance*, I notice that under average circumstances, the minister's department would distribute some \$968 per month to an average family. Is that enough? Of course not. How much is enough? The answer is clear. No amount is enough. It seems like the human personality recently referred to, acts in the form of resentment, anger, and loss of dignity at getting something without personal effort and without charity. With all the support system we've built underneath the unfortunate in our society, one wonders why the increase in family breakdown, why the increase in suicide levels? One wonders why the family is falling apart. It isn't because we don't pay enough. It isn't because there aren't enough programs. In my view, Mr. Chairman, it's because the system is wrong. I suggest to the minister that while he is heading in entirely the right direction to make it more efficient and less costly, it also needs more involvement of families, communities, churches, charitable agencies: direct personal contact of the type that will remove from this vast and costly effort the anger, hatred, and resentment we now find on all sides of the welfare/social assistance equation.

I commend the minister for his treatment of the programs under his administration. I don't see how it can be done much better in our society. Mr. Chairman, I feel that these matters of personal contact, of charity, of involvement in the community, are a way out that the present methods of paying, collecting, and distributing social assistance are not. Therefore I commend to his attention such things as a much wider involvement of the person.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does anybody have any further comment or questions?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, a few comments to the minister, not too lengthy.

First of all, when we look at the total expenditures of the department and compare 1977-78 to 1983-84, we note that the government has tripled its expenditures in this area, which means that it has just expanded and not examined some of the programs. I'm sure that some of the moves by the minister in the Legislature are a reaction to that tripling of costs since 1977-78. At the same time, we notice that the cost of central support services, the core people that administer the department, has increased by 200 per cent. It has doubled in that period of time, which is significant.

We're asking how many more services are given now than were given, say, in 1977-78? Are there any more, or are a lot of programs being created without meeting the needs of some of the people in the province? I think that's one area the minister should take a close look at, because we need services to help people at the community or individual level. We don't need a high-priced establishment at the central department area. If I were the minister, I would look at what has actually happened there. Are we doing a lot of planning, research, and writing of papers at the central level? What are these people really doing? Is that the extra cost of regionalization, which in my estimation has not really been effective up to this point? I don't know what has happened in terms of new services at the regional level to bring about better conditions for the needy in this province.

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

The hon. Member for Edmonton Whitemud raised the question of social services a little earlier. If '77-78 is a base of 100, the cost of social allowance has gone up over 336 per cent, and child welfare over 400 per cent. I've always felt much sympathy and concern in that area. I'm not as concerned about the expenditure there. But why the growth? What is really happening to bring about better services to people in this province?

I raised this in question period last Thursday. The FCSS programs funded by the department have been limited in expenditure and private, volunteer agencies are being cut back, but at the same time we see this large growth in departmental support services that surround the minister. Are they being cut by the same percentage as a matter of principle? Maybe the gross amount won't affect them that much, but is the principle applied to some of these community-funded agencies being applied to the central staff of the minister?

Vocational service agencies, programs for rehabilitation across this province, are receiving 5 per cent. The 34 groups in the Alberta association of rehabilitation agencies are not receiving consideration for the 12 per cent salary increase government employees got. Employees are moving from private agencies to government jobs. Is that what we want in this province when we're trying to work towards more volunteers and enhancing private agencies? We seem to be destroying them at the same time, but protecting the central bureaucracy of government. I don't think that should be happening. I think the minister must examine that direction.

I'd like to raise some questions with regard to the general directions the minister is taking. First of all, what are the priorities of the department in terms of services offered by the government and services offered by private agencies? How do those two balance? What is the attitude of government at this time? Is there more leniency towards the private agencies, or is the government coming down harder on them than on government programming, where a different kind of representation can go on?

Secondly, what is the minister's position on universal versus selective social services? Is the minister attempting to have a broad cafeteria of services or are they selective? For example, should all Albertans be entitled to free counselling through the Alberta mental health clinics or, on the other hand, do individuals have a responsibility to contribute to their own mental health? Where does the government lie on that question at the present time?

The third question: will the eligibility criteria for various programs be made stricter, and are we going to hear more announcements through the summer, such as the ones we've heard in the Legislature up to this time? If so, what will those programs be? How much lead time will the minister give many families in this province that have to adjust to those kinds of announcements? I think that's important when such strict measures are taken.

Fourthly, what studies are presently being undertaken by the government to reduce the cost of delivering services, and has any action been taken in this area? For example, we hire social workers to dispense cheques to various welfare recipients and that doesn't really need that high quality of service. I understand there are some studies going on in the department with regard to this matter, to try to separate economic responsibility from social or psychological responsibility of government towards the recipient. In a time like this, when we're under pressure in terms of budgeting, I think those kinds of

moves should be considered so that maybe we can move the money to the people that need the service out of the salary category.

I know the argument on the other side of the picture, and it has been this way for many years: if a social worker delivers the cheque, or assesses people for economic needs, they in turn can look at other types of counselling; they have the professional ability to detect whether a person needs psychological, social, or other kinds of counselling that are there. But maybe we can't afford that kind of service at the present time. The minister should be looking at dividing up the economic, social, and psychological responsibilities of the department.

Fifthly, will the government continue to increase its involvement in day care programs, as has been requested, or will there be a change in offering the service privately across this province? What's the attitude of the minister with regard to that matter?

In terms of the social allowance branch, I've already elaborated on one of the comments there with regard to utilization of trained social workers versus persons to administer the economic needs of people. Maybe the minister could comment on that. How has the work for welfare program in Taber and Lethbridge worked? Has it been successful? Will it be carried on? Will it be expanded into other areas of the province? What progress has been made with regard to the Klufas report on disabled persons? Has the minister done an analysis as to what it would cost the government to implement a number of those 86 recommendations? Has the minister worked with other levels of government, such as the federal government, with regard to their knowledge, programs, and reporting on the disabled? I think those are some of the things the minister should look at.

At this point in time, the general public of Alberta wants efficiency; there's no question about that. But I would have to say that in administering the programs and looking after recipients, I still feel Albertans have compassion for those who are in real need. I think it will be incumbent upon the minister in his next two, three, or four years of responsibility to assure himself that those who are really in need receive the services they require to meet the basics of food, clothing, shelter, and health care.

We can be hard and cold as government and we can neglect our responsibility, but I don't think anybody in Alberta wants that at this time. They want efficiencies, they want people to go to work if the job is there, and they want the employment opportunity program to be pushed to the greatest possible extent. I don't think they're at a point where they're saying people should go without and there should be hardships on any children in families across Alberta. I'd like the minister to comment at this time so we know what his goals are for the next two to three years.

MR. McPHERSON: Mr. Chairman, I feel invited to rise and make a few remarks on the estimates of the department. Perhaps my invitation to rise has been prompted by comments by the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood and remarks by the hon. Member for Edmonton Whitemud, which I very much appreciated hearing.

I'd like to direct some remarks with respect to the never-ending comments, it seems, from members opposite on the unemployment situation. While the Member for Edmonton Norwood recognizes that efficiency and accountability are laudable attributes in government, he has an ongoing penchant to want to increase the massive

budget of government. He seems to feel that massive government injection of funds into capital projects will solve the unemployment problem. Well, I believe there's a golden thread here that government must consider very carefully.

This government in fact has a large capital works program, but massive capital programs require ongoing operating funds. We must always be cognizant of that. In addition, they have a tendency to promote inflation in themselves. To cure unemployment by adopting policies which create inflation is like trying to put out a fire by pouring gasoline on it. Curing unemployment by creating inflation artificially misallocates resources into paths that cannot be sustained for long. The drug addict, too, can be temporarily cured by just one more fix, but this path ultimately leads to ruin.

I'd like to address a couple of remarks to welfare. On humanitarian grounds, emergency economic aid of this sort surely can be justified. But once past a certain threshold, it can threaten to promote continued unemployment. If, for example, one-industry towns suffering from plant shut-downs are slotted for additional aid, there is a danger that people will be discouraged from moving to places where greater employment opportunities exist. If this aid is contrived in such a manner as to financially penalize those who accept jobs, this will retard re-employment, not enhance it.

In Canada, a family of four with one breadwinner can actually receive more money from welfare payments than in the form of after-tax income from low-wage employment. In British Columbia, for example, the minimum wage level was \$3.65 an hour. At 40 hours per week, this translates into monthly after-tax take-home pay of \$562. But the same family can be entitled to \$415 in support allowances, plus anywhere from zero to \$455 in the form of shelter allowances, adding up to a relatively hefty \$870.

It's true that at maximum such a family could apply to the B.C. Ministry of Human Resources to make up the difference between the actual earnings and the welfare entitlements, so it would not actually lose out by engaging in paid labor. But under such a system, Mr. Chairman, it should occasion little surprise that few laborers voluntarily venture out into the cold winds of unemployment, for it is the rare individual who will willingly give up his full-time leisure for the dubious prospects of low-wage employment.

Such a system is truly generous, but generous to a fault. It should be curtailed in the interests of employment. This is the situation we have developing in this province and across this country, a situation where in some cases people are better off to be on unemployment and welfare than to be earning low-wage incomes.

With respect to the member's comments about little money being funnelled into social services and other aspects, looking at the estimates of the budget, it's interesting to note a total budget this year of \$1.212 billion, which represents a 14.3 per cent increase. I turn my pages to the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care and see a \$2.2 billion total budget, which is an increase of 14.6 per cent. I go to the Education Department and see another budget of \$1.116 billion, which represents a 7.3 increase. Certainly the funds are there. No one could possibly question that.

Mr. Chairman, there is just one question I would like to address to the minister, prompted by a number of phone calls I've received in my constituency. I wonder if the minister could provide for us — I know the question has been asked — some information as to the expectation

of the Cavanagh commission, and if the minister feels there may be any consideration given to changing the Child Welfare Act. Is any consideration being given to having an individual's name permanently struck from the child registry record when an individual has had a complaint lodged against him for child abuse but in which case the investigation has clearly determined that such an investigation is unfounded?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are there any further comments by members? Would the minister like to respond?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Chairman, I would appreciate it if the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood provided me with the rest of his questions, before responding to the ones he had.

MR. MARTIN: Do you want to go through all of them at this point? Sure, I'll throw out some more. I just want to keep some back, in case ... [interjections] Okay, seeing you've asked.

What is the commitment to volunteerism, which the minister has talked about, when family and community support services, which I believe support over 300 community-based agencies, are restricted to a 5 per cent increase? Even at this point, that would be below the inflation rate. Another question: the government has allotted a 3 per cent increase for operation of the single men's hostels but a 50 per cent increase in assistance available to transients. I believe that's 2.8.2. Where are all these new transients going to live?

Seven, what is the commitment to senior citizens when there is no increase in supplementary benefits under the Alberta [assured] income plan? One other question: a 7 per cent increase is budgeted for assured income for the severely handicapped. But it's my understanding that there was a 12 per cent increase in the numbers receiving this support last year. I wonder if he would comment on that. With those few questions, I'll wait for the minister's answers.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the comments and questions from different members of the Assembly. First, I'd like to make a brief comment related to our objectives. I indicated the priorities relative to the budget for this coming year. I indicated that three of the four government objectives outlined in the Speech from the Throne are related to aspects of this department: sound financial management, maintenance of quality social services, and reduction in the size of the public service.

Certainly I think we have an obligation to all Albertans in the unfortunate situation of requiring [services], whether that need be in the area of mental health, social allowance, child welfare, or whatever. At the same time, we have an obligation to the rest of Albertans who are not in need of these services, the taxpayers of this province, to see to it that our money is being spent responsibly — in other words, sound financial management. I've indicated several times in this House that in terms of being fair, we have to be fair not only to those people who need services but to other Albertans as well.

With respect to several points raised, the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood referred to the preventive nature of community services programs. At the current time, we are reviewing all programs in the department from the perspective of whether or not they have a preventive

component to them.

With respect to family and community support services, yes, there has been a 5 per cent increase in that program this year. But the hon. member should also note that there's been an 83 per cent increase in that program in the last two years. So in terms of funding to agencies and boards, we are living within the government guideline of 5 per cent. These programs are also of a preventive nature. The responsibility for the provision of those programs lies with the local municipality.

Many other areas in the preventive field — we have a home care program in this province. At the moment, it has a health-entry requirement to it. The program is four years old and has been taken up very much across this province. We are currently looking at ways to improve that program in view of the financial restraints we are under. In general, I think that in the next couple of years, when we are in a time of stability and restraint, we will have to responsibly look at programs from the perspective of possible reallocation of funds to see that the funds are spent better than they are currently. In other words, going back to objective number one: sound financial management.

With respect to employees, the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood indicated that there were some 80 positions in the child welfare area, if I understood him correctly. In the child welfare area, 10 positions have been abolished. They are all within the child welfare services corporate component and not in the front lines. Some 90 new positions have been created under that particular vote. However, those positions relate to the Strathmore youth development centre. So the creation of those 90 positions plus the abolishment of 10 results in a net increase of 80.

Overall this past year, some 255 positions have been eliminated. I must stress that these positions were not filled at the time. They were abolished. No one was put out of work. With some 101 new positions, if my arithmetic is correct, we have a reduction of some 154 or 155 positions.

In terms of increasing the budget for information systems, I think the hon. member would agree that in this age of computers, we should try to make the new technology work to our best advantage. In that regard, there has been an increase. I indicated in my opening remarks the priority related to improving our information systems. So certainly there is an increase in that area.

The Auditor General indicated some concerns in relation to how we can improve our information system. The hon. Member for Little Bow raised this in the question period some time ago. Three points the Auditor General raised were with respect to procedures. He indicated that attention should be given to procedures to ensure that information contained in social allowance recipients' files is complete and up to date, procedures to ensure prompt preparation and processing of data decision sheets, and procedures to follow up and recover social allowance overpayments.

In the process of implementing a remote data entry system, it's the intention to reduce the time to update clients' financial information, which addresses the number one point of the Auditor General. With respect to prompt preparation and processing of data sheets, I indicated in my opening remarks the process of simplifying the current codes and procedures, again to try to reduce the processing time. Third, the creation of 136 wage positions out in the field, the front-line workers, to try to help them with their case loads — and it certainly is acknowl-

edged that their case loads are heavier than they have been. The creation of these new wage positions should help in that regard and address the third concern of the Auditor General in terms of procedures to follow up to recover social allowance overpayments. We hope that, together with the assistance of Crown debt-collection people working with Social Services and Community Health people, will assist in reducing the chances of overpayment and fraud.

With respect to the EOP that the hon. member referred to, I should indicate that it is not a retraining program, as I believe he referred to it. Instead, it focusses on the most difficult social allowance recipients, to try to have them placed and to increase their talents so they can positively benefit and be able to go out and get jobs. With respect to that particular category, from February to March, for example, there was an increase of clients on EOP from 3,974 to some 4,599 — a 16 per cent increase in just one month. So certainly there's an attempt to get people into that program if they can be served by it.

The hon. Member for Little Bow raised a number of important points. I think the members for Edmonton Norwood and Little Bow referred to the 5 per cent increase in the FCSS program. I would suggest that a 5 per cent increase is not a cutback. And, as I indicated earlier, there's been an 83 per cent increase in that particular area in the last several years.

If I understood him correctly, I agree with the hon. member in that it's our desire to have services offered at the community level rather than through some centralized system of government. That was one of the reasons we introduced the decentralization program throughout the province, so services could be provided at the local level where the needs of the people could be best addressed. In terms of agencies receiving funding, he asked whether we had a priority with respect to government or private agencies providing these programs. The move has been to private agencies providing these programs wherever possible. As I indicated in my opening remarks, one of the reasons for moving from contracts to grants was to try to have more responsibility at the local level, and more accountability as well.

In terms of lead time for initiating programs to social allowance recipients or others, one of the concerns we had relative to the social allowance program was that we provide lead time. This is why letters went out to all social allowance recipients in the province prior to April 1, indicating that many aspects of the program would be brought into play in July. I agree that we need to provide lead time in order to prepare people for these moves. Will there be other moves? Once again, in my opening remarks I indicated that in the next two years we have the responsibility for sound financial management. We'll be looking at many different programs to see whether cost efficiencies can be built in.

The need for day care was over forecast last year. In fact the last figure I recall was a some 25 per cent vacancy rate in day care centres across the province. Of course these day care centres are made up of private sector and public day care centres. I think the private sector can certainly play a very important role in this area. There's no intention to discourage the private sector from working in that area.

The work for welfare program in Lethbridge was introduced on October 1, 1982, as a trial project to try to place able-bodied social allowance recipients in a position where they could help senior citizens and handicapped people. We didn't generally refer to it as the work for

welfare program. It was a community self-help program. It was community self-help in the sense that not only social allowance recipients but high school students and senior citizens could volunteer their services. In the community of Taber, if I recall, possibly more volunteer students and senior citizens took part in the program than social allowance recipients.

Some aspects of the program were subject to considerable debate. One was the compulsory nature of that program. Another was related to federal/provincial cost sharing. I don't think the compulsory nature of it really played a role in the program as a trial in southern Alberta. My preference for any future trials would be that it be a community self-help program, voluntary in nature. In terms of federal/provincial cost sharing, I have no reason to think there's any problem there.

The hon. Member for Little Bow also referred to the Klufas report, a very important study carried out the last several years — maybe not that long; possibly a little over a year — an excellent report from the perspective of an overview of the needs across this province identified by Albertans at public hearings held by the Klufas body. One extremely important aspect of that report was related to the tremendous number of agencies and programs we have across the province, yet some handicapped people have difficulties trying to find out what programs and services are available.

One particular program in Lethbridge has been pointed out as a model with regard to that, in terms of providing services to the handicapped in the community to place them properly. With respect to a cost analysis and other aspects of that report, I've asked the department to review that. Certainly it's my desire to see that we implement as many recommendations of that report as we possibly can, given the financial restraints.

With respect to several questions raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood, the AISH program, the 7 per cent increase — he indicated a some 12 per cent increase in those people who would be receiving the program. The latest figures I have indicate there has been close to an 11 per cent increase in the past year in terms of volume. But again, we are reviewing this program and others, and certainly we feel that through this program, which is unique in Canada, we are providing valuable assistance to those Albertans who need help.

I don't think any province in the country has the commitment to senior citizens that this province does, through such programs as the assured income plan, which supplements the old age pension and other federal programs. One point by the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood — I would have to check his numbers — indicated a 3 per cent increase with respect to single men's hostels. I will have to get that information and get back to him.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Chairman, if I can just make an initial comment. Nobody questions sound financial management, which I believe is the term the minister used. Nobody's questioning that. What we're questioning is whether cutting back and doing the things we're doing is sound financial management. Again, I make the point that there doesn't seem to be enough going into preventive social services. I'm sure my colleague from Little Bow, who was involved in setting up preventive social services under the old Social Credit government, which was generally a very good program . . . There seems to be a cutting back on that. By cutting here, there, and in other little ways, we're suggesting that over the long haul

it is not sound financial management. I used the example before.

The point of welfare: I think all members in the House agree that welfare itself is defeating, and we should be doing as much as possible to give people some hope to get off welfare at some point. Unless we do it through preventive social services, by keeping people's dignity and encouraging people to retrain and look for jobs, then we're going to keep paying out massive amounts of dollars in welfare. I suggest that this is not sound financial management. It is just the opposite of sound financial management.

I was pleased to see that there will no longer be a compulsory nature in work for welfare, if I understand the minister. I expect one of the reasons — and I'd like the minister to comment on that — is because it was clearly contravening the Canada Assistance Plan, as I understand it. Under section 4, it says: it is understood and agreed that no person shall be denied assistance by reason only that he refuses or has refused to take part in a work activity project. Obviously, in this particular case, there was a clear abuse. But I'm pleased to see that the minister, as I understand him, is saying that the compulsory nature will be taken out of work for welfare. I know the right wing won't like that much, but maybe this is one thing the minister is moving on.

In question period, I asked a number of questions about appealability, and the minister assured me that we're not contravening section 2[f] of the Canada Assistance Plan. I'm still not sure how. Maybe the minister can clear this up. It's my understanding that welfare recipients cannot appeal the new rulings in three areas: shelter allowances, asset limits, and assistance for employables. They're saying that you cannot appeal this new ruling. I quote section 2[f] in the Canada Assistance Plan: to ensure the provision by law, not later than one year from the effective date of this agreement, of a procedure for appeals from decisions of provincially approved agencies with respect to applications for assistance or the granting or providing of assistance by persons directly affected by such decisions. I cannot see how that doesn't, if you're saying there has to be appealability. The minister says that in three cases they can't appeal. I can't understand how that doesn't contravene, if you like, section 2[f]. I wish he would explain that more fully.

I also asked about the court case, and the minister said it doesn't affect us in Alberta. The minister should be up on it by now. When I brought it up, he wasn't aware of the court case. From my understanding, it says that they can't take the Alberta government to court. But if a welfare recipient believes that the Alberta government is not living up to the Canada Assistance Plan, they have the right to take the Canadian government to court. Of course that would affect the Alberta government, because they would have to cut off the funds. That was clear. The court ruled in a 2:1 split. It was a major ruling.

So what can happen in Alberta — and there are enough examples of people who are upset — is that a welfare recipient . . . I'm sure some lawyer would love to take this one on. I'm sure we're going to see a case like this. They can't take the Alberta government to court, but they can certainly take the federal government to court. And if they win that case, we'll lose a lot of money from the transfer payments. I know the minister said that that wasn't the case in question period, but it is the case. We've talked to a number of lawyers, and that is in fact the case. That could be done. Of course the courts will decide whether or not they win the case. But it's clear that

a welfare recipient in Alberta has a right to do it, if they disagree.

If they do not believe — and I believe there are cases where we're not living up to the Canada Assistance Plan, and I pointed out some of them — then they have the right to do that. That should be a real worry. It could mean millions and millions of dollars. If we want to talk about sound financial management, surely we should not be playing Russian roulette with that amount of money when clearly the Supreme Court recently said this could happen. I'd like the minister to comment on this.

I think I know the answer, but I ask the minister if there is anything more dealing with what I thought was an excellent program — I think the minister would agree. Is it sound financial management that the bereavement program — at least, Dr. Solomon's — is gone forever? I know it's been switched to another agency, but having been a counsellor, I think some volunteers could do this well. You are dealing with a very, very difficult area in terms of bereavement. Dr. Solomon's program was probably one of the best programs the government had — and I give them credit for it — but now it seems to be cut. I wonder if there was any thought about going back to a similar program they may have had.

I would also like to ask the minister about family court services. I believe it falls under his department. I'm told by people, and I'm sure the minister's got a lot of feedback ... We have letters people sent to us. There seems to be a shortage of workers in the family court services division. These are the people who have to do the pre-trial custody reports. It's a harsh enough time for people, Mr. Chairman, when they are going through the trials and tribulations of a divorce case, which often can be very bitter. The longer it goes on, the more bitter it gets, which is good for neither the children nor the people.

I'm told by a person from Calgary who wrote to us that it sometimes takes three to four months before a worker is assigned to do the studies. That's before the worker is even assigned, because there are so few workers they just can't get down to it. I wonder if that was in fact the case, or if the minister is not aware of that, would he check into it?

I want to check some other areas with the minister and ask three or four questions. Can the minister confirm the recent changes brought in which will actually mean social allowance cuts for 17,000 families? Does that figure come close to what the minister has? Following along from that, can the minister explain how a 50 per cent cut for special benefits, which includes moving expenses, emergency accommodation, and household appliance payments — explain a directive that district offices must exercise more control over those with the need for thousands to move? If in fact rents have not come down, we're trying to be cost conscious. I think this is where sound financial management may be going the other way. Could the minister explain that?

The other question: does the minister have an estimate of the number who will be cut off social assistance after being forced to sell their homes because the profits will put them beyond their assets limit? In other words, if I own a house and I don't have a job — as an example of this, I have a letter here. I'm sure the minister gets letters. What happens when we say, all right, you're a social welfare recipient; you can no longer own a house. We sell the house, and all of a sudden they're over their asset limit — still with no job. It will not take very long to eat up those savings, so we force them back into welfare,

with no home after their savings are gone. If this is sound financial management, it beats me. I don't believe it is.

Again, if we strip people's dignity away, they'll end up on welfare permanently. We'll pay for them for a lot of years. I suggest to the hon. minister, Mr. Chairman, that that does not make sound financial management. That's a term I believe the minister used. We have to go back and rethink, look at preventive social services and ways to increase the dignity of people to try to get them off welfare. I say to the minister honestly that these policies are going to make sure people are more dependent on the government over the long run and will keep them there with no back-up services to get off. We're asking that we take a look at the whole area again.

To conclude this part, Mr. Minister, my offer still stands: to get our staffs together and take a look at what's going on, if the minister would let me know if he's interested.

Thank you.

MR. NELSON: Mr. Chairman, I just have just one question for clarification relevant to the minister's comment on day care. I wonder if the minister was suggesting that he is going to consider expansion of day care in the public sector, rather than allowing the private sector to continue their good service to the community at large.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, three areas to the minister. First of all, one of the first recommendations of the Klufas report was with regard to funding resource centres across the province to provide greater information to Albertans. I note one of the sessional papers tabled by the minister within the last two weeks. I wonder if the minister is distributing that across the province so it's available to various citizens, to bring the services forward to them. I think that booklet certainly can provide part of the need with regard to that recommendation.

The second area I want to comment on is the Strathmore centre. Could the minister indicate whether clients are being placed in the Strathmore centre at the present time? Have the difficulties [been overcome], in terms of the building being renovated, changed, and brought up to standards acceptable for a facility to deal with the clients?

Thirdly, in terms of the increase of 80 employees, does that mean 80 new employees above what the department had before? Is there is no transfer of staff from other facilities where clients have been? What will happen to that staff that worked in the Baker Centre, for example, and some of the other centres?

The other area I want to comment on is the employment opportunity program. I was quite interested in the fact that there are some 4,500 people involved in the program at the present time. That's good. I'd be interested in the net savings the government sees due to the program, in terms of this current year. What is the cost input? What is the government placing into that program in terms of budgeted dollars? I recall that when the program started, we placed something like \$300,000 as seed money, and at the end of the first fiscal year, we netted a saving of \$1 million and placed quite a number of people in an employment opportunity.

The other suggestion I'd like to make to the minister — and somewhat similar to the one made by the Member for Edmonton Norwood — is with regard to talking to these people that have been placed by the employment opportunity program. I recall meeting with a group approximately three to four months after the program was initiated in 1969 or 1970. I met with some 40 persons in

the cabinet room. I remember the stories that were told at that time. For example, a young lady that had been staying with her parents, a single mother with one child, had been there for two years and was driving mad not only her mother and dad but herself. The conditions were just terrible. One of the social workers said, look, why don't we help you find a job, which we did. She said, that was the best counselling I ever had. That was rehabilitation; she felt like a new person, part of the world. I remember that at the meeting that evening, tears were streaming down her face as she was telling the story.

I think of a young native boy, that very same evening, who wasn't able to get employment for some time but had been trained in heavy-duty equipment. A caterpillar company in Edmonton agreed to take on this young fellow, gave him gainful employment, and he worked with the other workers. We gave him extra assistance in terms of getting to work and improving some of his work habits. He had a long-term stay of employment there. I remember his story that evening. He told how he felt great about the fact that somebody in social services finally helped him get a job, and that's really what he wanted.

I think of other mothers with dependent children. There were four or five there. I think of older people that couldn't get employment. But the stories they told about being able to go to work, doing something they wanted to do, and feeling that they belonged to the community again — they really didn't want to sit on welfare. They eliminated a lot of recidivism that existed at the time. Hopefully, it is still the object of the government to continue that program and push it as hard as possible. But I'd advise the minister to talk to some of those people, have a select group in to see the effects of that kind of employment opportunity program. It's a great experience.

Those are the three areas I wanted to comment on, Mr. Chairman.

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

DR. WEBBER: Do you think I can respond to all those questions in five minutes, Mr. Chairman?

Work for welfare should be called community self-help. The hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood referred to that as the community self-help program. He interpreted my comments correctly, in that any future trials of that particular program would be of a volunteer nature rather than a compulsory nature. Again, relative to preventive social services, I indicated that I agree we want to see that component in as many programs as we possibly can.

His views on section 2(f) relative to the Canada assistance program — I indicated in question period that our legal counsel indicates that as long as there's an appeal mechanism in place, we are not contravening that particular section. That particular appeal mechanism relates to those items built into regulations. Other provinces are in the same position, and they've had no problems in that regard either.

The court case that he said I wasn't aware of — which I was — indicates to us that it relates to the right of an individual to appeal to the courts relative to funding under the Canada assistance program, and is not related to the appeal mechanism built into the province, which we don't have now for the shelter allowance. I would agree with him that we do not want to waste money and we want to have the federal/provincial fifty-fifty cost sharing, but our legal advice is that we are not in any

danger of losing that.

The bereavement program in Edmonton, a good program we had, was moved to a private agency with AID here in Edmonton, which does use volunteers as a component — an excellent program. The suicide program in the province is one of the best in this country. At the same time, recognizing the problems we have with suicide, it's badly needed.

In terms of family court services, I will have to report back to the hon. member with details relative to that. Relative to the changes in social allowance, he indicated 17,000 families affected. I can get back to him. We outlined the numbers of people that would be affected by these changes. On cost efficiencies, I don't agree with him. I am saying that in terms of our program, we are being responsible and, at the same time, meeting the needs of the people in the new economic situation we find ourselves in. Day care, from the hon. member from Calgary: it is not the intention to expand into the public sector. We feel the private sector is doing a good job in that area.

Mr. Chairman, on the Klufas report, funding of resource centres: I was trying to remember the name of the centres in the recommendations. The resource centres are in two communities in the province, one in Lethbridge and one in Medicine Hat. Certainly it's a recommendation that we need to look at closely. The pamphlet we have filed with the Legislature is being sent out to all handicapped agencies in the province so they can use it to help handicapped people.

The Strathmore centre: clients are not being placed there. It won't open until January 1. However, with the recent announcements relative to the Young Offenders Act, it leaves in question whether that facility will be under the Solicitor General's department or with Social Services and Community Health. In either case, nothing's going to change very much. It will still be used for addressing severely disturbed teen-agers' difficulties. The difficulties that occurred in the process of designing — there have been problems. The people responsible for those problems are no longer with the department. However, I can inform the member further of the details of the difficulties we ran into there. I appreciate his comments about . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order please. I hesitate to interrupt the minister, but the time has concluded for this committee.

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

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

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

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You've heard the report and the request for leave to sit again. Are you all agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is so ordered.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, it's not proposed that the Assembly sit this evening. Just before moving adjournment, I would indicate to hon. members that the House will be in Committee of Supply tomorrow evening, starting with the Department of Municipal Affairs and, if

there's time after that, the Department of Tourism and Small Business.

[At 5:32 p.m., on motion, the House adjourned to Tuesday at 2:30 p.m.]