

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Monday, March 26, 1984 2:30 p.m.**

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **PRESENTING REPORTS BY
STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES**

MRS. FYFE: Mr. Speaker, as chairman I request leave to present a report of the special committee appointed to prepare lists of members to serve on the select standing committees of the Assembly.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

Bill 233

Motor Vehicle Accident Medical Costs Act

MR. ALEXANDER: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 233, the Motor Vehicle Accident Medical Costs Act.

The purpose of this Bill is to assign medical costs arising from motor vehicle accidents to the driver if that driver is convicted, under relevant sections of the Criminal Code, of driving while impaired.

[Leave granted; Bill 233 read a first time]

Bill 8

Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, 1984

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to introduce Bill No. 8, the Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, 1984.

The purpose of this Bill is to provide that members of the Assembly and Executive Council will forgo the otherwise payable statutory increase in salaries and allowances this year.

[Leave granted; Bill 8 read a first time]

Bill 218

Hospital Elections Act

DR. CARTER: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill No. 218, the Hospital Elections Act,

The purpose of this Bill will be to require that all members of a district hospital board, auxiliary hospital board, or nursing home board be elected.

[Leave granted; Bill 218 read a first time]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the annual report of the Department of the Solicitor General for the year 1982-83. Copies were distributed to members of the Assembly early in February.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table copies of the annual report of the Crimes Compensation Board for the year ended March 31, 1983.

DR. ELLIOTT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the annual report of the Ombudsman for the period January 1, 1983, to December 31, 1983.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, it's my distinct privilege today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly the Alberta Girls' Parliament, who are seated in the members gallery. They're viewing the proceedings today in light of their own mock parliament, which I understand will begin to be opened, in terms of an introduction, tonight. They are accompanied by Jean Walters, Doreen Walker, Bunnie McMillan, and Susan Cressey, and also by a group of young ladies who are Guides. To earn their citizenship badges, these young ladies — who, incidentally, are from the St. Albert constituency; I had the pleasure of meeting them today, and I know the hon. member would be very proud of them — are going to be serving as pages in the mock parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I just have to tell you an aside. After they met me, one of the young ladies asked, would they be meeting anybody important today? I thought that was rather significant, and in fact I believe they may indeed be in for a treat.

Of special note to all of us in the Legislature, it's also a pleasure for me to note that Miss Helen Hunley is with the group today. That group is very privileged in that she is acting as their parliamentary assistant, so I'm sure that mock parliament will be handled very well. I ask them all to rise now and receive the welcome of the House.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, members will recall that last year, certain amendments to the Health Occupations Act had the effect of designating the first health occupations which will operate in the province under the provisions of the Act. Among the first were the Emergency Medical Technicians — Paramedics. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to introduce to members of the House this afternoon the first committee established to govern the health occupation of Emergency Medical Technicians — Paramedics: Mr. Bill Coghill of Edmonton, Mr. Dan Osborne of Devon, Mr. Richard White of Edmonton, and Mr. Joe Heaton of Medicine Hat. They are seated in the members gallery with Mr. Dennis Gartner of the Health Occupations Board. I ask these gentlemen to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. MUSGREAVE: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to be able to introduce to you, and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly, two grade 6 classes from Beddington Heights elementary school in the Calgary McKnight constituency. Part of the reason for their being here is the study of governments in Canada; that was the reason for the visit to this building.

I should point out that they didn't come by car, airplane, or bus; they came by VIA Rail, which is a rather unique way to travel between Calgary and Edmonton, particularly for young people. They are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Harvie, Mrs. Hampel, and Mrs. Loveday, and parent volunteers Mrs. Lee and Mrs. Campbell. I ask them to rise and receive the greetings of the House.

MR. DIACHUK: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce seven young ladies who are members of the 133rd Guide Company and are also earning their citizenship badges. Accompanied by two of their leaders, Carol Moeller and Melodie

Dupuis, they are seated in the public gallery. I ask them to rise and receive the usual welcome of the Assembly.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

Hog Marketing

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. During his meeting with Mr. Peter Pocklington, I believe a week ago, did the minister issue any directive with respect to unilateral action on the part of the minister concerning the purchase practices of hog buyers, in order to ensure that producers be paid a fair price for their hogs?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, in my meeting with Mr. Pocklington and Mr. Bolanes, there were no discussions with respect to that subject. They raised with me concerns with respect to the system of sales within the province. But afterwards — in fact yesterday — I had discussion with the hog marketing board in my office, in which we discussed the whole area.

Mr. Speaker, I might add that as Minister of Agriculture, I have responsibility under the Agricultural Products Marketing Act, under which all boards in the province are established. As minister, I am concerned not only about hog marketing within the province but about the producers, processors, and marketers as well.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Could the minister outline to the House the reasons for his letter of March 21, 1984, to the chairman of the hog producers' marketing board, in which he indicated that unless four criteria were met, the minister would undertake "unilateral action". What does he mean by "unilateral action", and what time frame is contained in this letter?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, there have been concerns about the system from not only the producers but the processors. The letter the hon. leader mentioned wasn't sent to the hog board.

I would like to correct. It wasn't yesterday that I met with them; yesterday was Sunday. The days get meshed to some degree. It was last Friday that I met with them. Prior to that, I had said I had deep concerns about the industry and in fact had this letter prepared and was going to give it to them, because the misconceptions, if there were any, had to be cleared up.

Prior to my giving them the letter, the hog marketing board asked me if I would be prepared to put in an independent third party to handle the bids, so there could be no perception at all in the industry that there were any problems with respect to the selling system. I agreed in principle to do that and, as of today, we are working to work through that process. After they had asked and I had shared that I was going to send them this letter. Mr. Felstad, the chairman of the hog marketing board, said to me that he saw no problem with the letter, at which time I gave it to him.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Could the minister advise the Assembly what the government means by indicating that Alberta buyers be given an "assured and even supply of hogs"? Does that mean an even supply of hogs, regardless of price differentials?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, not really. One of the concerns in the industry — and of course all the producers

wish to have a very viable packing industry in the province; it's very important to them — has been the supply of hogs. So if all things were equal, they should receive that supply of hogs at basically the same price.

In the letter the hon. leader is mentioning, if he looks to page two, the last sentence says:

... this province have a market for their production at competitive price returns and that the province's processors have access to steady supplies of hogs.

That's the context in which the letter was written, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Further exploring that context, the minister points out that any selling system must be adequately discussed with the three major packers. Is the minister in a position to advise the Assembly whether it is the government's position that the selling system should be discussed and then proceeded with, or whether it must be approved by each of the individual packing firms?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, considering that the hog marketing board is also the owner of one of the packing plants in the province, it becomes even more evident that all discussions should take place between all packers, so they all realize that they are working with the same rules. Under the responsibility of the Agricultural Products Marketing Act, we want to be sure that fairness prevails through the whole system. So throughout the process — and in my discussions with the hog board, it is also their concern that everyone understands the system and works by the same rules. So it doesn't come down to a question of who approves it; it comes down to a question of seeing that it's done right.

MR. NOTLEY: A supplementary question. The minister has made reference to concerns by hog producers and also processors. However, could the minister tell the House whether any independent assessment has been made by the department as to the apparent difficulties of Mr. Pocklington's Gainers? Is it because of a problem in the selling system, or is it because Gainers is not bidding on a competitive price basis?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, there is an assessment going on by each of the packers within the province, assessing their futures and how they can best continue to operate economically. One of the concerns with the packers has been the even supply of hogs. That's one point. The other one is the labour differential between plants here and plants in the markets we ship to. So you can't pin it down to one specific. It's a number of specifics.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Given this letter of March 21, could the minister advise what priority the government now places on expanding markets outside the country for Alberta-produced hogs?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of International Trade may wish to supplement my answer, but I may state very clearly that it's a very, very high priority to work in expanding markets and also in servicing the markets over a long-term basis.

MR. SCHMID: First of all, Mr. Speaker, we are in fact negotiating right now with the federal government to assure that red meats will be included in the bilateral negotiations that go on between those two countries. As we all know, the quota of 10,000 tonnes for exporting meats to Europe from Canada is also in fact now part of the Canadian supply. Shipments of red

meats to Japan are naturally still undergoing negotiations. All in all, I would suggest that because of the higher cost of Canadian meats in the export market, we will face this challenge for some time to come.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, one final supplementary question to the hon. minister. Could I go right back to the first question and ask the minister if he could outline to the Assembly what the government means by "unilateral action"?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, there is no unilateral action necessary at this time. Any action is with full consultation and discussion with the hog board. In fact, today we are in the process of finalizing the way in which the selling system will be monitored by an independent third party for some time, until a new system is in place. So it's very clear that there is no action warranted, and the action I will be taking in the next couple of days was asked for by the hog marketing board.

Gravel Trucking Contracts

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my second question to the hon. Minister of Transportation. Last Tuesday, in response to questions on the matter of alleged kickbacks in government trucking contracts, the member said in *Hansard*:

If someone has evidence that there is some illegality going on with respect to some of these practices, then surely they should present it to the appropriate law enforcement officers.

Could the minister advise the Assembly whether, in the case of concerns brought to his attention, he drew any of these complaints to the attention of the police?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I have not had brought to my attention, by independent gravel truckers or anyone else, concerns that I thought it appropriate for me, individually, to bring to the attention of law enforcement authorities.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. I'm given to understand that on May 12 — this is from the Gravel Truckers Association — the minister's deputy was officially informed of a complaint of a kickback on the widening of Highway 16 west of Edmonton. Could the minister advise the Assembly what steps were taken by the department in investigating that complaint, and whether or not that complaint was drawn to the attention of either the police or the Attorney General's department?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, with regard to that particular matter, it would be my position that the hon. member is misinformed with respect to what was presented to me.

MR. NOTLEY: We'll see, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister then advise the Assembly whether, when complaints came in during the course of the last year, it has been the policy of the department to investigate those complaints on an individual basis or simply refer them back to the individual and leave the responsibility to the individual trucker?

MR. M. MOORE: First of all, Mr. Speaker, the particular matter the hon. member is referring to relates to a construction contract which was awarded on Highway 16 east of Edmonton and in fact involved a situation where a prime contractor was observing our regulations within the contract to hire 50 percent local trucks but, for the balance of the trucks on this particular

job, was utilizing his own trucks. That was part of his ability to do so, within the terms of the contract.

The problem that arose was — whether or not this actually is the case, I don't have all the facts in my possession. It was brought to my attention that the contractor was in fact purchasing trucks from independent truckers, with a view to reselling them to the independent trucker after the job was completed. In that particular case, I asked staff of my department to review with legal staff in our department whether or not that was a direct breach of the contract terms. While legal staff are still looking at various documents connected with that particular contract, it was my interim information from the department that it was unlikely — I repeat, unlikely — that such actions would in fact allow us, the Department of Transportation, to say that the company had broken the terms of the contract.

It was in light of that and other similar occurrences where contractors weren't meeting what I consider to be the spirit and intent of our regulations that I announced some major changes on Saturday, March 17. I said, though, last Tuesday in the question period, and I say again today, that if there are other allegations of contractors not living up to the terms of our contract and individuals who may be in the gravel trucking industry or other industries believe that there has been some infraction of the law, then they should take those matters to the appropriate authorities.

Our job in Alberta Transportation is to try to monitor contracts that we let, to ensure that they conform with the terms of the contract. In this particular case, we didn't believe they met the spirit and intent of the contract, and so have taken action to ensure that that kind of thing won't occur in the future. The hon. member will know that my announcement that a contractor can own no more than three trucks will accomplish that.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. Has the minister had drawn to his attention allegations of contractors requiring truckers to purchase their fuel from the contractor, at a price in excess of prevailing or posted prices in the area?

MR. M. MOORE: Those allegations have been made to me, Mr. Speaker. But I don't recall having had submitted, at least to my office, any direct proof that such was occurring. Oftentimes allegations are made by one individual or another. When they're checked out by staff of my department, there is no evidence to support whatever allegation was made. I don't recall having had that information submitted directly to my office. I would have to check to make certain that that is the case, because something may have come by mail that I don't recall.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. It's a follow-up to the question put by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley last week with respect to contractors, where there have been allegations or complaints about kickbacks. Has the government considered establishing a registry in which complaints that have been directed to the department concerning breaches in either the spirit or the letter, but in particular the spirit, of the government's intention can be evaluated?

MR. M. MOORE: As a matter of good management practice, the Department of Transportation does keep a record of all infractions of contracts or suggestions that a contract has been violated. They've done that for years. That isn't anything that has occurred recently.

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

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

MR. NOTLEY: Could the minister advise the House whether, as a result of these complaints, any mechanism apart from having truckers go to the police or the Attorney General's department themselves, has been developed within the department to evaluate these complaints — file the record of these complaints — to determine whether or not a contract should be issued if there seems to be a pattern of continued infraction of what should clearly be the spirit of the government's intention?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the member has been for the last two weeks. This whole matter of perceived unfairness to independent gravel truckers arose publicly because I took some direct action, by way of announcements on March 17, to correct some of the situations that existed. The hon. member knows full well that those actions will be successful in making a better situation for independent gravel truckers. I don't know what more he needs.

MR. NOTLEY: One final, final supplementary question; that is, whether the minister will give the House the assurance that he will meet with the Gravel Truckers Association to examine their concern that the policy announced on the 17th still contains loopholes which will allow the practice to continue by the back door, when the minister has developed a policy which will stop it through the front door. The concern is that it will still continue. Will the minister give the assurance that he will meet with the Gravel Truckers Association?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, for the past three days I've met with several gravel truckers. I hasten to add that there are 5,500 of them in Alberta, registered with Alberta Transportation. Some 400 are members of the Alberta Gravel Truckers Association, and there are something like eight or nine independent associations around the province. I meet any and all of them whenever I can.

As far as the Alberta Gravel Truckers Association is concerned, three weeks ago the president of that association expressed a concern to me that he was not getting adequate response from staff of my department. He'd been contacting more than a dozen people over the course of a few weeks. He and I agreed that in future, if he had any concerns to express with regard to contracts or any other matters relating to actions by the Department of Transportation, those concerns should be presented directly to me, in writing.

Since my meeting with the gravel truckers on March 17 in Red Deer, to my knowledge I have not received any communication in writing from the president of the Alberta Gravel Truckers Association. If I do, as I said to him, I'm fully prepared to respond to him in accordance with whatever his concerns are.

Election Contributions

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. In my hand I have one of the pages of the 1983 report of the Alberta Energy Company. A subsidiary listed there is Chieftain Development Co., and the affiliate is [Pan-Alberta] Gas Ltd. Both those companies have contributed to the progressive party [interjections] — Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta.

MR. MARTIN: Don't call them progressive.

MR. R. SPEAKER: No, let's be careful of that.

There's an involvement of public funds. My question to the Premier is: in light of that, is the Premier considering a review of the Alberta election finances and contributions Act that may address the question that is raised?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, the only way I can follow that through is that any company that donates to any party in the province of Alberta shouldn't do business with the government. I find that a very incredible suggestion. I think the important thing is that we have the disclosure; it's there. The position our government has taken, and will continue to take, is that these contributions are disclosed. It's the view of our government — it's consistently been the view of our government — that we treat the private sector and the various corporations on their merits in each and every individual case, without any relationship to contributions of that nature.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Premier. In light of the recent entry of Vencap into the investment field in terms of taking equity in various companies, where there is direct involvement of public money — and some of these companies could, under the present legislation, contribute to the government in power or to other parties — I was wondering if the Premier would view that situation as something different from the situation in previous elections or in previous years?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, with regard to the decision-making process of Vencap Equities, I believe that was thoroughly discussed in the Legislature, but I'd refer the question to the Minister of Economic Development. I'm sure he'd like to respond.

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, Vencap is the recipient of a loan from the province of Alberta. It's a private company funded by the citizens of Alberta, with a board of directors representative of the Alberta business community, and is in no way whatsoever involved with us in any decision-making manner. I hope the companies that are involved with Vencap in an equity way over time are free to do whatever they think they should do, in terms of supporting the political parties within the province.

Meat Packing Industry

MR. SHRAKE: My question to the Minister of Agriculture is with respect to the recent problems faced by the meat packing industry in Alberta. In January, Canada Packers announced closure of their southeast Calgary slaughtering operations. My question is, is the hon. minister aware that there are now serious problems facing Burns packers in southeast Calgary?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm aware that the management of the Bums plant in Calgary is looking at what their future may be and what activity they will have in the future. But that, of course, is a decision that Bums would have to take.

Community Schools

MR. McPHERSON: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education. I wonder if the minister could advise if the interdepartmental community school committee is considering designating any new community schools in the province of Alberta during the next fiscal period?

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, the officials of the department are like all the rest of the people of Alberta: waiting with bated

breath to hear the hon. Provincial Treasurer tomorrow evening as he reads the budget speech for the province. I think we can all anticipate that in these times, every department, certainly including education, has to exercise considerable restraint. Given that reality, we have a number of priorities that we would like to attend to, of which the community school is one. I can't make any undertaking that it will be possible to provide any additional assistance, given the economic realities of the time.

MR. McPHERSON: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure how to frame this question, given that answer. The question I wanted to ask was: if there is consideration of the designation of a number of community schools in the province of Alberta, is the minister in a position to advise if there is a priority list of the schools that will be so designated?

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps we could deal with that very hypothetical question after the condition on which it's based comes to light.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is asking whether or not we have in the department a list of schools that have applied and if we have prioritized them in anticipation of the budget, then the answer is that we do have such a list. But there are a lot of schools in the province interested in this status and, given the financial constraints of the province, it is difficult to suggest at all that schools anywhere on that list would receive assistance. Nevertheless, the school that the hon. member is interested in has been well represented by his submissions to the minister and to the department.

Criminal Record Checks

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Solicitor General. It's in response to earlier statements by the Premier, on the absence of personal record checks on senior civil service applications. Can the Solicitor General confirm that it's common practice in his department to thoroughly screen applicants for standard, nonprofessional staff positions, including a criminal record check in that screening?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, it is true that for correction officers, in particular, there is a screening of previous criminal convictions. That's obviously well worth while, in view of the occupation of the people who are hired.

MR. MARTIN: I was not asking about the correction officers, so I'll rephrase the question, Mr. Speaker. Does the criminal record check apply automatically to all applicants, or is it selectively used and, if so, what criteria are applied?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, that's what I was trying to indicate in my answer. There are certain occupations where we feel it is worth while to have a check on the criminal record of any possible applicant. A correction officer is one fine example of that particular type of occupation.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question to the Solicitor General, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister confirm that the criminal record requirement is strictly applied to all volunteer applicants, no matter how menial or nonsensitive their job might be?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member referred to volunteers. I'll have to check on that and get back to him.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I'll help him, with one of his pamphlets, I'm a Volunteer in Cor-

rections. It says: "All applicants are thoroughly screened and are required to undergo a reference and criminal record check". You can take a look at the pamphlet.

My question to the Solicitor General: is the Deputy Solicitor General subject to the same scrutiny as volunteer community workers?

DR. REID: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. When the hon. member was referring to volunteers, I thought he was referring to volunteers throughout the department, and there are many who are not working in the corrections system itself. With regard to other occupations, it depends on the sensitivity of the occupation and its relationship to those who are in custody. In my humble opinion, it's well worth while that those checks should be made.

MR. MARTIN: Well, I'll repeat the question to the Solicitor General. Is the Deputy Solicitor General subject to the same scrutiny as community volunteer workers working in the corrections department?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge he is not, as he is an appointee by order in council. The people mentioned by the hon. member are people who are working with either incarcerated people who have been sentenced by the courts or in the probation system. Whether they are volunteers or full-time salaried members on the staff of the department, it's eminently sensible that there should be a check into their own records, in view of the people they are dealing with.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary.

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

MR. MARTIN: If I understand him right, is the Solicitor General saying that the deputy minister of the Solicitor General's department is in a less sensitive position than a volunteer community worker for the Gaming Commission, who has to take a check, or a volunteer in the Solicitor General's department? Is that what he's saying?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is trying to put words into my mouth. I was referring to the direct contact between those employees or volunteers and people who have been found guilty of criminal offences. In the normal course of events, the deputy minister and senior officials do not have that direct contact.

Prescription Drug Sales in Hospitals

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. Is it a policy of this government to allow hospital pharmacies to sell prescription drugs?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, the operations of a hospital are of course within the complete purview of the autonomous board that runs the hospital. The Hospitals Act is quite clear in that sense.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, I guess that was my question. Does the Hospitals Act allow hospital boards to make a decision to go into a retail business?

MR. SPEAKER: May I respectfully suggest that the hon. member may wish to get legal advice concerning the implications of the provisions of the Hospitals Act.

MRS. CRIPPS: Maybe I'll rephrase my question. Since the government is supposedly committed to the privatization of government services, would it not be in opposition to allow hospitals, which are built and provided free space for hospital pharmacies, to sell prescription drugs?

MR. SPEAKER: With great respect to the hon. member, I believe it's apparent she has made a representation, and undoubtedly the hon. minister will consider it.

Charter Bus Regulations

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my question to the hon. Minister of Transportation has to do with the deregulation of the charter bus business. On a point of clarification, some people seem to be under the impression that now that there's deregulation, they can just go and buy a charter bus licence and go into business. Can the minister indicate what the policy is for people who are now going into the charter bus service? Is it that wide-ranging that you can basically buy a bus, buy a licence, and go?

MR. M. MOORE: In early January, Mr. Speaker, I announced some changes with respect to charter bus operations in Alberta that will be phased in over a period of time beginning May 1. They are quite lengthy. Rather than take the time of the question period to read the policy, I will provide a copy to the hon. member today, and he may wish to ask some questions on it tomorrow. I don't have one with me, and I would prefer to have the details correct and accurate.

Social Allowance Overpayments

MR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address my question to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. In his recently released annual report, the Auditor General again highlighted the problem of overpayments in the social allowance field. Could the minister inform this House what improvements have taken place, given that this has been brought up in consecutive years?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, the overpayments from the Auditor General's report referred to by the hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway refer to a total \$5.2 million increase in what they classify as overpayments and repayments. The report highlights the overpayment portion, which increased from about \$1.1 million last year to \$1.4 million in 1983. When I say "last year", I mean 1982-83. The main increase is due to the repayments, which are essentially loans to social allowance recipients who require essential services, whether they be damage deposits or utility deposits — that type. So the actual amount of overpayments comes to about .4 percent of the total social allowance budget.

We have looked at ways of improving the system to try to cut down on the size of that number. We have followed it up with procedures and, in co-operation with the Provincial Treasurer, are finalizing a process where the Crown debt collection group has located a collection unit of six staff in our department. They are assisting us in collecting overdue accounts.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to add that the Auditor General does recognize that improvements have been made but indicates that in view of the pending improvements, he would be indicating it again in the report.

MR. PAPROSKI: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The minister promised that by June 1984, a new computerized system would be in place to hopefully deal with and alleviate this concern.

Can the minister assure the House that this system will be in place by this time?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, last year I indicated that the system would be operational by June 1984, and we're still on schedule for June of this year. Currently, 70 percent of the data in the system is on the computer system. Once it's completed, it will allow the social allowance workers in the system more time to be able to process and deal with the information that goes into the computer. However, I think it would be a false impression to leave, that it's going to solve all the problems. It's not going to solve all the problems, because there will continue to be some human error. We'll be trying to cut down on that as much as possible.

MR. PAPROSKI: A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General's report also indicates that perhaps there should be improved communication regarding this issue from the minister and his department officials to social workers. Has the minister done that at all?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe the Auditor General indicated precisely what the member is indicating. However, we have tried and will continue to try to make the social workers more aware of the problem. I've recently discussed this particular matter with the deputy again.

With the heavy caseloads we've had in the last year and a half, we've tried to reduce the load for the workers by providing more clerical assistance, which we are continuing to do. The computer system will help reduce the administrative load of the social allowance workers.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister taken an assessment of the cost to the department of trying to collect these overpayments? I believe he said he had six people doing that full-time.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I don't have the numbers handy; however, I've been assured that the costs associated with the collection are more than balanced by the revenues generated from that.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. Could the minister table in this House the cost and how much they have collected, so we can make a judgment on that?

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps there might be an appropriate motion for a return dealing with the topic the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood has just raised.

Meat Packing Industry (continued)

DR. ELLIOTT: Mr. Speaker, my question is still to do with the meat packing industry in Alberta and is to the Minister of Agriculture. I'd like to ask if he could bring the Assembly up to date as to the plans and progress with the meat packing programs for the city of Grande Prairie area?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I met with the representatives of the city of Grande Prairie and producers within the area who had some concerns about the lack of processing capability in the northern part of the province. They weren't sure of what direction they should go, so I agreed to work with them in reviewing and assessing the feasibility of a meat packing facility in the Grande Prairie area. I think this will prove

positive. If it does prove positive, the potential markets that they would have in the northern part of the province, the Territories, and Alaska would be part of that study, and I'm working with them in assessing and reviewing it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

head: CONSIDERATION OF HIS HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Moved by Mr. McPherson:

That a humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable Frank Lynch-Staunton, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate March 23: Mr. Bradley]

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, it certainly gives me pleasure to continue participating in this debate on the consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech.

First of all, I'd like to congratulate His Honour the Lieutenant Governor on the fine way in which he has performed his duties in the province. As members may know, the Lieutenant Governor has a ranch in the constituency of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest and, as he is now four and a half years into his term of office, I suspect that in the next short while he will be looking forward to returning to his beautiful ranch in the foothills. I'd just like to say that I think he's done an admirable job in terms of serving in his function as the Queen's representative in the province of Alberta.

I'd also like to congratulate the mover and the seconder of the Speech from the Throne, the hon. Member for Red Deer and the Member for Wainwright, for the fine way in which they have brought forward their particular concerns and addressed current matters in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to congratulate you, sir, on the fine way in which you have maintained the proceedings of this House. I think any of us who have had constituents mention to us their views on the activities that take place in the Canadian House of Commons in Ottawa and then compare them with this Legislature have a very fine appreciation for the way you have maintained probably the finest decorum in any parliament in Canada. We sincerely appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, first of all I'd like to deal with some matters which are current in the constituency of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest and perhaps give an update on a number of things that have been happening there. Then I have a few remarks I'd like to make with regard to some of the current priorities of the Department of the Environment.

Last fall we had the opening of the new Pincher Creek hospital, at which my colleague the hon. Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care officiated. It's a fine new facility, serving the needs of the people of Pincher Creek and district, and has 20 extended care beds, which are very necessary in that community. Also, progress is proceeding with regard to approvals for the new Crowsnest Pass hospital. Recently over \$9.5 million was authorized for the construction of that facility. Planning is continuing. I might note that I'll be meeting with the local

hospital board in the next few days to discuss progress with regard to that matter.

On the transportation side, Highway 3 through the Crowsnest Pass has generally been completed. The work around the town of Blairmore was completed this past fall. I believe it now puts Highway 3 through the Crowsnest Pass in excellent position as a major interprovincial highway.

Other work done in the constituency: we had repaving of Highway 507 west toward Beaver Mines and the West Castle ski hill, a needed improvement, and a contract has been let to pave Highway 507 east, which is an important agricultural market road. Also, Highway 6 into Pincher Creek from the Highway 3 intersection has also been repaved.

There are other continuing highway transportation priorities in the constituency of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, Mr. Speaker. At the top of the list is Highway 22, from Lundbreck north to Longview. It certainly is a priority of mine and the constituents who reside there. It is an important agricultural market road but also an important road for people from the Crowsnest Pass to get to Calgary, or citizens from Calgary to get into the Crowsnest Pass area and out toward British Columbia.

Another priority is the Hillcrest bridge in the municipality of Crowsnest Pass. There is certainly a need to have that bridge upgraded, and I've had discussions with my colleague the Minister of Transportation on that matter. I'm looking forward to a needed improvement there. Another priority, which I feel is very important, deals with the upgrading of roads and bridges in the area of the Oldman River, which had been put on hold pending the decision on the Oldman River damsite. Mr. Speaker, I will be addressing that question in my later remarks, but I think it's certainly an important priority that once a decision is made on the Oldman, we are able to move with a program of upgrading roads and bridges in that area, because they've been put on hold for a number of years. Another road which requires upgrading is secondary road 786 from Brocket south to Highway 507.

In other areas in the constituency, Mr. Speaker, last fall we opened the Leitch Collieries Historical Interpretive Centre, which interprets the coal mining history at Leitch Collieries in the Passburg-Crowsnest Pass area. We had the pleasure of the attendance of the hon. Minister of Culture, Mrs. LeMessurier. It was a cool day, but there was a very large crowd of not only Crowsnest Pass people but people from throughout Alberta who are interested in the preservation of our history. I might note that the guest speaker on that occasion was a former Lieutenant Governor, Grant MacEwan.

I'd also like to report to the Assembly that considerable progress is being made on the Frank Slide orientation centre, which overlooks the incredible Frank Slide. The centre will play an important part in interpreting the coal mining history in the Crowsnest Pass area and also some of the cultural and social activities that occurred in that part of Alberta, which have a very historic significance to the development of the province. It also will give an almost incredible scenic, panoramic view of the slide area.

Also last fall, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Don Sparrow and I had the opportunity to open the Allison Creek trout farm, situated in Allison Creek in the constituency of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, west and north of Coleman. This is an important facility to Albertans, in that we'll be producing fish eggs which will then be hatched at the Sam Livingston Hatchery and will provide a number of important angling opportunities to Albertans.

I'd also like to comment on the West Castle ski hill area. We've had two ministers of the Crown visit that facility this past January and February. My colleague the hon. Minister of

Tourism and Small Business and I visited the site, and my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs had an opportunity to look at the West Castle ski hill at a later date. Currently the West Castle committee, made up of representatives of the town and the MD of Pincher Creek, which owns the facility, has forwarded to the government a preliminary disclosure for an expanded ski hill operation there. Previously the Department of Tourism and Small Business, through a private consultant, completed a feasibility study as to what could take place at the West Castle ski hill. It came back with a fairly impressive report which outlined the potential of that particular ski hill, in particular the exciting potential for not only downhill skiing opportunities for Albertans but a major international ski resort that could be developed at the Haig Ridge site if this area were developed to its full potential. It's certainly my intention to support the development of Haig Ridge to meet its full potential. I'll be encouraging my colleagues to move forward with the necessary approvals to see the West Castle ski committee able to move forward with this exciting opportunity, so they can go to the private sector and see what response there would be to develop this area.

I'd like to comment on the Alberta Winter Games, which were held in the municipality of Crowsnest Pass from February 29 to March 4 and were opened by our Premier, Peter Lougheed. Unfortunately I was unable to attend the events, but I'd like to thank my colleague the Minister of Recreation and Parks for filling in for me. The Winter Games were very successful. We had over 1,500 volunteers participate in the staging of the Winter Games, and that from an area whose population is only 7,500 people, which means that almost one in five citizens of the Crowsnest Pass volunteered to assist in the games' organization.

I might note that with the Winter Games coming to the Pass, and the development of some of the facilities there, the Crowsnest Pass is the first community in Canada to have facilities to host a version of all the Olympic events, which is very significant. They developed a ski jump facility and a naturbahn track, which is a natural luge or bobsled track. Facilities were developed to host the biathlon, which is cross-country skiing and target shooting. Also, improvements were made to the local ski hill, which, I might note, is one of the oldest in the province of Alberta. It now has two T-bars, lights for night skiing, and a chalet. With regard to the Pass ski hill, I should also quote my colleague, the Minister of Tourism and Small Business: "snow news is good news". Also, I might say that snow news is not only good news for the ski hill but would also be good news for agricultural interests in southern Alberta.

There were a number of cultural activities that took place during the games. One was a music hall which, I believe, received rave reviews from those citizens who were able to attend. There were also arts and crafts displays. With regard to the cultural component, I might note that our Minister of Culture, Mrs. LeMessurier, also attended the opening of the Winter Games.

It would not be appropriate for me to rise in the Legislature without mentioning the Crowsnest Pass Symphony orchestra, which performed a concert during the Winter Games. There have been a number of significant events in the life of the symphony orchestra in the last year. CFCN-TV produced an hour-long documentary on the Crowsnest Pass Symphony orchestra entitled *The Hills Are Alive*. Citizens of Alberta had the opportunity to view this program in Calgary over CFCN last Christmas Eve and, in the Edmonton viewing area, on Christmas Day. This production received the Canpro gold medal. Canpro is the program association of all the private TV stations in Canada. It received the gold medal in the performing arts specials category at the recent annual meeting of that group.

The Crowsnest Pass Symphony is one of the oldest amateur orchestras in Canada. The program *The Hills Are Alive* ends with a very interesting commentary. It notes that governments, and in particular Canada Council, have spent a number of dollars looking for ways to enhance cultural activities in Canada and, in terms of cultural identity for Canada, they question whether or not the Canada Council has ever really looked at what has taken place in the Crowsnest Pass and, in particular, the Crowsnest Pass Symphony orchestra.

In conclusion of the discussion about the Winter Games, I think it speaks well of the number of individuals in the past who volunteered to assist in terms of carrying them out. I think the role of the volunteer in our society certainly was enhanced, at least in the Crowsnest Pass, by the Winter Games. I note that the Winter Games pulled the citizens of the Crowsnest Pass together into a working team to successfully host these games. I think it bids well for the amalgamation of the Crowsnest Pass that there was such community spirit engendered.

I want to mention a few things about the local economy in the Pincher Creek-Crowsnest constituency. One interesting development is that Mr. Morris Palmer has proposed a fertilizer plant to be constructed at the site of the former Pincher Creek Gulf gas plant. Work is progressing on that, and it certainly is going to provide employment opportunities for people in the Pincher Creek area, as well as providing a fertilizer need in the province and in the local community.

With regard to the economy in the Crowsnest Pass, it is really dependent on international coal markets. There have been layoffs which of course have affected the local economy, and continued efforts are necessary to diversify the economy in the Crowsnest Pass.

Mr. Speaker, in the time I have remaining, I want to make a few comments about some of the priorities of the Department of the Environment in the current session. With the announcement of the special wastes site at Swan Hills, certainly the implementation of the Special Waste Management Corporation Act is important to us. Bringing forward a proponent to construct the plant is also a matter of priority, and we will be looking at implementing amendments and regulations to the Hazardous Chemicals Act.

I think we were very fortunate with regard to the siting issue. We had two communities in the province, Ryley and Swan Hills, which had voted by plebiscite to host a special wastes facility. I would like to express our sincere appreciation to those people of Ryley for their efforts in terms of the work they did in their local community and the response they got in terms of favourability toward the construction of a plant in their community. Unfortunately there can only be one community which can host the facility and, in our view, the community of Swan Hills had a much higher degree of public acceptability than that registered in Ryley, although it was certainly a difficult decision for us to make. Both sites met our environmental criteria geotechnically, but it really came down to the overall question of which community had the greatest public acceptability in the longer term.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to speak briefly on the question of the Oldman dam site. I think it has to be a priority during this sitting of the Legislature to determine a location for a dam on the Oldman River. I anticipate that we'll be in a position to announce where that dam site will be by midsummer, if not earlier. In 1980 the ministers of Agriculture and the Environment announced that there would be a dam on the Oldman River. The question of siting was left as an opportunity for the Peigan Indians to come forward with a proposal. They have forwarded to my office a concept letter as to under what parameters they may wish to discuss with us the possibility of siting

a dam on the Oldman. We are currently reviewing that and will be responding to them.

When we look at the decision that was made in 1980, it was to have an operating reservoir on the Oldman River in place in the period 1990 to 1995. I think it is very germane today, given the necessity of the Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District having to shut down their operating system last year on two occasions because of insufficient water in the Keho reservoir and given the prediction that this year we will see only 65 percent of normal flow in the Oldman River. It is necessary to move forward with the siting decision now so that in the period 1990 to 1995, we will have that on-stream storage capacity to meet our needs. So that decision will be made, and it is a necessary one.

Before concluding, I'd like to comment briefly on the question of acid rain. Last week I attended an international ministers of environment conference on acid rain, which was held in Ottawa and was attended by nine European ministers of environment, our federal minister of environment, and the 10 provincial ministers of environment. The agreement that was concluded there amongst those 10 governments was to move forward by 1993 to a reduction of 30 percent of sulphur emissions in the countries that were signatory to a declaration. I think that what Canada has agreed upon in terms of implementing that decision is important and should be clarified. At a meeting on March 6 of Canadian environment ministers, a program was outlined that Canada would move to reduce by 50 percent our wet sulphate emissions in the area east of the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border. The reason for this is that the real problem in terms of acid rain occurs in our eastern provinces — in Ontario and Quebec and, to some degree, in the maritime provinces. Certainly the cause of some of the acid rain problems is from the United States, but it also comes from industry in eastern Canada. What the ministers agreed to is that we wanted to reduce to 20 kilograms per hectare of wet sulphate deposition on an annual basis in that area east of the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border. This would obviously deal with particular industries which were causing problems in that area, and a working group of environment departments and ministers across the country has been set up to look at how in fact we would implement that reduction to 20 kilograms per hectare.

There has been some speculation that Alberta will then be reducing its emissions by 50 percent. As I have just outlined, this agreement will take place east of the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border because the wet sulphate deposition in that area, depending on the plant site area and the lakes involved, is 30 to 40 kilogram per hectare. The reason Alberta is not participating is because our wet sulphate deposition in the period 1978-1982 averaged 10 kilograms per hectare on an annual basis and, specifically, for 1982 was down to the rate of 8 kilograms per hectare. So there is not an acid rain problem in Alberta, as defined by this national target figure to reduce wet sulphate emissions to 10 kilograms per hectare. For my agricultural friends, I might note that 20 kilograms per hectare is equal to 18 pounds per acre, I believe. That might explain that in the imperial system of measurement. I might also note that Alberta has had an excellent record in terms of controlling sulphur emissions. There has been some fairly strict legislation brought in place with the Clean Air Act, and we've adopted some fairly strict standards. In terms of ambient sulphur dioxide criteria, Alberta adopted the strictest standard in Canada, which recommended .17 parts per million in the ambient air. In Ontario, where they have the acid rain problem, they adopted a desirable standard which was .23 parts per million, and then there's a higher standard. So we adopted the strictest standard.

Another thing to note is that Alberta processes twice as much sulphur as Ontario, Quebec, and Manitoba combined,

yet our emissions are one-quarter the total of those three major emitters of sulphur dioxide. In terms of our acid gas or sour gas processing industry, the cleanup rate currently is somewhere around 97 percent, which is fairly significant when you compare it to the smelter industry in Ontario where they may be at 50 percent cleanup of their emissions.

On this question of acid rain, I'd also like to note that the Alberta government has undertaken a number of research projects with regard to acid rain. Although we do not presently have a problem in this province, I think it's incumbent upon us to continue to monitor and research this question so we do not end up with the types of results that have occurred in European countries where their forests are dying and the acidification of lakes which has occurred in Ontario. We are fortunate in this province that our soils have a considerable buffering capacity, which means that the sulphate deposition that is occurring on them is actually beneficial to those soils in some areas of the province. We also have significant buffering capacity in our lakes.

I want to mention some of the research we're doing. We have the Alberta oil sands environmental research program, which is doing monitoring and research in the northern part of our province. We have an agreement with our sister provinces of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba and the two territories to do some long-range research into transport of atmospheric pollutants. Of the parties I mentioned, Alberta is the most significant contributor to that research program. The federal government is also involved.

Mr. Speaker, I get a number of inquiries in my office about what we're doing about the acid rain problem in Alberta. There is not an acid rain problem in Alberta, as I indicated. We certainly support the efforts of our eastern provinces to reduce their emissions to the 20 kilogram per hectare level, which they believe will solve the problem with regard to the moderately sensitive lakes they have there. With our deposition rate at around 10 kilograms per hectare, there is no necessity for us to look at an emissions reduction program. We will certainly continue to monitor. We consider it to be a serious issue for Canada and for Europe as a whole. We will encourage those industries in other areas of the country to look at reducing their emissions and support the effort of the Canadian acid rain abatement program, which has been endorsed by all the environment ministers across the country.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to conclude.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise briefly and participate in the debate. You will forgive me if I'm not quite as laudatory as some of the government members about what's going on in the province.

As many other members, though, I would first of all like to talk briefly about my riding of Edmonton Norwood. Last year I said, and I still believe this, that it certainly is the most interesting part of Alberta. Because of the ethnicity of the riding, many people call it the little United Nations. I think this adds to the area. I live in the area, and I enjoy it very much. Of course there is a heavy Italian population, a heavy Portuguese population, a heavy Ukrainian population, but there is almost every ethnic group there that you would want to see. As a result, as I said, it's the most interesting and probably the most colourful riding in Alberta. I might say that there is even the odd WASP in the riding, perhaps even one that was elected to the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things happening in the riding. I'll come to a number of them, but for those people who are not aware of it, one of the more interesting aspects is a federal government program for young people called Kati-

mavik. Generally, in the past, they have gone around to remote parts of Canada, certainly into rural areas. This year for the first time they have started to have these young people come into urban areas. Part of the Edmonton Norwood riding is one of the first times Katimavik has been involved.

For those people who do not know about it, Katimavik, as I said, is sponsored by the federal government and is a group of young people in the age range of approximately 18 — actually 16, I guess; some of them haven't finished school — to 24. The idea is to send them to different parts of Canada to create an awareness of the country and, if you like, do useful work. They are paid their expenses plus \$1 a day. If they go through the whole nine-month program, Mr. Speaker, they receive some \$1,000 at the end of it, so it's a good way for young people to save money.

In the Edmonton Norwood riding, these young people are working at the Alberta Avenue Community League, Norwood school, Norwood Extended Care, and the Norwood Service Centre, participating, I suggest, in some very useful work. Part of what they have to do — I suppose it's a learning experience — is live with certain people in the area for two weeks. As a result of that, we have just had a very interesting young woman from Quebec by the name of Lizette Boudreau stay at our house, and we enjoyed very much having her there for two weeks.

I would like to talk about other areas in the riding, because one of the things I agree with the government members on — I do that from time to time, Mr. Speaker — is the importance of volunteerism. If I can say it proudly, I think volunteerism is active and well in the riding of Edmonton Norwood. As a result of the area, we have certain problems that other ridings might not face. The inner city Calgary ridings might understand what I'm talking about. We are faced with different pressures. If we did not have a strong, active community group, you would see a rapid deterioration of the area, and the people that live in the area are well aware of this. We face pressure from the suburbs that want to build freeways through the middle of the city and, of course, uproot the people who live in Norwood. So we are constantly fighting that. At the other end, we're worried about people forced out of the Boyle Street area, transients who do not have places to live, moving into our area, which of course would detract from the livability for people with young children.

So there are problems in the area. The positive aspect as a result of that, though, is that volunteerism, especially among community groups, is extremely important. I might add that all the community groups are active. I have been to all of them and know all the people — people in Elmwood Park, Delton, Montrose Avenue, Eastwood, Parkdale, Norwood, Spruce Avenue, and Westwood. I also mentioned in the last Speech from the Throne the excellent work done by the Norwood Service Centre, especially in preventive social services. I know the Minister of Social Services and Community Health is well aware of the good work they do.

I would like to come to the last two areas, because I think they show the problem that is developing. I have some sympathy for the Member for Calgary Currie. He talked about school closures. Mr. Speaker, while it is not the same problem in Edmonton that it is in Calgary, it certainly is a significant problem. We have fewer schools, but we are having schools closed down in Edmonton.

I know there are schools closing down in other hon. members' areas, and in my area there are two. One of them is a school in the Westwood area, which is really historical and one of the older schools in Edmonton: H. A. Gray. The people in the Westwood community were told this year that the school would be shut down. As a result, it has certainly made the

parents in the Westwood area more political. They have been contacting local school board members, local council members, and certainly their local M.L.A., about what they can do to fight to keep their school open, as happened in Calgary Currie. As a result, Mr. Speaker, we still do not know what is going to happen. But the parents are doing an excellent job, and we are still hopeful that the school can be saved.

I think it is especially important that we look at the significance of school closures. It is bad enough that the schools close down and students have to go to other schools. But that's not the major problem in the inner city, Mr. Speaker. It is what it does to the inner city. If you lose a school, that has a deteriorating affect on the whole community. I mentioned that the people in the inner city are always fighting to keep their community together, to keep it a decent place to live. Closing down a school has a significant impact on that.

We know what has happened in other parts of North America: when the schools start to close down, the inner city starts to crumble. We know the horrendous social and economic problems that occur because of this. We could pick city after city in the United States and eastern Canada and know what the problem is. Closing down a school is going to have a deteriorating effect on that area. Mr. Speaker, this is the point that the Westwood parents are talking about. For instance, if there is no school, one of the things you want to do is revitalize your community because a lot of older people live in an area like Westwood. But what you want to do to make your area a decent place to live and to raise children in is to appeal to young people to move into the area. So you get caught in a chicken-and-egg situation. For example, if there is no school, young people are not going to move into the area. They are going to move out to the suburbs, to St. Albert, Bon Accord, or wherever. That is precisely one of the things that happened 20 years ago in American cities.

Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is that they realize they made a serious mistake. If you look at most of the major American cities, they are making plans to redevelop the inner city, and that has to do with schools. So we are suggesting to members of the school board, and certainly to this government, that we will save money in the long run if we can keep these schools together. That does not mean that there isn't a serious problem — we all know there is — with dropping enrollment throughout the province. We overbuilt schools right up until last year, and now we are paying the price for it.

I think it was summed up well in a brief that I might point out, the parents from the H. A. Gray area have given to the school board. They have done a very good job, with a very good brief. I think we could all learn a lot from it. One of the quotes sums up my point very well.

If "the community is the soul of the city", then the school is the heart of the community. To take away the heart of the community is to destroy the soul of the city
I think that sums it up very well.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to have to be much more innovative with the whole school closure business than we have been in the past. We are going to have to look at other uses, other things we can do with these schools when enrollment starts to drop — perhaps a partial use for students in the area and a look at other ideas. I would suggest to the government and the minister — and they know this, because they have had studies on it — that there are some very innovative things going on in other parts of North America, Seattle and Toronto, that we can begin to look at before we start to close schools in the inner cities. I think that's an important concept that we should look at.

Even in this brief, just briefly, they mention some of the things. They say;

We feel that this would also provide a number of benefits.

Our school serves as the focus of our community.

They just mention some ideas. I don't know whether they are feasible or not, but they should be looked into.

Making a section of the school available for such programs as a family daycare centre or a senior citizen's drop-in would involve the community in the school, and vice-versa.

One of the things the Department of Education does have at this particular time — the planning and research branch of the Department of Education, in its study entitled Ways of Using Excess School Space, addressed the question of the relative cost effectiveness of different methods of responding to excess school space. One of the things that might happen because of the recession, Mr. Speaker, is that more and more young people will be looking toward the inner city in the future. So they will start to move back, and you will need to have new schools again. As I said, that has happened in other jurisdictions. But they say that "considerable modification of buildings makes reconversion of space to educational uses difficult or impossible". And they say that space sharing with short- or medium-term leases allows for easy and relatively inexpensive reconversion.

What I am suggesting, Mr. Speaker — and I am saying this through you to the Minister of Education and other hon. members — is that school closures certainly have an educational impact, but they have a real message to what types of cities we want in Alberta in the future. I think we have to look at innovative ideas. The parents in Westwood have begun to do this in their brief, but there are many other areas that we can look into, I know the Department of Education certainly has some of the studies that we've been talking about.

Mr. Speaker, the other aspect of the riding of Edmonton Norwood that I would like to refer to is small business. Small business is extremely important in the riding of Edmonton Norwood. For those of us who know the city of Edmonton, we know that 118th Avenue, along with 111th Avenue, contains a number of businesses, and businesses are scattered throughout the riding.

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

The organized business group in the area — not just Norwood but east — is the East Edmonton Businessmen's Association. Mr. Speaker, when I talk to these people, this is where I get different messages from what hon. members are giving me in the throne speech. Their message is a little different. They are clearly saying to me — and this is the organized group in that area — that they are hurting and hurting badly. They are looking for some leadership from the provincial government. They are not saying that everything is great, that it's just a slight downturn and everything is going to get better. That's not the message I get when I talk to them.

I give you an example of many of the ethnic shops. One of the things, as I said, that makes Edmonton Norwood the most interesting place to live in Alberta is the different little ethnic shops. You can go around that riding and see all sorts of different nationalities with their little shops. When you talk to these people, as I do, they too are hurting badly. They're not sure that they're going to be in business. If we lose these shops — they're one of the things that I believe is significant to Edmonton, that makes Edmonton such an interesting, diverse city — I believe we lose a great deal of our heritage. If you go around and talk to them, they are hurting that badly that

they may not be in business very much longer. They need the purchasing power. They need people who can afford to go into a restaurant or the local store and buy goods. If we have high unemployment that is affecting their members more than others, as my riding is being hurt, then they're not going to be buying at the local store. So we have a serious problem.

I refer hon. members to the petition I put in. We have to recognize that when we make government decisions, there is a chain reaction to events. When we close down the liquor store hours, a number of merchants in the area are being hurt along with the people who are being laid off. Mr. Speaker, it is significant when, in less than a month, one merchant next door to a liquor store can get 8,400 signatures asking the government to reconsider. That is significant, and the government should listen to that.

If anybody knows about the 118th Avenue liquor store, why you would shut it down makes no sense to anybody in the area, because from 8 until 11 that place was always full. It is in the centre of the city. But here we have a merchant who tells me that after about three weeks to a month, I think it is, of having those hours shut back, his business has dropped some 40 per cent. These people made business decisions to go into that area when they thought they were buying a liquor store that was going to maintain those hours. The point I'm trying to make is that in being zealous and cutting back, we may be hurting people a lot more than we understand. We certainly should take these things into consideration before we just have a government policy announced, and there we go, with no consequences to what might happen. This is the small business that I hear Conservative members talking about, that they believe is the backbone of the economy. Yet we're deliberately taking policies that hurt at least certain businessmen in the area.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go from there to the economy generally and how I perceive it affects my riding. I mentioned that I did not know I was in the same province when I sat and listened to the hon. members' speeches from the throne. I thought we were in the middle of rather good economic times, because everything was self-congratulatory and everybody was saying that everybody out there is happy with us. I do not believe that is the case. As I said, I believe it is an Alice-in-Wonderland attitude of a government that is not listening to the people out there right now and is not concerned about what is happening to people at a gut level. There are two reasons for my saying this. Number one is obviously my perception, and hon. members can argue that my perceptions are different from their perceptions. Certainly as I go around not only my riding but Edmonton and the rest of the province — as a small opposition, you travel a lot — the message I'm picking up is not what came from the hon. members' throne speeches on the government side. It's certainly not the message that I'm picking up, and I'm talking to all sorts of groups. A call came from an Edmonton businessman today who wants to meet with me to talk about this government. I've talked to Calgary businessmen. I've talked to all sorts of people, and it's not the message that I'm getting.

The only other thing I can go by — the Member for Little Bow had a survey. I might point out to hon. members that we also put out a little survey about some of the key issues in my riding. I don't say that this is necessarily scientific, that Gallup is going to buy it, but it's the best we can do. It went out to every door, just three or four points about the major issues that were occurring. I think it's significant that 148 people bothered to return it. This was put out in the November-December period.

1. Do you feel that the recent 13% increase in your provincial income tax is necessary?

Yes 6, No 136, No Answer 6

2. Would you agree with the statement that the provincial government should eliminate waste in government spending before increasing your provincial income tax?

Yes [141], No 5, No Answer 2

You may say that's a rather leading question, but we asked them that. Obviously everybody's going to agree with them, but I guess the key question we asked was:

3. Do you feel that there is a lot of waste in the provincial government's spending?

What's your perception about this provincial government and their waste? That was the question.

Yes 143, No 4, No Answer 1

Then in terms of health care — because the other thing that was raging at the time was user fees — we asked the question:

4. Do you feel that user fees are the fairest method of raising funds for your health care?

Yes 14, No 120, No Answer 14

Those are the four key questions. If the government is listening, I believe, as the Member for Little Bow did, that if you put those questions to people all over this province, you are going to get similar answers. There were a number of other issues that they alluded to and wanted us to look into, but those were the four major points.

Let me just come from there, Mr. Speaker, briefly to the economy, and mainly unemployment. In my riding, unemployment is ravaging people right now. We know the figures, but figures don't tell us much. The most recent figures that were printed I believe show that in Alberta there was an 11.2 percent unemployment rate: Edmonton 13.9 and Calgary 12.4. Of course those are the people who are still registering. There are people that we call the hidden unemployed who have given up; they don't even register. So we're not really sure what the actual rate of unemployment is in the province or, to be fair, in the country for that matter.

If I can use Edmonton as an example, where you have almost 14 percent unemployment, it has never made any sense to me on an economic level to tolerate unemployment but certainly to tolerate it at those levels. Many people say, and I would not be one of them, that it's dumb economics. When we look at the cost of that directly into the economy — just talking about economics — we have figures where you estimate the social cost accounting of unemployment. This was done in 1982; it's the latest that I have. At that time, the unemployment rate in Alberta was about 7 percent. When we put the figures together, it meant that at that time we were losing almost \$5 billion out of the economy because of the high unemployment rate. We lose it in terms of what we're paying out in unemployment insurance, welfare, lack of purchasing power, the social costs, extra social workers, lost tax revenue to government, and all the rest of it. That was in 1982; I hesitate to guess what it would be like now with an unemployment rate in Alberta of 11.2 percent. So we're paying an horrendous economic cost by having a high unemployment rate.

It seems to me that any government that was worried about the economy would do anything to put people back to work — I say "anything", Mr. Speaker, and I say it deliberately — rather than saying, oh well, we'll wait for the private sector, when the price of oil is dropping and we all know that the private sector is not going to invest in this province. Contrary to what the Provincial Treasurer says, every economic indicator says it's going to get worse in the next year.

I've alluded to this before, but it's come home to me on a personal level in my riding: what unemployment means; the psychological impact of unemployment on people. People sit-

ting comfortably in this House may not recognize it, but we pay an horrendous psychological and social cost for unemployment. The figures have always been there. The Minister of Social Services and Community Health said the other day that he wasn't quite sure if it was worse when it was boom or unemployment. I don't know where the minister has been in the last little while. The most recent impact is called *The Real Impact of Unemployment*, just produced by the Canadian Mental Health Association, and it's excerpted from *Unemployment: Its Impact on Body and Soul*. Let me give you three or four startling figures that come from this study that was just released:

A police study in Toronto in 1980 showed that of 100 wife-beaters, 80% were unemployed.

In the U.S., in 1980, a study showed unemployed people had a divorce rate seven times higher than their "rich counterparts".

In Windsor, in 1980, when unemployment soared to 20%, there was an increase in the caseload of local service agencies of from 25% to 377%.

According to David Randall, chairperson of the Canadian Mental Health Association, "The single best indicator of child abuse is having an unemployed father in the home".

A 1977 study concluded, "... in the case of crimes of violence, we can demonstrate a fairly strong relationship between these offenses and deteriorating economic conditions mainly reflected by high unemployment".

It goes on and on and on.

It should not surprise people that these things happen. In a work-oriented society, from the time we're very young we're told that what work we do is the most important thing to maintain our dignity and our pride. If we strip this away at a certain point, then we can expect problems. I suggest that we could do it to any one of us. If we were laid off for any period of time, for whatever reason, we'd start to develop psychological problems. That's just the absolute truth of the matter.

The other horrendous problem that we face, Mr. Speaker, is that this is distorted with the young people out of school, from the ages of 18 to 25. Whether the Minister of Advanced Education will acknowledge it or not, we know there will be fewer and fewer young people able to go into higher education, be it at NAIT, Grant MacEwan Community College, or other junior colleges throughout the province, or at the university level. That is very clearly the trend at this particular time.

At a time when young people are developing attitudes and looking at life in general, we have an unemployment rate in Edmonton right now of over 21 percent at that age level. That's over one in five young persons out of work. If you don't think we're going to pay an horrendous economic and social cost in the future if we don't put those people back to work, then government members are just not following history. We're beginning to see that in Britain, where you've had people perennially unemployed and violence is starting to develop in that society. Mr. Speaker, if I seem somewhat overly emotional about unemployment, it's not just the economic costs, it's what I believe are the social costs that we will pay in the future.

I notice that my time is coming to an end. I had a lot more to say, but let me conclude by saying to the government: I think the people of Alberta made a serious error by having such one-sided government. No matter how honourable the members are — and there are good people on the opposite side — when you have an overwhelming majority like this, I believe you listen to who you want to listen to, and you start to not deal with reality. As a result of this, this government has become arrogant, whether we're dealing with the justice system or unemployment, as I said. We have taken away the checks from

a very powerful government. That's why the people of Alberta are now paying a cost. I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that they now recognize that giving this Conservative government that overwhelming majority was a big mistake. That's the message I'm trying to give to the government. When you're so overwhelmingly powerful, you have a special responsibility to make sure that you're listening to the people, but it's not being done. I've often said that unfortunately the best politician in the world is a scared politician, maybe one like myself who wins by some 75 votes. I can suggest to these members opposite that there are going to be a lot of scared politicians in the next election, because people are angry. If they're not picking that up, they're just not listening.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I would say to the members that in the next election, if you don't deal with these problems and deal with them quickly, you are not here by divine right. People are not just automatically going to vote Conservative, as they have in the past. I for one am looking forward to carrying our message into the next election against this government, if they don't get off their butts and do something.

Thank you.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise to comment on the throne speech. I would like to start by adding my congratulations to the participants thus far. I think all have endeavoured to represent their constituents very well, and I have found the speeches very informative. I think that topics have been very well covered.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Speaker, for his guidance of the Assembly. We who are rookie MLAs have certainly appreciated the chairmanship over the Assembly, over the sessions that we've had experience in thus far.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech has many features of importance to my constituents and to all of Alberta. I'd like to take this time to remark on just a few of these topics. First of all, I'd like to make a few comments from the point of view of small business in the Ponoka-Rimbey constituency. They are particularly impressed by the references in the throne speech to the government's effort in the field of deregulation and in looking at some innovative ways of providing financing for small business across Alberta.

The independent small businesses are a very important part of all rural communities. The local chambers of commerce are the guiding organizations for these independent businessmen. In our area, they've welcomed any progress toward genuine and effective deregulation. I can sympathize with the challenge facing the committee chaired by the Member for Edmonton Whitemud that is working on that topic. Some progress has been made to date, Mr. Speaker, and they look forward to more in the future. They point out that large firms in the province are better equipped, from a personnel standpoint, to deal with regulations and interpretations, and the occasional legal problems that can arise from handling these. They point out that small businesses do not have the flexibility or personnel to deal with those particular problems.

The reference to measures to provide investment capital to small business is also looked on with favour. As the economy hopefully picks up, this economic sector, with its energy and initiative, will play a very, very important role in the rural communities of the province and within the large urban centres as well. I think there are many good comments in the throne speech dealing with this particular area of our economy.

Small business, and many areas of our constituency, look with interest and anticipation at the reference in the throne speech to privatization. I would commend the Minister of Recreation and Parks for the initiative in that area. In the west end

of our constituency, we have one of the regional centres for the administration of the Recreation and Parks program. A few days ago I was speaking to some of the personnel there, and they say that the interest in bidding on the maintenance contracts that are available through the initiative this spring has been very, very high. They are getting many applications, and they look for a great deal of service being provided by the private sector, an opportunity for employment that has not existed there before, and for small-business men to get in on that particular area of providing service.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to comment on the issue of health care. When we're looking at the throne speech and in our general deliberations, I think quite often we have to sit back and look at many of the features in this province which make it a very privileged and good place to live. Certainly the area of health services is something much appreciated by Albertans. I've seen it over and over again in the representations that have been made to me in the constituency. I think we should also recognize that there is an overall recognition by our citizens of the need to constrain costs. I receive many suggestions as to how this could be better done, and I see many of them being worked at by the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care.

Mr. Speaker, I have been concerned about some of the references in the news media to the inappropriateness of having top-quality rural hospitals in this province. I can't help but note that the Ponoka General hospital has recently received a three-year accreditation with a large number of commendations in the report. I think that's indicative of the high level of service that a small- or intermediate-sized rural hospital can provide. In our two general hospitals in the area, in Ponoka and Rimbey, we have a great deal of satisfaction from the constituents on the services being provided. There can always be improvements, but certainly I think we have a satisfactory situation in that area.

I'd also like to mention that one of the programs of the province, the home care service, is one of the most popular and highest quality services we offer outside of the active treatment network of the province. Senior citizens in particular, but many, many other people, are benefiting from the dedicated service being provided by our home care workers. It's an area of service, Mr. Speaker, that I hope receives high priority in the years ahead.

Along with appreciating the high quality of health care, our senior citizens are very aware of the programs we have for them in this province, which are second to none in this nation. As examples of the continuing development taking place on their behalf, I note the completion and occupation of two senior citizens' apartments in Ponoka and the completion of an addition to the lodge and some senior citizens' apartments in Rimbey. The quality of care and attention and the physical facilities are very much appreciated by our senior citizens.

I would like to comment, Mr. Speaker, on the situation as it relates to Alberta Hospital, Ponoka. I share the disappointment of the staff, the board, and the community in the failure to get accreditation, which was just recently announced. However, I think there are a number of very, very important points to be made with respect to what is happening there and what is likely to evolve in the future. One of the things that should be noted about the accreditation report is that the actual investigation was done last fall. Several of the weaknesses, if we can call them that, pointed out in the report have since been corrected.

We now have a very well-qualified executive director; that was one of the things referred to in the report. A building renovation and improvement program, which was referred to last week in the question period by the Minister of Hospitals

and Medical Care, is under way. There are a number of other key staff positions that have been filled. I see a considerable improvement in the hospital situation between the time of the actual investigation which led to that decision on accreditation and the present time. Mr. Speaker, there certainly has to be a great deal more work done. I hope we will be able to attract good and qualified psychiatrists, medical staff, to the hospital.

I note that for a short period of time the decentralization of Alberta Opportunity Company to Ponoka experienced some difficulty, it was said, in attracting staff. But where the effort is given in recruitment, that sort of problem is usually alleviated.

Another item relating to Alberta Hospital that I look forward to, Mr. Speaker, is the introduction into the Assembly of legislation which would give the psychiatric nurses of the province their own professional legislation, something that is needed and is looked forward to by a very significant number of my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see education as a priority item in the throne speech. We need to ensure that every effort is being made to provide the best possible education for our young people. They need every skill and particle of knowledge they can garner to work in a changing and competitive world. The understanding and appreciation of the benefits and problems of living in a very competitive Alberta society need to be clearly spelled out to young people.

I think we have a good education system, Mr. Speaker, but reviews and consequent changes are necessary if it is to stay that way. I note that some of our critics have expressed concern about references to "back to the basics" in some of our statements related to education. I would like to point out that there are some things to be learned from the past.

We've had the introduction of departmental examinations this year. I think they have been successful. They have gained an added degree of credibility for the education system. Where tests of this nature are well-prepared, the information on them is clearly distributed to schools so they know what is expected, and there is adequate funding and attention to the marking of the papers, I think the results can be very good for the educational system of the province.

In talking about departmental examinations, I would like to note that the students in the Ponoka-Rimbey constituency coped with these rather well. Mr. Speaker, I hope it is in order to mention a couple of students as examples: Colin Dobi, who made 100 percent in his chemistry, and Charlotte Wilkie, who followed with 99. I think they are representative of the many very hardworking and talented students we have all across the province who did very, very well in those examinations and, I think, confounded the critics who have said they would not be able to cope as well as they have.

Looking at the changes proposed with respect to education, however, I think many of our problems and challenges are not always going to be solved by looking back to the basics. We're going to have to be futuristic in our consideration of the various issues. I look particularly at the topic of literacy. I think the definition of literacy as required in the present world and in the future is going to have to be looked at very carefully. We'll have to look at written communication, oral communication, listening, viewing, understanding the whole area of computer use, and acquiring and interpreting information from new sources.

One thing mentioned in the throne speech that I think we have to be aware of and keep emphasizing is that the government is making a major effort to listen to people and receive their input on a number of matters in government policy and particularly education at this time. We've gone through

the process of contacting every household in the province in the secondary education review. There's going to be plenty of opportunity for input with respect to the School Act and other matters in this area. I hope the people of the province — students, teachers, parents — will all take this opportunity to help us in our formulation of policy and decision-making in this area.

I'd like to go on, Mr. Speaker, to comment on the area of the environment. I note that the reference in the throne speech is to take a constructive approach, to work with industry and business to protect our environment. There's always a need to ensure protection, but I think it's also essential to have a good working relationship so that any danger to our environment can be coped with and dealt with and not be so disruptive to the production of this province that it is counterproductive in terms of benefit to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, at one time the Ponoka-Rimbey constituency had some interest in the hazardous waste plant, but I would say — and I think I speak for the constituency — that they are pleased to see that it has found a home in Swan Hills. I think the enthusiasm and planning the town of Swan Hills put into obtaining that plant is something they should take every pride in. Certainly this is a very, very much needed decision and facility for the province.

Agriculture is of course the major industry of our constituency, and the agricultural community certainly has a number of major concerns. The route review of the Western Grain Transportation Act is something they will want to have input to and look at as being very, very critical for the future of agriculture in that area and all across Alberta.

The constituents of Ponoka-Rimbey also anxiously await progress on the red meat stabilization plan. It is very critical to the area, being one of the major producing areas of the province. Hopefully, when progress is made, this will rationalize the present situation, where we have so many competing provincial plans which ultimately benefit no one.

Mr. Speaker, 1983 was a very good, very active year in the constituency as far as oil and gas activity was concerned: a great deal of drilling activity, which certainly benefited the economy of the area. I would like to mention that the new Surface Rights Act passed at the 1983 spring session has, in my view, certainly smoothed out the relationship between oil companies and the farming area in working out agreements over the use of land for oil and gas activity.

Last year was a good year, but in 1984 we look forward to an even better year in terms of tourist activity in central Alberta. I note that we are becoming something of the stampede capital of Alberta, if you put all the stampedes together. The Panee Agriplex on the four bands reserves, run by the Ermineskin Band, is certainly a first-class facility — very, very active, attracting large crowds and offering quality rodeo entertainment to northern and central Alberta. Added to that has been a very fine complex of a similar type built and operated by the Montana Band. Those two facilities, now combining with the Ponoka Stampede, which is the second largest stampede in Alberta and, some say, the one of highest quality, certainly give a great deal of attraction to rodeo lovers in Alberta. The Ponoka Stampede will be hosting an international native dance contest and powwow for the third consecutive year, and this is becoming a major event for the native people of the province. I think the native leaders in the area are to be commended for that particular effort.

Mr. Speaker, the various efforts of the government in the past year, as outlined in the throne speech, will continue to be very much appreciated by the constituents of Ponoka-Rimbey, particularly in the area of the small business, farm, and home

interest shielding programs. I note that a large number of residents, in both the farming and small business areas and as homeowners, have benefited from this program. Initiatives in that area will be welcomed in the future.

Transportation is a concern of the constituency. They will certainly appreciate the changes in policy with respect to hiring independent gravel truckers, and they will also very much favour the various efforts being made to involve more private contractors in the road building that goes on in the constituency and throughout central Alberta.

We welcome the improvements to Highway 2A, to the Ponoka airport, and the paving of secondary road 822. But I would like to point out that we still have a major road construction project as a high priority within the constituency, and that is the widening of Highway 53 and its extension as a paved road west of Rimbey. This is the main transportation artery of the constituency and is in need of improvement.

I'd like to conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, by referring to another area of major policy development in the throne speech. This is the area of public lands and fish and wildlife policy. The west end of our constituency is extremely involved and interested in these changes. The efforts to deregulate in this whole area and to refine and make the policy in that particular area more straightforward and more easily understood and administered are very, very much welcomed by my constituents. We look forward to the legislation, the debate, and the changes in that area.

The legislation proposals mentioned in the speech will be welcomed by our constituents and, I'm sure, the province in total. The statement on the Child Welfare Act and the Public Health Act, which indicates that they will be moved forward this year, is a concern to people in our area, as I'm sure it is all across the province. We look forward to the changes coming there.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to participating in this session of the Legislature. I think the throne speech sets out a sound plan of action for the province. I think we have a great deal to do, a great deal to consider, but I'm sure we can have a very, very constructive session ahead.

Thank you.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, as I rise to take part in the debate on the throne speech, I'd like to congratulate the mover and seconder for their speeches, which started out the throne speech. They were both very good, and I'm sure they'll remember that moment for a long, long time.

First, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make some comments about a colleague in another House. On March 18, the Walsh community held a night to honour Bert Hargrave, the Member of Parliament for Medicine Hat. Bert has spent approximately 12 years in service to the people of the constituency, of Canada, and of Alberta. A great many tributes were paid to Bert that night, all of them deserving. Bert has been a very committed person to his job as MP. He has been committed to the people of Canada and of Alberta. I think we owe him a degree of thanks for his participation, because he was one of the MPs who have been on side with us, the Alberta people and the Alberta government, in the three major issues we have faced in the last number of years.

Mr. Speaker, this year I was happy to be able to have the provincial building named after Harry Strom, a former Premier of this province and former member for the constituency of Cypress. I think this will be a lasting memory to people that Mr. Strom served the people of Cypress for a great many years and that the provincial building in Bow Island will probably

bear his name. I look forward to the opening of that building in the very near future.

We have heard a lot lately relating to agriculture and to red meat stabilization. I believe calling it "stabilization" is a mistake. I would like to associate it with crop insurance. In the crop insurance system we, in two levels of government, and the producer participate in a system that assures him of a certain return on his land. Why wouldn't we call it insurance or assurance for red meat instead of stabilization? The program was designed by the cattlemen themselves. That's who originally designed it; it was a committee of them. Why all of a sudden does it become stabilization because it talks about red meat? The proposal as it exists in the cost-sharing arrangements and the way everybody picks up their share is indeed a type of insurance. I think we should begin to call it insurance and approach it that way. Mr. Speaker, we really need a program to assure some system of smoothing out the peaks and valleys in the red meat industry in the province. I believe this system would do that.

In other matters relating to agriculture, Mr. Speaker, I think members would feel I've been remiss if when I take part in the throne speech debate I don't say something about irrigation in my constituency and in southern Alberta. Many members know that the Forty Mile Coulee project has been put on hold for some time and that the continual upgrading of St. Mary's main canal and other main canals in the area will proceed. But the Forty Mile project will be reassessed. To that end I would like to quote a sentence from a letter sent to me by Mr. Bryce Smith, who is president of the Bow Island Chamber of Commerce.

We, as a Chamber, wish to register our continued support for this essential project, and implore you and your department to do everything you can to ensure that no further delays are allowed and if possible set the starting date earlier than that which you announced last year.

Mr. Speaker, the Forty Mile project is important to the people of my constituency. It is true that the main canal is also very important. But the main canal, when it is completed in its upgrading, has been designed to include this Forty Mile water storage project. We will need to have that project in place in order to gain the maximum possible service from the canal upgrading, so it is important that at a point in time this project continue.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, I also look forward to further concrete action by the Cattle Commission, the agriculture caucus committee, and the Minister of Agriculture relating to the production credit associations, along the recommendations as existed in the motion that I proposed in front of this Assembly and that was passed last year. I look forward to our exploring the production credits possibilities so agriculture and small business can do something to help themselves with very little government action, so that we are able to finance ourselves in a time of capital finance in agriculture being so great and at a time when lending institutions are re-examining their agricultural lending policies.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to review some other matters relating to irrigation. I guess I should have numbered my pages better, because I have some of them mixed up. That's why we're in and out of a couple of subjects.

Today the Minister of the Environment released a press release stating that the portion of Forty Mile Coulee siphon, which is a part of the Forty Mile project I talked about earlier, related to the need to be reconstructed and the main canals

hooking up to it needing to be constructed, would go ahead. The contract has been awarded at a cost of \$4,582,493 and — can you believe it? — 30 cents. I suppose that would be very close bidding when you see a figure of 30 cents on the end of a bid that size. The contract is to go to a Calgary company. It is expected that construction will be started immediately and that it should be completed by October 31 of this year.

Mr. Speaker, that will allow the canal to be serviced from both sides of the reservoir before the end of the reservoir, and it will allow people to feel a little better about water going through a precast concrete pipe instead of the old siphon that was built 20-some years ago with a 20-year life expectancy — a wooden siphon that probably loses three or four CFS of water through leaks in it. When water runs through that in 1985, I'm sure everybody will breathe a sigh of relief that that project has been constructed and completed.

Mr. Speaker, just a brief review on the upgrading that has been going on in the St. Mary's canal. This covers areas from Ridge reservoir through to Sauder reservoir. In total to date, from Ridge reservoir to Chin reservoir, there has been almost \$7.8 million spent on upgrading and enlarging that canal so it will better carry the water, and in certain areas, where there was excessive seepage, lining it and recovering a lot of farmland because of that.

On the reach from Stafford to Forty Mile, there has been approximately \$20 million spent. A great deal of the work is going on at present; there are two or three major contracts on that section of the reach. On the section from Forty Mile to Sauder reservoir, \$16.34 million has been spent. That section includes a major project from Highway No. 3 to Sauder reservoir, just out of Bow Island, that upgrades about 35 kilometres of main canal in one project.

Mr. Speaker, those numbers show the deep commitment that the heritage trust fund has towards the upgrading of the irrigation systems in southern Alberta.

I've noticed on TV, Mr. Speaker, when one has time to watch it, some advertisements that the federal government has sponsored relating to eating fish, how much fish we should eat and all that sort of thing. They look pretty nice; they're pretty flashy. I think it really speaks well when you look at that and then you see the ads the beef industry in Alberta and Canada, with some government help, has put together, with the industry paying a very large portion of that advertising, which is not the case with the other product. I think it speaks very well of what happens when industry and government work together and how well an advertising package can be put together and be very comparable, and better in my estimation, than the one that was put together for the other product.

Mr. Speaker, recently we had the opportunity of exchanging with some Montana agricultural people who came to Edmonton to discuss some common problems with us. This group was made up of a number of state Senators, legislators, and some support staff. It was interesting to find that they have many of the same problems we have. They have the same problems with the eastern part of their country that we have with ours. They have the transportation problem, and they have the other problems of the east wanting them to be an area of raw product. They want to have it transported down there to process it and send it back as finished product. It almost seemed like we were talking to our neighbours in Saskatchewan or Manitoba because, as I said, they appear to have the same problems. They would very much like to start some projects we could work together on.

One of the topics discussed was the possibility of how the movement of beef could be arranged. We've had questions in the Legislature today about problems with the slaughtering

facilities that have been closing down and what studies have been done for the possibility of the improvement of facilities in other places. Here we have quite a large number of cattle, the majority of them within about 200 miles of Lethbridge. It has three slaughtering facilities and a very large cattle-feeding area around it, one of the most highly centralized cattle-feeding areas in the province. If we could come to some agreement with the federal governments, animals could be moved across the border — moved a couple of hundred miles instead of going over a mountain range in either direction in Montana, fed out of state, slaughtered out of state, and then transported back as finished meat. We could do that if we had some sort of free border movement of beef. We could move back and forth across that border freely. If these situations can be explored, it may be something that would indeed be very beneficial to both parties.

Also this summer, Mr. Speaker, I was happy to be part of a tour of the northwest irrigator operators association. This group is composed mainly of irrigators in the northwestern United States, but the irrigation districts in southern Alberta are also members of that association. About once in 10 years, that group comes to the Lethbridge/southern Alberta area. This year was the largest tour the association has ever had, and it was held here. At various times, between 225 and 250 people took part in this bus tour of the irrigation districts and irrigation upgrading projects in southern Alberta. They were very favourably impressed with our irrigation system and the commitment we have taken toward upgrading that system.

Mr. Speaker, last evening I was writing my column for this week's paper and was wondering what to put in it. I was going through some of the material that had been sent to my home through last week. I noticed what I guess would be a mini-paper from the Department of Education on educational review that had been sent out, asking people to read it and send it back to the department so it can be assessed and we can undertake the major review on education that we are committed to in the throne speech. I would urge people to indeed read and review that, answer the questions and put any comments they have on it so it can be returned and reassessed, so it becomes part of our ongoing review of the education system.

I noted some of the questions they asked in that paper. I can remember, a couple of years ago I think, when I made a reply to the throne speech, I had met with a group of the local ATA associations in the constituency. I remember one of them saying, you know, maybe it is time we look at our system, because I have just had advice that we are having drama as part of grade school, and what we are going to have to cut out is part of the three Rs, which in the last 13 years have been cut, if I remember the figures right, from 1,000 minutes a month to 540 minutes a month, or a week; whatever it is — maybe it's a week. All these things have cut the three Rs, and here we are looking and talking about putting the three Rs back in education. Maybe we'll be back somewhere where we were quite a number of years ago, and hopefully improve on it.

Mr. Speaker, the local ATA associations are also holding meetings — at least I know they are in Medicine Hat rural No. 4, and I believe the others are — to talk with parents, students, and others on their review of the educational system. When they complete that, I have asked them to send the findings of their meetings to me so I'm aware of what they feel is lacking and what the parents tell them they feel is lacking.

Another thing, that I understand is going on in other schools in other jurisdictions but I know is going on in the Senator Gershaw school in Bow Island, is that for a period of three weeks. I think, they take all the boys out of industrial arts and all the girls out of home ec. and the boys go to home ec. for

three weeks and the girls go to industrial arts for three weeks. I have heard some interesting reactions. The boys who are taking home ec. that I have heard from think it's a real deal. They have no problem with it at all.

MR. ALGER: They learn to fry eggs.

MR. HYLAND: I think, hon. member, that they're further than the egg frying exercise, from some of the stories they told of what they made.

Mr. Speaker, I think that's something that is somewhat unique and should be carried on in many other schools. I'm sure many of the male members of this Legislature wish that maybe they had had three weeks in home ec., so when your wife is away you don't have to go down to the restaurant and eat all the time. It would certainly be a lot cheaper and probably a lot better for us too.

Mr. Speaker, since my appointment to the Social Care Facilities Review Committee, I have been in a number of facilities all over the province, from as far south as Raymond to as far north as High Level. I have visited day cares, group homes, single men's hostels, shelters for battered women, AADAC centres, et cetera. I have found the past year to be very interesting. One goes through these facilities and gets a whole new view on many of one's ideas. These facilities are costing us a great deal of money. Anybody who suggests that the kinds of facilities we have in Alberta are not the best in Canada is, I suggest, talking through their hat. I have seen many of these facilities. Mr. Speaker, if other parts of Canada have better facilities, they must have better than a Cadillac system. We could put ours up against any in Canada and come out on top.

Mr. Speaker, that doesn't mean to say that there are no problems with these facilities and with the people in them. The one concern I have is that I think we as a government and as an institution have, in many cases, allowed families to give up too easily on their children. If you have a particularly bothersome child or young adult, it is quite easy to say: we can't make him behave; let the government look after him; they will put him in a group home, work with him, and everything will be okay — forgetting that the portion of family life called tender loving care is not there. That is something that no matter how good — and there are very good people in many of these group homes and other facilities, but they cannot replace the care that parents would give to their children if they would stay there and work with them. In some cases, even when the children go to these facilities, parents don't participate in any sort of program in order to help their child.

Mr. Speaker, when these kinds of things happen with children, maybe we should look at charging the parents a portion of the operating costs of these facilities, because they are very high. That way, maybe it would force them to participate. We must try to get the best value for our dollar. We must try to see if these high-cost facilities are indeed obtaining the desired success rate they should be, and that they are the most cost-effective way of helping these children.

Mr. Speaker, I have some comments to make about health care and the attack that has been made on rural hospitals by some of the major dailies in the province. The Member for Ponoka spoke partly to that issue. As a member who served on a small hospital board, I well understand what a small hospital has to do with an area, how effective it is, the problems it faces in the community and, indeed, the problems if a hospital such as that ever closed, what it would mean to the community. When an editorial was published in the *The Medicine Hat News*, I wrote a letter to the editor, that was published. I challenged them to go to these small hospitals and to talk to the people of

the area and see how they feel about the hospitals. I don't know if they've been to the one in Bow Island yet, but from an article in the paper I know that they did go to the one in Empress.

Let's use the Bow Island hospital and the Medicine Hat hospital, for example, on the cost of operation. The hospital in Medicine Hat could run for 32 days on what it takes to run the Bow Island hospital for a year. I think that says that these hospitals have an important place in our health care system, and there is no reason why those in rural Alberta should not be able to go to a hospital that provides a certain level of health care to them in their own community.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit about the economy and how it has affected my constituency in matters relating to the oil service industry. In the area around Redcliff, there are many oil servicing companies in operation. They are indeed having a tough time making it go.

I keep on getting some notes here. It's a wonder they don't start stealing my pages, but I only have a couple left.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of items related to that area and to the industry: if we tried to start some possible incentives relating to our royalties, similar to those in Wolf Lake and other heavy oil areas, I often wonder if that would help the oil industry in the area that I represent and in the other areas of the province.

With that, Mr. Speaker, after I received the note from you, I guess I should best ask members to support the Speech from the Throne. Thank you.

MR. NELSON: I don't think I'll have time to get the same note.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to participate in the debate that is ongoing. First of all, I would like to congratulate the Member for Red Deer and the Member for Wainwright for their excellent presentations in moving and seconding the Speech from the Throne, and you, Mr. Speaker, for your ongoing diligence in the running of this House.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to deal somewhat with my constituency and also the opportunities related to the many aspects of it. In the House over the last number of days I have heard some members, opposite in particular, talking about all the problems in Alberta. I think it is attitudes like this that create the negativity and maybe those problems within the province. There is a time, and maybe this is that time because of some of the good things that have happened and are happening, when maybe we ought to talk about the opportunities that are available to all of us in this province — not just because you are a supporter of the Progressive Conservative government or of some other area, whether it be the socialist party of Alberta or whoever it might be, but because we are in a land of opportunity. We are in a land of opportunity because of the abundance of our natural resources, our agricultural development in the province, our tourism and, probably most important as far as I'm concerned in the constituency of Calgary McCall, our people. Our people are our best and most natural resource. With that resource, we have many of them who are private entrepreneurs within the province, small-business men.

During the ensuing two or three months I think we will be dealing with the economy of the province, in which the small-business people have such a large part to play, unlike many of our members opposite who don't know too much about business, in particular small business, because many of them have — I could use the term — sponged off the community most of their lives with the payroll from the community, but I won't say that.

Mr. Speaker, small-business men ...

MR. SPEAKER: If I understood the hon. member to be referring to the members of the opposition. I would have to take

objection to that statement. I'm not sure if I understood him correctly. To say something and then say that you won't say it is really a slightly convoluted concept. That is certainly not the kind of thing that one hon. member should be saying about another.

MR. NELSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll withdraw the statement, with the decorum of the House.

In continuing, our small-business community not only has a lot of opportunities but the government has a part to play with those opportunities. They have difficulties in continuing businesses because of too much government intervention in most cases. But in many cases, in particular when dealing with banks or financial lending institutions, they are given a very difficult ride — I guess it's mainly due to policies within these institutions — that creates financial difficulties. Small-business people are honourable people, and in trying not only to make a living but also to participate in the community, roadblocks are placed in front of them. There may be a time when banks will become more competitive. Again, I guess our federal government has a part to play here in encouraging the development of offshore banking institutions that will come to Alberta or to Canada to offer that competition to the small-business community so they may have the same opportunities as the very large businesses.

Although those large businesses employ a considerable number of people, it's the small-business person who in the main is probably employing more people than the larger or the medium sized businesses. After all, you hear the words in the House, by members of the government and members opposite, suggesting that small business is the backbone of our economy. They're certainly right. But they need to be given the same opportunities as the larger businesses through our lending institutions. If it is necessary, and I hope it isn't: more development of the Alberta treasury branches, giving them the opportunity as a lender of last resort in some cases to participate a little more freely within the private sector, to encourage development of small-business people.

Mr. Speaker, the jobs provided by small business are enormous. Our members opposite continually talk about unemployment, jobs, and so on. Interestingly, this government has created at least 56,000 man-years of employment over the last year, some of this part-time, some full-time, some a continuing thing, and jobs that have been able to be continued through the private sector. That's a considerable commitment by this government that we must address. Interestingly enough, some of our largest critics are the people who I consider as being of a socialist nature. Yet when you compare participation rates within Canada — and let's take two provinces. Alberta, for example, had an actual 70.8 percent participation rate during the month of February. Again, using the term socialist, we have the province of Manitoba, that has a socialist-type government, and they have a 64.7 percent participation rate — clearly, 6.1 percent less participation rate in a province. And with this high employment Alberta has, we are continually criticized for doing nothing.

The government of Alberta and its members are sensitive to the needs and requirements of our citizens, and they address those. They address them on a daily basis, whether the session is in place or not. The constituency of Calgary McCall, Mr. Speaker, has needs similar to other Albertans. We don't jump up and down when we don't get our way all the time, but there are times of course when we must lay out some platform and requirements. I'm sure these will also be addressed as they are in other areas.

Mr. Speaker, the two major requests from Calgary McCall at the present time are the development of a hospital in our constituency and of course the development of a high school. Consider that Calgary McCall was one of those constituencies that grew in population in 1983, when many other constituencies actually lost population. We have some 80,000 people in the constituency of Calgary McCall and possibly, considering the last speaker, with that population I should be given five times as much time as he had to speak. But considering the time, that will not be possible.

When I come to the House and suggest that we need a hospital that will probably serve in east Calgary some 130,000, 140,000, 150,000 people, and consider that I ask for a high school that will serve a population nearly twice the size of Red Deer and at least one and a half times the size of Lethbridge, I don't think I'm asking anything too much. Certainly when there are economic considerations to be made, with the times we live in, we may have to consider that. However, there is an expression that says that for every dollar spent on education, you get six back. But also, they tell me that for every dollar you spend on tourism, you get six back. So maybe we should be doing a little more in both those areas.

The Calgary McCall constituency is not only a large constituency but a very young constituency. The average age of members there is less than 30 years of age. That means there are a lot of kids, a lot of preschool kids, and they're certainly entitled to an excellent education when they grow to school age.

I recently sent out a questionnaire in my constituency which gave me an indication of what people are thinking. I didn't ask "Do you think tax increases are bad?" and questions of that nature, because we all know the answer to those anyway. Nobody likes a tax increase; nobody likes an increase in anything that takes money out of our pockets. To ask a question like that is somewhat redundant, because most of us are smart enough to realize that we don't have to ask questions on that issue.

I'm being hammered here to close it down.

Mr. Speaker, I had some very good responses on a couple of issues. One was regarding seat-belt legislation: 58.5 percent of the population indicated that we should have mandatory seat-belt legislation. That surprised me. What also surprised me regarded Sunday-closing legislation. Out of a survey of 727 replies, 69 percent of those people who responded said: less stringent, or leave Sunday shopping as it is now.

Mr. Speaker, we have charges laid at us by members of the opposition that continually hammer on user fees. Tell me where there is a hospital using user fees. I would like to know, as the minister has already indicated that there are none.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my two secretaries — Cec Gibson in Edmonton, and my secretary in the Calgary McCall constituency office, Zoe McCall — for their assistance over the last year.

I have a number of other topics I would like to discuss, including tourism, where we certainly need considerable imagination to develop people into our province. Considering the Miss Universe contest in Calgary, the Pope's visit in Edmonton this year, and the Winter Olympics coming up, we certainly are in the forefront of the world and we can certainly use that advertising, which has a worth of over \$100 million to our province. We can use that to our advantage and certainly to the advantage of our constituents, in an economic sense and so on.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I'm going to thank the House for its indulgence and, as I'm sure I can see by many members, happily sit down. As I will have an opportunity to speak to the

budget itself and the estimates, I have other comments I will make at that time.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: May the hon. Member for Red Deer conclude the debate?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. McPHERSON: Mr. Speaker, about 10 days ago I had the distinct honour of introducing a motion that this Assembly consider His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's gracious Speech from the Throne. In the intervening time I've had the opportunity, as have all members, of listening to many, many speeches on both sides of this House. I hope there is no question by any Albertan that their government, their representatives in this Legislative Assembly, is dedicated to the development of this province. This dedication has been abundantly evidenced in various speeches by hon. members throughout this Assembly. These speeches have demonstrated the profound commitment, concern, and pride that all members of this Legislative Assembly have for their constituents. It's been a good debate. The debate has re-emphasized just how vast this province of Alberta is. I would like to congratulate all members who participated in the debate for teaching each and every one of us a little more about our great province.

Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to formally move that the Legislative Assembly accept the 1984 Speech from the Throne.

MR. SPEAKER: On the motion by the hon. Member for Red Deer, seconded by the hon. Member for Wainwright, for an humble address to be presented to His Honour in reply to the speech which His Honour was graciously pleased to make from the throne, would the members in favour of the motion please say aye. Those opposed, please say no. The motion is adopted.

head: **GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

1. Moved by Mr. Lougheed:
Be it resolved that the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor by such members of the Assembly as are members of the Executive Council.

[Motion carried]

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, it's not proposed that the Assembly sit this evening. Tomorrow evening, as all hon. members know, is the presentation of the Budget Address by the Provincial Treasurer.

[At 5:25 p.m., on motion, the House adjourned to Tuesday at 2:30 p.m.]

