

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA**

Title: **Friday, May 4, 1984 10:00 a.m.**

[The House met at 10 a.m.]

**PRAYERS**

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 39****Pension Statutes Amendment Act, 1984**

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill No. 39, the Pension Statutes Amendment Act, 1984. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of the Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the sole purpose of this Bill is to implement the five-year phased increase, totalling 1.25 percent for employee contributions and the same percentage for employer contributions, under the Public Service Pension Act and the Local Authorities Pension Act. Subsequent legislation will be introduced with respect to the other policy matters set forth in the ministerial statement of two days ago.

[Leave granted; Bill 39 read a first time]

**Bill 41****Alberta Mortgage and  
Housing Corporation Act**

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill No. 41, the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation Act. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

This Bill follows the commitment contained in the throne speech read earlier to the Legislature. The purpose of the Bill is to combine the Alberta Housing Act and the Alberta Home Mortgage Corporation Act and to amalgamate the Alberta Housing Corporation and the Alberta Home Mortgage Corporation into a single corporation.

If the Assembly agrees, Mr. Speaker, I would like to file with the library a report entitled Alberta Housing Organization Review, dated April 1984, describing the proposed reorganization of the two Crown corporations.

[Leave granted; Bill 41 read a first time]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am prepared today to table the response to Motion for a Return No. 155.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the MLA for Calgary West, I am pleased this morning to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, 36 grade 6 students from Westgate school. They are accompanied by teachers Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Laidlaw, and Miss Dodds-Belanger; by parents Mrs. Cossins, Mrs. Lawrence, Mr. Jones, and Mrs. Hoover; and by their driver, whose name is Andy. I didn't get his last name, and I apologize to him. They are seated in the members gallery. I enjoyed a brief visit with them just before the House sat this morning. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly 65 grade 5 students from E.G. Wahlstrom school in Slave Lake, in the constituency of Lesser Slave Lake. The students are accompanied by their principal, Mr. Dennis Woodard, and by teachers Barb Cuff, Laurie Johnston, and Sugar Barath. Also with the students today are parents Linda Harden, Carol Bottle, Marian Sunderman, Chris Ghostkeeper, Helen St. Louis, Sharon Reid, Elsie Gullion, and Judy Spilak. The students are visiting the Legislature today, as well as the great China trade fair. I ask that the members accord them their usual welcome as they rise in the public gallery.

head: **MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

**Department of Transportation**

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, for the last eight years, 4-H clubs across the province have been involved annually in a united effort to clean up Alberta's highways. This year's program will take place tomorrow, Saturday, May 5, with Saturday, May 12, being an alternate day in the event of inclement weather in some parts of the province. Thousands of young Albertans will be taking to our highways to help once again in keeping Alberta clean.

Over the years, the program has grown to the point where in 1983, over 7,000 young Albertans participated. Although the majority of the groups are 4-H clubs, Junior Forest Wardens and other youth organizations participate as well. In the one-day program last year, these youngsters collected over 54,000 bags of garbage. In doing so, they cleaned over 6,800 kilometres of highway throughout our province.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that all motorists be aware that the participants will be on the highways tomorrow, wearing safety vests and bright clothing and supervised closely by their parents and group leaders. There will be signs placed along the highways indicating areas where the cleanup is occurring, and the vehicles accompanying the groups will also be marked. As well, both the RCMP and the Highway Patrol will be present on the highways to assist with traffic control.

These safety efforts have been very effective over the years. In spite of these efforts, Mr. Speaker, three years ago a youth was tragically struck and killed while participating in the cleanup campaign. No matter how many precautions the participants take, it is essential that all motorists be aware of the cleanup campaign. Motorists must exercise a great deal of care and caution while using our highways this Saturday.

In an effort to increase the motorists' awareness of the cleanup campaign, our government has implemented a provincewide advertising campaign. Advertisements advising motorists of the cleanup and urging them to drive safely have

been placed in newspapers across the province. Radio advertisements will run again on Saturday, reminding drivers to be extra mindful of the youngsters out there cleaning up our highways. It is hoped that these additional efforts will add to the safety.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind everyone to do their part by exercising extra care and caution and driving safely this weekend. Together, let's make sure this is safe and productive cleanup campaign. And above all, don't forget to wave.

#### head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

##### Abacus Cities Investigation

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the hon. Attorney General. It's with respect to the investigation into the collapse of Abacus Cities. Could the Attorney General advise the Assembly whether the government is reviewing possible breaches of section 14 of the Companies Act?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I'm not able to indicate from memory to the hon. leader today the specifics of the statutory offences that would be under review and under consideration. The principal interest, for my purposes, would be the potential for charges with respect to the Criminal Code. The extent of the review is very considerable and, in due course, I can certainly inform the hon. member if that is one of the sections that is being specifically looked at for statutory offences.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask a supplementary question of the hon. Attorney General, and ask whether the minister has had an opportunity to review the Ghitter-Orr report, three copies of which I file with the Legislature.

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I might just say that in view of the fact that the document is critical of certain individuals, I'm putting it into the record of the Assembly only because of the legitimate interest and concern of many Albertans whose financial interests were affected by the actions of the parties, but with a warning contained in the report that although the authors feel confident that it affords a general and reasonable prospectus of Abacus, it is not a complete audit or investigation.

Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Attorney General: bearing that stricture in mind, has the minister had an opportunity to review this report?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, it wasn't my intention to review that particular report. It is five years old and was superseded by a much more formal type of reporting. The Ghitter-Orr report was one that was voluntarily done by the company in 1979 and formed part of the basis for those who later conducted very extensive investigations. I have no doubt of its usefulness at the time it was done and of the ability with which the report was undertaken and carried out, but it seems to me that the later report is of more use now.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Is the minister in a position to advise the Assembly what action was taken with respect to the concern identified in the Ghitter-Orr report that

it appears that the actions of Abacus with respect to this employee share purchase plan is likely in contravention of the Act as aforesaid.

That is section 14 of the Companies Act.

Is the minister in a position to advise what action the government took subsequent to receiving this report, dealing with that particular observation?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, no charges as such have been laid. Throughout the course of the various inquiries that have been done, there may have been a couple of Securities Act charges which were sworn out at the particular time, but process was not issued with respect to them.

As to Criminal Code or other offences, nothing has been proceeded with, based on the 1979 report. The hon. leader will recall that it was within a matter of a month or so of the time of the Ghitter-Orr report being produced that the Abacus organization was placed into receivership. At that time the receiver assumed certain duties and responsibilities, and there followed a very detailed investigation and examination, which we have previously spoken of in the Assembly.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. In the absence of the hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, who has responsibility for the Securities Commission, perhaps the Attorney General could advise the Assembly what action, if any, was taken by the government with respect to section 14(5) of the Companies Act after receipt of the Ghitter-Orr report. That is basically the statute of limitations, and it's relevant in terms of the rights of people who have lost money to be able to bring their claim into court. Could the minister advise the Assembly what steps, if any, were taken by the government to advise and inform Abacus investors of their rights and obligations under the Companies Act?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, certainly the Attorney General's responsibilities wouldn't encompass the area of public notification that the hon. leader is asking about. I would have to take as notice the question as to whether or not the Securities Commission acted in a particular way with respect to that organization, and either my colleague the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs or I could perhaps provide some information from the Securities Commission.

I should just note that the Securities Commission has extensive statutory responsibilities involving publication and, with respect to the availability of documents that are provided to them by promoters and others, as to the form of those documents and the content and amount of disclosure that is thereby made to people who are interested in becoming investors. But I'm not able to respond to the hon. member this morning as to what was done with respect to a specific procedure under the Act in question.

##### Agricultural Assistance

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the second question to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. It's with respect to what appears to be a sit-in today in the Red Deer offices of the Agricultural Development Corporation by farmers who are concerned about their future. My question is: are any changes contemplated in the loaning provisions of the Agricultural Development Corporation to provide more what might be called bridging capital for farmers who are facing serious problems, particularly the threat of foreclosure?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, the Agricultural Development Corporation is always reviewing the programs, as we all are, to make sure they're meeting the challenges of the economic times we happen to be in. No changes to the programs are being proposed right at this time. They are well established

and seem to be working fairly well. In addition to the programs, there is counselling available through the Agricultural Development Corporation and the loans officers out in the regions, as well as the regional economists and the department itself. We feel that is adequate at the moment.

Additional capital and financing are always necessary for agriculture, and we are looking at new initiatives with respect to providing that new type of financing that are also being considered by other provinces and the federal government. I might comment that one of those I might use as an example is the production credit system used in the United States. Discussions are now under way between the Department of Agriculture and the Alberta Cattle Commission to see if a system like that could be made operative in Alberta.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. As I recall, the minister has rejected the suggestion by some of the farmers of a debt moratorium. However, given the seriousness of the situation which a number of farmers feel they face at the moment, has the government given any consideration to at least reviewing legislation that was once on the statute books in this province; namely, the Debt Adjustment Act of the 1930s?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I have taken a somewhat cursory look at that Legislation. But I have to say that the investigation to this point points out very clearly that if we moved in that direction, the pool of capital available to agriculture in this province could dry up right at a time when it's most necessary. I've also had discussions with respect to how each individual financial institution is handling it — the banks as well as the Agricultural Development Corporation — and how we can operate by deferring payments, refinancing arrears, and a number of things like that, which I think makes far more sense than a debt moratorium.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Given the minister's answer, what specific advice can he give those farmers now facing the desperation of imminent foreclosure and not able to receive redress from the ADC? What advice can he give these people?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm always careful of what kind of advice we give people, because I think individual initiative and management skills play a very significant role. I always feel very badly if there's an individual producer in this province that is in financial difficulty.

If I were to give some advice, I would say that if there's a recognition that there are difficulties in their operations, they should immediately get in touch with the Agricultural Development [Corporation] loan officers or the regional economist or directly with my office. I'd be happy to put them in contact with individuals who may be able to help them readjust their operation, reduce their debt load, or do a number of things so that their operation may — and I use that word "may" intentionally — stay viable. Through our programs in this province, we try to provide the opportunity for people to be involved in agriculture, not a guarantee that they will succeed.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Given the mandate of the ADC as a lender of last resort, what priority is the minister now placing on ADC financing for those farmers that are in serious arrears with existing financial institutions?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, we're more than happy to try to review each individual case. We have available a guarantee program that hopefully will be of some assistance to

them. What we want, though, is to be sure the banks aren't backing out on their commitments to agriculture and we aren't in fact taking over their responsibilities. In each case we try to encourage the banks to do what they can. If the producer is in difficulty, though, there is a guarantee program through the Agricultural Development Corporation if the management skills, viability of the operation, repayment ability, and adequate security, of course, are there. We're dealing with public money. We would be more than happy, and have in fact helped many individuals in this province.

MR. NOTLEY: On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could revert to Introduction of Special Guests.

HON. MEMBERS. Agreed.

#### head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

*(reversion)*

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, this morning it's my pleasure to be able to introduce to members of the Assembly Allan Blakeney, Leader of the Opposition in the province of Saskatchewan and, for 11 years, Premier of the province of Saskatchewan. I ask if he would stand to be recognized by members of the House.

Mr. Speaker, he is accompanied by Howard Leeson, who has a number of things to his credit. He was my first executive assistant in this Legislature and, for some years, the Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs in the province of Saskatchewan. He is now a professor at the University of Regina. I ask if he'd stand and be recognized by the members as well.

#### head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

*(continued)*

#### **Highway Littering**

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Transportation relates to his ministerial statement this morning on the 4-H cleanup. Are any new efforts being made to discourage motorists from littering?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should call on the Attorney General or the Solicitor General; I'm not sure which. But in the Highway Traffic Act we have certain regulations with respect to control of motorists who litter our highways. That of course is a function that's carried out by our police officers.

I believe few provinces in Canada, if any, have as effective control over littering of highways as we do. That's largely due to the introduction of the Beverage Container Act in this Assembly several years ago and the refunds we have on both cans and bottles, which are by far the most litter which occurs on highways throughout the province.

It's inevitable, however, that certain amounts of litter accumulate over the course of the late fall and during the winter months. I think, though, that the effective thing we're able to do is have this cleanup campaign I talked about today, which again puts our highways at the forefront of any in Canada in terms of their cleanliness throughout the summer tourist months.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, I guess my concern is with a particular container. Over the last number of years, it's been

my experience as a parent on the cleanup — by the way, last year is the first one I've ever missed — that there is at least one disposable diaper for every mile these kids clean up. How many disposable diapers would that be on the primary highways in this province? [interjections]

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, my difficulty is that we're now operating in kilometres. My fast arithmetic would indicate that's 1,609 disposable diapers per kilometre. Actually, it's the other way around.

Last year we cleaned up — there are in excess of 13,000 kilometres of primary highway in the province and, of that total length, 4-H clubs will clean up about 5,000 kilometres. I'm glad to hear the hon. member will be helping again tomorrow.

MRS. CRIPPS: I didn't say that. My children have outgrown it.

I can assure members that it's no laughing matter. I raised it in the Assembly because I think it is important. I can also assure you that no student ...

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would the hon. member proceed to the question.

MRS. CRIPPS: ... who has cleaned highways will throw out a disposable diaper.

My question to the Solicitor General: is it necessary for a private citizen who witnesses such littering and lays a complaint to appear before the court?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, we're into that awkward situation between the Attorney General and the Solicitor General, on the investigation and prosecution. As far as littering the highways is concerned, I would like to say that one of the most difficult problems I notice, travelling the highways, is the discarding of fast-food containers. Nowadays in the first few miles past every community with a fast-food outlet, the ditches tend to be littered with the containers. Some of the chains have now put on their containers "please do not discard". It would be very pleasant if the people in Alberta and visitors to the province would obey that injunction.

With regard to appearance in court on littering, I'm not aware of any cases where complaints by citizens have gone as far as court. If there are any cases, perhaps the hon. member can either communicate with me or the Attorney General on the matter.

MRS. CRIPPS: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the fine for littering be handled in another manner? If a citizen laid a complaint to the highway traffic patrol, would there be some decision made on that complaint?

DR. REID: Perhaps the Attorney General can answer that, under the provisions for handling that type of complaint.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, the diaper question seemed to me to be a cover-up. [interjections]

As to the processing of charges, I assume that virtually all of them are done under the violation ticket system and specified penalties. It's only in a case where the specified penalty is not to be paid that the matter might end up in court. If there's something more to the hon. member's question that I missed, I'd be happy to try to respond.

MRS. CRIPPS: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, and this will be my final. What effort is being made to enforce littering laws, and how could the public become involved? The highway traffic patrol can't possibly police all the highways.

I ask the question because just after we cleaned up last year, the kids saw a diaper being thrown out and were furious. Naturally the traffic patrol isn't able to be on all highways at all times.

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I can make just one additional comment relative to the Highway Traffic Act. There are obviously lots of instances where the Alberta Highway Patrol, the RCMP, or other police forces do write tickets and lay charges with regard to littering offences. As the hon. Attorney General said, they are most often paid without an appearance in court.

It's been our experience that when a citizen encounters an occasion of littering by someone else, obtains a licence number and such other details, and reports it to the police authorities, there's no possibility of prosecution unless that citizen is willing to at least appear in court if it comes to that length. I know of instances where citizens indeed have made complaints and have offered to appear in court, and the guilty party has pled guilty without that person having to appear as a witness. But obviously that person must be willing to. There isn't any possible way you can have a system that will result in prosecution of people unless those who have the evidence are willing to identify themselves and be present. So there is very definitely some onus on our citizens to assist us in this regard.

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, if I could supplement the answers of my colleagues, the Litter Act is under the Department of the Environment. We are responsible for enforcing it through that legislation and through the local municipalities who have litter control officers.

Just to supplement in a general way in terms of what the government is doing through awareness programs and programs such as the one conducted by the Minister of Transportation whereby he assists 4-H clubs to clean up, we are certainly putting in place amongst our citizens, particularly our younger people, an ethic about litter. So we are making them aware of this through the education system.

One of the specific activities of our department is to assist an organization called Outdoors Unlittered. Next week they will be starting their pitch-in campaign, launching it in the province on Monday. Last year some 55,000 individual citizens were involved in the Outdoors Unlittered program. We feel this is healthy and will promote amongst our citizens an ethic which will eventually stop littering in the province.

#### Telephone Toll Revenue Sharing

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question to the Minister of Utilities and Telecommunications. Will the minister outline to the House what progress the government has made, if any, to solve the dispute between AGT and Edmonton Telephones over toll revenue sharing?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, meetings have occurred between the mayor of Edmonton and an alderman from the city, along with the chairman of the Edmonton government caucus committee — the Member for Edmonton Gold Bar — and me. Further meetings are planned.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. It deals with section 7(1) of the AGT-Edmonton Telephones Act, which states:

AGT has no power to enter into any agreement or arrangement with the City whereby any part of AGT's toll revenues from telephone calls originating or terminating in Edmonton may be paid to the City.

My question to the minister is: what plans does the government have to repeal section 7(1) of the current AGT-Edmonton Telephones Act?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, I and I'm sure all government members look forward to the debate that will occur when Bill 241, a Bill put forward by the hon. member asking the question, is debated. That Bill does in fact address the question the hon. member has raised.

MR. MARTIN: So we're waiting for my private member's Bill. I'm glad I'm not important to the minister.

My supplementary question is: does the government have any plans to introduce in this House in this spring session any legislation which would alter the substance or interpretation of the current AGT-Edmonton Telephones Act?

AN HON. MEMBER: Wait and see, Ray.

MR. BOGLE: As I just indicated, Mr. Speaker, there is a Bill on the Order Paper that would do just what the hon. member is suggesting.

MR. MARTIN: Then I take it by that answer that he's going to follow my lead and repeal section 7(1). I'm sure the city of Edmonton will be glad to hear that.

AGT had a considerable debt last year, I believe some \$56.5 million. Considering that Edmonton Telephones had a profit of over \$3 million, my question is: can the minister indicate if any consideration has been given to privatizing Alberta Government Telephones and, if so, is Edmonton Telephones part of that privatization consideration?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may be alluding to the first recommendation made by the Milvain committee, in which the committee unanimously suggested that consideration be given to creating a new telephone company. That company would purchase the assets of both Edmonton Telephones and Alberta Government Telephones, and then sales of the shares would be made available to the public.

I'm sure the hon. member is aware that the city of Edmonton has rejected that particular recommendation of the committee. The Alberta government caucus has accepted the decision of the city council, and we are currently discussing other ways of bringing the current scrambling by Edmonton Telephones and the operator intercept by AGT to a satisfactory conclusion, mutually acceptable to both parties.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question for clarification. Then the minister is saying at this time that this government has no intention of privatizing Alberta Government Telephones.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, the suggestion was put forward by a jointly appointed committee, in terms of a long-term solution to the affairs between the two telephone companies. What I've indicated to the hon. member and to other members in this Assembly is that it is not the view of the government that the recommendation as put forward and as rejected by one of the two parties is an integral part of settling the current dispute.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, he skated around that one, but I'm sure we'll see in due time.

My question to the minister is: to update members of the Assembly and the people of Alberta, can the minister indicate what other solutions — or what solutions, period — the government has considered to end the current dispute between AGT and Edmonton Telephones?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure the hon. member is aware, there are at least three ways the current dispute between the two telephone companies in Alberta could be brought to a conclusion. The first, preferred by the government of Alberta, is a negotiated settlement. The second is litigation, whereby the courts would determine jurisdiction and other such matters. I'm sure the hon. member is aware that certain actions have been taken by the city and by Edmonton Telephones in that regard.

As well, there was an action commenced in September 1982 by CNCP Telecommunications, wherein an application was made to the federal regulatory body, the CRTC, to permit an interconnect with Alberta Government Telephones. I believe that case, which has a very substantive bearing in terms of jurisdiction, will commence on May 28 of this year here in the city of Edmonton.

The third way is the legislative route, of course, and that suggestion is contained in the hon. member's Bill No. 241.

MR. MARTIN: Just one final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, just to clarify so we're all crystal clear about this issue. Is it correct to say that in the spring session of this House, the only type of legislation dealing with this matter will be private member's Bill 241?

MR. BOGLE: To be crystal clear, Mr. Speaker, the only legislation before the House at this time which deals with the two telephone companies is Bill No. 241.

MR. MARTIN: The question is not what is on the paper right now, Mr. Speaker. I'll rephrase my question. Besides Bill 241, is there any other legislation planned by this minister in this spring session?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the hon. member would like to become part of the government caucus so he knows what matters are in fact being discussed and so he can be party to that. [interjections]

MR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister of telecommunications. I'm pleased to see that the verbal lines of communication are still open between the city and the province. I would like to know if the minister has plans in the not-too-distant future, like within the next month, to meet with the mayor and Alderman Leger.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, a meeting did take place earlier this week, and I can report to the House that a further meeting is planned next week.

MR. PAPROSKI: A further supplementary. Then what the minister is saying is that there is ongoing communication and that the minister will continue that ongoing communication until there is a resolution.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, the government's preferred course of action in resolving the differences between the two telephone companies has always been through negotiation. I see no reason at this time to change our mode of thought.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Several hon. members have indicated they would like to make introductions of special guests who've recently arrived in the gallery. Does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, it's a real pleasure for me today to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, 26 grade 6 students from St. Anthony's school in the city of Drumheller. They are here to see their government in action. They are accompanied by their teacher, Jerry Hamilton, and by Mike Harasym, Mrs. E. Krill, and Mrs. L. Foesier. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would like them to stand and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. STROMBERG: Mr. Speaker, today we have with us some 35 grades 7 to 9 students from an outstanding school in Heisler in my constituency. With them is their driver, Mr. Horst Brunsch; parent/chaperones Mrs. Carol Meyer, Mrs. Badry, Doris Poepping, and Beth Blaeser; and also their principal, Dennis Batiuk. I might add that Dennis is the son of the Member for Vegreville. I ask that the students, parents, and their principal, who are seated in the public gallery, now rise to be recognized by this Legislature.

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to members of this Assembly, four members of the board of the Fort Vermilion school division. Chairman Ray Dechant, Noreen McAteer, Elaine Dextrause, and Dave Elias; along with the administrator, Darrell Couture, and the superintendent, Ted West. I ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce 45 grades 6 and 7 students from Alder Flats school. They're accompanied by their teacher, Ms Rose Marie Sackella, and by parents Diana Rowen, Marilyn Tonhauser, and Linda Moody. They're seated in the members gallery, and I would like them to rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**  
(*continued*)

**Senior Citizens' Lodges**

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I have a question to the Minister of Housing. It relates to the annual report of the Alberta Housing Corporation, which he tabled in the House just last week, and the subsidies paid by the government of Alberta for the senior citizens' self-contained housing program as well as the lodge program. My question is: has there been a change in policy whereby the government of Canada, or Canada Mortgage and Housing, no longer contributes to subsidies for our self-contained senior citizens' suites?

MR. SHABEN: No, Mr. Speaker. On projects that are built in Alberta under the seniors' self-contained program or the lodge program, where those units are within the numbers that have been allocated by CMHC to the province, subsidies are available for 50 percent of the operating deficits. During the period

of rapid delivery of housing units for seniors in Alberta, in the late 70s and early 80s, there weren't sufficient numbers of units allocated by the federal government. As a result, nearly 6,000 seniors' units are not cost shared by the federal government.

MR. GOGO: It would appear then that the provincial government has responded to the need of the seniors regardless of the federal government.

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Does the subsidy mentioned in the report relate in any way to the amount senior citizens pay in rent; for example, 25 percent of their income? Does that in any way affect the amount of subsidy toward these self-contained mortgages?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure I understand the question. The rental is 25 percent of minimum income of the seniors, and that policy is as a result of determination by the government. The increase or decrease in deficits does not necessarily affect a decision with respect to rental rates.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary for clarification. Is there any plan by the government to change the percentage of senior citizens' income that would be the rent they pay for the self-contained suite, which is presently at 25 percent of their income? I raise that because if the subsidy has to change to maintain the existing buildings, requiring more funds, will the seniors have to pay a different proportion of their income, in the form of rent, to offset those deficits on the buildings?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, at the present time the government has no plans to change that relationship, that 25 percent income contribution by the seniors.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Will the committee please come to order for consideration of estimates.

**Department of Education**

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I have a list of hon. members who were recognized the last time the committee sat to study the Department of Education. The hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway.

MR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Chairman, I would like to add my congratulations to the Minister of Education to those of members who congratulated him the last time the estimates were discussed in the House. I believe the hon. minister has continued to show excellent leadership in his department, a department that has such a major influence on our children and youth throughout all corners of the province.

I have a number of comments and questions for the minister. First of all, Mr. Chairman, I believe the initiative of implementing grade 12 governmental examinations has been lauded by students, parents, and teachers.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Could we have some order, please.

MR. PAPROSKI: I know concerns have arisen on the first set of these exams. However, as an educator and a counsellor I believe they are indeed long overdue. I believe the implementation initially caused some consternation, frustration, and disappointment on behalf of students and teachers. But I know future exams will definitely cause less concern, at least through my experience as a part-time counsellor presently at a high school level. I believe their impact should strengthen education in this province and satisfy, for educators, students, and parents, concerns regarding standards and curricula.

On a second issue, Mr. Chairman, I believe a review of the School Act is long overdue and I'm sure will strengthen education in this province as well. I ask the minister to consider implementation of separate elections for school trustees. It is sad that so little attention is given by the general public to the election of public guardians of the education purse. One simply has to look at the turnout of electors on election day for school trustees to see the lack of interest. I trust the minister and his committee will review the pros and cons of separate elections for school trustees, and I hope that indeed they could be considered.

Another area I'm very interested in is counselling generally in schools throughout the province. As a counsellor I believe there is a need for a further injection of more counsellors and counselling staff at all levels, from kindergarten to grade 12: at the elementary level to work extensively with parents, students, and teachers in the prevention of the onset of so many educational concerns; at the junior high level to help parents and students cope with the most difficult human transition stage, adolescence; and at the high school level to provide guidance, support, and assistance to students preparing for the future, whether it be postsecondary institutional training or indeed the world of work. In addition of course I believe counsellors are needed at the high school level to assist students in alleviating the many stressful situations they face in the 1980s.

Mr. Chairman, another comment pertains to the resolution this member initiated in the House last year, dealing with the implementation of computerized career counselling programs in schools. The motion was accepted in this House. I wonder if the minister could comment on the progress of possible implementation strategies.

Another issue relates to the Alexander Rutherford scholarships. I know the Rutherford scholarships are the responsibility of the Minister of Advanced Education; however, I know that the change this year, deleting Math 31 as an eligible course, has upset a number of Kingsway residents. Would the minister please attempt to have the course reinstated in the future, if possible, so Math 31 can be used as a required course for the Alexander Rutherford scholarships?

My final comment deals with a very topical issue throughout the province; that is, school closures. Mr. Chairman, school closures have caused so much upset and anger throughout this province. I highly recommend a complete review of school closure policy and guidelines for the entire province. I know Kingsway residents are very unhappy about the closure of St. Rita school by the Edmonton separate school system and by the proposed closure of Sherbrooke school under the jurisdiction of the Edmonton Public School Board. In my estimation, school closures are a retrograde step for city communities. Closures have a horrendous impact on community spirit and morale as well as on the financial stability of communities. I appeal for a review of school closure guidelines, to stress alternative school use even more clearly — closing part of a school, as an example, and many other alternatives that have been discussed in this House.

I applaud the minister once more. I wish him well in his future endeavours, and I praise him for the estimates he's presenting here today.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: May the committee revert to introduction of visitors by the hon. Member for Wainwright?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and to members of this Assembly 31 grade 8 students from the Blessed Sacrament school in Wainwright. They are accompanied by teacher Mark Swanson and by parents Mrs. Sheila Whaley and Mr. Steve Pioker, who is an old golfing buddy of mine. They are seated in the members gallery, and I would like them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

#### head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

##### **Department of Education** (*continued*)

DR. CARTER: Mr. Chairman, my comments with respect to the Department of Education relate to a number of issues with respect to native education in the city of Calgary and throughout the province. Through you to the minister, Mr. Chairman, in giving an overall response to members' questions and comments, I wonder if he might take some time to give the Assembly an update with respect to the operation/implementation of the Northland School Division Act and whether there has been a full participation rate in each of the isolated communities with respect to the new structure of education committees within the community. That would be on an individual community basis, but perhaps the minister would also be good enough to supply some information as to the overall operation of the board throughout the whole Northland area. I would be very concerned to know that the board has been meeting on a very regular basis and that there has been full attendance by members from the various communities. I have a concern that with the operation of the new system, some of the communities might not be participating in the total operation of the Northland school area. I'd be interested in the minister's comments.

The other area with respect to native education is in the urban areas. Perhaps the minister would be good enough to give us some update as to the present status with respect to the system in Edmonton in particular. The minister and I have had some conversation with respect to the Plains Indian Cultural Survival School and the matter of the exam process throughout the province. Would the minister be good enough to state for the record his position with regard to the more mature students at the Plains Indian Cultural Survival School taking exams, and in particular the demarcation line between students who are taking a general course diploma as opposed to those who intend to go on to the college or university levels.

There have been a number of motions introduced to the Assembly — and I'm quite certain the Minister of Education has taken note of the motions and as much of the debate as possible — which reflect upon the further training and preparation of not only our students but the teachers throughout the province so they're better prepared to deal with the challenges and the impact, not only the future impact but the immediate impact, of high technology. As other members of the Assembly have pointed out, one of the great difficulties we have with respect to our present education system is that we're caught in

transition between those of us who were raised 'B C', before computers, and those who were through the system or are currently in the system after the introduction of computers on such a massive scale. It's in this area of course that the minister deserves compliments. In the past number of years, he got out there on a limb and got a fair amount of flak delivered to him with respect to the introduction of computers into the school systems. But I for one applaud him for the fact that he got out there and got the introduction under way. We know full well that in this day and age, advancement in technology in computer systems happens at an astronomical rate of speed. I commend the minister and the department for having got on with it. I understand we are acknowledged as being one of the jurisdictions throughout North America which has the largest number of microcomputers in place in the schools.

I wonder if the minister might comment as to what future plans he and his department have with respect to that whole area of computer technology, the matter of software development within the system, or the purchase of software programs from other jurisdictions. I understand that a considerable amount of educational software development packaging has taken place in California, and I wonder if the minister has some comments in that regard.

One of the other areas of course is the matter of alternative schools, in particular the Jewish schools in Calgary. I wonder if the minister would be good enough to comment on how he sees the developments that have taken place. My understanding is that those two schools in particular, under the care of the Jewish community, are now going to be moved over to the separate school board in the city of Calgary. What are the ramifications of that from a financial point of view? And what are the ramifications, Mr. Minister, with respect to you and the department? Again in that area. I know the minister has been having a number of discussions with the public and separate school systems in the city of Calgary. I wonder if we might have any further developments given to us with respect to the Logos school situation in Calgary itself.

One of the areas I know is being put under consideration is with respect to the matter of teacher development. It's an interesting kind of relationship which must be there between the Minister of Education and the Minister of Advanced Education with respect to in-course training and additional course training, as was raised in the Legislature yesterday with respect to one of the Bills. It strikes me as being very difficult to build a positive relationship between having the Department of Advanced Education in charge of teacher training and the Department of Education having to be the recipient of persons who have been trained within our system as well as from other provinces. In that regard I hope the minister is in ongoing communication with his colleague the Minister of Advanced Education with respect to course development in our universities, which in turn will pick up this whole matter of the high-tech revolution as well as microcomputers. I'm given to understand that one of our problems in the system is that we lack a sufficient base of teachers who are adequately trained and aware of the challenges there, which have really been dropped upon us and which we have to respond to immediately.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. NELSON: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to take just five or six minutes to discuss some of the positive areas and some of the areas of concern in Calgary McCall. I'd like to congratulate the minister and his department, because in general terms they have been looking after our constituency quite well over the years. It should be noted that we have some 23 schools in place now. One of them, Clarence Sansom in Pineridge, is having

an official opening next Wednesday during Education Week. We have another two schools under construction which will be ready in the next year or so.

I would like to identify just a couple of areas that the minister might possibly be able to give us some direction with. First of all, we've recently discussed the area of back to the basics of education. Many people discuss this, but they don't know the meaning of it. What is the definition of back to the basics? I think we as the government should give a definition so the teachers, students, and parents can identify what we're referring to as basic education.

We in Calgary McCall have certain needs, with the great number of people who live there and of course the great number of students. Something in the area of 35,000 to 40,000 people under the age of 18 live in this constituency. Of course the needs will be to be ongoing. Concerns have been raised many times with reference to educating our young people in the ages of kindergarten to grade 6. They're concerned that their children have to be bused out of the community. Unlike many other communities in the city, where there are concerns of school closures, we have the opposite concern. Especially for those very young children, the parents are extremely unhappy about them having to be bused. There are suggestions that possibly additional portables could be supplied to existing schools. Of course land is still set aside for additional development of new schools.

There is a growing concern in Calgary McCall because of the large numbers of students with special needs such as learning disabilities, the bright and gifted, and also those who wish to have a religious portion placed into their educational needs. Again, I guess we can look at the Logos situation in Calgary. We certainly have a great deal of need for these various areas in Calgary McCall. A possible suggestion may be that we should examine the manner in which the school boards collect taxes from the local taxpayer. Maybe it could be dispersed in a different fashion so that these special groups pay their taxes to the area of their special need. That being the case, if revenues were to change from the so-called need of the Calgary Board of Education, maybe they would be more sympathetic to the needs of some of the special-interest groups that wish to educate their children in a different fashion or at least in a more disciplinary area.

There doesn't appear to be any reduction of students or future students in our area, so I think all our schools will be full for some period of time.

At this particular juncture, I guess I should again bring up the issue of the development of a high school on the east side of the city of Calgary. Interestingly enough, the only high schools on the east side of Calgary are Forest Lawn in the public system and Father Lacombe in the separate system. Yet on the east side of town, we have something in the order of 25 percent of the population and no high school. Much concern has been debated over this issue for some time. I have a feeling that the residents of the community, now that their minds are off other things, are going to be pressing more diligently and possibly expressing their views more openly in the near future. The high school is an extremely important part of this community. With this large number of students in a constituency that actually grew by 1,400 to 1,600 people last year, we would certainly appreciate consideration again of this high school.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to make one further comment with reference to the community school program developed by this government and the minister. I recently attended a session in Dr. Egbert school with a group of people from community schools throughout the province. I have never seen a group of more enthusiastic people trying hard to recognize the needs of



the school, the community, and the education system. We need to give these people in these community schools every encouragement, as I know the minister is doing, and develop additional support for other community schools. I would like to see community schools developed in the Abbeydale community of McCall constituency and also in the community of Falconridge-Castleridge. These are communities with low- to middle-income people. At the same time, I think they need the support of the community and the school together to assist them in continuing the efforts they are trying to make within those communities. Those are two areas of recommendation I would like the minister to consider.

All in all, though, I think we have a pretty good education system. We have some very, very dedicated people in the schools in Calgary McCall, dedicated in the manner of educators, students and, of course, parents. We support those people educating our children in McCall, as I am sure everyone else in the province does. I just ask that we continue the encouragement that's given from the minister and his department.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MRS. FYFE: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to make a couple of very brief comments. Firstly, I would like to commend the minister for the initiatives he has taken in a very wide area of endeavour. I am sure there are people who wonder how he can keep himself wrapped around so many different areas. He does a commendable job. I have the privilege of working with him on several committees, and I really appreciate the energy he brings to his portfolio and the tremendous contribution he's making in the field of education.

I would like to express one area of concern I have that comes to me from probably a variety of different sources. It relates to children who fall into the category of mild learning difficulties. These are often the children who are not analyzed or evaluated to have severe difficulties. They are not allowed to go to special classrooms, yet they are not functioning in what we would term a normal classroom. In my terminology, I would say these children tend to fall through the cracks of our school systems. I think there is a fair number of these students, and I would like to see a greater emphasis in trying to assist these children.

I know some of the private schools, such as the Evelyn Unger school, have been able to take a few. But there are some who fall in between those who would be admitted to the special programming and those who will probably learn in spite of what happens within the classroom. I have a very serious concern. I think we've done a lot in the areas of special needs; now we are moving in the gifted. We have made significant progress with those children with special needs. But in my opinion, there is still that black spot, those few children, that small percentage, who are still not well addressed as far as being able to develop their potential. I ask that the minister and his department take special consideration of this group, to ensure that all children in the province have fair and equal access to education.

I would like to conclude by complimenting the fine people in the school systems in Alberta. I've had the opportunity over the last year and a half to meet a wide variety of educators, school trustees, and resource persons, and I think we can be very proud of the attitude and energy these many people bring to the education system. We are fortunate in our province to have a top education system. We are always striving to improve in areas that are identified. I would just conclude by complimenting the people who spend their lifetimes and make a tremendous commitment to education in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton Belmont.

MR. SZWENDER: Thank you for your patience, Mr. Chairman. I was [distracted] somewhere else, doing a little bit of political discussing about the future outcome of some ridings in the province.

First of all, I would like to commend the Minister of Education for the fantastic job he's doing. I'm sure he knows that, and he usually lets everyone know he is doing a fantastic job. As a new member of this caucus, I am certainly glad to be able to do my share, particularly as a member of the education caucus, which is being more than adequately chaired by the hon. Member for St. Albert. It's indeed a pleasure to work with the chairman and other members of that committee, who I think are working extremely well in co-ordination with the minister and have a number of ideas and projects under way.

I would just like to point out to the minister that I am extremely pleased with some of the innovative changes being introduced and brought about in this term, particularly the minister's secondary review policy committee. I wondered if the minister could indicate just a rough idea of when he thinks the recommendations of that committee could be implemented.

There is also a committee of which I am a part; that is, the School Act revision committee. We will be looking at that over the next 18 months and will hopefully have the changes and the final Act ready for 1986. I believe there is also work being done on the Teaching Profession Act, as well as some major policy directives in the area of evaluation. I wonder if the minister can indicate what the response has been to his evaluation policies and whether there have been any initial signs of success at this point.

I would like to again compliment the minister on the introduction of departmental exams for high school students, as a prerequisite to graduation from high school. I know the first set of exams were administered at the end of the first semester in January '84. I believe some of the marks were disappointing, at least in some areas of response. I wonder if the minister could once again give his view of the level of those marks, whether he sees a need to change the format of the exams, whether he is satisfied with the present format, or whether he has any other plans in terms of future departmental exams.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would just like to bring to the attention of the minister something that has been annoying me for quite some time. This is the number of people in the teaching profession who have jumped on the bandwagon over the issue of nuclear disarmament, peace, and things like that. I think they have in many cases carried this far too deeply into the classroom, and the Department of Education has to take a firm position on this, in the sense of a directive. The principles and initiatives are good, but when people start taking personal involvements and commitments in some of these movements or pseudo movements — I think it's more of a fad that anything else, because everyone else is doing it — I'm certainly concerned about the effect this may have on students in the long run, particularly when a lot of doom and gloomers are raising almost paranoid fears about the eventual destruction of this planet and all the people on it.

I can think of no better indication of that kind of misleading and harmful propaganda than the latest issue of the *ATA Magazine*, which I'm sure the minister has seen. That's the March-April issue of the *ATA Magazine*, which usually has a more than adequate, high standard of content. I was extremely disappointed that almost the whole issue was dedicated to what seems to be an obligation on the teacher's part to spread fear and doom and gloom about the eventual destruction of this

planet. I think there was only one article in this magazine that showed that teachers have only one role in the classroom, and that is to teach a balanced effect of the material, of anything they present in the classroom, not a one-sided or biased view as to their own personal interpretations.

I have taught grade 12 for many years in the past, and certainly one part of the grade 12 curriculum was teaching the effects of nuclear war. I've always done that without anybody prodding or encouraging me, and that was certainly just done as a matter of information. I would like to emphasize once again to the minister that I believe introducing studies of this kind prior to grade 12 would be highly harmful and detrimental to students. In the present curriculum, the content is limited to grade 12, and I encourage the minister to ensure that this isn't changed in the future.

I know there was a lot of negative reaction to the film *The Day After*, a film on nuclear holocaust, and there were all kinds of reports of children having trouble sleeping. In fact there were all kinds of advertisements on television prior to the airing of that program, that children shouldn't watch it alone because of the effects it might have on them. I think that's a pretty good indicator of the effects of that kind of a program, which is indeed the kind of material that would be introduced in the classroom. I'm really worried that too many members of the teaching profession are on this bandwagon of nuclear disarmament, nuclear holocaust, and all the ill effects of it. I really request that the minister look at this carefully and examine the future curriculum and be very careful as to how those changes are brought about.

With those words, I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to quickly pose four or five questions and areas of concern to the minister. First of all, I note that the white paper on school library policy has recently been released. I think the initial reaction to that paper is good. I wonder if the minister could outline in his remarks the process whereby this paper will be dealt with and the policies or modifications thereof implemented in the school systems of the province.

Secondly, I would like to add to the remarks of other hon. members my support of the diploma examination program. I think it has been generally well received. Certainly the added preparation and statistical follow-up his department has provided to the schools are very well thought out and well received. However, I do have a major concern with respect to the outcome of these examinations. I ask the minister whether the department is going to be providing guidelines to superintendents and school boards on the interpretation of the results that students achieve on these examinations.

I would like to use just one illustration among several I could give. I note that in one small school jurisdiction near my constituency, the marks were somewhat lower on average than in neighbouring jurisdictions. Immediately there was a rush to look for the reason, and the attention seemed to focus on the quality of the teachers, the management of the school board, the function of the superintendent, and so on. I think that if you look at the size of the jurisdiction and the rather narrow scope of the programs they're able to offer, you would find the major reason for these results. In a school where only one stream of English can be offered, say English 30, and students are taking that subject or nothing, as opposed to most of the schools of this province, where there are streams of English 13, 23, and 33 and English 10, 20, and 30, there is bound to be a significantly different mix of students in those classes and consequently a marked difference in performance. I really suggest that consideration be given to at least a set of guidelines

that could be sent to superintendents and school boards across the province on matters that should be considered when these results are being analyzed and interpreted.

Thirdly, Mr. Chairman, I note that there is some concern about the rate of curriculum change. I believe it has slowed down for the current year, but I wonder if he could quickly outline if there are any major changes coming through this year and, also under this topic, if he would comment on the likely cost of implementing the new health curriculum at the elementary level. I have had some expressions of concern about the avowed cost being extraordinarily high in this particular case.

Mr. Chairman, I have also noted that there is provision in the budget for a moderate amount of additional money for in-service activity in the schools of the province. I wonder when we might expect an announcement on the details of this program and what provision there might be in the guidelines for applying this money, to ensure that all parties concerned are being involved in the decision-making whereby this money would be utilized.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I have a major concern with respect to the very important activity of the School Act review. I have looked over the paper that has been distributed, outlining numerous issues that have come up under the School Act review, and I note there is no reference to the implications or the future of educational governance as it relates to the County Act. It seems to me that this is an area that should be examined in the review. This takes in a great number of school jurisdictions in the province, and I really think this should be assessed.

Perhaps there are some good, constructive changes that could be made with respect to the relative representation of towns and villages versus the rural areas on school boards. There seems to be little reason for an impediment in the road of a board of education approving its own budget. I think the issue sometimes raised over tax collection is a red herring and that really, if it meant that a school board had to collect the taxes for its own budget, so be it. Certainly the county system is functioning well in many areas, particularly for municipal purposes, and there is a need for close liaison between school and municipal functions. But I would like to see this topic added to the review of the School Act. I know it also bears upon the Department of Municipal Affairs, and perhaps a survey of elector preferences or something of that nature could be done. The result might well be very supportive of the county system, or it might suggest some constructive changes.

Those are my remarks, Mr. Chairman. I would like to add, along with the other members, that I feel the minister is a very hardworking and accessible Minister of Education. I also agree with the Member for St. Albert that commendation should be given to the people in the school systems in the province, particularly the teachers and, I think, a very good group of students who are doing well in the schools of the province.

MRS. KOPER: Mr. Chairman, first I would like to commend the minister on the intensive review he has taken of our system and the reports being generated from that. I feel that educational initiatives will arise from them that will do us in good stead.

I have five areas I'd like to address, and I will be as brief as possible. The first one, of course, is computers in schools. In our area of Calgary Foothills, the educators feel very strongly that there soon must be some sort of philosophical stance and some direction given to the program because of the wide proliferation of not only the type of hardware in the program but the languages that are being used. From our discussion on computers and computer literacy within the constituency, the problem has arisen of inner-city and small schools that cannot

possibly generate funds for their computers. Because of this, some of these schools fall increasingly behind in their purchase of this type of hardware and the program they can subsequently offer, and a bigger gap arises between the schools that can afford things and the schools that cannot.

I am not sure, but I wonder if the minister could please comment on whether he thinks there should be unequal funding in order to provide equal opportunities in education for some children. It also would be great to eliminate bake sales. I think perhaps we should support our road building by bake sales and support primary educational adventures or progress through the budget.

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

I also feel that school closure will not necessarily eradicate the problem of unequal education for children. The clientele will then be spread even more thinly over a greater area and could still be labelled as children of the poor, because they can't possibly afford to contribute to the funding needed for the kinds of programs that are offered in higher economic areas.

A second problem, and it can be illustrated best by the introduction of computers to the system, is the continuity between elementary, junior, and senior high. For example, elementary schools in Calgary have many computers, and many of them were funded through the educational opportunity fund. It appears that when they move to junior high, there is not as much accessibility to computers in that particular program. When they get into senior high, the computers are almost totally dedicated to some specialized field, such as business education, and very often — but I must say all too rarely — to mathematics and science. I think we really need to know where we are going in computer technology, and I am glad to see this in the budget, Mr. Minister. We have too big an investment now, and I don't think it should get any larger before we adopt a common language so the children in our schools will have some level of accomplishment in this area.

The second item I'd like to address is early childhood services. Because of the distinct funding procedures and mechanisms of this program, it's developing into an entirely independent empire, rather than an integral part of the school system. Are any changes that would bring this program closer to the total system contemplated in this funding structure? It is interesting that your department, in discussing the library paper, was unable to talk about any initiatives whatsoever being made in the early childhood program, in developing any help or assistance or guidance in libraries for children under the age of six.

The third item has to do with local autonomy. I believe your management and finance plan that was introduced is most commendable in that it does enhance local responsibility, their discretion, their flexibility. As well, I think it permits a focus on objectives, not processes. In Calgary, however, it has come to our attention that the educational opportunity fund is being withdrawn from the junior high school. At Senator Patrick Burns school in Calgary Foothills, we have a program called Bearspaw North, which has been most helpful throughout the northern part of the city in addressing problems of adolescents that are having difficulty either settling down to school or with their school program. With this program possibly being terminated at the end of the year, there is a problem in our community. Parents really don't know what they are going to do, and schools are concerned because this resource will no longer be available. I wonder if the minister could comment as to the extension of the educational opportunity fund program at both the elementary and junior high school levels.

The last point is regarding community schools. I believe the kind of joint co-operation between the departments of government that is needed for this program is really vital in all areas of education. It's not only the provincial government but the city government. By encouraging this, I think we could also introduce far more community schools into our system and save money on some of the past ventures that are proving most costly at this date. I'm thinking of community centres versus a school that is the centre of the community.

In closing, Mr. Minister, I really appreciate the vision you show in your role as minister. I think it's exemplified by your position in your original opening remarks, the talk about what we want for our children in the future. I heartily endorse your path.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. TOPOLNISKY: Mr. Chairman, I have a three-part question to the Minister of Education. It stems from an ASTA zone three meeting with some MLAs. Firstly, define a community school. Secondly, are community schools on the increase in the province? Thirdly, why is funding in support of community schools frozen by the Department of Education for the year 1984-85?

Finally, Mr. Chairman, since agriculture is our basic industry, I recommend that the minister consider implementing a curriculum in agriculture in the junior high schools in the province.

MR. LYSONS: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to address a few points to the minister.

AN HON. MEMBER: Briefly.

MR. LYSONS: Briefly, as I'm reminded.

One thing my constituents have asked me to have you clarify is back to the basics. What do we mean by back to the basics, and why do we have such difficulty establishing what that really means?

MR. MARTIN: Building on the basics.

MR. LYSONS: Another thing that has long bothered municipalities in transporting children to schools is the cost. Many of the municipalities have asked us over the years to have you work with the Provincial Treasurer to allow school buses, in rural areas particularly, to use purple gas, because they are really an agricultural vehicle.

One of the frightening things that seems to be bothering parents is the use of calculators in schools. A lot of the children really can't add, calculate much in their heads, without having a calculator. There's an alarmed feeling out there that we're taking away one of the very substances of life by not having people make commonsense decisions in their heads.

Another factor that has bothered many of our people is that there is really too much emphasis put on the school system as such and not enough on the parental system. It seems that some schools are ready to go ahead and bring in any program at all that suits the particular board or school system, as long as they can get funding on it. It gives a sort of competitive edge, if you like, and children will want to go to one school versus another because of a certain program.

It's felt that about 10 percent of the children are high achievers, and of course we should cater to high achievers. About 10 percent are underachievers. We should put some emphasis on that as well, naturally, but not have the entire school system and basic education undermined for the sake of those that are

better learners or those that are poorer learners. We should have some sort of a meeting of the minds and a practical approach to this.

Last Sunday I attended the opening of a new addition to St. Jeromes school in Vermilion. It's a separate school, a religious school. It's one of the very, very better schools. They teach a number of different subjects I'd like to see in all our schools, and one of them certainly is religion. It seems that religion has been driven out of the school for the sake of some of the more artsy things. If we're going to get back to basics, I think we should get back to real basics. It's been a big concern.

One of the ways I think we could get back to basics, Mr. Minister, is to take a look at where a lot of us have come from. If we look around this Legislature, we'll find that many of the members here attended one-room country schools or multigrade schools where they had one teacher. If you had a child in a lower grade who couldn't understand something the teacher was teaching, there would certainly be a child in a higher grade who could probably help that child.

It's interesting to see some of the numbers in this little survey I did. One of our members attended a school where the grades from 1 to 9 were taught. There was one teacher and 54 students. The member is a very successful person in his own right, as well as being a member of this Legislature. There are all kinds of people sitting here today that have gone through this system. I'm not so sure we shouldn't take a look at the multigrade schools.

Lastly, Mr. Minister, I'd like to congratulate you and those people involved in having students travel from all over Alberta to look at the China trade show. This was just an amazing thing, and the students and teachers really appreciated it. One of the comments that came from that particular visit to Edmonton by a few of my students was that they wondered why some of the city students shouldn't be able to come out to the country and visit their farms, if we could have a reciprocal program where city students would visit their counterparts in the country and learn more about rural life and agriculture. As the Member for Redwater-Andrew has pointed out, we should have agriculture taught in our schools again, because that's certainly our basic industry in this province and one that is going to sustain this province for the decades to come.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, my colleague has already dealt with a number of issues. I won't repeat those, except to deal with what I think is a very crucial question, the government's response to the Minister's Task Force on School Finance. I might just say that after the government took over in 1971, we saw some progress being made for a few years. More and more, the government seemed to recognize that they had a broader responsibility for the financing of education. By 1975 a significant percentage of the cost of education was actually borne by the provincial government. What has occurred since that time has been a slow erosion of the percentage of funding by the province. More and more, the burden has been passed to local school divisions, who have to use the supplementary requisition as a means of financing their share of education.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Legislature from the Peace district have traditionally met once a year with the zone one trustees. Traditionally, the zone one trustees outline very clearly to us the problems with the current funding formula. On a number of occasions, Mr. Minister, we could say the issue of funding education was under review. I distinctly remember matters relating to the funding of education being raised in this House in the question period or during discussion of departmental estimates. The minister would always reply in a very

firm way that the matter was under review by the Minister's Task Force on School Finance.

At least it was a plausible answer, because we had this august committee or task force representing the municipal districts, counties, the ASTA, the ATA, the Alberta union of municipalities — a broad range of groups studying the question of financing education. So it was at least a plausible argument three or four years ago or during the course of some of these questions to say: well, we have the matter under review.

I might also point out that when we had the Calgary school strike a few years ago, the government's response was to appoint the Kratzmann commission. The commission made recommendations that related to education financing, class size, and that sort of thing. The government didn't like those recommendations, so we had the Minister's Task Force on School Finance.

Having reviewed the Minister's Task Force on School Finance, Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that we have to have some clear indication from this government as to what they are going to do about Recommendation 3, that

The provincial share of total schooling costs should be targeted towards providing an average of approximately 85% of the total expenditures of all school boards in the province, leaving an average of ... 15% to be raised by local supplementary requisitions.

Our figures indicate that the provincial share is now about 67 percent. As I mentioned before, the share was nearly 80 percent in 1975. What the minister's task force is suggesting is that we try to achieve an objective of about 85 percent. Mr. Chairman, I just have to say to members of the committee that I believe the task force recommendation is an excellent one. I hope we would have some indication from this government as to what they're going to do on implementing Recommendation 3. The minister can talk about the other recommendations in the task force, but I'm concerned about Recommendation 3, which is the 85 percent target figure.

Mr. Chairman, the fact of the matter is that Albertans now are paying for the cost of education. But because of the disparities in the tax bases in this province, the burden of picking up that 33 percent which is now raised by local supplementary requisition, or at least by other than provincial funding, is not fairly distributed. If some districts have a good deal of industrial assessment within their jurisdiction, it is easier for them to raise a supplementary requisition than other districts where they don't have the industrial base.

We've had recommendations over the last dozen years that have ranged all the way from a system of divvying up the industrial tax base and sharing that among the municipal jurisdictions in the province, but we haven't seen any action, Mr. Chairman. The net result is that for the areas of the province that don't have the tax base, Mr. Minister, the burden of providing decent education is becoming extremely onerous. I'm sure the minister has to be getting this from the trustees' association. Certainly as a Peace River member of this House, when I meet with zone one that is the comment that comes through very clearly. They want action on what they consider redressing educational funding disparities in such a way that the burden falls unfairly on those areas of the province that don't have an adequate tax base.

While my colleague has dealt and, I think, will deal in his comments with a range of other educational issues. Mr. Chairman, I just have to stand in my place during these estimates and urge the government caucus not to simply review and then shelve once again the issue of educational financing but to get on with the job of implementing recommendation 3 of the Minister's Task Force on School Finance.

MR. MARTIN: I won't be long, Mr. Chairman. I did have a number of remarks before, but I'd like to come to another couple of issues that have come up since the estimates, one that actually came up during the estimates. The first one has to do with evaluation. If you recall, I believe the minister had given out the paper the day we were into Education estimates. I would just like clarification on some things. I think this is probably the appropriate time to take a look at and ask some specific questions. I know the minister would like to clarify if there is some confusion.

First of all, generally I have no quarrel about Provincial Evaluation Policies as a general document. Most people I've talked to in both jurisdictions think that generally it's a reasonable document. But I would like clarification in a couple of areas. To begin with, there seems to be some concern or lack of understanding in teacher evaluation. I look first of all on page 4 and under policy guidelines, number 2, which says:

Each school jurisdiction will develop and adopt written policies, guidelines and procedures in keeping with the intent of provincial policies, guidelines and procedures.

Then it says:

These policies, guidelines and procedures will be a matter of public record, upon request. Alberta Education will assist school jurisdictions . . .

Because it seems to be a contradiction, the concern I have is that this could possibly lead to sort of a scattergun approach in terms of evaluation. There might be a different level, if you like, of evaluation depending on which board you're in. What I'm saying is that board A may develop certain guidelines and board B may develop guidelines that are entirely different. That's not in itself necessarily bad. But when we talk about equality of education for all people, I think we would have to have some control over that. I'm sure the minister has thought about this, and perhaps he can enlighten us on that.

The other one I don't quite understand is number 3, where it says:

Alberta Education will not hear any appeals from individual teachers . . .

By that, I take it that Alberta Education does not want to be involved, that the appeal procedure is within the local board itself or through the ATA. I think they may want to think about that. Maybe I could talk individually with the minister about that at some point. But I take it that's the intent of that guideline.

Going along in the evaluation, the other where I have some [inaudible] and perhaps the minister will explain — I pointed out about the scattergun, but when I look at program evaluation, number 2 under the guidelines says:

Alberta Education is responsible for conducting evaluations of provincial programs.

That seems to be somewhat of a contradiction, but maybe the minister can — is Alberta Education responsible or are the boards responsible? Is this just being done at their request, or is it going to be automatic that Alberta Education is going to do this? I think that goes all the way through — Alberta Education is going to conduct — so I don't need to go through each one of them.

The other question I have of the minister has to do with points brought up under the guidelines in both school system evaluation and school evaluation. It's the eighth point, where it says:

Alberta Education will conduct school evaluations when it is deemed by the Minister to be desirable and in the . . . public interest to do so. These reports will be released at the discretion of the Minister.

My question is, what would make it desirable? What would cause the minister to want to do this? Would it be complaints

from parents or what? And if Alberta Education is doing this, why not just make it public? We're all involved in public education, and certainly the best evaluation is if it is made public. I'm saying why only "at the discretion of the Minister"? Perhaps the minister can give me a good reason for that.

The other areas I want to talk about have to do with evaluation. I understand that private schools will be included under the new evaluation. Perhaps a slight thing, but for clarification — the government expects school boards to develop evaluation policies and procedures, but school boards don't necessarily exist for private schools. My question is, who is going to develop the policies for private schools? Is it Alberta Education?

The other area — and it's just a bit of a concern to do with student evaluation — has to do with the high school diploma examinations program. I understand we're into 50 percent departmentals. One of the areas we've been trying to do since the '60s, as I'm sure the minister is aware, is to educate all students. I think the fear many people have is that perhaps we're developing a two-tiered system, that the better education is if you do the departmentals, and perhaps that's meant to be. There might be some pressure to get students who aren't at that academic level to take those examinations simply because they feel they're getting a second-grade education if they don't. Frankly there are many students who are not academic students and probably should not be taking those exams. I would like the minister to comment on the possibility of a two-tiered system.

I see that the Member for Edmonton Belmont is back, Mr. Chairman, and the only other comments I want to make have to do with his comments. He and I must have read a different *ATA Magazine*. When I went through those articles, I do not think they were saying to take one side or the other. When I read those articles, what they were basically talking about was that this is an important issue to students. Whether we like it or not, whether the television scared students or not, the fact is that it is a major issue with young people. If the minister has gone to classrooms and talked to students, as I expect he has, one of the first things they ask me at least is about the peace issue.

The thrust of what that *ATA Magazine* was trying to do is: perhaps we should look at it. I'm sure the Member for Edmonton Belmont talked about it. I'm not sure what his views are, but I'm sure he talked about it. Because the possible destruction of all mankind is the major issue of the day, they were saying that perhaps we should look at it in a more organized way. That's not to say it shouldn't be taught in a balanced view. I have taught social studies also. I agree with the Member for Edmonton Belmont that different viewpoints about all issues should be taught, but that does not mean it should not be part of the curriculum. The hon. Member for Edmonton Belmont and the Minister of Education are well aware that some teachers will teach it and others won't. We all know that. What they were saying is that it is the major issue of the day: it certainly is in the relevance of the students. If the destruction of mankind is not the most relevant issue to people. I don't know what is. What they are saying very clearly is that because of that maybe we should take a look.

I say to the hon. Minister of Education, from question period the other day, there has been a change in people's perceptions over the last 15 years. I think we were very worried about the cold war at one time. Then after the Cuban missile crisis, there seemed not to be so much worry about it, and it wasn't as relevant. But lately there has been much discussion. Whether it's TV programs, the fact that Ronald Reagan got elected, or the fact that the U.S.S.R. has gotten more militant. I can tell you that people are discussing it much more. We've had peace

rallies. I'd point out that we've had a Prime Minister—generally accepted by the Conservative Party, giving him merits—travelling around the world on world peace. We have the peace institute being set up that's probably going to be supported by all federal parties. The point I'm trying to make is that there has been a difference in the perception of the people that probably makes this a more relevant issue now than it may have been 10 or 15 years ago.

I think that's what they were talking about. Rather than taking a cheap shot at the ATA, they were trying to bring an issue to people. As I read through the article, certain people certainly had very strong viewpoints on one side of the issue or on the other, but any good social studies teacher, as the Member for Edmonton Belmont should well know, would bring up all those viewpoints when the issue is discussed. I say to hon. members that if the future of mankind is not a relevant issue to be taught in schools, I'm not sure what should be taught. It should not be done just on a hit-and-miss or scattergun basis by certain teachers. If it's important, then perhaps it should be organized as part of the curriculum. That's what they were talking about. They were not talking about taking one side or the other. Before we take cheap shots at people, I think we should get the facts about it together.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. SZWENDER: Mr. Chairman, if I could just clarify some of my comments for the benefit of the Member for Edmonton Norwood, I was not making any remarks about the peace movement or the peace initiative. I was making comments about the scare tactics used by some teachers in the classroom over nuclear holocaust and nuclear destruction. There is a difference, so I hope the Member for Edmonton Norwood would observe that. I'm also talking about teachers in the classroom who are active members of some of these movements. It would be the same as if I as a teacher started telling the students in my classroom that they should all be Progressive Conservatives. I would not expect to hold my job long as a professional. I think the same kind of conflict exists with teachers who are active in the peace movement or the antinuclear holocaust movement or whatever you want to call it, who are then taking those same views into the classroom and indoctrinating their students. I just wanted to clarify that for the benefit of the Member for Edmonton Norwood.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Chairman, on that point, agreed; no question there. That's not what I'm talking about. But you did refer to the *ATA Magazine* you had in front of you. That's what I was saying: that was a distortion of what they were saying in that particular magazine.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question, question.

MR. KING: We've had the questions, now we're going to try to work on the answers. I would like to begin by saying that I very much appreciate the contributions that have been made by all hon. members. I have made what I think is a diligent attempt to keep track of all the observations raised, particularly the ones to which I might respond. I've tried to keep track of the questions that have been raised, and I will try to respond to all of them. In the event that I have failed, hon. members can come to their feet when I have finished. In any case, I will carefully read the transcript of our committee proceedings, and I'll make an undertaking to get back to any members individually in the event that I don't answer their questions or respond to their concerns in the course of the next few moments.

Let me begin by making a few remarks about the governance of the school system in the province. I think it's very important that we have an idea in mind of the purpose of education, as we consider important questions about how the system should be governed. In terms of considering the purpose of education, I personally believe—and I believe this is supported by the majority of my colleagues—that we have to think of education as performing both a public purpose and a personal purpose. You can't think of education as being for the community without concern for the individual child. At the same time, you cannot think of education as being for the child without considering the needs of the community. You can't direct the system in one way or the other. You have to try to maintain a balance. In the course of maintaining that balance, there is always tension between the two different points of view. There is always tension between community interest and personal interest.

I don't believe we want an educational system that serves the interests of the state, as in the Soviet Union. At the same time, I believe we have been dissatisfied with what was partly our own experience in the late '60s and early '70s, when the idea was that the system served the interests of the "me" generation without any regard for the responsibilities of the individual to the community. So first of all the educational system has to be concerned for the individual student. It must also be concerned for the well-being of the community.

It follows from that that the responsibility of the whole system, from the Legislature and the Minister of Education down to the local school board, is to try to allocate scarce resources. We don't have enough money to do everything everyone would like to do for every child, particularly if at the same time we're also going to provide health care, roads, and cultural and recreational services. We are attempting to allocate scarce resources in the best possible way, to be as helpful as possible to as many children as possible and to the community as a whole. In doing that, there are some policies that are appropriately established at the provincial level. There are some priorities that are appropriately established provincially. There are some programs that are appropriately established provincially. But it is equally true that there are important policies, priorities, and programs that should not be established provincially. They should not be established in this Legislature or in my office or in the Devonian Building. They should be established by the local community, and that is why we have school boards. It's why we continue to need school boards. It is in the board that the community focusses its interest on the policies, priorities, and programs they believe are appropriate in their local community.

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

So you have a distribution of responsibility. Some things are the responsibility of us provincially, some things are the responsibility of the local school board. In my view, it is also true that some things are the responsibility of the local school community: the principal and his teaching staff, perhaps including the PTA or the home and school association associated with a particular school. The point I'm trying to make is that we established boards for a reason and, in this province, the community has historically supported the idea of a meaningful role for local school boards.

I was somewhat taken aback by the earlier comments made by the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood when we talked about school operations and school closures. What concept of responsibility says that the local school board should make the decision as long as it is the right decision, but we should reserve

for ourselves the right to decide whether or not we like the decision that is made locally and, if we don't like it, we'll say it was the wrong decision and correct it? Responsibility means responsibility. It means that you live with the consequences of failure; you live with the consequences of making bad mistakes as well as you enjoy the outcome of making good decisions. No one is actually exercising responsibility if I am looking over their shoulder and promising that in the event of their failure, I will step in and make it right or this Assembly will step in and make it right.

Surely the hon. member wouldn't argue that good labour relations are offered by having somebody watch over the shoulder of the union or of management and saying, when we don't like what's going on at the bargaining table, we will step in and settle your hash. I believe the right to fail is inescapable if we're going to extend to people the right to succeed. You just can't have one without the other. I believe in the right of local boards and parents to learn from experience, and I believe in their right to overcome experience and to grow in the process. In that belief, I think I am joined by the vast majority of the people in Alberta, which is honestly one of the reasons I believe there are 75 people in one caucus and two in another.

MR. MARTIN: That arrogance is going to bring changes, Dave. That arrogance is going to get changed in the next election.

MR. KING: Let's consider whether or not that is arrogance. Let's use the example of the school building funding formula, because the hon. member has a legitimate and I'm sure a sincere interest in the school closures question because of what's happening in his own constituency. I share that. We should be clear that the school building funding formula wraps up within it the school closure problem. The school building funding formula is clearly based on local decision-making, local responsibility, local priorities, and local planning. Essentially, between 1979 and 1983, we said: you can decide where to build, what to build, how to build, and when to build; you are free to make that decision; we expect you to plan, because our final support will be established three years down the road on the basis of how closely your building program corresponds to your enrollment; if you plan well, you'll get more financial support; if you plan poorly, you will get less financial support; but in any case, we leave the planning to you, we leave the decision-making to you, and you do what you think is right in the local community.

In that regard, it is important to note that there is no penalty in the program for excess space. The penalty is for underutilized space. We have simply said to school boards: if you've got empty classrooms, find another community use for them; rent them to the Edmonton dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church, to the 4-H club, the Boy Scouts, or the senior citizen quilters; we don't care what community use you make of that school space; please do not leave it empty; find a community service organization and permit them to use the space; the penalty is not for excess space; it is for underutilized space; if you don't have kids in it, find some other community group to use it.

In that respect, I think it is quite clear that leadership was offered by the Department of Education. But the point is that leadership was not imposed. Having said that we think this is the way you should go, we didn't go the additional step and say to boards: and if you don't do it, we'll step in and do it for you. I don't believe we should do that. If that is what the hon. member means by leadership, it's a concept of leadership I don't subscribe to. Did we suggest these things to them? The fact is we did.

The hon. member had five questions to ask about school closure and in point of fact, all five of them have previously been answered by initiatives of Alberta Education. First of all, he asked if we wouldn't alter the formula so there is no penalty until alternatives can be developed by the local school board. How much more time should we give them? The program is six years old now. If local school boards are prepared to accept their responsibility, perhaps the hon. member could suggest to me what is an appropriate amount of time to give them, recognizing that they have already had six years. He said we should establish a clearing house and went on to list the kinds of information we should make available to school boards in the province. All of that information is currently available from the school buildings branch of the Department of Education and from personnel in each of our regional offices, and I believe every school board in the province knows it is available.

He said we should give them some information about the alternative uses of schools, and he said that right after he had spent a few minutes describing a \$63,000 study commissioned by Alberta Education which had done precisely that. He made reference to a BQRP, building quality restoration program, modification that he thought would be a good idea. It has already been implemented. He first of all said that we should consider imaginative alternate uses of schools. He suggested the conversion of Beacon Hill school in Victoria and a school in Hamilton. He then said that school closure destroys the community. Conversion is a form of closure, and he can't have it both ways. You cannot convert Beacon Hill school into apartments and make the argument that the school still exists in the community. If he wants H.A. Gray kept open, he can't advocate that we convert it into condominiums.

He asked for another task force report. From his description of it, it seems to me that it would more appropriately be undertaken by the Alberta School Trustees' Association. I'm not sure that it is wisdom on our part that everything should be done by the Department of Education.

Because I don't want to be too argumentative and drive the hon. member to his feet again, let me turn to some other questions affecting school governance. A number of questions were asked about the review of the School Act. I would like to make only two general points and one particular point very quickly. First of all, I want to assure hon. members and the general public that neither I nor the department nor the government caucus have any hidden game plan with respect to the review of the School Act. We simply believe it is appropriate to reconsider the legislation, that it is appropriate to ask ourselves some searching questions about the continued effectiveness of the legislation.

It may well be that when we have asked ourselves these questions, we will come to exactly the same conclusion our predecessors came to 15 years ago or 50 years ago. But in my view, it is a worthwhile exercise to ask ourselves the questions again and to come to some deliberate, very, conscious decision about what we think is the right answer for Alberta in the 1980s and the 1990s. The outcome may or may not be quite different from what we have at the present time. But to the extent that it is different, that will be wholly the result of the public debate that is carried on in the community. There is no hidden game plan anywhere.

At the same time I want to say that because of the nature of the review, there is nothing that is excluded from the review. Anyone can raise any question they want to about the School Act in the province. If it is a significant issue that is meaningful to a lot of Albertans, then debate will be carried on about it. If it is an insignificant issue, not of interest to Albertans, it will die a natural death when it is exposed to the air. The questions

that are raised, the questions that survive to be debated, and the questions that die a natural death are all going to live or die on the basis of what the public thinks, not on the basis of how we are going to control or manipulate the process. In that regard, if any member or citizen of the public wants to raise the question of the separate election of school trustees, that question will be dealt with in the vein that I have just described, as will every other question.

The same is true of the future of alternate and private schools vis-a-vis the public or the separate school system. I cannot predict for any member what the future relationship of the Calgary Jewish schools to the Calgary separate school board will be, because I think that's going to be determined in the course of the debate. However, hon. members may be interested in knowing that the consultative Committee on Tolerance and Understanding released a discussion paper this morning, of which copies are now available. Their first of four discussion papers is on private education in Alberta.

I was asked for a report on the operation of the Northland School Division. I can't be specific with regard to any one of the communities, but I can say that the information I receive is that the board is operating cautiously and effectively, that they are both learning something about the process of governing the system and teaching administrators in the system something about the importance and value of political oversight. I can only say that to this point in time I am pleased with all the reports I've received about the operations of the new Northland School Division.

Questions were asked about community schools. Let me say first of all that the decision not to increase the funding for any particular community school was made for one year only. It should not be taken as a signal of the government's future intentions with regard to the community school program. The reason we made the decision this year was so we could free up some money to fund three additional designated community schools. So in fact while the funding for individual schools has not increased, there are three more schools receiving funding this year than last year. The program would ordinarily terminate next year. It had a five-year mandate. I have advised others, and will now advise the House, that it's my intention to advise my cabinet colleagues that the program be continued. I am a supporter of the program. I believe that in the vast majority of the designated community schools throughout the province very good things are happening that are well worth supporting, and they demonstrate that it is well worth while to continue the program.

Since the program's first term expires next year, the representation to cabinet about its continuation would provide an appropriate opportunity to consider the proposition raised by the hon. member from Calgary, that we might consider redirecting all or some of the funding from a specific school — if I understood her correctly — to the school board, so they could make decisions about supporting community school type activities in a greater number of the schools in their system. If that was the nature of her representation or in fact if any other representation is to be made about modifications in the designated community school program, now is certainly the time to do that, because we are considering modifications as we prepare for the submission we will make to cabinet.

Turning away from questions of governance, the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood referred to 'ad hococracy' with respect to finance. One-third of the grants to local school boards are in programs other than the School Foundation Program Fund. He is the very first person who has ever described that as a weakness of the financial program of education in this province. In fact most people who study educational finance

in this province have come to exactly the opposite conclusion. We have an educational finance model which is held up as one of the best in North America for precisely the reason the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood has described as a weakness of the program. Instead of funding all education strictly on an enrollment basis, instead of putting one hundred percent of our support into the School Foundation Program Fund, we have recognized that there are three quite different variables, each of which is critical to the successful operation of an educational system.

Some, but not all, of our financial assistance is based on enrollment. Some of it is based on offering programs. If you don't offer the programs, you don't get the financial assistance. Some of our financial assistance is based on access to resources locally. If you are a wealthy system, you get less money from the provincial government. If you are a relatively poorer system, you get more money from the provincial government. The outcome of all of that is that in a recent year one school division in the province received 93 percent of its budget from the provincial government, recognizing the variety of diverse conditions that existed in that community. Another school division received only 55 percent of its budget from the provincial government, recognizing access to far greater resources locally. Quite frankly, that's how I think it should be, and I believe a finance program that was exclusively enrollment driven would be a regressive step, not a progressive step. The fact of the matter is, to respond to a point made by another hon. member, that we do fund unequally in order to support equity. We believe we should continue to fund unequally in order to support the concept of equity.

A number of members asked about property tax and equalized assessment. The only thing I can say is that, as for you, it is a constant thorn in my side. We recognize the problems. We have made a number of attempts to net them out or to correct them by the operation of our own finance programs. We have not been as successful as we would like to be, and we are always looking for advice on how we can make them more successful. I'm sure I will hear further from the hon. Member for Barrhead.

A description of educational finance often includes some comment that provincial government support for education has eroded in the last eight or 10 years or that the province has passed a burden to local school boards. I categorically reject either of those as any kind of description of reality in this province. I can't do much more than repeat what I said the first time I spoke. This province is the most generous funder of education in the country.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood referred to a statistic, and he didn't have any attribution for the statistic. It suggested . . . Could I have forgotten to mark it? I did. He suggested that on the basis of this statistic, we were either fifth, sixth, or seventh in terms of our per capita support for education in 1982. I have not been able to find any confirmation of that statistic. Let me offer this alternative information. In 1982 Alberta expended \$657 per capita on elementary and secondary education. That placed us number one in Canada. In 1982 we were number one in Canada on the basis of per capita expenditures in education. The information is publicly available. It has been widely distributed. The hon. member has a copy of it, because he referred to it, although he didn't refer to this particular piece of information. The sources are the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada and Alberta Treasury Bureau of Statistics. Alberta Statistical Review.

A number of questions were asked about our objectives in education: for example, questions about the basics, something that I dealt with on April 13. I'll only repeat the point very



quickly. I do not think we should talk about going back to the basics, because I don't really believe that's the direction any of us want to head. I think we should talk about building on the basics. I think we want a sophisticated program; I think we want a balanced program. Aside from the review of the secondary program of studies, discussion of this question has raised some concern in my own mind about whether or not we have overloaded the elementary school curriculum. I do think that teachers, trustees, and the department are going to have to consider the question of whether or not we're attempting to do too much in the elementary school and achieving an extensive coverage at the expense of the necessary intensity of our coverage.

The educational system is partly the author of its own misfortune. The logical outcome of liberalism is the idea that education will solve all our problems. In the '50s and '60s, the community subscribed to that belief, and the educational community was more than happy to say: that's right; you give us the money and we'll solve the problem. In the '50s and '60s, the promise was that if you used your war on poverty to fund inner-city schools, if you used your war on poverty to otherwise support the educational system, it might take one generation or two, but education would solve all the problems of the community, and in 20 or 30 years we'd have some kind of nirvana. I'm overgeneralizing.

The essential truth is, however, that in years gone by the community was a generous supporter of education, partly because they were oversold on what it is possible to accomplish in the school system. When they realized they had been oversold on what it was possible to accomplish, they reacted against that. We are living with that reality today.

Questions were asked about a number of specific programs. Hon. members are undoubtedly aware that we have just released proposed departmental programs respecting programs for the gifted and talented and for school libraries. In the next week, we will release similar outlines for programs affecting guidance and counselling and the use of computers in the schools. As I said, I would like hon. members who have questions about either or both of those concerns to watch for the release of the action plans in the next week or ten days. In that time frame, we will also be releasing the discussion paper on teacher training, teacher education and preparation. I think that discussion paper will respond to some of the concerns raised by hon. members.

Money for the junior high school educational opportunity fund has not been withdrawn. It is still available to school boards, and in fact additional money is available to school boards. There are no strings attached to it. It becomes the responsibility of the school board to decide whether or not they will continue certain programs. But the financial assistance from the department continues to be available.

In co-operation with at least three other government departments, the department has put considerable effort into the development of a new curriculum that I think would be supported by our rural members. It is called Land and Life. The introduction of it has been deferred for financial reasons. Nevertheless, the work has been done; the curriculum has been developed. We would like to see the new Land and Life curriculum available to school boards in the province as quickly as possible, which cannot be in this budget year. As I said, if any hon. members are interested in looking at it, I'd be pleased to provide them with the information. I think they would find it a vast improvement over what is currently being used.

Let me conclude with some comments about evaluation. I've said on other occasions that I think the community is increasingly expecting that we will be able to state our objec-

tives in education, that we will be able to describe how we intend to go about achieving those objectives and that, at the end of the process, we'll be able to evaluate whether or not we have achieved those objectives. Quite frankly, I do not believe the community will support additional investments in education until we in education are able to demonstrate that we are accomplishing more when we get more resources. I think we've got to be able to do that. It's the principle reason we are giving this attention to evaluation, not only to student evaluation but to teacher, program, school, and system evaluation. We are looking to improve our performance; we're looking to be able to demonstrate to the public that we have improved our performance.

Questions were asked about the diploma examinations written in January. I think one question was: what do I judge the performance to have been? On the whole, I was satisfied with it for 1984, given the fact that it was the first writing after an absence of 12 years. I wouldn't be satisfied with it next year and, in the case of some particular examinations, I was not satisfied this year. But on the whole, I was satisfied. I am very pleased to see that we have reinstituted the examinations. I believe they're going to make a positive difference in the system.

To the extent that I was not satisfied with performance, who is responsible? All of us are. The students bear some responsibility, the teachers bear some responsibility, the Department of Education bears some responsibility, and the community as a whole bears some responsibility. You can't use the results of the examinations to point your finger at any one group. In fact the exams are not meant to allow us to decide where we're going to point fingers. The purpose of them is not to attribute blame; the purpose is to discover weaknesses so we can attend to them and improve the system. You cannot use student examinations as an indirect means of evaluating teachers and, in any case, you wouldn't want to.

In our view, we have given sufficient policy direction to local school boards that they can further develop policy locally in a way that won't provide a lot of disparity from one jurisdiction to another. Only experience will demonstrate whether we are right or wrong, but I think you will find that as policy is developed across the province, it will be remarkably similar from one jurisdiction to another, in the policy statement and in the application of the policy. Very simply, the reason we decided Alberta Education would evaluate provincial programs is because they're our programs. They are developed at the provincial level; they are prescribed at the provincial level; they are implemented locally at the direction of the provincial Department of Education. You'll see throughout the whole policy that it is predicated on the idea that the people who make the decisions do the evaluating. When decisions are made locally, the evaluation is conducted locally, under the terms of local policy. When the decisions are made provincially, as is the case with provincially prescribed programs, then in our view we are the ones who should be responsible for the evaluation.

With respect to school evaluation, the fact of the matter is that sometimes representations are made to the minister about situations in individual schools in the province which local boards either cannot or will not deal with. In that case, given the importance of the child's needs, the minister will occasionally cause evaluations to be done, investigations or inquiries into the operation of individual schools. I favour making such evaluation reports public, and I expect that in most cases we will make them public. But I am not prepared to commit myself or any future minister to the idea that they would necessarily be made public, because I can't imagine now what circum-

stances might be involved in some of these evaluations. In all of the policy, we are generally moving in the direction of making the outcome of evaluation public information. That generally would be my intention with respect to evaluations conducted by the department. But I do think it's appropriate that we leave open the opportunity that in some situations to make it public might not be a wise course of action.

The question was asked about diploma examinations in some subjects other than the ones for which they're currently available. I think there's a lot of merit to what's been advanced by the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood. We simply adopted the position that we would not make those kinds of decisions in the context of the evaluation policy, because we don't believe the evaluation tail should be wagging the curriculum dog. If in the course of reviewing the secondary program of studies we come to decisions about streams or alternatives that are available for students within the system, then we should modify our student evaluation program to conform to the curricular or program decisions we make. We did not think we should be imposing evaluation decisions on the curricular structure or the program structure.

The Department of Education will conduct the evaluation of private schools. Of course we have been doing that for as long as we have been approving private schools. The nature of the evaluation will certainly be extended and, we believe, improved in the future, but we are and will continue to be the ones who evaluate private schools.

In the event that there are any questions I failed to note, I am at the end of my notes. Hon. members can contact me afterward or, as I said earlier, I'll read the transcript.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. MARTIN: I won't go through the whole ball of wax, but I think the minister did throw out — I thought maybe I was on estimates here, and he was asking me some questions. But I would like to comment on a few things, because I think there are some contradictory things that are important to bring out, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, the idea — we talked about school closures, and we both agree. If I'm correct, I believe there are some in the minister's riding too that are in the same position as one in, mine. It is a tragedy; I won't go into all that. I say to the minister, though, that I never did say it was provincial Education. I have *Hansard* of April 13, page 473, and I said:

I look at H.A. Gray. I'm not blaming the minister specifically for which schools were closed down in Edmonton. That was a board decision, a shortsighted one . . .

And I went on.

But the point I'm making, though, is that it's all well and dandy to talk about local decision-making, Mr. Chairman. I think we both agree with that. But by the nature of the funding, certain decisions are taken away from the board. For example, the zero percent grants in the school foundation have an effect on the types of decisions the board can make. I think the minister would have to agree that who controls the purse strings has some effect, perhaps a great deal of effect, in terms of the types of decisions. It may limit decision-making at the local level to choosing between two or three or four undesirable alternatives.

But the fact is that by the decisions the provincial government is making, they are affecting those decisions. So it's not completely local decisions. That was my point. We've tried to point out that more and more local autonomy has meant they spend more on property taxes. That's been going up, and the provincial level has been going down.

The other point I make, and alluded to in the first part, has to do with one of my five points, the governing capital funding formula. Through the Chairman, Mr. Minister, what you decide on that capital funding formula will determine how many school closures there are or will at least have a bearing on it. My only point by this — and I think the minister would agree — is that it's not just local decision-making. It's at least a partnership when decisions like school closures are made, because of the financing and because of the way some of the grants are structured. I think the minister has to acknowledge that. I certainly agree that the board makes decisions on which schools and all the rest of it but, because of financial burdens, they may be caught making undesirable choices. That has to be a partnership, if you like, with the provincial government.

The other point I make in that whole area dealing with school closures, where the provincial government had an impact is that — I mentioned this before; perhaps the minister forgot about it — in the 1960s, we knew there was a flurry of building. Those were different times, and I'm not saying that decisions were made. But as I understand it, Mr. Minister, there are provincial mechanisms in place for approving and funding new schools. We had a flurry of building up to 1979, and even since 1979 some 75,000 additional pupil spaces have been built. The point is that that was through provincial mechanisms. I recognize that we now have a tremendous problem. I don't know what the ultimate answers are. I know it's very serious. I know we can't continue, and that's why I'm not saying and never said that a school closure could never occur. When we probably have a theoretical surplus of some 10,200 classrooms in the province and the cost of that is about \$765 million a year, I recognize that we have a problem.

The studies the minister pointed out are good — no denying that. But I suggest, Mr. Minister, that it's not quite as easy as saying the school board members should know about them. The fact is some of them I talked to didn't. So perhaps there's a better way of communicating that information to the board.

The other point I want to make on the whole school closure business — the minister alluded to me talking about Beacon Hill. That's correct; I did. In a sense, that was a school closure; the minister's also correct about that. I was trying to show alternatives because of all these extra spaces. But if he recalls, in the same argument I also pointed out Hamilton central elementary school, where they put the top into office space and kept the school open on the bottom. I'm talking about where feasible we keep the schools together and look at alternatives like that. Where it's just not feasible, I accept that we're going to have to do something different, and Beacon Hill is an example.

The reason I used Beacon Hill is because I'm very concerned about my community in the inner city — as I'm sure the minister is — and at least there's something appropriate to the community. If I can go back, Mr. Minister, what was happening — I don't know if it happened in your area. The people at H.A. Gray were told — it was bad enough to lose their school, and I went through the safety aspect. Again, I'm not blaming you for that. But when I asked the board what plans they had for H.A. Gray, they couldn't tell me. That's just the wrong way to go, and I'm sure the minister and I would agree. If you're going to close down a school, community participation should be involved and they should have had some alternatives. Now those people are expecting the worst: a parking lot for NAIT or to slowly deteriorate and change their community. So that's the whole point.

I know that's a combination of things, but I suggest again that while the Department of Education has excellent studies, let's at least communicate them widely. This problem is going

to be ongoing. This is just the start of it. It was more severe in Calgary. This is just the start of it, but it is going to be ongoing. So perhaps there should be communication there about it. But my point remains: finances dictate in terms of decisions. I believe that's a very valid point.

The other point the minister said had to do with my question about some \$800 million, I believe, outside the school foundation program. Mr. Chairman, I suggest we're being slightly contradictory there. If you're cutting grants at zero percent and putting money outside the school foundation program, you are in effect having a role in decision-making, because from the Department of Ed, this is somewhat taking away from local autonomy. If they want to get that money, they have to do the particular program ascribed to by your department. So that's slightly contradictory. That is somewhat a centralization. Whether it's good or bad, we could argue. But you've made the case for local autonomy many times when it was desirable to do so. I think we should be fair that that's a part of centralization. That's my point.

The other area — we're not going to agree on school finances. The minister showed his figures and said he wasn't sure where I got my figures. Being the kind person I am, Mr. Chairman, I want to give the minister this information. Basically what we were saying is that provincial funding has not kept up with inflation over the years. We used the example — we won't go into the task force at this point. But Statistics Canada, provincial and municipal finance 1983, page 60, says that in 1982-83 Alberta spent 17.6 percent of the provincial budget on education, eighth in the nation in terms of percentage expenditure. Just to compare it, from the same records, in 1981-82 Alberta spent 19 percent. So it was going down; it was seventh in the nation at that point.

The other point we're making is that education remains the largest element of the local government budgets in Alberta at 32 percent, and that's been increasing. We can play with these figures. He has figures that say they're the best; I have figures that say they are eighth. I suppose that's largely irrelevant to the majority of people out there. I think that over the years, in the '60s, education in this province has generally been well served; I'm part of it myself. But, Mr. Minister, I see a trend that worries me. That's what we're talking about. When we have zero percent grants and the latest CPI figures at 4.5 percent in Edmonton, I'm suggesting there's been a gradual deterioration.

His concept about liberalism in the '60s — I recognize that education can't solve all the problems, but I would say to the minister, what are the alternatives? He talked about the problems of poverty, inner-city deterioration, and all the rest of it. What are the alternatives then? Education isn't going to solve it all, but are the alternatives in terms of spending government money, more jails and welfare? I have figures that you and I can sit down over someday, but I can tell you this honestly:

good teachers — and we would both agree with that — and the climate they create in that school with small classes can be a significant other and can make a difference, especially at the lower level. But many of them get burned out. We either pay for it at that level, or we'll pay for it in all sorts of social deterioration later.

That's not to say there should be a blank cheque, Mr. Chairman. Nobody's ever said that. The point I'm making is that it's not saving money in the long run, because we pick it up in other areas. Even when we deal, with the foundation program ...

I would like Education to go on a little bit because I do have some more things. I know the Chairman wants me to shut up, but there are a few other educational matters I'd want ...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Chairman did not say that.

MR. MARTIN: I know he didn't, but he was trying to point out.

While I have a minute here, the other point I want to make ...

MR. CRAWFORD: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman; on a point of order. We cannot stop the clock in the committee. It can only be done in the Assembly. That obliges me to move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

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

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the report and the request for leave to sit again, does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, it's not intended that the House sit on Monday evening. In the afternoon we'll be in Committee of Supply with the estimates of the Department of Economic Development, including the Minister of International Trade as well as the Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not able to say for certain what the case will be for government business the rest of the week, but the present intention, subject to review, is that legislation, second reading of Bills on the Order Paper, might be done on Tuesday night.

[At 1 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 4, the House adjourned to Monday at 2:30 p.m.]

