

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: Tuesday, April 2, 1985 2:30 p.m.

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. SPARROW: With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity today to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, the Hon. Colin Maxwell, Minister of Parks and Renewable Resources in Saskatchewan. He met with me for the last couple of hours today to discuss Alberta's policies regarding fish and wildlife resources, and we had a great interchange of ideas. With pleasure I welcome our neighbour from Saskatchewan to this Assembly. Accompanying Mr. Maxwell is his assistant, Alanna Koch. They are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I wish they would rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

head: READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

MR. STILES: Mr. Speaker, I move that the 14 petitions for private Bills presented to the Assembly on April 1, 1985, be now read and received.

[Motion carried]

head: INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 19

Real Property Statutes
Amendment Act, 1985

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to introduce Bill 19, the Real Property Statutes Amendment Act, 1985. This being a money Bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

In 1984 Bill 89 of the preceding session was presented to the Assembly. Bill 19, presented now, is similar in most respects. But it's a substantial Bill, and I think a statement of the principles is important today. There will be several principles covered.

The procedure for applying interests registered in the general register of the Land Titles Office to property transactions has been changed in order to reduce the number of cases in which people will have to swear statutory declarations because of similar name situations.

There is also a new provision for the registration of party-wall agreements or for the registration of a declaration as to the existence of a party wall in adjoining parcels. When enacted, the statute will establish that the rights in respect of party-wall agreements run with the land.

There are new provisions with respect to the survey and registration of strata space plans and titles, providing statutory guidelines so that space within any structure can be subdivided into titles above or below ground on a volumetric basis.

There would further be an amendment to the law respecting legal actions by a person claiming an interest in land. A certificate of *lis pendens* could be filed, giving notice of the existence of the claim by registration of it at the Land Titles Office, with respect to any title with respect to which that particular legal proceeding is being carried on.

Another change, Mr. Speaker, would be to significantly increase the liability of the assurance fund at the Land Titles Office. That is provided for persons utilizing the services of the Land Titles Office who suffer some loss because of any negligence or something approaching that on the part of the registrar.

Further, a requirement of the notice of intention on occasions when a transfer is registered severing a joint title — a requirement with respect to notice of that transaction to other interested parties who are involved in the joint title — has also been proposed in this Bill.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, making assignments of rent and rights of first refusal into equitable rights pursuant to statute in order that they can be protected by caveat has also been introduced by way of this proposed Bill.

[Leave granted; Bill 19 read a first time]

Bill 36

Rural Utilities Act

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 36, the Rural Utilities Act. This being a money Bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

The purpose of this Bill is to establish a separate statute to incorporate, administer, and amalgamate the Rural Electrification Association and natural gas co-operative associations, to transfer provisions from the Co-operative Associations Act, to repeal the Co-operative Marketing Associations and Rural Utilities Guarantee Act by transferring appropriate sections, and to transfer from the Rural Gas Act certain administrative provisions which apply to natural gas co-operatives.

[Leave granted; Bill 36 read a first time]

Bill 35

Apprenticeship, Training and
Certification Act

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 35, the Apprenticeship, Training and Certification Act, which will replace the existing Manpower Development Act.

The new Act will cover designated trades and trade-related matters, while other manpower responsibilities will be transferred to the Department of Manpower Act. The purpose of the Act is twofold: first, to simplify and streamline the administration of the Act; secondly, it will clarify the roles and relationships of the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Board, local and provincial apprenticeship committees, and the department. In carrying out these changes, the first priority has been to retain the existing philosophy

of apprenticeship and trade certification and the integrity of trade requirements in Alberta.

[Leave granted; Bill 35 read a first time]

Bill 38

Vital Statistics Amendment Act, 1985

MR. WOO: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 38, the Vital Statistics Amendment Act, 1985.

The purpose of this Bill is to bring certain sections of the current Act into conformity with provisions of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and to make current other sections dealing with certain administrative functions and procedures for making regulations.

[Leave granted; Bill 38 read a first time]

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 38 be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

Bill 215

An Act to Amend the Ombudsman Act

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 215, An Act to Amend the Ombudsman Act.

This would extend the benefits of the provincial Ombudsman to municipalities on an optional basis. It has the support of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association.

[Leave granted; Bill 215 read a first time]

Bill 222

An Act to Amend the Hazardous Chemicals Act

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 222, An Act to Amend the Hazardous Chemicals Act.

This Act will compel the Minister of the Environment to establish a schedule of hazardous chemicals throughout the province. It will compel those who possess these chemicals to inform the minister within 90 days of what chemicals they have. It will further require that the best available technology be used to treat hazardous waste before it is stored or disposed of. The Bill includes penalty provisions of up to \$10,000 or six months' imprisonment.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, a complete inventory of hazardous wastes will assist the Minister of the Environment in planning his hazardous waste disposal sites by informing him of the location of known wastes to be treated.

[Leave granted; Bill 222 read a first time]

head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, I'm tabling two reports by the office of the Auditor General. They are for the Metis Population Betterment Trust Account, including the financial statement to March 31, 1984, and for the Metis Settlements Trust Fund, also including the financial statement to March 31, 1984.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I want to table or file two documents. The first one for filing is the annual report of the Crimes Compensation Board, ended March 31, 1984. The Clerk will distribute the copies that are available for all hon. members.

I hope the table whereupon the next item is to be tabled is adequate to the job. It's the response to Motion for a Return 135.

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the annual report of the Alberta Petroleum Incentives Program Fund for the 1983-84 fiscal year.

MR. CHAMBERS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the annual report of the Alberta Department of Public Works, Supply and Services for the fiscal year '83-84.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege today of introducing to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, a second group of students from the Manachaban school in Banff-Cochrane. There are 62 grade 8 students, accompanied by teachers Glyn Hughes, John Holstein, Peter Istvanffy, Ginger Hisey, and Sandra Achman, and parent Diane Petryshen. They are visiting our capital city today, having come up in a bus from Cochrane. They will be going back tonight after they visit the science centre here in Edmonton. Would the students, teachers, and parent please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to all members of the Legislature 31 vibrant and enthusiastic young people from grades 6 to 9 who have travelled to Edmonton from Meadowview. Meadowview is an agricultural community located within the county of Barrhead, and it is approximately 90 miles to the north and west of where we are today. The students are accompanied by teachers Clarence Assenheimer and Laurin Lamothe and bus driver Gary McCormick; They're in the public gallery, and I ask them to rise and receive a warm welcome from my colleagues.

MR. ALGER: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure this afternoon to assist my erstwhile colleague for Red Deer, who is very busy in Red Deer today, in performing the following very pleasant duty. I would like to introduce to you, and through you to all members of the Assembly, 26 happy, energetic, and intellectual grade 6 students from the Pines community school. They are accompanied by their group leader, Mr. Klaus Opatril; their teacher, Mrs. Eleanor Coene; and their student teacher, Miss Kelly Buday. They are seated in the public gallery, and I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

head: MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Department of Economic Development

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, in keeping with this government's avowed commitment to support and promote the development of new technology in Alberta, I am pleased today to announce three major initiatives in the field of advanced electronics. The government of Alberta will be

establishing microchip design and fabrication facilities, a telecommunications research centre, and an electronics industry information centre.

Mr. Speaker, let me take a minute to briefly describe what each facility will do and why we have decided to take a leading role in these endeavours. The design and fabrication of custom-made microchips is an integral part of the continued expansion of the electronics industry in Alberta. Recognizing this need and to assist the further growth of this industry, our government is committed to establishing design and fabrication facilities. The design centre will be located at the University of Calgary, with the fabrication facility to be located at the University of Alberta. Both facilities will be managed by the Alberta Microelectronic Centre.

We believe this initiative will significantly enhance microelectronics development in the province by providing a learning centre for the training of future engineers who will be needed as this industry continues to expand. In addition, it will provide microchip design and fabrication assistance to industry. To this end the government of Alberta will contribute a total of \$13 million for the first three years of the centre's operation.

The second initiative, a telecommunications research centre, will focus on two major areas: fibre optics to aid in electronic communication and computer-aided design of microelectronic products and services. Jointly funded with Bell-Northern Research and the University of Alberta, the research centre will be established at Bell-Northern's Edmonton facilities. The government gratefully acknowledges Bell-Northern's contribution to Alberta's future in high technology. The government will contribute \$4 million over five years to this centre, which will be unique in western Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the third significant initiative will create an electronics industry information centre. The development of electronics products is directly linked to the availability of technical information. This information is growing at an explosive rate, and at the same time development cycles are shortening, which is critical in an increasingly competitive marketplace. To further assist this industry to continue to develop advanced technology, this information centre will create a computerized network linked to an information bank. The bank will be accessible by Alberta electronics manufacturers and will therefore allow most of them all the up-to-date technical and design information available. The contribution of the government to this endeavour will be approximately \$1.5 million.

Implementation of these three initiatives will begin immediately, and operations are expected to commence this year. These are just three examples of the increasing development of advanced scientific endeavours in the electronics field in Alberta. With co-operative efforts such as these from government, industry, and the universities, Alberta can take its place in the forefront of new technology. While our agriculture and energy resources have made and will continue to make this province strong, the development of a strong and flourishing technological base will add another dimension for growth for Albertans in the international arena.

Mr. Speaker, I'm confident these three building-block initiatives will stimulate industrial growth in our province, improve job training opportunities for university and technical school students, and generate entrepreneurial opportunities. Planned as separate yet integral resource centres for our electronics industry, these three initiatives will prompt

increased investment and diversification in Alberta's economy.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, in rising to reply to the ministerial announcement, at first perusal each of these three initiatives looks worth while in our search for diversification, if I may put it that way. Obviously, however, we want to look at what it will attempt to do and what the world markets hold in this area. The minister is well aware that high technology has become a buzzword; it means almost everything. I sincerely hope this research will move us toward areas we can compete in and that we are not just following some countries which are much further advanced than we are, and we wouldn't be able to compete.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker. I commend the government. It looks good on paper, at least.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Commenting on the announcement, Mr. Speaker, high, medium, and low technology certainly should be advanced in the province of Alberta. I hope the final statement on page 3 of the announcement, where the government talks of increased diversification, is valid. We certainly need that. We have heard about increased diversification in this province since 1971. Hopefully, this statement is even more credible than the historic past.

I raise for the minister to consider somewhere in our discussions, possibly under estimates, the reason government had to step into this area to initiate these three programs. The question I raise is whether the private sector could have handled it as such. If they couldn't, why not? I'd like to hold that question at bay until we move into estimates and study the matter in greater detail.

Department of Hospitals and Medical Care

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, as hon. members are aware, a young man named Steve Fonyo will be crossing the Saskatchewan border into our province within a very short time. He is running across our nation, and his cause is that of the Journey for Lives, the medical battle society faces in combating cancer.

No one cannot be touched by the courage and determination Steve Fonyo has brought to his cause as he has crossed Canada through our bitter, cold winter. It would be extremely difficult for any person to tackle this run, without the physical disadvantage Steven Fonyo faces.

I know every member of this Assembly will want to join me in saying to Steve how excited we are to see him reach Alberta and in saying that we are inspired by every step he takes. My colleagues have thought for some time about how Alberta could best honour Steve Fonyo. We have concluded that the best way to honour him is to assist his cause in the battle against cancer.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to announce that for every dollar Steve Fonyo raises in Alberta for the Journey for Lives, the Alberta government will make an equal contribution to cancer treatment or research in this province. [applause] The provincial contribution will not come from existing appropriations but will be a special contribution which would otherwise not have been made. We will match any and all contributions.

Today I've just been made aware of the first contribution we will match: \$170,000 contributed by the Rotary Clubs of Calgary. Their contribution is in the form of special

equipment for the Alberta children's hospital and the Tom Baker Cancer Centre.

We trust that Albertans will give generously to Steve's Journey for Lives, and that in turn will trigger a generous government matching contribution. Until we know more definitely what dollars are involved, I cannot be specific, other than to say that contributions will be directed toward special cancer equipment through the boards of the Alberta children's hospital and the Alberta cancer programs.

Mr. Speaker, our visible tribute to Steve Fonyo will take the form of dollars, but there is another tribute of equal value from the people of Alberta to Steve Fonyo. His run symbolizes to us the human will to overcome physical limitations. Through people like Steve Fonyo who come along on occasion to inspire us by their courage, our faith in our fellow man is renewed and strengthened.

Steve Fonyo, to you we say thank you.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I would like to join the government in expressing our admiration for Steve Fonyo. At some time in our lives all of us have probably come into contact with somebody who has had cancer. We know the horrible effects of this disease. We know that more research has to be done to find a cure for this crippling disease, but we also know it is a very expensive process. Steve Fonyo brings this home to us in a most dramatic way. I think the courage of this young man puts our own lives in perspective somewhat.

At this point I compliment this government for getting into the spirit of the Steve Fonyo run and offering matching grants. Mr. Speaker, for once I hope it costs Treasury a lot of money, because we think it would be a good investment.

MR. R. SPEAKER: On behalf of Dr. Buck and myself, Mr. Speaker, I can only add our congratulations to Steven Fonyo for the courage he has shown in coming across Canada. His contribution to many of those people who are suffering will be long remembered. I believe the act of the government today is very acceptable and to be complimented.

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Natural Gas Incentive Program

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, now that we've agreed a couple of times, maybe we'll move into question period. I'd like to move back to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. My question concerns the extension of certain natural gas price systems indicated in the energy understanding of last week. Under questioning in this Assembly by my late colleague last May 10 with regard to the 35 cent per mcf cut in the price of natural gas for eastern users, the minister said he wasn't sure what the program would cost:

It depends very much upon economic factors and upon the take-up by industry to the program. . . . we will see that in the months ahead, and I think those results will be clear in a very short period of time.

Given the extension of the program, has the minister any general, ballpark estimate now of how much this has cost the Alberta Treasury over the last year?

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Mr. Speaker, at the time this program was announced and questions with respect to its implications

were raised in the Assembly, I indicated to the House that it was our judgment and aspiration that there would not be a net cost to the province of Alberta but that as a result of this incentive program to industrial users east of Alberta there would in fact be a net gain as a result of a greater utilization of natural gas rather than alternate fuels which are and were available at the time. I cannot provide specific numbers to the Assembly at this time, certainly by virtue of the fact that the program has been in place for a number of months, but I can advise the Assembly that it is the joint view of both the industry and the province of Alberta that our aspirations have been met. There has been a net gain to the province of Alberta and to the industry by virtue of significantly enhanced natural gas sales in eastern Canada in the last number of months.

It's always difficult to try to attribute a specific amount of that overall gain to a particular program, but the judgment is that there has been a net gain, which means there has been no cost to the province of Alberta. It was on the basis of that overall judgment, shared both by us and industry, that we decided to extend the program again. It's a good program, and it's working.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. On one hand, the minister seems to be saying he's not aware, that they don't have figures; then in the next breath he says there has been a net gain. I would like to know from the minister how he came to this conclusion if he doesn't have any figures.

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is asking for very precise figures, and as I said, I certainly don't have those at hand and wouldn't purport to provide a figure to the Assembly without the benefit of that specific information.

Part of the reason such statistics aren't readily at hand is the fact that we have an overall sales circumstance into eastern Canada at the various levels: the residential, commercial, and industrial. So it's a matter of trying to gauge from the distributors' response, the transmission companies' response, and our producers' response whether the judgment is that a significant portion of the take-up in sales is attributable to the new program. That is their judgment. It's a judgment we share, and we're continuing the program for that very reason.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister telling this Assembly that he agreed to extend this incentive plan for another year without really knowing if it cost Alberta Treasury money or not, or really what happened in the past? We've agreed to extend it a year with very flimsy evidence.

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Not at all, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it should be borne in mind that the industry is a significant contributor to this program, because it affects the netback they receive for the natural gas. It was only with the strong support of industry, as well as our own assessment of the overall situation, that we agreed to move in this direction. It's a move that has the strong support of the industry.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. Last May the minister referred to the take-up on the program. Can the minister advise as to the take-up? For example, did it restore us to the eastern market level we held before 1983? I

believe that was when sales declined approximately 10 percent.

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Mr. Speaker, there has undeniably been a significant increase in our sales and in take-up in not only the residential but the commercial and industrial levels. But the hon. member's question is a very precise one, and the response I've given is the response one could provide within the purview of the question period. There has been a take-up, and it has been significant.

MR. MARTIN: I guess we don't know how much that take-up is. We'll just have to go on the minister's word on that, as with the other things.

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

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. In December the Petroleum Marketing Commission signed an agreement with the Quebec industrial distributors, which I think involves a direct rebate of an approximately 35 cents per mcf price cut. Published reports at that time indicated that the cost for just the Quebec rebates would be \$50 million over three years. Could the minister confirm or clarify that figure for this Assembly?

MR. ZAOZIRNY: Mr. Speaker, that agreement relates to the very program we were discussing in this Assembly. I can't speak to the specific number, except to say that the comment I made earlier to this Assembly, that in the overall any immediate outgoing of revenue has been and will be more than compensated for by a take-up in incremental sales that wouldn't otherwise be there, is very much the case, both in the important Quebec market as well as the other eastern markets.

MR. MARTIN: I'm sure we can come back to that another time.

Student Employment Legislation

MR. MARTIN: I'd like to direct the second question to the Minister of Manpower, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister sought legal advice with regard to whether or not section 2 of the Student and Temporary Employment Act conflicts with section 2(d), freedom of association, in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

MR. ISLEY: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. Could the minister be specific and advise this Assembly if he sees no problems with that in a constitutional sense.

MR. ISLEY: The best advice I have, Mr. Speaker, is that there is no problem.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question to the minister. There seems to have been only one authoritative opinion delivered so far in Alberta with regard to some of the implications of section 2(d). It was delivered by five justices of the Court of Appeal on December 17 last year. Has the minister sought legal advice with regard to whether or not the provisions of section 2 of the Student and Temporary Employment Act can be interpreted as being consistent with

the opinions delivered December 17, 1984, especially with regard to the lone opinion on question 7 delivered by the Honourable Justice Belzil?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I've already stated, the best advice I have is that the legislation is in order.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. Does the minister have any idea what I'm talking about in these constitutional matters?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, what we are actually discussing here is a Bill that is before the House. It will be thoroughly discussed on second reading. As I understand the questioner, I have a feeling that he hasn't read or understood the Bill.

MR. MARTIN: The Bill is very easy to understand, Mr. Speaker, but I'm sure the minister better start to get his department working and find out what he's into.

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

MR. MARTIN: Has the minister asked for any study of whether this Bill, if enacted, will mean that unionized construction workers high on their hiring halls' lists will lose their places on those lists because they must quit their unions if they take temporary job creation program work?

MR. SPEAKER: It would appear to me that the hon. member is asking for a legal interpretation as to what provisions of the Bill mean.

MR. MARTIN: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I'm not. I'm asking if they took this into consideration before he brought the Bill out. I'm asking about the minister's actions.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm having a little difficulty with the line of questioning. I get the impression that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is in opposition to this government's attempting to do everything possible to get jobs for students and other people having difficulty getting into the labour force. [interjections] There is nothing in that Bill, Mr. Speaker, that interferes with the freedom of association.

Health Unit Nurses' Strike

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health is with regard to the nurses' strike. Could the minister indicate what precautions have been taken in the last day or two with regard to the strike, in terms of ensuring Albertans that there will be no suffering by those who are now provided services by the nurses?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, the implications for programs delivered by the health unit nurses are generally in two categories: the home care nurses and the community health nursing program. I understand that fewer than 25 patients across the province, clients of the home care program, have had to be moved into hospital or nursing home care. The heavy-need clients would be the ones who would require this acute care. The minimal- or moderate-need clients are

being maintained in their own homes by either families or others.

In the other area, the community health nursing program, it is only in the case of an outbreak of a communicable disease that there would likely be any visible health effects or hazards from the strike for a short duration.

There will be no new admissions to the home care program. In the immunization area some patient care is included in the use of hospital outpatient departments, doctors' offices, and pharmacies, where treatments will be done and medications administered. Coming back once again to the home care program, the homemaking services and rehab services will continue and are continuing, I believe, in almost all the health units. The cessation of services may create some inconveniences and delay progress in some of the developmental activities. However, no life-threatening situations should occur.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, the minister made the statement that the government would not intervene in the strike unless there was some health or life-threatening situations, and he briefly referred to that term just now. Could the minister indicate what is meant by that? What kind of circumstances would change the government's mind with regard to that definition?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe the hon. member heard quite accurately. In the comments I made, I didn't make any reference at all to intervening. I indicated that it is the opinion of the health units that it is not likely that life-threatening situations will arise.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Could the minister indicate whether any additional funding will be provided for the health units to meet a newly negotiated contract or a contract that may evolve at some point in time?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, it's my view that the negotiations should continue through the usual course that is outlined.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. At present health units are funded one hundred percent by the department, which means that if a local health unit has insufficient funds to meet an increase, it would not be able to do it and would have to come back to the government. Is the government prepared to meet extra funding at that point?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I think any comments I would have in that regard would be an intrusion into the process of discussions that might take place. Funding for health units is included in the budget, and I would be happy to discuss them when we get into the estimates.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Could the minister indicate that at present there is adequate funding in the hands of the health units to meet significant or adequate increases in the wage demands at the present time?

DR. WEBBER: As I indicated, Mr. Speaker, when we get into the estimates, we can discuss the funding for health units and other programs in place.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. The Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care indicated that there would be a zero increase in the budget for the fee schedule of the medical profession in the province of Alberta, because there weren't funds, period. Could the minister indicate that the situation could be the same with regard to health units and the health unit nurses in the province?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I thought the hon. member was asking a question of my colleague. When we get into the estimates, we can discuss the amounts. The hon. member knows as well as I do that there was an increase of 2 percent, I believe, in the estimates for health units across the province.

MR. R. SPEAKER: A supplementary question.

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

MR. R. SPEAKER: Could the minister indicate that 2 percent would be the maximum amount of funding available for an increase in wages in a settlement? Is that the maximum amount the government is allocating toward those negotiations?

DR. WEBBER: As I indicated, Mr. Speaker, a 2 percent increase for the health units of Alberta is indicated in the estimates. There is no reference, no statement made, that those funds would be directed toward nurses' salaries. That is the increase toward health units in this province.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, could I ask a supplementary of the hon. Minister of Labour. Has the minister been requested by either the United Nurses of Alberta or the Health Unit Association of Alberta to become involved in resolving this strike in the health units?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, the answer to the question is that the Department of Labour has been ready and, in fact, has volunteered its services for mediation to both parties. The position of the United Nurses of Alberta is one of nonco-operation in respect of any mediation from the government. At this time the negotiations are proceeding, if they are proceeding, on a direct basis. However, both parties know the government is available with its expert mediation staff, and we would certainly provide any assistance we would be called upon. But mediation is a voluntary exercise, and in this instance one party regrettably has chosen not to avail itself of those services.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Labour. As I understand it, the United Nurses of Alberta are requesting an independent mediator, not a government mediator. Is the government prepared to consider that request of the UNA, to get the negotiations in place and on the road?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, the question has not been put to the government because of the position of nonco-operation, as I stated earlier. I believe the question may have been put to the Health Unit Association, which I understand is representing the health units who are in this particular round of bargaining. But because of the position already taken by the United Nurses, that is not a question which has come to the government.

Armed Forces Training Grounds

MR. ALGER: Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Associate Minister of Public Lands and Wildlife. For some time now the Department of National Defence has been negotiating for land as a training ground in the vicinity of Calgary. I wonder if the minister would give us an update as to where the negotiations now stand and who the Department of National Defence is dealing with at this point in time.

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, we have been working with the Department of National Defence, looking for several sites throughout southern Alberta. They came to an agreement with the Sarcee Band about a month ago, and that temporary agreement has been voted on by the Indian band and has been approved. It now has to go to the federal Treasury Board and has been recommended to the board. If the board agrees with that negotiated agreement, it will take place at the Sarcee Band. They've agreed to a 20-year lease.

MR. ALGER: A supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister any idea of the actual costs involved in this negotiation? I'm sure you said "with the Sarcee". Would the minister enlighten us as to what this will cost the Department of National Defence?

MR. SPARROW: I have seen the figures, Mr. Speaker. I think they are someplace in the range of \$10 million or \$11 million, plus approximately \$300,000 a year for the first 10 years and an increase in the last 10 years.

Customs Officers

MR. ALEXANDER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address a question to the Minister of Tourism and Small Business which may also involve the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. In view of the recent budget, which tripled the budget to attract tourists to Alberta, could the minister tell us whether his department has under way any initiatives to come to grips with the offensive and bizarre and almost always disgraceful harassment of not only visitors but citizens returning to Canada by Canada Customs at the International Airport in Edmonton?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, that's one of the challenges that faces us in the department and other departments of government, as well as in the industry. The only point I can make to the hon. member is that at the last federal/provincial conference of tourism ministers at Halifax, Alberta led the way by making the request that the new specific minister of tourism seek, on our behalf, some indication of including in the training programs of future customs officers and the in-house training program for existing ones something to impress very emphatically on the minds of those who serve us the value of the first impression on a tourist or a person returning to this country.

I should point out, Mr. Speaker, that there are some good ones. I was recently in Calgary at a function where one of the customs people was recognized by the city of Calgary and the tourist authority for the work he specifically has done to welcome visitors to this province. But that's one of a great number.

MR. ALEXANDER: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. It's encouraging indeed to hear that we have one in Calgary,

but the problem in Edmonton has been a long-running one. I wonder if I could ask the minister, in light of some of the things these people have to go through — for example, a guest from New York with whom I had lunch this week was asked not only about his citizenship and why he was here but, when he informed the agent he was here for the TriBach concert, was asked: "Which one? Do you have a ticket? Do you have a return ticket home? Who paid for your ticket? It's okay now. If you have all those things in order, you can stay perhaps an extra couple of days." And that wasn't the end of it.

I'm asking the minister if we could have an undertaking that this matter, particularly having regard to Edmonton, could be pursued to a conclusion, because it has gone on too long.

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I certainly think one of the ways we can do that is the co-operation of all the citizens within the province as well as the hon. members in writing to our counterparts in Ottawa. I can assure the hon. member that we are pursuing that one, because one of the challenges that faces us in the interest of tourism in this province is for that first impression to be positive.

My colleague the hon. Minister of Economic Development may want to supplement my answers, because he has been involved in some of the requests for this kind of improvement in that particular service, with the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on that issue. I'm glad it's on the floor of this Assembly. I've written letters quietly and in anger. I've tried to be circumspect with my comments. My colleague the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs has done the same thing. My view is that about half of them ought to be fired.

MRS. CRIPPS: A supplementary to the Minister of Economic Development, Mr. Speaker. Are potential investors subjected to the same disgraceful and humiliating interrogations too?

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, not only some potential investors but people who come here and gratuitously give of their time in courses and seminars to help our people grow in international trade, high technology, and finance are subject to the same abuses. It's disgraceful.

Teaching Standards Council

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Education. It's with reference to a ministerial statement that he made last Friday, announcing the establishment of an advisory Council on Alberta Teaching Standards. Could the minister advise the Assembly what progress or success he has achieved?

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, since we made the announcement that the government will establish a Council on Alberta Teaching Standards, we are making plans to request nominations, review all the nominations, make appointments, and establish the council.

I might advise the House that yesterday, because of the concern of the Alberta Teachers' Association and following a meeting in my office yesterday morning, the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association phoned me. She advised

me that the Alberta Teachers' Association was bringing the president of each local of the ATA to Edmonton and that there would be a meeting at 5:30 yesterday afternoon in Barnett House. Mrs. Thomas asked me if I would like to attend the meeting. It is important to note that in the telephone conversation she did not say anything to me about speaking or not speaking at that meeting. But I must confess that I went to the meeting assuming that I would be expected to answer questions or explain the position of the government with respect to the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards.

When I arrived at Barnett House yesterday afternoon at 5:30, I was told by the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association that I had been invited to listen but not to speak. The meeting went on for 20 minutes, during which time a number of questions were asked, perhaps rhetorically, about the council and the government's intentions with respect to the council.

At the end of 20 minutes the suggestion was made that rather than talk about the proposal, the people present at the meeting should consider how they should respond to the proposal, at which point the president of the ATA made concluding remarks. I went to a microphone, and after Mrs. Thomas had made her concluding remarks, I asked if I could speak. The chairman said that I had been invited to listen but not to speak. I responded that that was true but that no one had told me I would be unable to speak or to defend the government's position.

The chairman told me that I could not speak to the assembly, at which time I asked if the members present agreed with the position of the chair or if the members present wanted to give the Minister of Education an opportunity to explain the government's position. The chairman, Mrs. Harvey of Calgary, asked if there was anyone at the meeting who wanted to allow the Minister of Education to speak, and there was silence. The chairman said that I could not address the meeting, so I thanked the chairman and excused myself.

That is the current state of discussion existing between the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Minister of Education.

MR. BATIUK: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Last night on the television news I saw the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association express her opposition to the council, but she also stated that the Minister of Education was doing this to destroy the Alberta Teachers' Association. I always felt that the minister, as well as I, had strong support for the teaching profession. Could the minister advise whether there is any legitimate reason for this?

MR. KING: There is absolutely no validity whatsoever to that charge. My responsibility is to see that students in classrooms get the best possible education. My responsibility is to the students, to their parents, and to the community generally. For six years my attitude has been that by and large the best way of guaranteeing good education for our children is to ensure that there are competent and professional teachers in the classroom. In my view Albertans can be proud of the vast majority of our classroom teachers. They are indeed competent, and they are professional. I bend every effort toward doing the things that will acknowledge and support their competence and their professionalism.

MR. BATIUK: Another supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In the minister's statement it was stated that the majority of the members of this council are going to be teachers.

Could the minister advise the reason for their rejection? Did they want all the members to be teachers?

MR. KING: It appears that the objections of the Alberta Teachers' Association are these. First of all, it appears that they believe neither the minister nor this advisory council should be concerned with practice review. They do not think we should be addressing our attention to what is going on in individual classrooms throughout the province. They apparently do not believe the Minister of Education, the Department of Education, or the government of Alberta should be concerned about the 1, 2, or 3 percent of Alberta's teachers who are not competent, not professional, and should not be in classrooms. In news reports and otherwise they most often express concern about the fact that the minister is going to become more actively involved in what is called practice review.

Secondly, it appears that they are very much in favour of the idea that all the teacher members should be appointed by the minister on the nomination of the Alberta Teachers' Association. They do not believe anyone other than the Alberta Teachers' Association should be able to nominate teacher members of this advisory council. It is important, once again, to remember that the council is advisory to the Minister of Education and that the ultimate responsibility for all these matters has always rested in law with the minister and continues to rest in law with the minister.

Thirdly, it appears that they are of the position that all these matters should be dealt with by writing a new Teaching Profession Act, that we should focus our attention on writing a new Teaching Profession Act, and that we should not address any of these other challenges except in the context of a new Teaching Profession Act. As I said, having tried three times over the space of six years to get a new Teaching Profession Act, I am absolutely unwilling to maintain the status quo for who knows how much longer while we attempt one, two, or three more times to succeed at something on which we have already experienced three failures in six years.

MR. SPEAKER: Might I intervene briefly. We're using an awful lot of question period time with information which perhaps should be sought in a different way. A number of members have not yet been recognized for their first questions, and I believe there are four members who wish to ask supplementaries. Might I respectfully ask those four members to make them brief, and might I also respectfully ask the minister to make his answers as brief as possible. I'll hope there won't be anything in the supplementaries that would get the the minister unduly exercised.

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Speaker, I'll make sure this is my final supplementary to the minister. In view of the fact that the Alberta Teachers' Association is opposed, is the minister advising the House that he will not reverse his decision and will carry on with this establishment?

MR. KING: The government is going to carry on with the establishment of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards because we believe it will be good for the classroom teachers in the province.

MR. GURNETT: A supplementary question to the minister, Mr. Speaker. In developing the structure for the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards, has the minister been given any assessment as to the potential for political manipulation,

given the structure we have for this organization? Will he now announce the mechanisms he is prepared to install to prevent the council from becoming nothing more than a spokesman for the prevailing government's policies at a given time?

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I suspect that the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview is most concerned about the political persuasion of the five teacher members who are going to be appointed from among those nominated by citizens of the province. We are going to appoint teachers who are first and foremost professional and concerned for the professional interests of their colleagues in the province. I am looking for five teachers who are professional. I don't call into question the professional integrity of any teacher who happens to belong to the New Democratic Party; neither do I call into question the professional integrity of any teacher who happens to belong to the Progressive Conservative Party.

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps if there's time we can come back to this topic. I have a notion that it will still be interesting tomorrow. Might we have the hon. leader of the Representative Party followed by . . . I thought there were some other members who indicated their interest in getting back in. In that event, after the hon. leader we'll go to the next member.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister as well. It is with regard to the statement of the minister indicating loyal support to the ATA. It's not going to break them up in any way. In terms of this advisory committee, is the minister prepared to accept the appointees of the various groups, the ATA and the ASTA particularly, as members of the committee in an act of good faith?

MR. SPEAKER: It appears to me that the minister answered that question today and also yesterday.

MR. KING: In addition to which, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make it clear that I have never expressed loyalty to the ATA. They are quite capable of looking after themselves. My loyalty and responsibility are to the teachers in the classrooms in this province, all 28,000 of them. When the ATA and I agree about what best advances the professional interests of those teachers, we are quite happy in our relationship. When we disagree, we disagree respectfully.

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps we could come back to this topic. There are a number of members who have not . . . The hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo followed by the hon. Member for Calgary North Hill.

Workers' Compensation for Taxi Drivers

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister responsible for Workers' Health, Safety and Compensation. On February 27 a report entitled Taxi Driver Safety in Alberta was released. It contains a number of recommendations. Given that Justice McDonald recently declared that dependent contractors are employees in reference to the trucking industry, and in view of the parallel between the trucking industry and the taxi industry and the fact that over 90 percent of the taxi drivers surveyed indicated they favoured compulsory workmen's compensation, is it the

intention of the minister to introduce legislation to that effect?

MR. DIACHUK: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo raises a very timely question and concern. I just want to bring to his attention that it is workers' compensation, not workmen's.

The Honourable Justice McDonald's decision was in the area of individual rights protection. But I share his concern and the concern of the honourable justice and want to assure the House that taxi drivers have been deemed to be independent operator/proprietors under the Workers' Compensation Act in Alberta. I don't believe legislation is required, but we are looking at and reviewing the question of providing coverage for taxi drivers the same way as independent trucking people are covered under our Act in Alberta.

MR. LEE: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. A number of the recommendations in the report refer to the necessity for both public education and better safety training. I understand these recommendations resulted from the submissions of the drivers themselves. Has the minister considered preparing occupational health and safety clinics and a public, general, workers' safety campaign, as has been done for other occupations?

MR. DIACHUK: Mr. Speaker, the report was indeed critical of the brokers and the taxi commissions. May I point out that there are only two taxi commissions in Alberta under the municipal Act, one in Edmonton and one in Calgary. The report was quite critical. This issue is now being placed in the challenge of the taxi commissions and the brokers, and I want to assure that the officials of my department are working and prepared to continue working to bring about some good training programs in co-operation with the respective police departments.

MR. LEE: A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. During the past few weeks I've been conducting a direct poll of taxi drivers, and there is very little awareness of this report. In view of that, I wonder whether the minister would consider conducting an open public forum, in both Calgary and Edmonton, with a direct message and invitation to the taxi drivers themselves to hear and see the recommendations of this report and respond with their views as to the implementation.

MR. DIACHUK: Mr. Speaker, the report was given all the publicity possible. The media was very much in attendance covering it. We've advertised and provided the information through press releases. I think our work now is to work with the brokers and the taxi commissions. At this time I can't favour any public forums to try to bring that about. I want to say that at all times my office and my department have encouraged taxi drivers to continue to provide input. Many copies of the report and the summary have been sent to drivers. I welcome the support of members of this Assembly to encourage the drivers in this industry to take an interest in participating in very, very good coverage — that's workers' compensation — that would provide full coverage while they're at work.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary North Hill.

MR. OMAN: Mr. Speaker, one of the ministers I wanted to question has escaped from the House. Therefore, I ask to defer my question until tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: That is fortunate for the Speaker, because we've just run out of time. I apologize to the hon. members for Edmonton Norwood, Clover Bar, and Drumheller, who were not able to ask their first questions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. SPEAKER: May we revert to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker and members of the Assembly, I take great pleasure this afternoon in introducing 35 grade 6 students from the James Mowat school in Fort Saskatchewan. They are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Dahl, Mrs. Stenger, and Mr. Ben Mandrusiak, and their bus driver, Mr. Lawrence. They are seated in the public gallery, and I ask them to rise and receive the welcome of this Assembly.

MR. STROMBERG: Mr. Speaker, may I also take this opportunity to welcome and introduce 33 grades 5 and 6 visitors from the Round Hill school in the Camrose constituency. With them are their two teachers, Dan Adrian and Terry Dashcavich.

Mr. Speaker, Round Hill is approximately 20 miles northeast of Camrose. I point out to the Minister of Education that last Friday in a countywide plebiscite the ratepayers of Camrose voted by a majority of 82 percent to keep schools such as Round Hill and to refurbish these schools. They are seated in the members' gallery. I ask that they rise and be welcomed by this Assembly.

MR. DIACHUK: Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to join my hon. colleagues in the Assembly and introduce a class of some 22 grade 6 students from the Beacon Heights school in the constituency of Edmonton Beverly. They are accompanied by teacher Jim Spivak, and they are seated in the members' gallery. I ask them to rise and receive the usual welcome of the Assembly.

head: **MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

204. Moved by Mr. Lee:

Be it resolved that the Assembly encourage the government to expand its suicide prevention program to all junior and senior high schools in Alberta, in conjunction with a suicide prevention and awareness week targeted specifically toward students and their families.

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, it is with somewhat mixed emotions that I rise here today to initiate debate on this motion. When one thinks about the words used to describe suicide, I immediately think of "tragic", "grief", and "despair". I believe those are the words that come to the minds of most people. However, for me the name Betty Wheatley comes to mind — a constituent I've known for seven years,

first for five years as her alderman and more recently for two years as a member of the Legislature. She's a very remarkable woman and played a key role in founding the Bow Cliff Seniors in the Calgary Buffalo constituency, which for a senior citizen drop-in centre now boasts over 500 members — a remarkable achievement. She is a remarkable woman. I wish each of the members could have an opportunity to meet with her. In the absence of this she has asked me to relate to this Assembly a very sad story, a story which involves her son Peter seven years ago.

First, I'd like to tell you a little bit about Peter. He lived what most of us would term a very normal childhood. He enjoyed Cubs and Boy Scouts. He was a very quiet boy and in some respects a very deep child. He came from a stable family, not the stereotypical family of broken homes, fights, and so on; in fact, a family that played a very important role in the community. He had a girlfriend. He was not what you would call an outstanding student, but he did pass his grades. He had his own room, his own job, his own desires, and his own dreams.

On November 18, 1978, while at a friend's cabin during a party, Peter left the party, went into the bedroom with a gun, closed the door, and ended his life. With the party and music going on, Mr. Speaker, nobody heard the shot, just as nobody heard his silent screams for help. I first learned of this heartbreaking tragedy shortly after. His mother, Betty, told me that even after seven years one copes with but does not get over the cruel tragedy of a teenage suicide. Just as she still grieves for Peter, so should each and every one of us grieve for every teenager who commits suicide in Alberta.

This could have been the end of the story, but Betty Wheatley would not allow it. It was only a few months after Peter's suicide that Mrs. Wheatley began visiting schools with an Anglican minister and a young lady who had attempted suicide three times. This group went around to classes and spoke with students about suicide and, most importantly, started talking about it. The response from students was excellent, and discussions were open and frank. Mr. Speaker, I can't help but think that everyone here would regard Mrs. Wheatley's actions as nothing short of courageous. For me it was an inspiration to see her act, and that is why the resolution is presented today.

I wish to speak to this resolution and cover five elements of its difficult area. First of all, I'd like to talk about the statistics of suicide. Secondly, I'd like to provide an overview of what work is already being done in Alberta in terms of suicide generally and teenage suicide specifically. Thirdly, I would like to suggest reasons why I believe the education system is the place to focus our efforts and deal with suicide prevention. Fourthly, I wish to talk about the symptoms of suicide. Finally, Mr. Speaker, I wish to address what I believe are the benefits of a suicide awareness week.

First of all, the suicide statistics. Mr. Speaker, there was a report in the *Calgary Herald* on November 15, 1983, and the headline read: Teen suicides soar 1,200 percent. It was reported by Dr. Mark Solomon, who was then the provincial suicidologist, that adolescent suicides in Alberta had leapt by more than 1,200 percent in the past 30 years. He was referring to a report that had been released at the International Psychiatric Research Society's 25th annual meeting in Ottawa, which showed that three times as many children commit suicide now as did in 1956.

Let's look at the statistics as they relate to Alberta. According to the chairman of the Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee, teenage suicide in Alberta has increased

fivefold in the past 15 years alone. Next to motor vehicle accidents, suicide is the second leading cause of death among teenagers. It's incredible to think that in Canada each year 1,300 teens between 15 and 18 commit suicide. Preliminary figures from the Chief Medical Examiner's office for 1984 show that last year 35 teenagers in Alberta committed suicide — 35 Peters — yet this may just be the tip of the iceberg. The consensus among suicidologists is that these official figures can under-report the situation by up to 100 percent. Many suicides are disguised as motor vehicle or other accidents. This can be attributed mainly to religious and social taboos that wish to spare the survivors and protect the name of the victim; families draw together. In addition to this, recent studies estimate that for each teenager who was, if you'll pardon the expression, successful in a suicide attempt, 50 to 100 other young people will attempt suicide — 50 to 100 attempts for every completed suicide.

When viewed in these terms, the statistics are very frightening. It was not long ago, Mr. Speaker, that the Attorney General released the annual report of the department in this House. It was interesting to note that while murders for the year 1983-84 were down, suicides were up by almost 9 percent. Even more alarming is an increasing trend in the United States towards preteenagers committing suicide. In Canada we tend to follow these trends. Today we are really not speaking about statistics; we are speaking about people — young people, Alberta's greatest natural resource.

I wish to outline to you an incident which occurred a few years ago in my own constituency. A teenager, a young man, committed suicide. At his funeral the son of one of my constituents acted as a pallbearer. A few days later that same boy who acted as a pallbearer ended his own life as well. No one can convince me that these two teenagers are merely statistics, faceless by their very nature, because behind each one of the 35 teenagers who ended their lives last year in Alberta lies a story of despair and hopelessness. The statistics do not show the grief and guilt that the families of these suicide victims carry with them and the unanswered questions: what could I have done?

Statistics aside, there is something else which causes me great concern and alarm. Recent studies have indicated that a rise in the completed suicide rate trails the bottom of an economic downturn by several years. One scholar graphically underscores the point by pointing out that despite depictions of North Americans jumping out of tall buildings in 1929 during the stock market crash, it was not until two years later, in 1931, that the American suicide rate increased. Given Alberta's recent economic downturn, this puts us on a collision course with higher suicide rates — in particular, teenage suicide rates in the very near future. This is something the provincial government is aware of and is preparing for.

Mr. Speaker, I've outlined a very dark side or picture of Alberta society, yet I do see some light and opportunity to help. I recently read a news article in which the provincial suicidologist was quoted as saying in reference to teen suicide:

A lot of these suicides are preventable ... if persons close to the suicide victims had been aware of the signs and symptoms.

Before we get to the symptoms, I wish to speak about the prevention programs that exist in Alberta today. The key word here is "prevention", and that is the goal of this motion. In this case my firm belief is that prevention can be accomplished through education. Societal and religious taboos have prevented a broad community dialogue on suicide

from taking place. Because of this many of us still hold to many of the myths that surround suicide.

It is similar to the case years ago when cancer was not discussed. There was an ignorance by the general populace of the warning signs of that disease. More recently, in the past two or three years, we've seen some excellent examples of courageous people, particularly high-profile people, who have come forward and begun talking about the symptoms of cancer and what happens. I think in particular of the courage of Mrs. Betty Ford, the wife of the former president of the United States, who began talking about the symptoms of cancer as it relates to mastectomy. As a society we must become familiar with the warning signs of suicide. Mr. Speaker, in this case ignorance is not bliss; ignorance kills. We should work from the premise that even one suicide is too many, because one suicide is too many. The key is prevention through education.

Mr. Speaker, in early 1979 as a result of the Wheatley tragedy I became aware of and alarmed at the problem. The solution wasn't clear, and at the time I had been consulting with a number of community leaders in Ward 6, the constituency I represented in Calgary. We decided to host an aldermanic prayer breakfast that would focus on the theme of teenage suicide. The prayer breakfast was unique in its diversity; it was hosted by 13 churches. It was cochaired by a Methodist minister, Pastor Wayne Lewry, and a Baptist minister, Pastor John Tiebe. It included 13 churches. We had representation from Catholics, the Church of Christ, the Sikh religion, Evangelists, Ismailis, Greek Orthodox, United, Islamic mosques, and so on. It was very dynamic. We had 120 participants.

We invited experts from the Foothills hospital and the Calgary crisis line to come and speak to us. I was touched by several things that occurred at that prayer breakfast: by the simplicity of the symptoms and how obvious they are; by the concern by all present of every age; by the involvement of the community in this concern; and, more than anything, by the heartbreaking testimony of the families who had been touched by this tragedy. The good news is that there was a commitment by everybody to carry on and get the message across. As a result, many sermons about awareness of the problem occurred within the churches in the community over the next year. So I became convinced of the need for two things: awareness and education of symptoms.

Mr. Speaker, there are at least 10 organizations in the province of Alberta that are playing an important role today in prevention. I'd like to touch upon them briefly. First of all, the Suicide Prevention Provincial Advisory Committee was established in August 1981 by the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. The committee's primary objective is to advise the minister on the development of programs. It makes recommendations for funding, it assesses the current delivery of service, it reviews the progress of projects and programs funded by the department, and it reports to the minister. Its current chairman is Dr. Menno Boldt, a University of Lethbridge professor who has devoted much of his life to the study of suicide prevention, intervention, and 'postvention'. I'm proud to see that the government of Alberta has committed over \$800,000 in the current budget to this subject. It funds crisis lines, bereavement programs, referral and follow-up programs, and a Suicide Information and Education Centre headquartered in Calgary. The phone number to reach this group in Edmonton is 427-2709.

Second, the Suicide Information and Education Centre is headquartered in Calgary but can be accessed through

the Datapack network within Alberta or by phone. It's basically a reference library, a computerized information system, available to all Albertans. It has in its data base over 10,000 documents including films, videos, journal articles, books, reviews, conference proceedings, et cetera — everything available on the subject. If you would like information, the centre can be contacted in Calgary at 283-3031.

Mr. Speaker, we have a provincial suicidologist in the province. The position was created in 1978. I know of no other state or province in North America that has taken such a step. It is unique. The present suicidologist is Dr. Ron Dyck. He has talked to hundreds of teens in Alberta schools. The phone number he can be reached at is 427-2816.

The Chief Medical Examiner's office is one of the most progressive offices in the country in collecting information on suicidal deaths. I believe there has been considerable progress in recent years in creating accurate and accessible information, and that is a key to prevention. The Chief Medical Examiner in Alberta today is Dr. John Butt; he can be reached at 297-8123.

Mr. Speaker, shortly after our prayer breakfast I became aware of the strong interest in the subject by the Canadian Mental Health Association of Alberta. In conjunction with the suicide advisory committee they fund a number of suicide prevention programs. The contact person in Edmonton is Liz McCord, who can be reached at 482-6091.

The AID Service of Edmonton was founded in 1978 and funds a number of programs. The crisis outreach program, CORE, reaches out to people in suicidal crises. The CORE clients come from contacts made in hospitals, social service agencies, psychiatrists, and psychologists. The services are available seven days a week. Then there's the Edmonton suicide bereavement program, which also comes under AID. It helps individuals who have suffered loss as a result of suicide. It helps them come to terms with the loss and with such feelings as anger and guilt. All of these programs are free. That program can be reached at 426-3242.

Mr. Speaker, a group that has long been concerned and provided a compassionate valuable service on the subject is the Salvation Army. It funds a crisis line in both Calgary and Edmonton. People who are contemplating suicide and who wish information can contact the Salvation Army in Edmonton at 422-2727 or in Calgary at 252-3111.

I should point out that I am making a point of reading these phone numbers, which wouldn't be a normal practice in a speech, so that they can be recorded in *Hansard* and those who read *Hansard* are aware of this information. If we do nothing else in this debate today, we must convey where help can be made available and how it can be made available.

Mr. Speaker, I was proud to hear that the Rotary clubs of Calgary have announced a contribution of \$170,000 to the Steve Fonyo run. They have shown an exemplary interest in teen programs and have raised a significant amount of funds for suicide prevention in Calgary. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the downtown Rotary Club of Calgary.

The Distress Centre in Calgary has a crisis line open 24 hours and provides short-term counselling. The phone number is 266-1601.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to the pilot project I believe should be expanded throughout Alberta. In particular I would like to outline the specific initiative by Alberta Education that was introduced to 30 junior high schools last September, which deals with suicide prevention via the health curriculum. In grades 7 and 8, students are instructed in the areas of self-awareness, self-concept, and self-esteem, setting the groundwork down for the discussion of suicide in grade 9. I've taken the opportunity to obtain a copy of the pilot edition of the junior high health curriculum guide. It is impressive in the simplicity and awareness that it deals with. The goals are understanding the effects of emotional change, understanding the nature and effects of depression, and understanding the facts and myths related to suicide.

As I went through the contents of the document, I was particularly impressed that it started off just by defining suicide. And what are those many myths that surround this complex yet tragically simple problem? Myths are often used to stop a person from doing anything to help a potential victim. As the curriculum states, they limit our understanding of the truth. Another myth: people who talk about it don't do it. Not true. Another myth: only certain types of people commit suicide. Not true. Suicide affects all religious backgrounds, income backgrounds, ages, societies, and all communities within our community. There is a myth that people who attempt suicide are just seeking attention. That may be, but there's a little more to it than that. And there is a myth that those who attempt clearly want to die. That is the worst myth of all, Mr. Speaker. The curriculum is excellent and it has been well received.

I spoke by telephone to two teachers who participated in the development of the curriculum: Bill Gordon, a teacher in the county of Strathcona, and Ron Staines from the Sherwood community school in Calgary. Both indicated two things: number one, this program must be expanded as soon as possible and, number two, indigenous to every time this is talked about in the schools, invariably children will not raise their hands during the discussion, but afterwards they come quietly to the teacher and ask for help. Thank goodness we've begun this program, but we can do more.

I also want to mention the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission, because I believe it is an excellent example of developing a dialogue with teenagers about promoting self-esteem and the self-concept. Clearly, if there's any common denominator of those who commit suicide, it's the lack of a sense of self-worth. Recent events in Alberta have highlighted the problem of teenage suicide. Richard Cardinal, Ramona Talley — what sad stories they were.

It is my belief that the answer is education and awareness. So the question comes, Mr. Speaker: why deal with teenage suicide in the education system? Some might question whether the school is an appropriate setting for educating our children about suicide prevention. Many hold that suicide is an imitative act and that by introducing it into the school curriculum, we may in fact increase and not decrease the incidence of suicide among students. These same people would ask that we shelter our children from the realities of suicide, and this, I suppose, is understandable, because we must proceed with care and caution. However, our schools have not been untouched by the reality of suicide. An incident in a United States classroom — a 16-year-old boy shocked his classmates and teacher when he pulled a revolver out of a paper bag while sitting at his desk and, in full view of the class, shot himself in the head. For any of you who think this happens just in the United States,

in a high school in my own constituency two weeks ago a teenager attempted suicide in the school washroom. Fortunately, it was unsuccessful.

One of the most compelling reasons to be teaching suicide prevention in the schools is quite simple. When students are asked who they would speak to if they had thoughts of suicide, 90 percent will say a fellow student. It's not surprising in view of the communication gap that exists for youngsters during these difficult years. The same qualities which make peers the first choice of confidence by students also make them dangerously inadequate as potential rescuers. Societal taboos have made information on suicide difficult to obtain. More often than not adolescents' sources of information are rumour and speculation, and their experts are other teenagers.

Programs in the school would provide a yardstick by which information from other sources would be measured. Mr. Speaker, I think of a classic example in the progress we have made in the past two years by educating young people about the dangers of drugs. The use of drugs today in schools is on the decline because of the awareness of the impact. Education can assist both potential victims as well as rescuers. Show them alternatives, ways of coping with depression, how to detect symptoms, and what to do once having recognized the symptoms.

The question is: what are the symptoms? Mr. Speaker, can you remember as a teenager wanting so hard to achieve something only to come up short? Feeling a sense of failure, somehow not having lived up to expectations? You so badly wanted to please your friends or your family. Everyone here has lost a loved one and experienced the accompanying grief and depression. Can you recall how you handled it? Have you ever felt that things were just becoming too much to handle and experienced a sense of helplessness? Have you ever experienced a marital crisis? Broken up with a boyfriend or girlfriend? Can you recall the hurt, the very real pain? For the adolescent the stress which each of these situations creates may be too much. They may view suicide as the only release to all that pain.

We must begin by recognizing these symptoms for what they really are: number one, pleas for help. We must show teenagers that there are alternatives, and that requires an open dialogue. I believe we legislators here today can contribute to the importance of that dialogue.

Mr. Speaker, the theme for this week, April 1 to 7, has been designated by the Health League of Canada as Health Challenges for Young Canadians. It is fitting, because I can't think of a greater health challenge than suicide itself. That is why I believe we need an awareness week. There are many good examples. In Alberta I think of Agriculture Week and Education Week. Then I think of some not so good examples. Can you believe this? We have Blame Someone Else Day, National Grippers Day, Groundhog Day, Silent Record Week, Egg Salad Week, and National Bowling Week. We have a Weeks Week. Surely the subject of teenage suicide deserves the same exposure as these subjects. The American Association of Suicidology has recommended the week of May 6-12 every year for that subject.

Mr. Speaker, to summarize, we've looked at five aspects of this problem: suicide statistics, suicide prevention in Alberta, suicide prevention in the schools, symptoms of suicide, and finally, the importance of awareness through an awareness week. We can do something today. Send out a message that this Assembly is no longer going to stand quiet while the youth of Alberta turn to suicide. The poet T.S. Eliot once wrote, "April is the cruelest month." The

suicide rates bear this out. It is so ironic that spring is associated with rebirth, yet when we begin the month of April, we see so many tragic examples of suicide.

I call on all members on both sides of this House to take action this April and for Aprils in years to come to ensure that Alberta will no longer be the custodian of tragic statistics as there have been — 35 a year. We can do something today. We can send out a message that we want people to be aware of the symptoms and we want to educate our young people.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close my remarks with a poem. The title of this poem and the final line really is the ultimate statement, the bitter message of this great tragedy. I bring it to your attention because I don't want to hear this poem ever again, and I believe we can contribute to its end. I'll read it and sit down. It was written by Bruce Gard, who was a father, and it was his final message to his teenage son who ended his life. It is called *A Time to Cry*.

You left without saying good-bye,
I didn't know it was your time to die,
Time goes on and things do change,
And I have to realize it will never be the same.
You left and still I wonder, "Why?"
Sometimes I have to take a time to cry.

Time heals all wounds, so they say;
Look ahead to a brighter day.
Hopes and dreams and plans of the past,
Things of this earth were not made to last.
But memories so sweet and thoughts so dear.
Are what will sustain me through a future year.

Suns will rise and suns will set,
But somehow I believe I will never forget,
The good times for sure, and also the bad,
But, Son, I know you would not want us sad.
Each mournful day will pass even with only
A sigh, but
Sometimes I have to take a time to cry.

MR. DIACHUK: Mr. Speaker, at the outset may I commend our fellow MLA for Calgary Buffalo for, first of all, taking the time and even sharing with me his intent to introduce this resolution, because April 1985 is the fifth anniversary of the suicide of my own son. One of the things I want to share here is that, as the hon. member indicated, you can never forget. However, our work is still here. The ones that remain, the family, carry on. I want to share that we have many, many good programs, but one of the real challenges is that we're never expecting it to happen to us.

We're least prepared, but thank God that we're getting the concern about suicide out of the closet, getting it into the classroom, and talking about it. We no longer shun the word "suicide". As the hon. member indicated, we used to shun the words "cancer" or "venereal disease" or others. We're now sharing it in our society and working towards resolving the ill that so often falls on many unsuspecting people in our society.

I want to concur in the hon. member's resolution. But I want to say that it's not that it isn't being done, even though there may not be pilot programs in the schools. Even though some schools might not have it structured, I am convinced that there isn't a school where the professional people are not trying to come to grips and cope with what is their challenge; that is, the unhappy student, the one that

is in difficulty, and the one that even gives symptoms of taking their own life.

In 1981 I rose in my place in this Assembly on the anniversary of my son's suicide and commended some of the work that is done by the teachers who so often blame themselves because, with their professional training, they either missed the clue that was there or saw it but didn't take it seriously. I want to say that nobody should blame themselves, only realize that we're all human. We don't notice it. My wife, Ollie, and I as parents never noticed it, never saw any symptom. To this day we never ... So we can't blame the teachers. But at the same time, I argue a little bit with all these statistics and studies. I think every one of them has some weakness and inaccuracy.

A few years ago I visited the country of Finland. In the city of Tampere, my wife and I were hosted over a dinner table by a couple of fine Finlanders. Both of them were at the University of Tampere. How common it is; we struck up a conversation, and Ollie shared with the lady that we lost a son through suicide. Finland believes that they have the highest teenage suicide in the world. They don't know why. We are not alone. I want to say that I also shared with them: what had they compared it with? Maybe they compared it with the fact that people are more open or more willing to talk about it.

I have always counselled and shared with people: share with others; speak about it. Our first contact with the police that morning — this is what I said: "We have had a suicide in our home." As I indicated so often shortly after my son's suicide, I want to say that I couldn't help but commend the professional approach of the Edmonton city police. They were well prepared to handle it and had the people and the resources there to handle any case — I think as many as there would be.

Grief and guilt. Grief is normal. As the good book indicates, even the grieving process is a healing process. Some of it takes longer than others. My wife and I continue to be involved in the suicide bereavement support group. We want to help others and also strengthen ourselves through helping them. We want to share with others, and they share with us, because we want to overcome the guilt. Yes, there is a great amount of guilt. As I touched on, I found that because so many of these teenagers are students, the teachers are the ones that really take a lot of the personal blame and guilt. I think it's good to share the kind of work that the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo indicated is taking place, that we don't know about, to encourage others, because maybe we can bring about some prevention through that.

I don't personally accept the fact there's that much indication, that you can identify or spot the young person who is potentially going to take their life. I believe there are more of them that you can't. But through prevention, by working on the aftermath — I have often said to young people subsequent to my son's loss of life: please remember that that is a very easy way to bring a solution to a problem, but you leave more problems behind to the ones you love. The educational system is naturally a good avenue, because we have the captive young people there.

I searched for quite some time trying to figure out why my son didn't turn to someone, a counsellor or some friend. To this day five years later, I've never been able to find an answer, except that I have come to two conclusions. One is that he feared the unknown of the future, and before I conclude, I want to touch on what I believe was his fear. The second one is that on the very night he was contemplating

suicide, he had been out to a very fine restaurant in Edmonton with his young lady friend, her sister, and others, and he did have a few exotic drinks. I say to the young people as they read and hear this: please remember that alcohol is very much a depressant. In my opinion, he had too much alcohol that night. It wasn't the number of drinks he had; it was the metabolism in his body that couldn't cope with it. His girlfriend said, "He only had two exotic drinks that night." We all know that when you mix a liqueur and whiskey the combination is unknown. I say to young people any time I have a chance: don't take alcohol for granted. I believe there are studies that show that alcohol is a great contributor to or a large part of suicides. There was alcohol involved in it. I share this openly, because I know he would want me to say this.

The other thing I want to say is that it's most important that we respond to anyone who is a friend by listening instead of turning them off. Quite simply the suicidal youth will turn to a friend, and we shouldn't be judgmental: "Oh well, you have everything good," or "There's nothing to worry about the exam." Listen. Let him talk. On one occasion a friend of mine asked me how he would respond to a friend that lost a sibling. I said: "Listen to him. Let him talk. Let him cry."

The stigma surrounding suicide, as I indicated and as the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo indicated, is not as serious now. We talk about it openly. We look at it and accept the challenges and even share some of the great things that are happening. Recently I took the evening off and watched the movie *Silence of the Heart*. It was a tremendous movie done in Hollywood style. But the message was there, because that little girl, the sister, had one of the most difficult challenges in getting her dad, mother, and others to accept the fact that her brother took his own life. I think that's another thing that could contribute to more.

There is all kinds of concern that suicide can occur more than once in a family. I shared with one of the members sitting in the Assembly that my biggest fear is having a second one. I hope not. I pray not. But now I know what the first one is like. I didn't know what the first one was like, and I have a greater fear for the second one.

I've said this sometimes. I believe our media are to blame. I share this sincerely. We have too much bad news in this world. I wish the media would print and write about some of the great things young people are doing. Every one of us in this Assembly knows the number of scholarships and athletic awards we have to deliver in our constituencies to the number of good young people who are doing so well in school and are being recognized. But we don't get enough of that. Shortly after my son's suicide, Mr. O'Callaghan of the *Journal* came to me and was concerned about an article in the paper by a young reporter by the name of Cohn. He did an excellent coverage. Mr. O'Callaghan was concerned that it may have been stronger than I would appreciate. I said to him, "No, that was good, but I wish you would cover some of the young people who do well." We see so many examples. I challenge the media. It is so easy to cause young people to lose all hope by the continuous bad publicity in our media, whether the electronic or print media.

One can only say that we're fortunate in our society because we do associate. I said that some four years ago and repeat it now. When some 60 to 65 members of this Assembly joined me and my family and even adjourned

part of the session to attend the funeral of my son, it was an indication that we had a lot in common. That doesn't happen in an atheistic world. It happens in a world that is free to believe, Christians and non-Christians. As the hon. member indicated, they had Christians and non-Christians in the Calgary prayer group. One of the strongest messages we got was from a Jewish couple, friends of ours. I repeat it for the bereavement support people because it's worth it. The man wrote to me and said, "Bill, as my wife and I are at the synagogue tonight, we shall pray for you and your family." Very strengthening, very supportive.

With those few words I want to say that as difficult as it is, I want to thank the hon. member for bringing it forward for attention here. It's not something that needs to be structured, but I think we should all address it, face it very openly, and work positively. I think we may prevent some through the programs we have now. I'm not sure we'll prevent them all; I doubt it. But we will be able to save some and prevent this from continuing, from growing, from being a simple way out of a sometimes difficult problem.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. GURNETT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak for a few minutes in support of this motion. I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton Beverly for the personal sharing and the things he has just said, and also compliment the Member for Calgary Buffalo for his very good presentation, which I think thoroughly covered a very important and difficult subject and reminded us of a lot of things we need to keep in mind as we make a decision related to this motion.

As has been said, it's important that our willingness to talk about suicide is here now. It's not something that's considered to be out of sight and out of mind. We can share and discuss it openly. Suicide of young people is something that especially disturbs me, because it's sad in a way that no other kind of death is. It's hasty. You so often have a sense that if they had just understood more, a different decision would have been made. That ties in very much to the motion at hand. Also, the whole issue of the waste, the loss of valuable contributions that could be made to our society by young people who make decisions like this, troubles me as a person who has spent a lot of years as a teacher.

We've heard some of the statistics reviewed and summarized, Mr. Speaker, and should be frightened and concerned when we realize that in the particular age group involved, we're looking not at some disease as the second major source of death but, in fact, at personal choices that result in this happening. I think this motion is a good beginning in a process that could make a real change in that situation. In this motion we recognize that it's not a negative thing to face something unpleasant and then to try to deal effectively and creatively with it. That requires a kind of courage, but in fact things improve when we're willing to face that kind of struggle.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to take time to talk any further about the good reasons this motion is important, but I want to say that if we move into an action such as this motion proposes, it's very, very important that what we do is done well. This is a subject that has a lot of potential to have a real impact on people's lives, and it's important to approach it carefully and in a way that gives us the best possible assurance that we'll be successful in what we undertake.

Over the years as a teacher, I've been involved on various occasions in teaching units on death and dying, and I can certainly affirm the kinds of comments that have been referred to. Facing something like this and looking at it with young people has an effect. On several occasions I've had young people come to me and indicate that it was helpful to look at these things and talk about them, that it made a difference for them. If that's the perception of young people, I think we need to take that strongly under advisement. It's interesting that at the same time that young people have had those comments, there have sometimes been comments of disapproval from others, in some cases parents of young people. I think it's very good to see that the motion refers specifically to targeting this action not just to young people but to the parents involved as well. It's going to be vital that they be supportive. Parents are a very key part of a young person's life, and if they're able to participate thoughtfully in young people's lives in areas like this that are so important, the chance is that maybe there can even be some mending of relationships, some rebuilding of bridges between parents and children. In some areas of our society that's a source of real difficulty as well. We don't know all the problems that may lead to.

As I said, if we're going to extend an action such as this motion proposes, it must be done in the best possible way. We have to approach it with a real desire to be excellent at it. I want to briefly mention four things that must be kept in mind as we think about this motion. First of all, I think we have to be aware that there's a continuing need for research. Some basic parts of the subject of suicide have been well looked at, but there's still a lot we don't know. We've been reminded this afternoon about why people make a decision to attempt or to commit suicide. There are things we don't know about the subject of suicide in rural areas, where it seems to be occurring in areas that have never before experienced it. There's also a need to do more research into how we can reduce the occurrence of suicide. I know that talking about doing research doesn't sound very exciting, Mr. Speaker. On the other hand, the danger is that a subject like this could be dealt with in a sensationalized way; then inaccuracies result, and the potential benefits are lost. So it's important to realize that if we move in this direction, we have to be prepared to fund and encourage and support ongoing research.

In suicide awareness, I think it's also important to realize we're not talking about a limited program that's related to a small number of young people. What we're talking about in the larger picture is a preventive program that's built into the overall educational program for young people. That can centre around this building of positive self-concept. It should be a priority in school systems throughout this province that we take action and structure the schools so we're encouraging the development of a positive self-concept in young people.

Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned about directions we see in the educational system that may mean we can't make the kind of progress we need to make with a program like this when, at the same time, we increasingly see a school system that tends to emphasize success and performance as opposed to the intrinsic value of every human being regardless of their imperfections and shortcomings. If prevention is in fact at the heart of making sure we see the decline of youth suicide in this province, we have to face the fact that we don't do that only by a particular program that takes place on particular days in a health subject area; we do it by a school program where there is an emphasis on a positive

self-image, on real self-esteem on the part of every young person in the school, that their meaning as a person doesn't lie in their success as a student.

That leads to the third point I'd like to make. If we act on a motion like this, it's going to be necessary to spend money to in-service teachers, so they are as good as possible at delivering a program like this, and to develop and continue to improve the curriculum so it meets the needs that exist at various age levels and in the changes that are happening in our society. We have to be sure we don't set up a self-fulfilling prophecy, Mr. Speaker, where we bring in a program and it doesn't produce results because it's isolated in a little corner of children's lives. We have to look at an overall approach where we're encouraging, with families and teachers, an esteem that's given to young people in this province that will let them realize they are important, they are valuable.

Finally, I'd like to mention that perhaps the most valuable resource in dealing with young people who are thinking about suicide is the assistance of those people who have attempted suicide and are still with us. When we look at a motion like this, I think we have to also be prepared to consider supporting an expanded role for counselling and therapy, so we can take advantage of young people who have had to face these kinds of situations and are still with us, as the kind of valuable resource they could be.

It's important to do something and do it well, Mr. Speaker. I commend the motion before us. As a result of this motion, as a result of a growing concern on the part of families and school systems in this province, I hope that a few years from now we'll not see the kinds of statistics we see now, with increasing rates of both suicide and attempted suicide, with figures for suicide in this province that are amongst the highest in Canada, but instead will be looking at a situation where we see a definite change, where we see that young people, through the support of actions by this government and by other agencies in society, are deciding to take their part as positive members of society. We'll all be winners as a result of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DR. CARTER: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in the debate with regard to Motion 204, and I commend the Member for Calgary Buffalo for bringing it forward, for allowing all members if not to debate the motion at least to give it some very sober thoughts and to see how it affects their lives and how it has perhaps affected their lives in time past. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to our dear friend the MLA for Edmonton Beverly how eloquent he was, but "eloquent" is a word which does not fully express the sensitivity and concern evidenced in his personal experience and his courage in sharing his feelings with the Assembly.

The matter of suicide is to be seen in a societal context. For example, there are some societies where suicide is not seen as evil. It doesn't take too much thought to reflect upon the action of kamikaze pilots in the Second World War. In that instance suicide was regarded as an honourable death, an honour to the nation and an honour to self. In some parts of the world, even today, suicide is seen as an honourable death — depending of course on the circumstance.

Motion 204 gives us an opportunity for dialogue. I'll make reference to this a bit later in my remarks on the issue, because in actual fact I spent some time last night speaking on the telephone with my two daughters, who are now aged 25 and 22. In terms of an opportunity for dialogue,

it became a very, very meaningful experience for me and, I believe, for them.

The motion really deals with the matter of personhood, how you and I understand ourselves, how we see and value our self-worth. When we think from our own interpretation of that, we can extrapolate to see how it affects other persons, no matter what age they may be. There are many times in our own lives when we experience feelings of worthlessness. For example, we may feel that our peers in the Legislative Assembly do not understand us, that they do not understand the various other kinds of talents we bring to this challenge of being a member of the Assembly. In our personal relationships within families, for example, there are many times when we really feel we are not properly appreciated. Actually, we may feel that we are not appreciated at all. But then we have to pick up the mirror and try to reflect upon how often we're too busy to say to other persons, not only within our family but in terms of all the relationships of our life: "I value you. I love you. You are important to me." No matter what age we are, no matter what degree of maturity we have supposedly arrived at, each of us needs to be reassured by other people's valuation of us. It's out of that that we then can grow in our understanding of our defects and our very real positive values and attributes.

Many people who have studied suicide say that one of the major factors is the breakdown of families. That may indeed be true, but that isn't necessarily the reason for all suicides. There may be a rupture of a relationship; for example, you've broken up with your best friend or lost the love of your life. Oftentimes that may be the thing that tips the balance as to whether you stay or go, in terms of the precious gift of life. More often than not it's this matter of a lack of self-awareness and finally a sense of hopelessness with regard to your personal situation at any given moment. As has been mentioned by other members in the debate, there is the misuse of alcohol and drugs or, for that matter, even the misuse of motor vehicles.

To my mind, there are some instances where suicide is indeed not only understandable but probably quite understandably the right approach to take under the circumstances. I think of severe illness, excruciating pain, especially with an elderly person, where you believe you have lived your life and are totally alone. Perhaps that is the time to decide to pull the pin. In that respect, I share with the Assembly a poem which I wrote in 1978. It came as the result of the suicide of one of the residents of Carter Place in Calgary. This is a person I had come to know.

Cleanliness Next to Godliness?

Even at eighty Walter was a tidy man
his room was sparse yet spotless
his clothes threadbare but clean.

Each day at ten he slowly limped
along grey concrete clad streets
stooping now and then to pick up litter.

Last week's diagnosis read cancer.
Kneeling over tiled bathtub he sighed
raised his arm then pulled the trigger.

Even within my lifespan, in the early part of my 25 years of ordained ministry, there was a time when a known suicide was not allowed to be buried in consecrated ground.

I always regarded that as utter nonsense, as evidence of an unloving attitude to what Christian love is all about.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

There's emotional trauma for the person who is in agony which brings them close to the decisive moment of committing suicide. As has been mentioned, there is trauma for the survivor: "How could I have helped? There must have been some signal I should have read. I should have stopped long enough to spend the extra time. I could have done something about it." You recognize that those comments I just made are the same kind of reaction we have to the death of any person under any possible circumstance. Somehow the emotional trauma is intensified with respect to a suicide. How could I have helped? That's when we're thrown back to the other question of trying to have our eyes and ears open to be able to respond to each other each moment we travel through this interesting journey of life.

I remember the one occasion when I thought I would attempt suicide. I was an old man of 10 years. At that time, there was a very cute English girl who had been evacuated from England because of the blitz. She came to Regina, Saskatchewan, and I was head over heels in love for the first time in my life. There was a birthday party for that nice little girl, and I wasn't invited. I went to that party — almost. I went down the back alley. I had a piece of rope and was able to tie one end of it around my neck. I climbed up the telephone pole; remember, they used to have spikes you could climb up. Fortunately, I was unable to figure out how to tie the other end to the pole, at least that's my rationalization, and then I decided she was a cute little girl but it really wasn't worth it after all.

I also remember a couple of years later arriving early at a Sunday school picnic near Wascana Lake in Regina, just in time for the ambulance to pull away, having cut down a man who had hung himself. He'd been drinking too much vanilla extract. Then I began to realize the difference between my silly little attempt at suicide, which was nothing more than a passing thought, and the actuality of seeing a dead person, of seeing the finality of death. Working for an undertaker later on, I saw enough finality of death. That's one of the difficulties with television or movies today. You see death all the time, but you really don't understand the nuts and bolts, the finality of it. Some of the suicides happen that way, because people don't truly appreciate that death means no coming back.

I also realize that on another occasion one of my good friends used me in an interesting way. He committed suicide in Winnipeg. He was the organist and choirmaster in my second parish. He was having economic difficulty. He had a wife and three daughters. He finally decided that he would do himself in, but he didn't do it until after he and I were very, very close friends and he knew that his wife and daughters could rely on me to look after them and help them through the after event. Then my good friend went out and drowned himself. That's a learning experience I wish I had never had.

I mentioned that in terms of this motion I spent a fair amount of time last night talking with my two daughters. The eldest is now 25. I asked her if any of her classmates from high school days had committed suicide. She answered yes. One boy was 16 years old and in high school at the time. He had too much to drink and went out and did himself in by crashing the car. A girl who was 17 went

the route of sleeping pills and slashing her wrists. My daughter Heather said that this was one of the things she found with her age group. Oftentimes people didn't realize the finality of death, and if they had too much to drink, all of a sudden the thought would come out of their subconscious: "What's the use of living anyway? Why don't I just twist the wheel and do myself in?" Under the influence of alcohol one tends to get a little bit too careless behind the wheel of a car, and sometimes a suicide which really isn't planned just happens.

One classmate of our youngest daughter Maureen attempted suicide at 17 a number of times, by taking sleeping pills and slitting her wrists. In this case this girl was quiet, she had good grades, and she was well liked. No one seemed to understand why she was eventually successful in her suicide attempts.

Last night I asked both my daughters if they had ever thought of committing suicide. First off, there was a silence. "Hey Dad, how come you're asking a question like that?" was in the silence. I'm fortunate in my relationship with them, because they then said yes. I know when it was with our oldest daughter, a time of real upheaval in terms of the family when the daughter left home at age 16. She said, "Yes, I thought about it, because I realized that if the rest of my life was going to be such a mess and full of such anxiety and frustration and pressure, then I didn't want to be part of it." I said, "How did you think about doing it?" She said, "I thought about taking sleeping pills, but then I realized that life was more important; I had to keep trying." I'm here to say that it took her until age 24 to get it all straightened away, but that's one very interesting human being, whom I'm proud to call my daughter and my friend.

Our youngest daughter said: "Yes, I thought about it once; that was a case of lost love. Then I realized that life is very precious to me too, and it isn't worth it to try to take pills or slit my wrists or anything else." That same daughter, who is also a very neat individual, works in a bank in downtown Calgary. She said that one of her customers is involved with the teenage distress line in Calgary as one of the trainers and counsellors. They have talked on a number of occasions about how teenagers who have been trained are working on those distress lines and doing a tremendous job.

In 1982-83 in Alberta there were 388 identifiable suicides in the total population. In the same year in Canada there were 3,755 deaths. In the following year, the '83-84 period, there were 424 suicides in the total population of Alberta. It's estimated that for every person who is successful, especially in the adolescent age range, 50 others try. It's also interesting from the stats that three times more men than women commit suicide.

I think one of the other factors that really distorts the statistics is this. There were 441 motor vehicle deaths in '83-84. Any of you who have been present at the crash scene of a vehicle where death has occurred realize there is a lot of question in the eyes of the law as to whether it was an intentional death or whether it was indeed accidental.

Alcohol and drug abuse are indeed factors within our society. As the Social Care Facilities Review Committee moves throughout the province, in facilities for young offenders we find that alcohol and drug usage, along with depression and confusion of identity, are things our young people and people of all ages have to deal with. The Social Care Facilities Review Committee is very pleased that AADAC is going to go ahead and build a 50-bed facility

at Grande Prairie, which should be completed by the fall of '87. That follows one of the recommendations of our committee which was put forward in our report of 1981.

There are many warning signals with respect to potential suicide. Stage 1 is identified as depression or prolonged anxiety states, runaway episodes, antisocial behaviour out of the norm, a very low energy level, a change in sleeping or eating habits, and a significant decline in school or work performance. I'm sure hon. members have found some of those symptoms to be part of their own lives from time to time. Stage 2 is the cry for help: giving away prized possessions; preoccupation with death in the form of music, poetry, or writing; statements about feeling worthless or being a burden to the family; and talking about suicide.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I know that hon. members have listened to the debate with great attention and have reflected upon it as it affects them and their relationships. In terms of my 25 years of counselling, my final words are these: stop — take time to value yourself; take time to value the people you know; take time to listen to them; shut up and listen. Then do something you probably don't do enough of; I don't do enough of it: reach out and hug them. In essence, the motion is terrific, but what it boils down to in the end is: value yourself and value each other.

MRS. KOPER: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo brought this motion to the Assembly today. I feel it is not only timely but, as he said, it provides a forum whereby the awareness of the public can be increased in a suicide prevention and awareness week in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the statistics have already been reviewed by other colleagues who have spoken on the problem. I believe we should also consider it extremely timely. Research has indicated that there is a relationship between completed suicides and economic difficulties and the unemployment rate. There is some evidence that these problems affect the composure and the stability of the family in such a way that this alternative seems the only way out.

I was also impressed with the statistic that there were 50 to 100 attempts where one fatality occurred. The other statistic I think we must always remember is that it is the second highest cause of death. We're constantly concerned about automobiles being very dangerous and causing death in this age group. I believe we should take this one very, very seriously.

In regard to that, I feel we should first talk about some of the reasons we see in our society. Why this is happening? I've already mentioned the economic trends and difficulties that lead people to believe that everyone has written them off. I think a second factor was referred to by the Member for Edmonton Beverly; that is, the impression teenagers get when they watch television and see that life problems are presented and fixed in a very short time — half an hour. When the problems of a young person go on over an extended period, sometimes their frustration heightens and they feel a sense of failure because they haven't been able to solve their problems. I also feel that we put tremendous pressure on teenagers for academic success and never spend too much time trying to help them handle the problem of academic failure.

Some members have talked about the loss of a friend or a pet of importance. Some members have talked about chronic illness. Another one I think we must face in Alberta is the instability of the family structure at this time and the importance of the family to the resolution of adolescent

problems. I think this is crucial to the understanding of the period of adolescence.

Former speakers have also talked about instances in Alberta where we have done a great deal to become leaders in this field. I, too, would like to commend the present and past ministers of Social Services and Community Health for the formation of the advisory committee in 1981. Their report, presented by Dr. Menno Boldt, gave a very clear path and an outline of what to do, and many of these things have happened. The intent was to look after the emergencies in the lives of people and offer teams of trained professionals for treatment and follow-up services. This is being done in our province to a great degree by many volunteers.

It was my pleasure to open the suicide crisis centre at the Salvation Army in Calgary and spend some time with Major Ostrow, who talked about the problems as they came in. One of the questions I asked was: "What is the problem these people identify?" He talked about the hopelessness, but he also mentioned a factor that has been mentioned by one of the previous members. That is, more frequently than not alcohol was involved in the problems these people face when they telephone. When they reach out for the telephone, they're pretty well at the end of their line. They need someone on the other end to help them over the rough spot, to give them confidence. People with alcohol and drug-related problems are really the most frequent users of the distress line.

It is also interesting that the Alberta government sponsors AADAC. AADAC takes a very firm stand in trying to build self-confidence and the feeling in an individual that they can handle their lives through the problems that are encountered with drug and alcohol abuse. I see AADAC as a very important instrument in trying to prevent suicide in this province as well.

Mr. Speaker, a second organization I have had a great deal to do with in my capacity as MLA is the Canadian Mental Health Association. In discussing suicide prevention programs with Yvonne Stanford, the Calgary director, I found that their main focus is intervention, counselling, and follow-up. They felt strongly that all three areas are extremely important — first of all, counselling the person in a crisis, and follow-up for the person and helping the families in cases where there was a fatality.

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken of two organizations I feel are extremely important. The Canadian Mental Health Association has done a lot of things on another tack, which I guess are positive, proactive steps, providing public awareness and comprehensive information on prevention, intervention, and help to families. They've provided articles, books, and films. These are all available for people to find out more about it and to bring them to the attention of others, if they need them. This association also gives a training program for the development of materials that can be used in the prevention of suicide and also provides a service for the selection and screening of candidates or volunteers to act in suicide prevention and offers a very complete and thorough training program for them.

Mr. Speaker, I feel strongly that these efforts are most appreciated in our province, but I also feel that perhaps we need to do more in the co-ordination and support of these agencies, making it a total community effort. I've mentioned the three agencies working in the field. I know there are many more. I hope we continue to make efforts to co-ordinate what they are doing for the benefit of the community.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to talk a bit about the thrust of the motion to expand the suicide prevention program to all junior and senior high schools in Alberta. In schools in which I worked as a teacher I was affected in two instances by the sad death of young children. In both cases we feel they were directly attached — who knows? — to something they saw on television; again, a feeling of hopelessness, that they couldn't handle what was happening in their lives.

I guess early adolescents are more social than philosophical, more impulsive than reflective when they talk about what they are going to do. In the research conducted for the Alberta Secondary Education Review, they describe a point that I think we should remember. This is basic to all programs offered in junior and senior high.

There still exists a strong need for the group togetherness or affiliation they experienced as early adolescents to prevent loneliness and isolation.

Further, it says:

Although youth generally come to a realistic acceptance of their limitations, for some it deteriorates into a form of self-pity. They hate the society which undervalues them. Since the adolescent emotions become stronger, sorrow, jealousy, anger and hatred, add to the stress of the period. This increased stress can lead to all forms of self-destructive behavior which can escalate during middle adolescence.

We have causes there for suicides, homicide, drug-related deaths, physical assaults, and as severe things as depression, schizophrenia, and paranoia.

Mr. Speaker, this is a sensitive period of everyone's life, and I feel our schools have to do more than recognize it in a program. We have to do far more to embed the kind of support needed for persons attempting suicide. Our Department of Education has made other approaches; for instance, a survey last spring, responded to by over 10,000 Albertans. It was generally felt that parents should be far more involved in educating their children. They felt that parents and communities should have a great deal of influence with their local school systems and that there should be parent advisory councils in every school.

Mr. Speaker, I feel very supportive of the ideas expressed by the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview, in that the kinds of positive activities and attitudes in our school should be built so they will encourage life enhancement, an attitude that should pervade every corner of our lives. Persons attempting suicide are not oriented toward death; they seek to escape a situation that has extended beyond their grasp.

Former speakers, particularly the hon. Member for Edmonton Beverly, have touched us all deeply. While I thoroughly support the intent of this motion and praise the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo for bringing it forward, I hope it could be broader, that in our reform of the school curriculum and restructuring the School Act we will include the development of attitudes that will ensure that every student is important, every student matters.

Many years ago Dr. David Miyauchi, a psychiatrist in Calgary, spoke to a group of teachers. He talked about the stress teachers had. He talked about teachers playing in a ball game where they changed the rules every once in a while and nobody told them about the change. This also happens to students, and Dr. Miyauchi very skillfully brought his audience of 2,000 teachers to the point that they should be looking at the students. Just one voice, just one person, reaching out in a time of need, in a time of crisis, can prevent something like this. Mr. Speaker, I recommend to all members of the Assembly that we remember this in our

lives: when we see someone who is lonely, isolated, we reach out and touch them.

MR. SZWENDER: Mr. Speaker, we're addressing a very difficult topic today, and certainly the words of the previous speakers give strong evidence to that. A lot of care and thought was put into those words, expressing the problems related to suicide. Most of us, I would say, at some point in our lives have had to face the difficulty of accepting the suicide of someone close to us. I commend the Member for Calgary Buffalo for bringing forward the motion for debate in the Legislature, for allowing us all to express our experiences, and for bringing it up for consideration for the government in its future deliberations.

Mr. Speaker, as a teacher of many years, I have been involved in a number of incidents which certainly make the words of former speakers in this Assembly very relevant to me. I know of at least three of my former students — they weren't students at the time, but I knew them or had previously taught them — that we were informed had committed suicide. Inevitably one sits down and ponders the question: was there something different about these individuals at the time that you knew them; were there any signs at the time you taught them that these people could have been helped or some way had a change in their attitude or mental health that would have averted their deaths? It's always very, very difficult.

The one incident that comes to mind most effectively is when I received a note from a student saying — I don't remember the exact wording, but it was certainly left very clear that this person was contemplating suicide. It's always rather difficult to determine by observing these students whether somebody is suicidal. In high school the classes change every hour. You may have five or six different classes dealing with 100 or 150 students a day. It's really quite difficult to establish any good rapport with students in the way the younger grades may be able to, in the sense that the teacher is with them for a large portion of the day. When you get a note like this, you are concerned, because inaction could lead to somebody's death. At that point I realized that I was inadequately prepared to deal with this person. The only thing I could think of was referring them to the guidance office, but that in itself was difficult. That student had probably approached me because of a certain degree of trust, and referring them to another person, a guidance counsellor they might not know or have ever met, was certainly a difficult thing to do. Although the guidance counsellors are skilled and educated and trained to deal specifically with those problems, they often don't have individual contact with students. The problem is that they go by referral, and that is not exactly what they may want to do. Fortunately, that incident worked out well. I helped the student as much as possible and her home situation improved; I think she moved. Whatever happened, that situation turned out fortunately.

The point of my comments, Mr. Speaker, is that the motion as it reads puts on the educational system the onus of trying to be the forefront in detection in those cases where suicide is a possibility.

Be it resolved that the Assembly encourage the government to expand its suicide prevention program to all junior and senior high school [students] in Alberta . . .

Although the motion is extremely important, my concern at this point is that it places a very, very serious responsibility on the shoulders of the teachers. As the Member for

Edmonton Beverly expressed, individuals who are close to those who commit suicide often feel a great degree of guilt because they didn't do something or they weren't prepared to recognize signs or symptoms. I'm a little concerned that if teachers were given this responsibility through an increased program, there would be a great amount of apprehension on these teachers to do the best possible job of assistance. The problem would be, if there were a failure in detection, "Was I to blame?"

This is not to say that the program, as it would be determined, would not work. Detection is certainly something that all people should have greater skills at, because suicide is not a problem that's isolated only to teenagers. Although this motion addresses teenage suicide, suicide is a problem that runs through the strata of our society and, in fact, is a greater problem in particular segments of the population.

Suicide prevention week, as mentioned by the Member for Calgary Buffalo, would be a very important initiative. I think all citizens of our province and our nation should be made more aware of the difficulty suicide has become in our society, and all individuals should be prepared to act in any way they can.

Mr. Speaker, I want to present those words of caution, because as a teacher I don't know whether I would have the time, education, or preparation to fully deal with these problems if the statistics we've been given today were borne out by the frequency and the magnitude.

Mr. Speaker, in view of the many other comments I would like to make, I move to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: It is so ordered.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I believe that all hon. members are aware that the House will not sit this evening. Tomorrow afternoon the business of the House will be Committee of Supply. We will consider first the estimates of the Department of Agriculture, followed, in the very unlikely event that we conclude Agriculture tomorrow afternoon, by the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services.

[At 5:29 p.m., on motion, the House adjourned to Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.]