

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA****Bill 59  
Police Act**

Title: **Thursday, May 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. SPEAKER: I am pleased to draw the attention of the hon. members to the presence in the Speaker's gallery of the distinguished Ombudsman of Alberta, Mr. Brian Sawyer. He is accompanied by his executive assistant, Mr. David Greer. Would they kindly stand and receive our welcome.

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to my colleagues in the House, perhaps one of Calgary's most successful restaurateurs, a past president of the Greek community in the city of Calgary, and a successful businessman. I might add that I was recently very proud to learn that the Prime Minister of Canada had appointed him to the Canadian Council on Multiculturalism, and he was here today for a meeting with our Minister of Culture. As he stands, I'd ask my colleagues to give Mr. Larry Safaris a warm welcome.

**head: PRESENTING PETITIONS**

MR. STILES: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the petition of John and Wendy Ibbotson for the Paul Mark Ibbotson Adoption Act.

**head: INTRODUCTION OF BILLS****Bill 64****Municipal Government Amendment Act, 1985**

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce Bill 64, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 1985.

In addition to provisions in the Act which respond to the requests that have been made to us over the years by individual municipalities, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, we have responded in Bill 64, as we had indicated in the ministerial statement read earlier in this House by the Attorney General, to the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada relative to the federal Lord's Day Act. That response, Mr. Speaker, is contained in the amendments to the legislation which particularly provide for substantially increased levels of fines. In this Bill the fines that municipalities will be authorized to impose are increased from the maximum now of \$500 to a maximum, in the event of a third offense, of up to \$10,000.

[Leave granted; Bill 64 read a first time]

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 59, the Police Act.

This Bill introduces flexibility in the provision of police services in rural and small urban communities, allows for regional police services, and permits an Indian reserve to establish a provincially recognized police service. It also delineates the relationship between police commissions and municipal councils.

[Leave granted; Bill 59 read a first time]

**Bill 63  
Maintenance Enforcement Act**

MRS. KOPER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 63, the Maintenance Enforcement Act.

This Bill introduces a program for the enforcement of maintenance orders and will be a provincewide initiative designed to decrease the number of defaulted payments to holders of all enforceable orders and agreements, including those relating to matrimonial support, parental maintenance, custody by agreement to affiliation and maintenance orders.

It is the intention that all court appearances involving maintenance enforcement matters will be heard in the Court of Queen's Bench rather than, as formerly, within Provincial Court jurisdictions. In addition, certain decision-making powers will be delegated to the master in chambers. Another key feature of this program is that it will be incumbent on the person required to make payments to justify any non-payment rather than requiring the person who is to receive the payment to initiate the court action, as presently. In order to do this, Mr. Speaker, an office of the director of maintenance orders will be created. The director will have the power to initiate action when payments are in arrears and to exercise some discretion when circumstances change.

Registration in the system will be automatic after December 31, 1986, and the financial function of the program will be centralized and automation extensively used. Mr. Speaker, this Bill will consolidate all legislative provisions relating to the enforcement of maintenance and support orders contained in six other Acts and hopefully deal with these matters in a consistent and uniform manner.

Thank you.

[Leave granted; Bill 63 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: I should express some concern. Very often what we do is taken as a precedent. Almost a section-by-section description of Bills that are being introduced — that kind of attention to Bills is normally given when Bills are up for second reading.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 63 be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

**head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. SPEAKER: I have the honour to table the 18th annual report of the office of the Ombudsman of Alberta.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table a program for capital cost projects presented to us by the dandelion group yesterday.

**head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. ALEXANDER: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you, and through you to members of the House, 75 grade 6 students from Duggan elementary school, accompanied today by teachers Mr. Arnold Ostfield, Don Kulak, and Nelson Girard, and parent Mrs. Holt. These people were kind enough earlier today to allow me to have my picture taken with them, and so in a rejoinder for that I'd like them to stand in the members' gallery and receive the warm welcome of the House.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, 55 grade 6 students from Rimbey elementary school, Rimbey being a very fine town located in the beautiful Blindman valley. They are accompanied by group leader, Mrs. Jean Foster; teachers Mr. Ken Stemo and Mr. Walter Johnson; parents Mrs. Grutterink, Mrs. Ulveland, and Mrs. Hitchens. They seem to be enjoying the beautiful spring weather today and seeing various sites of educational interest in Edmonton. They are seated in the public gallery. I would ask that they now stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a pleasure for me today to introduce to you and other members of the Assembly three gentlemen who protect our Alberta streets and environment in many ways. I would like to introduce to you Dave Wismer, Sid Shields, and Norm Koch. They are presidents of the Calgary, Edmonton, and Alberta police associations. I would like them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**head: MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS****Department of Agriculture**

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, as hon. members are aware, last year winter arrived several weeks before we normally expect. Alberta's fresh vegetable producers were particularly hard hit. It is not surprising, then, that many fresh vegetable producers located all across the province are facing considerable hardship due to last year's early winter weather. Unfortunately, for these producers, crop insurance was simply not available. As a result, there is a distinct possibility some fresh vegetable producers might cease production this year. That concern, along with the fact that this sector has an important profile as a contributor to Alberta's food self-sufficiency, has led us to take action to see this industry through a difficult period.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to announce today a temporary incentive program to stimulate commercial fresh vegetable production in Alberta in 1985. Under the 1985 Alberta fresh vegetable production incentive program, eligible producers will receive direct grants equal to approximately one-third of their cost of production. The total cost of the one-year program is estimated at \$1.2 million.

Fresh vegetable production in Alberta was worth approximately \$5.6 million last year. Crops are usually grown for sale to wholesale and retail outlets in the province. Local fresh vegetable production also offers consumers a significant alternative to imported vegetables during summer, fall, and into winter. We hope this production will encourage our fresh vegetable producers to maintain and even expand their acreage in 1985. Currently, we estimate about 3,000 acres

of fresh vegetable crops will be eligible for incentive payments under this new program.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to note that a major effort has been made to establish an all-risk crop insurance policy for this type of production, something we have needed for some time. We have made considerable progress, and it now appears a policy for fresh vegetable producers will be offered by the Alberta Hail and Crop Insurance Corporation in 1986. Producers will then be in a position to insure their own production, eliminating the need for interim measures such as the program I am announcing today.

There are a number of guidelines producers must meet to be eligible for the incentive program. Among the most important are that producers be licensed by the Alberta Fresh Vegetable Marketing Board and that vegetables grown for processing or in a greenhouse are not eligible for incentive payments. As well, the first two acres of each crop grown by each producer are ineligible for payments. Complete details of the guidelines are available in a news release which has been distributed to each member.

Mr. Speaker, geography has not been especially kind to Alberta when it comes to fresh vegetable production. We have some major disadvantages, but where production is possible, it adds a significant dimension to our agriculture industry. With the introduction of the 1985 Alberta fresh vegetable production incentive program, I think we will have eased the worries of many producers so that fresh vegetable production in Alberta will continue to offer us that element of diversity in our agriculture industry.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, replying to the ministerial announcement, I certainly have no objections to the \$1.2 million that is given for our vegetable producers. As I understand it, it's a necessity if some of them are to stay in business. So I compliment the government for doing it. We've also helped the sugar producers, and I compliment the government for doing that. I wish I could have complimented them for the Peace River grain producers, but that's another matter.

I think the \$1.2 million is important, but I think the best part of this, as I look at it, has to do with the all-risk crop insurance, because my colleague and I have been lobbied. As I understand it, for the first time we're going to look into this for vegetable producers. I think that's probably even more significant than the \$1.2 million for the year. So I certainly applaud the government in this case but hope that in the future we'll look at all producers equally.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, in remarking on the ministerial statement by the Minister of Agriculture, one of the most important opportunities and potentials we have in southern Alberta is in the vegetable industry. At the present time, our vegetable producers of southern Alberta produce a little less than 15 percent of the total amount of vegetables consumed in Alberta, which means we have an opportunity to expand some 85 percent by a number of actions that could be taken and developments that will occur through research or innovation by the farmers of southern Alberta.

In terms of the action the minister has taken today, I think it's important that we hold that industry in place, because it's going to be a significant contributor to the economy of Alberta. The replacement that will be given in this coming year in terms of crop insurance is the right approach to go. If we can get government out of the business of agriculture by allowing farmers to insure their

own produce, that's the best thing that can happen. So I'm glad the minister has introduced that policy of crop insurance for vegetable growers at this time, which will certainly look after the ups and downs of that industry.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

**Job Creation Program**

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, flowing from the discussion yesterday about job creation. Would the minister clarify the situation precisely with regard to a special grant for water main improvement in the city of Edmonton and confirm, once and for all, that this government has completely rejected the option of special funding for this project, even though we're told it could create 5,000 person-years of work?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Utilities and Telecommunications may want to supplement my answer in that there are grant programs under his department relative to water and sewer matters that municipalities attend to throughout the province.

I do have certain responsibilities with respect to regional commissions, and we have, in fact, provided start-up grants to some successful initiatives that have taken place in the past couple of years for regional services in the area. Specifically with respect to the Department of Municipal Affairs, no authority exists within the department by virtue of legislation or our budget, which we went through the other evening, for the granting of funds to municipalities on a conditional basis, which condition would see those funds being expended on the construction of water or sewer mains or facilities.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, I will supplement my hon. colleague to this extent and would be pleased to get into it in a little more detail when the department's estimates come up before the House. The municipal water and sewage treatment grant program is limited to providing assistance to communities for both facilities and trunk lines but does not allow for cost sharing on what can normally be called the distribution system. The system within a municipality is deemed to be the responsibility of the municipality. There are many villages, towns, and cities across the province that do have systems that need replacing from time to time. It is deemed that those systems can be replaced and that the costs can be provided either through a frontage tax, which is used in many of the communities, or through the general taxation. That decision is at the discretion of the municipality in question. So the program that the hon. member refers to does not extend to the degree that the hon. member has required.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question to either minister. In view of the fact that we have record high unemployment across the province but specifically in this city, could the minister not have a special program without going through the bureaucracy he's talking about? Is it not possible that we could put a special program into this area to create jobs now and in the long run save money for both Edmontonians and Albertans?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, I'd be very pleased to get into that in some detail during the department's estimates. I

think at that time the hon. Leader of the Opposition will see the very substantial commitment this government has made. I'll use as just one example the capital regional sewage treatment system, where we're providing, I believe, in excess of \$140 million of assistance to the communities around the city of Edmonton so they can be tied into the new regional sewage treatment plant. Those funds are being made available, have been over the past couple of years, and have created hundreds of jobs in the Edmonton region for that very purpose.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. That's all very well and dandy, but we're talking about exceptional circumstances. Unemployment here is still high. I'm asking for special funding, not the estimates. My question to either minister: has the city of Edmonton requested special help in this area, and have we given them a response? [interjection]

I'll have to ask either minister. Maybe the Minister of Municipal Affairs was asleep; the other minister didn't seem to know. Has the city of Edmonton requested special help for water main improvement in the city, and has a letter or any response been given to the city in this matter?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the Leader of the Opposition has chosen a specific minister to pose the question to.

The city of Edmonton has, in fact, with respect to its involvement with the PCM, indirectly made submissions in that respect. I don't know if I would categorize those submissions as being specifically to the provincial government, but there has been representation made to the federal government on behalf of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities with respect to an overall contribution by the federal government in this area.

In saying that, Mr. Speaker, during the course of my comments yesterday, I did indicate that the municipalities do have the borrowing authority and the Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation through which they can borrow money at the lowest possible rate. Having made the decision that there are upgrading steps they want to take with water, sewer, roads, sidewalks, lighting, or what have you, they are very free to approach the Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation and obtain funds for that particular purpose.

Nothing in our legislation prevents that. After all, those are amongst the major functions of municipalities when it comes to local government. If local government reaches the conclusion that their responsibilities require that they make those decisions and embark upon those expenditures, they have the capacity to provide for the borrowing if necessary, the taxing if necessary, or the paying out of reserves if necessary, for those expenditures. We would of course encourage municipal governments to make those decisions where necessary.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister saying it's the government's policy that this provincial government, which has over \$14 billion in the heritage trust fund, should be encouraging other levels of government to borrow if they're having problems with water main or other construction projects?

MR. KOZIAK: Now that is an interesting question, Mr. Speaker, when it's framed against the comment that the provincial government has \$14 billion in the trust fund, because it suggests either a complete misunderstanding of

the nature of the fund or an unwillingness to find out. Is the hon. Leader of the Opposition suggesting that we should now contact the municipalities and school boards and ask them that, notwithstanding that they have a contract which requires them to pay by debentures to the Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation moneys over five, 10, 15, 20, 25, or 30 years, the Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation should demand of the cities that they repay that money back so the Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation can give the money back to the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust fund so we can relend that money to the cities? You can't spend money twice. Now that may be NDP philosophy, that may be NDP economic thought, but you cannot spend a dollar twice.

What, in fact, exists in the Heritage Savings Trust Fund are loans to the Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation, loans to the Alberta Opportunity Company, loans to the Agricultural Development Corporation, loans to the Alberta Home Mortgage Corporation. The only way that money can be lent again is if the current borrowers repay it. Now, what are you going to do? Are you suggesting that we should impose a retroactive law that says, "Notwithstanding that you've agreed to pay it over five, 10, 15, 20 years, we want it now"?

DR. BUCK: Julian for Premier.

MR. SPEAKER: I realize that the hon. minister's answer went somewhat beyond the scope of some answers, but I must say in all candor that, given the nature of the question, there was no way I could feel justified in intervening.

MR. MARTIN: Fair enough. After that rather smug and complacent answer, as the minister was campaigning there, the point is that average Albertans understand precisely what we're talking about. Whether the minister wants to throw in a red herring or not, it's precisely what he did. My question is this: is the minister saying, once and for all, clearly, that there will be no extra help at all with the water mains in Edmonton from this government, period?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition suggests that we should reduce the budget to the Department of Education, for example, and take the moneys that we're providing there for the education of children to build water mains, he should make that point. But I said that we have presented the estimates of the departments, that we've presented a very important, balanced budget that shows expenditures of \$10 billion in funds this year, including substantial capital budgets of \$2.7 billion. There is a responsibility on municipal governments to respond to those levels of authority that are within their jurisdiction. To those that are within ours, we have responded.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Followed by a supplementary by the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry.

MR. MARTIN: Only the Minister of Municipal Affairs could go from education to water mains. Next we'd be in the sewer, I'm sure.

My question then is — if I have only one left. I have a number of them here. I'll direct it to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. Can the minister advise

if any studies at all have been done on the merit, cost, or job creation potential of roofing Commonwealth Stadium?

MR. CHAMBERS: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that facility is a property that is under the purview of Public Works.

MR. COOK: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: Could I follow up from that?

MR. SPEAKER: We've spent considerable time on the first question. We're almost on another topic, it seems. Perhaps if there's time, we can come back to this topic. In the meantime, might we have a supplementary from the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry.

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Could he advise if his department has been monitoring the allocation of the surplus funds from the development and sale of lands in the land assembly in Mill Woods that the city has accumulated and whether those surplus funds that the city has have been applied to the problems in the Mill Woods sewer system that the city incurred, acting as developer?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, I don't know that I can provide the answer to that question, although I sympathize with the position that I interpret from the question being put forward.

MRS. FYFE: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Utilities and Telecommunications. Has the city of Edmonton applied to become part of the regional water and sewage program?

MR. BOGLE: No, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. FYFE: Mr. Speaker, are there other municipalities within the Edmonton region that have applied and to date have not been approved for tie-ins to the regional systems?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, in the original concept the towns of Morinville and Gibbons were to be included. Those communities were notified earlier this year that they would not be included in the program. I believe both communities have some further concerns and, with the assistance of their MLA, will be meeting with me in due course to discuss their particular circumstances.

MR. MARTIN: I'd like to continue with the first set of questions in the second set, if I may, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to go over to the Minister of the Environment and look at the job creation part of Environment. On April 3 I asked the Minister of the Environment if he had any intention of sitting down with city of Edmonton officials to review possible cost-sharing arrangements on a pipeline from the Rosedale water treatment plant to the E.L. Smith plant, which would be used to alleviate the water quality problems there and create jobs. In the ensuing month, has the minister reviewed the idea yet or had any meetings on it, and does he have any estimate of how many jobs this might create?

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asked a number of questions. With regard to specifically funding such a project, that would be something which the city would have to discuss with my colleague the hon. Minister

of Utilities and Telecommunications. I do not have any idea as to the job creation of that specific suggestion.

MR. MARTIN: It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that I would be rather interested in this. I suggest the minister do something about it. Has the minister undertaken any projects at all in the planning stage with regard to cleaning up river waters in Alberta, as opposed to only picking up the litter along the river? I suggest this would have a lot of job creation, and it's things we're going to have to do in the future.

MR. BRADLEY: In the past, Mr. Speaker, I believe I've responded in the House with regard to some of the initiatives of the province over the last six years since 1979, through the program which was under the Department of the Environment and now with the Department of Utilities and Telecommunications. Some \$600 million have been provided to municipalities to assist them with water treatment and for treating sewage effluent.

The capital region sewage treatment facility to serve the capital region, which improves the water quality in the North Saskatchewan River, has been alluded to in the House today. I believe some \$146 million has been expended on that specific system to improve water quality. We've discussed some of those issues in the House before. The hon. Member for Clover Bar raised it. We identified that the two major concerns, in terms of effluent into the North Saskatchewan River, were the outfalls of St. Albert and Fort Saskatchewan, which will be resolved with the improvements which will be coming on stream through the capital region sewage system.

MR. MARTIN: I'm a little confused by the answer. Is the minister then saying that the pollution quality is up to date in this province, that there would be no benefit at all in putting more money into that to clean up the rivers, that there's nothing there to do, and that this wouldn't create jobs? That's what I hear him saying. Am I correct?

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, there is a program through the Department of Manpower, the Alberta environment employment program, which a number of municipalities, citizen groups, and community groups have applied to. Some of that is being applied to clean up rivers, in terms of automobile bodies which may be in them and other things which people have placed in them over a period of time. The other sources of effluents into river systems include municipal sewage outfalls and that type of thing. I explained the very generous funding which the province has provided in this area over a period of six years. In terms of industrial emissions, I understand that with the licences which are in place there's very high compliance with those licences, over some 97 percent, I believe, in terms of industrial outfalls into our river systems in the province.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Everything is generous, and everything is the best in this province. I don't understand why we have so much unemployment.

Let me move to the Minister of Utilities and Telecommunications. It's with regard to Genesee. I read his answers from yesterday. Can he assure this Assembly that although the government is awaiting ERCB advice on it, the government itself has no objection to the commissioning of the power and the go-ahead for the project?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, I answered questions yesterday. The hon. member might wish to read *Hansard*.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. What I got from the minister's answers is that they're awaiting ERCB advice. My question specifically is: when the ERCB says go ahead with this, then the government would have no objection to it and would allow it to go on stream?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, I'm not prepared to answer hypothetical questions today any more than I was yesterday.

MR. BRADLEY: I'd just like to supplement a previous answer to the hon. leader with regard to expenditures. The Canadian Nature Federation recently did a survey of provinces and a report card on what provinces were doing in terms of a number of areas in environment. Alberta happened to place second overall in that report card across the country.

With regard to expenditures on pollution control, Alberta placed the highest. We got an A on that. We far exceeded the per capita expenditures of any other province in terms of our contributions to assisting municipalities with regard to pollution problems, specifically in the sewage treatment area. The next closest province was Ontario, which was considerably lower than Alberta in terms of per capita expenditures.

MR. MARTIN: Bully for you. Everything is wonderful, no pollution, and everybody is working in Alberta. Amazing, amazing.

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

MR. MARTIN: Yes, it might be.

MR. SPEAKER: It will be.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, can the Treasurer advise if it is still the position of this government that it will not provide Alberta investment division debentures at low interest to Edmonton Power for Genesee?

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I've spoken to that issue before. There are moneys available, and always have been, at a record rate in the country through the Municipal Financing Corporation for public works in municipalities. Traditionally those have not and will continue not to include utilities.

#### Sunday Shopping

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Attorney General. Could the hon. House Leader indicate whether the government is prepared to introduce government legislation at this time that will give small businesses in this province the opportunity or the choice as to whether or not they close on Sunday?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I think any law that is dedicated to Sundays only, as the hon. member posed his question, would probably not stand, indeed would be struck down by any court upon an application by someone, relative to the recent decision of the Supreme Court on religious freedom. It may be that there are other ways of attacking the same problem, and maybe the hon. member is thinking

of those other ways. I might just note that the hon. Member for Calgary North Hill has introduced a Bill suggesting that although the choice wouldn't be regulated to a specific day of the week, such as a Sunday, it might be possible to provide that at least some businesses, where there's a landlord/tenant situation, be regulated to the extent of not being required to open more than six days. Probably the need to do that would be less for business people who owned their premises. I shall be most interested in the hon. member's views when the debate on that private member's public Bill takes place.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. The private Bill the hon. minister refers to is 32nd on the Order Paper, which means it will not come up during this current session of the Legislature. Is the government prepared to introduce legislation similar to this or to legislation which is in place in Ontario — I believe it's called the public holiday Act — which would set aside one day during the week, at which time a private owner/operator of a business, say, in a mall or not, could have the store closed if they so desired, without any kind of recrimination from the owner of a mall?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, no consideration has been given to that up to the present time.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. I hold in my hand some 2,000 signatures on a petition which I received just before coming into the Assembly. We will file them properly tomorrow. Along with that was a letter to a number of owner/operators in malls. This specific one is from a mall in Edmonton. This is the edict: "Beginning May 13, 1985 [this] mall will be open the following hours," and Sunday is included.

Sunday hours are not optional and are directly enforceable under your [present] lease agreement.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister indicate what recourse those individuals faced with that lease agreement have, in terms of basic rights?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. and experienced member would know that a question asking people what their rights are is related to law and that that kind of advice should be sought outside the question period.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Has the minister reviewed the problem I have just raised, in terms of this letter, and is there any consideration of action by the government relative to the minister's findings?

MR. CRAWFORD: No, Mr. Speaker. There has been no consideration given up to this time in respect to trying to statutorily affect contracts of that type.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the House leader. Would the House leader consider a resolution by the government on the Order Paper which would consider the option of there being one day a week that businesses could close?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, the government has made no determination to proceed with such a resolution or such legislation. As I have indicated to the hon. member in answer to some of the previous questions today, I would hope, though, that at some point it's possible to debate the

issue raised in the private member's public Bill previously referred to.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. Has the minister or the department any studies or information to indicate what effect there is on the family unit when one or both breadwinners must work on a Sunday?

DR. WEBBER: No specific studies that I'm aware of in that regard, Mr. Speaker. I could take it as notice and check and report.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Manpower. Can the minister indicate if his department has done any studies to indicate if there's a positive effect on unemployment if people are forced to work on Sundays? Does it increase it or decrease it?

MR. ISLEY: If I'm understanding the question correctly, Mr. Speaker, the answer would be no.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister of small business. If the department has done any studies, can the minister indicate if there's any indication from those studies of the effect on small businesses when they must remain open seven days a week versus opening six days and closing one day?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, as I said in response to a question just last week by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, we're not doing any studies in that area. The document that was provided to me by the Leader of the Opposition was really a study done in England relative to the shops Act and the effect of Sunday closing on that. In that particular one, it said there was no significant increase or decrease in the number of jobs relative to Sunday opening in Great Britain.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Has the department done any studies on the effect in the United States or North America? Does the department have any information on that?

MR. ADAIR: To my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, we have not done any studies. I'd have to take the latter part of that as notice and respond.

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

MR. R. SPEAKER: In terms of Bill 267, did the hon. House leader say that there would be no consideration given to Bill 267 being a government Bill? Did I hear that correctly?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I indicated that up to the present time, the issue represented by Bill 267 has not been made the subject of government policy.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. Is the matter under consideration? Is it possible that during this session of the Legislature Bill 267 may become government legislation, or is the issue not an issue in the minds of the government?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, the answer to the latter part of the question about the government selecting that particular Bill as an item of government business would be that I don't foresee that happening and no consideration has been given to it. At the same time, I should say to the hon. member that I think he, the hon. Member for Calgary North Hill, and I might agree on the matter in our own private ways but, as to government policy, that has not been given any consideration.

MR. SPEAKER: We're running out of time. If we can, of course, we'll come back to whatever questions members want to ask.

#### **Farm Input Costs**

MR. BATIUK: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Agriculture. My question is whether the minister has considered trying to alleviate in any way the high costs of chemicals, looking at the high input costs in agriculture these days.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, all areas of farm input costs are of deep concern to the government. I've had discussions recently with the Minister of Agriculture from Saskatchewan. We have been discussing the option of asking for a meeting with the Canadian chemical association to have some discussion with them about the costs of chemicals and, I guess, have some tough words with them about how we feel about farm input costs and the whole area of chemical prices. The Minister of Agriculture is co-ordinating that meeting, and I'll be happy to report back after it has taken place.

MR. BATIUK: A supplementary question to the minister, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that all chemicals are being imported, and I guess the duties are quite high, has any consideration of duties on these chemicals been looked at?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, most of the chemicals are imported. I don't believe we produce any; we may do some formulation here in Alberta. I don't believe there are any duties or tariffs on agricultural chemicals at all.

#### **Southwestern Alberta Health Study**

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. Could the minister advise what impact the medical diagnostic review he announced last night in Pincher Creek will have on other Alberta communities which may have exposure to emissions from gas plants?

MR. SPEAKER: The way the question was phrased, I'm wondering if this is within the minister's official duties. It seems to me a matter of research that any hon. member might wish to undertake, or have undertaken on his behalf.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to take the question, because as minister responsible for community health I did announce last night the medical diagnostic review in the community of Pincher Creek. The study is a major one for the communities of Twin Butte, Hill Spring, Mountain View, and Glenwood and is designed to determine whether or not people in those communities are sicker or

healthier than Albertans in other communities. We're concentrating on this particular area, of course, because of the concerns the people had for many years because of their exposure to gas plant emissions. However, it is too early to indicate what impact this would have since the study is just getting under way. I would expect the results of it early next year.

MR. NELSON: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister explain the methodology being used in the medical diagnostic review?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of studies done over many years in that particular part of the province. However, there has been one of two things wrong: either the study has not been scientifically acceptable or the community has not accepted the results, primarily because of lack of involvement on the part of the people in the preparation for the study. In this particular one government is staying out of it, at arm's length, and we are having a very independent and objective review of the health concerns of the people in the four communities I mentioned. There will be a team of approximately 50 medical experts who will be examining the people from the four communities that I referred to over a 10-week period beginning June 1. They will be comparing the health of people in those four communities with two other communities in Alberta that will be selected shortly. We've gone to great lengths to assure that the government is at arm's length from the project, and we believe that we have a real blue-ribbon panel of medical and scientific experts involved in this particular community.

MRS. CRIPPS: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. In conjunction with their study, will the panel be doing an evaluation of the concerns that were raised in the hearings on the Lodgepole blowout last winter?

DR. WEBBER: No, Mr. Speaker. This particular scientific group will be examining the health concerns of the people in the four communities I referred to who are concerned about long-term exposures to emissions from gas plants, and they are working with the people in those communities to have the study address their particular concerns. Certainly, the results of the study would have an impact on other communities in the province where people are exposed to gas plant emissions. This is why we want to do a very, very thorough and comprehensive study to try to address once and for all the question of whether or not people who are exposed to gas plant emissions or live nearby are healthier or less healthy than people in other parts of the province.

MR. THOMPSON: Could the minister explain to the House why he brought in a group of scientists from McGill University to do that instead of giving the opportunity to the universities in Alberta?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, requests for proposals were sent out to 10 Canadian universities, including the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary. The proposal of Dr. Walter Spitzer of McGill University was accepted. He will be leading a team of scientists, doctors, and specialists from a number of universities in North America including the University of British Columbia, York University, Harvard University, Yale, the University of Texas, Rochester: many very significant schools of medicine from which we

do have the leading scientists and medical people to come to those communities to examine their health concerns.

MR. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, Dr. Spitzer claims that he needs 90 percent participation in this diagnostic review to make the results accurate. I expect they will, but if the communities do not participate to that extent, are any contingency plans in place to cover that situation?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, the member raises a very important question, because it's absolutely essential that everyone in those communities participates. Because of the small population bases we're dealing with there, it's essential to the project that we do get the 90 percent or more participation rate. The scientific team are involving the local people by setting up a local advisory committee to assist them in stressing the importance of the study to the people in the community. My conversations last night, and I believe the conversations of the members for Cardston and Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, indicated that the people would be coming out and participating and would be encouraging their neighbours also to participate in this study.

#### Auxiliary Hospital Rates

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. It concerns auxiliary hospitals and is based on the report just tabled by the Minister of Social Services and Community Health from the Provincial Senior Citizens' Advisory Council. The council has recommended that the initial no-cost 120-day stay in auxiliary hospitals be ended for those admitted on the basis of a permanent residence. Could the minister advise the Assembly if his department is actively considering the commencement of a daily charge for all those admitted to auxiliary hospitals?

MR. RUSSELL: We're not considering that proposal at this specific time, Mr. Speaker, but the rates charged residents are reviewed from time to time.

MR. GOGO: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The report explains or claims that many Albertans go into auxiliary hospitals rather than nursing homes or lodges because they can go in free for the first 120 days. Has the minister had any studies done that, in fact, would say that is true, that people are seeking admission to auxiliary hospitals because they're free?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I've heard that story and allegation from time to time. I'm not aware of any proof or evidence to back it up. It is true that because of the different rates in different kinds of hospitals it is possible to theoretically save money by moving from one to another, but I've never personally met anyone who has done that.

MR. GOGO: A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, while we're on the topic. Is the minister or the government considering increasing the daily rate for auxiliary hospitals at this time?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I said earlier that that's an item that's really ongoing throughout all the days of government; at least it has been as long as I've been involved. Those rates are always under review and taken in context with what's going on by way of total operating

costs, incomes, cost of living index, et cetera. So it's a matter that's under ongoing review at all times.

#### AMHC Mortgage Foreclosures

MR. GURNETT: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Housing and concerns published reports that Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation intends to foreclose on about 124 rental properties in the province in the near future. Does the minister have any rough estimate of how much this will increase the nonpaying liabilities of the housing corporation?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I also read the article in the *Edmonton Journal*. The Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation presently provides financing by way of mortgages to over 500 multiple-family rental projects in the province, totalling slightly more than 2,700 housing units. In the course of 1984, statements of claim were filed on 34 projects, and I believe to date in 1985 statements of claim have been filed on an additional seven projects. I believe it's a total of about 41 for which statements of claim have been filed. In 1984 final orders were granted on four projects of 65 rental housing units.

There is some difficulty with arrears on rental projects, Mr. Speaker, and the corporation responded by undertaking a number of measures. The first measure was to work with the landlords to accommodate them during this period of high vacancy rates and rental rates that are below economic levels, and many landlords are now providing their net cash flow to the corporation plus subsidizing their payments. In addition, we provided a policy whereby with a 90-day penalty the landlords could write down their mortgage interest rate to 12.5 percent. Some landlords had difficulty meeting the 90-day cash requirement in order to write down their interest rates. Members will recall that in 1981 and '82 interest rates were very high. So very recently the board of the corporation recommended to the government, and we concurred, to allow the 90-day penalty to be added to the principal.

So our efforts at trying to achieve work-outs with the landlords rather than acquiring properties by way of foreclosure are continuing. In some cases we cannot avoid it, and that's why the numbers of statements of claims I indicated to the hon. member have been filed.

MR. GURNETT: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. In connection with the 90-day penalty and the interest write-down, can the minister confirm whether or not a landlord in arrears with payments is still eligible for the penalty and the write-down?

MR. SHABEN: I thought I had made that clear. In some cases some landlords or owners of projects had difficulty providing the cash for the 90-day penalty, and in those cases we'll allow an addition of that 90-day penalty to the principal. Those sorts of arrangements are being made based on the long-term viability of the project being ultimately successful. So judgment decisions are being made with respect to whether statements of claim are filed or work-outs are done in a variety of ways.

MR. GURNETT: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister again. It's good to hear the efforts made to reassure owners. I wonder if the minister can also clarify the situation with regard to damage deposits paid by tenants



of these properties. Can the minister assure the Assembly that tenants in properties that end up being foreclosed on by the Crown are paid the full amount of their damage deposit?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to check further on that. My understanding is that the corporation has been paying damage deposits to individuals. Though it's not legally acceptable, many individuals have taken their damage deposit by way of not paying their last month's rent. In some cases they have received their damage deposit that way. I'm aware that the corporation has paid damage deposits to tenants, but I'd like to clarify for my own information the total policy with respect to payment of damage deposits and will provide additional information to the members of the Assembly when I obtain it.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. SPEAKER: Might we revert briefly to introduction of special guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

MR. PENGELLY: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, a very competent and popular mayor of Innisfail, His Worship Doug Fee. Doug is also the president of the AUMA. He's seated in the members' gallery. Doug, would you please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I have the distinct pleasure today to introduce to you and members of the Assembly three classes of grade 12 students totalling approximately 90 students. They're from Prairie high school in Three Hills. The students are accompanied by their principal, Mr. Down; teachers Mr. Unger, Mr. Gamache, Mr. Scott, Miss Stevens; and parents Mrs. Gamache, Mrs. Down, and Mr. and Mrs. Stevens. These young people come from many points in Alberta, not just Three Hills and area. I might say that they received rave reviews from the tour guides today, so they indeed must be on their best behaviour. I know from exposure to these wonderful young people that they are going to be very, very fine citizens of this province. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. TOPOLNISKY: Mr. Speaker, seated in the public gallery is a fine group of special Albertans: 12 members of the Redwater Pioneer Club. They take pride in the fact that they own and operate their own bus, which is funded under the very popular transportation program. They are accompanied by Mrs. Eva Johnson, the leader, and bus driver Mr. Stefaniuk. I'm very delighted, Mr. Speaker, to introduce them to you and to members of the Assembly. I ask that they rise to receive the welcome.

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a rare occasion and a privilege and pleasure for me to rise in my place in

the House today. In the term I have been here as a member of the Legislature, I have not yet had the occasion to introduce to the House a class from my constituency. The reason that has occurred is that the students who have come here today from my constituency got up at 6 o'clock this morning and have travelled over 300 miles. I'm very pleased to introduce to the House nine students from the Rockyview Christian school in the municipal district of Pincher Creek. They are accompanied by their teachers Donna Toews and Joanne Freisen; teacher's aide Laura Toews; parents Wilbert and Jenny Toews, Gerald and Audrey Toews, and Mrs. Jim Dejax. I'd like them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. LEE: Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you 44 bright, intelligent, creative, and well-behaved students from grades 6 and 7 of King Edward school in Calgary Buffalo. I spent a day with them a few months ago, and I can tell you that these students and teachers are a great example of enthusiasm in young Albertans. They are accompanied today by teachers Peter Burt and Bonnie Bilcox and bus driver Walter Crawford. They're seated in the public gallery, and I ask my colleagues to please give an enthusiastic welcome as they stand.

MR. GURNETT: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to the other members of the Assembly, Carmen Johnson who I understand is behind me in the members' gallery. Carmen is a counsellor in the village of Berwyn in Spirit River-Fairview constituency. She's also vice-president of the AUMA and a very active participant working hard for the municipalities in this province. I ask her to rise and enjoy the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that Motion for a Return 137 stand and retain its place on the Order Paper.

[Motion carried]

#### head: MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

201. Moved by Mr. Zip:

Be it resolved that the Assembly recommend that the government introduce a policy of issuing special licence plates for vehicles registered in the name of or regularly used by disabled drivers, that will permit such vehicles to be readily identifiable.

[Adjourned debate March 19: Mr. Szwender]

MR. SZWENDER: Mr. Speaker, I completed my comments when I participated in the debate on the previous occasion.

MR. DROBOT: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak on the motion before us. However, I do have some reservations about it. There is no doubt that it is well intended. In dealing with the issue, we must balance the benefits and, of course, the drawbacks.

Perhaps rather than issuing licence plates, physically disabled drivers could, if they desired, use other means of identification. It is estimated that 2 percent of Alberta's population are in the disabled category and 85 percent of them are transported by motor vehicles, which merits some

means of identifying such vehicles on a voluntary basis. I realize that several provinces and states have similar legislation, but some states are considering repealing the disabled vehicle licensing identification Act. It is important to remember that wherever special identification is provided for the handicapped, it has to be on a voluntary basis.

We realize this motion would bring about a standard identification system of licensing throughout the province. If we have a standard identification system, what about enforcement? Are we going to put more teeth into the law in regard to abusers of special parking stalls to make allowances for licensed vehicles? Our hectic everyday life certainly is complex enough for the disabled — in mobility, in access to public places, and so on.

It should be drawn to our attention that there is a concern by many people of a special danger to people who are disabled, and it is magnified by a highly visible, special-member licence plate. In many cases it is not only the invitation to crime but the continued fear of crime by being so identified which causes uneasiness and anxiety in the minds of the disabled.

We are all familiar with instances which have been brought to our attention of illegal use of handicapped parking stalls, a callous attitude by some inconsiderate people of the rights of the disabled, but in general the public respects and assists the handicapped in parking and other services which they are entitled to. The transport board of Canada, which has done a study, says:

Standard identification is best if it is portable, transferable, has an ability to be easily transferable. Licence plates and adhesive stickers do not meet this criteria.

For instance, the car is not always driven by the handicapped only or other vehicles may be used by the handicapped driver. The study further shows that handicapped drivers do have a concern about disclosing to the public their disability because of criminal assaults or personal reasons. It suggests that the use of portable cards as a standard means of identification is to be considered. The study further suggests that a disabled individual should have a standard parking privilege right across Canada. In many cities across Canada, disabled drivers may obtain special permits for parking privileges. However, lack of co-operation within provincial municipalities has restrained the mobility of handicapped drivers.

Let's take a look at the European community as regards handicapped parking and identification. Most of the member countries require a special badge or card to be displayed on the windshield or dashboard. None of the member countries appear to issue licence plates.

In the United States, regulations which apply to handicapped privileges are known as blue curb laws. However, each state acts independently; some recognize the law and others don't. Another interesting point in regard to the blue curb law is that 35 states endorse it but only 18 extend the privilege to out-of-state vehicles.

Only two Canadian provinces presently have special licence plates. They are Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia. Ontario, Quebec, and of course Alberta use an official portable identification card. The results of the survey show that the blue international wheelchair symbol or some variation of it is most commonly used in surveyed provinces.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that the motion is well intended. I commend the member for bringing it forth, but I wonder if enough research has gone into it to make it law.

Thank you.

MR. SHRAKE: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to speak on this motion. I think this is a very well thought out motion. It's a problem that exists in most of the major cities and some of the smaller cities in Alberta.

For any members who have not had the background experience, I think one of the most interesting things they could do is spend a day in a wheelchair. Mount Royal College had a program where each year they would ask a few of the aldermen from the city of Calgary to spend a day in a wheelchair, and it's a very interesting experience. I think Alderman Lee and a number of the aldermen spent a day in a wheelchair. I don't know if they have this type of thing in Edmonton, but it was sure an eye-opener. You suddenly realize how difficult it is and how much you miss the mobility.

As far as parking for handicapped or this problem of handicapped people trying to get around, it would be good if we identified their vehicles. A few years ago in the city of Calgary we had a motion — and it was really very difficult to get this through city council — that on the new curbs that go in, we have that little dip so a wheelchair could make it from the sidewalk onto the street. We wouldn't tear up the old ones. I remember the debate in city council in Calgary about all the expense, all the problems, all the things that would happen. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that after this was put in, I never heard of it again. As the years roll by I notice that most of the curbs in the downtown area of Calgary have this nice little lip that rolls down to the street. A person can now get from block to block in a wheelchair by themselves, and that's good. It was a start in the right direction.

Our city planning in Calgary, and I think the same in Edmonton, encourages or regulates that shopping centres, the Jubilee Auditorium, and various places reserve as a courtesy a few stalls, parking spots, for those who are handicapped so they are closer to the front door. This has worked well except for one problem. Occasionally you get the guy who goes in and parks there, and there comes the problem of enforcement. I'm sure no MLA would ever park in a handicapped parking stall, except maybe Jack Campbell.

Mr. Speaker, the police and commissionaires who issue these tickets want to co-operate on this, but it's very difficult. Throughout this province we have a variety of stickers handling this. Calgary has some and I know Edmonton has some, but this really doesn't work that well. Some put the sticker on the left side of the front windshield and some put it on the right. This motion actually identifies it quite well: put it on the licence plate. It's very logical, it's very inexpensive, and I think the creator of this motion has come up with an excellent idea. The licence plate has traditionally been the way you identify your vehicle. If you issue a ticket, of course you look at the licence plate. So a little sticker attached to the licence plate would solve the problem for the police and commissionaires who go around issuing tickets for illegal parking.

I think it might create another side effect. Drivers of handicapped buses sometimes have a little difficulty getting into the proper lanes or various things like that. I think the public at large has enough sympathy, warmth, and feeling for the handicapped that if they recognized this sticker on a licence plate, they would give that extra courtesy to these vans and vehicles, to the handicapped people.

I'm hoping this motion will go all the way and eventually we will get a regulated system of stickers on the licence plates, not just in Calgary and Edmonton but throughout

the province. That way, if a fellow in Calgary moves his vehicle all the way to Edmonton, it's one type of sticker that the Edmonton police would recognize just as well as police in the city of Calgary. Again, I want to congratulate the mover of the motion, Mr. Zip, and I hope we can bring this about.

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to lend my congratulations to the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View for bringing the motion before the Assembly. I think it's timely and well intentioned. I have some concerns with the implementation of the concept, though, as some other members have expressed. I think all members recognize the need for handicapped drivers to have freedom of mobility in society. When you're confined to a wheelchair, it's difficult to have the same rights and privileges to get around town and do the normal things that we take for granted.

The provision of handicapped parking stalls that are close and proximate to shopping makes a lot of sense. I understand that 33 of 50 states in the United States, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia have legislation for the provision of a tag on a licence plate or a card on the dashboard. The concern that having a tag on their licence plate would target them for vandalism or assault or theft is something that has been raised by hon. members, and I understand that this is a concern shared by the Canadian Paraplegic Association. There is a concern that if a vehicle is permanently identified as being the property of someone who is handicapped, that then targets them for people in society who are not well intentioned to victimize.

It seems that a better solution is simply to have a portable card that can be left on the dash of the car. The Canadian Paraplegic Association has suggested as well that those cards would essentially be registered, perhaps by the motor vehicles branch. In lieu of the Solicitor General's office issuing such a portable card, the association here in Alberta has made available portable cards that are not numbered or registered. There is a danger that they can be misused. There is no provision for fining someone for misuse of these cards, Mr. Speaker, and there is no central registry for these cards. So it makes it difficult to issue tickets under the traffic Act or other legislation for the misuse of those cards or to people who have illegally parked their cars in handicapped stalls.

Mr. Speaker, it seems reasonable that in addition to this resolution we as an Assembly ought to contemplate provision under the Planning Act for allocation of space for handicapped parking stalls near the entranceways of major malls or other developments. It seems reasonable that we should start to work on that. As well, it seems reasonable that we ought to provide legislation to municipalities to enforce handicapped parking access where it's been posted on private property. I understand that at the most recent meeting of the AUMA, the municipalities requested just such authority.

Mr. Speaker, I think the proposal by the hon. member is well intentioned and meets a need, but we also need to address some other concerns that go with it and review the implementation of this kind of initiative. I think that other volunteer groups have to be congratulated in providing services to the handicapped. The Canadian Paraplegic Association has started to address this concern and, I understand, has started to lobby the Solicitor General. I think we can take the Assembly's interest and intent in this area as an indication that the Solicitor General ought to take necessary steps to implement this kind of proposal. I'm sure the Member for Calgary Mountain View would share that view.

What would be contemplated, then, is a small change to the resolution, that rather than issuing simply a licence plate, the Solicitor General's office and motor vehicles branch would issue a numbered card that would be centrally registered. As well, other organizations, like the A.C.T., have done work in this area.

I think that all in all society is starting to recognize the needs of the handicapped. We had the United Nations Year of Disabled Persons a few years ago, and people have started to think in these terms. Significant work has been done to redesign the sidewalks in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. Developers have changed the design of buildings so that they are more easily accessible. I note that in this year's Edmonton Telephones directory, there is a section at the front listing restaurants and other public services and facilities that are accessible to the handicapped. This resolution ought to be thought of in terms of a continuation or follow-up of society's gradual evolution in thought as to how we can better serve the needs of the handicapped in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have an awful lot more to say. I hope that hon. members lend their support to this kind of initiative and encourage the Solicitor General to enact the necessary legislative changes and also that the ministers responsible in other ways for planning legislation and for the Highway Traffic Act take necessary steps to follow up on some of the other ancillary ideas that are involved in this motion, and other members have referred to them. I hope that perhaps in the next year or so we could bring together a package of legislation that addresses these kinds of concerns, so our fellow citizens who are handicapped have the freedoms, right of access to buildings, and mobility we all take for granted.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member ought to be congratulated for bringing this idea to the House. I hope he will continue to put pressure on caucus and the ministers to effect the necessary changes.

Thank you.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise this afternoon and say a few words on this important motion. I commend the Member for Calgary Mountain View for bringing this topic before the Legislature. It has been before us before and was discussed at length not only in the Legislature but also between members. I believe all members are sympathetic and cognizant to some extent of the concerns that face the handicapped and, hopefully, are sensitive to looking at meeting their needs. There have been some excellent studies over the past little while that have not only brought together the identification of some of the problems that face handicapped people but also given a much broader outlook to the identification and analysis of some of those concerns.

I find it an interesting motion for debate in the Legislature, because basically, as I said, no one would want to speak against any motion that highlights the concerns of the handicapped or that would possibly suggest some sort of legislation that would help handicapped people. However, as has been stated by other members, it does produce some concerns, more or less from a co-ordinating point of view, if nothing else.

I understand that there are a few handicapped associations that are each in their own way doing a terrific job on many of the concerns. What we really need is a co-ordinated effort in dealing with those problems. The question is well represented in this motion. One person could say that it's

an excellent idea to go hand in hand like a couple of the provinces in Canada and have identification right on the licence plate, while other people probably favour what in some ways appears to be a much easier solution, and that's some type of placard they can use, if they want. So it's an individual request. That would work all right if a handicapped person were driving their own vehicle. But then they could put that placard, which would be portable of course, in a car if they're riding with somebody else. In that way they would have double protection.

One of the concerns, though, that's been brought to our attention is the lack of co-ordination of the organizations, identification of their objectives, and some of the solutions they might have to the problems. I believe one speaker actually suggested that the government could be the co-ordinating agent. I would say: heaven forbid that that should happen. As far as I'm concerned the people who are closer to the concerns, the specific organizations at the grass roots, are the ones that would do a much better job with regard to co-ordinating the efforts of all the groups. I don't really see that it's a place where government could be effective in that regard.

When the Member for Calgary Mountain View made his introductory comments, one of the points he mentioned — I'm sure with great empathy — was the concern over the care and attention motorists give to handicapped drivers on the streets. I really can't go along with any type of legislation that's going to improve that situation. It's sad that these people probably don't always receive the type of courtesy that would be very helpful to them in very extenuating circumstances, but how well we know the calibre of drivers on the streets and in the country too. A lot of them could certainly benefit from either defensive driving or some type of courtesy training, not only for the handicapped but for all people. While it's nice to think that might be an expectation, I'm afraid it's just a little bit unrealistic to think that's going to happen.

The Member for Calgary Buffalo gave a very concise and detailed presentation to the Legislature, identifying many of the same points I was going to speak on, but I notice one of his comments was that legislators have given this subject "unintentional yet benign neglect." I'll just take it in good sport that he was obviously referring to himself when he made that comment and hopefully assume that he was not speaking for the rest of his colleagues in the Legislature, because I would have to take exception to his comment. As I said when I first started, there has been a lot of concern, a lot of empathy. Alberta has spent a lot of dollars in so many areas that are important to handicapped people. That's not to say we can't do better; there are always new areas. It's almost unbelievable that today there are still public buildings that are not accessible to people in wheelchairs.

The Member for Calgary Buffalo made another comment on how there was support for a Bill he intended to introduce which would look at parking lots for handicapped people. I certainly wish him well in that regard. We had had conversations before, and one of my intentions a few years ago was to introduce such legislation. It's what is so tragic and seems like such an excellent idea, something that would help people that probably do need a little special attention or special assistance. It becomes a very complex issue. It's amazing the number of departments within our government that would be involved in one aspect of care for the handicapped, such as parking spots.

I notice that the Member for Calgary Buffalo solicited the support of the mayors of the large cities. I found it a

very interesting strategy to realize that they were willing to let the province do something. My outlook with regard to doing something specific for a certain group of people is that I feel a lot more comfortable and feel I can support it if I know it comes from a grass-roots organization, know that we have their support and basic ideas. Certainly, if there is a difference of opinion or more than one idea that comes forth on a certain topic, they're the people who can give us the input on what is best for them.

I'd like to know from the member who introduced this motion what type of support or comments he has had from the people who view this as a concern. He mentioned a couple of personal experiences he had, but I wonder if a group of citizens brought this to his attention or if he had a lot of constituents who were very anxious to have some type of identification, either on their licence plates or on their cars.

I think enforcement is one of the other major issues of great concern, whether we're talking about licence plates, placards, or parking stalls. This is an extremely difficult area. We all know perfectly well that there are some parking stalls identified in some large parking areas around our shopping malls, but my experience in observing this the last few years has been — because I am interested in the subject, I have tried to notice what is happening, and I can at least concede that it now seems to be a little better. There was a time when you could drive by and every handicapped parking stall had a car in it. Of course, one could say, "How do you know it wasn't a handicapped person?" I saw enough of them getting out of the car to know that they didn't appear to be very handicapped. This is probably one of the greatest problems we have. But in the last few years, with the education that has been going on and the signs at the parking stalls, I think it is getting better. People are being a little more courteous and leaving those stalls open for somebody else to park there. I want to again stress the idea of enforcement. When we're looking at a motion or Bill before our Assembly, we have to be realistic as to how practical it is to make sure it's well looked after.

Mr. Speaker, I again want to commend the Member for Calgary Mountain View for bringing this topic before the Assembly. I think it's very good for all of us to be a little more cognizant of our constituents who have special problems. Hopefully, it makes us a little more aware of what they sometimes go through, particularly in trying to travel around. It also gives us the opportunity to update ourselves and pay a little more attention to the specific reports and the up-to-date information in this area.

In closing, I don't really feel I can support this exact motion at this time because of the debate as to which would be best by what method, but I will be very interested to hear the rest of the comments made by my colleagues in the Legislature. Thank you very much.

MRS. KOPER: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise and speak on the motion introduced by the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View. I commend the member for introducing this motion, because I think it focuses our attention on a problem for disabled people that could be resolved with very little effort or expense, and that's a rare thing in this House.

When I was first elected in 1982, Mr. Speaker, one of the first reports submitted to the government was the Klufas report regarding services to disabled persons. Recommend-

ation 3.2.7 was with regard to parking for disabled persons. It asks for exactly what this motion suggests:

that parking at public centres be made widely available and suitable to disabled persons by:

- i) the Solicitor General's implementing a license plate system of identification for use by disabled persons that enables effective policing of parking spaces designated for their use ...

I believe the member's motion asks that the recommendation delivered at that time be implemented. The thought behind it all is that by policing parking stalls that are placed conveniently close to the entrances of buildings and designated specifically for the use of disabled persons, more and more convenience would be given disabled persons to enable them to live their lives in comfort and ease and in as normal a way as possible.

After reading this recommendation so long ago, Mr. Speaker, it was brought to my attention by a friend who had recently struggled very hard with the management and administration of a shopping centre in which she has her office. She is disabled, and it is necessary for her to have a car which she can enter and exit very easily because she has braces on both legs and must use crutches in order to get around. She's a very busy lawyer. She had to argue with the shopping centre to provide some parking space for her near a door so she could be spared the difficulty of walking over some rather difficult terrain, very slippery in winter and very wet in this month of April. After a great many discussions she was finally able to persuade the manager that this would be a convenience for her, but only for her. Her name was put on a parking spot fairly close to the door, but her name alone. The spot was reserved for her and made an immense difference in her accessibility to the building. She needs a little more room to get in and out of the car because the door must be fully opened in order for her to access her crutches and be able to straighten up. So it really meant a little more than the average person would need at a shopping centre.

She approached me when she found that management was not willing to consider extending this privilege to other members of our community that may have a similar handicap. She asked if something could not be done so that buildings had to allocate space for disabled parking. Mr. Speaker, I maintain that this is perhaps a greater problem at this point in time than the present motion. If the spaces are not there, what good is it to have parking identification?

It was most pleasing, Mr. Speaker, to note in *A Guide to Services for Disabled Albertans* that the Alberta Building Code provides that for all new buildings except industrial buildings, houses, boarding houses, and apartment buildings less than four storeys, access to a main entrance, public spaces on the entrance floor, and one elevator, if elevators are present, are required for physically disabled persons. At entrances to supermarkets and public buildings, they're asked to display a symbol of access, and there are grants available for renovation assistance in order to gain access to public places.

After making inquiries to the Department of Transportation, I found out all about the Canadian Paraplegic Association, which was working toward ensuring that a method is available whereby the parking spaces allocated could be policed. I know that the Alberta branch of the Paraplegic Association has been mentioned in previous debate, and I know their system has been mentioned, whereby a simple sign is distributed and placed on the windshield when they're parked in a designated area. This makes it really simple to

police the system and ensure that the space is being used appropriately. This system seems to be working. It doesn't need major renovation of our licence plate issuing system.

Because the matter of parking falls under the purview of the Highway Traffic Act, considerable authority is given to municipalities to establish and regulate their own parking matters. Different municipalities have taken entirely different initiatives. It has been largely left to the determination and persistence of the Paraplegic Association to take leadership in establishing a workable system. They have done so, and for many years this volunteer organization has distributed these placards.

The problem, however, arises when reciprocal arrangements are not made throughout the province and across our country. Some provinces have other systems that have been well accepted and actually do identify the vehicle through a licence plate. But this system has been devised by the users of the system, and they have chosen and prefer the card system for reasons which other members have already stated. It does not label the vehicle permanently and allows for normal operation of the vehicle. The probability of a disabled person becoming a victim of a serious crime is very real indeed. The ability to remove the card when not needed makes the placard system preferable in my opinion. If I were in that position, I believe this would be preferable because it doesn't identify the occupant of the vehicle as disabled or advertise that the occupant may be defenseless.

This association, Mr. Speaker, has done a great deal of work in the matter of transportation for the disabled. Eighty-five percent of all transportation needs of the disabled are by car. In conjunction with the Canadian Paraplegic Association, I was present at a banquet where the travellers' association provided hand controls for cars. They donate these each year and have offered a great deal of support to those who have lost the use of their limbs in some way. This enables them to operate a vehicle and perhaps not be as dependent on the rest of us as they would have to be.

It seems a very small thing for us, as the hon. member has suggested, to take a little more leadership and make an acceptable and universal system with reciprocal arrangements from other provinces. However, to return to my first point, Mr. Speaker, that's only half the equation. The other half is, of course, the parking spot itself. I've already talked about the rules that exist within the Building Code to make buildings accessible and how public buildings must be accessible, but parking stalls are sometimes overlooked and this causes a problem.

Mr. Speaker, the other day I had a call from a lady who is in the auxiliary section of the Fanning centre. She's badly crippled with arthritis and has been for 12 years. When she phoned, however, she mentioned to my secretary that she wanted to see me on a matter regarding pensions. She said, "Is the building accessible?" My secretary said, "Oh, yes, of course," not thinking for one moment that she might arrive in a wheelchair. We have three small steps in our building. The lady and I were lucky it was a nice day; we had to have our conversation in the hall outside the building. Eventually we moved out into the sunshine. Thereupon we concluded our discussion, and she said, "Would you mind checking, please, with the handi-bus to ensure that they have my pickup time of 2 o'clock." We had been together for almost an hour. I did, and they had her time of 2 o'clock. As I said before, we were lucky it was a beautiful, sunshiny day. It took over an hour for the handi-bus to make that 2 o'clock appointment. This bright, cheerful lady was trying her very best to be independent.

To my way of thinking, she had encountered terrific odds in coming to see her member of the Legislature to discuss the situation. She was trying to act as normal people do. I know how I feel when the person who's going to pick me up is an hour late.

Mr. Speaker, I feel there are enough obstacles in their way. I feel very strongly that we should be listening to them and providing whatever means are possible for people to continue to operate independently. More and more effort is being made to integrate the disabled into the work force. Therefore, more and more effort must be made to enable them to operate in a self-sufficient and independent way. Through their efforts at independence they can free themselves and us from their disability and contribute to society. We've recognized the increased mobility of handicapped persons. We created William Watson Lodge in Kananaskis Country, and other speakers have referred to that. It seems a shame that we cannot do this very simple thing.

Mr. Speaker, while I agree with the intent of the motion, I believe the preference of disabled persons as to the method of labelling the vehicle should be examined. In my opinion, perhaps a combination of both would be acceptable to them. But I presently believe that when the handicapped person does the driving — if it were me, I would prefer that a simple card be placed in the windshield when I need access to a public place. I would prefer the card system and therefore hope this motion could be amended at some point to do that.

Thanks again to the Member for Calgary Mountain View for bringing this item forward for our discussion, and I look forward to hearing from other speakers.

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise to speak to this motion. However, considering the hour, I beg that we adjourn debate and carry on to Motion 207.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm not sure that we can achieve a great deal with Motion 207; it's Thursday afternoon and it's half past four.

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, with the unanimous consent of the Assembly, possibly we could move on to the next item of business.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

HON MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: It is so ordered.

head: **PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS**  
**OTHER THAN**  
**GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS**  
(Second Reading)

**Bill 207**  
**An Act to Amend the**  
**Debtors' Assistance Act**

MR. GURNETT: Mr. Speaker, I'm speaking in support of an important idea for our times when I speak in support of Bill 207, An Act to Amend the Debtors' Assistance Act. For the last little while we've been debating a motion to assist the disabled. A large number of people in Alberta

today are suffering from economic disability because of the burden of debt. That's specifically what this Bill deals with.

Mr. Speaker, I was elected to carry the concerns and ideas of the people of the Spirit River-Fairview constituency into this Legislature, and the substance of this Bill is an expression of those concerns and ideas. Bill 207 would establish a program of debt adjustment for farmers, homeowners, and small businesses and would create a board to administer the program. The problems created by the farm debt crisis are not going to go away because the government chooses to ignore them. Total net income for farmers in Alberta declined by just over 16 percent in 1984, and Alberta Agriculture is anticipating and predicting a further decline during 1985. The total cost of interest payments by Alberta farmers last year was in the area of \$450 million.

During the by-election campaign in Spirit River-Fairview, the idea of debt adjustment in some form or another was raised by a great number of farmers in conversations I held in homes. In many cases they didn't really know the specific term, but they knew what was needed. What they described is basically what is proposed in this Bill. Since the input of those people in my constituency during the by-election, I've also found that there's a wider interest in this kind of action. Farmers in other parts of the province are looking for the same kind of thing, Mr. Speaker.

Just last Friday in Valleyview at a meeting of over 200 farmers from there and the region all around, the first resolution passed during the evening's discussion called for the appointment of a person to negotiate, as they put it, just settlements between families and lending institutions — for that person to not only negotiate those settlements but actually have the power to enforce the settlements when a foreclosure or bankruptcy is pending. Early this week a farmer contacted me and talked about a meeting that had been held east of Edmonton, where again one of the main ideas discussed was this need for some kind of support that would allow a rescheduling of the debt burden of people.

Debt adjustment legislation, Mr. Speaker, is founded on the belief that the debt problems of many Albertans, farmers and others, are the result of unexpected economic changes happening very rapidly and not, in most cases, the incompetence of the borrowers. Debt adjustment legislation is not a bailout for borrowers, and it's very important to recognize that as we look at this Bill. It is not a bailout for bad farmers or bad managers. It is a reasonable action by government to benefit citizens who are otherwise going to end up as victims of the behaviour of the lending institutions.

Mr. Speaker, farmers in Alberta are facing a debt crisis right now that's unlike any we've seen since the days of the great Depression. As a more and more capital-intensive industry, agriculture in Alberta is overwhelmingly dependent on debt financing, and heavy debt loads have become an accepted fact of life for many agricultural producers in this province. But in recent months, over the last year or so, the combination of increasing input costs, high interest rates, low returns on products, and also falling land values has resulted in a serious loss of equity that has really reduced the ability of many producers to keep up with their debt payments.

In fact, farm bankruptcy in Alberta continues to worsen. Figures for 1984, to the end of September, show an increase of slightly over 65 percent in the province's farm bankruptcies over the same first three quarters of 1983. And those were up 68 percent over the figures for 1982. I think that's pretty alarming. Even more alarming is the fact that in this whole area of farm bankruptcies, Alberta continues

to account for an ever-increasing share of total Canadian farm bankruptcies. In the first three quarters of 1980, Mr. Speaker, only slightly under 2.5 percent of all the Canadian bankruptcies took place in Alberta. Alberta's share in 1981 rose to 5.76 percent. Then it rose to 6.01 percent in 1982. It rose in 1983 to 9.61 percent, and last year it rose to 12.71 percent of all the farm bankruptcies in the country.

The situation isn't complete even when we look at those statistics, because we don't have accurate information about foreclosures on farm mortgages in Alberta. That's not available. Nor do we have information about forced sales, where people feel that they need to sell. But we can assume that the figure is much higher than just the figure for bankruptcies. In Saskatchewan those figures have been available, Mr. Speaker. I think we can get a comparative figure for Alberta by looking at what's happened in Saskatchewan. The figures show that during the fiscal year 1982-1983 there were 45 farm bankruptcies in Saskatchewan but there were also 282 farm foreclosures. So we've got a ratio of roughly 1 to 6. For every one bankruptcy we have six foreclosures. If we apply that 1 to 6 ratio to Alberta and don't pay any attention to the fact that Alberta's proportion is increasing overall, it would indicate that there were probably more than 300 farm mortgage foreclosures and bankruptcies together during the first three quarters of 1984.

There is unquestionably an agricultural debt crisis in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. It is getting worse, and the marketplace, operating on its own, has really been shown to be completely incapable of relieving this. The inescapable conclusion I come to is that action by the provincial government in this area is essential at this time.

Before going into the details of what debt adjustment legislation is in principle, I want to also note that debt adjustment legislation by itself is not going to be adequate to address the crisis facing agriculture, particularly the family farm in Alberta. Debt adjustment legislation by itself isn't adequate, and I readily accept that. A lot of other steps are needed. A week ago we debated here one of the other very valuable steps, and that's making fixed, low-interest, long-term loans available using the Treasury Branches and the credit unions. We also have to look at the current economic conditions particularly and do a lot more to aid beginning farmers than is happening in this province. We also need to continue to look for more and more possibilities — and this came up a little earlier today in question period — to reduce the input costs to farmers. For example, I've talked with the Treasurer about more support for reducing the cost of farm fuel. Today we've agreed that there needs to be something done about the high cost of chemicals used for herbicides and pesticides.

These are other areas that we need action in, Mr. Speaker, but debt adjustment legislation makes a valuable contribution to the overall need to assist with the problem of debt in this province. Debt adjustment legislation isn't a panacea, but it has to be understood within the context of an approach that involves a range of ideas. In a nutshell, debt adjustment legislation is intended to meet two fundamental goals.

MR. SZWENDER: How much will it cost?

MR. HYLAND: That doesn't matter.

MR. GURNETT: I'll come to that, and you'll be pleased with the results when you hear.

The first goal of debt adjustment legislation is to be sure that no farmer is forced out of production only because he or she is temporarily unable to meet incurred debt obligations. The second purpose of debt adjustment legislation is to be sure that that debt is neither forgiven nor forestalled but is simply rescheduled on conditions that allow the farmer to continue his operations. This is something that provincial governments definitely can do. Provincial governments cannot cancel debt; they cannot change the amount of principal to be repaid. But this idea of rescheduling debt is something that is within the jurisdiction of provincial governments. Provincial debt adjustment legislation would in fact function to achieve the same end that many of the major banks are now trying to achieve in their negotiations with some of the heavily indebted countries in other parts of the world, countries like Brazil and Argentina. Debt adjustment legislation would attempt to give Alberta's farmers the same kind of sympathetic treatment currently being afforded by the banks, often the same banks that are not offering it to Canadian farmers, to large international debtors.

There is lots of precedent right here in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, for the legislation I am proposing today. In 1923 the United Farmers of Alberta government introduced and passed An Act to Facilitate the Adjustment of Agricultural Debts. This allowed for voluntarily rescheduling farm debt between a debtor and a creditor, but it also allowed that in selected areas of the province no proceeding could go ahead without first being looked at and investigated.

A series of amendments to this Act were passed in the early 1930s by the UFA government. Some of the amendments in 1933 are amongst the most important. The 1933 amendments, first of all, prohibited any creditor from pursuing a foreclosure action for satisfaction of debt against any farmer or homeowner unless that creditor had first received permission to do that from the debt adjustment board established by the amendments. It also gave the debt adjustment board powers to direct a farmer as to how to conduct his operations and how to dispose of his produce once the farmer had a certificate issued in his name under this Act. Thirdly, it extended the operations of the Act to include homeowners in addition to farmers.

When the Social Credit government was elected in 1935, the Act continued on the books. It was further amended in 1939 and 1941. It was transformed into An Act for the Assistance of Debtors in 1943. An Act virtually identical to this 1943 Act remains in the Alberta statute books to this day in the form of the Debtors' Assistance Act. The only problem is that any form of legislatively sanctioned mandatory debt adjustment provisions was removed in 1943, so since then the Act has really provided for nothing beyond debt counselling. Both Saskatchewan and Manitoba also have had debt adjustment legislation dating back to the 1930s.

It's this current Act, the Debtors' Assistance Act, that's a sort of ghostlike leftover of Alberta's previous debt adjustment legislation that this Bill before us now seeks to resuscitate. It proposes to do this by restoring to the Act currently on the statute books many of the debt adjustment provisions that were previously there, that have already been part of it in the past. Put simply, the Bill would prohibit any lender from foreclosing on any mortgage or any other instrument of indebtedness if by foreclosing the lender would cause a farmer to lose his or her farm, a homeowner to lose his or her home, or an independent businessperson to lose the business they operate.

It does this in two ways. First, with regard to all three of these categories of persons, no action could be pursued

by a creditor unless the creditor first obtained permission from the board. At any time any debtor in the three categories I mentioned or any creditor of any debtor in these categories could apply to the board for assistance in working out — or rescheduling is a reasonable way to put it — the existing debts. So I repeat that there would be no forgiveness involved here, no writing off of debt; it would simply be a rescheduling. If a creditor applies to the board for permission to act against a protected debtor, the board approval to do so is granted in the form of a permit. The board has significant powers to investigate and can order a settlement of the debt on such terms as it deems necessary for the circumstances. A special exception is allowed in the proposed Bill to guarantee that farmers cannot be the subject of a settlement that would deprive them of the basic means of subsistence. They would be guaranteed that they could keep enough to continue to farm.

The rest of the Bill deals particularly with farmers. It sets up a system whereby the board issues a certificate against the farmer's assets when the farmer requests them to do so, and that protects the farmer from any further action brought by a creditor. There is a condition, and it's an important one, because we don't want to guarantee that people who shouldn't be in business are allowed to continue in business. That condition is that in granting the certificate, the board is also given substantial powers to guide the farmer in their functioning beyond that. That's necessary, Mr. Speaker, to protect the rights of the creditor as well. That's just as important during a period when they've basically lost the legal remedies that would otherwise be available to them.

The Bill also provides for appeals of the decisions of the board for parties on either side. It also allows that if a creditor such as a bank were to find itself in serious financial difficulties as a result of the operation of this Act, to the point where that creditor was facing foreclosure or some other kind of debt collection process, the creditor could also be treated as a farmer for the purpose of the Act's provisions and seek the same shelter through debt adjustment. So it tries to be comprehensive and fair to all parties.

The Bill also proposes to bind the Crown. This is a feature that didn't exist in the debt adjustment legislation we had in Alberta previously. The reason for including it now should be obvious, though, in that Crown corporations such as the Agricultural Development Corporation, the Alberta Opportunity Company, and the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation are all heavily engaged in lending to individuals in the categories this Bill would protect. There were no parallel Crown corporations such as these in the 1930s, so the question of binding the Crown at that time was irrelevant. But it's far from irrelevant now when we look at the statistics of how heavily involved these Crown corporations are in lending in this province.

The Bill also provides that its contents would disappear automatically in 1988. We're considering that this is a kind of emergency action that's needed because of the debt problem that exists at this particular time.

In outlining what the Bill would do, Mr. Speaker, it should be clear that it's not going to be a costly action for the government. It's going to be something that looks at the problems faced both by creditors in this time of high debt load and by people unable, in many cases, to meet their obligations. It looks particularly at the problems faced by the people with those debt loads.

I want to conclude by urging all members to support this Bill. I think it's a good example of truly fair legislation

that seeks to provide a real solution to a serious problem. Farmers and small businesses are the major creators of new jobs in our economy. Farmers are creators of new wealth in this province. Owning a home in this province is still one of the major indicators of economic security, something people still look to as a real sign of security. The Bill would help people with a debt crisis in any of these areas, Mr. Speaker, without doing any damage to the lending institutions. It's a realistic step toward economic recovery. It's a real encouragement to create confidence, and it's a clear statement to the people of Alberta that this government really cares about them. That's the message that would come across here if legislation such as is proposed in Bill 207 were passed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LYSONS: Mr. Speaker, I too am forced to my feet over Bill 207, An Act to Amend the Debtors' Assistance Act. We have just been listening to Alice in wonderland, a member of the flat earth society, I'm sure. I can't imagine how anyone who has ever been around, and for quite a while, could come out with something so naive as to believe that a board could be given such great powers and responsibilities and be effective. We've just listened to 20 minutes of explanation that has no basis in reality. The reality is that if someone loans someone money, they intend to get it back. They have to work within all the laws of the land in order to do it. Most lenders are not Scrooge; they are human beings who lend money with the intention, as in any business — in most instances it is a commercial operation — of working with their borrowers as fully and sincerely as any person possibly could. To expect a board to be set up and to have all the powers that this amendment would give — it would be simply unthinkable to have a board that could do so many things, upset so many fundamental characteristics of business in Alberta. It is such trash. I was really quite surprised when I read it.

Having been an old credit union manager, we got an awful lot of loans that most people wouldn't have touched with a 10-foot pole. We loaned money to people who had debt collectors after them and all kinds of bad people — some of them multinational, actually. I'll have to give you an example, Mr. Speaker, of one of the very first debt consolidation deals I ever got involved in. A 22-year-old man and his 22-year-old wife were \$2,200 in debt to 22 creditors. It was easy to remember. We sat down with this couple, and there was no way in the world that they had any security. There was no way we could even ask his parents or her parents to cosign. They had enough problems of their own. We sat down with them and some of the creditors and wrote and telephoned and talked to all the other creditors, and we worked out a deal whereby this young family could pay off their debts. It took about four years to work it all out, but they were able to do it.

There isn't a bank, a financial institution, a mortgage company, a loaning situation that I know of anywhere that doesn't do exactly the same thing, although maybe not to the same extent that I would have. But every bank, the Treasury Branches, the ADC, and all these people have the facilities and time and do the very thing this amendment is supposed to do for them.

If I were loaning money and had to work with a situation like this, I would cease to loan money, I'm sure, other than to the very, very best of borrowers. When you stop to consider that we already have a Debtors' Assistance Act — it's rarely used, by the way, but it is used some and



it's effective. I don't know how many situations it would have been used for in 1984, but it is used some. It is there. But to have a board sit down and study an individual's financial situation, be able to make long-term decisions, do all those good things that the local bank or credit union or mortgage company can't do, and have this board run out of some office in Edmonton or Calgary or Spirit River would be really unthinkable.

We know we have people in trouble; we have always had people in trouble financially. I can't ever remember a time when I heard a socialist say that times were good. I can't remember a time when these people came along and said, "Hey, things are lovely and great, and we don't need a whole bunch of these laws that we bring in when some people get into trouble." But everybody's in the same boat if we're going to be taking on the responsibility of lending or collecting money. We have some idea of what we're going to be faced with. We never know exactly for sure when we get into these things, and it's a good thing or we'd never get into it. I'm sure that that would run true for most of us in politics, but it's fun if you don't take yourself too seriously.

Here was the Member for Spirit River-Fairview taking himself very seriously. I could hardly contain myself as he went along about how he was going to protect the farmer, homeowner, and independent businessperson, providing that he didn't make over \$66,000 a year — I don't know where the farmer that makes over \$66,000 a year would fit in — and, of course, that he had no more than 10 full-time and no more than 15 part-time employees. They're going to have all these breaks in it. They can't leave things alone.

Mr. Speaker, what we need in Alberta is not more laws. What we need is attitude, a forgiving attitude of helpfulness and a sincere desire to make things work out, not laws. I've just been handed a note to remind me what a socialist is, and I could add a few things to that.

AN HON. MEMBER: You'd better not.

MR. LYSONS: I'm told I'd better not.

Mr. Speaker, I will have to vote absolutely against this amendment. I'm not suggesting for a minute that a debtors' assistance board wouldn't be useful. I can see a debtors' assistance board made up of lenders and businesspeople in the community. They're the really big losers in all this. The small private businesses are the big losers, because they don't have themselves secured very well, if at all.

I can see where some permissive legislation could be brought in so we could have counselling services that would be helpful. But usually, at least in small-town Alberta, these things are going on. They're behind the scenes. We used to have a little meeting from time to time with the different banks and borrowers. This was when times were really good — it wasn't now, when things are really tumbling and bad and all that — when if you couldn't make a success of things, it could be said that you weren't trying very hard. But we still had people in trouble. We would study the possibility of the individual, what his work ethic was, whether he was a farmer or a businessman.

We had to be sure that the married couple was a unit. I've seen very few farm units survive when the husband and wife didn't work together, Mr. Speaker. Usually it was the wife who had to be the strong member of the team. If there were going to be problems paying bills or meeting commitments, she had to be the one to cut back first. She had to be the one who would put in a bigger garden, bake

bread, wash clothes, patch socks, and all these other good things.

DR. CARTER: Run the tractor.

MR. LYSONS: And run the tractor, yes.

AN HON. MEMBER: Nobody gave them credit.

MR. LYSONS: And nobody would give them credit cards. That's right. We used to have a little motion on the books that said a woman cannot borrow money without her husband's signature.

The situation still exists today. If a bank or business has a loan, bill, or account with a farmer or a businessman, and the wife and husband are team players who work hard together and pay attention to what's going on, generally there aren't severe problems, unless they get hopelessly in debt. Most times it's their fault, but sometimes it isn't. Generally, if it isn't their fault, the lenders will go along with it.

It's very simple to be successful in farming if you've inherited the farm or been treated to some other way of getting land, if you get three or four good crops in a row without any problems, and if you don't break your leg — the worst thing that could happen is that your wife breaks her leg — in the first two or three years. If you get rain at the right time and good harvest weather, it's not that tough to be a farmer. But if a few things go wrong, it can be really tough.

A lot of people borrow huge, tremendous amounts of money, and when they get into a problem, they feel that it was the government that told them to get into debt. The government told them to borrow money to build these big machine sheds, buy these big tractors, and all that. I suppose there may be some government people out there that have done that, but generally when you sign a promissory note, you know full well that it's you that's going to pay it off.

In all the years I was lending money, I never once had a farmer come in and indicate to me that he wasn't prepared to compete with the rest of the world in his product. If he grew wheat, he had to compete with the rest of the world. He knew that. We used to talk about it: do you realize what you're doing here? When it was a new borrower, I usually went out to the farm and talked to the farmer. But in all the years that I loaned money, I never once had a farmer or businessman or individual come along and say, "If I get into trouble with my loan, the government's going to bail me out." Now isn't that funny? I never heard them say that the government was going to bail them out. [interjection] I know. We even loaned some money to people in Saskatchewan, and they never said that.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's called responsibility.

MR. LYSONS: There's a certain amount of responsibility about borrowing money, as the hon. member next to me says. There's a certain amount of chance the lender takes when he loans money. You have to have that balance of responsibility, chance, and all those ingredients to make a successful operation. A debtors' assistance board, as this amendment would put out, certainly would never help those situations. Most borrowers that get into trouble will tell you that they wished we hadn't granted the loan. But I don't think I ever had anybody blame me for loaning them the money. We had an awful lot of borrowers who thanked

us for not loaning them the money. We turned down about 50 percent of all the loans we granted.

Mr. Speaker, I could probably go on for a long time. I have been going on for a long time. In wrapping up here, what I'm trying to say is that I seriously ask all hon. members in this Legislature to read this amendment, smile, and defeat it.

Thank you very much.

[Two members rose]

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to participate in the debate briefly. I'm sorry, hon. Member for Cardston, but if the other hon. member hadn't gone on for so long, I might have let you in ahead.

It seems to me that there are a few myths. I was very interested in the oratory from the Member for Vermilion-Viking. If he were a little more coherent, maybe he could go on bank commercials for CIBC. The sympathy for the banks pouring out of him was quite considerable, and I hope he will think of that as a new career after the next election.

Mr. Speaker, the whole point was missed. I suggest that it's not a government bailout or government subsidy. We get so hung up with these words. It is simply a breathing space for people. If you notice, it comes to an end on January 1, 1988. If we're going to sit here and not recognize that there are serious problems in rural Alberta and among the small business community, I can suggest to hon. members that there is a fair amount of support for something like this. It's not that all of a sudden people want government handouts and all the rest of the rubbish we hear. The fact is that they want to stay in business so that they can become productive, and this is meant as a temporary breathing space. Nowhere in this Bill does it say that they would not have to pay back their debts. It would be irresponsible if it did say that. So before we speak on Bills, I wish we would read them.

The point is that there are serious problems, Mr. Speaker, whether we recognize them or not. People are looking for some help at this particular time. It seems that certain people can get help. The Canadian Commercial Bank — what was that but government subsidies? Sixty million dollars interest-free. It seems to me that depending on who you are, you can certainly get into the government. A lot of farmers and small-business people would have liked to have had interest-free debts. A lot of people with mortgages would like to have that. That's government intervention, Mr. Speaker. That's the reality of it. So let's not be so blase as to think that we don't involve ourselves in the economy. I'm sure farmers would have liked the same sort of thing.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address the main thing we've heard is wrong. It's a serious concern, and I'd like to address it in a serious way — that somehow the credit would all dry up, that financial institutions would not lend and we'd be in a worse position than we are now. The evidence has not occurred. The evidence in the past has not supported that. I've mentioned that even with the moratoriums in Saskatchewan in the early '70s, there was actually an increase in farm debt.

It seems to me we have to ask a fundamental question: how many farms, how many small businesses, how many houses do financial institutions need? More importantly, Mr. Speaker, how many do they want? In a recent article people in financial institutions indicated that if there is a recovery,

there'll probably be an increase in bankruptcies and the rest of it, because people will have a chance to get their money back. I want to point out that the credit wouldn't dry up. There's no historical reason for it.

Some interesting research was done by the Christian Farmers Federation, who have been lobbying government departments to bring in something similar to ours. It's not entirely similar; they call it a farm debt set aside proposal. So if that sounds better, we'd certainly be quite prepared to change the name of the Bill if we thought it had any hope of passing. They make many of the same claims and arguments for a temporary breathing space as we do, because young farmers especially are going out of business. It's true of small businesses, and we've had debates about what's happening to people owning their homes.

They went and did some research into it. If I were in a financial institution, the last thing I'd want to do at this particular time is foreclose. This is why I don't think this credit would dry up if we had the board. They took agricultural real estate values in Alberta in constant 1971 dollars. They had a graph indicating the price per acre of land in Alberta. It went from 1974 to 1984. From the graph it seems that the peak in the price per acre, roughly \$180, was between '80 and '81. It gradually went up, and now we see it gradually coming down to where it's about \$130 per acre. In other words, in the last three or four years it has probably gone down by \$50 an acre.

My point is simply this. If financial institutions are forced into foreclosure, they're taking over land that has gone down in real estate value. In other words, they're not going to get their money back. They may squawk about it, but it would make good sense for the financial institutions to have some sort of stopgap measure to keep people in business, because they're going to lose a lot of money if they have to take them over. That's the reality of it.

In terms of agricultural real estate values in Alberta, they compared them to make the point in a different way. They compared them to the overall inflation rate. They pointed out how much the land value was above or below the inflation rate in the official consumer price index. For example, in 1974 it was 16.6 percent above the inflation rate. It was a good investment in those days. It was a good time to buy land. In '75, 9.6 percent; '76, 14.0 percent; '77, 9.5 percent; '78, 17.8 percent; '79, 9.8 percent; '80, 9.9 percent; then in '81 it starts to come where it's just 0.7 above the inflation rate. But what's happened since then? In '82 it was 4.1 percent below the official inflation rate; in '83, 10.5 percent below; in '84, 11.6 percent below. To the financial institutions and those people who are worried about them, my point is that if you want to help them out, keep farmers and small businesses in business, because they're going to take a tremendous loss if they have to foreclose. The result is that they wouldn't even get the inflation rate back at this particular time.

We're not suggesting government intervention on a massive scale, Mr. Speaker. I say again and make it as clear as I can: it's a temporary breathing space because of the extraordinary times we're in. If things were like they were in the '60s and '70s, there would be no need for this type of board. We're not suggesting it should be there forever. But we're suggesting that a lot of people need some temporary help to reschedule debt so they can stay in business.

I think it's worth talking again about my experience with the person in the Spirit River-Fairview by-election who told me that their father was going to be foreclosed on by

a financial institution but, because of what happened at that particular time, was given breathing space to stay in. Years later that particular farmer stayed in business and was a master farmer. We know what good farmers those people are, so it couldn't have been that they were mismanaging it. But that person wouldn't even have been in the agriculture business if there hadn't been something similar going on at that particular time.

Mr. Speaker, we can start talking about socialism here. We can talk about all sorts of labels, and we can label each other. But in reality what we should be doing is looking at the merit of the Bill. If there are things wrong with the Bill, not in a philosophical sense, if you can see improvement — as I mentioned, the Christian farmers looked at it in a different way — if there's a different way to go about it, fine, let's take a look at it. I'm not saying, and I don't think my colleague is saying, that you have to dot every "i" and cross every "t" in every Bill. But it seems we should be looking at ideas in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, if you want to take the thought that there are no problems, that things will go along well, that we can interfere with our financial institutions only when they're going broke like the Canadian Commercial Bank, and that it's all right if a number of farmers are not making it, I would suggest ... We've been talking about employment. If a number of farmers and small-business people go out of business and people lose their homes, it's certainly going to have an impact on the employment rate. Rather than rejecting and throwing out labels and all the rest of it, the crocodile tears I heard for the banks — small-business and big-business people have been telling me about the help they've been getting from the banks lately. That's one thing I've mentioned, that the Treasury Branches at least have been much more amenable and understand Alberta. The people I've been talking to have been getting the runaround from those financial institutions. I don't think we should worry about them. They'll be in business long after we are in the Alberta Legislature; I can assure you of that.

It seems to me that something would work for a temporary piece of time. That's why we've suggested January 1, 1988 — not forever, not written in stone. We won't have to bring it in and repeal it. It will repeal itself in 1988.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I just say we think it's an idea worth looking at. I tell people quite honestly that it's not only us who think this is a good idea. While there are 74 Conservatives in this House, if they don't think it's a good idea, they don't represent all Alberta. Other people are looking beyond labels, and all the rest of it that we hear, for policies that work. I for one have found no good evidence, at least from what I've heard in the Legislature, of why it wouldn't work. If there is good evidence, it certainly hasn't been shown to me. But I'd be quite prepared to listen to that. Certainly, the Member for Vermilion-Viking didn't convince me that our Bill, in its wisdom, didn't come up to the mark. In fact, I think I'm more convinced now.

Thank you.

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a real pleasure to stand in my place to say a few words in this debate on Bill 207, An Act to Amend the Debtors' Assistance Act. I've found the debate so far rather interesting. The mover of the Bill, the Member for Spirit River-Fairview, seems to have discussed farmers in the main. His Bill relates to at least three particular areas of concern, one being the farmer he discussed for so long, one being the homeowner,

and one being the businessperson. In the brief moments I have available to me this afternoon, because it is unfortunately getting close to that hour, I would like to spend a few minutes discussing the ramifications of such a Bill for the small-business person in our community.

It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, when people have not had to go out and earn a crust, make a payroll, go out in the real world and see what's going on there with small-business people and understand that there are difficulties other than just standing up and making words sound nice so that some socialist friends out in the community will think they're doing a good job. The member suggested that he wanted to represent his constituents, and I think that's credible. I think it's what we're all here to do. I read an editorial in the *Post* regarding representation of the people, and I might just come back to that in a few minutes — how the member was representing the 36 percent or thereabouts of the people who voted for him. I'm going to question that a little later.

Mr. Speaker, if a Bill of this nature were put into law, I have some difficulty in determining that a creditor would ultimately have to ask permission of a board before they could take legal action to retrieve moneys owing on a debt. Can you imagine the little florist out there who gets a couple of cheques bounced by a customer? Can you imagine limiting that little florist in going to retrieve those moneys through the system of the small debts court, possibly to the extent that if too many people did that to some of these small florists today — because things in the florist business aren't that rosy, to coin a phrase — it would mean that the bank would possibly jump into the business of that florist and shut him down?

I guess we could go on and on for as long as we could stand here and debate and separate the various issues that could be related to something of this nature, especially when it concerns businesspeople, homeowners, and, yes, even farmers. Can you imagine property rights in common law possibly being overruled by the authority of a board, as suggested in this Bill? Unheard of. They do that in Russia and possibly now in some of their satellite countries. They don't have any rights. To give some person that has created a debt upon themselves the possibility of removing some of that responsibility and maybe putting some other poor guy or woman out of business — I ask you, Mr. Speaker, where is the fairness?

At present the Debtors' Assistance Act, under chapter D-5, gives every person who has a concern regarding their own debt the ability to get family financial counselling services. There's a brochure on it. I've sent people over to Centre 70 on MacLeod Trail in Calgary many times to get assistance in getting their financial affairs in order. There is assistance available to them. People can use it, and it works.

Certainly, there are cases out there where people get themselves in so deep that there's no bailout for them. That's what's being asked for here. Let's not fake it. It's a cover-up. There's nothing new. It's a bailout. Don't try to fool me or anybody else around here. The socialist way is to spend the taxpayers' money without worrying about the revenues. Unfortunately, the poor guy that gets it is the middle-income guy. It's not the higher income guy or the guy that's in hardship and not making too much. It's the middle-income guy. There has to be a middle road, and that is not the middle road.

The government has so many programs of assistance available to people; possibly we have too many of them. Look at what happened with the Alberta Heritage Savings

Trust Fund, with all the mortgage assistance money that went out to both homeowners and businesspeople, the announcement that was made in September of 1982. Tremendous. Consumer and Corporate Affairs puts out a book, Taking Charge of Your Money. I didn't see the member bringing any of these items forward and saying: "Look, folks in my constituency, there are things available for you. Why don't you go and use these? Give it a try." I'm just wondering about the one person that may have come to him and said, "Maybe we ought to put this into law so that we can put the squeeze on the small-business guy to get him off my back."

Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of comments that I'd like to continue with. Considering the hour, I ask to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Do the members agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: It is so ordered.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, it's proposed that the Assembly not sit this evening. Tomorrow morning the business of the House will be further consideration of the estimates dealing with the Department of Tourism and Small Business.

[At 5:29 p.m., on motion, the House adjourned to Friday at 10 a.m.]