

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Wednesday, May 22, 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: May I draw the attention of the Assembly to the presence in the Speaker's gallery of Mr. Elvin Woynarowich. Mr. Woynarowich has been a returning officer in Alberta for 33 years, doing faithful service in that capacity. He is being honoured today at the culmination of his 33 years of service. He is accompanied by Mrs. Woynarowich and our distinguished Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Ken Wark. Might I ask them to stand and be recognized and welcomed by the Assembly.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS****Bill 272****Council on the Status of Women Act**

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 272, the Council on the Status of Women Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill would establish a 15-member council on the status of women, charged with promoting full and equal participation of women in the economic, social, and political life of the province. The mandate of the council would include communicating information regarding the status of women in Alberta to both the public and government, conducting the necessary research, and recommending to government departments any changes which, in its opinion, would serve to improve the status of women in Alberta.

[Leave granted; Bill 272 read a first time]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. SPEAKER: From the Chief Electoral Officer I have a report for tabling concerning candidates in the by-election in Spirit River-Fairview. This report is submitted pursuant to section 36 of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, Monsieur le Président, c'est aujourd'hui mon plaisir à dire bienvenue aux vingt-trois étudiants dans la galerie des membres. Ces étudiants sont de la sixième année à l'école Holy Cross dans la circonscription d'Edmonton Jasper Place. Ils poursuivent leurs études en langue française. Ils sont accompagnés aujourd'hui par leur professeur Ninassi et un parent Mme Beth Weston. Mr. Speaker and hon. members, I would ask that you extend the traditional welcome as the students rise in the members' gallery.

MRS. FYFE: Mr. Speaker, today I have the great pleasure of introducing three Albertans to you and to members of the Legislature. First, I would like to introduce a person who has been here previously and who members will remember as the former mayor of the city of St. Albert, Mr. Ronald Harvey. With Mr. Harvey is his wife, Irene Harvey, who is treasurer of the St. Albert Festival of the Arts, which is an annual cultural event. I know the Minister of Culture has visited the Festival of the Arts on a number of occasions. This year it will be held from May 29 until June 9.

Accompanying Mr. and Mrs. Harvey is a young Albertan from St. Albert, Mr. Victor Laderoute, a 16-year-old student in St. Albert who has taken on the task of directing his first play, *House of Blue Leaves*, in the St. Albert Festival of the Arts. Victor is a very talented young man and hopes to pursue acting and drama as a career. I would ask these three if they would rise and be recognized by the members of the Assembly.

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, I'm privileged to have two groups with us today. I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, a group of 63 students from grade 6 in Caledonia Park school in Leduc. They are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Paula Foley and Mrs. Susan Salisbury. They are seated in both the members' and public galleries. I ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

Mr. Speaker, we also have with us 21 grade 6 students from Riverview elementary school in Devon. They are accompanied by their teacher, Ms Janette Sheridan. They are also seated in the members' gallery. I wish they would stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

MR. DROBOT: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, 18 grade 7 students from the land of beautiful lakes, Vilna junior high school. They are accompanied by their teacher, Lucia Ash, assistants Ms Pauline Cardinal and Ms Gloria Half, parent Esther Matiuychuk, and bus driver Mr. Malysh. They are seated in the public gallery. I would now like them to rise and receive the traditional welcome of this House.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD****Women's Emergency Shelters**

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'll look around and see which ministers are here. I'll direct my first question to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. It's with regard to women's emergency shelters. Does the minister or his department keep any statistics on how many battered women and children are turned away from emergency shelters each month because the facilities and staff are insufficient to meet all the demands for their services? If he keeps those figures, could he give us a ballpark figure of how many were turned away last year?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, any statistics we have would be the result of the emergency shelters' providing us with those statistics. We have had these figures from time to time when we've wanted to find out what the demands on the different facilities are. So they really aren't our statistics; they come from these facilities. I don't have any available at the present time.

However, certainly there is a demand on a number of these facilities across the province. I believe we have 12 emergency

shelters in Alberta at the present time. The information I receive from the department and their contact and mine with some of these agencies that operate the women's shelters is that, in those situations where they're not able to accommodate the demand, individuals are referred to social service emergency services and are accommodated, usually the next day, in the women's emergency shelters.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. The minister acknowledges that there seems to be a problem with demand. My question to the minister is this: has the minister conducted any studies to assess what the effects are in those communities where provincial funding of emergency shelters has fallen below what we're told is a traditional 80 percent share of operating costs that his department usually assumes?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, in terms of acknowledging a problem, I guess it goes to acknowledging whether or not we have a problem with family violence in our society. Certainly, it's an issue that has received wide publicity in the last number of years and an area where I haven't seen any group, government, or any other individual organizations that have a solution to the problem of family violence. I think most people recognize it as a long-term process of changing society's attitudes to deal with this problem. However, in the meantime we are trying to deal the best we can with the victims of family violence, whether they be spouses or children.

In the area of family violence we did appoint a director of the office of prevention of family violence in our department. This individual chairs an interdepartmental committee on family violence. They are working to see if they can't come up with recommendations by summer as to what kind of plan we can put into place, in dealing with the very, very broad issue of family violence. Rather than funding women's shelters in every community in this province, we decided we would wait until we have a plan in place before making any commitment to fund beyond the present level. However, as I indicated in the House last week, with the home in Fort McMurray there are discussions going on between the management of the women's shelter there and departmental people, to see whether or not the facility could be expanded from nine beds to 15. So that's the situation at the present.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question to the minister. It's certainly nice that we have a plan, but the minister says that we wait until we have a plan. I think we're well aware that the situation is serious with certain people. They can't wait for the plan. A lot can happen in that meantime. Let me use the Airdrie example. I know the minister has had some consultation with the people in Airdrie, but has the minister conducted any studies in an area like this, which has a huge population and where no emergency shelters exist, which would show, for example, how many battered women and children are staying in the violent home they're trying to get away from because they simply have nowhere else to go? Are there any studies in that area specifically or perhaps in other areas of the province?

DR. WEBBER: Specifically with regard to the Airdrie community, Mr. Speaker, a study had been done there by local people and the University of Calgary, which indicated that there was a need for services in that area. However, I think it's important that the hon. member recognize this in a Canadian context, in that the moneys and facilities we have available in this province today compare very, very well with what's happening elsewhere in this country. At a recent meeting with other ministers from across this country where we exchanged

information about what each province was doing and how to best approach this problem of family violence, we decided we would place it on our next agenda. That's coming up very soon, if a meeting takes place in the Yukon in the early part of June. The hon. Leader of the Opposition indicates he can't wait for a plan. I would like to hear what suggestions he has in the meantime.

MR. MARTIN: More money for shelters, Mr. Minister. That's what the people are asking you for. It's all right to talk again about what's happening in Canada, Mr. Speaker, but that argument means nothing to battered women and children. To come back specifically then, a suggestion has been made to the minister, not by the Leader of the Opposition. Is the minister prepared now, to use the one example we've talked about, to start funding the Airdrie shelter, as proposed by the Airdrie women's emergency shelter association or, temporarily at least, fully fund a crisis line for the area? That's something he can do right now.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier in my comments, I think we are making very rapid progress in this area. There will be no decision to fund any further women's shelters or crisis lines until we get the recommendations from the interdepartmental committee in July. So in the meantime we will be dealing with these the best way we can; as I indicated, in the Fort McMurray area right now, and if there are things the Airdrie group can work out with our regional group in Calgary to accommodate any emergency situations, I'm sure they'll do that.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. There was one suggestion. The minister asked. I could give another: cut back on hospitality costs and put them into this area. Maybe talk to the Premier about that. Another suggestion: in instances where provincial funding of emergency shelters has fallen below the traditional 80 percent of their operating costs, would the minister be prepared to provide funds immediately to bring those shelters back up to the 80 percent provincial funding target — while he's in the midst of his plan, go back at least to what we had?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has suggestions on how to save funding for this government, and he talks about studies. I would suggest that the research in his particular area isn't really anything to brag about, and maybe some moneys could be saved there. As a matter of fact, if you look at the estimates, which hopefully we will be getting into this afternoon, the hon. member would see a 6.3 percent reduction in departmental support services in our department for the past year.

With regard to standards for the women's shelters across the province, as I mentioned earlier, we have 12 different women's shelters in Alberta. When we dealt with emergency situations and developed these centres over the last few years, we did so without putting in place a set of standards and programs that should be in women's shelters across this province. Now that we have these 12 established, we do have a group working on standards and programs for not only the women in these shelters but the children as well. So we are working towards a set of standards for women's shelters in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: Might this be the final supplementary in this series.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, the minister brags about a 6.3 percent reduction. We're talking precisely right this moment

about people being battered in the province, and he doesn't have the money for it. I'll save some more money for him, then. The minister didn't know in estimates; has he discovered where that \$87,000 that was allocated to start up a battered women's program in Lac La Biche last year is? Has he figured out where that is, or will we find that out somewhere along the line in public accounts?

DR. WEBBER: If the hon. member would understand the votes, Mr. Speaker, he would recognize that the reference I made was not to the vote for women's shelters in this province. Maybe he could study that a little further to find out where that is, and we'd be happy to discuss it from there.

We did discuss the trial project in northeastern Alberta during the estimates. I'd indicated at that time that I thought we had funded an excellent program in the northeastern part of this province. The concept was excellent; the management was not. In terms of having trials, certainly you are going to have some failures along the way. If the hon. leader is suggesting that we sit back and do nothing, I don't think that is the right approach. We will continue to look at proposals with regard to funding emergency services in rural areas.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to add a point on philosophy, and this came out very loud and clear at our last interprovincial ministers' meeting; that is, it is not government's sole responsibility to be dealing with family violence. It's a societal problem, and I think there are many players and people who are responsible that the hon. Leader of the Opposition doesn't recognize.

MRS. FYFE: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister could advise the Assembly if government policy regarding the funding through family and community support services or any family support programs that would be in conjunction with women's shelters would prevent the establishment of women's shelters. Is there anything within that policy that would prevent the establishment through that program?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, that is a good point: the family and community support services, a program unique in this country, looking at the programs that deal with preventive services. Municipalities have the decision as to how they allocate those moneys, and much of that budget is in family support services. I'd be pleased to compare our present services in this province with any province's in this country and continue to assess the situation to see what more needs to be done, not only by government but by the other players as well.

MR. MARTIN: I guess we still don't know where the \$87,000 ... That's clear by the answer.

Sugar Beet Industry

MR. MARTIN: My second question is to the Minister of Agriculture to begin with, Mr. Speaker. It comes back to the sugar beet industry or, I guess, the lack of it at this point. It's clear there will not be a sugar beet industry this year. As I understand it, alternative crops will be grown, particularly wheat. Those crops will be unable to make up to the \$170 million ...

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps we could get to the question without extending the length of the preliminary recital.

MR. MARTIN: It would have been shorter if we hadn't had the interjection there.

AN HON. MEMBER: Order.

AN HON. MEMBER: Respect.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. If the hon. leader invites interjections or interventions, he's going to get them, regardless of what effect that may have. Sometimes it has to be done.

MR. MARTIN: We'll ask the minister. It's a very serious matter, and I hope the backbenchers will listen, because it's important. What steps will the government now take to offset this blow to the economy of southern Alberta? For example, are there any programs or other actions that the government will now put into place to make up for this economic loss?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: No, there is not, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: Following from that, my question is to the minister. So we're just saying, "Too bad, there's nothing the government can do about the \$170 million at this particular time"? That's what we're saying to the people of southern Alberta, particularly in the Taber area?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, that's just ridiculous. The MLAs from southern Alberta and I have been working together with the marketing board for the sugar beet industry, recognizing that what we need is a sugar policy in this country. We made it very clear that that is what's needed. The federal government has been studying that for 15, 20 years and more. It's just ridiculous to study it that long. We studied it to death. Let's get on with the sugar policy. I'm working with my colleagues from this Legislature with the federal government to impress upon them the fact that a sugar policy now is not only important but mandatory. It's just ridiculous that we should continue to be a dumping ground for sugar on the world market. That's what we're doing.

With respect to other crops, there is very little we can do. It's unfortunate that the alternative crops maybe won't make as much return; but hopefully it will only be a one-year respite, and next year we'll have a sugar beet industry again, with a sugar policy and a profit for our producers.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. Agreed, there has to be the long term. I was specifically talking about what is happening this year. Could the minister advise whether or not he has been notified, as of this moment, of B.C. Sugar's plans with regard to its Taber plant and if so, generally what those plans are?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I haven't received any formal notification from the plant on what their actions are, but I understand they intend to keep on a skeleton crew and keep the plant operating. If there is a sugar policy, of course, it could be back in full production next year. The unfortunate part with respect to jobs is not so much the permanent work force at the plant but the very significant number that work there on a seasonal basis. I don't believe there will be hiring of those people this coming year, but my understanding is that the plant will stay in operation.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. Could the Minister of Municipal Affairs indicate if his department has any contingency plans for the sugar beet industry in the town of Taber specifically or any other affected municipalities? Does this government have any contingency plans to help them, at least through this year till there is a sugar industry back there that the minister is talking about?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition originally posed the question to the correct minister. The minister who responds to the agricultural policies that are necessary in this province is the Minister of Agriculture, and he is doing an excellent job at that.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. You answered my question.

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

MR. MARTIN: Perhaps if there is one more, then to the Minister of Economic Development. Yeah, that's you, I think, Mr. Planche. My question simply is this. Has the minister received any estimate of the effect of the shutdown of the sugar beet industry this year, especially on the small manufacturing companies in southern Alberta that manufacture the specialty equipment catering to that industry?

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, the shortline equipment manufacturers for sugar beet production are going to be hurt. There's no question about that. When we got involved in this issue, B.C. Sugar had the option of producing, at some considerable profit, sugar from their Vancouver plant that would satisfy the market that's normally served by all the beet plants across western Canada. They elected to pass that and keep the plants open here at some considerable cost to them, providing that we would participate in a subsidy program. I think we came forward quickly and in good faith, as did the federal government, to support a program in a falling sugar market. It's unfortunate in the extreme, in my view, that that wasn't accepted by the marketing board, although it was accepted by many growers. In my judgment the B.C. Sugar company has a very strong social conscience, and they're going to do whatever is necessary, within economic limits, to keep that plant open, although there won't be any beets planted this year.

MR. GURNETT: Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Economic Development as well. Can the minister advise whether there are any special programs the government intends to put in place to tide over the equipment manufacturers during the non-crop year for the lost income they'd suffer?

MR. PLANCHE: No, there are no plans to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Consultations with Interest Groups

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, to the Solicitor General. It's a general question about the process by which the Solicitor General brings legislation into the Legislature, specifically Bills 59, 71, 72, 75, and 76. Could the minister indicate, in terms of each of those Bills, what consultation took place with the associations that are directly affected? Have there been recent consultations or were all consultations sometime in the past?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, the Bills that the hon. member mentions have gone through very similar processes. There have been consultations with the associations, in some cases going back some years, both with me and the preceding minister responsible for professions and occupations. Subsequent to those discussions and negotiations there have been ongoing discussions with the associations, societies, and institutes, in most cases up to approximately two weeks before introduction of the Bills.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. I find the associations raising this specific question — and there are questions about consultations and interpretation: in terms of the Police Act and the Acts that affect the accountants across this province, could the minister indicate who asked for the legislation to be presented in this session? What pressure group is asking for the legislation to speed through this spring session?

DR. REID: In relation to the Police Act, Mr. Speaker, there have been police chiefs, associations of police chiefs, police associations, police commissions, and various municipal authorities across the province. In relation to the various professional acts: usually the professions concerned, sometimes members of the public, and the various departments that have the normal responsibility for the particular profession.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister with regard to the Alberta police association and their representation. Could the minister indicate whether further consultations or hearings have taken place with that association since the last time I raised the question and a brief that was presented to the minister as of March 14?

MR. REID: There have not been further consultations with me since the meeting in my office that I mentioned previously. As I've said before, I did give the assurance to the association of police associations that we would take their representations under advisement and that we would certainly involve them in the development of the regulations. I might add, Mr. Speaker, that in relation to the particular concern of the police associations, I repeat that there will be hearings and that there will be the appeal to the Law Enforcement Appeal Board. That appeal will, of course, be in public unless the Law Enforcement Appeal Board feels that is not suitable.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Could the minister indicate at this time whether it's the government's or the minister's plan to proceed with each one of those Acts and bring them to third reading in this spring session?

DR. REID: That is currently the intention, Mr. Speaker.

Red Meat Stabilization

MR. GURNETT: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture as well. Could the minister confirm whether or not he's received firm assurances from the federal Minister of Agriculture to the effect that a national red meat stabilization program will be put in place before the House of Commons' summer adjournment, probably at the end of June?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I received assurance that the Bill would go through all the steps necessary and be passed before the House rises for the summer recess. However, the concern I have with that is, of course, that I received no assurance that there would not be amendments made to that Bill. I've stated before very clearly that that's one concern we have. The Bill is proceeding. Yesterday it moved through second reading and is now in committee. So hopefully we'll see the passage of that Bill, which is of crucial importance at this time for our cattlemen and in particular our hog producers.

MR. GURNETT: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister advise whether or not his department is at this time

drafting any contingency plans or programs to establish a provincial red meat stabilization program, in the event that the federal action isn't in place by the summer adjournment?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I've given it some consideration, particularly after the events of the past week, during which the federal NDP used stalling tactics in the House and it didn't look like the Bill was going to get through second reading. However, we are working on a plan in the event there are amendments made to the Bill or it fails to pass, because I've stated very clearly that there's no way we're going to see our livestock sector in this province disadvantaged.

MR. GURNETT: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I assure the minister we're as anxious as anyone to see a good program in place. Can the minister advise whether or not, among the alternatives that are being considered by his department in the event that something is done provincially, there would be a consideration of proceeding, if necessary, to bring in a stabilization program, in the absence of actual legislation being passed?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: As I stated, Mr. Speaker, all options are being considered, recognizing that there's no way we're going to allow our livestock sector in this province to be disadvantaged. So I'm looking at all options that could be considered, to react relatively quickly.

MR. GURNETT: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Could I ask whether the minister would give his commitment to seek the approval of this Assembly for a program on the understanding that such a program at a provincial level would be implemented only if there was no progress in a proper, satisfactory federal program.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, that's an option I'll consider.

MR. SPEAKER: Might this be the final supplementary in this series.

MR. GURNETT: To the minister as well. Among the aspects being considered for a provincial red meat stabilization program, should it prove necessary, could the minister indicate what consideration is being given to the establishment of a provincial Crown corporation to encourage the meat processing industry in this province and put it in a better state?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, of course, we are looking at the entire red meat industry. The processing sector is of crucial importance because the processors need the producers and the producers need the processors. But with respect to any Crown corporation for the packing industry, there's no consideration being given at all.

Liquor Store Hours

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Solicitor General. In view of the significant influx of tourists to Alberta during the summer and in view of our desire to ensure their stay is memorable, enjoyable, and relaxing, is the hon. Solicitor General considering altering or amending the hours or days of operation of the ALCB stores?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, I am giving some consideration to a certain number of locations in the province, in larger towns

that serve a large tourist industry to opening on Mondays where they are currently closed on Mondays.

Provincial Park Camping Fees

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. Minister of Recreation and Parks. It concerns an announcement recently by the government of Canada with regard to the fees for the federal parks in the system across Canada, particularly Alberta. Is the minister considering any increase in the provincial park camping fees in Alberta for 1985?

MR. TRYNCHY: No, Mr. Speaker.

Farm Development Guarantee Program

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Member for Spirit River-Fairview raised a question about applications under the Alberta farm development guarantee through the Agricultural Development Corporation and with respect to particular cases which may be delayed somewhat. As of May 21, 83 applications for the farm development guarantee program were received at ADC's head office in Camrose. Of those 83, 66 have been processed, of which 49 were approved. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the processing time for all the farm loans is approximately 14 working days. I would also like to point out that under the farm development guarantee we place an urgency on all applications received, bearing in mind the time of year and the need to assess the operating capital as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the information that has been brought to me by the hon. member.

Municipal Boundary Changes

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and it's with regard to changing boundaries within various MDs and counties across the province. Could the minister indicate how many counties and municipalities are going to be affected by the department's program at the present time, and what criteria is the minister using for those boundary changes in various areas?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, there are 30 counties and 20 municipal districts in the province. My estimate at this time would be that a good 75 percent of those counties and municipal districts have gone through a revision of boundaries that has resulted in either a retention of acceptable existing divisional boundaries or the adoption of new divisional boundaries. The criterion that has been used in making the decisions relative to the location of boundaries has been basically the same criterion that we used in our Legislative Assembly Act. Councillors were asked to look at their own circumstances. They were given a departmentally prepared map which would be used as a guide, and then they would make whatever adjustments they felt would be necessary to take into account the Legislative Assembly approach that we used. That was a plus or minus 25 percent variation from the norm. What we would do, Mr. Speaker, is take the total population of a county or municipal district and then divide that by the number of divisions, and that would give you an average division. Then we would ask that in each particular municipality the division with the largest population would not exceed 125 percent of the norm and the division with the lowest population would not be less than 75 percent of the norm. Basically, that was the way the matter was approached.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister, and it's similar to the one I asked the Solicitor General in terms of who initiated the action at the county and the municipal level. Was this a request of the rural counties and municipalities of the province, or was this program initiated by the minister? Who asked for the changes?

MR. KOZIAK: The program was initiated by me, Mr. Speaker, after a review of a number of divisional boundaries of counties and municipal districts in the province. We were going through a review of our own boundaries here in the province, and it was brought to my attention that in some cases three and more decades had passed since a review of the divisional boundaries of counties and municipal districts had been considered. In that review we discovered that, in some cases, one division might have four times the population of a neighbouring division, and that process identified some concerns. Some of those concerns materialized in terms of difficulties that certain rural municipalities had in governance, and we attended to some of those prior to the last election.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary to the minister. I find that a number of people resident in the counties and municipalities, as well the councillors, have not asked for the changes. In situations where the local council of either the county or municipality does not want to change, is the minister willing to accept the boundaries as they are, or is it a compulsory requirement that each one of them change at this time?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, there is an alternative which has been suggested in some cases where they want to retain divisional boundaries but the number of people within each division is beyond the norm; in other words, it's greater than that spread of plus or minus 25 percent that I identified in my earlier answer. We've suggested in that case that perhaps they might nominate on a divisional basis but elect at large, and that would serve democratic principles quite well. So that approach is available to those municipalities who would like to retain current divisional boundaries.

Accountants Acts

MR. GURNETT: Mr. Speaker, a question to the Solicitor General. What studies were undertaken of the impact on small rural communities, many of which are served by CGAs and almost none of which are served by CAs, when the proposed changes in the auditing functions of CGAs were being prepared in connection with Bill 71?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of concern expressed on that particular item. If the hon. member would read the definition of "audit" carefully, he would find that in actual fact there will be very few businesses in any small community that will require an audit under the definition as it will be. The other thing that is part of the package is, of course, a complete survey of all the statutes and regulations where financial requirements are stipulated. The aim of that is a considerable level of deregulation and a decrease in the number of audits that will be required by the statutes of the province.

I have said before that it's my intention to meet with the private sector financial entities that are in the lending business and encourage them to read these definitions carefully and to use them in their requirements as well. I understand they may be quite happy to use these new definitions, the understanding being that audits will only be required for larger loans such as most small-town businesses would not be looking at.

Container Port Facility

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Economic Development. This has to do with the container port in the county of Strathcona. Can the minister indicate what discussions he or his department has had with that private group to look at the feasibility and any support that's available for the group? Has the minister had discussions with the private group?

MR. PLANCHE: Yes, I have, Mr. Speaker.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate what progress has been made in possibly some government participation or support for that project?

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, at the inception of that project we had a fairly thorough discussion with the proponents. We advised them of our activities in an effort to break freight rates and what our sense of direction was going to be, and we were assured at that time that they were fully financed and that their activities would in no way run contrary to what we were trying to do.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate if there is an equivalent group in the city of Calgary that is trying to accomplish the same purpose of having a container port in that area?

MR. PLANCHE: I guess the trouble I have is what the purpose of a container research corporation is. The answer to the question is no. This is the only one I know of that is going on in Alberta, but as near as I can tell, there's nothing in terms of their activities that's in any way other than complementary to what we're doing.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, back to the county of Strathcona container port. Can the minister indicate what economic impact this will have in the province if this project goes ahead? Has the department had a look at the feasibility study of what impact it will have on the economic well-being of the province?

MR. PLANCHE: Of course, that wouldn't be our business. It's a private-sector initiative. It was clear when we asked, "Would the savings that would be accomplished by this new technology, whatever it may be, pass back to the shippers to enhance our competitive position?" The answer was vague, but I think it was no.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the hon. minister. In light of the fact that the minister's department has been doing fairly extensive studies, I presume, what economic impact did the minister's studies indicate that this container port would have on the economy of the province?

MR. PLANCHE: The question isn't clear. If it's the container port that the Department of Economic Development has been working on for three or four years, that's one issue; if it's the container research port that's now under construction in north-east Edmonton, that's another.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, the question I'm trying to have answered is: what economic benefit would the project have in light of the information that the minister's department must have had when they were looking at the feasibility study, and

hopefully that they would encourage the private sector to go ahead rather than a government project?

MR. PLANCHE: In terms of the activity that we're under way with, hopefully there will be an announcement in the short term. The only reason the government would be involved is in its early stages. The way it's set out, some unknown losses are going to occur, and it just isn't the kind of thing the private sector would be involved in until it begins to make some economic sense over the near term. In terms of the container research port that's under construction in the northeast part of Edmonton, it wouldn't be our business to assess the economic benefits of a private-sector initiative.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a final question. The minister is saying that as of now it doesn't seem that there would be any financial support for the container port project in the county of Strathcona?

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, first of all, when it began, we were assured that it was fully financed, so it wasn't a problem. Secondly, we don't normally become involved in a project that's half finished that isn't financed. I haven't seen the official request that I understand is out there; I have read the press clippings. If there's a request from someone for government assistance, we will have to have a look at a business plan, assess it, and then make a decision around a table with my colleagues, the way we customarily do.

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. STILES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and to other members of the Assembly a group of grade 6 students from the Olds elementary school in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury. I understand the students are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Grieg Connolly and Mr. Gary Woodruff, and by parents Mrs. Jean Pochapsky and Mrs. Susan Sanders. I do notice at least one other parent, Bridgitte Maicher, who is with the group. Unfortunately, I don't know the name of one of the other parents who appear to be with them. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Speaker's Ruling

MR. SPEAKER: Might I just refer briefly to a statement I made yesterday evening with regard to a reasoned amendment introduced by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. At that time I accepted his invitation to consider the matter further. I've done that, and it appears that I gave a too-restricted interpretation to the precedents and practices in that regard and that the amendment should have been allowed. I apologize to the hon. Leader of the Opposition and to the House.

As hon. members know, once a ruling has been given, it belongs to the House, and the Speaker has no authority to reverse or change it. However, instead of going through the procedure of formally reversing the precedent, it would be my respectful suggestion to the House that we might agree that the application of the ruling would be restricted to precisely the circumstances of yesterday evening. In that event we could be sure that it wouldn't be followed by a precedent on a future occasion. If that isn't too Machiavellian for the House, I should appreciate the consent of the House to that proposal. Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Anyone contrary?
Thank you.

head: COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would the Committee of Supply please come to order. We have a number of departments to consider.

Department of Social Services and Community Health

MR. GURNETT: Mr. Chairman, just a couple of questions that I haven't had an opportunity to ask the minister about on other occasions and would appreciate some response on.

One relates to some figures that I've seen about the turnover rate of staff within the department. I have a figure that indicates that almost 10 percent of social workers with master's degrees are leaving their positions annually, and slightly over 4 percent of social workers with bachelor's degrees are also leaving positions. Perhaps in boom times and times when there were a lot of job possibilities, those figures might not have been too surprising, but I wonder whether there's been any investigation of why those kinds of figures apply and whether things could be happening within the department that would give more continuity in staff. I also wonder whether the minister's department has looked at whether there is any negative impact on the services being offered by the department, as you have relatively high levels of turnover among staff: any study of why it's happening and what its results are.

In the annual report of the Public Service Commissioner yesterday I noticed the figures for the number of people that were given assistance for staff development and the number of people receiving it in the minister's department. I wonder if he could perhaps amplify a little on that basic number and indicate what kind of assistance is given, what the criteria are to qualify for staff development assistance, and the process by which applications for that are approved. It would seem to me that certainly one of the ways to guarantee that staff want to stay is, if they have some assistance in those areas, to continue to upgrade and improve themselves. I wonder how that assistance is made available and to which employees.

Also, going into a somewhat different area, Mr. Chairman. I was looking at some other statistics for the number of people receiving social assistance. This was in the city of Calgary in particular, where the number of people receiving social assistance was higher although there was a small decrease in the unemployment figures. In fact, I think the month of April was the second highest month ever for the city of Calgary. I wonder if there has been any investigation, particularly of whether or

not those higher figures for social assistance have a relationship to people who have exhausted assistance or benefits under unemployment insurance and have used up any other assets they might have and, as such, have no choice but to receive social assistance. Perhaps the minister can indicate some other explanation for why the unemployment figures are declining slightly, yet the people on social assistance are increasing.

I don't have figures, in part because unemployed people in this city have talked to me on a number of occasions but, on a provincial basis, I wonder whether there's any more general investigation of what's happening as far as people who are reaching the end of any possibility other than social assistance, whether there are any new conclusions we can draw about the people that have to begin receiving social assistance and about the ability of people to continue receiving social assistance, and whether there's any increase in difficulties related to that. Those are all areas where I'm sure there's been some good research done, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to the minister maybe being able to tell us a little bit about that.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to make one or two comments to the committee and the minister and ask a few questions on the meeting that we had with the mental health people. What is the situation as far as what services are available for the young adolescent? Especially in a time of high unemployment, it seems that because they cannot find jobs, so many of those young people come to the point where they think, "I'm never going to have a job." They get quite depressed. I'm sure the minister is concerned, but I'd just like to know what he projects for the future, what facilities will be required, and what progress is being made in this area.

Of course, the question of suicides always comes up. There was a resolution in this House, and there was quite an extensive debate, which I'm sure the members all listened to very, very attentively. I would like to know from the minister what programs the department has in place to look at preventing some of these deaths, especially in the young age groups. I know it's a very, very difficult problem. Of course, the parents have a great difficulty understanding: "Why us? Why did he or she have to do that?" It is a problem, especially when it seems that the economy takes a downturn. I know that in a time of high unemployment many of the marriage breakdowns and the emotional problems we have directly relate to how few dollars you have in your pocket. The two things seem to go together. I know we have to look at some type of counselling service, so I'd like to know from the minister what is in place.

The question of child battering is a also problem area in that we sometimes tend to overreact. We are so concerned about the welfare of the child that we sometimes infringe upon the parents' rights and what their responsibilities are for disciplining the child. All of us possibly think we're close to being normal parents. As parents we always had the old philosophy that we were raised on: spare the rod and spoil the child. There's that fine line, Mr. Minister, where the child possibly does need disciplining, and the neighbour anonymously lays the charge, acting in good faith. Sometimes it causes the parents a problem. I would just like to know what some of the guidelines are.

In a time of high unemployment, of course, we have spouse battering. That is the term I want to use rather than "wife beating", because I've known instances in my own community and my own constituency where quite often it's the other way around, where the husband is being battered by the wife. It is an area of concern. I know there are facilities in place, and I'd like to know from the minister if these are increasing in numbers or the services are becoming more needed.

I express some concerns to the minister. On the whole, I would like to say that in dealing with the minister's department and many of the social workers, I find those people to be very, very dedicated, very reasonable, and very accessible. I know they get criticized many times for not being accessible. But all the people I've had to deal with in the department have been very concerned, very co-operative, and very obliging. I hope that fact that they have such great staff is a reflection on the minister. I say that rather tongue-in-cheek, but I mean it sincerely, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Most of the people, I would say a great majority, have compassion, understanding, and appreciate the fact that when a person asks for assistance, it is a genuine problem. I would like to say as sincerely as I can to the minister and the committee and have him convey to his people that I've been very pleased with the work and co-operation I've received from those people.

With those few remarks, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to the estimates.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Chairman, in responding to the questions raised by the two hon. members of the opposition, I'll take them in order. First of all, the Member for Spirit River-Fairview quoted some numbers relative to the turnover rate in the department. I certainly don't think we have any problem at all in terms of turnover rates. The hon. member used the term "relatively high". Relative to what? Relative to a few years ago, the numbers are very, very low. Of course, during the boom times one of the concerns was that there were many job opportunities at relatively higher pay in many areas, where they could leave and work. However, in the last several years the turnover rate has been very, very low compared to what it had previously been.

In terms of staff development, we have a very good program in place in the child welfare area. We have 52 man-years allocated for staff cover-off positions during periods when the staff is away or for staff development. That has been in place for a number of years now, and it was primarily put in place to try to upgrade the qualifications of the child welfare workers in the system. Around 1980 the number of degreed child welfare workers was in the range of 30 or 40 percent. Now I believe that has increased to approximately 75 or 80 percent. I'm not sure of those exact numbers, but there has been a significant improvement in that area. This concept of staff-allocated positions has been approved by Executive Council and the department. The administration and the approval process for how they carry that out is the responsibility of the deputy minister.

There was an increase in the numbers on social assistance in the Calgary region of 1.4 percent from the middle of March to the middle of April and an overall provincial increase of 2.1 percent during that time. Certainly, with the unemployment rate the way it is, the prognostications of the numbers of people on social allowance tie very, very closely with the unemployment rate. There certainly will be a lag in a reduction of people who are on social allowance, given any downturn in the unemployment rate. There is that lag.

The best numbers that we have of UIC exhautees, or the people coming off unemployment insurance benefits, indicate that approximately 5 percent of these people come off UIC and end up on social allowance. That is a figure that's been pretty consistent right across the country. It seems as though a number of these people end up getting work after their benefits have run out. So the numbers of people coming onto social allowance have been around the 5 percent mark. I would have to check whether or not that has changed in the last couple of months, but I think that if it has increased, it hasn't increased significantly.

For the new cases that come on, one important thing to note, Mr. Chairman, is that approximately 80 percent of the new clients who are coming on social allowance have come off social allowance within about eight to nine months after being on social allowance. As I indicated in the House previously, one of the concerns I have is: how can we get the long-term social allowance recipients who have talents and skills back into the work force? The longer one is on social allowance, the more depressing it is and the more difficult it is to get out there and look the way they may have looked in the early stages.

I described just very briefly the last day a program we are initiating on a trial basis in Edmonton, Calgary, and possibly Red Deer; a job-finding program modelled on a program similar to what's occurring in British Columbia today. We take a particular group, about 15 social allowance recipients who have been on for more than eight months or so and try to motivate them to think they have talents to offer and to go out and look for work in the areas they have an interest in. They show them how to fill out application forms, resumés, and also how to phone an employer. The main part of the program is to motivate the individual to be able to get on the telephone. They have mock sessions with the TV cameras to show them how to call. They're not interested in whether there's a vacancy in the agency or the company they call. They try to sell themselves to get an interview with the employer and then go out and sell themselves with that employer.

The results have been very, very impressive in British Columbia. In a three-week time period, approximately 70 percent of the people in the program end up getting work. Because they did it themselves and nobody else got the job for them, they stick with that job longer as well. I think this is a program that is demonstrably very effective in British Columbia and one I would like to see get started here. I also think it's a program whereby the private sector, at least in British Columbia, has shown that it operates more effectively there than if the government is operating it. That is one area where we are concentrating some effort to try to get the long-term social allowance recipient with some skills back into the work force.

We have other programs in the department. The employment opportunities program: in the southern part of the province the emphasis seems to be on retraining and developing those skills, whereas in the northern part of the province it's more trying to place them in jobs. I don't have the exact numbers, but there are quite a number of people involved in that particular program as well.

Going on to the Member for Clover Bar, Mr. Chairman, and some of the questions he had. He talked about the young adolescent who has been unemployed for some time. The job-finding program that I just finished describing would certainly apply to young, unemployed adolescents who would be on social allowance for a considerable length of time.

I'm very pleased with the efforts presently being made to develop a mental health program for adolescents in this province. We made that commitment after the Thomlison and the Cavanagh Board of Review reports where there were strong recommendations that we had to improve mental health services for the adolescent, the 16- and 17-year-old particularly. We have the social services department and the mental health division on the community health side working together with agencies and the public so that during the course of the next number of months they will be developing a mental health program for children. It's my hope that that program will be planned by the end of this year and implemented by the end of next year. This is part of the whole thrust in improving our child welfare system in the province.

The hon. Member for Clover Bar referred to the number of suicides that are occurring in this province. I believe that in the last numbers I had we ranked about third in the country, although it's been fluctuating in that first, second, or third range across the country over the last few years. One of the things I find very interesting is that in Newfoundland, where the unemployment rate has been high for a considerable length of time, the suicide rate is one of the lowest in the country. I think one of the reasons for that is the presence of family and family stability, whereas during the boom times we had many people moving into Alberta and away from families. It has fluctuated somewhat over the last three or four years; it hasn't changed significantly between the boom times and the last few years. If there's one single factor that is important here, I think it's family stability or the presence of family to help people through difficult times.

The hon. member was asking what kinds of services were in place in the province to deal with the mentally ill. In the community health side of our department, with the preventive thrust, we have mental health clinics in a number of centres in the province.

Going back to suicide again, we have a suicide advisory committee. They have an \$800,000 a year budget. They use that money to have training programs across the province to try to make teachers, social workers, and particularly people who are dealing with young people recognize the signs of potential suicide victims.

We have a heavy thrust in the area of mental health research. A research component in the mental health area amounts to some \$750,000 a year. A portion of that research is in depression. I think we have some good research going on in the mental health area. Of course, the causes and different types of mental illnesses have been an area of great mystery for many, many years. I think considerable progress has been made in recent years, but more research yet needs to be done.

One area of concern is the suicide rate among young native people. Just this morning and yesterday I was discussing with the deputy minister a thrust of some mental health workers and some native people working together in an area in the northern part of the province where there is a particularly high suicide rate among young native people. So we'll have four or five people in the mental health area concentrating on some of the problems with some of the reserves in the north.

The Member for Clover Bar referred to child abuse. I believe that our new Child Welfare Act will be very, very much improved over the previous Child Welfare Act in the definition of a child in need of protective services. It will be clearer to courts and to social workers and child welfare workers when a child is in need of protective services, with the definition of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

We have a policy that corporal punishment is acceptable, used with discretion, reason, and good judgment, so it is not a departmental policy that foster parents and others cannot spank their children. Certainly, if foster parents have a child in their care who has been physically abused, they would be very, very concerned about whether or not they would use corporal punishment in the discipline of that child. But it certainly is not our policy that we disallow corporal punishment. There is in the new Child Welfare Act the capability for social workers to deal with malicious or vexatious calls. In the past a requirement was put on them that they had to go out and investigate a call that was related to possible child abuse. If they think a call is malicious and have good evidence of that, then they can use their discretion as to whether or not to follow up on that. I think that will be helpful for them.

Spouse battering; I certainly agree with the hon. Member for Clover Bar in terms of the expression "spouse battering" as opposed to "wife battering". I don't even like the word "battering". I think it's abuse, in the same way that we have child abuse. To me, battering means physical punishment, and many of the women or spouses that end up needing assistance are there for emotional abuse and not just physical abuse.

The hon. Member for Clover Bar asked what kind of services were increasing. This would be a follow-up to the question period as well. In January this year we did open a new women's shelter in Camrose. It became operational January 15. There is a proposed shelter which is not operational as yet; I believe it's in the Edson or Hinton area. It's called the Yellowhead Women's Shelter. So we have been increasing the number gradually over the last number of years. The occupancy rates: I have numbers, and if the hon. Leader of the Opposition wanted to request numbers through the Order Paper, I'd be happy to provide the statistics we have, varying from an occupancy rate of 29 percent in some of the smaller communities of Alberta up to almost 100 percent in some of the more densely populated areas, but generally around the 75 to 85 percent occupancy rate.

I appreciate the comments of the hon. Member for Clover Bar with regard to the compassion and understanding of many of the child welfare workers, the social workers, frontline workers—although I don't like the term "frontline workers" either; it sounds like you're in a war. These people providing services have to be very tolerant and understanding to deal with some really sad cases. My hat goes off to them as well, and I will certainly convey the hon. member's comments to the people in the department. I think we have excellent morale in the department throughout the province. I think the process we went through, particularly in the child welfare area, where we involved the child welfare workers who were dealing with the children that were in their care, to get their input in the policy development by having meetings in the communities, where many of these people put in hours and hours of work in preparing their submissions—this was during the time when the first Bill appeared on the Order Paper and prior to the second Child Welfare Act coming in and being passed in the Legislature. I think it was very important to get input not only from the community at large but also from the people who are dealing directly with the children in the system.

Mr. Chairman, I believe those remarks answer the questions from the members.

MR. GURNETT: Mr. Chairman, just to follow up on two or three things. I certainly appreciate the very interesting information provided. I'm wondering about the role of in-service with regard to staff development. For example, when a major new piece of legislation like the Child Welfare Act comes along, I'm wondering what the department does, whether information is distributed to staff, whether there's some program of in-service that would not be the same as the upgrading type or the staff development area that he addressed earlier but also would be important. So I wonder how that's followed through on in the department.

Also, in my questions about turnover within the department, I wonder whether there's been any investigation within the department of whether, in fact, given the change in the economic climate, we have a situation now where people are simply staying because there are not other jobs; whether there's been some investigation of the level of job satisfaction, if people are actually enjoying or at least feeling challenged and satisfied with the work they're doing. I certainly concur in the statements we've heard from a number of people about the very fine work

done by a lot of the staff, but I wonder what investigation there has been of that overall subject of job satisfaction.

In responding to the questions about abuse situations asked by the Member for Clover Bar, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to have the minister follow up, particularly with regard to the child abuse reporting system and the whole issue of the confidentiality attached to that. I'm aware that there's a completely confidential number, but I know from having at one point been part of a conference in northwest Alberta that a lot of people, teachers and others that work with children, have indicated that, in fact, they don't make use of that because, especially in small rural areas, confidentiality is almost impossible to assure. I wonder how those cases are followed up, how they're looked at, so that people can have real confidence that if they have genuine concerns, they won't be threatened by reporting that. Maybe it's something that can't properly be addressed in areas with light population, but I wonder what particular considerations the department gives to that.

One other area that the discussion about the situation with children brought to my mind relates to the whole area of whether the minister has any information about the reasons behind children being taken into care by the department. I've had some indication from people working with children that maybe there is an increasing factor in single-parent families where the parent is away working. The reason I think of that particularly is that as we look at the possibility, which I hope won't come to pass, of stores open many more hours, seven days a week—whether we know if that's also going to result in more children coming into care because the parent is not available, has to take jobs at shifts that leave the children alone at home and with no one to actually take care of them.

Those are just a few areas the minister may have a few minutes to quickly respond to.

Thank you.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Chairman, I'd be happy to quickly respond. I do have a problem timewise, and I hope the hon. members bear with me because of that. We could possibly go on to another department.

On the staff development side, in-service training: several years ago the Child Welfare League of America was involved in training departmental staff in the child welfare area, and significant work went on with this in-service training. Today we do have people in the department who are continuing with that training with the program materials that were used by the Child Welfare League of America. A very, very extensive training program is going on right now, in anticipation of the proclamation of the Child Welfare Act on July 1.

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

We do put out bulletins on a regular basis, which are available to agencies and individuals across the province. Certainly, the hon. member is welcome to those bulletins, progress reports. Reading the latest one last night, we intend to extend the training process beyond the department into community agencies that would be involved in offering child welfare programs as well. I attended a dinner recently in Edmonton, one of the training sessions of about 40 to 50 child welfare workers at the completion of their program, and they were going to go out across the province and train people in the regions as well.

A number of the other questions the hon. member referred to, I guess, are almost philosophical, speculating what might happen in the department, the turnover if other jobs become available. My view is that with the overall qualifications in the department higher than they were a few years ago, we will see

a lower turnover rate, even if there is a repeat of the boom times that we previously had.

Mr. Chairman, certainly I could comment at length on some of the other questions that were asked, but I would appreciate if we could carry on that discussion at some other time, in view of the fact that I have an airplane to catch very shortly.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Chairman, I think the minister appreciates the understanding of the committee in changing gears in midstream, you might say, this afternoon. I think the Minister of Advanced Education will be here shortly, if the committee can bear with us for perhaps 30 seconds. If he is not able to come, we would call the Department of Education.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Is it agreed that the committee take a short recess until the Minister of Advanced Education makes his presence known?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

Department of Advanced Education

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Minister of Advanced Education is now present, so we will continue with his estimates. I'm not sure where we were on the last day. Has the minister any more comments to make, or had he concluded?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Chairman, when we left off last day, I believe we had just dealt with the last question from the Member for Little Bow, and I was anticipating we would go to the numbers as soon as possible.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Chairman, I have one question I'd like to ask the minister before we go to the question. It pertains to the Alberta educational opportunity equalization grants. I understand that up to \$1,400 per academic year is available as a grant under that program to enable students to attend educational institutions further than commuting distance from their parents' home. If they are dependent, however, and if they do not qualify for student loans, then they don't receive any portion of this \$1,400 Alberta educational opportunity equalization grant. A number of students have a very difficult time meeting their own needs and can't qualify for this equalization grant. My question is: if some students cannot qualify for a student loan and so cannot qualify for this grant, how is it an equalization opportunity grant? Is there a way in which those students can apply and benefit from that program?

MR. MARTIN: A couple of short questions to begin with. We've covered quite an area. I want to share a picture with the hon. minister. I don't know if he's seen it. "Johnston gives commitment to increase base budget." It has the minister sitting there and one of the administrators sort of praying on his knees. Has the minister seen the picture? My question to the minister: I wonder if this is the new assessment of the way we deal with the budget in the province. I'll show him the picture if he hasn't seen it, Mr. Chairman.

MR. SZWENDER: Do you want it autographed?

MR. MARTIN: Yes, I'd like it autographed. If that's the way to get money, it might be a new way we can influence and talk to people about dealing with the Minister of Advanced Education.

To come to some discussions we've held in the House during question period about the PCB spill at the U of C — I know

that's not specifically in the minister's area. It falls under the Minister of Environment and, of course, at the time the minister of occupational health and safety. As I understand it — I don't have *Hansard* right in front of me — the drift of what the minister said is that he was satisfied that it was handled in the proper way, I gather because they told him that. I say to the minister that while it's a cup — we don't know that; that's what they said.

Our whole point was that there was a special way to handle this. If we say that the U of C has special rights because they're professors or whatever, and they know this, then we have to have different laws for PCB spills for different people. I really suggest to the minister that while he may have been satisfied, it is clear that it didn't come up for a year and a half later. They may have handled the spill quickly and efficiently: we don't know. I think the minister would agree — and I'd like his comments on this — that the government should have been notified, maybe not his department but certainly occupational health and safety and Environment. In that sense it was handled badly.

The other question I have, and maybe the minister doesn't have this information because we are here for estimates: in a case like that who does pay for the cleanup? Is it the University of Calgary itself, or does it go through Environment? Has the minister any update in that particular area?

Just those few comments initially, because that's something that came up. It seems to me that not reporting it was a fairly important omission by all standards, whether it's a cup or whatever. Where do you draw the line on when you should report these things? Occupational health and safety doesn't say how much. It clearly says it must be reported. I think that's the major problem. It's not to go after the U of C. We'd better make sure that institutions, while they may be universities, obey the law, the same as we would a private company in a case like this.

MR. GURNETT: Mr. Chairman, a couple of questions to follow up on some responses the minister gave the last time we talked. One of them relates to the whole issue of various technical institutions and colleges offering particular courses. I had asked earlier about a particular course at a particular institution. I wonder if the minister would be willing to give some indication in a general way of the process by which it's determined which technical institutions and/or colleges will receive permission to offer a particular course. Who's allowed to have input into that process, and how is the decision then made for a course? Which institutions will end up being able to offer which particular trade? For example, I'm thinking about the motorcycle mechanics program. The minister indicated that he was looking forward to it being offered at Fairview College but, on the other hand, couldn't guarantee that that would necessarily be the only institution where it was offered. I just wonder what the process is by which those courses end up in particular places and not in others. I know there have been cases where other courses have been developed and ended up being offered in institutions that the developing institution wasn't sure should be offering it.

Another question I'd like to have the minister respond to is about conditions that might accompany any kind of funding. I'm wondering, for example, whether an institution, a college or a technical school in the province, would be told a funding increase would be given but that none of it could be used for salary increases. Would there be conditions under any circumstances attached to increases that an institution would receive? If so, what justification is there for the department to tie those kinds of conditions to any increases?

I also am interested in the whole subject of full- and part-time students, Mr. Chairman. I was looking at a report prepared by the Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations, and they indicate — maybe the minister can indicate if it's accurate or not — that his department tends to put a very heavy weight on full-time equivalents rather than on number of students and that that apparently is somewhat different from what is done by most other groups that deal with funding for advanced education. In their document they indicate there are a number of good reasons for not going the full-time equivalent route but looking at the actual number of students. They point out, for example, that a part-time student still requires an instructor and still takes up a place in the institution, that administration costs are probably virtually the same, and also that we are looking at a situation where part-time students will occupy a much greater percentage of the total student enrollment, and that has to be taken into account. So I wonder what the minister's and the department's approach is with regard to full- and part-time. I understand from this study that the ratio used in Alberta for full-time equivalents is 3.5 part-time to 1 full-time. Maybe the minister could confirm if that's accurate and just how the department intends to approach the situation with part-time students in view of this growing role they are going to have and the fact that in so many ways they are as expensive to an institution as full-time students.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, one other area I would like the minister to respond to is about the situation with student loans for students that are either coming into Alberta from another province or maybe choosing to study in another province and are Albertan in the sense of where their home has been at the time they are applying for the loan. I was told by one student coming into Alberta from another province that she was told that if she was choosing not to go to university in her own province, she had a much poorer chance of receiving a loan. I wonder if that is, in fact, the case. If an Albertan chooses to go to another province, does that hurt their chance of receiving student assistance? Also, how does the student loan area go about deciding on when somebody can apply as a resident of that province? If somebody is beginning their third or fourth year in a program in Alberta but initially applied after having lived for a year in British Columbia, can they finally at some point begin applying as an Albertan for programs within Alberta, or do they have to continue to always apply as a nonresident of the province? I would like some clarification on that matter as well, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Chairman, first of all, with respect to the equalization grant, raised by the Member for Drayton Valley, of course we are placed somewhat in a quandary in that the equalization grant is triggered by a loan request and agreement. Yet in most cases where there is a need for a student to move away from his home, a loan usually is given. There are very few cases I can think of where anybody, particularly with a need, is not allowed to negotiate a loan and therefore is not allowed the benefits of an equalization grant. Usually what happens, however, is that some people use the failure of the equalization grant being applicable to criticize the process, when, in fact, the error is on behalf of the applicant who didn't qualify for the loan in the first place; that is, if they own a source of income, have had a full-time job, or for a variety of other reasons are not eligible for a loan.

Normally, the Students Finance Board is very careful in determining when the equalization grant is provided, because

in fact it does just that. It allows a student who is not eligible to go to school in his own backyard, so to speak, to be assisted for the travel distances away from his home. But normally the problem is that they're not eligible for a loan in the first place, and in that case obviously the equalization grants would not flow.

If the member is suggesting that we should review or implement a new policy which would deal with equalization as apart from equalization in student loans, then I will accept that advice and perhaps give it some thought. My view now, however, is that we would like to keep it as close as possible to the student loan equalization grant process, because it provides additional assistance for those students who for a variety of reasons must leave home to go to university or college.

With respect to PCBs, raised by the Member for Edmonton Norwood, I can only advise that, number one, we have kept a watching brief with the University of Calgary, and they have continued to keep me advised on a week-to-week basis as to the proceedings. I haven't had an update this week simply because of the time involved and the fact that most of the university system is involved in completing the marks. But they are in the process of reviewing both the way in which PCBs are handled and the guidelines themselves, to ensure that they conform with a minimum set of guidelines as prescribed by a variety of government agencies. Thirdly, they are reviewing the details behind the spill themselves. I won't pursue the details because I've dealt with those already, but I should say that I still am convinced that in terms of the process of handling it themselves, they did it with just process and with due consideration for the risk involved. I'm fairly confident that will emerge.

Should that not be the case, of course my colleague the Minister of the Environment does have the opportunity to proceed with prosecution against the University of Calgary. If that were the case, I imagine that he would use his own judgment to pursue that possibility, in which case it deals with the question of who pays for the cleanup. I'm sure that as responsible citizens, if it was seen that the University of Calgary did not employ proper process to clean up the spill itself, they, in a moral and legal way, would accept the responsibility to do it. Secondly, they could of course be charged under the Act, and therefore the judge could prescribe conditions under which the University of Calgary would be penalized. I can't go much further than that in terms of the details, because we're still simply speculating as to what might happen. But that is some of the range of possibilities that could take place.

Let me deal with the two or three questions raised by the Member for Spirit River-Fairview. The first one dealt with the process of new course development and how, in fact, that was allocated. Currently, of course, every institution has an opportunity to bring forward a set of new course recommendations, and each institution is doing that based on its perception of its mandate, its statement of goals and objectives, the kinds of students it is serving, its geographical location within Alberta, and, I suppose, the resources it has as well, including the capital infrastructure. Once that process has gone through the internal discussion, including academic review and board of governor review, it is sent to the department. At that level there is an opportunity for the department to judge whether or not the new course is, first, within the priority of the government itself in terms of funding, because of course we're doing with scarce resources, and secondly, a competing course or a course which simply overlaps with other institutions within the same geographic region. Of course, that is a normal allocation approach to ensure there's not that much duplication in courses.

If it is an apprenticeship course, it would naturally go to the apprenticeship board for review. My colleague the Minister

of Manpower, through his apprenticeship board route, would have some say as to the curriculum, how it's delivered, and which institution would deliver it, because of course he has some responsibility for technical requirements. As well, in some cases, once a course has been approved, there is an opportunity for that college or institution to broker that course to other institutions. In the case of the nursing refresher course, for example, that course is brokered by AVC Edmonton. It's delivered in a variety of other institutions around the province of Alberta under a brokerage arrangement with AVC Edmonton, which continues to update and upgrade the curricula, often provides instructions, and now, of course, provides computer-assisted learning processes as well.

Here is a service provided by one institution which saves other institutions from duplicating efforts and attempting to derive the necessary course. It's not just a question of duplication; it's also a question of saving footwork and allowing your own staff to do other areas which are more important and perhaps in the area of new horizons for your own institution. It's working fairly effectively. I can't say it's perfect, because of course we will always have some duplication as long as you assume that students should have an opportunity, initially at least, to go to a college or university in their own area. If that's to be assumed, there must be some duplication. Obviously, you're going to have to teach English 200 at all colleges, and you may even have to teach Carpentry 200 in all the tech schools, simply because it's fundamental to the underpinnings of the apprenticeship program at all the technical schools.

I think it's working fairly well. I could point to a couple of weaknesses. I would like to see more resources to allow the institutions to free staff to revitalize existing courses, to update them in the new areas, and to have new input. There is a variety of opportunities which you can imagine could be effective if we could free some resources, at least on a short-term basis. I think that would assist the institutions.

Secondly, I should say that it tends to be a problem for us if a course is dropped by an institution. Do we take the money away from them? Normally, the course is sort of shoved off. Eventually the numbers drop off and the instructor is put somewhere else. The course is still in the budget, but they're doing some other things with it. It's not perfect, and I'll admit to that. But we are in the process of course review, and I think there are some areas which we can improve on ourselves in terms of the internal allocation of funding within an institution.

We often attach some conditions on funding. The classic case here, of course, would be with the enrollment money, which is clearly a conditional source of money for the institutions, universities and colleges. That condition is that the money will continue as long as the students continue, and when the students start to drop off, that money will start to drop off. In the meantime, there's about \$50 million in the budget earmarked for enrollment money.

Secondly, it may well be important for us to target certain areas. We have done that historically in the case of business schools in the province of Alberta. At least four or five years ago we did in fact target certain institutions. We attempted to agree with the college board to flow the money through to the faculty so that it could deal with the increased student numbers, enhance the curriculum, or perhaps even provide some special capital or special sessional instruction. That's the second kind of condition.

Thirdly, conditions exist if an institution agrees to introduce a new program. We also attach conditions in that that program must be successful for at least two years, successful by a series of tests including ample development of curriculum, ample response by students themselves, and a commitment to continue

the program into the future. On those conditions being satisfied, that money goes into the base budget. Before that happens, that money is conditional. It's in my new program sector and is allowed to sit there under special program financing until some of those conditions are satisfied.

As to other conditions, I guess it might be argued that conditions to funding always exist. But I should say that the only control I really have over a university is through the new program money, and it's very difficult for me to suggest to an institution how to internally move its money about. Of course, I could say to them: here is the amount of money you're going to get this year; we'll give you .5 percent — or an incremental rate of -.5 percent, as they're saying in B.C. — for your institution this year. If that's the case, they obviously must face certain imperatives, including the negotiations, because wage settlements account for 65 to 75 percent of the cost of an institution. A saving of 1 or 2 percent on the total payroll budget can equate to a significant budgetary saving. I would not attach conditions to the money if it were used for wages; I would simply discuss with them some of the options. Right now the academics at all institutions are aware of those options. If they want higher increases, there will probably be a lower complement in the teaching faculty itself, and they're well aware of that.

Those are some of the kinds of conditions that could be attached. On capital, as the members well know, there are the clear conditions that we'll give the money based on satisfactory construction progress. Once the building is built and new programs are approved as a result, we'll give operating money. There are obviously conditions therein as well.

With respect to full-time equivalents and the Canadian Association of University Teachers, just last week I met with the Alberta contingent. We've had a couple of meetings to discuss areas of common concern, both the CAUT report and the Johnson report, which is now part of the discussion among academics and the CAUT across Canada. Generally speaking, they don't have too much difficulty with the FTE account. Their test is: what is the province of Alberta doing in terms of funding relative to what it should be doing? The normative versus the objective — and it's always a debate as to whether we do it or not, enough or not. On my side, I always throw in a comparison with the other provinces, because it's a win/win situation for us, and we have an interesting debate. Nonetheless, we have a fairly open communication process.

I appreciate the support of Peter Herron and others who are making major inroads into the national situation to talk about university funding. I think the pervasive concern is whether or not the federal government in tomorrow's budget will tinker, adjust, or cut back on the established program financing. That raises some questions, mostly for other provinces who are more dependent on federal assistance. I guess the other problem faced is whether or not the federal government will intrude into our jurisdiction, and that is always a concern for us.

In terms of FTEs, I think we in Alberta agree that if you're taking three courses at a university or college, you are a full-time equivalent or full-time student. If it's 3.5, I stand corrected. In any event it's something of that order; 3 to 3.5 courses equals one FTE. Although FTEs were important until 1975-76 when we funded on an enrollment-driven formula, essentially the only time you use the FTE calculation now is to report to me that your institution is growing at 9 or 10 percent per annum and you're eligible for some enrollment money. Besides that, we don't use an enrollment-driven formula, contrary to every other province in Canada, which do use an enrollment-driven formula. So to some extent it's irrelevant whether it's an FTE of 1.1 or 1.2 compared to other provinces, because we don't

fund on that basis, except at the margin in terms of enrollment money. We use the base budget approach, and we continue to expand it based on programs and objectives of the institution.

I contend that a student taking one course is not quite as expensive at the margin, to my mind at least, as the student who is taking a full-time load, because he occupies space, he's in the cafeteria, and he has to park his car for longer periods of time. In terms of administration and surely enrollment, it may be equal, because you're processing one name and it's not a big problem. But I don't think a full-time equivalent is, on average, less expensive than one person attending an institution. There probably is some disagreement between the two of us on that point, but I would think that a full-time equivalent student is more costly to a college or a university than somebody who is simply taking one course. Of course, there are a variety of arguments for that.

Student loans outside Alberta and within Alberta: our policy is that if you're not a resident of Alberta, you should not be eligible for student loans from the Alberta Students Finance Board. But if a course is offered only outside Alberta and you cannot take the course in Alberta, as a rule you are usually eligible for student loans within Alberta. You can travel to other universities or colleges to take studies, you can borrow money, or you are eligible for the Heritage Savings Trust Fund scholarships. There are a number of students who take advantage of that policy. You shouldn't forget that if you're a foreign student — that is, someone from outside Alberta coming into Alberta to go to university or college — you always have the opportunity of accessing your own province's student loans, so it isn't that you're cut off.

What you find is that a student comes to Alberta, sees how attractive the institutions here are, recognizes the strength of the government ... [interjection] I just wanted to see if you were awake; that's all. As well, he recognizes that the student loan program here in Alberta is a very attractive one. They always want to make themselves eligible for the student loan program in Alberta as opposed to their own province. It's a natural propensity that all of us would attempt. So they attempt to qualify under Alberta legislation, and therefore, they'll obviously get more money to go to universities here. But we use judicious process there and try to assure that full-time residence has been established and that the student is a legitimate Alberta resident. If he's simply attempting to establish himself in Alberta to access our loan program when his own province's is available to him, we think it would be better for him to access his own province's program. That's essentially the rule we follow.

In terms of regulations, I think I've said before here that the Students Finance Board, under chairman Mark Tims with a publicly appointed council, essentially sets the regulations. They deal on a year-to-year basis with a review of these regulations to make sure that they're responding to the student needs, that they are equitable in terms of what the funding may be, and that they recognize economic circumstances which students are facing from both their own earning potential and their own cost side. So they have that responsibility. I should note that students, in fact, are members of the board. So students do have some input as to how these criteria are established. In fact, I know at least one of the pages who was here two or three years ago is a member of the Students Finance Board. As a student herself, I think she carries to the board the same kind of perceptions and understanding, and can articulate the problems faced by students when it comes to the loans themselves.

I think, Mr. Chairman, those are the essential points raised by my colleagues. I will rest my case to see if there are further questions.

MR. MARTIN: Just a couple. I promised the Minister of Education I would give him some time today to finish up, so we will do that. But I want to know a little bit about projections. When I look at it in terms of Advanced Education — I see he's got my picture — there are roughly four universities, three technical institutes, 11 public colleges, four private colleges, AVC: these sorts of things, Mr. Chairman. I wonder if we have some projections, say for the next 10 years, because things are changing so rapidly. Of course we've had the recession that's put people back in because of lack of opportunities for jobs. It's put pressure on most of the higher levels. But I take it there's ongoing planning trying to project what we would need in 10 years. Can the minister give us some idea of what he sees happening? Will there be another university or not? Will there be more public colleges? Will there be fewer? Can he just give us a rough estimate of what he sees happening in the next 10 years?

The other area: I'm curious about AVC. I think generally that's a fairly recent phenomenon in terms of Advanced Education. Adult retraining and that is relatively new in this area. Have we had some follow-up studies to see what happens to some of the students in some of the AVC institutions throughout the province? My guess is that they'd probably be relatively successful in maintaining employment and upgrading, but I wonder if there's a follow-up in that area.

The third is a point of clarification on the heritage trust fund scholarships. It's my understanding, unless it's changed, that a student who qualifies out of an Alberta high school can go to any institution anywhere. I thought that there was some confusion about that, because I know that was the case when I was there.

With those few things we'll let the Minister of Advanced Education enjoy his time off and let the Minister of Education come in.

MR. JOHNSTON: I appreciate the photograph. I should say that it's not typical for the gentleman who is genuflecting to do that. He's one of those hard-nosed chartered accountants who is attempting to receive professional recognition in this Assembly right now, but he's also the chairman of the finance committee.

In the case of the University of Lethbridge, it was an opportunity to discuss that university because, of course, it is now at the point where it is new. We had some projections about how it would operate and what might be expected from it. The students were uncertain, but the two are coming together now. So we have to re-examine the base budget of the University of Lethbridge, because we have now removed many of the uncertainties and I think we can examine it in terms of what its mandate should be in the future. That is the role the board is taking over the next few months as well.

Let me talk about the future. It's interesting to note, members of the Assembly, that today at Government House, for example, all the presidents and chairmen of universities and colleges across Alberta are meeting simply to bring together their minds as to what it is we should be doing to better reflect in government policy, in financing, and reaction by the institutions to the longer term needs of Advanced Education in the province. Although I'm here now, I know it will be ending in a few minutes. I hope there will be a series of recommendations given to me which will allow me to bring together, on both short-term and long-term bases, some policy outlines for both universities and colleges in the province.

Of course, the concerns there deal with what accessibility level is a minimum to the province. How important is knowledge in terms of other diversifications of the economy in terms

of both human resource improvement, which is a priority of ours, and diversification, because you attract into the province around the intellectual or knowledge community certain kinds of diversifications, essentially the high-tech industries? What about research and development? Is this a priority for universities? How can it be better folded into the college system? Are there enough resources being given to universities and colleges for research? Moreover, how do we ensure that the research is transferred in an economic sense to the private sector? And, of course, how do you trade off applied research with general research? Those are some of the issues which are being assessed today. We're working from a variety of papers which have been put together by both the department and other external participants. As a result of today's efforts I expect we'll have a better clue as to what direction we'll be going.

This has been an ongoing process. We've been doing it for the past year and a half or so in terms of responses to and from — communication. I visited with all the universities and colleges across the province and have an opportunity to deal with them in terms of their own mandate and try to generalize that mandate into some policy for the province as a whole. That's been the process we've been moving through here in the last year or so.

I also believe that the AVCs, as the Member for Edmonton Norwood noted, play an extremely important part in the educational system in Alberta. The typical student at an AVC will be a single parent, 27 to 30 years old, female, with about a grade 9 education, who for a variety of reasons is accessing the workplace again and obviously must upgrade her skills so she can go into the work force, go into the college program, or do a variety of other self-interest and self-improvement courses, or for that matter simply pre-employment programs.

Finally, on the literacy side. With the number of immigrants and displaced people who have come to our province in the last three or four years from Vietnam, et cetera, we find that not only do they require English as a Second Language but many of them are in fact illiterate in their own language, in their own country. Therefore, there are a substantial number of people who are tapping the resources of the Alberta Vocational Centres across the province for those kinds of programs. For example, I recently visited, along with my colleague from Calgary Mr. Shrake and Mrs. Fyfe from Edmonton, the two vocational centres. In both cases I think both of us were extremely impressed with the excitement which exists in these systems. People have an opportunity to go back into the school system, to develop their own self-esteem, to become familiar with external forces — believe it or not, that's one of the problems — and have an opportunity to upgrade their skills. I think all of us would agree that over the period ahead, as jobs change and as technology starts to impinge on the job situation, the need for retraining, the AVCs or something like the AVCs in the future will certainly play a very significant role. From my own point of view it's a very high priority, and I will assure that these departmentally operated institutions will receive a priority both in terms of goal setting or mandate description and in terms of resources over the near term.

So I'm afraid to say that I can't give you any follow-up. I think my guess would essentially be the same as yours. I can only say that my impressions were that the people who were there, where there was the skilled carpenter going back to upgrade Math 9, 10, or 20, or the person I described who is typically found in a vocational centre, are all very excited. All are optimistic about job opportunities, and in many cases the way in which the vocational centres are responding with vocational training allows the student to come from the private sector into the institution for a while and go back into the private

sector or develop short-term skills which are readily needed in the private sector as well. There's a history of successes there, and I am simply excited by the leadership, the administration, and the staff of these institutions. I know the substantial increase in student numbers must indicate that there's a real need in these areas. As I say, my commitment will stand.

On the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, of course they're for Alberta residents but you can go anywhere to go to school. In the case of our postgraduate fellowship, which I was particularly talking about, it is quite common through some of the other programs besides the Rutherford scholarship program that most of these for graduate studies are outside of the province.

Mr. Chairman, I welcome any other questions.

MR. FISCHER: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask a question or two about the regional Lakeland College and the future plans of the different branches. I understand some funds have been committed for the Lloydminster branch and there has been a proposal put in that funds would become available in the future for the Bonnyville, Vegreville, and Wainwright areas. Our town of Wainwright has offered to donate some land so that we can build a college building there and possibly expand it a little bit. Could you give me a quick rundown on that, please?

MR. JOHNSTON: I should indicate that as a regional college, Lakeland College is serving a very particular need in that it provides services to a vast number of communities within the lakeland area. At the same time that does bring some problems, because it's such a diverse set of communities and each community, of course, wants to identify with a college, believes it has enough students to justify a permanent facility. We are moving on a gradual basis, as opposed to a revolutionary or quick basis, to attempt to accommodate as much as possible the growth of students in the urban nodes around the Vermilion area. First of all, we believe that the heart of the campus should be at Vermilion. That's where we're placing the major amount of our capital investment. We believe that will be the focus of the institution, and that has been the traditional heart of the institution. But we also believe that it's important for us to provide facilities in a variety of other areas, at least on a short-term or less-expensive basis.

Last fall I was very impressed with the response the MLAs made. They met for a full two days with the board of governors of Lakeland College. They agreed on how the future of Lakeland College should be described, developed, some suggestion as to timing, and some agreement as to where the next set of capital expenditures should take place. I think they gave me about six recommendations, and I believe about five of those have been acted on in this budget. I certainly appreciate the efforts taken by all MLAs in the region who participated in that meeting. I also believe that the next phase should be some permanent facility in Lloydminster, simply to reflect the expected student numbers there, the retraining requirements, for the interprovincial upgrader. I think the MLAs also made that recommendation to me.

As to other communities, I would be hesitant to say today that we will build a similar campus in each of these communities in the near term, because I simply don't have enough information to make that judgement. But we will continue to lease space, to provide courses, instruction, and to accommodate wherever possible some of the students who show up in those areas, because it is providing a very vital service to the communities, and each community believes that it should have an opportunity to send its children, youth, and students to a system close by it. It's working very effectively. The student numbers

are increasing, and I believe that on the educational side it will be a significant contribution to that region.

MR. MARTIN: Just one quick question, because I want the Minister of Education to get his chance. Flowing from the picture, would you listen to the opposition more if we go down like that and accept some of the things?

MR. JOHNSTON: [Inaudible] knees, I'd be glad to respond to it.

Agreed to:

1.0.1 — Minister's Office	\$251,070
1.0.2 — Minister's Committees	\$301,500
1.0.3 — General Administration	\$6,823,210
1.0.4 — Planning and Research	\$108,102
Total Vote 1 — Departmental Support Services	\$7,483,882
2.1 — Program Support	\$31,824,449
2.2 — Provincially Administered Institutions	\$32,398,280
2.3 — Private Colleges	\$4,412,820
2.4 — Technical Institutes — Operating	\$118,739,955
2.5 — Public Colleges — Operating	\$133,286,686
2.6 — Universities — Operating	\$384,208,103
2.7 — Technical Institutes — Capital	\$11,793,000
2.8 — Public Colleges — Capital	\$46,955,000
2.9 — Universities — Capital	\$61,735,674
Total Vote 2 — Assistance to Higher and Further Educational Institutions	\$825,353,967
Total Vote 3 — Financial Assistance to Students	\$106,531,299
Department Total	\$939,369,148

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Chairman, I move that the votes of Alberta Advanced Education for the year ending March 31, 1986, be reported.

[Motion carried]

Department of Education

MR. KING: On our last occasions, Mr. Chairman, hon. members asked a number of specific questions. In the intervening time, I have been able to prepare drafts of letters and memos to all the members who asked particular questions. Those will be going out shortly to all the members. So I thought that instead of going over each of these questions individually, I will reply to two or three in a general way. If there are questions members would like to repeat and get on the public record here, I'd be glad to do that, or if there are other questions raised, I'd be glad to respond to them. But I repeat the undertaking I made earlier that there will be written responses prepared for each member for each of the questions asked at our last session which weren't answered at that time.

There were a number of questions about internship. Of course, since then information has gone out to all the school jurisdictions in the province and to the faculties of education. I only say that we see the internship program as a structured program that provides a transition from the university experience into the world of work as a teacher in the classroom. Because the questions were concerned about this, I want to

emphasize that we do not see the internship program as providing financial support to school boards to hire interns as replacements for full-time certificated teachers in the classroom. I want to be clear that if we receive any evidence that boards are using the interns to displace certificated teachers on their staff, using them as substitute teachers or otherwise subverting the clear intention of the program, we will end our relationship with the boards that are engaged in that kind of activity. I want to be clear about that.

The basis of the internship program, the initiation to teaching program, is our interpretation of a lot of research that has been done in many jurisdictions suggesting that if we want to improve the practice of teachers in the classroom, the first thing we should look at is the process of getting into faculties of education, the second thing we should look at is what happens in the faculty of education, the third thing we should look at is an extended practicum program, and the fourth thing is an internship program.

We think there's a lot of substance to that research, but for obvious reasons we are not prepared to commit ourselves to that course of action until we have some actual experience. That's what we hope to acquire in the next two years: experience in this province that will help us make a decision about the long-term future of an internship within the province, and particularly the question of whether or not we are going to make an internship a universal and compulsory feature of precertification.

Questions were asked about the School Act. I want to emphasize that we are still receiving submissions, letters and briefs, from interested Albertans and will continue to receive them until May 31 and likely for a few days into June. In June and July we will be involved in analyzing all of this public contribution. In July and August we will be drafting a proposed new School Act. We hope to release that School Act for public discussion early in September. I want to emphasize that when that draft is released for public discussion, it is entirely open to another round of public debate. That draft is not going to represent any fixed position of the provincial government, and I don't want the general public responding to it as though they must fight with the provincial government over a decision already made.

The purpose of getting the draft out is to encourage another extensive round of public discussion, which we hope will be carried on through the fall and winter of 1985-86. It is my hope that we would introduce a new School Act in the spring of 1986, but that of course depends on the outcome of the public discussion. It might not be introduced until the fall of '86. I'd also like to suggest that given the importance of the legislation, it will probably be 12 to 15 months after the passage of the legislation before it is proclaimed—very much like the Child Welfare Act. Changing the mechanisms and organizational systems to conform to the new legislation will require 12 to 15 months. The message I want to communicate to my colleagues and to the general public is that they need have no fear that a new School Act is going to be rushed through the Legislative Assembly quickly. We are prepared and committed to the idea that we will take as much time as necessary to provide widespread public discussion. We want the best Act possible when it is introduced and passed in the Legislative Assembly.

Finally, with respect to the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards and the possibility of discussing a new Teaching Profession Act, members are aware by now that the deadline has passed for receiving nominations for the public members of the council, including the five members of the public who must also be certificated teachers. We expect to be making appointments to the council in the early part of June. I expect

that the council will hold organizational meetings in June, July, and August so it can be substantially operational come September 1.

I have just written to the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association about an issue which I know is near and dear to the hearts of many members. I have asked whether or not the ATA would be in a position to nominate members to the council by June 1, because we hope to make the appointments in the early part of June.

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

The establishment of the council goes ahead independent of discussions about a new Teaching Profession Act. Again, I'd like to make it clear to my colleagues and to the public that as a government we certainly are prepared to discuss a new Teaching Profession Act with the Alberta Teachers' Association and with the interested public. If the ATA is interested in proceeding with that, it is certainly something that can happen during the course of the summer and fall.

With those comments, Mr. Chairman, I will sit down unless hon. members want to ask additional questions.

MR. GURNETT: Mr. Chairman, initially, to follow up on a couple of things the minister has been talking about just now, I want to express appreciation for the information about the School Act and trust that that information will be widely communicated. I know it will be reassuring to a lot of people and groups who have been contacting me who are concerned about the speed the process was going to go about. It is good to hear that the time line is quite specific and reasonable.

I still have some concerns about the internship program that the minister may respond on again. I can understand the hesitation to move to an internship program on a universal basis, for all people before they become regular certified teachers in the province, but last time I raised the question of the danger of a two-tier system in the province and wonder what attention is being given to that. The situation I can see is one where there will at least be a perception that the best graduates get full-time regular teaching positions and the other ones end up being hired as interns. It may be that a very capable person will want to serve as an intern, and I'm sure there will be all kinds of possibilities. But I still have a concern about how the department is going to deal with that perception growing amongst students, graduates, and the public at large, that in fact there are those two tiers and the best get one thing and the others get something else.

I also wonder whether the minister has any idea yet how many boards are going to be interested and what response there is to the internship program, if there's been a very clear communication, as he indicated there would be, that the program can in no way become a replacement for regular teaching positions. If school jurisdictions clearly understand that they can't in any way save themselves money but this is in fact an additional part of their program to improve what they're able to offer students, I wonder if there is any idea yet how many will actually take advantage of it. It may be that the school jurisdictions don't yet understand just how definitive the situation is and are still thinking that there are all kinds of ways they can save hiring the number of regular teachers they should in return. So maybe there's no clear answer to that situation yet.

Finally, in responding to the matters the minister raised, Mr. Chairman, I wonder if he would be able to supply any idea of the number of nominations that have been received for the five teaching positions on the council that will be filled from nominations from the general public. I'd be interested to

know what response and if there's any particular geographical distribution favouring cities over rural areas or anything along those lines.

Then just briefly to ask some questions in some other areas that I haven't raised on other occasions with the minister, I'm interested in the status of the minister's task force on computers in schools. I note that there wasn't a major increase in funding in the votes to deal with technology. There was some granted, but the minister's task force which came out almost two years ago had 40-some recommendations in various areas related to the role of computers in schools. It seems to me that the estimates we have before us don't give a significant place to a lot of those recommendations' being addressed. Maybe the minister could update the status of the recommendations in that report — not necessarily every one of them in detail but some particularly that interest me, coming from a jurisdiction that I think was doing more in this area than many areas of the province.

So I would like some information, particularly on recommendation 3, which said:

That all students graduating from the Faculties of Education [in Alberta] after July, 1986, be required to have completed [some training in computers].

Recommendation 9 dealt with in-service programs developed and funded by the government. Recommendation 17 is one of particular interest to me, and that dealt with encouraging the development of a courseware industry within this province through incentives, through funding assistance, and through shared research. Recommendation 27:

That there should be a minimum of one computer learning station for every eight students in [the province].

There are a lot of them, now that I look at it, that it would be interesting to hear the minister respond on, but perhaps one other. Recommendation 44 was:

That the Government of Alberta . . . provide the major portion of the funding and incentives to carry out the recommendations . . .

That ties back into my initial comment that there doesn't seem to be a significant amount of new funding for technology and this whole area in the estimates we have before us. I'm wondering where we can see that task force and its recommendations going.

When the minister was responding some days ago on some of the questions he had, he referred to a survey of student opinion that was made in June '84. I'm wondering about the availability of the results of that survey, if that's something people can get hold of and that's known or at least that's generally available.

Also, I have a question about busing. Rural jurisdictions spend a lot of money on busing. I wonder if there's been any particular attention to whether or not busing is more expensive in different parts of the province. I know that school jurisdictions in the northwest part of the province typically are having to take money out of their foundation grant to make up for the shortfall in operating busing systems, and I wonder just what kinds of things might be being anticipated to make sure that busing could be funded so that it didn't in any way take away from any other programs and any other moneys that were coming to schools.

One offshoot of the whole area of assistance for transportation and busing that I'd appreciate the minister's thoughts on relates to the funding for educational trips. I see every day, now that I'm in Edmonton, the advantages of being in or near Edmonton: the classes that are able to come and see what's happening in this building, for example, and to take advantage of many other good things in Edmonton. I know that in my

part of the province being able to do that usually required a year-long process of fund raising and a large amount of energy by both students and staff. Certainly, the initiative shown by that is very good, and I've enjoyed being part of raising money through those ways, but I wonder if there's been any particular attention given to the whole area of some greater equalization of taking advantage of the kinds of opportunities that exist in Edmonton and maybe in the other urban centres, so that people in the remoter parts of the province can get in on those things.

Related to that, I also wonder if the minister could indicate the status of educational exchanges at this point within Canada and also other kinds of exchanges, international exchanges. I know that information is made available through his department, but I wonder if any priority is attached to actual funding assistance in any ways for educational exchanges for either individuals or class groups and whether there's a recognition that this is something that needs increasing attention and support.

In this whole area of providing greater possibilities for students in the remote parts of the province, one other area I would be interested in a response on is in providing cultural possibilities to students. I was at a school where we were able to have some very good art programs that came to us through the Edmonton Art Gallery, but that program ended last year and wasn't refunded. It meant that if you couldn't take your students to an art gallery because of distance and the cost for that kind of a trip, you could get a few art shows a year in your school. I wonder if we're looking at some of those kinds of programs. The same could be said about programs to increasingly bring the performing arts into schools in the rural parts of the province and assist that.

Maybe the major area I want to raise with the minister is the whole area of what's happening with evaluation in the department. I wonder if there's been any evaluation of the effectiveness of the various evaluation programs that the department has gone into on quite a scale, not only teacher evaluations but, more particularly, school and even school jurisdiction or school system evaluations. Do they accomplish what they were intended to accomplish? Have there been any unexpected difficulties with these programs? What's been happening in that area?

The major part of the whole movement into evaluation has certainly been with examinations and student evaluation, and I wonder about a lot of areas there. For a starting point, maybe the minister could indicate, with the grades 3, 6, and 9 achievement tests that have been in place for the last few years, whether there's been any investigation or any attention to the concerns by a lot of elementary teachers about those exams at the grades 3 and 6 levels particularly, and whether there's any concern about the damage they might do to children that have to face this major examination at the end of grade 3.

I could spend a lot of time on the diploma examinations, Mr. Chairman, but I'd like the minister to respond, particularly about the economics of them. I know that a large number of teachers in this province, and some of the best teachers I know, have expressed real concern about a lot of aspects of those examinations: that there's a limitation on the course material being covered, for example; that optional areas may not get the same attention they should because teachers are concerned about their students doing as well as possible on the core part that's tested; that some aspects of courses just cannot be tested through the diploma examinations; that exams are coming to have a bigger and bigger importance with students, and the role of the teacher may be injured by that.

I wonder particularly if we could get some idea of what those examinations are costing. It seems to me that there are

a lot of new areas of expense involved with both the preparation of those examinations and the marking of them and so many other aspects of it. I wonder if we know whether the benefits being realized match the cost of those exams being offered and particularly whether the fact that money is being dedicated to the diploma examination area is in any way impacting on there not being as much money available to school jurisdictions to operate the programs they want to operate.

The final point I might raise with the minister about the whole diploma examination area particularly is: what attention has been given to the relationship between examinations and evaluation and accreditation of schools? At this point, would the minister be starting to look more seriously at a process of accrediting individual schools and evaluation would be one component of that? What happened as far as the use of diploma examinations would rest with an accredited school and be something they decided on rather than it was mandated by the department.

I'll turn the floor over to others that might have questions or to the minister to respond, Mr. Chairman.

MR. KING: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member and I should go on the road. I think we would make a terrific team. He raises a number of interesting and significant questions. I'd like to spend a few minutes on all of them, but I don't think that will be possible. So, let me very quickly touch on some.

While the government has undertaken a number of initiatives, I think we can say it is too early to evaluate the impact of evaluation. This is really the first year, the '84-85 school year, that a number of these evaluative programs are operating. Some of them, for example teacher evaluation, are just getting under way. So I think formal and substantial evaluation would have to wait for the next school year after the '85-86 school year.

I do want to make a couple of points very quickly about student evaluation. I can't touch all the comments made by the hon. member, but a couple are very important. The achievement examinations in grades 3, 6, and 9 are widely misunderstood. That misunderstanding may not be in the mind of the member, but he is representing it when he asks his question. The department doesn't set those exams with a view to testing each individual child. We are interested in testing the grade 3 population as a whole and comparing this year's grade 3 population with their counterparts four years ago.

Individual boards have made the decision that instead of using those exams on a sample basis, they would apply them universally and use them locally for a quite different purpose. We have always said that for local school boards to do that is a mistake. But beyond telling them it is a mistake, we are not prepared to tell them they cannot do it. In our view it is not a really sound educational use of the achievement exams, because they are designed and constructed for a different purpose. But because we believe in local autonomy, that's a decision the local boards are making, though they have received our advice to the contrary.

Diploma examinations: I think it needs to be stated again that we have acknowledged from day one that there are limitations to the diploma exam program.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair regrets interrupting the hon. minister. As he indicated at the start of his remarks, he was going to have a limited amount of time. I'm afraid that time has expired.

As all hon. members know, we're now into a matter of procedure, which is covered in sections 58 and 59 of our *Standing Orders* of the Assembly. Section 58(1) requires that the

Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the main estimates for not more than 25 days, and section 59(2) requires that on the 25th day the Chairman shall, at not more than 15 minutes before the normal adjournment time, put a single question that will propose approval of all matters not yet voted upon. That question has to be decided without debate or amendment.

So I now put to you the question: is it agreed that all resolutions on the main estimates of expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1986, and all questions on the supplementary estimates of expenditure and disbursements for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1985, not yet voted upon be agreed to and reported? Will all those in favour of the question please say aye?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those opposed please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is approved.

Also, 59(2) provides that at this time the committee will rise and report. There is no motion necessary for that procedure, so we will do that.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. APPLEBY: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration the following resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Be it resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1986, sums not exceeding the following for the departments and purposes indicated:

The Department of Advanced Education: \$7,483,882 for departmental support services, \$825,353,967 for assistance to higher and further educational institutions, \$106,531,299 for financial assistance to students.

The Department of Education: \$20,921,722 for departmental support services, \$1,182,535,300 for financial assistance to schools, \$29,723,574 for education program development and delivery.

The Department of Energy and Natural Resources: \$35,236,247 for departmental support services, \$12,643,148 for resource evaluation and planning, \$66,406,377 for minerals management, \$80,193,763 for forest resources management, \$19,533,917 for public lands management, \$24,896,556 for fish and wildlife conservation, \$1,652,213 for oil sands equity management, \$469,515 for foreign ownership of land administration, \$9,936,983 for surveying and mapping services, \$8,055,322 for petroleum incentives, \$3,672,000 for oil sands research fund management, \$6,621,000 for petroleum marketing and market research.

The Department of the Environment: \$6,144,950 for departmental support services, \$17,174,376 for pollution prevention and control, \$5,308,753 for land conservation, \$45,637,311 for water resources management, \$3,460,805 for environmental research, \$11,461,408 for interdisciplinary environmental research and services, \$9,445,000 for special waste management, \$1,077,256 for overview and co-ordination of environmental conservation.

The Department of Social Services and Community Health: \$57,513,588 for departmental support services, \$461,230,352 for social allowance, \$127,377,411 for child welfare services, \$16,306,857 for specialized social services, \$198,023,056 for benefits and income support, \$21,193,625 for vocational reha-

bilitation services, \$116,947,428 for services for the handicapped, \$44,917,479 for treatment of mental illness, \$57,110,886 for general health services, \$155,170,482 for community social and health services, \$26,295,219 for alcoholism and drug abuse — treatment, prevention and education.

Mr. Speaker, further resolution states that sums not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1985, for the departments and purposes indicated:

The Department of Advanced Education: \$12,600,000 for assistance to higher and further educational institutions, \$16,886,931 for financial assistance to students.

The Department of Agriculture: \$26,935,000 for production assistance, \$1,274,940 for field services, \$1,555,000 for hail and crop insurance assistance, [\$551,718] for agricultural development lending assistance.

The Department of the Attorney General: \$250,000 for crimes compensation.

The Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs: \$500,000 for business registration and regulation.

The Department of Culture: \$600,000 for 75th anniversary celebrations.

The Department of Economic Development: \$649,100 for economic development and international trade, \$4,905,000 for financing — economic development projects, \$3,000,000 for international assistance.

The Department of Education: \$2,000,000 for financial assistance to schools.

The Department of Energy and Natural Resources: \$18,000,000 for minerals management, \$24,000,000 for forest resources management, \$6,065,000 for fish and wildlife conservation, \$200,000 for petroleum marketing and market research.

The Department of Environment: \$6,600,000 for water resources management, \$3,210,000 for special waste management.

The Executive Council: \$640,905 for support to native organizations, \$1,461,000 for natural sciences and engineering research, \$2,188,322.64 for disaster preparedness and emergency response, \$194,000 for public service employee relations.

The Department of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs: \$645,000 for intergovernmental co-ordination and research.

The Department of Hospitals and Medical Care: \$2,894,189 for financial assistance for supervised personal care.

The Department of Housing: \$43,100,000 for mortgage assistance.

The Department of Manpower: \$198,200 for departmental support services, \$13,200,000 for manpower development and training assistance, \$56,255,000 for special employment programs.

The Department of Public Works, Supply and Services: \$2,300,000 for land assembly.

The Department of Recreation and Parks: \$9,000,000 for recreation development.

The Department of Social Services and Community Health: \$15,892,000 for benefits and income support.

The Department of Tourism and Small Business: \$162,000 for development of tourism and small business, \$6,911,100 for financial assistance to Alberta business.

The Department of Transportation: \$2,300,000 for construction and maintenance of highways.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the report and the request for leave to sit again, do you all agree?

HON MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Is there anyone opposed? It is so ordered.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, it is not proposed that the Assembly sit tomorrow evening. On Friday the business would be committee study of Bills 10 and 55 and, after that, supplementary estimates. The first supplementary estimates to be called would be the ones relative to the General Revenue Fund,

dealing with departments of Agriculture, Economic Development, and Tourism and Small Business.

Mr. Speaker, I move we call it 5:30.

MR. SPEAKER: Do the members agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[At 5:28 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 4, the House adjourned to Thursday at 2:30 p.m.]