

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

Title: Thursday, July 31, 1986 2:30 p.m.

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 25

International Child Abduction Act

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 25, the International Child Abduction Act.

This Act will bring Alberta on stream with respect to the Hague convention on child abduction.

[Leave granted; Bill 25 read a first time]

Bill 26

International Commercial Arbitration Act

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 26, the International Commercial Arbitration Act.

This Act will implement in Alberta the United Nations Conference on International Commercial Arbitration of New York convention.

[Leave granted; Bill 26 read a first time]

Bill 8

Department of
Community and Occupational Health Act

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to move first reading of Bill 8, the Department of Community and Occupational Health Act.

This Bill creates the new department whose prime focus is the promotion of good health practices in the home, community, and workplace and throughout our daily lives.

[Leave granted; Bill 8 read a first time]

head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to file with the Assembly the following documents: a letter dated July 22, 1986, from myself to Dr. Doug Perry, president of the Alberta Medical Association, together with certain attachments regarding changes to the health care insurance plan fee schedule; secondly, a further letter dated July 22, 1986, from myself to Dr. Doug Perry, together with an agreement between the government of Alberta and the Alberta Medical Association dated July 22, 1986; and a copy of a letter from Dr. Perry to myself dated July 24, 1986.

Mr. Speaker, copies of this material have been provided to the leaders of all three opposition parties.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to introduce to you, and through you to members of this Assembly, the chairman and members of the Coaldale hospital board. The members of the board are in Edmonton today for meetings with the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care to finalize the agreement with regard to a new hospital and nursing home in Coaldale.

I would like to ask the chairman and members of the board and their administrator to rise and receive the welcome of this House. They are: chairman, Jake Janzen; board members, Mrs. Dorothy Boras, Mr. Bill Regier, Mr. Jake Janz, Mr. George Schmidt, Mr. George Wall, and Mr. Leonard Fast; and the newest board member, who also serves as the mayor of Coaldale, Mr. Dave Newfeld. I would also like to recognize the administrator of the board, Mr. Frank Wiens.

Mr. Speaker, one of the real privileges of serving as an MLA in this Assembly is that over the years as we work with those who are elected at the local level, that working relationship quickly turns into genuine friendship, and that is the case with these people. I would ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming them to our Assembly.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, four leaders from the town of Claresholm who are here today to meet with the Minister of Transportation and Utilities to look for some significant, needed road improvement in southern Alberta. They are seated behind me in the public gallery. We have two members of the Claresholm town council, Mr. Ernie Patterson and Mr. Stan Stoklosa, as well as Mr. Harold Seymour and Paul Rockley, editor of the *Claresholm Local Press*. I would ask them to stand and receive the customary welcome of the Assembly.

head: MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Department of
Hospitals and Medical Care

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, hon. members have been interested for some time in the negotiations which have been going on between our government and the Alberta Medical Association. I am pleased to announce today that we have reached an agreement with the Alberta Medical Association for an end to extra billing in Alberta effective October 1, 1986.

Mr. Speaker, as all members know, the Canada Health Act requires that every province in Canada facilitate reasonable access to health services without financial or other barriers.

It has been determined by federal legislation that the practice of extra billing of insured health services, which are defined as hospital services, physician services, and surgical dental services, must be eliminated by March 31, 1987, or Alberta will be denied funds normally available to a province by transfer from the federal government. These funds, which are equal to the amount of extra billing by medical practitioners for insured services and hospital admission charges levied by hospitals for insured services, are projected with respect to Alberta to reach \$36 million by the end of this fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, as members are well aware, the method of meeting the terms of the Canada Health Act has varied with each province. The most recent example of action by a provincial government was witnessed in Ontario earlier this year.

Our approach in Alberta has been to work with the Alberta Medical Association and the Alberta Hospital Association to meet the terms of the federal Act in a co-operative spirit which will best serve the health care needs of our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the elimination of extra billing for all insured services, we will be advising hospitals across the province to discontinue the \$10 hospital admission charges effective October 1, 1986, and to expect additional grants from the province equal to the loss in revenue.

Mr. Speaker, the agreement with the president and the board of directors of the Alberta Medical Association, which must be ratified by their general membership, provides that the Alberta Medical Association support the elimination of extra billing for insured services and support the amendments to the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act to accomplish the effective elimination of extra billing.

The agreement provides that there be certain fee increases in the schedule of payment of physician services, for the most part involving increases for maternity services and the deletion of some services when not medically required, which mainly involve cosmetic surgery.

The agreement also provides that there be a further medical service added to the fee schedule, called the extraordinary medical services fee. This new concept will provide an opportunity for a physician to make application to the health care plan for a payment above the fee schedule when it can be shown that additional services and time commitment was provided and medically required or in cases where a particular medically required service is not now listed in the current fee schedule.

The agreement, Mr. Speaker, also provides for some assistance to establish a meaningful disability insurance plan for medical practitioners who are unable to practice medicine because of disability, generally involving illness or contagious disease which might endanger their patients.

The agreement also provides for negotiation between the government and the Alberta Medical Association, on an annual basis, of the amount of funds provided by the government to the health care insurance plan and, failing agreement, to the provision of binding arbitration.

Mr. Speaker, the net additional cost to the health care insurance plan for this agreement is equal to slightly less than \$9 million per annum or a 1.3 percent increase in the current allocation to the plan. This amount will be paid for from the General Revenue Fund of the province without any increases in health care insurance premiums during the current fiscal year.

It is my expectation to introduce for first reading next week amendments to the Health Care Insurance Act which will reflect the provisions of the agreement which will eliminate extra billing.

Mr. Speaker, the federal minister of health, the Hon. Jake Epp, has advised that the action we have taken will result in the federal government forwarding moneys owing to Alberta at the earliest opportunity after October 1, 1986.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that we were able to reach this agreement and wish to commend Dr. Doug Perry, president of the Alberta Medical Association, his executive and staff, as well as staff of my office and

department for their co-operative approach to this important matter.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, in replying to the ministerial announcement, let me first of all say that I think it's a victory for the people of Alberta. If I may say so, we on this side of the House have fought for many years to abolish extra billing, and I can recall ... [interjections] The hon. members know that's the truth. I can recall the previous minister saying that it was a matter of principle, that we were never going to do it, but today this minister has brought in an excellent ministerial announcement. I would suggest that the government learned during the election that this was a major election issue and that the people of Alberta were clearly against extra billing, but I am complimenting the minister in recognizing that and bringing this about.

There are some good parts to it that I'd also like to go through. I'm glad the hospital admission charge is being repealed. I think that's an important victory for ordinary people. I'll flag just a couple of possible problems. I'm not saying the minister is wrong, but I think we need to take a look at the whole idea of cosmetics, at what is necessary and unnecessary, but I am prepared to live with that. Also, the extraordinary medical services: there is some potential for abuse; again, I'm not against the concept. It's good that the doctors are getting disability insurance. It's good that they've agreed to binding arbitration. I would point out, though, that when we start talking about higher medicare premiums, this should not be the reason, because we'll be saving Alberta taxpayers \$36 million. As the minister himself said, it's going to cost us only \$9 million this year. So I would hope that higher medicare premiums would not follow from this.

The other excellent point that I was trying to make yesterday and that the minister has done is that there will be legislative approval. I think that's a very important feature of this particular program.

Let me say to the minister in conclusion, Mr. Speaker: good work. Again, this is a tremendous victory for the people of Alberta, and I welcome this announcement.

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Water Quality

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the Minister of the Environment. During the recent election campaign — maybe they'll follow along with our ideas here too — I suggested that major funding support should be provided for our municipalities to improve the quality of drinking water. My question is: how much progress has the minister made in designing a program to assist with municipal water quality improvement?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, a number of steps and initiatives have been taken with respect to that matter, and one of those was a joint agreement between the province of Alberta and the city of Edmonton in 1985 to have an independent study commissioned to take a look at the quality of water, particularly in this part of Alberta. Today a draft report is being circulated to all members of the Legislative Assembly with respect to a report undertaken by a University of Alberta professor, Dr. Hruddy, that is just tabled. It's a draft report making some suggestions. We in the government

intend to review the suggestions very carefully over the next period of time.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question to the minister. What is the policy of the government with respect to the need for special provincial funding to assist municipalities with water quality improvements? Does the government have a program now that they can announce that will lead to that sort of promotion?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the provision of water in the various municipalities in the province of Alberta is the responsibility of that municipal government. Through a variety of programs made available from the province to assist municipal governments, they can choose to allocate their dollars in the way they see fit. In some municipalities, the municipality itself has a service charge for individuals within the community. Perhaps my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs would like to talk about municipal grant programs that are available or the minister responsible for utilities might want to supplement the answer with respect to programs that are available under his jurisdiction. In terms of Alberta Environment, we provide expert assistance and technical advice.

To repeat what I said in my response to the first question, I'm delighted with the report provided by Dr. Hrudey with respect to water quality here in the North Saskatchewan. He very clearly indicates that it's very, very good. I look forward to reviewing all of his recommendations in greater detail.

MR. MARTIN: If I may come to that report, Mr. Speaker, it's not quite as glowing as the minister says. Now that he has brought up the report, when does the minister plan to announce a decision on some of the major recommendations, especially dealing with the North Saskatchewan?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. leader hasn't had an opportunity to take a look at the report, but it's very, very clear that the report is titled Draft for Comment: A Critical Assessment of Drinking Water in Edmonton, and there's one conclusion put forward by Dr. Hrudey:

... there was little objective reason for health concerns associated with trace substances in Edmonton water.

It's my understanding that Dr. Hrudey will be requesting public feedback and input with respect to this report. City council in Edmonton has it on their agenda for discussion next week, as I understand. Dr. Hrudey clearly indicates that he anticipates that a final report will be released in 1987. I think it's a bit premature after having commissioned such a report, having seen public dollars come forward by the province of Alberta in the amount of some \$90,000, some \$90,000 being made available by the citizens of Edmonton through their council to commission such a report. Surely we should abide by the major requests and recommendations of Dr. Hrudey to allow the public input process to flow through. I've indicated in response to the two previous questions that I've taken all the recommendations under very, very close advisement.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. There are some specific recommendations that don't necessarily have to be studied; there could be action. Specifically to the minister: is the government of Alberta prepared to provide assistance to Edmonton for a new intake pipeline from Rossdale or

for filtration improvement? Would they provide those funds immediately?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that in terms of the basic unconditional grants that flow from the government of Alberta to the city of Edmonton, the city of Edmonton can choose to allocate those funds to the degree and in the manner they want. Earlier this year the previous Minister of Municipal Affairs also announced a new special type of assistance in terms of municipal infrastructure. I understand there are considerable dollars available to the city of Edmonton with respect to that matter. Furthermore, I'm not aware of any requests from the city of Edmonton for any additional assistance for some of the recommendations put forward by Dr. Hrudey.

I would like to repeat and really underline that this is a draft report. City council in Edmonton has not had a chance to review it, I understand, and I think we should give that elected body an opportunity to see what their thoughts are with respect to the recommendations contained in the report.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, this is a supplemental to the minister. Is he in the process of making a study to replace the use of potable water that is now used in the secondary flooding of oil wells by fossil water or nonpotable water? A million barrels a day of potable water is used now to push oil out of the ground.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised. We have such a study under way. It's currently being reviewed in the province of Alberta. The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon may only have been elected in the last several months, but we announced such a review many, many months ago. All the groups in the province of Alberta who've expressed an interest in that matter currently have it under review. The Alberta Association of MDs and Counties has it under review. If the hon. member will check the Order Paper, he will note that there is a motion on the Order Paper that has been brought to the attention of the Assembly by the hon. Member for Dunvegan. I really look forward to the response and input of all members when that motion comes to the floor of the Assembly.

Labour Legislation Review

MR. MARTIN: I'd like to direct my second question to the Minister of Labour. Can the minister confirm that in deciding the makeup of his committee to review labour laws, he did not solicit formal nominations from either the Alberta Building Trades Council or the Alberta Federation of Labour, even though these are the official provincial representatives of organized working people in Alberta?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, I solicited no requests from any organization or group in the province.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Labour or the Premier, whoever is doing the soliciting. I'll direct this to the Premier. Is it true that these two groups have not been asked to participate in this labour review?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, as we've said many times in the House, it's our intention to have a balanced review panel that would have participants from labour and man-

agement and citizens at large, and that's exactly what we're doing.

MR. MARTIN: That answer floors me. The Premier is saying that the two major labour groups are not even going to be involved? How in God's name could you think it would be a fair assessment when you don't even involve the two major labour groups in the province?

MR. GETTY: As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, we will have management and labour participating in this panel. I think all Albertans will agree that the people who are going to participate are able to represent the views of all Albertans in a responsible way to give us the most balanced suggestions possible.

MR. MARTIN: With the problems we've been having in this province, Mr. Speaker, I can't believe I'm hearing this from the Premier; we're not even going to have the two major bodies represented.

My question is: there's a letter from Mr. Werlin, from the Alberta Federation of Labour, asking that we hold off on this. It was directed to the Minister of Labour. What is the Premier's answer? Would he be prepared to entertain this request that they hold off until they've had this meeting?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I should say that I tried to have a meeting with Mr. Werlin several months ago. He wasn't able to keep his appointment. I should also say that Mr. Werlin has made some comments in this province that I think Alberta labour should totally disassociate itself with.

MR. MARTIN: Whether the Premier of this province likes Mr. Werlin or not, he was elected by a group of people. The question is: why are you avoiding the elected representative of this province?

MR. GETTY: The Premier of this province doesn't like him; that's for sure.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. Is the Premier appointing personnel from outside the province? If they're from outside, would they be representing labour?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, hon. members should just restrain themselves, because the Minister of Labour will be announcing the makeup of the panel.

Premiers' Conference

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier also. The Premiers' Conference is less than two weeks away now. The conference agenda, which has not been tabled in the House as was promised, sets out only three vague ill-defined topics. The members of the Legislature have not been told what position the Premier intends to take at the conference table. They have not been given an opportunity to discuss those positions. Has the Premier met with the western Premiers to develop a common strategy for addressing western concerns at the conference?

MR. GETTY: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TAYLOR: Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the Premier would wish to share with the Legislature some of the strategy

positions, for instance, with respect to grain exports and oil price stabilization?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon has seen, I'm sure, the communiqués that were tabled in the Legislature. They give him full background on what the western Premiers discussed and their agreements when we were in Manitoba. We also have discussions on the telephone. The idea of announcing strategy in advance is hardly the way to go into negotiations.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. I'm having a little trouble following the position papers and the negotiating strategies the Premier has developed. Given that the former Premier was always prepared with a strong, coordinated negotiating strategy, I don't understand why he has not been able to share with the Legislature in very specific terms what his negotiating strategy is going to be.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I repeat again: if you have a negotiating strategy, the worst possible thing to do is announce it in advance.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, does the Premier have a bottom-line position, for instance, on the PGRT versus what the Minister of Energy suggested, a gasoline tax to consumers all across Canada?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, that was not suggested by the Minister of Energy, and yes, we do have a bottom-line position.

Grain Transportation

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture. It's a follow-up question to one I asked on July 16 relative to the extension of the July 31 deadline of the Canadian Wheat Board for quotas in the province of Alberta.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, because of the strong representations made by the hon. member who posed the question and by all members of the Legislative Assembly, I can share with the Legislature that we took the liberty of phoning the minister responsible for the Wheat Board this morning, and he indicated to us that even though there is not going to be any formal extension, provisions are going to be provided so that farmers can deliver their full quota to the elevators.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. In terms of that response, does that mean that present supplies of wheat on the farm would be eligible for sale in the old crop year, but new crop production would not be eligible for sale on the old crop year price?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has pretty well hit it right on. I should share with him that the Canadian Wheat Board has indicated to the elevator companies to accept grains up to their present quota levels to ensure all of the farmers the opportunity to deliver under their present quotas. They refer specifically to number 3 Canadian western red spring wheat, Canadian feed wheat, and barley. We're delighted at the decision by the Canadian Wheat Board whereby they took very seriously the repre-

sentations made by this Legislature and have in reality extended the opportunity for farmers to deliver their grain.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Could the minister indicate whether any further progress has been made with regard to the movement of wheat from the various elevators in terms of the supply of boxcars and the possibility of the shipping and moving that grain to the coast?

MR. ELZINGA: Yes, Mr. Speaker, in a conversation I had with the federal minister, he indicated that additional cars were going to be allotted immediately to northern Alberta, where there is severe congestion. They are giving it a high priority, so there will be additional boxcars to deliver the grain.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplemental, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Could he give the House an idea what the minister said would be the absolute extreme limit of this so-called gentlemen's agreement to deliver last year's wheat? How far will it extend? Ten days, 20 days, 30 days?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, in conversations he indicated to me, as I'm sure the members of this Chamber will understand, that July 31 is going to be a long day, much the same as we at times will ignore the time on the clock. He didn't give me any specific times, but he did indicate the assurance that farmers would be allowed to fulfill their quotas under the old crop year.

MR. FOX: To the minister, Mr. Speaker, thanking him for taking action on this as I suggested in this House on June 25. Will individual producers have to make representation to the Wheat Board for these extensions, or do they just go to the elevator and deliver as normal?

MR. ELZINGA: This is going to be done on an individual producer basis so that they can deliver their grain. It was my understanding, but I stand to be corrected on this, that farmers could just go to the elevator and deliver their grain. I would suggest to the farming population that they make precontact with those elevators to ensure that their grain deliveries can be accepted, and in the event that they do encounter any difficulties, we'd be more than happy to follow up their case.

Red Meat Stabilization Program

MR. FISCHER: Mr. Speaker, also to the Minister of Agriculture, concerning the red meat stabilization plan, the slaughter part of that plan. Has there been any announcement on the payout in the second quarter with the slaughter plan?

MR. ELZINGA: No, Mr. Speaker, there has not been, but we are expecting some type of announcement next week.

MR. FISCHER: In the event of this announcement, will the producers have to pay a retroactive premium before they can collect on it?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is assuming that there's going to be a payout. I can share with him that our rough calculations indicate that there will be some type of payout, but that is under the jurisdiction of the stabilization board itself. To concur in what the hon. member

has indicated, in the event that there is a payout — and we are very hopeful that there will be and that it will be announced next week — the premiums will be deducted from the payout.

MR. FISCHER: A supplementary. What participation rate is in the slaughter plan as well as the cow/calf plan?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, acknowledging that the deadline was extended to July 15, we do not have any exact figures, but the participation rate as it relates to slaughter cattle has been very good. We're estimating anywhere from 70 to 75 percent. I share with you that it's an estimate. The participation rate for the cow/calf stabilization program is somewhat lower, in that calf prices are a great deal better, and I think a number of the producers are looking to the time when calf prices have dropped prior to their entry into the program.

Farm Credit Stability Program

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture on the Farm Credit Stability Fund Act. Can the minister confirm that producers wishing to refinance through this farm credit stability program will be required to have the value of their land reassessed?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, when we have the opportunity to hold a press conference, which will be in a very short while, we will be releasing all the details as they relate to this excellent program that we campaigned on and that the farming population is looking forward to.

MR. FOX: The race is on tomorrow to file applications under this program, and I think we need to know. Recognizing that land values have declined dramatically, will the minister waive this reassessment provision?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is assuming that's going to be in the program. I haven't indicated that that will be in the program, neither has the Provincial Treasurer and . . .

MR. TAYLOR: Why don't you share it with us?

MR. ELZINGA: Well, as hon. members are aware, I'm happy to share.

Let me indicate that we are going to be producing a manual. The brochures are printed now and are ready for distribution at the appropriate time. We hope to conduct a press conference and release all the fine details as they relate to this program.

If I could indicate to the hon. member, Mr. Speaker — I was hesitant to do so, because I acknowledged that he was a new member some few days ago when he asked me this question as it related to the details the hon. Member for Dunvegan released — had he taken the time to read the press release when the legislation was tabled on June 27, he would have seen all these details.

MR. FOX: A supplementary to the minister. Assuming the guidelines are in place and about to be released to the public, has the minister instigated any studies that would determine how many producers will be eligible for refinancing under this program?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, we're very hopeful that a good number of producers will be eligible. As I've indicated to this House on many occasions, under the Agricultural Development Corporation we have loans greater than \$1 billion. This program is going to assume an additional \$2 billion of farm credit within the province, which will assume approximately 50 percent of the farm debt in Alberta.

If I could also indicate as it relates to Farm Credit Corporation loans, our investigation shows — and the hon. Member for Little Bow asked this — that slightly less than 50 percent of the borrowing under the Farm Credit Corporation in the province of Alberta is under the 9 percent level, so there is not that concern as to the rollover into our program. We acknowledge that there is going to be some, but we are not overly concerned about that in view of that fact and the commodity-based pricing loans the federal government has.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary to the hon. Provincial Treasurer, who has indicated that as much as three-quarters of the \$2 billion will be targeted for refinancing. Is this a global figure in the province, or have individual banks been instructed to loan moneys with that provision in mind?

MR. JOHNSTON: This is a global figure, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, could the minister report on any success he's had in getting the federal Minister of Agriculture to reduce the farm credit loans to 9 percent so that it would minimize the rollover?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I referred just a moment ago to the Farm Credit Corporation and indicated that the provisions as they relate to rollover are very small. In view of the fact that their total portfolio in the province of Alberta is about \$900 million and in view of the fact that a little less than 50 percent of that is presently borrowed at less than 9 percent and the Farm Credit Corporation also has provision whereby commodity-based loans can be given at 6 percent, those individuals within the Farm Credit Corporation can roll them into that.

We acknowledge there is going to be some rollover. We made representations to the federal minister. In view of the fact that they have done a considerable amount already, he was hoping that interest rates would drop a little more and left the door open for himself to reanalyze this, but he would not give me a specific commitment on lowering them right away.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Provincial Treasurer. I've had some indication that investment capital has been frozen or reduced or withdrawn from Alberta by lending institutions that have their central office outside Alberta. I was wondering if the minister has had any discussion with the various management personnel of lending institutions here in Alberta to have assurance from them that when we place this \$2.75 billion in the lending institutions, further investment capital will not be withdrawn from Alberta as a trade-off?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, that's quite an order first of all, in that I don't know how we track currency or deposits of that order, except to say that the banking system in particular is made up of a national deposit system. Obviously, the currency or the money as it's described and

when ... Balances do move where the demand for money has been. However, historically Alberta has been a net user of money, and recently in my discussions with one of the chairman of the banks, they indicated that there is still a net flow of money into Alberta from other parts of Canada to satisfy the demand for money here.

Obviously, the banking system itself does have a lot of money. There's a lot of money on deposit, and therefore the money is flowing to where the greatest margin of return is offered. Right now, marginally speaking, the demand for money is very strong in Ontario and Quebec. Nonetheless, in terms of other mortgages and demands for money, there's still a substantial requirement here in the province. As I said, my understanding of the net banking system is that there's still a net requirement for dollars in the province of Alberta, and therefore we are taking money from other parts of Canada to support our demand.

Heritage Savings Trust Fund

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Treasurer. The Heritage Savings Trust Fund has to be liquid if it is to live up to its billing as a rainy day fund for job creation. In addition to that, negotiations with Ottawa may in fact be hampered if the east thinks that we have \$15 billion in a liquid savings account, when in fact we really don't. Can the minister please illustrate what kind of liquidity he can expect from the \$8 billion in Heritage Savings Trust Fund loans to Alberta government Crown corporations? Or is this money in effect already spent?

MR. JOHNSTON: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I haven't got the full information in front of me, and therefore I am assuming that the research which the hon. member has presented is accurate; I have no reason to believe it isn't. But you must remember, for example, that the Heritage Savings Trust Fund advances to such corporations as Alberta Government Telephones are income-earning debentures. Instead of using other sources of money across Canada, historically what we have done is use the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. Therefore, the income from that fairly significant amount of money flows into the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, and as all members know, the income flow, which approximates about \$1 billion, is then transferred to the General Revenue Fund to assist us in financing our requirements. The current transfers to the General Revenue Fund are about equal to a sales tax.

We have no reason to believe that that money is going to reduce. We have it very well invested. With other parts of the investment in the Heritage Savings Trust Fund beyond those in government agencies, there is obviously, as I've reported previously in this House, a profile which suggests that a fairly substantial amount of those interprovincial loans will start to mature and will obviously also provide more money to the fund for other purposes of the province.

If the member is saying that some of the investment in Alberta agencies is under some question, then I think that might be an appropriate comment, but for my part these are income producing. They're generating income right now. They're stabilizing a variety of agencies in this province, which allows them to borrow internally and not offshore, and therefore they've been able to support the dollar to some extent on that basis.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, in fact those very same corporations lost about \$350 million in 1985, and they're being supplemented by the Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

Can the Treasurer please indicate how the \$2.5 billion called deemed assets in the fund can be turned into liquid cash for job creation and economic development programs? For example, would we be considering selling Kananaskis park for cash?

MR. JOHNSTON: That's a touch of faulty analysis, to say the least. Let me begin by saying that in terms of some of the major investments which have been in the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, including a very substantial investment in irrigation works which is above and beyond any requirement of the General Revenue Fund, these obviously have been used to generate jobs. In my own part of the province and southern Alberta in particular, the investment by the heritage fund in irrigation headworks has made a significant contribution in terms of both short-term job opportunities and long-term food production. Mr. Speaker, I cannot think of any better investment for the Heritage Savings Trust Fund in terms of a long-term potential to maximize use for these surplus dollars.

MR. MITCHELL: I'm not arguing about the past; I'm talking about rainy days in the future.

Could the minister please confirm, therefore, that there may only be about \$4 billion in the heritage trust fund now in any kind of liquid or accessible state and that that is equal to about 18 months current deficit spending?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, again the analysis is faulty. There's no doubt that our intention has been to keep the fund fully invested and in income-earning assets, and that has been the way in which we maximize the use of that fund. It's carefully managed on that basis.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, at the present time we have approximately \$2 billion in terms of very liquid assets which we could use for a variety of purposes. We will use the Heritage Savings Trust Fund as a barometer to meet the requirements and borrowing, first of all, and to cover some of the requirements of the General Revenue Fund in terms of transfers from the heritage fund to general revenue.

We are very, very fortunate in this province to have this heritage trust fund in place. It's about \$15 billion in total assets and about \$12 billion in income-earning assets, and we're using the cash flow from that heritage fund to supplement the very great expenditures in this province and to maintain the lowest tax regime possible. Everyone knows that the investments of this Heritage Savings Trust Fund have caused worldwide attention. Other parts of the world have looked to us and said, "I sure wish we had that opportunity to maximize potential for the revenues." Look at Alaska; look at Texas. They have not had that opportunity. They have not had the foresight, and they're now wishing that they had made those serious decisions.

MR. MITCHELL: Exactly my point, Mr. Speaker, we are telegraphing a very significant message about our wealth. To the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. Can the minister outline his strategy to stop telegraphing this image of wealth to eastern Canada to ensure that the perceived but artificial \$15 billion bank account that we have is not hampering our negotiations ...

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Supplementary questions are to be brief questions. Perhaps it could be better crafted next time.

MR. HORSMAN: The strategy of the government of Alberta under this party is to tell the truth.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the Treasurer. Has the Treasurer thought of the relative merits of loaning money under the farm loan program and the small business loan program out of the heritage trust fund as opposed to using international capital?

MR. JOHNSTON: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have at various times indicated that we have considered that, but I would not want to use the total liquidity of the heritage fund and not have an opportunity to use that as a sort of swing source of money for the kinds of funding the province may require. Therefore, I think our strategy would be to use long-term funding from a variety of markets to provide the funds to these two very important programs.

MR. R. SPEAKER: A supplementary question to the Premier. During the campaign and also during the leadership race, the Premier made the commitment that the base of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund would not be eroded. Is that still the policy of government? Could that be confirmed at this time?

MR. GETTY: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The heritage trust fund is not spent; it's invested.

Public Building Projects

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to calmly address this question to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. On occasion there are some — and I stress not all — public buildings that are viewed as having been somewhat overbuilt. Could the minister indicate whether his department has taken any steps to control overdesign and overconstruction of public works buildings?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, virtually all construction projects carried on by Public Works, Supply and Services are designed by private-sector consultants in consultation with our project management people, with the user department or agency, whatever it happens to be, and in many cases with members of cabinet, sometimes MLAs, and sometimes locally elected officials. So there's a lot of input, and I don't think I could comment on any overdesign unless I had specific examples.

DR. WEST: A supplementary. Over the years architectural indulgence has tended to sometimes design buildings with poor utilization and more aesthetic value. Are steps taken to watch and review this problem?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, the reason for the involvement of the project management division and the user department is to make sure that the utilization required by the user of the facility is built into it.

DR. WEST: A further supplementary. Often there are delays in planning construction starts. These delays create winter-time starts, increasing costs in cement construction and other such construction phases. Is the department taking a direction to initiate more summer and fall starts?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, on occasion the delays in construction starts are a deliberate planning process to

provide work opportunities to the construction sector at certain times of the year when they aren't normally there. We try, though, to plan to get outside work done as much as possible in the summertime but try to plan projects so there is ongoing work in the off-season.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. In terms of his answers, could the minister confirm that there are no general guidelines or directions given by the department of public works relative to the building of public buildings so there is some consistency and cost control?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I hope I did not leave that impression. In checking the numerous projects that are under way, most of them appear to be coming in under budget, so the cost control mechanisms are there. The reason for the involvement of the project management division is to make sure that there is some consistency in policy guidelines by user departments.

Government Loans

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. The June 19, 1986, edition of the Edmonton Report on Economic Development carries an item which reports that Western Aerospace Technology Ltd. got help in the form of a \$1 million loan from the Alberta government. I'd like to ask the minister who approved this loan on behalf of the provincial government.

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I'll have to take the question as notice and advise the hon. member.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. While he's investigating it, would he find out whether there were any special conditions attached to this loan? Secondly, the article indicates that they have not yet hired key personnel, they have not yet got contracts, and they do not yet have a site for their remanufacturing facility. Would he find out whether it's standard operating procedure to lend \$1 million to a firm without ...

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. The Chair has difficulty with respect to the question because the initial question relates to a publication. Under questions, either oral or written, in question period one is not to inquire whether statements in a newspaper are true. This is one of the difficulties with respect to the line of questioning.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could respond in part to some of the allegations that have been advanced.

MR. MARTIN: Impugning motives.

MR. YOUNG: There's nothing impugning about my response, Mr. Speaker. I just want to put on the record that the loan in question is contingent upon performance. The loan has not been advanced and will not be advanced until such time as the company is in a position to meet the conditions of the loan.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, my point was simply to allude to the publication from which I was basing my question.

As a follow-up supplementary to the minister: given that one of the two directors of the firm, Mr. Robert Chapman, stepped down this spring as chairman of the AOC, is there any government policy which might restrict the awarding of government loans to former directors of the AOC?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, the individuals who have served the province of Alberta over the years on the board of Alberta Opportunity Company and other boards have served the province in an outstanding manner. Any business relationships that are undertaken with individuals who have served in a number of capacities are dealt with in the normal manner in which any citizen is dealt with in the province.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary to the Premier on this particular issue, Mr. Speaker. In reply to a question the other day about conflict of interest of cabinet ministers getting loans, he assured the House that he was looking into it. When he's looking at revising the conflict-of-interest rules, would he also consider a cooling-off period for cabinet ministers or major civil servants after retirement?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, that question was asked of me just two days ago by the hon. Member for Edmonton Strathcona. Perhaps you might review *Hansard* to see my answer then.

Aids to Daily Living Program

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Speaker, I have questions of the Minister of Community and Occupational Health regarding the aids to daily living program. They relate to the questions asked yesterday by the Member for Calgary Mountain View. It's an expensive program. I'd like to ask the minister if he has standards in place to ensure that there are no abuses of this program.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question by the hon. member. The aids to daily living program provides benefits to Albertans who, according to their doctor, are truly in need of that benefit, whether it's oxygen, wheelchairs, footware, or any other benefits under that program. The criteria for those needs have been spelled out by physicians with the assistance, help, and consultation of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta. Those criteria guide the doctor and our department in the provision of benefits under this program. I can say categorically that no Albertan who is truly in need of a benefit under this program will go without.

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge medical conditions change. What assurances can the minister provide that the government is continually monitoring the program to ensure that only the appropriate benefits are provided?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, in an ongoing program like the aids to daily living program, I believe it's responsible for us to assess the continuing need of a patient for a benefit. Some 13 months ago we introduced such a reassessment plan for, say, the oxygen therapy program. Some 3,000 patients have been assessed since then. Two hundred patients chose not to be assessed and chose to discontinue their benefits; 100 other patients chose to be assessed and were found to be healthy, no longer in need of that therapy. It's important that we continue to assess the best delivery

of that program for the moneys we spend: some \$37 million last year, \$8 million in oxygen therapy alone.

MR. BRASSARD: Let me relate specifically to the blood glucose testing strips for diabetics, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister help me respond to my constituents by announcing that this program will cover the cost of these strips?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, as I conveyed to my colleague the Member for Calgary Millican the other day, this is a matter that all members of the Assembly, including my colleagues from that side of the House, have conveyed to me some interest in. What I've asked the Department of Community and Occupational Health to do is meet with officials in the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care as well as officials in the College of Physicians and Surgeons to identify the real needs of certain diabetics in the province who are in need of those blood glucose testing strips.

I'm correcting a figure I conveyed the other day, Mr. Speaker. There are some 8,000 insulin-dependent Albertans, and were we to provide that service to all 8,000, we would be looking at an increase in that program of some \$8 million. What I've asked the college and the officials to do is identify a priority list, and we will ...

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. minister. The time for question period has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that motions for returns 154, 158, 162, and 163 stand and retain their places on the Order Paper. We will deal with the questions.

[Motion carried]

head: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

150. Mr. McEachern asked the government the following question: For each person to whom a certificate of provisional eligibility was issued in anticipation of the coming into force of the provisions of the Alberta Stock Savings Plan Act, what was
- (1) the name of the person,
 - (2) the date of the issuance of the certificate of provisional eligibility, and
 - (3) the nature of the business of the person receiving the certificate of provisional eligibility?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Edmonton Kingsway has posed Written Question 150, in which he indicates the word "person." Recognizing that this cannot be amended, I am simply qualifying the word "person" for the purpose of this question and am interpreting that to mean "corporation." I am filing the answer to Question 150 accordingly.

152. Mr. Strong asked the government the following question: What amounts of money, other than money paid as a result of a contractual arrangement for the provision of goods and/or services by Gainers Inc. to the government or any agent of the government or of the Crown in right of Alberta, have been paid to Gainers Inc. in the form of grants or

other payments under any program operated by the government or any agent of the government or of the Crown in right of Alberta, and in each instance what was the program under which the money was paid out, how much money was paid out, and what was the purpose for which the money was paid out, since March 31, 1984?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, the government will accept the question and in due course will answer same.

159. Mr. Taylor asked the government the following question:

- (1) What is the total dollar value of loans issued by the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation under the core housing incentive program (CHIP) for the fiscal years 1984-85 and 1985-86?
- (2) What were the names of the individuals who received CHIP loans in each of the fiscal years 1984-85 and 1985-86?
- (3) What was the dollar value of the CHIP loan received by each individual in the fiscal years 1984-85 and 1985-86?
- (4) What is the rate of interest on each of these CHIP loans?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I would like to indicate to the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon why that question can't be answered. The Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation is like many government-owned corporations in that it is in the commercial sector and doing business in the same way that other lending institutions do. I think it quite unfair when asked for individual names if the people who deal in good faith — and there are many tens of thousands of them — with government lending institutions have the privacy of their business transactions offended in a way which doesn't happen in other commercial corporations.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, if the question could be phrased in such a way that individual names were not to be part of the response — overall figures, numbers of loans, interest rates in categories — there would be no difficulty.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'll speak to that for a moment. It's not quite correct, in my opinion, to say that these are normal business loans like any other organization such as a bank or trust company. The government has occasionally moved in and interfered with and changed the CHIP loans we're talking about here. For instance, the interest rate was decreased last year by government fiat. In other words, the government looked at CHIP loans, looked at problems the people were having in the development business, and by edict or fiat said, "Abracadabra, the loan is now X percent rather than that." You can't do that with any other loan organization.

I submit that it's very much a part of government business. Certainly the sun should shine on deals like this in order to preserve what reputation for fairness the government might wish to have, rather than having it done in the dark.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Speaking to the particular question that's raised here, Mr. Speaker, I have the same concern as the hon. member and a few others. We've raised the question a number of times in the Legislature that when public funds are borrowed or one of our corporations lends money to various individuals or groups, there's no way for

this Legislature to bring about some accountability. It's a very difficult thing.

I would suggest that one of the considerations that should be made here is one of the changes that was brought forward by Dr. Horner a number of years ago in terms of the Alberta Opportunity Company. When the loans were over a certain amount, we published in the *Alberta Gazette* the name of the individual and the amount of money, which really doesn't disclose anything beyond what kind of money they received. In terms of this presentation to the Legislature, an automatic answer would have been made available to us. I still question whether each individual one is really confidential information.

If as a farmer I receive a grant for X number of dollars to assist me with my fertilizer on the farm, the public should know about it, because I got the money. If I got it to put water to my farm, the public should know about it. I shouldn't be able to hide that information in any way. Possibly one of the things we should look at in dealing with matters such as this or with corporations is having a clause in agreements signed by individuals who receive money from corporations which says: as a corporation, through the Legislature, we have the right to disclose your name and the amount you receive in some public document. I think that would cover the Legislature, cover the minister, and make it available.

In the number of years I've had the opportunity to be around this place, this same issue has raised its head over and over again. It did in not only this government but the previous government of Alberta. To bring about public accountability, possibly we should look at that kind of amendment in things we do from this point forward.

164. Mr. Wright asked the government the following question:

- (1) Has there been any alteration or variation in the policy of the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care that the contract for the commissioning of a hospital is not to be let to the same firm, or any close associate of the same firm, that designed the hospital being commissioned?
- (2) If not, what contrary considerations were deemed to be of sufficient moment that the board of St. Therese hospital at St. Paul was permitted to let the contract for the commissioning of that hospital to Manutec Ltd. of Edmonton, a company owned by or closely associated with Vinto Engineering Ltd. of the same address, the company which designed the hospital?
- (3) Will the minister undertake to advise the board of the hospital of the proper policy in this regard and require them to follow it?

MR. HORSMAN: On behalf of the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care the government is prepared to accept the question and will be filing a response in due course.

head: MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

213. Moved by Mr. Martin:

Be it resolved that upon the appointment of the Standing Committee of the Assembly on Public Affairs, the Labour Relations Act, chapter L-1.1, RSA 1980, stand referred to that committee; and
be it further resolved that the standing committee be instructed

to inquire into all aspects of the Act, its operations, and effects; and

be it further resolved that as part of its inquiries, the standing committee hold public hearings at the Legislature and at such other population centres across Alberta, but not fewer than five such centres, as may be determined upon motion moved in the standing committee by a member of the Executive Council designated for this purpose by the Executive Council; and

be it further resolved that as part of its inquiries, the standing committee solicit written submissions, in addition to those oral and written submissions received at public hearings held pursuant to this motion, from interested Albertans; and

be it further resolved that upon the conclusion of its inquiries, which conclusion shall be no later than November 30, 1986, the standing committee prepare a report on its inquiries, including any recommendations for improvements in the Act which the standing committee may deem advisable; and

be it further resolved that the standing committee report to the Legislative Assembly no later than the conclusion of the seventh sitting day of the Second Session of the 21st Legislature.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments. I think Motion 213 is especially relevant in view of what happened earlier today in question period. Let me first of all say to this government that at the start of the throne speech, they seemed to recognize that we were having some problems with labour relations in this province. It was even mentioned in the throne speech. Since that time, if I may say so, the situation has not gotten better; it has gotten worse. Maybe we do not see quite the same emotionalism we saw on some of the picket lines at the start, which caused the government to recognize that perhaps there might be a problem, but there is still a lot of frustration and anger in the community in regard to the labour laws of this province.

There is still a major labour dispute going on at Gainers, the one that people are most aware of, but I would remind you that in Fort McMurray there is still a serious labour dispute going on with Suncor, and of course Zeidler's and IWA. There is the potential for many, many more labour disputes, Mr. Speaker, and the frustration level is high among working people in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I recall that the Premier said at one time that he would be looking for ways to look into the labour laws; he was open to suggestions. That's why we put in this particular motion at the time; it has been there for quite a while. That's why we'll be needing an amendment, which my colleague will be bringing forward later.

I want to say, first of all, that the whole labour Act needs to be reviewed. In debating Bill 206 that we brought forward, many hon. members said that our labour laws aren't that much different from any other province in Canada. The reality is that that is just not the truth. At one time they weren't that much different, but there have been interpretations by the courts that have made them very different. Other provinces have moved to plug those loopholes, and Alberta has done nothing. That's why we've brought in a couple of Bills — for example, Bills 206 and 229 — that we believe would go some way to bring balance and fairness back to the system. We thought those could have been brought forward and debated. If this government

wanted to deal with those loopholes, they could have done it this session, Mr. Speaker.

I think we would all agree that the whole point of labour negotiations — we may disagree on what that definition is — is to bring co-operation rather than confrontation. It does not take a person who comes to this province long to recognize that the climate out there is sour. I've talked to many tourists who are not from Alberta. When they ask what's going on, they just cannot believe the labour laws in this particular province. Even the most right-wing person — and I've talked to many prominent Conservatives, if I may say so, who are not in this government, and they tell me the same thing: the laws have to be changed.

For the life of me, I can't see why we couldn't have a couple of Bills to plug the obvious loopholes and then take a look at the labour Act. I have nothing against taking some time to look at the whole labour Act to try to find that balance of fairness and justice, if you like, Mr. Speaker; that makes eminent good sense. I think the whole labour Act has to be looked at right from the beginning of negotiations to the end to try to find, as I said, that idea of balance and fairness. But in the meantime, the climate out there is getting worse and worse, because we refuse to plug the obvious loopholes. That's why we in this part of the caucus brought in Bills 206 and 229: to try to resolve that immediately.

Obviously the government, by its reaction to hon. members, isn't prepared to look at that. But I say to this government — and I will come back to the announcement that's probably coming tomorrow about the committee — that they were very clear in the throne speech, when they had 10,000 people out in front to take the heat off them. The throne speech says:

A full review of labour legislation will be undertaken by my government, and necessary amendments will be proposed to assure that the laws of the province, for the present and for the future, will be responsive to the needs and aspirations of employers and employees.

It says "necessary amendments will be proposed." I ask members in the government: where are those necessary amendments? That was a promise in the throne speech. If we can't believe the government in that sort of promise, that there will be amendments, why do we have to believe the government in anything? Because that's very clear; it's in black and white, Mr. Speaker.

Now we're told by the government that at some point down the way we're going to have a committee. Well, that is interesting, Mr. Speaker. We thought there should at least be these amendments right away, and we should have moved on it quicker than that, because I've tried to point out that the climate out there is not a healthy climate. At least maybe a fair committee will look at the labour laws.

What we find out today is the unbelievable admission that we're not even going to involve ourselves with the two major labour groups in the province, and we're going to say to the people of Alberta that this is going to be a fair committee. As I said, how in God's name will they expect people to believe that with this type of attitude? It's not important that you like or agree with whoever is heading up these two major organizations; it's not important that you necessarily agree at the time with those who head up the business groups. But these are people who were elected to serve organized labour in this province — that's the key point — and they're the ones who should be on that committee.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I have no faith in this committee that's going to be hoked up at this particular time because of who I find out hasn't been asked. The hon. member over there can laugh, because he's part of the problem that we have in this province right now. The point I want to make is that maybe this particular Assembly should begin to take its responsibility seriously, because that committee is obviously a farce. We should begin by bringing in Motion 213. [interjection] We're getting the right-wingers excited; that's good. I hope they will get up and debate, Mr. Speaker, because I always love to hear the right-wing rump of the Conservatives. Oh, he's proud of it. Which rump is he on? I'm not sure.

Mr. Speaker, the point that I want to make is a serious one.

MR. DAY: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Some of the statements seem to be regarding this government not representing labour. I believe that is misrepresentation, since it was clearly indicated earlier today — and the Blues could be checked on this — that labour is indeed going to be represented on this committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. It's truly not a point of order. I'm sure the Chair will entertain your part of the debate. Hon. leader.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At least I got him up; that's encouraging. What he has to say about labour laws in the province should be interesting, coming from him.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go on and say that's why we put forward Motion 213. If you recall, the Premier said that he was looking for ideas about how to conduct this review. Without going through it, I want to point out that our motion — I'm sure hon. members have had a chance to read it — would put the responsibility back here with this Legislature. We could have employer groups, labour groups, interested citizens, and whoever wanted come into this Legislature with their views and listen to them. We're also suggesting that it shouldn't be just here in the Legislature, that the committee should also go to major centres around the province and listen. We think that would give a fair review. If you still want to have the committee, fair enough, have the committee. Nobody is going to listen to them anyhow, Mr. Speaker, because of what has gone on.

The point I want to make is that we did this. You will recall that we had people come into this Assembly when we wanted to bring in Bill 44, when clearly what the government wanted to do was take away labour rights at that particular time. They brought groups in here, and they had to take it even though they didn't agree with it. Many groups told them what they thought about it, but at least it was a democratic process at that time. So we've had some precedent in doing this in labour negotiations, Mr. Speaker. It wouldn't be a new thing.

MRS. CRIPPS: You didn't like it then.

MR. MARTIN: No, I loved it, because they went after the government. They had to sit there and take it, and that was enjoyable. They told me that was the most enjoyable time they had, taking after the government. Anyhow, Shirley, you'll get your chance to stand up. We always appreciate the contributions you make in this Legislature.

The point that I want to make about this, Mr. Speaker, is that we think ...

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. leader, the Chair acknowledges the interesting debate and the banter back and forth, but perhaps the references to members could be via constituency or the department rather than by first names. Thank you.

MR. MARTIN: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley. How's that?

Mr. Speaker, I want to have other people, especially from the opposite side, recorded in this debate. So in conclusion, I would like to say that it seems to us that time is of the essence. That's why we are talking about bringing in immediate amendments that would plug some of the loopholes and having this done by November 30. My understanding now is that even this committee, if it does any work at all, will not be able to report back until the next session, and Lord knows how long it will take to change the laws after that.

The point I want to make, and that members here had better listen to, is that there is a great deal of anger and frustration out there with those laws. Whether people are on the right, the left, the centre, or wherever, they want changes, and they want us to look at it and do it quickly. That's the point that I want to make, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, we on this side, and I think the majority of working Albertans, feel that the balance is way over on one side. I think we saw an example of that in the recent disputes we've had. So I say to this government that if they can't buy this motion, at least let's have a committee that represents all groups fairly when they look into this. Everybody's going to feel that this committee is a whitewash because of the start that it has had at this particular time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address this motion and, obviously, support it. In so doing, I might preface my comments by noting that the results of the last election may have reflected a government attitude with respect to extra billing, a problem which seems to have been solved. Following the next election, if we don't fix our labour laws, the configuration in this House may in fact be reversed. Now that is by way of saying that this is not a matter that is of sole concern to either employers or employees who may be in dispute or may be looking down the road toward conditions which would give rise to a dispute. Rather, it is an observation that the longer we hold off fixing what I truly believe are deeply rooted problems in our labour legislation, the more we provoke hostilities and the more we pulverize society, and the government will be blamed for that kind of implicit hostility toward fundamental rights.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that aside from reading into the record the names of the Bills this opposition caucus has sponsored which we believe would fix the two essential labour legislation problems. Bills 206 and 229, both sponsored by the Member for St. Albert, I am actually on my feet to propose an amendment to Motion 213. The amendment I would like to propose is one that would deal basically with the technicalities of the motion as it exists on the Order Paper. Essentially, the problem is that when it appeared on the Order Paper, when it went on notice, we had not formalized the standing committees of the Legislative Assembly. They were formalized after this motion went on.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, has the amendment been circulated to all members of the Assembly?

MS BARRETT: Yes, it has, Mr. Speaker.

I was saying that there's a technicality with respect to the committees. What I would like to do is sort out the problem with the technicality because of the timing of actually getting to discuss this motion compared to when it went on notice. Therefore, I will read into the record the amendment I propose, which has been circulated to all members and I believe to the Clerk, the Clerk Assistant, and the Speaker. I move that Motion 213 on today's Order Paper be amended as follows:

(1) in the first paragraph by deleting all the words after the words "be it resolved that" and substituting therefor the words "the Labour Relations Act (Chapter L-1.1, RSA 1980) stand referred to the Standing Committee on Public Affairs; and," and

(2) by adding the following immediately before the last paragraph: "be it further resolved that for the purpose of discharging these instructions, the standing committee be authorized to strike such subcommittees for such purposes as may be determined on motion moved in the committee; and,"

and then carry on.

Obviously, the purpose is so that we can actually have a subcommittee struck by the Public Affairs Committee which was struck after the motion went on notice, and thereafter we could operate in a reasonable fashion. In other words, it wouldn't require 83 MLAs to get on buses and drive around the province to listen to the real concerns of Albertans. A subcommittee agreed to by the Public Affairs Committee could undertake the work on behalf of all the members here. Of course, we feel absolutely confident that that committee would be struck with an appropriate balance.

That, Mr. Speaker, is my amendment.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say a few words on Motion 213 and ...

SOME HON. MEMBERS: The amendment.

MR. JONSON: I'll get to that.

It so happens, Mr. Speaker, that the amendment actually is more appropriate to my concerns over the motion than the original, so I would like to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, I think the review of the labour Act is a very, very important task, and in considering the amendment, we're looking at one aspect of the best method of proceeding with this process. I think everybody in this Assembly wants this job to be as thorough and as effective as possible and to lead to the best Labour Relations Act and associated measures possible in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a little bit concerned that just a few moments ago the hon. Leader of the Opposition said he has no faith in the committee. I would assume that perhaps no process initiated will be satisfactory. Nevertheless, I think we have to work toward that end.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment adds another feature, another set of details, to the action proposed by the Public Affairs Committee. I think we have to sit back and consider the nature of the task facing whatever body has this job put before it. As I've said before, it's very important and a great deal has to be covered. This is something that we want to be thorough about. I'd just like to mention some of the things that have previously been mentioned as relevant

to this work in this session of the Legislature and in other venues and other forums.

When we're looking at the Labour Relations Act, there are a number of items that are going to have to be looked at, whether by the committees, by the Public Affairs Committee, or by some other body. We have the matter of the application of the Act. Currently it does not apply to public service employees, police officers, farm employees, and domestics, and I imagine some will want to comment on that. There's the work of the Labour Relations Board; some people would like them to be tougher and more consistent in their rulings. We certainly need to look at the overall structure, powers, and jurisdictions of the boards as outlined in the Act.

We have the whole matter, Mr. Speaker, of trade union certification. The procedures for the organization and registration of a trade union are set out in the Act, along with prohibitions and protections for organizing activity and procedures for the collection of union dues. Some of those matters are currently at issue within this nation relative to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and certainly that is something specifically relating to the Act that would have to be looked at by subcommittees.

There's the registration of employers' organizations. The registration of these organizations and their rights are set out in the Act, and whether those should be extended or contracted or changed in some way would have to be looked at. We have some specific concerns in this province relative to the construction industry. They're rather unique in terms of the collective bargaining process, and I am sure that is a specific area of concern. We have the rules governing the overall area of collective bargaining. We have the whole matter of strikes and lockouts and the right thereto; this is certainly a serious matter and one that has been referred to often in this Assembly. Along with that we also have the whole matter of right-to-work legislation, which there is certainly some interest in.

We have the process of arbitration to be considered. Although in recent studies and reports the process of arbitration in the province has stacked up as rather good and rather fair — very fair, in fact — in this overall review I think we still have to study very, very thoroughly the conditions under which arbitration, compulsory or otherwise, occurs and the procedures for the handling of appeals of resulting awards.

We have the whole matter of unfair labour practices and the way that those are arbitrated, dealt with, and enforced or ruled upon. We have the matter of the right of individuals to be involved in political activity and assume political roles in this province that has to be looked at.

Those, Mr. Speaker, are items which pertain directly to the clauses of the Alberta labour Act. If we were to go this particular route, I think an even more massive task would be part of the review. When you advertise that a thorough look at this whole area is going to be undertaken, I do not think you can avoid the more general considerations of peoples' and organizations' views on the matters of unemployment, the rights of ownership, and the opportunities there should be for the private owner to own, run, and pursue his business. Those things have to be taken into consideration.

We have the whole area of technological change. I would predict that over the next few years that particular area is going to present a number of challenges and a number of things before this Legislature. Labour departments, employ-

ers, and employees in general will cause a need for change and very, very careful consideration.

There is the matter of minimum wage laws, another item that has certainly been of interest in this province; the whole area of equal pay and the various definitions that are attached to it; the whole matter of the use of union dues for political purposes, which has been brought to the fore in eastern Canada in some recent preliminary rulings.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, the Chair has difficulty with respect to the amendment before us. Your comments are indeed germane to the motion as a whole. Perhaps it might be helpful to the Assembly for someone to call the question on the amendment so that we might then return to the general motion as a whole. I'd ask the hon. member to speak a bit more precisely with respect to the amendment.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, if I might just respond. If I could just comment — I will certainly go by your ruling. The amendment, since it talks about utilizing the Public Affairs Committee and splitting into committees, in my view adds to the size, detail, and the rather encumbering nature of the whole process put forward in the motion and in the amendment. I will certainly sit down and we can deal with the amendment, but I think that is a point that I would like to return to.

MR. HORSMAN: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the suggestion from the Chair that debate can be confined solely to this particular amendment, this amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands is procedural in nature. From debates in previous years on procedural matters as to how committees might deal with matters by way of hearings, it is my recollection that the main substance of the motion could very well be the subject of debate during the course of debate on an amendment of this nature. I don't want to unduly prolong the discussion on this matter, because the important thing is to discuss the principle of the motion the hon. Leader of the Opposition has brought before the Assembly today. I would respectfully suggest, sir, that debate be permitted to continue on the elements in both the motion and the amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: On the point of order?

MR. McEACHERN: It would seem to me that the hon. member across the floor might be right in a situation where the amendment was very substantive to the motion. In this case it's a very technical amendment just suggesting a way of getting away from having 83 members of this Legislature who have to get up and travel around the province. The hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands did explain that at the start of it. In view of that, perhaps we could then dispense with this amendment and get back to the main motion which the member wished to speak on.

MR. WRIGHT: Debate involving the substance of the motion is only relevant to the amendment in respect to the convenience — or lack of it — of the amendment. In my respectful submission, Mr. Speaker, the speaker we have interrupted here was straying far beyond the areas of relevance.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could speak on the amendment for a moment or two. I really believe that the

amendment which is under discussion deserves to be considered very carefully before it is accepted. The amendment is in fact a proposal for a specific manner in which the substantive motion itself would be dealt with. The amendment proposes that the Standing Committee on Public Affairs be the one to produce a recommendation dealing with the labour Act, and that may be so. I would submit that there are alternative approaches that could be followed other than having the Standing Committee on Public Affairs deal with this matter, as suggested in the amendment and in fact in the main motion. I'll give an illustration. In fact, I may before the time is up give more than one illustration of the problem. The hon. . . .

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair appreciates the comments of the minister. The Chair therefore rules that the discussion will continue with respect to the amendments, and there are two parts to the amendments.

MR. YOUNG: The hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands, in moving this amendment, has suggested and is recommending to the Assembly that it should be the members of this Assembly, having before them representations from the public in various areas around the province, who would through that form and through that mechanism produce the recommendations which would ultimately form the basis for changes, if any, to the Labour Relations Act.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this afternoon the Leader of the Opposition reflected his views on the status of labour legislation in this province, and I happen to have very different views than he has. I'm not sure that the best method and procedure for resolving a difference would necessarily be to have a committee made up of politicians whose philosophies are somewhat different, whose interpretations of existing legislation are certainly different, and whose interpretations and understanding of the problems which have been so well enumerated by the hon. Member for Ponoka-Rimbey — whether that is the most efficient, effective procedure to follow in dealing with the matter which is before us in terms of evaluating our labour legislation. It may well be that there should be representatives of the public, experts in labour relations, and practitioners in labour relations on this committee, and that is not what is proposed by this amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I've just given one argument why I think we should consider very carefully the amendment that is before us. I for one would not wish us to be confined strictly to the views of members of this Assembly. It seems to me that we need representation from outside; we need to hear what people think. We also need to know and to have people who are involved in labour relations on both sides of the bargaining table, if you will, think this process through for themselves. I'm not sure this is the mechanism which will be most effective in achieving that think-through.

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member's recommendation were to be followed, as simplified as it is, in one sense, with only members of the Public Affairs Committee on the committee itself, I think it would lead us to a very divisive kind of potential solution. I would be really interested to hear from the hon. Leader of the Opposition just how he thinks his views would be modified by such a procedure and whether we're in fact talking about co-operation and mutual understanding. Surely that is the goal, and the process is important to our achievement of that objective. I would hope there isn't a single member of this Assembly who would think that our objective should be other than co-

operation and creation of mutual respect between employers and unions. I think that's fundamental.

I don't think that can come about if members of this Assembly begin by knowing the answers right off the top and by holding to a fast position. What we have from the hon. leader's statements is his presently known solution to the problems. Mr. Speaker, we actually saw him out marching with one of the interest groups. [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, both as a minister and a member of this Assembly I try to avoid publicly posing with one of the interest groups when the issues are of a nature which requires reconciliation. One doesn't do that by publicly nailing oneself to the flag of a particular party. I think the point which I'm addressing has been aptly made by the response of my opposition friends across the way. The fact is that they already know the answers in their minds. I believe we should instead look at this with a very open mind. I'll be very interested, since the hon. Leader of the Opposition feels somewhat challenged by what I've said, if he cares to make some comments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Speaking to the amendment?

MR. MARTIN: Specifically speaking to (2) in the amendment, and dealing with the amendment as my hon. colleague did before, let me say first of all that the purpose of this committee going around the province is so that all Assembly members can listen to the points of view that all the groups are talking about. We tend to get very isolated in this particular Assembly, and this hon. member is just the same way. If he wants to talk about the labour laws that were brought in, if it was him and this government that brought in Bills 110, 44, 41, and all the rest of them that are causing the problem, if he wants to talk about fair labour laws — we know his government's stand. They don't have to go on a picket line; we know where they stand, sitting in here passing the laws that have caused the problems. That's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker.

The other point I would make is that when they wanted to have the Assembly bring in Bill 44, it was good enough for us to sit there then, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, with great respect, the Assembly is having difficulty with dealing with the amendment. Perhaps we could refocus the phrase a touch.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I was taking the leniency that the previous minister had in going off the amendment, but I tend to agree with you. But I would say that he asked me to comment on his statements, and I have, Mr. Speaker.

The point that I would like to make about this is that you can still have other groups going around checking into the labour laws, Mr. Speaker; I have no objection to that. But ultimately it's the people in this Assembly that will have to make any amendments to those labour laws. That's the reality, so it's important for us to get around also and listen to the various groups that the minister's talking about. If he still wants other committees, management groups, and labour groups going around looking at the labour law in a technical sense too, I have no objection to that. But surely this minister must recognize that the loopholes in that labour Act now are so immense even he must recognize that there's a problem there. Why else are we having the labour disputes? If everything was going along so well, we would be having

the same labour peace that other provinces have, Mr. Speaker.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister asked me to reply, and I've replied. If he wants to take this battle anywhere in the province, I'm prepared to debate it with him anywhere in this province, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the amendment, Calgary Millican.

MR. SHRAKE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak on the amendment. Actually, the amendment's a very nice one and so is the motion itself. It's a little bit confused, but I think he's trying very hard. But in this type of motion and this amendment I think we have to go a little further than saying, "When in doubt, when you're confused, strike up a committee." It doesn't always quite work. First, if we're going to be sitting until probably the middle of September, I don't think the members of this Legislature are going to get out and put the type of time, energy, and effort into this. If you do, you're not going to be sitting here all afternoon and evening.

Looking at the striking of this standing committee, I think we've got to take a little harder and a little more serious look at this than I think has been done, especially with this particular amendment. First, I had the occasion to try to look into labour matters myself along the way. I was a committee of one appointed by myself, and I did go into this type of thing, trying to look into this. Now where do I start, and I thought the first thing to do — and I was unbiased, because I've got a lot of companies in my constituency. I've got this monstrous area of the Foothills Industrial Park, which contains the major part of the industry in Calgary. It's big, and a lot of employees working for these companies live in the Calgary Millican constituency. It gave me a lot of concern. I look at this amendment and I think: well, they're plunging into something here, but there's got to be a lot more thought than this.

The first thing I did was to phone. It took me a while to get hold of one representative from every construction trade in Calgary and see if they'd meet with me. That took a little bit of time, and this committee here will run into that same problem. Then I phoned every construction company to try to balance it out and get the full impact of what the problem is and if there is a solution. They agreed to meet with me. Last but not least, I got hold of the gentleman who just sat down, who was then the Minister of Labour. He met with us, and we did sit down. We went to my little constituency office, we sat down, and I tried to make it an informal meeting. I thought...

AN HON. MEMBER: Are you talking to the amendment?

MR. SHRAKE: Sorry; I'm maybe straying. I beg your indulgence there.

Anyway, it was a good meeting, and that's what this amendment is saying: we've got to strike a committee. But I don't believe my little type of meeting or a little committee of the Legislature is going to quite do it. It says here, "strike such subcommittees." The way we're going, I guess we'd get a committee and then we'd get our subcommittees. We would play with it; it would be a crash program, and usually crash programs are hash programs. You'd come in, and if you had put on some of the opposite members, we already know they have a very strong bias, because they've hit the picket lines. They seem to think the best thing we

can do to create jobs is to put these people out of business. I sometimes think they should rethink their position on that.

I really believe we would do well, speaking against this amendment, if instead we went ahead and had our Minister of Labour sit down and get a few representatives from the unions and people who've been involved in unions. Instead of a little subcommittee bashing about, maybe get some of the people who have had involvement and experience from the company side and a few independent ones, and form that type of committee and take a look at the problems in front of us. When I was on city council, we usually tried to get somebody purely neutral, maybe a bishop of the Catholic church. I'm not being facetious. I mean that, because they have some wisdom; they've talked to both sides. The problems that this committee has to look at are not simple if you've had no experience. Here we're going to send a few politicians bashing about, and they've had no experience.

The first thing they have to do is educate themselves about what the problem is. I had a guy over on the weekend who is with the pipefitters union. He was explaining something to me, and he had to explain it to me twice; I know I'm a little slow on these things. I did finally get the drift of what's wrong in the construction trades. They had a strike but called the strike off because their funds were running out and they could see that the strike was futile, because the very companies they were striking were not doing any business; they were shutting down anyway. The spin-off companies — Capton, the spin-off from Bennett & White — shut down. They haven't tendered a job for the last few years.

Anyway, this gentleman sat down and explained this. He explained that with the existing legislation, which this committee would have to look at...

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker...

MR. SPEAKER: On a point of order?

MR. McEACHERN: I think it's become fairly obvious that the other side has decided they're going to talk this out on the amendment because they would rather not get down to the substantive details, but there is...

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, there's no way, on a point of order...

MR. McEACHERN: Well, he was way off...

MR. YOUNG: ... that the hon. member should be imputing motive — just no way in the Assembly.

MR. McEACHERN: He was out of order.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, if he wants to speak and still have his turn, he should get up and speak. I'd be glad to hear where the Member for Edmonton Kingsway is coming from. We'd really like to know.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Would the hon. Member for Calgary Millican continue and conclude his remarks.

MR. SHRAKE: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I do wander at times. But this is not a very simple matter that we are discussing: the amendment or the main motion.

To get some idea of what this subcommittee has to look at, they've got to go into the legislation and figure out what happens when the construction industry ... They went out on strike, they ran out of money, they ran out of funds, and then they called the strike off. Okay, what do they do? You can only have one strike under the existing legislation.

I just don't think an amendment for striking up this type of committee is going to work, Mr. Speaker. I believe it would be better if we got a group and this group went after this. We could get a few of the captains of industry, a few of the members, and the leaders, the people who've been involved in the trade unions, on the one side and get some people who are a little bit more detached on the other side, who are neither construction union people or business people — the employers — and actually get a few to balance it out. Maybe a guy from the chamber of commerce on one side, maybe the bishop of the Catholic church on the other, maybe the bishop of the Mormon church, but get a good variety and ... [interjection]

I'll tell you what. These people have good variety. If you're trying to say that the chamber of commerce knows nothing about business or industry, surprisingly enough, they do have experience. They've hired employees; they've been employees themselves and have worked their way up. But it balances out the committee so that it's not just all politicians or not just all members of the establishment, as you would call it, or not just all members of the union movement.

It's got to be balanced. They've got to go out and examine every bit of the labour legislation, and they're going to have to interview a lot of people from the construction unions, every union in the province. They've got to get some feedback from them. They've got to get feedback from such — as you're implying — horrible organizations as the chamber of commerce, your business people. I think that is the committee.

They've got to be provided with the funds to do it. We've got to find some people that are dedicated and are going to put in the time to do it. They've got to have a lot more time than any of the members sitting here in these rows today should have. If you people sitting over there have a lot of spare time you don't know what to do with, maybe you could come over and help me keep up with the paper that seems to keep getting poured in my mailbox every day and help me return a few of the phone calls, because I have trouble even getting all my phone calls made.

Maybe I better conclude, Mr. Speaker. I think the amendment is not really well thought out. The only thing worse is the motion.

MR. SPEAKER: On the amendment.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, on the amendment. I went through the process of reviewing a bit of the history in order to be prepared.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, the difficulty the Chair has is that you were supposedly speaking to the amendment before, when we came to this interesting exchange with respect to points of order. Therefore, the Chair rules that you've spoken on the amendment. Other speakers with regard to the amendment?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, yes, I would ... [interjections] You're right. I'm glad to see you're back. I thought maybe you weren't really interested in the debate.

At the Leader of the Opposition's introduction of the motion, he was talking about the makeup of the committee and arguing that the makeup of the committee, as opposed to the makeup we've just been presented in the amendment, was not fair and just.

Mr. Speaker, that's predetermining how the government is going to make up the committee. It's also guessing how the labour Act will be reviewed, and I think it's a supposition. In this particular amendment to the motion, it's very, very important that the labour Act itself and the importance of the labour Act to the province of Alberta and to the future of labour relations be adequately and effectively evaluated during this review process.

The implication I get from members of the opposition is that they're disregarding the importance of the decisions that this committee will bring to the Legislature and to the members of the Legislature. Actually, it appears to me that we're more interested in arguing against the process than in taking a look at positive results from the process, which in my estimation is what this whole review is about. Mr. Speaker, this amendment is suggesting that a committee of the Legislature review the labour Act as opposed to 83 members of the Assembly — 82 members; I don't think you would be allowed — reviewing the labour Act. That in itself ...

MR. WRIGHT: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. With the very greatest respect, the hon. associate minister seems to be talking about whether it should be a committee of the Legislature or some outside committee. That is not the amendment.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, on that point of order, the purpose of the amendment is to discuss the process by which the review will be undertaken, and all the hon. associate minister is doing is discussing alternatives. Surely that's a perfectly proper consideration in any debate on this amendment. If the hon. member has forgotten the amendment, I could read it into the record again. I realize that might consume another minute and a half. I think the point of order is not well taken.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair agrees. The point of order is out of order, because there has been great latitude with respect to all speakers this afternoon with respect to either the amendment or the main motion. Would the Associate Minister of Agriculture continue for a lightning-fast one minute before the business must change.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, if I have one minute, I'd far rather speak on what I hope this process will achieve than on the argument about the mechanism to achieve the desirable end which I believe each and every one of us want for this province: the best review of the labour Act and also, in the long term, the best interests of both labour and management for the future of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. Associate Minister of Agriculture, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. The motion is carried.

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

Bill 209
Mortgage Interest
Tax Deductibility Act

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, it certainly gives me pleasure to move Bill 209 in second reading, the Mortgage Interest Tax Deductibility Act. The objective of the Act may not be as paramount in the minds of Albertans today as the review of some important legislation that affects many people in the province of Alberta, but I see this piece of legislation and the intent of this Bill as providing some kind of tax relief to Albertans that are paying for their homes through various mortgage interest payments, tax relief that will give them some assistance in meeting those mortgage costs.

We all know the current situation in Alberta in terms of the increased cost of living, the pressure that many families face in terms of reduced income because of changed job status or no job status at all, and many more Albertans living on unemployment insurance, welfare benefits, or other pension benefits which they had not done three, four, or five years ago or two months ago. They're faced with increased costs. I think this Bill is even more timely in terms of giving relief to those people than it was one, two, or three years ago when I introduced it for the first time in this Legislature.

To explain the Bill and the intent of it, it's an addition to section 9 of the Alberta Income Tax Act, which allows Albertans to deduct up to \$5,000 of mortgage interest from their revenue or their income in calculating their tax payable. This interest would be on a mortgage on their principal residence; in other words, their family home.

We on this side of the House and our party believe you can assist Albertans through tax incentives. By increasing taxes you can deter from some of the objectives they would like to achieve, such as owning their homes and having the piece of mind that they're able to meet their monthly payments relative to a mortgage. We think a technique like this, whereby there is tax relief or payment relief, would be more satisfactory than the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation providing moneys at a lower interest rate or government intervening in the process.

Through a technique like this, plus others, people could go to the lending institution of their choice, make an arrangement for the mortgage, and pay the mortgage through that institution without the intervention or the hand of government over their shoulder in any way. In terms of government as a whole — I've said this many times — if the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation were eliminated from the field of lending and intervention, we could currently save a number of public dollars that could be used for other items of priority in this province. That's certainly another question in terms of the functions of government.

There are three main areas of benefit which Albertans will gain by legislation such as this. First of all, a decrease in taxes and the related increased disposable amount of money that they will have to pay their yearly mortgage. If a mortgage were \$50,000, the tax savings on that mortgage through this type of plan could be up to \$400 a year, which

isn't much, but it certainly is a savings for that particular mortgage. For a \$100,000 mortgage, it could be more.

The second benefit from such a program is that we could make housing more affordable to the average Albertan. By making the interest tax deductible, more people would be able to afford their homes or be able to pay that monthly mortgage.

The third supporting benefit is the possibility of stimulating construction. As I survey the construction industry across the province of Alberta, we have a downtime, a time that's more down than we've had for a long, long time. Houses currently being built in terms of speculation are not moving. Real estate is not moving. Any kind of incentive that we can add to that field of mortgage costs and mortgage repayment capability would certainly help to stimulate the construction industry.

I believe this program would be one that could work as a complement to the 9 percent program that's available to farmers and small businessmen. We've given them relief. The government has left out of that program any kind of mortgage support. If we could fix mortgages at 9 percent, that certainly would be of assistance to many, many people across the province of Alberta. This Bill is another technique by which we can help to support mortgages in the province and those people that have to repay mortgages at higher interest rates. I would say that such a piece of legislation would certainly complement the two pieces of legislation which we have endorsed and will be given approval by the Lieutenant Governor tomorrow in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage the members of the Legislature to support the intent and the principle of the Bill this afternoon. I certainly look forward to the debate and contributions of any members that feel the desire to do so.

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Speaker, I think we have to thank the Member for Little Bow for bringing this Bill to our attention. Certainly it has a lot of sensitivity. I can see where some of our constituents would feel we should support it.

However, I do have some problems with it. The Member for Little Bow mentioned the option of making 9 percent mortgages available to homeowners, similar to the small business and farm improvements. I would think that if we were looking at options, 9 percent would probably be better than Bill 209, Mortgage Interest Tax Deductibility Act. First off, it would create a situation where no one would want to retain the ownership of their home. If their income tax were deducted from their interest rate, once they had one home paid for they certainly would be out looking for a mortgage to buy another one because of the interest rate benefits they would get. It would probably be a great boon to the real estate industry in that regard, but it would not do a lot for owners of rental units. Only 56 percent of all Albertans have mortgages in various degrees. In a case where interest rates were tax deductible, we would be favouring a few of the population.

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

The change could have the resulting effect in causing inflation in interest rates and certainly could cause inflation in the price of homes. The upper limit proposed is a \$5,000 tax deduction. As the average mortgage in Alberta is \$56,000 and as it would only take a \$42,000 mortgage to qualify for the \$5,000 tax credit, it would mean that virtually all mortgages in Alberta would qualify for the maximum credit.

Another factor is that to have Alberta income tax equal to the minimum tax credit, a person would have to have a taxable income of nearly \$50,000 to qualify. If we're talking about a tax credit, a person could have a substantial credit long after his home was paid for if this is in the form of a tax credit that carries on. This proposal would cost the government of Alberta \$550 million a year. In the economic climate that exists today, I don't think such a move would be advisable. This money would have to be raised from some other source.

There has been some assistance to mortgage holders in the past, particularly in 1982 with the interest subsidy program when interest was very high. That certainly helped many people keep their homes when mortgage payments doubled in a short time because of the rapid increase in interest. House prices and interest prices are stable today, so why should we disturb this in favour of another tax or type of income to the government to cover the shortfall that would be created by this tax deductible program?

I would have to say that in today's economy, the people who are having real problems probably couldn't get any benefit from this because in certain cases they don't own their own homes. In other cases, where our economy has problems, they wouldn't qualify for the tax that would be necessary to pay their mortgage. So those would be the people at the bottom of the payroll ladder that couldn't benefit from it at all.

The United States had a program a few years ago, and they found that it cost the federal Treasury an arm and a leg. I understand they still have the program. The U.S. would clearly love to drop this, but they found that once they started such a program, it's awfully hard to get out of it. When a program is in place and a new homeowner has bought a house on the merit of the tax credit program, it would be unfair to drop it. Now they find they're not able to drop it; they're forced to carry on with it.

Mr. Speaker, there have been several federal housing programs, and they've all been discontinued because they are unfair to some people and also very costly to the federal Treasury. When we have the lowest provincial income tax in Canada and when we consider that this proposal only affects a portion of the homeowners, I suggest that we not support it.

Thank you very much.

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, it's always a pleasure to rise and address this Assembly. This afternoon I rise to share my concerns regarding Bill 209, the mortgage interest deductibility Act.

The hon. Member for Little Bow has proposed that this government provide a \$5,000 tax credit to homeowners. It is believed that to do so would stimulate a sagging housing industry, creating jobs for many unemployed tradesmen, and that it would further put dollars into the hands of consumers, which in turn would generate consumer spending, aid the economy and, more importantly, provide badly needed assistance to a group of Albertans who have been battered by a poor economy and high interest rates and have experienced great difficulties in holding on to their homes in some cases. However, Mr. Speaker, I would certainly hesitate to deny that any of these arguments have merit, and they most certainly have voter appeal.

There can be no doubt that the less money a government takes in taxes, the more is left for individuals to use in ways that may stimulate economic growth. Mr. Speaker, that belief underlines the government's efforts in the last

few years to keep Alberta's taxes as low as possible. There is also no doubt that a mortgage interest tax credit, particularly of this size, would encourage people to enter the home ownership market and would therefore stimulate the demand for housing. Certainly in recent years homeowners have faced unprecedented difficulties: historically high interest rates and plummeting market values, which have made the benefits of investing in a home questionable at this time.

Indeed, Bill 209 does raise some hard questions. How should one stimulate economic growth and employment? How does a government best encourage investment, and what sort of investment should be pursued? To what extent should we be helping individual Albertans facing personal financial difficulties during a prolonged recession? Mr. Speaker, because these issues have been raised, I am glad to have the opportunity to participate in the debate this afternoon.

However, having said that, I cannot endorse the idea contained in Bill 209 for three reasons. First, the housing market has changed considerably in the last few years, becoming more affordable and more stable. Second, the tax credit is far too large, too unfettered, too broad, and does not fit into the tax system or the tax system's objective of progressivity. Third, it would have major redistributive effects which could be quite harmful to the provincial economy.

Five years ago, Mr. Speaker, a crisis hit the home ownership market. The average price of a home in Edmonton and Calgary was \$99,300. The three-year mortgage interest rate was 18.25 percent and rose even higher during the next year. The average monthly carrying charge on a mortgage where a 10 percent down payment was made was \$1,327 per month. For those contemplating a home purchase, those figures were daunting. For those who already had a home and faced refinancing, they were often devastated. The cry for help was widespread and motivated by sheer economic hardship.

Today, Mr. Speaker, interest rates are at an eight-year low, lower than they were during the heyday of the oil boom when builders could not meet the demand for new homes. The average price of a home has dropped to \$79,300, and the cost of carrying a mortgage involving 90 percent financing has been halved to \$687 per month. Furthermore, this affordability has been present for nearly two years, as interest rates and housing prices have become very stable. So the dire economic necessity of aid to homeowners has disappeared.

During the time of crisis, the government of Alberta responded by using the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund to reduce individuals' monthly mortgage payments to an affordable level. It was a temporary measure to address a short-term problem, Mr. Speaker. It would be a mistake at this time to introduce a permanent program to deal with difficulties that the mortgage and housing markets have worked out themselves. Not only is there no need for this measure at this time; there is no equity in the application of the credit. It would be available to all homeowners regardless of their income. It would be available only to homeowners, to those who have mustered enough personal wealth to purchase a home. With no equivalent tax credit available to those who do not have this wealth, it ignores the fact that home ownership is more prevalent among the middle and upper classes than among the poor and that the higher one's income, the higher the mortgage one can afford to carry. There is no progressivity to the idea. In fact, it

could be argued that it's a regressive tax measure. It would only be available to those with the ability to take on a housing investment.

In addition, as I alluded to earlier, the \$5,000 credit is much too generous. As pointed out earlier by the Member for Bow Valley, the average mortgage in Alberta today is \$56,000, and the mortgage needed to claim the full \$5,000 credit is \$42,000 on a five-year term or \$46,000 on a one-year term. Therefore, as again pointed out by the Member for Bow Valley, the majority of mortgage holders would be able to claim the maximum credit. Furthermore, there is nothing to discourage homeowners from increasing their mortgage amount to obtain the maximum credit.

According to present tax levels, an individual Albertan would need a taxable income of \$49,000 to pay \$5,000 in provincial income tax. A taxable income of only \$49,000, not a gross income and not a salary or wage level, combined with the average mortgage level of homeowners would mean the greatest majority of homeowners would not pay any provincial tax whatsoever and that the more you make, the more benefit you receive. In my mind this result does not fit well with the idea of a tax system based on the taxpayer's ability to pay.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I have some grave concerns about the redistributive effects of the proposed tax credit on the economy. Obviously, from the remarks I have just made, there is the question of how the government will make up the revenue shortfall if a significant number of Albertans no longer pay income taxes. Sixty-two percent of Albertans own homes. It would be reasonable to predict then that with this tax credit, 30 to 40 percent of Albertans will become exempt from provincial income taxes. Where would the shortfall come from? Cutbacks in government spending perhaps, but again it's government spending that supports a vast number of social programs that benefit the poor and which is used to encourage activity in the economy.

A tax credit for mortgage interest would encourage more people to enter the housing market, potentially leading to more housing construction. It could have three negative effects. Firstly, the more demand there is for homes, the more upward pressure there is on house prices. The more demand there is for mortgage financing, the scarcer mortgage funds become and the higher their cost. The stability and affordability so recently achieved could be seriously jeopardized.

Secondly, as people become attracted to owning their own homes, rental vacancies will climb and rents will fall. Depending on the extent of the movement away from renting, we could well end up in a bit of a vacancy crisis, with the owners of rental units unable to make their investments viable.

Thirdly, the tax credit creates an incentive for people to invest in housing when they otherwise would not. It becomes an economic decision rather than a life-style one. Money that would have been invested elsewhere is put into the housing market because the return is obvious and immediate. The attraction is heightened by the fact that there is no taxation of the benefits of home ownership, of either the imputed rent or capital gains, whereas the benefits of other forms of investment are taxed. The tax credit would draw funds away from investment in Alberta's businesses and corporations, investment that is badly needed today to spur economic growth.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the idea of mortgage interest credit should not be accepted at this time. Certainly it raises some difficult issues that every government struggles to deal

with. However, it provides an overly simplistic answer that holds the potential for great economic disruption. The real answer lies in the encouragement of growth through diversification, aid to small business, and assistance to our primary industries of energy and agriculture.

Thank you.

MR. HERON: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I rise to speak against the Bill, which has unclear objectives and proposes a very expensive and unrealistic cost given current economic times. Mortgage tax credit is the wrong remedy for our current economic ills. The hon. Member for Red Deer South provided us with some quantitative data pertaining to the current changes in the housing market. I think they are very relevant to the discussion at hand. The cost of this Bill is a very important consideration. As is any program implemented by a government, the cost must be a justified one.

Programs should provide assistance where it is genuinely needed. They should not discriminate or provide an unfair advantage. This tax credit program would cost over \$550 million in each year, a figure also noted by the hon. Member for Bow Valley. I question whether this half a billion dollars wouldn't be better spent in other areas given the current economic ties in this province. Our revenues from the energy sector are falling with the world oil price. Our vital agriculture sector is hurting. Over \$550 million in a tax credit to homeowners is unrealistic in this economic climate.

Bill 209 proposes a tax credit to all mortgaged homeowners regardless of financial need. In effect, it is a substantial transfer of wealth from the general populace to homeowners, whether they need it or not — not exactly a fair program. In fact, Mr. Speaker, when taking account of the increasing demographic trend towards marrying at a later age or not at all and these single adults being generally less interested in owning a home, this Bill penalizes these individuals for their decision not to buy a home.

The objectives of this Bill are unclear. If it is meant as an economic stimulus, then the general tax environment should be addressed. If it is meant to reduce mortgage expenses, then there are more efficient methods of assistance: a mortgage interest reduction, for example. The possible economic effects of this Bill are uncertain and would likely be negative. A mortgage interest tax credit would put upward pressure on housing prices, interest rates, inflation, and therefore on the down payment necessary to purchase a new home.

Another negative effect: Bill 209 would be detracting Albertans from investing in other capital assets. It would siphon off funds into personal mortgages, going against the intent of programs like the Alberta stock savings tax plan credit, for example. I do not see the necessity for this program. Interest rates have fallen dramatically. In 1981 mortgage interest rates stood at somewhere around 18.25 percent. Today that figure would be somewhere around 11 percent. That translates to an average monthly payment which has been cut in half from \$1,367 to \$687.

Bill 209 is a regressive step, because home ownership and higher mortgages are more prevalent among the rich than the poor. This goes against our progressive tax policies. Looking at the U.S. experience shows that once a program like this is implemented, it cannot be revoked. In the U.S. the mortgage interest deduction program has a huge cost which continues to grow. These costs have been cause for great concern, but the program continues. It is a program

described in Economic Watch this way: "America's biggest economic [problem] today is the gap that divides homeowners from non-homeowners." The American experience with this "extreme tax favoritism for owner-occupied housing creates serious problems of both efficiency and equity." The program encourages accumulation of wealth in homes rather than financial assets. It also rewards the already well-off homeowner more than it helps people to become homeowners.

Examination of this Bill produces many loopholes. For example, existing homeowners without mortgages could remortgage to take full advantage of a free \$5,000 tax credit. Past history, and we can always learn from that, has shown the government must play a flexible and responsive role in the housing industry. Bill 209 would create a structural change that would be completely inappropriate in these times in the housing industry. Now is not such a time.

[Mr. Bradley in the Chair]

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is packed with more problems than it could ever solve. Bill 209 is full of loopholes. It proposes a scheme which is neither efficient or equitable. It proposes a scheme which would place an intolerable burden on government treasuries. It is inflexible in an industry which demands flexibility. In my belief it would create severe dislocations of economic resources which would come back to haunt us. For all the reasons I have outlined, I do not support this Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, in rising to participate in this debate on Bill 209, I think I'll come down on the side of the hon. Member for Little Bow. Maybe he won't be surprised or maybe he will; I don't know. I have a few disagreements with my hon. friend who has just resumed his seat.

I think the Member for Little Bow said the federal Conservative Party did support this program at one time, and I believe it was part of the budget that got the heave-ho in 1979 and caused the election, [some applause] I see the NDP is happy that happened. They were the ones that caused that election and let Mr. Trudeau come back in so we could have the national energy policy and all those other good things.

In any event, I would philosophically argue that home ownership and family formation are a good thing for this country. My hon. friend who just spoke said that maybe we shouldn't be rewarding family formation and home ownership. In that area I have to disagree with him, because I do think it's important that people own their homes and that we aren't a nation of renters. We should be encouraging more and more private ownership of every nature and kind. Of course, the home is the largest investment for the vast majority of people who live in Canada. I really do feel this is an appropriate subject for the federal Income Tax Act rather than the Alberta Act. I don't know whether a province can take this thing on. As I will agree with the hon. member who spoke before me, it is an expensive thing. I personally think it is an expense that's well worth while.

It has been pointed out that people who are well off might be benefitting more than they should. I think in this area it's well to remember that if they're well off, they're not likely to have a mortgage. They're more likely to have

clear title. I'm thinking of the new married couple or the younger couple who want to have a starter home and get real property of their own. I think they should be encouraged. In my view, it is a very, very important area, and they should have this tax break.

Even if somebody has acquired their home and gone through the misery and pain of paying for it and does have clear title, I don't think it's a terrible, shocking thing to have them remortgage it. My hon. friend seemed to indicate that money would then lie idle. I don't think anyone would mortgage their home just to have money lying in the bank, because that is no way to do your investments. You can't win that way. Surely the borrowed money would be used for a productive purpose, an investment in an active company or enterprise that would be making more money. That should not be something that should be discouraged.

The U.S. experience has been mentioned. I'm not sure what the status is of mortgage interest deductibility under their new tax reform in the legislation that is currently before Congress. Generally speaking, I think the philosophy behind that legislation is that many so-called tax loopholes are going to be eliminated in return for three substantially lower tax brackets. It has been said that it's very hard to get rid of a measure such as this one once it has been introduced because it is very popular. I guess it's very popular because it is attractive to the ordinary, hardworking, productive individual who wants to have his own home because it makes it easier for him to have that home. I for one find it hard to argue against that.

It will mean less income for government, and that is a serious problem at this time. While I would agree with the proposal in principle, I suppose I might have difficulty voting for it at this particular time because of the \$2.5 billion deficit we have this year. If conditions don't improve soon, we're going to have another substantial deficit next year. So while it's really desirable to have, I don't know whether in fact we can produce what is a really significant tax cut for the citizens of our province at this particular time.

All in all, Mr. Speaker, I really do feel we should be supporting this type of approach in principle for the benefit and the good of our society in the days and years ahead. Thank you very much.

MR. MUSGREAVE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say a few words. Unfortunately, rising to debate at this period of time, most of what I was going to say has already been said.

I would like to say that I think the purpose of the Bill is a noble one. I think there's nothing better than trying to keep people in their own homes, particularly when times are tough like they are now. I would point out that the objective of this Bill is similar to that of my Motion 221, which will come up for debate in the future.

The major flaw, though, and the hon. Member for Bow Valley mentioned it, is that one of the three reasons we should do it is as a stimulus to the construction industry. I have concerns with that. I remember a study some years ago that pointed out that one of the sad facts of life in Canada pertaining to the construction industry is that it has been used by politicians as an economic lever. Rather than letting the industry respond to the needs of the marketplace, governments all across Canada, federal and provincial, started up these wonderful programs that are politically great. They do provide housing sometimes, but quite often they backfire. I believe back in the early '70s something like 30,000 homes

were built under the AHOP program the federal government sponsored which ended up being foreclosed because people just walked away from them. I think the down payment was \$500, which equalled about two months' rent. So you can see people had very little equity, and when things got tough, they just sent the keys back to the mortgage company.

I think we recently went through the same sort of experience here in our province. I remember getting into a very difficult debate with the Deputy Premier at the time we were creating a housing ministry. I pointed out to them that we didn't need a housing ministry. What we needed was availability of funds, and the marketplace would make sure the properties were built. What happens is that you get a false injection of activity, and I appreciate we had a tremendous boom running in our province. But we trained thousands of tradesmen at SAIT and NAIT, particularly in the construction industry: plumbers, electricians, carpenters; you name it, we trained them. Now they're unemployed and pretty bitter at having wasted all that time getting an education.

We bankrolled land. We assembled land all over the province because we were going to keep the prices down. I think it had the reverse effect; we moved the prices up. Today we have hundreds of millions of dollars of land throughout the province that is distorting the marketplace, and we're keeping it in the inventory in the hopes that prices will rise and we'll recover the tax dollars.

Alberta Housing has hundreds of homes that have been foreclosed in my constituency. Many of them are empty and many of them are uncared for, and now they're turning several of these over to the city of Calgary so they can put them out as low-rental housing, which is great. Unfortunately, the properties are not being looked after as well as they would have been if they had been cared for by owners.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

This is happening because governments wanted to do what we in Canada think: people should be well housed. We have done this in a way that we ensure they provide the opportunities to acquire the homes, and we don't recognize the fact that because of inflation or rising costs of one kind or another, difficulties emerge when people can't keep up their mortgage payments.

I have to agree with the hon. Member for Stony Plain. What we're trying to do is twist the money market around by subsidy programs. I couldn't support a universal program such as this. In the last provincial election in Alberta the program of support for mortgage interest subsidy for homeowners and the small business subsidy programs were politically well received. Obviously, the results of the election should tell anyone that, and these are the political facts of life in Canada. Canadians want these kinds of programs, and if you're going to be in office, you have to recognize that.

As I mentioned earlier in this Legislative Assembly, our budget is more likely to be over \$3 billion than \$2.5 billion. Just this last week I see that the Provincial Treasurer is agreeing with me. I think all of us know that many people throughout Alberta are hurting badly. As the Member for Drumheller mentioned, there are many people that aren't. There are many people with clear-title homes, and a program like this isn't going to affect them, because I would doubt very much that they would put a mortgage on their home

so they could then go and get an interest subsidy program. The economics just wouldn't be there.

I think it's very important for us to husband our resources wisely. We are heading into difficult times. A lot of people mention the fact that the oil industry has less revenue, and we therefore have less royalties. Tied to that, which you don't hear very much about but which is very significant, when you let hundreds of people go and put them on unemployment insurance, they are suddenly not on the tax rolls any longer and they're not paying income tax. Likewise, if oil companies go down the tube, they're not paying corporate taxes. So the financial situation is going to be worse than we realize unless there's some significant action taken by the federal government in co-operation with the resource-producing provinces.

All in all, I commend the member for bringing this Bill in because I think he feels the same sense of desire that I do. There are many people in this province that need help, and I think it's the responsibility of all of us to try and zero in on them and help those in need. This means trying to get away from universal programs. Any of us that watch the news tube know what happened to Mr. Mulroney when some lady on the Parliament grounds called him a liar. He just folded up like a pierced balloon. He just couldn't stand that kind of flak. What the federal government was really trying to do was make people conscious of the fact that we can't go on receiving more money that we don't make. He was not cutting back from anybody that was in need; he was simply reducing the rate of indexation on pensions.

When we promote or try to suggest that there be universal programs here in this community, I know the political results are going to be disastrous, because Canadians refuse to accept that situation. They are aided and abetted by those who feel that we have an inexhaustible store of wealth in the country. We have been doing very well with 15 percent of the world's supply of water, a fair amount of arable land, and lots of mineral resources, not to mention our wood products. We have been living very well exporting our wealth around the world. Now that we have to compete with the rest of the world, those in our community who spread the word that the good fruit grows on trees are doing a disservice to themselves and to the community.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that while the member has certainly brought forward a Bill that's worthy of consideration, I doubt very much that I could support it for the reasons mentioned earlier.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, up until a moment ago it was not my intention to participate in the debate, and I hope that won't be painfully obvious to the members still in the Chamber this afternoon. I would like to share — and that's an overworked word today in our Assembly — with the members an experience I had some years ago.

I was privileged to be selected to do the role of Tevye in a wonderful musical called *Fiddler on the Roof*. There's a priceless scene in *Fiddler* in which Tevye, who is always striving to be agreeable, agrees with the point of view expressed by one of the townsmen. Then a second townsman expresses a quite divergent point of view, and Tevye says, "He's right too." Of course, a third townsman then leaps in to point out that Tevye has agreed with both sides of the debate, and he says, "You know, you're also right."

Having listened to some of today's debate. I think it's fair to say that persuasive points have been made on both sides, certainly by the Member for Little Bow, who I

thought gave a very reasoned explication as to the benefits of his Bill. I realize that some members on both sides have expressed some agreement with those principles of his Bill. By the same token, again at the risk of sounding like Tevye, I think some of our members who have pointed out some of the difficulties of the proposed legislation are equally persuasive. Like Tevye, I'm tempted to say to both sides of the debate: you're both right.

Mr. Speaker, I guess I have built half a dozen homes in the last 20 years. Up until the last one they were all done by means of a mortgage. Speaking on a purely personal note, I think I frankly would have liked to have lived in a jurisdiction that had this kind of legislation on the books. Using the very narrow focus of my own personal experience, I can see where it would have made it even easier for me to build those mortgaged properties and would have made dollars available to me that I would have loved to have used in other places. For example, trying to educate seven children, some in the United States, has been a very costly undertaking, and I could certainly have used some of those freed-up dollars.

However, despite the fact that I see some merits in purely personal terms to the Member for Little Bow's private member's Bill, I feel ultimately persuaded by the debating points raised by our members, which I suppose could be summarized with the phrase "fiscally impractical." I believe our Member for Bow Valley recounted the U.S. experience. I do recall reading in a U.S. publication some months ago some material relative to the U.S. experience. Some of the members will recall the very great fanfare that accompanied the introduction of this type of legislation in the United States, and there's no question it was politically very, very attractive. It's accurate to say that U.S. legislators in both the Senate and the House of Representatives would like to be able to turn the clock back, for the last two decades have demonstrated what I can only call the fiscal impracticality of this kind of legislation.

As I listened to the various participants in today's debate, I looked forward to participation by the members of the New Democratic Party. On another occasion perhaps they may wish to avail themselves of this opportunity, because this proposed legislation embodies some very important principles. I think the constituents of the opposition party as well as my own constituents would welcome and appreciate the opportunity to learn of their stand on these particular principles.

MR. FOX: Give us a chance.

MR. PAYNE: Did I hear an invitation to participate from the front bench opposite?

MR. FOX: We said, give us a chance.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, you and my colleagues are here as my witness that the Member for Vegreville has asked me to give him a chance.

MR. FOX: Us.

MR. PAYNE: Oh, us. I assumed when the Member for Vegreville used the word "us" he was using the royal "we," but I can see that it's the unpatriotic "them."

Mr. Speaker, as I shuffled my notes, I think it must be painfully obvious to you and to the other members present that I have pretty well come to the end of the points

I wanted to raise. But before I return to my seat, I would like to compliment the Member for Little Bow. This is not a legislator's platitude; it's a genuine expression of not only interest for but recognition of some of the valuable principles within his legislation. It's entirely possible at some future time that I might find myself in a position to speak not quite so ambivalently but indeed in favour of it. But for now, like Tevye, I must rest on the side of ambivalence.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. Member for Calgary Fish Creek, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, if any, please say no. Division? No. The motion is carried.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, this evening it is proposed in Committee of Supply to deal with the Department of Community and Occupational Health. I can advise the Assembly as well that tomorrow Royal Assent to Bills 12 and 14 will be sought, followed by Government Motion 11, which I understand will not engender a great deal of debate, and then followed in Committee of Supply by the Department of Municipal Affairs.

I would move, Mr. Speaker, that when the members reassemble this evening at 8 p.m., they do so in Committee of Supply and that the Assembly stand adjourned until such time as the Committee of Supply rises and reports.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. Deputy Government House Leader that when the members reconvene at 8 p.m. they will be in Committee of Supply, does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[The House recessed at 5:25 p.m.]

[The Committee of Supply met at 8 p.m.]

head: COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Would the committee please come to order.

Department of Community and Occupational Health

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I will call on the hon. minister to make his introductory remarks.

MR. DINNING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased tonight to be able to introduce the estimates of the Department of the Community and Occupational Health to the Committee of Supply. It's was an honour for me earlier

today to introduce the departmental Act, so we are well on our way to becoming an official operation.

Before I go very far along, I'd like to make a couple of comments about some of my predecessors. I've been ably preceded by the likes of the current Minister of Municipal Affairs, the current Lieutenant Governor of the province, my colleague from Taber-Warner, and my colleague the current Minister of Energy and of course subsequent to that Minister of Social Services. I believe they've served this Assembly and the province very well in their activities in days past.

I also want to pay a special word of tribute to the Member for Three Hills for all the assistance and good and valuable advice she's provided to me, and as well to my colleague the Member for Banff-Cochrane, the new chairman of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. I look forward to working with him in the days ahead.

There are some people in the gallery this evening under the able guidance of our Deputy Minister of Community and Occupational Health, Dr. Bob Orford. I want to say a special word of tribute to all of them for the tremendous support they have provided to me in the last nine and a half weeks. I am ably served by Mr. Jan Skirrow and Mr. Ken Pals as well, and I am very grateful for their assistance.

Mr. Chairman, we also have a number of volunteers who assist and guide our shop: those people who serve on the provincial Mental Health Advisory Council, the six regional mental health councils under the guidance of Mr. Allan Maiani, the Occupational Health and Safety Council under the chairmanship of a former colleague of ours, Mr. Andy Little. I also want to welcome the newest member to that council, the Member for Calgary North West. I look forward to working with him in the days ahead.

As well, there are the provincial health appeal and advisory board under the leadership of Dr. John Walker, the workers' compensation advisory board under the leadership of Mr. Eugene Sikora and, finally, the Suicide Prevention Provincial Advisory Committee under the able leadership of Mrs. Maxine Richardson. I really want to say a special note to all of these people as well as the people on the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission and the Workers' Compensation Board, because I believe that we have a mandate in this new department that brings these groups together in a very natural way and in a way that's going to make for some very challenging, exciting days ahead.

The reason I say that, Mr. Chairman, is that I want to lay out my view of what the mandate of this new Department of Community and Occupational Health really is. Quite simply, it's fourfold. First of all, it's the promotion of good, healthy living practices in all aspects of our lives, in our homes, in our communities, and at our workplace. Secondly, it's the prevention of ill health and the prevention of accidents. Thirdly, it's the fostering of independence by all members and for all members of our society and especially for our elderly and sick. Fourthly, it's the delivery of those services at the community level, those services served in the community base. That's so essential to this new department.

Mr. Chairman, what's it's really all about is raising the awareness of all Albertans, beginning with all of my colleagues here in the Assembly. I suppose that green apple that I had the good fortune to put on your desk earlier this evening is my first contribution to improving that understanding. It's a very small symbol of health. I ask you as you're chewing on that sweet green thing to think about

health, that very precious commodity that all of us take for granted. I ask you to think about home visiting and immunization for families with newborn babies. I ask you to think about care for our elderly, our sick, and those in need through home care and through the family and community support services that provide nursing, therapy, Meals on Wheels, handyman services, and just plain visiting with folks in their homes and, through the Alberta aids to daily living program and the extended health benefits program, the provision of medical supplies and equipment like oxygen, wheelchairs, footwear, and other important items that help Albertans to operate very comfortably in their daily lives. I ask you to remember always that these are programs that promote independence, that help to keep people in the comfortable surroundings of their own homes.

I ask you to think about the mentally ill, from those who suffer from stress to those who have just been discharged from Alberta Hospital, Ponoka. I ask you to think about their treatment, about where they live, how they're cared for, and how they're going to live in a community following their time in that institution. I ask you to think about all of us as Albertans, as workers on a worksite, and the good health and protection of those workers on the site. I ask you to think about suicide and the important steps we are taking to prevent it and to understand it when it hits home, as it has to some of us very recently. I ask you to think about the elimination of diseases that affect our children, like measles, mumps, and chicken pox. I ask you to think about diseases that affect all of us, whether tuberculosis, meningitis and, yes, even the new, very dreaded disease of AIDS, the acquired immune deficiency syndrome. I ask you finally to think about the use and the abuse of alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes and the fact that these affect all of us, whether as addicts or as friends and families of those who are dependent.

That, Mr. Chairman, is the Department of Community and Occupational Health. It's promotion, it's prevention, it's independence, and it's community based. As you get to the core of that sweet green apple. I ask you to think of the thousands of Albertans who help us deliver all of those programs. These are community-oriented programs. Fully 74 percent of the department's budget is in the form of grants, and in most cases the decisions as to how those dollars are to be spent are made at the local level according to priorities established by the local jurisdiction. I ask you to think about the people who help us deliver those programs. They're the people who are elected and appointed. But most importantly, I think of the millions of volunteer hours that are so freely given by thousands of Albertans giving their time and efforts to deliver those important services to Albertans who are truly in need.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to quickly walk through the various votes of the department and then would certainly welcome questions and comments. I won't spend any time on vote 1. It's basically the support for the department through administrative services, the deputy minister's office, as well as the minister's office.

Mr. Chairman, under vote 2 are a number of interesting new initiatives. One in particular that I want to mention is the provision of some \$173,000, new dollars, for early intervention programs in St. Albert, Sherwood Park, and Lloydminster. This program is designed to decrease infant mortality in the province. It provides support for families whose children suffer from birth defects such as Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy, and other childhood diseases. The family is helped to adapt and to respond sensitively to the

needs of the child, to help that youngster cope. We found that getting in early will help the longer term development of the child and that in fact he or she will do a lot better in school once they achieve school age.

Mr. Chairman, under vote 2 is contained the general health services provision, which includes health promotion and education. It's here that I'd like to mention the very serious need to address a number of health issues over the weeks ahead, including smoking, drinking, physical fitness and, yes, even seat belts. I welcome the Bill sponsored by my colleague the Member for Calgary North West. I have to admit that I have not been a regular seat-belt user, Mr. Chairman — sporadic at best. But in this new responsibility of mine, I am increasingly aware of the need for seat-belt use. I must say that when the matter comes to a vote, I will be supportive.

Mr. Chairman, contained within vote 2.5 are the aids to daily living and extended health benefits programs. These have become incredibly popular and, I believe, very forward-thinking programs that provide basic medical supplies and equipment to the long-term disabled as well as to the chronically or terminally ill. We're talking about walking aids, wheelchairs, footwear, and respiratory equipment. We're also talking about a large number of dollars: \$19 million in 1981-82, double that some four years later. It's a demand-driven program, a very popular one, and many of my colleagues are looking to it to provide more and more.

All of us are being faced with with calls, letters, and representations asking the government to fund a new development for diabetics, the blood glucose testing strip. As I mentioned earlier today in question period, I've asked officials in Hospitals and Medical Care, Community and Occupational Health," and the College of Physicians and Surgeons to come together to identify a priority list of needs for diabetics in this province and then come back to me with a funding proposal as to how best we could provide funding to those people who are truly in need of the program.

I must forewarn all of my colleagues on both sides of the House of the very pressing nature of the costs here. There are more and more calls for more and more benefits to be provided under this program. I myself am very interested in pursuing the provision of myoelectric limbs for young children who are born without limbs and who are badly in need of this new kind of technology. Mr. Chairman, the caseload is up and prices are up. I have to ask all members to recognize a responsibility to make sure the program is delivered to those who are truly in need.

Also contained within vote 2, community health services, are grants to boards of health. We are very fortunate in this province to have a system of locally administered public health: some 25 health units plus the Edmonton and Calgary boards of health, who with 100 percent provincial funding — a total of \$104 million this year, an increase of 10 percent over last year — each provide any number of services to the residents in the communities they serve. These are very valuable partners of ours, Mr. Chairman, in the delivery of community health care. We couldn't do it without them. I had the good fortune to meet with representatives of those units two weeks ago today, and we were discussing that subject that's near and dear to their hearts and to all of ours: funding. I asked for their help, and they are providing it in helping me to come up with solutions for a better way to fund those health units. I look forward to working with Mr. Tom Biggs, the chairman of the Health Unit Association of Alberta, as well as all of his colleagues in the association in the weeks ahead.

One key element of this program that I am very proud of and frankly very excited about is the provision of home care to our citizens. This is a program that really brings community and occupational health together. It provides for independence and promotion of good health; it prevents illness and institutionalization. Most of all, it's delivered at the community base, and that is the crucial part of this program. I'm really very pleased to be able to stand here tonight and reconfirm to the Assembly an additional \$5 million of funding for home care this year, to provide a total of \$31.2 million to this very important program. These additional dollars will flow primarily to providing more assistance to the frail elderly. As well, the Calgary Board of Health in conjunction with the Foothills and Mountain View health units is undertaking a very important pilot study on the assessment and placement of those requiring long-term care in our health care system. I'm excited about this study and welcome the co-operation of my colleagues the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care and the Minister of Municipal Affairs as well as the hospital boards, that are very much involved.

One last element of the community health services vote, Mr. Chairman, is that of family and community support services. All members are very familiar with this program that provides funding to municipalities for the delivery of services locally determined and delivered — important programs such as Meals on Wheels, out-of-school care, volunteer programs, drop-in centres for our youths and seniors. I'm delighted to have this very innovative program under the community health umbrella. Again, it's prevention, it's promotion, it's independence. It fills so many gaps that appear in a community, and those gaps can be filled by those local municipalities determining the needs, determining the priorities, and rifling in that important funding. There is no doubt in my mind that family and community support services is best housed and certainly well-housed in the Department of Community and Occupational Health.

I'm delighted, Mr. Chairman, because this budget provides for a large increase in the funding to the family and community support services programs: a 30 percent increase in the payment for Alberta cities, from \$10 to \$13 per capita; a 16 percent increase for towns and rural programs, from \$12 to \$14; a total funding increase of 29 percent for these programs and the delivery of them; a total of \$31.7 million in all. It also provides for the inclusion, expansion, and the opening of arms to 20 new communities, for a total of 100 Alberta communities that are served by family and community support services. I'm hoping that this new funding will go some distance in responding to the requests put forward by a number of municipalities, including the intermunicipal task force on out-of-school care. I met with this group of committed Albertans in early July. They presented me with their report, and they also expressed a great deal of appreciation for the increase in the program funding. I'm currently considering their report and discussing it with my colleagues, and I will be responding to them in the weeks ahead.

Finally under this vote, Mr. Chairman, I want to say that I look forward to working with Mrs. Pat Workun and her colleagues in the Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, moving to vote 3, occupational health and safety services, I want to briefly touch on a very critical and crucial part of this new department. I want to pay a quick tribute to a former colleague of ours, Mr. Bill Diachuk. In the seven years he served in the cabinet of

this government, Bill Diachuk elevated the importance of occupational health and safety, workers' compensation, and workers' safety to a new level, a level that all Albertans can truly be proud of and certainly all workers in this province should be and can be very grateful for. The sole focus of this division is the promotion of good occupational health and safe practices as well as the prevention of accidents and ill health at the worksite. Through the inspection division, which focuses on accident investigation and consultation with workers in worksites and employers, through occupational health services, and through the research and education services of the division, I believe workers in Alberta are very well served. Through the \$11.8 million provided under this vote, I believe that the quality of inspection, the quality of consultation, and the quality of education that is so crucial, so important, will continue into 1986-87.

Vote 4, Mr. Chairman, is that of mental health services, and this, I believe, is one of the most important parts of our health care system. I'm very proud that it's contained within this vote and within this department. The delivery of community-based health care is a matter which I take very seriously and, frankly, I'm very concerned about it. I've discussed the matter with my colleague the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. We both agree that more must be done to build a strong link between the mental health hospitals under his jurisdiction and the community facilities and services delivered under our department: a strong link between the treatment side and the prevention and rehabilitation side. It is just so crucial that our community-based system be a strong one, one that can truly meet the needs of all of those who are mentally ill and who choose not to be part of the institutional system, through mental health clinics, residential spaces, and day programs. We certainly have our work cut out for us in the months ahead. I'm fully committed to an improved system of community-based mental health care.

This budget provides the basis for such a system. It provides the funding for regional delivery: 54 mental health clinics and some 48 travelling clinics. It provides funding for community residences and day programs: some 643 residential programs throughout the province. This is in addition to the 550 spaces in our three centres in Camrose, Claresholm, and Raymond. I'm pleased that with the new funding under this budget we can provide for day programs in Mundare and Camrose. These are essential for a successful transition back to the community from an institution. As well, a \$150,000 grant for the Calgary Association of Self Help, better known as CASH, provides additional needed day facilities.

I want to briefly mention, Mr. Chairman, the outstanding work done by our provincial suicidologist, and I welcome the motion adopted by the Assembly and initially put forward the other day by my colleague the Member for Olds-Didsbury. Our suicide prevention program is the envy of Canada, and it provides a very good model for the world. We've got much to be proud of there. We have further to go, but I believe that we can take a lot of pride in having set up that provincial suicide program, the only one of its kind in Canada, some eight years after having originally set it up.

May I also mention, Mr. Chairman, the Canadian Mental Health Association, a committed group of volunteers who are invaluable in their assistance in delivering programs in our province. I met with the president of the association, Mrs. Mary Ord, just the other day, and I look forward to working with her and her colleagues in the days ahead.

Two other votes, Mr. Chairman. I know my time is running short, but I want to get to vote 5, alcohol and drug abuse treatment, prevention, and education. Before I say anything about the vote, I want to pay a special tribute to the MLA for Lethbridge West, the new Deputy Speaker. This man led AADAC to be a world-renowned resource, certainly one that all Albertans can be very proud of. AADAC has very, very successfully raised the awareness level of all Albertans, particularly our young people, to the need for moderation and, quite frankly, just saying no to alcohol, drugs, and smoking in our society. John Gogo deserves a great deal of credit for raising that level of awareness.

Mr. Chairman, I'm delighted to have the opportunity to work with the Member for Banff-Cochrane, the new chairman of the commission, and I know that he is very committed to the objectives and mandate of that commission. Let me say that through the AADAC offices in Edmonton and Calgary and 19 other communities throughout the province as well as some 31 private agencies, Albertans are on the receiving end of treatment, education, and prevention services that are second to none in Canada.

Two programs of note — I won't get into detail; perhaps other members might ask me questions on it — are IMPACT and the very popular and very successful media campaign focussed on adolescent prevention.

The last vote, Mr. Chairman, is workers' compensation. I tabled the workers' compensation report in the Assembly just a few days ago. The funds requested here are required to meet pension obligations, ongoing as well as this year's lump sum programs. This has provided for those workers and their dependants who were injured on the worksite prior to 1974.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, you can see that there's a lot of territory, a lot of scope in this new department. I've raised a number of issues. I welcome informed debate — I underscore "informed" — and I welcome the comments and suggestions of my colleagues on how best to improve the health care delivery system at the community level in Alberta.

Thank you.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to speak in support of and yet critical of the Department of Community and Occupational Health, as has been so well presented by the minister tonight. It is, as I have already said in my remarks in terms of the Hospitals and Medical Care budget estimates, the flip side of that whole multibillion dollar delivery of the health care system. This is the very vital and very integral flip side of all of that, and if we don't begin to get that straight in our public policy and in our health delivery, then we haven't got to first base.

I think it is in a sense, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, a sleeper department. It is generally undervalued, underfunded, and often misunderstood by the public, and that's what I hope this minister can correct in large measure. With Bill 8 the Department of Community and Occupational Health has, as the minister has already said, a weighty mandate, and I was glad to see that finally in legislation today and intend to support it wholeheartedly. The minister has a weighty responsibility before him, as I would like to suggest we all do as MLAs serving in public office and in a sense modelling public health for our public constituents. They look to us as examples of what it is to be healthy people in a healthy life-style. So in terms of both our role

as representatives of the people and our public policy, we need to do a lot more in terms of public health.

I congratulate the minister on his appointment. He must be the envy of many first-time government MLAs who have not landed a cabinet post on their first time out, but maybe that's the result of being a protégé of a former Premier. Nonetheless, we congratulate him on his landing the cabinet portfolio in his first time as an MLA.

The overall orientation — as the minister has said, the public policy, the formulation, the thrust of it is so crucially important, and we as the Official Opposition are going to support him right down the line in terms of bringing this forward to the public of Alberta. What we're talking about here is the operative word "health". In the midst of a world where there's a focus on illness and a focus on medicine in sick hospitals, what we need to be talking about much, much more is health; as the minister has said, illness prevention and health promotion. I think this is the only way to contain the multibillion dollar costs of hospitals and medical care. We must really force onto our people as best we can an improvement in life-style and thus promote healthy community living.

The hon. minister of health at the federal level well knows this. I have been reading and becoming familiar with some of the literature in the field. Everyone is talking about what the Hon. Jake Epp said at a recent conference in Vancouver. He was really articulating a revolution in terms of health, talking much more clearly than the minister has tonight. Maybe he hasn't read what the federal minister said, but he should. What he is talking about is strategies for actions which set out a vision of health, goals set in mind, and how they'll affect the current delivery system with an improved understanding of self-care, with an improved understanding of self-help, and mutual support creating better environments that promote health with increased access for health information.

We haven't got a lot from the minister tonight in terms of what the subvotes are doing. There's a lot of money set aside, but how much of it is really set aside for increased access to health information encouraging consensus about particular health ideas? How much is set aside for breaking drinking and smoking habits, which we really need to encourage and enforce in our society?

AN HON. MEMBER: They don't want to smoke and drink.

REV. ROBERTS: That's right, particularly during the Committee of Supply. I've got to wait for my apple later.

What he talks about much more clearly than I've heard tonight is intersectoral co-ordination. We are wanting to hear more of intersectoral co-ordination between the various ministries, particularly between the minister of community health and the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. The federal minister's mandate is that by the year 2000, through the world health assembly we need really to have come to a clear comprehensive understanding of our public policy of health in terms of health promotion and illness prevention. So the federal minister knows about this.

I'd also recommend for the minister, if he hasn't read it already, some of the remarks of Joseph Califano, the former secretary of health, education, and welfare in the United States. In a book recently published on the revolution in health care in the United States, he clearly says that there is no longer — with the graying of America and AIDS, the health care system in the U.S. is going to be bankrupt. We have to do much more now to prevent illness

and to promote health. He very clearly is saying this. I've taken it from a very expert, very articulate person in the field.

Also, the hon. Member for Lethbridge East in remarks a week ago said that his own family learned a lot more about health from public health units than they ever learned from doctors. I'd like to second that remark, because where our families and we ourselves are learning about diet, about what is part of a healthy life style, and about health promotion is from the local community people. I would suggest that in their education doctors themselves need to be much more attuned to community health, health promotion, and illness prevention. When I first went to my doctor, he said: "What are you eating? How much fibre is there in your diet? How much sleep are you getting? How much alcohol are you consuming each week?" These were his first-line questions to me, and I took them as a great understanding of a new revolution that's going on in terms of health care, and I really appreciated that.

In a sense we all know what this revolution is about. I want to encourage the minister and tell him of our support as a party which is concerned at the community, grass-roots level. As well, with him New Democrats want to promote good, healthy life-styles and good, healthy Albertans. That's going to save money that is so overspent in Hospitals and Medical Care, but it will take a lot of determination and a lot of will.

Let's turn to some of the specifics. The only question in vote 1 — if the deputy minister is in the gallery he would certainly appreciate that someone from the opposition is going to ask why his office budget is down 12 percent. I just throw that out. I'm sure Dr. Orford would appreciate some explanation of why that's so.

Moving over to vote 2, community health nursing. Mr. Minister, you've talked about getting out into the community, particularly geriatric programs. Tell me why it is that community health nurses — people who go out and visit the elderly and have an access, an entrée, into many of the seniors' residences and in the very integral aspect of their work see some of the problems that are occurring in the homes and apartments of our seniors — are being cut back 2.2 percent? That's not even inflation. To me that is unconscionable when I have had information from local boards of health which are asking that what we need are at least five or six more full-time nurses doing that kind of service, talking to seniors and elderly people in a prevention mode and saying, "Here's where we can refer you; here's some improvement in your diet; here's something that can be done" before their multisystems break down, before they have to be hospitalized, before they're put in nursing homes.

In fact, that raises the whole question. Although you talk about the increases in spending — and I don't know how; perhaps over the next four years we can do some of the cost benefits of spending in this department — I think that the cost benefits of any spending in this department are going to be first class, so if you increase community health nursing as much as you've increased other dimensions, say even 10 percent, you will see benefits throughout the system in terms of decreasing costs.

I skipped over vital statistics. Could I put in a personal plea here? I don't know why it is that in Alberta vital statistics — as a priest, I've married dozens of Alberta couples. They come to me and I say, "By the way, before you get a marriage licence, you have to go and get a blood test. That blood test is going to prove to vital statistics and

STD clinics that you don't have venereal disease and that you don't have syphilis." You try being a priest and telling couples that they have to get a blood test before they can be married. My understanding is that no other province requires this extra aspect. I don't why that is. I would like some clarification. I think it's embarrassing and unnecessary and perhaps causes unnecessary spending. It might do some good for the lab work involved, the laboratory costs, but it's not important or necessary.

We move to the communicable diseases control and sexually transmitted diseases, the STD clinics. The minister has skipped over what I've already referred to as one of the greatest health concerns in the United States. It's growing by leaps and bounds, and if we don't get on top of AIDS, acquired immune deficiency syndrome, and give increased funding to the STD clinics to do some monitoring, research, or health promotion and illness prevention in that area, then we're really going to be into much more difficult trouble. It is a major concern. I know we're going to be laughed at. People are going to accuse us of licensing all kinds of life-styles, but no matter. It is a major health concern. If it isn't addressed at the community level and through STD clinics now, then there are going to be much worse problems.

Moving through to Alberta aids to daily living, I would just say as someone who lives with a diabetic that we cannot wait any longer on glucose strips and glucometers. Going through a pregnancy with a diabetic — you cannot understand the anxiety and the difficulty of monitoring one's blood sugar as a diabetic day to day or particularly if you're pregnant. To be able to monitor that and get some control of one's blood sugar without having to go to a diabetic specialist or doctor all the time is imperative in one's life-style. It is not based on urine samples or on urine tests; it's on glucose strips and by glucometers. Those are very expensive items. If we do not fund those now, the cost to the hospital system later is going to be exorbitant. Though you talk about this being an endless supply of requests that we're getting, I still maintain that to begin to fund this now and get a grip on this very important area of life — for so many diabetics, the cost benefits are there, so go with it sooner than later, please.

Others will talk about the provincial laboratory of health, which we have a number of concerns about, and the FCSS. I want to talk a bit about home care. I believe it is under the funding of local health services; the minister did refer to it in that vote. I think it is vote 2.7. We're into it, and now I perceive some move by the government and others to say, "Wait a minute here; what's going on with home care?" We dropped the medical entry for the elderly, and even with the medical entry that we did have, the demand for it went off the map in terms of the scale of the usage. I know it's expensive; I know it's a huge budget item. We've budgeted — is it 10 percent or 16.8 percent? But the cost benefits are there.

With other medical services — if we're saying that if you see a doctor and he says you can have a heart transplant, that's costing the public purse \$2.5 million or whatever it will cost for the 12 who are being designated for heart transplants. Certainly if a doctor says that you need home care, if that's going to help unblock hospital beds and help one's peace of mind and one's health, get them back into their homes and supported at every level by better home care, no matter how it's provided, through VON or whatever, then it's the way to go. We don't need to put a cap on it, either at a government level, a medical level, or a social services level. It is a freeing thing, and it is one that is

going to help in terms of the hospital beds and in terms of our elderly particularly and also the disabled. I know you're onto it. Please, Mr. Minister, keep going with it. It's something that we need in terms of both economics and the healthiness of our society.

For vote 3 I have some concerns about some of the statistics, which to me are quite glaring in terms of the significant increase in accident rates. The Workers' Compensation Board information bulletin, volume 10, issue 2 of June '86, says that the claims under workers' compensation have risen 12 percent from 1984-85. If the claims have risen 12 percent, how can the minister possibly justify such a modest increase of 19 percent overall? At a time when fewer Albertans are gainfully employed, why do we see this dramatic increase? The number of fatalities in the workplace has increased by an alarming 44 percent rate. The number of new permanent disabled has increased by 12 percent. Total compensatable days have increased 21.7 percent according to Workers' Compensation. These shocking statistics indicate to the Assembly that Alberta's work force is not being served or protected as we would expect.

The object of the program seems to be, as the government indicates in these estimates, to prevent injury, to promote health, and to prevent genetic damage resulting from employment. But it appears that this program is not achieving a great deal of success in curbing the statistics that are coming out from the workplace. Would the minister advise the Assembly if onsite safety inspections have been curtailed or whether occupational health and safety inspectors have been restricted in any way in the discharge of their duties? Working Albertans deserve an answer to these questions from the minister. It is the desire of all members of this Assembly to achieve cost-effective government. With respect, I would suggest to the minister that larger increases in this budget for occupational health will result in significant savings in the amount of compensation grants that we see in vote 6. With the other statistics that are so alarming in terms of what is coming out of the workplace, the modest increases of less than inflation in vote 3 are not acceptable.

We move to vote 4. Again, we're encouraged by the minister's discussions with the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care to try to get some comprehensive programs in terms of dealing with mental health services. But as argued through all kinds of information that we are receiving, it's fine to deinstitutionalize, it's important not to increase funding for institutional care but rather to bring more backup, more community-based care for the mentally ill. Certainly much more co-ordination needs to be going on in this area.

It would appear that the disadvantaged are targeted in budgeting cuts; for instance, the Michener Centre and the community placement of retarded children in Wetaskiwin. Could we get some clarification of what's going on in those areas?

Similarly, in the communication that needs to go on ... The breakdown between social services and community health, the split that's now occurred: while there have always been problems even with the old department encompassing social services and community health insofar as handicapped groups have been concerned, since they've had to deal with two different deputy ministers, now that the department has been split, there is the added problem of having to deal with two different ministers and two whole different departments. Can there be some more comprehensive way of dealing with the handicapped, instead of their falling into the gap between the two departments and having to deal with all that bureaucracy?

As we've argued before, there just does not seem to be, as there are in other jurisdictions — and I would like to look more at the Minnesota jurisdiction where apparently they spend 15 percent on institutional care for the mentally ill and 85 percent in terms of community-based services for mental health, and they have an overall saving of an enormous amount of dollars. So that's an area which I think needs a lot of pioneering work, and we would certainly support the minister in all his efforts to enhance and encourage community-based services for mental health.

In terms of suicide, we are pleased and proud that we have \$800,000 for the Suicide Prevention Advisory Council and the suicidologist in Alberta. We had the debate just last week about suicide prevention. In addition, we have some questions or at least some concern. What is being done in rural Alberta, where we are told the suicide rate is most on the increase, where they do not have the advantage of distress lines or more expanded community-based support but are often isolated and need more support? It seems to me that with the farm community as it is, experiencing such anxiety and difficulty, it's no wonder that suicide is on the [increase] in rural Alberta. What is being done through the suicidologist and the council in terms of meeting that glaring rate of increase?

As well, I was really quite embarrassed as an MLA in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta that in the debate last week I don't think one remark was made about suicide amongst native people. What is the minister doing to develop programs in that critical area so that native people can work in native communities to deal with this problem? I think we've learned the lesson that to continue trying to do something in our white mode of doing things to help prevent suicide in native communities is not the way to go. But what are we doing to enhance and increase — the suicide rate, which is so high amongst native communities, by native people?

As well, though the motion got by last week — and it's a rare event when a motion such as that gets through in an afternoon when it's not fully supported by the government in advance. The motion asked for curriculum in the schools. What specific curriculum is going to be used in the schools? We had reference to the fact that the curriculum may talk about one's personal feelings toward one's mother or father or brother. It's going to raise a whole lot of interpersonal issues, ones which we're not often comfortable dealing with in the schools. But it needs to be done if we're going to be committed to suicide prevention in the schools, and such a curriculum needs to take a grip of that interpersonal, more emotional side of what suicide is about there. When is suicide awareness week going to be designated? It was said that we would have such a week. When is that going to be next year?

Moving over to vote 5, the work of AADAC is exemplary. Yet with so many Albertans continuing to need to avail themselves of these services, it seems to us that there are still so many more other macroproblems which are often, as with suicide, driving one to drink. No doubt the unemployment rate is one of those macroissues. If we don't get a handle and hold finally in Alberta with all of our resources to lowering dramatically our unemployment rate, then it seems to me that those who need the services of AADAC are going to be continually high, as with other social problems that we face because of our lack of dealing more effectively with the larger economic and employment problems.

Finally, in vote 6, Mr. Chairman, in terms of the Workers' Compensation, there again are some real concerns,

particularly when the estimate is at such a whopping 204 percent increase. The whole history of workers' compensation is one that I think needs some review, because it seems to us that the Workers' Compensation Act establishes the Workers' Compensation Board as a corporation and that in Canada the origin of the workers' compensation stems from the Meredith royal commission of 1913. Such a commission seems to suggest — Mr. Chairman, it gives rise to the following questions of the minister.

Why in vote 6 do we see a 204 percent increase amounting to an excess of \$30 million in government tax dollars going to fund workers' compensation when this should be funded by assessment of employers? When was the last increase in assessments levied on employers, or is this government going to continue to subsidize indirectly employers in the province of Alberta? Workers' compensation is the cheapest form of insurance an employer can purchase. Employees have had their right to legal action taken away and replaced with compensation. Why should tax dollars and taxpayers subsidize an already cheap insurance scheme? Is this government ever going to superassess an employer with a dismal safety record or an industry with excessive accident rates? This government should increase assessments to employers 10 percent and eliminate this \$30 million subsidy as indicated in this budget. When is this more responsible way going to occur?

Overall, Mr. Chairman, as I said at the outset, we'd like to commend the minister, wish him well. We do feel that it is a sleeper department. We want to see it expand by leaps and bounds. I can't wait till the day when it surpasses the budget spent on Hospitals and Medical Care. When it does, we will have a healthy Alberta with lots of money for oil, agriculture, tourism, small business, and we'll be able to eat green apples every day of our lives.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, I hope all my colleagues took note of the positive comments put forward by my colleague the Member for Edmonton Centre, and I welcome his positive comments at the outset. There are a lot of "buts" and "yets" in there, but that's the name of the game. I'm afraid I don't have as fast a pen as the member has a tongue and mouth, so I'll do my best to respond to all of the questions he put forward.

The first one that hit me was on drinking and smoking. I turn the member's attention to vote 5. The Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission focuses on drinking and smoking and particularly on the drug side. That education, that research is there in its prevention and education services. You can see that there is a total increase in that vote alone of nearly 60 percent. So that kind of awareness level and heightening is certainly there. Also contained within the Department of Community and Occupational Health in the general health services and program development and support side is provision for health education and promotion. The funding for it is found there, so the initiatives are there. I'll come back to it later. We have, as I mentioned, some 25 health units plus the two larger cities' boards of health. Through those health units that kind of education is ongoing every day. They're out working with school nurses and working in all of those communities on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis.

The member mentioned the community health nursing side. He expressed some concern that it was cut back. I can tell the hon. member that that community health nursing side of vote 2.3.1 is in fact more of an administrative

mechanism to oversee and provide consultation and advice to health units. In fact, you'll find that health units have enjoyed for 1986-87 an increase in their community health nursing allotment. We feel that it's so important that community health nursing be delivered at the community level. The province and the department simply can't and won't do it by itself. It can do it at the local level.

I just want, now that I've got the opportunity — you mentioned community health nursing. We're providing in this budget some \$850,000 of funding that will go not all the way but part way to helping health units to balance their programs and provide a good level of service. In the Alberta West Central Health Unit, the Mount View Health Unit, and the Foothills Health Unit we're providing a total of about \$110,000 in new funding for community health nurses. That kind of funding is there, and it's there in the rest of the budget in the \$104 million for those health units.

I can't answer the question about vital statistics, Mr. Chairman. It's something that puzzles me. I have the good fortune to have my bride of some 12 years at the end of next month in the gallery with me tonight, and about 12 years ago right now we had to go and get a blood test as well. It's something I'd like to look at and I'll come back to the member on. [interjection] I've been chastised by all of my colleagues for the cousins, first cousins, aunts, and uncles. My bride is a modest woman. I'm just very, very grateful that she's here with me tonight.

I hate to go the next subject, being communicable diseases, Mr. Chairman, but the member raises a very, very important point on AIDS, the acquired immune deficiency syndrome. It's something that deeply troubles me. We have, if I'm not mistaken, some 32 Albertans who have contracted the disease, and we've lost approximately 15 of those people. Through AIDS Calgary and through AIDS Network of Edmonton our department has provided in the past budget, and I expect to do the same in the days ahead, funding to promote their education program.

I think I'll leave the blood glucose testing, Mr. Chairman. We could get to that another time. I feel as though I've answered that as best I can within the limitations of the time.

AADAC is something the member raised. I have to get in what I couldn't say before, that it's the whole promotion, the whole adolescent prevention program that that organization has so successfully introduced to all of us. The program enjoys tremendous public support. It's really unparalleled in this kind of endeavour. I can say that according to what we've found out, two-thirds of the teenagers of Alberta have found that these programs have helped them personally to be a lot more positive about themselves, to live healthier lifestyles, to live the way they want to live, and to do their best to resist those negative, very difficult pressures from their peers. We all know very well that it's hard in this day and age. So I have to commend the tremendous efforts of AADAC and must say that they must continue and that they require the full support of this House.

Mr. Chairman, the next point that I want to raise is occupational health and safety. Claims are up, and I can say that that doesn't please me at all. It leaves me very concerned and very disappointed because one will be too many. Our goal in the occupational health and safety division is that we will have a year — it may be a ways away — when it will be zero, and it will be at a minimum. Our goal would be that it should be cut in half.

I have to say, though, that 1985 over 1984 saw a tremendous amount of activity in this province. There were

some 96 fatalities on the site in 1985. Yes, it concerns me very, very much. But with that increased drilling activity, construction activity, manufacturing activity — Robert, you know that in 1985 it was active in Calgary. That kind of activity creates more workers on a worksite and, unfortunately, more accidents.

The member raised the subject of on-site inspection. I didn't get into it in my remarks, Mr. Chairman, but I'm told there are some 800,000 workers in this province, some 43,000 employers, some 63,000 worksites, and so naturally it's important to focus and to rifle in on that kind of inspection activity. We have chosen to do it in those areas which are considered high hazard, high risk. I can identify two or three of those for the member: one is certainly the drilling and servicing rigs and other on-site well activities; forestry and logging activities; sawmills and pulpmills; trenching projects; and certainly major construction, pipeline, and demolition projects. So I can very easily reassure the member that that kind of on-site inspection is being carried on as rigorously as we always have.

Short of doing what the member may suggest we do, that we bring in a horde of new inspectors — we'd get chastised, I'm sure, for massive increases in public servants. We believe that's not the right way to go, that we use the resources we've got and, yes, we'll beef them up as necessary, but we've got to help educate employers and employees to understand that a safe worksite is an even more productive worksite. That's something we're very, very committed to.

The member raised the subject of mental health, and I think I responded to that in my opening remarks. The 85/15 Wisconsin split is something I'm certainly familiar with, and I can tell the hon. member that I will be moving in that direction to do battle and compete with my colleagues for those important funds.

The suicide matter is something that I think the member is making a very good point on. In our urban centres I think we've been able to respond very well. I can tell you that my good wife worked on AID Services in Edmonton for a number of years when we lived here in previous incarnations, and it's something that I'm very familiar with and very committed to. I commend the services in Calgary and in Edmonton.

The suicide rate in rural centres is something that has definitely come to my attention. As a matter of fact, I met with the Member for Redwater-Andrew and some of his constituents the other day on that very subject. The people of Smoky Lake had put together a brief and sought some assistance through AID Services that we might set up a provincewide line that would connect rural centres to those major urban centres that provide those services. It's something I'm very interested in. We have a group within the government working on it right now. It's something that concerns me, and I'm committed to finding out how we can best meet those rural needs.

Suicide among natives is something that the Suicide Prevention Provincial Advisory Committee, better known as SPPAC, has been addressing. I haven't got the numbers at my fingertips, Mr. Chairman, as to how many dollars are devoted from SPPAC to native suicide, but there is a commitment there. Yes, more can be done, but those dollars are being put to use now. Some of the very, very unfortunate incidents in days past in northern Alberta have brought the attention of AADAC to the kinds of activities you mentioned. Certainly their campaign to tell our northern citizens that you can't burn it, you can't filter it, you can't do anything

with it — it ain't safe; it never will be — is something that we're bringing very much to the attention of the natives.

I'll sit down, Mr. Chairman, after mentioning the Workers' Compensation Board. Two hundred and four percent appears to be a great sum of money. This vote provides for pensions to workers and their dependants who were injured on a worksite in Alberta prior to 1974. This is an agreement that was worked out in 1974 following the deliberations of the select committee of the Legislature. The funding for pre-'74 accidents of that kind and increases in those benefits would be paid for by the General Revenue Fund, and all coverage would flow from the Workers' Compensation Board for incidents having taken place after 1973.

The 45 is divided in two: \$15 million is ongoing, year-to-year pay for those increased benefits; the 30 percent is something that the select committee of the Legislature recommended to this Legislature back in 1982. That was that we move more and more toward paying lump sums to pensioners. If you are on a 25 percent disability pension and are going to be receiving \$200 a month for the rest of your life, better in some instances that you take all that money today, valued at a present value as of today, and start a new business, pay off the mortgage on your home, or get into a more independent state rather than relying on the government to provide month in and month out, government supposedly knowing all.

The individual dependant knows how to deal with and work with those funds, control and manage them, so we've given them the choice. That is why that \$30 million, 204 percent increase is there. It is to provide for that lump sum payment for the 1986-87 fiscal year.

MS LAING: Mr. Chairman, I'd also like to congratulate the minister on his appointment. I really applaud his commitment to prevention and community-based programs. In fact, I have worked as both a volunteer and a staff member in community-based programs for the last 10 years and believe they really have to be the support base of our mental health programs.

I'd like to address the issues of mental health and community health services in the budget. I believe that mental health needs must be recognized as being as important as physical health needs and that indeed they are often related in that intervention as well as prevention is extremely important, and I want to address some of these issues.

One of the things that I have noted through the years is a concern about availability of service. Although the service that I have seen has been really excellent, particularly in the larger centres, I have discovered that access is sometimes a problem for people. Because mental health services often require ongoing appointments week after week, it means that people have to either get time off from work or take their children out of school for half a day because the hours are only 8:30 to 4:30. I would suggest that it would be more accessible to people if clinics were open in the late afternoons and evenings, as in fact medicentres and many community programs now are. Certainly I've heard of people being threatened with losing their jobs if they have to take an hour or two or three off every week for an appointment. Another thing is that transportation for people to get downtown is sometimes a problem, so I would like to see, even in the larger centres, more community-based programs.

Another concern I have is the split from Social Services, because there's often a need to co-ordinate mental health

services with child protection and social assistance services, which are covered under the Department of Social Services. The mandate there is the protection of children and income assistance. Workers, particularly in the area of social assistance programs, can be front line and key to picking up the indicators of personal or family distress. I believe that the parents of all the children who have died in this province at the hands of care-givers have in fact been involved with social assistance workers prior to the death of the child. So if we have social workers in the social assistance programs and they're front line to pick up the potential for child abuse, we then need a referral to mental health services.

I believe we also need more services for potential abusers; that is, people who feel out of control. Certainly when I worked on a crisis line, I had people phoning in saying, "Help me," and in many cases there was no place to send them. So I think that's one of the areas where we don't really have a lot of services.

Another area where I see a need is in services to people where some members of the family may have involvement with Social Services but other members of the family are not eligible for that care under the Social Services mandate for care. I would suggest that when we look at batterers — for instance, if the mother is being battered — there is no care for the batterer if he is not involved in the family or is not involved in a forensic unit. Most of the programs for batterers — that is, child abusers and incest offenders — are forensic-based treatment programs. In many cases there are no treatment programs for offenders after they have been released from prison or the Alberta Hospital treatment programs. In fact, for two years I was involved as a volunteer in one program that ended after I was no longer able to be there, because there was no funding for that program.

In the same way, there is a dearth of resources for batterers who look for self-referral. I would suggest that whether they go back to the family or not, they will be in families, and unless we treat them, they will go on to abuse and reoffend. Certainly my experience with incest offenders has been that without adequate treatment and ongoing monitoring they go on to re-create families and reoffend. So we have a succession of victims. I would ask that the minister look to providing treatment resources for these people.

In addition, I think there aren't really treatment programs for women who have been battered. Many of them, of course, leave without going to the shelters. We need community-based programs where they can get support to help them through the transition stage. Again, people at social assistance, if they had that information and there were a link, would be able to refer them.

A truly preventive program that I see needing to be set up is treatment for children from families in which there has been physical violence. Anyone reading the literature on the intergenerational cycle of violence knows that children who have witnessed or been the targets of violence have strong potential for becoming violent offenders as adults. So I would ask that there be a real commitment to this kind of treatment program as a strong preventive program.

We also need treatment programs for neglected children, who also suffer emotional deprivation. Often Social Services involvement only provides that the children receive proper physical treatment and care, and the emotional impact of neglect is not taken care of. We need treatment programs, I believe, for children who are victims of extrafamilial sexual abuse; that is, children who are assaulted by someone

unknown to them, a teacher or a person known but not a member of the family. As far as I know, there are no treatment programs of that kind here. Again, a strong preventive program. Most sex offenders report having been sexually assaulted as children. Without treatment the trauma goes on to be acted out on society. I would ask the minister what commitment he would be willing to make to these kinds of treatment programs.

I also have some concerns about the resources for rural and small centres, in particular the demands placed on workers in these areas. Often the demands are very heavy. They are often isolated and have a wide range of problems to face. I'm wondering what commitment the minister has to in-service training and support for these workers, because I've certainly heard some horrendous stories from them. I'm wondering also what commitment the minister has to supporting local workers in initiating new programs. Again, out of my experience, these programs are often initiated on a volunteer basis by professional people in the community who see the problems that are within the community. The unfortunate thing is that they then have to scramble for funds. The scramble for funds is one of the reasons I sit in this Assembly; I got so fed up with it. Often the services are only available through volunteers. I know we must honour our volunteers; they make a tremendous contribution. But we need money to co-ordinate their volunteer work, and sometimes we need to be willing to put forth money for those programs.

We have already talked about suicide, as I spoke to the motion on curriculum development in relation to suicide. It is something that worries me deeply. I think we have to also look at the underlying causes of suicide. It's not good enough to deal just with child self-esteem and what's happening in the family. But what's happening in a society where there are these many factors? I think this is particularly true in the area of native suicide, which is truly shocking. We have to look at that. We have to look at unemployment and its impact on people in terms of family violence, social violence, and violence to self. I hope that there would be programs established to help not only those who have not worked or have had minimal kinds of work but those that have had work for years and have then faced unemployment. I note that we are having a hookup to the distress line for rural areas. I hope that comes through very quickly. We not only need suicide lines; we need distress lines where people can deal with other kinds of stress and possibly keep them from coming to the brink of suicide.

I also have some concern about the availability of funding to crisis centres, noting that the sexual assault centre in Lethbridge was closed because of lack of funding. I would point out that one in 17 Canadian women is raped in her lifetime. That is one woman every 29 minutes. I think not to face that and to refuse to fund agencies is a crime.

I note that we have a significant increase of 25 percent to FCSS funding, but I also note that since 1982 the funding has been frozen. So I am hoping that there will be aid to these people, particularly as they support victims of family violence. I would ask the minister how these programs are being monitored and what kinds of training and support services are available to these agencies.

In the final area, one that comes from many years of experience in working with people who have been victims of violence as well as perpetrators of violence, I would ask the minister if there is any way there could be an inter-departmental committee of the departments of the Attorney General, Solicitor General, Social Services, Community and

Occupational Health, and Hospitals and Medical Care that would provide ongoing treatment and continuity of treatment that meets the needs of all members of these families so that they don't get lost somewhere in the process.

I also have some concern about treatment programs for young offenders and wonder what the commitment to them is. What kind of programs are available to young people who teachers and parents may feel have a potential for becoming offenders, so that there is early intervention that keeps them out of the criminal justice system?

Thank you.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, rather than responding to many of the good representations by the hon. member, I think I'd like to have an opportunity to hear other members and perhaps then I could.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, may I, too, commend and thank the minister for undertaking this most important portfolio with the very definite thrust toward health, prevention of illness, and rehabilitation with the least possible disruption. I know it's the intent of this department to keep our citizens happy, healthy, and productive, and to keep families intact and workplaces safe for employer and employee alike. I might add that there are obvious enormous cost benefits.

Mr. Chairman, I was fortunate in my early education to have a professor who was very determined and very dull. He talked for a year, and he made only one message clear to us. That message was that health is a positive factor; it is not just the absence of illness. But after a year of getting that message every day, I began to internalize it, and it has been a mainstay in my belief in community services and how we organize our communities to protect ourselves and one another.

Mr. Chairman, if I can go directly to the budget, under program development support in vote 2, I want to speak about the FCSS program, one that's been dear to my heart for many years. Of course, historically it had its beginning in the preventive social service legislation, a unique piece of legislation, a foremost and marvellous breakthrough on the part of Alberta some years back. That legislation gives to municipalities the decision-making on public and private nonprofit organizations. There have been many spin-offs as a result of the legislation — day care, many programs for seniors, and home care — that have had their origins in the PSS program, now FCSS.

The municipal boards that operate these programs in our towns and cities allow for a great deal of voluntary input. Their agencies and work give much credibility to early intervention, and health in our communities is reinforced. I believe there's a very subtle but continuing influence on individual group and municipal responsibility through this program. The amount, however, is small in comparison to other programs of a rehabilitation nature. Not to take anything away from rehabilitation, but the increases here have been minimal, and services have fallen behind and have had to be reduced.

Somewhat as a result of the economic situation, we've had a gravely increased demand and an enormous increase in family breakup and problems. I'm pleased that the government has seen fit to increase the per capita through this program to \$13 in the cities and \$14 in rural communities. I'm still perplexed as to why we have that difference when I believe the cities have indicated that they need \$16 to \$17 to come even close to their requirements.

and it's very evident that the concentration of problems that respond to primary prevention is in the urban areas. As a result of not keeping pace, the 80/20 ratio arrangement has been distorted over the years, and in '86 the provincial share, I think, pays for approximately 60 percent. Meanwhile provincial caseloads in social services have increased dramatically, making a higher burden on private organizations. Hopefully, working with municipalities throughout the province, the minister will see his way to increases in this very successful preventive program that has tremendous economic benefits to us all.

I'd like to mention some specifics within the FCSS funding, Mr. Chairman. One that the minister touched on is out-of-school care. We all know and have observed the societal changes that have required us to develop safe programs and policies to meet the situation of children and families in our communities and to move ahead of them, not just react to societal changes. It's now estimated that there are as many as 150,000 children between 6 and 12 in Alberta who need some form of supplementary care. It appears that 20 to 35 percent of these children are left to look after themselves. Of course, we know that Alberta has the highest female labour force participation rate in Canada. Eighty-five percent of single parents in Alberta are women, earning an average annual income of \$16,000. The combination of these factors has increased the demand for subsidized after school care, and while that program has grown steadily since its inception, these same families now require out-of-school care for children that are making that transition, that bubble of population that's moving into grade 1 and the other grades.

I was pleased to hear that the minister has had some conversation with the task force, whose recommendations I agree with, and I'm hopeful that there will very quickly be a resolution of some of their requests. The uncertainty over the availability of out-of-school care funding is of great concern. It produces tremendous anxiety in families, and it may in fact force people to either quit or lose jobs. Then what are their alternatives? I hope for an early resolution to the out-of-school care situation that would perhaps establish under FCSS funding a separate element for out-of-school care, still keeping to the 80/20 formula but opened so that it could float, in a sense, Mr. Minister, with maximum allocation but that it would be available to communities on a need basis to some extent. I think it could be worked out in that fashion and would be very helpful and would not put a competitive demand on other FCSS programs, which, depending on the municipality, are going to have to suffer if we are going to meet the out-of-school care need on a continuing basis.

Mr. Chairman, I would also hope that the minister, along with that task force, will develop common standards across Alberta and put these into effect to ensure that there's a minimum quality of care throughout our municipalities, that those standards are similar to those that are developed now for day care, which we've all been trying to get him to increase and enhance.

Mr. Chairman, also in vote 2 are local health services. I've been privileged to serve on a local board of health and am relatively familiar with their work. They do an extraordinary piece of work for us and have excellent relationships with the community and the needs of the community. Of course, their primary aim is toward family health and health of preschool children. In thinking about the boards of health and about their funding, it's important not to lose sight of the needs of children in growth devel-

opment stages, particularly those in the early school years. I hope that the funding for the program is sufficient that we don't have to cut back on consultative nursing to school personnel, because public health personnel have a very vital role to play in providing those services to schools and institutional staff. So I would hope it could be maintained and strengthened.

Mr. Chairman, we don't know a great deal in Alberta about community clinics. My understanding is that there are only two operational: one in the city of Calgary and one in the city of Edmonton, both funded partially through the local health services and partially through Hospitals and Medical Care. In my view, this provides a very promising alternative method of health care delivery. The community clinic is an excellent environment for the educational preventive approach to health care, and I hope that the minister will be looking more closely at this most invaluable service. The one in the city of Edmonton, and I believe the one in Calgary as well, provides service in a downtown area. The emphasis is on prevention, and education forms a very large component: training in parenting and child care and nourishment. Also, they do home visits to the elderly and make themselves available as volunteers and trained professional staff to community organizations, to handicapped and seniors throughout our downtown communities. Ontario and Saskatchewan have legislation that could be models for us. I hope we will look seriously at what I think is an alternative to health care delivery that could have cost benefits as well.

Another one included in vote 2, Mr. Chairman, is home care. We've heard something about this tonight. This particular program is proving itself invaluable. It's highly thought of by seniors in our communities and by the medical profession, who value it too. I'm glad to see that there was a widening of the entry point in '84-85 beyond just having medical requirements. I'm also glad to see that there has been some increase in funding to meet the demand. The benefits are certainly economic. The cost per patient per day in home care averages \$5 compared to nursing homes at \$55, auxiliary hospitals at \$105 — these are round figures — active treatment hospitals at \$150 to \$700 or \$800 per day with the average coming in at around \$300 to \$500. Yes, there are economic benefits through home care. There are also benefits in human terms that the minister has spoken of: the independence and the familiar, normal surroundings in which recovery can be more speedy, the support systems are left intact, and there is far less isolation and stress. Of course, home care is not a replacement for hospitalization when that is necessary, but it should, I believe, be an indigenous part of the health care alternatives for planning and operation.

What is needed here? Mr. Chairman, emphatically I submit that we need a single entry intake with all extended care. I understand that there has been some development going on in the province looking at that possibility, and I know some of our own organizations and committees are suggesting it. I refer you to the annual report of the Alberta Health Facilities Review Committee, which talks about a single point of entry. On page 13 they say:

A Single Point Entry Assessment would encompass a body of representatives from all community support services. This would reduce jurisdictional problems and ensure the proper placement of individuals within the system.

We now have a single entry point for extended care facilities, and I would hope this could be spread to include home

care. I think it's an important step to study immediately and to undertake if at all possible.

Mr. Chairman, it's time to move more surely into the field and the practice of home care: day hospitals and day care for adults. Day hospitals have been extensively studied and reviewed in this province, and we've had very positive reports. I would hope that the minister and his department will want to take some action in that regard. There are many savings to be achieved in dollars and in happiness and comfort. The home care program has been assured of increases, but as yet they don't appear to have materialized within our communities. Perhaps what we're doing tonight is getting them under way.

Mr. Chairman, the palliative care component in home care has also been unable to meet the demand. There's a large waiting list. I know the cancer clinics are particularly concerned with the situation. Hopefully the minister will comment on plans for an orderly expansion, an integrated entry system, and development of day hospitals and day care.

Mr. Chairman, I want to comment on occupational health and safety with an emphasis on mental health and the workplace. We are experiencing throughout our society an increase in emotional and psychological disturbances that are reflected in the workplace. It's a very expensive kind of health problem, showing itself in absenteeism, lost productivity, physical illness, and so on. Much of it is due to the stress of job insecurity and stress in the workplace. There is increasing evidence of this problem. I think it's important that we recognize the issue, that we encourage business, industry, government, and government institutions to become aware and to take such steps as they can to change and intervene.

We now have a rapidly developing body of knowledge regarding creating a program and an environment in the workplace that will enhance mental health and positive attitudes and behaviour. Large companies and industries are more often able to retain industrial psychologists and other personnel to assist in rethinking their experience and making adjustments. Medium-sized or small businesses don't always have similar advantages. I think there's an important move that we should make. Government should take some leadership to develop public policy that will serve as a blueprint. There is a role here for us to set standards in the public sector and to establish a policy framework and program supports that will encourage positive mental health practices in public and private services.

Mr. Chairman, I would indicate to the minister that there is a very important study in this regard going on in our province right now in the city of Fort McMurray; it's called Work and Well-being. It's indicating to us many ideas about ways that we can change our workplace setting without enormous expenses.

The mental health services section of the budget. It's been indicated that we're going to have a new Mental Health Act, and I would like the minister to comment on whether it's his intention to bring one forward this summer. The minister has indicated that he's proud of the services and has made a strong statement about his commitment to this area. I'm glad to hear of it; I certainly assure him of mine.

I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that the community services are inadequate and that we have people in our communities who are often not consulted, who are given credibility, who are in fact helpless, who are in need of more care. This need is particularly critical in the area of residential services. The housing programs that are presently in existence are

not adequately financed to meet the needs of those recovering from an illness. Because of the lack of options for former mental patients, many who could be in the community remain institutionalized. Unfortunately, in the absence of support we see many discharged patients having to be readmitted to hospital as a result of their deteriorating health and functioning.

There are few, if any, psychogeriatric specialists in this province to provide consultative assistance to communities and organizations that are attempting to provide a humane community-based program of safe alternatives to hospitalization. We have spoken before about the urgent necessity to develop programs in regional hospitals to accept involuntary patients. While this isn't specifically in the minister's department, I think that it, too, would in large measure increase the opportunities for early intervention, thereby protecting and preserving family and community support to patients.

Lastly, on mental health services, Mr. Chairman, I want to say once again that I emphasize the need to amend the IRPA to bring it in line with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to protect persons who have suffered with mental illness against discrimination. I cannot accept the reasoning put forward that we should only include visible handicaps as a difference.

I'm glad to hear of the minister's support for progressive organizations such as CASH, the Calgary Association of Self-Help, and the Canadian Mental Health Association. These are the gatekeepers. They are the innovators that move with the times, and I hope the minister's interest and support will be reflected financially as well.

Mr. Chairman, just a footnote about the move toward privatization, or what I describe as commercialization. I would like to ask that the government delay moving ahead with commercialization in health or social services until the philosophy has been publicly debated and guidelines, standards, monitoring, and evaluation have been developed. I make that a request to the minister because of the growing restlessness and anxiety in our communities.

I've had the pleasure, Mr. Chairman, of serving on one of the minister's regional mental health advisory boards. I agree that there are many dedicated volunteers, and I know he listens carefully to their recommendations.

Alcohol and drug abuse. I want to commend the minister on a very aggressive and positive program. I also want to commend the department for their educational and treatment programs. I note that this has had a 10 percent increase. It's certainly justified and should prove to have many economic benefits as well. All too often we're delinquent in trying to measure some of the economic benefits that accrue to us as a result of these excellent investments.

Workers' compensation. I'm not entirely conversant or familiar with the details of how this program operates, Mr. Chairman, and I submit that there isn't a great deal of information provided here. I have tried to glean what I can from annual reports. I am continually struck by the number of employers and employees alike who have approached me and seem to have experienced difficulties and have a lack of confidence in the program. They've expressed dissatisfaction with settlements, with income support, and with the process as well. I realize that we're often dealing with people and families who are experiencing or have experienced hurt or injury and in some cases are never able to regain their health, but it's very important that citizens feel secure in the knowledge that they are adequately protected

through workers' compensation and that the program operates with fairness and equity.

Mr. Chairman, I make a final plea for close collaboration between this department, Social Services, and Hospitals and Medical Care. I have expressed before my anxiety about some of the particular publics that could have difficulty in this regard, but I'm looking to the minister to give direction to that close collaboration so that people and community needs won't fall between the cracks.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to the minister's comments on my remarks.

MS MJOLSNESS: I have a few brief comments on after school care. I know that the Member for Edmonton Gold Bar spoke about after school care and brought up some concerns. I have some additional concerns.

Alberta has the highest rate of female participation in the labour force in Canada. We also have a record number of separated families, resulting in a growing number of single-parent families. Approximately 85 percent of those single-parent families are headed by women. We all know that the majority of those women do not earn a significant amount of money. When we take in all of these factors, we recognize that there is a serious need for after school care and also a great demand for that after school care. The last thing we want, of course, is our children to be left unattended before or after school.

The province at present provides subsidies for child care for children under six years of age. I think the same commitment should be given to those children who are six years of age and over once they enter elementary school. I would ask the minister if he will be looking at giving subsidies for children for after school care. I recognize the fact that FCSS receives funding for after school care, but in fact in 1986 they are operating on grants that are equal to or below the grants they received in 1983.

There have been recommendations put out by the inter-municipal task force report on out-of-school care that the minister mentioned. These were made up of representatives from many municipalities. The recommendations were endorsed by 17 different municipalities across the province. Because of the increased demand for out-of-school care and also the fact that FCSS funding is very limited and they are also involved in many different types of programs, one of the recommendations of this task force was that after school care be given a separate fund, as was mentioned previously tonight. The recommendation was put forth so that demands could be met and necessary care could be guaranteed to parents who are in need of receiving that type of care for their children. I was quite pleased this evening to hear that the minister had met with the task force. I was surprised as well, because I talked to someone this afternoon, as a matter of fact, who was very involved in that task force, and they told me they had as yet had no response from the government. So I'm very pleased that you have met with that task force. I would ask the minister if perhaps he could give us a specific date as to when we could expect some feedback on those recommendations.

I would also ask if the minister will guarantee to this Assembly this evening that no children will go without after school care if in fact FCSS needs more funding to provide that service. I know that Edmonton has currently filled 350 extra spaces that they weren't expecting for children who are in need of after school care, and they are a bit concerned in terms of a waiting list that may be created. They have

no idea of how many more children will be in need of after school care.

A couple of other concerns. At present the Social Services department continues to license spaces for out-of-school care. While the funding comes under Community and Occupational Health, I'm wondering if the minister will be assuming the responsibility for licensing of after school care. The last concern I have is that there are currently no provincial standards, as was mentioned previously this evening, for after school care. I'm wondering if the minister will be implementing a set of standards across the province in co-operation with the municipalities, as recommended by the task force.

Thank you.

MR. ADY: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to make just a few brief remarks on the estimates of the Department of Community and Occupational Health. First of all, I would like to congratulate the hon. minister on his appointment and his able presentation this evening. For the past two years, I have been a board member of our local health unit, and this has given me a better insight into some of the services offered by the hon. minister's department, but that of course, is only a fraction of the services offered by his department.

My reason for becoming involved in this discussion this evening is that I'd like to relate to the committee and commend the minister on his department's participation in a program in my constituency. It all began when the so-called Raymond Go Getters council society was incorporated in September of 1981. The membership and board of directors includes the residents of the Raymond home, which is a provincial extended care facility, and some community laypeople. In October of 1983 that society constructed a six-bedroom house in Raymond. This house is owned and operated by the nonprofit society. In October of 1983, six former residents of the Raymond home moved into and self-funded this six-bedroom house. Although collectively the six ladies have spent a total of almost 200 years in various provincial institutions, since October of 1983 they have enjoyed the privacy and independence of their own bedroom, as well as the support and friendship of the Go Getters society, the Raymond community, and the Raymond home staff. They all share in the regular household duties like cooking, shopping, budgeting, laundry, and other household responsibilities.

In terms of the continuum of community living options, this is one experience somewhat unique in Alberta, where a nonprofit society has maximized the use of community resources and, without direct government operating grants, has utilized the user-pay system inasmuch as residents pay for their own basic needs. Since this option has been successful both therapeutically and financially and has been a credit to the Raymond community, a second self-funded, six-bedroom house was constructed in May of 1986. Six additional ladies have since been discharged from the Raymond home and are enjoying the privacy and independence of their new home as well. I think this is indicative of the initiative of that community.

It's also the tip of the iceberg of a movement that really has a place in our society to help people like that gain additional self-reliance and self-respect. By all means I wish to commend the minister for the participation of his department in this movement. My question to him is: how committed is his department to furthering this type of program, which has made both the participants and supporting community very proud of their accomplishment?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, I've got a collection of a lot of good ideas and thoughts here, and I certainly welcome the intervention by my friend and colleague from Cardston.

I'd like to go back to a few of the comments made. I know I can't answer them all, but I'd like to hit on a couple raised by the members for Edmonton Gold Bar and Edmonton Calder. It relates to the whole subject of out-of-school care. When I met with aldermen Reimer, Scott, and Green, from Edmonton, Calgary, and Medicine Hat respectively, and their various officials, I think the thing that I found most interesting about the discussion was not so much their proposal, because I respect a lot of hard work went into that proposal and some good hard thought. Where we went in the conversation — and I don't think I'm revealing any secrets because it's one I've had with a lot of members on both sides of this House — is the whole notion of: where are we going in our society with respect to care for our children and those who need care, especially our young people?

I am a strong advocate of providing day care for children of parents who need that kind of help, support, and guidance on a day-to-day basis. I expressed to the three aldermen, three good women, that I was concerned about where we were moving in providing more and more care, that the government was being called upon to provide more and more care. I'm fortunate; my family is very fortunate that my wife and my two children — I'm not in a position where Jane has to work, so we've made a decision, she's made a decision, that she's going to devote at least the first part of their lives to being there as a support system for them. But where are those who don't have that choice to make going to be served within the community?

I thought: why is it the government that has to do this? Why aren't we turning to our neighbours, friends, and family to be providing more and more of this? They did what you did; they shook their heads, and I see it. They said: "Face reality; that's a myth. Face the trend." I said: "Be that as it may, it's your responsibility, it's my responsibility, it's all of our responsibility to reverse that trend and to instill in our constituents, in the minds of all Albertans, to reestablish and to turn that focus around." That kind of care, that kind of support has to come first and foremost from families, friends, and neighbours. Then where it can't be delivered, perhaps there's a role for government to play in providing that continuing continuum of service after day care, after preschool care. I only expressed a sentiment; I expressed a concern about the growing trend of moving more and more toward government taking on this responsibility.

I say that to all hon. members and ask them to consider it and think about taking on that responsibility of saying, "Hey, before you ask the government to do it, have you talked to your neighbour, have you pooled your resources within the community, can you get your act together on a community basis?" I think that's awfully important.

The Member for Edmonton Gold Bar raised the subject of family and community support services, the 80/20 split, and it struck me as funny that she would suggest that we had gone down to 60 percent provincial government funding. I really have to take issue with that. I think the statistics show otherwise, that we are providing that 80 percent or very, very close to it. It's up to communities to come up with their 20 percent before we deliver our 80 percent, and that's a fundamental, key part of that program. It brings the discipline to the program that's so important, that local priorities and local dollars are spent in the delivery and the setting of priorities for those programs.

I have to express a bit of concern about taking out-of-school care and making it a separate element from the rest of family and community support services. The member asked why, and I think it's this: yes, there are any number of urban communities that are asking for this service, 17 members on the intermunicipal task force on out-of-school care, but there are another 83 members of the Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta that didn't buy into that report. They have some real concern about possibly separating that one element at the expense of other programs that they are keen about, that they are interested in. What you do by moving it out as a separate element within that FCSS umbrella is dilute the initial, fundamental, major philosophical thrust of what family and community support services is all about. I wouldn't want members — the only members rattling their heads opposite — to get the idea that I don't support in general that which is being put forward, but I've got to be sensitive and responsive to other members of that FCSS Association. So I ask you to consider that.

I'm interested in the comments of the member on community health clinics, and it's something that I'll take as note. The suggestion that home care is not a replacement for hospital care is absolutely correct. My interest is moving a few degrees each year in shifting that focus away from as much institutional care, moving more toward the benefits of home care, of providing that service in the comfort and the familiar surroundings of one's own home. There are clearly limits to that kind of service; there's no doubt about that.

The member for Edmonton Calder also raised out-of-school care: will we be providing subsidies? I think to respond to that would perhaps prejudice the government's reaction to the intermunicipal task force report. Right now out-of-school care is a community-delivered program based on the FCSS philosophy to let the community make the choice, make the decision. In the case of Edmonton, Calgary, and a number of other communities, those FCSS boards and municipalities have made a decision, "We're going to deliver out-of-school care." Whereas a good number of other municipalities have said, "No, we're not interested in that; we've got other priorities." To suggest that we will be giving subsidies and answering that question before we've responded, I think, would prejudice that.

I'm surprised and disappointed that the Member for Edmonton Calder was surprised that I had met with representatives of the task force. I would have expected that she might at least have given me and others in the government the benefit of the doubt. I'm open to people who want to meet with me, and I'm keen to meet as many as I can within the limitations of time that this session imposes and demands. It's my intention to get around and meet as many people — health units, mental health clinics, and other facilities around the province — as quickly as I can.

I'm going to respond to the comments made by the Member for Cardston on the Raymond Go Getters. This is a program that I think we can learn a lot from. To me it is a symbol, a very graphic sign of how our mental health care system can ideally operate. We're not going to be able to move all the way down that path, but as we move more and more toward a community-based system, we need to put homes, residences, and day programs in place to provide for the needs of people like the Raymond Go Getters. As I said earlier, it's something I strongly support; it's a direction that I'd definitely like to move in. I welcome those comments and would receive any other suggestions, Mr. Chairman.

MR. YOUNIE: Mr. Chairman, I'd start out by thanking the hon. minister for his kind gift. It was a most enjoyable way to start the evening. I would caution that I hope everybody who has eaten theirs took the time first to wipe it very carefully. Although the apple itself is very healthy, it's only after one has wiped off pesticide sprays that it is so. [interjection] No, I wiped it carefully with my tie and proceeded to enjoy it most thoroughly.

I would also wonder if in fact it wasn't a sort of precursor to ministers for community health, getting early into the participation spirit, who designed this place. After running up and down literally thousands of steps a day, I have certainly found that the Legislature and working here does a tremendous amount for one's health and stamina. I think it must have been part of the purpose of the design to see who could withstand the running up and down steps.

There was a lot of mention of aids to daily living. The minister expressed his desire to meet with anyone who had a problem in that area, so I'll just now give him warning that I'll be calling his appointments secretary soon concerning a constituent who did apply for a wheelchair under aids to daily living and was told that he was over 18 and therefore didn't qualify. As he understood it, that was the only thing that seemed to prevent him from qualifying. From what I've heard here, that doesn't seem to be what the qualification should be, so I'm sure we can work something out on his behalf and get him a motorized wheelchair so he will no longer be confined to his house.

An issue that I do believe comes under the auspices of community health would be a story that was dealt with in the *Sherwood Park News* and not too many other newspapers at the time, dealing with cancer statistics in the county of Strathcona and lots of speculation on what might have caused, according to the articles, the much higher rate of cancer in the county of Strathcona than the provincial average. It was interesting to note that the writer of the articles seemed to be of the opinion that it must be industrial pollution out of Refinery Row and Fort Saskatchewan industrial subdivisions. Others said, "No, in fact it was probably life-style habits like smoking." Perhaps one should mention at a time like this that even second-hand smoke from those nearby can do that. Other aspects of life-style: there are things in coffee, which we all seem to enjoy, that are known to be less than healthy and so on and so forth.

I would not want to jump to any conclusions about what might be the cause. If I did, I don't think anyone in here would have to guess more than once to know which it would be that I would predict. I would just urge that the cancer board, or some other group that the department of community health could help out, would be funded adequately to begin and continue a very accurate registry of the history of all people who do have cancer, so that if there are problem areas, they can be identified quickly and health officials can start working towards causes. So I would appreciate the minister's comments on that apparent statistic for the county of Strathcona, where I used to work. Indeed, if being there seemed to be part of the cause, it is something about which I am personally concerned after spending six and a half years working there all day.

Another matter that I have some concern about — and I think it has implications for this year's and future budgets — is the medical diagnostic review that was just completed. Where I think it has implications for the present and the future, even though the study is now complete, is that as far as I've been able to find out, the estimated initial cost was \$700,000 and the final cost was \$3,700,000, which

indicates an increase of \$3 million from the initial \$700,000 — just in case the minister or one of his deputy ministers hasn't got that subtraction done at this point.

My concern is: how does a cost over-run of that magnitude happen when, as I've been able to find out, most of the changes from the initial proposal seem to be in the nature of taking things out of the study rather than putting new things in? Although a number of heavy metals, gases, and so on were taken out of the testing, the cost went up. I've heard it proposed that perhaps it was the study of out-migrants, those who had moved out of the area, but in fact one table in the study indicates that only 45 percent of those who'd moved out of the area were ever contacted and only 65 of those were then surveyed, which leaves a very small percentage of those studied.

I would also wonder — and people got tired of a panelist on Front Page Challenge asking people this question — how much was paid to Dr. Spitzer for his professional services in the study.

AN HON. MEMBER: You're no Gordon Sinclair; that's for sure.

MR. YOUNIE: Well, I will confess that; that's true. But notwithstanding that I still am curious, and I wonder what information the minister might have on that. Also, having learned from the medical review done in that area, will the minister be considering some policies and some long-range planning and methods of accounting for and keeping track of costs of such research studies? What policies will be coming forward to make sure those kinds of things don't happen in future studies or maybe even present studies that are under way but not complete? I think it's a very important part of the whole process to keep those kinds of costs under control and to keep them from inflating to that extent.

With that I would sit down and await the minister's comments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MRS. MIROSH: It's my turn first. I've been a waiting a long time for this. [some applause] Thank you. Thank you, members opposite. You'll notice my colleagues aren't clapping.

It's indeed a pleasure to rise to speak on occupational health since I come from the private sector in that area. Industrial health is ...

I don't have an apple. Where's my apple? You guys stole it. Thank you.

Industrial health has been given significant attention in the past decade, educating employees on the hazards causing disease and disabilities due to unsafe worksites. Mr. Minister, you're not listening to me. The prime objective of occupational health is related to preventing accidents. Prevention is certainly the key word in this issue. It certainly has helped increase the awareness of occupational safety and preventative methods. Regulations and standards that your department has adopted have been very well received by the private sector. I really commend you for your openness and willingness to meet people and talk about these regulations. There certainly has been a significant improvement at the worksite.

The private sector consequently has concentrated very heavily on safety and the hiring of full-time safety directors and occupational health nurses. That is large and small companies, by the way. Industries have adopted an ongoing

safety program and have developed routine medical examinations for employees to help offset industrial diseases and poor work hygiene. The workers are becoming more and more aware that these regulations are really for their safety and well-being. They no longer feel that there is infringement and government intervention on their rights. The past few years the public has been aware that loud noises cause deafness and can be avoided by constant use of earplugs. Exposure to asbestos causes lung disorders, as does smoking. Teaching the proper way to lift heavy equipment reduces back injuries. Wearing hard hats and steel-toed boots reduces injuries. There is also radiation protection.

The occupational health regulations and standards, the education programs, and occupational health distribution of literature to labourers, worksites, and employees help enhance the public awareness, reducing particularly compensation costs. The private sector is very concerned about these compensation costs. Even though we have had a lot of awareness and all this education, I was surprised to see in the annual report that the compensation costs have risen. I think that perhaps if we could discuss a way of reducing these costs — I know the private sector, with the downturn of the economy, is certainly not looking forward to any increase in compensation costs. Yet those on disability want more money. I think probably we could help the situation by setting up follow-up or people who will go out and help rehabilitate those who have become disabled. For instance, those with hearing loss could become politicians. They don't get paid very much, but ...

MR. YOUNIE: My students gave me earplugs.

MRS. MIROSH: Your students gave you earplugs? That's good.

There are areas where people do suffer back injuries. That seems to be the number one disability compensation claim. I think that these people can be re-educated into programs and go into a different kind of work. I think our government could be very helpful in that respect. I think that we can also have some follow-up to the disability program. It is very disconcerting about the workers' compensation costs, but we can all work together to improve that by improved communication.

In regard to public health and the reduction of communicable diseases, I'd like to just briefly mention that as a result of these programs over the years, public health has wiped out diseases such as smallpox and polio, increased efforts towards eliminating measles, and reduced incidence of TB. It also has improved awareness of cardiovascular disease, developing health promotion, and increasing awareness of smoking causing coronary artery disease. I say this for my colleagues' sake. With this communication on non-smoking, three-quarters of the population of Canada now do not smoke.

Promotion of health and well-being of the growing aging population: referring to the home care program, I think it is an excellent program. Through my involvement on a hospital board, I know that it has increased over the years. It has kept the elderly at home and has helped them to become independent. But I think we have to look at areas where we can still give them some social interaction. That's as important as the home care that we're giving. Also, as has been previously mentioned, I think there has to be a lot of communication in this area between hospitals and home care. So if the health of the elderly is diminishing, there should be areas to help them adjust to hospital living.

We also must remember that home care is now provided to 20,000 residents, but one area of assistance to the elderly is, once again, to provide the social interaction which they don't currently have. Perhaps, too, this can be promoted with day care, if there can be some interaction with home care and day care hospitals. If there are too many people coming out to give physiotherapy or occupational therapy and you have five people coming out to give service to one, then perhaps it's time to evaluate that care and bring them into a day care situation where they can come to a facility for the day and still get the same type of treatment along with the social interaction and some occupational therapy. This has been very successful in Calgary with our day care hospitals. There are two of them associated with district 7.

Mental health services: this has definitely been an area where there is high quality improvement. Not too many years ago there was a stigma attached to people with mental health problems, and at that time they were all locked in institutions and forgotten about. People just frowned upon mental illness. We've come a long way in a short time in accepting mental illness and bringing people who are mentally handicapped into working areas and accepting them in our society. There are very many programs that have allowed independence of the mentally handicapped. Of course, they are out in the work force, and they're also going into group homes instead of hospitals. I think we've really come a long way there, and I have to commend this department for that.

AADAC: the drug and alcohol abuse centres also provide excellent educational programs. Someone's looking at the clock; I'm winding down, honest.

The programs in general, with the volunteer agencies, community groups, the private sector, public awareness: I think Community and Occupational Health has brought a lot of groups together and a lot of awareness to good health in the community. Communication has been an important factor, and I think this department has done a very good job on that.

Public health nurses with the local boards of health have been servicing schools. I think there is an area where we could perhaps help young teenagers with the suicide prevention and awareness of drug and alcohol abuse and particularly communicable diseases. This could be increased with the help of bringing some of your experts into the schools, providing students with knowledge in conjunction with their educational daily living programs.

In closing, I feel that basically it's an excellent budget. You've done a heck of a good job, and I think that government, the private sector, and communities have worked together very well in this area. I think that your budget is fair, and one very important part of it is that you have allowed the private sector also, by contracting work out. We've all worked together in this area, and your open concept, with meeting people and discussing, acting with them, has been very important.

Thank you.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

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

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion, does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, if any? Carried.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow government business will be Committee of Supply and the estimates of

the Municipal Affairs department. Prior to Committee of Supply, I would advise hon. members that Royal Assent will take place on the two Bills that were given third reading yesterday. Following that, hopefully, Resolution 11 will be moved and concurred in.

[At 10:25 p.m., on motion, the House adjourned to Friday at 10 a.m.]