

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Friday, March 13, 1987 10:00 a.m.**

Date: 87/03/13

[The House met at 10 a.m.]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Each day in this place each one of us is expected to face the ongoing challenge of representing the concerns of all Albertans.

May God grant us strength and wisdom to carry out our responsibilities.

Amen.

head: **PRESENTING PETITIONS**

MR. YOUNIE: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to present a petition of some 1,200 signatures of people requesting the Premier to put a hold on new wildlife regulations.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS****Bill 15****Assessment Appeal Board Amendment Act, 1987**

MR. CLEGG: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 15, the Assessment Appeal Board Amendment Act.

This Bill gives the minister the authority to appoint more members to the Assessment Appeal Board if necessary.

[Leave granted; Bill 15 read a first time]

Bill 13**Alberta School Trustees' Association
Amendment Act, 1987**

MR. CHERRY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 13, the Alberta School Trustees' Association Amendment Act, 1987.

The purpose of these amendments is to describe the role and functions of the Alberta School Trustees' Association as the present Act does not adequately describe its role and function. Section 3 of the current Act is amended to more clearly describe the objects, powers, and purposes of the Alberta School Trustees' Association, including the advancement and betterment of education in Alberta to ensure that the Alberta School Trustees' Association has the legislative authority to set up and administer a benefit plan. With the Alberta [Teachers'] Association, the Alberta School Trustees' Association has set up a benefit plan of insured services.

Section 4 of the Act . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, with due respect, not too detailed with introduction of first. Perhaps this is the last point on the Bill.

MR. CHERRY: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Section 4 of the Act is amended to ensure that the Alberta School Trustees' Association is a nonprofit organization.

[Leave granted; Bill 13 read a first time]

Bill 12**Emblems of Alberta Amendment Act, 1987**

MR. SHRAKE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 12, the Emblems of Alberta Amendment Act, 1987.

The purpose of this Bill is to standardize our emblem colours as set out by the Canadian General Standards Board.

[Leave granted; Bill 12 read a first time]

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bills 15, 13, and 12 be placed on the Order Paper under government Bills for second reading.

[Motion carried]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MISS McCOY: I beg leave to table the 35th annual report for the year ended December 31, 1986, pursuant to the Public Contributions Act.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, in response to the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care's request for suggestions of lists of medically required services to be included for Alberta health care coverage, I'd like to table with the House a list of suggestions from the Official Opposition, which have been entered into in consultation with Albertans throughout the province, particularly 250 Albertans . . .

MR. SPEAKER: [Inaudible] the tabling, please.

REV. ROBERTS: One criteria is that these medical services be less in total cost than the cost of bailing out failed Tory banks.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. Albert.

MR. STRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I have the honour and privilege today of introducing to you and through you to the members of the Legislative Assembly, a group of 55 grade 6 students from Bertha Kennedy school located in the constituency of St. Albert. They are accompanied today by their teachers Mrs. Maria Takacs and Mrs. Emma Valente, as well as three parents: Mrs. Despina, Mrs. Olenek, and Mr. James Esslemont. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that today is as special a day for each of them as I know it is for me, as this is the first group of parents, students, and teachers that I've had the opportunity to introduce to this Assembly. The group is seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, four students from the grade 6 class at Graystone Academy school in my con-

stituency. They are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Klootwyk and Mrs. Stewart, and I'd ask that they stand and receive in the members' gallery the warm welcome of the hon. members.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, it's very seldom I get an opportunity to introduce anyone from the deep south, but I have four people in the members' gallery today who are very active in King's College and are up here to meet with them today from the Macleod constituency: Bill and Pearl, Kevin and Rachelle Nieboer. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Speaker, if we might move from the deep south to the far north, it would be my privilege to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, a gentleman from the Fort McMurray constituency, Mr. Mel Perchinsky, seated in the members' gallery.

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Health Care Insurance

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in spite of mounting evidence to the contrary, the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care continued to insist that his Bill 14 would bring in a statutory and regulatory regime in health care similar to that which obtains in British Columbia and Saskatchewan, and he continued to insist that the purpose of the Bill was to allow private insurance of services not insured by Alberta health care. Has the minister had an opportunity to review Bill 14 since yesterday afternoon, and does he now recognize that its provisions in fact would lead to more like a two-tiered system which obtains in Britain than to a system of regime which obtains in Saskatchewan and British Columbia?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I've had an opportunity since yesterday afternoon to further review the legislation in other provinces, and the situation is this. The provinces of British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Prince Edward Island do limit private insurers to those services not covered by the provincial plan. Information provided to my department by officials of the British Columbia health plan some time ago was in fact the opposite, that British Columbia did not limit private insurers. Those officials met with their legal counsel earlier this week, in fact yesterday, and their interpretation now is that British Columbia does in fact limit private insurers to those services not covered by the provincial plan. The provinces of Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland have no prohibitive legislation with respect to private insurance.

My comments yesterday in this House with respect to Saskatchewan are accurate and those of the Leader of the Opposition yesterday are inaccurate.

MS BARRETT: I believe that the minister omitted one point, and that is that the opposition leader's comments yesterday about British Columbia's Act were accurate.

Yesterday the minister also declined to table the list of recommendations from the Alberta Medical Association with respect to medical practices which might be up for deinsuring. Will the minister now table those medical practices which the government is considering for its hit list for deinsuring?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I indicated that we were assessing the matter on the basis of suggestions not only from the Alberta Medical Association but from other groups across the province and individuals as to what items might be deinsured. I have had literally hundreds of letters from individuals and from members of the medical profession making individual suggestions. I indicated as well that I would be pleased to receive from opposition parties in the House their suggestions for items that might be deinsured. I understand the hon. member this morning has provided some to the House, but I think his list is just those that can be added rather than those that might be deleted, which wasn't really what we had in mind.

Mr. Speaker, just in concluding, I provided this morning to government MLAs a fact sheet -- and it just occurred to me now that it might have been much more useful had I provided it to members of the opposition -- with regard to the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act and the situation which exists in other provinces. I'd be pleased to file a couple of copies with the House so that the opposition would have the benefit of this information as well.

MS BARRETT: Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister outline what mechanisms he has in mind or his department has in place to ensure that whatever deinsuring does go on, whether behind closed doors of cabinet or in this Assembly, does not contravene the Canada Health Act?

MR. M. MOORE: Anything that we do with respect to the changes in the health care insurance plan in Alberta has to be done, in my view, on the basis of its not contravening the Canada Health Act. We would want to, as we have in the past, work fairly closely with the federal minister of health in that regard. As I reminded hon. members yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta health care insurance plan covers a great deal more medical services than any other plan in Canada, so certainly we have some latitude to shift our dollars into the more urgently required medical services, away from some that may not be medically required and still be well within the Canada Health Act.

MS BARRETT: Yes. Well, that didn't quite answer the question. Will the minister now agree to hold public hearings -- and I do mean public hearings -- across the province to allow Albertans in a very public forum to state their case for not deinsuring any other programs or procedures covered by the current provisions of the Alberta health care, or is the minister afraid of the public scrutiny?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I dealt with that matter at some length yesterday. Firstly, I said that I would be certainly prepared to examine whatever written information comes to my office from whatever source in Alberta relative to the health care insurance plan. I made a commitment in answer to a question from the hon. leader of the Representative Party to meet with every one of the professional groups that provide services. I've met with some of them already. I'll meet with some again.

Mr. Speaker, I also indicated to the Leader of the Opposition yesterday that we have in the government caucus, and I hope we have in the opposition caucus, representatives of all of the people of Alberta, and I listen continually to the representations that they make. Before any decisions are made with respect to the health care insurance plan and what is insured or deinsured, the government caucus will have a full opportunity to review it, and

when it's tabled in the Legislature or announced or however it gets here, the opposition will have ample opportunity then to decide whether or not the actions we've taken are appropriate.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Question to the hon. minister. Could the minister indicate whether any services that are either to be insured or deinsured, that that change in program would coincide with the next fiscal year, the 1987-88 fiscal year, so that it has some of the budget implications that are in the mind of the minister?

MR. M. MOORE: Well, I'm not at liberty to divulge what the Provincial Treasurer will divulge on the afternoon of March 20.

MR. TAYLOR: Supplementary to the minister, indeed a very elusive target. Could the minister tell us whether it's his intention, or am I wrong when I interpret his answers to mean that it's not going to be a medical council, it is not going to be the doctors, it is going to be the Conservative Party or the Conservative government that decides exclusively what is insured and what is deinsured?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, the nature of the democratic system is that those who hold the majority of seats usually form the government, and we have a responsibility then to . . . [interjections]

MR. STEVENS: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Would the minister provide the Assembly with information as to what this change means to the principles of medicare and the Alberta health care insurance plan rather than the misinformation we've been getting from that corner?

MR. M. MOORE: I'm not exactly sure, Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member means by this change, but if it's with respect to the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 1987, in practice it will mean very little except that each time an individual or an insurance company wishes to get private coverage for some item not covered or not covered fully by the Alberta health care insurance plan, they won't have to write to me to get a regulation changed to do it. That's what the whole Bill is about; it's very simple, straightforward. There's no hidden agenda. It will still result in a better health care insurance plan in Alberta than anywhere else in Canada.

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question, Official Opposition.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I designate the second question to the Member for Edmonton Belmont.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton Belmont.

Employment Initiatives

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Career Development and Employment. As a result of the failures of employment programs and policies of this government, there are now 145,000 unemployed Albertans in the labour market, up 29,000 from this time last year. Along with the unemployed, the policies of this government are not working. Is the minister now prepared to come forward with new employment policies at this time?

MR. ORMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must say that I share an equal concern or probably a greater concern, I guess, than the Member for Edmonton Belmont, for there's not a day goes by or an hour goes by that I do not have a concern for the rate of employment in this province. I can assure the members opposite that there is not a cabinet committee of this government that goes by or a caucus that goes by without an expression of the concern and discussions about initiatives that we can undertake as a government to alleviate the rate of unemployment, for as we've said before, there is no acceptable rate of unemployment in this province.

One of the ongoing challenges that we have in this province, Mr. Speaker, is to expand the rate of employment with the rate of the expansion of the labour force. There are 22,000 more people working this year than there were last year, but as the hon. gentleman indicates, we have an expanding labour force in this province, which is expanding greater than the rate of employment. And that's no excuse. That is a concern, and that is something that we as a government should address.

So I want to assure the member that everyone on this side is concerned. And I can refer the matter to my hon. colleague the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, for we have a number of initiatives, I believe some 56, that are to deal directly with alleviating the rate of unemployment in this province.

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech on March 5 the government indicated that we would be bringing forward some new initiatives, and in due course during this sitting a number of initiatives will be announced that should be helpful to the present situation that we face in Alberta.

MR. SIGURDSON: I recall, Mr. Speaker, that in 1982 there was a promise that the recovery was just around the corner.

Supplementary then to the Minister of Social Services. Given that a study of almost 2,400 welfare files found that more than 70 percent of employable recipients had received no counseling, no job referrals, and no training programs after six months on welfare, will the minister explain why this government makes no real effort to help those on welfare find suitable employment?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I believe we are making a real effort to make sure that people have an understanding of where they should go for appropriate information as to the course of action for either training or some type of job enhancement. And it is certainly true that I did ask for a review of enough files to give us an understanding as to how the services were being delivered across the province. As a result of receiving that information, obviously we were not satisfied with the way the services were being delivered. A particular person, a senior person, has been appointed in each region to make sure that there is better continuity, that there is a better explanation of what resources are available to people, and we have instituted that since that study was done.

MR. SIGURDSON: Supplementary question again to the Minister of Social Services. Several states in the U.S. have found that increasing benefits and providing training assistance pays substantial dividends.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, hon. member. It's a supplementary question, not supplying of information. Turn it into a question, please.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister carefully examine the successful programs developed in Washington, California, and Massachusetts to determine ways this government might improve its dreadful performance in this area?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I don't accept that it is a dreadful performance, but I do accept the information that the hon. member has supplied to the House and let him know that in fact various programs indeed on other continents are under investigation, both by myself and by my colleague that's responsible for career development.

MR. SIGURDSON: I guess you give a passing rate of 30 percent. My final supplementary, then, is to the Minister of Career Development and Employment. Instead of suggesting that welfare recipients are responsible for the poor economic conditions and the poor economic performance in this province, will the minister now get on with implementing a comprehensive job training and employment assistance program?

MR. ORMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's always room for improvement, and we are continually examining ways that we can improve on our job-creation and training programs. I will be discussing with my colleagues and presenting to this House in the very near future the 1987 labour market strategy that is designed to be sensitive to the changes, the restructuring of the Alberta economy. I should also point out to the member that, as he knows, we are working very diligently on a program that will assist the employables category on social assistance in finding meaningful employment, and that program, too, will be announced in the very near future.

I should also say, Mr. Speaker, to respond to one of his supplements to the hon. Minister of Social Services, that in fact there are bright spots in the Alberta economy. The fact that we are number one in Canada in terms of number of people employed per thousand population I think is a bright spot. It indicates that there are jobs being created in the economy. It's the measure of the economy, the ability of the economy to create jobs. Now, as I indicated, we have to move quicker in terms of dealing with the expanding size of the labour force, the people looking for work in the economy. That's the ongoing challenge, and I believe we're up to the task.

MRS. HEWES: To the minister of manpower, Mr. Speaker. Tell that to the people waiting at the Food Bank.

MR. SPEAKER: To the Minister of Career Development and Employment, please.

MRS. HEWES: To the Minister of Career Development and Employment; I apologize, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister sought help or consulted in any formal or organized fashion with municipal labour, business, and industry to get some real advice on a comprehensive program? Mr. Minister, the answers are clearly not being found over there. They are not there.

MR. ORMAN: Well, yes, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to speak to the Canadian Organization of Small Business in Red Deer just recently, and during those discussions we dealt with how we as a government can deal with them as an industry to take up the concerns that we have with the number of employables on social assistance. No program will be successful in

putting employables on social assistance to work unless we have the co-operation and the consensus of the private sector, because there's where the jobs are being created and there's where the future opportunities for permanent employment lie.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Supplementary question to the Premier. In order to really come to grips with this unemployment question in Alberta, we need the co-operation of the federal government and certainly the private sector in a major way. Could the Premier indicate, in his discussions of the last two days, whether the federal government is now recognizing that some of the funding that's made available in other provinces should now be made available in the province of Alberta to supplement and assist in our employment opportunities here in this province, and also industry opportunities?

MR. GETTY: Certainly, Mr. Speaker. We discussed the matter of additional assistance to the province of Alberta in a variety of areas, in the area of regional economic development and changing the rules under the DRIE arrangement to allow Alberta to participate in a more meaningful way. We discussed, as members I think know, the assistance in helping our coal mining communities. We discussed additional assistance, and I was pressing them for additional assistance, in the energy field, and in job-creation assistance programs as well. We discussed them and we pressed them for them. The understanding has to be the next step and action, and that is where there have been problems with getting the kind of response we would like.

Might I say that in talking, though, with the federal government and people in eastern Canada, when they come and visit us, they are surprised at the strength of the Alberta people who have been hit by two of probably the most major economic developments in most people's lifetime, and that is the problem of the drop in energy prices . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. members,

MR. GETTY: . . . and the problems of the huge subsidy war between the European Economic Community and the United States in the grains area. It is true that they felt Alberta would be devastated far more from those actions than they have been. One of the solutions has been the kinds of programs that my colleague the Minister of Career Development and Employment has been talking about and the huge job-creation effort by the government. While the unemployment rates are too high, nevertheless the huge job-creation efforts by the government have been helping Albertans to get through this period.

Assistance for the Handicapped

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week in the House the Premier was asked about his government's commitment to the handicapped. He waxed poetic about the money the government has spent in the past . . . [interjection] That's two sentences. He waxed poetic about what the government has spent in the past, but avoided entirely the question of continued funding for the Aids to Daily Living program. Now, my question is to the Minister of Community and Occupational Health. Will he carry through with the proposal to make the handicapped, who receive necessary materials from the Aids to Daily Living program, pay a 50 percent user fee for the materials that allow them to participate more fully in society?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, that is a budgetary matter, but I want to make it clear to all hon. members that we are committed to this program and that we will continue to provide benefits to all Albertans who need them. And just as my colleague the Provincial Treasurer as well as the Premier have said many times in the past, our attempts to reduce the deficit will not be done on the backs of the handicapped. They will continue to receive benefits. That's a commitment by this government.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Gretzky has somebody who's an even better stickhandler over there.

Earlier this week, Mr. Speaker, the Premier bragged that the province gives the most of any province to the handicapped. Is the minister aware that a 50 percent cut in the fees would put this record behind a number of provinces who operate programs similar to Alberta's Aids to Daily Living, some of which have recently committed both their words and their money to enhance their programs? Is he aware that that would put us back in the lower echelon, not the upper?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, there is no cut in the benefits provided under this program, and the program will continue to provide the most comprehensive set of benefits anywhere else in this country.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I am indeed pleased to hear the minister say there will be no cut to the handicapped Aids to Daily Living, and I will hold him to it.

This is to the Premier. The Premier promised to establish a council, Mr. Speaker, on the status of disabled persons. When can Albertans expect to see this council in place and functioning, and when would we expect to get the council in place and functioning for the benefit of the province's disabled?

MR. GETTY: Very quickly, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. leader of the Liberal Party would know, the request was made this week on Monday, and we agreed to it. It's been ratified by the government, and we will be moving to create the mandate, the appointments, as quickly as possible.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. Will the terms of reference and the list of prospective members for this council be presented to this Assembly for ratification?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the terms of reference will certainly be presented. The appointments will be made and will be announced. As my colleague the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care said, the leader of the Liberal Party is not a member of the government; he's a member of the Legislature. We have the responsibility; we're fulfilling it.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Member for Edmonton Calder.

MSMJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier. I'm pleased that the Premier is committed to the disabled. Can he then justify why the residential fees for handicapped people are being increased by 40 percent as of April 1?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'd ask the minister responsible to deal with that matter.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, the fees for residential serv-

ices have historically been tied to auxiliary hospital and nursing home fees. But I think all hon. members will be aware, particularly in light of my comments yesterday about the assured income for the severely handicapped, that we have a pension program in place in this province that is unlike any other program in Canada, where in other provinces we deal with it on a social allowance basis and cause people to deplete their assets. Even with the fee increase we are speaking to an amount of dollars that really relates closely to the amount of room and board that it would cost handicapped people, regardless of where they were living, and they still have the most disposable income of any individual in Canada left, notwithstanding the fees that are being paid.

Agricultural Assistance

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture. As of late I've had a number of concerns from individual farmers and farm groups with regard to possible cuts in various programs in agriculture. One of the main areas of concern is with regard to the Alberta farm fuel distribution allowance. Could the minister confirm to this house that there will be no cut with regard to that allowance for the farmers of Alberta?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, in regard to the specific question put to us as it relates to the farm fuel allowance, there was an announcement in the Speech from the Throne. As the hon. Member for Little Bow is aware, half of the program was due to expire at the end of March. We gave the commitment in the Speech from the Throne that we are going to continue. We've allocated additional funding to the farm fuel allowance, which falls under the Provincial Treasurer. But as it relates to budgetary matters, the hon. member, as all other members in the Assembly, will have to wait until the budget is introduced on March 20.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question in the same vein. With regard to the fertilizer price protection program, could the minister commit that there will be no cuts there and the program will remain the same in '87-88 as it was in '86-87?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, as I've just indicated to the hon. Member for Little Bow and as I've indicated on a consistent basis in this Legislative Assembly, we are committed to doing everything within our power to reduce input costs for the agricultural sector. It's an ongoing commitment, but the hon. member is going to have to wait for these specifics when they are introduced by our Provincial Treasurer.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I ask the same question with regard to the red meat tripartite stabilization program. Can the minister make any commitment today with regard to that program, that the funding will remain the same for '87-88?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I can make a number of commitments to the hon. gentleman, and I have done so, to leave him with the assurance that we are going to continue with our strong support for the agricultural sector, the tripartite agreement with the various commodity groups, the federal government, and ourselves. We are committed to those agreements, and they naturally will be continued on an ongoing basis, but as it relates to

the specific figures, again I would ask for the hon. gentleman's patience. He's a long-standing member of the Legislative Assembly, and I'm sure he is aware of the rules and the process as it relates to budget confidentiality. He will have to wait until March 20.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Could the minister indicate in terms of his budget process whether he will be cutting across the board in terms of his programs in agriculture, or will he be selective in his cutting of his departmental expenditures?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, we haven't indicated as to whether we are going to increase the spending for agriculture or whether we are going to cut it or whether its going to remain consistent, because that's why we have a budgetary process in place. Again, I would just refer the hon. member to the March 20 statement that is going to be coming from our Provincial Treasurer.

MR. TAYLOR: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. In view of the fact that three of the four major marketers in Alberta have raised their price of gasoline 1.9 cents a litre, another one raised it 2 cents a litre, has the minister or any member associated with him in the cabinet called the oil companies in to ask them why they are raising gasoline 2 cents a litre when the price of crude oil is still at the same price?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon is aware, this government is more supportive through its farm fuel allowance than any other government in Canada. It's the type of support we are going to continue with. I'm unaware as to whether anybody has communicated with the individual energy companies, and in the event that they have, I will make enquiries and make sure that we get that information back to the hon. member.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Taber-Warner, followed by the Member for Edmonton Centre.

Sugar Beet Industry

MR. BOGLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question also is to the Minister of Agriculture. Sugar beet growers in Alberta and Manitoba have been working with the federal government, the Manitoba government, and our government with the view of establishing a sugar beet tripartite agreement. Can the minister update this House on progress establishing the stabilization plan?

MR. ELZINGA: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member is very aware, because of his own strong representation and the strong representations from the southern Alberta MLAs, we do have some progress to report whereby we have received communication from the federal minister responsible, who is negotiating, that he is willing to sign an agreement with the sugar beet growers and the province of Alberta so we can establish a tripartite program. Regrettably again, as is the tradition with the New Democratic Party, they have proved to be the stumbling block to this agricultural agreement, whereby the Manitoba government is unwilling to participate in supporting a very important portion of our agricultural sector.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. The Alberta government has been supportive of our sugar beet growers in their desire to see a national sweetener policy. Can the minister advise any progress on this matter?

MR. ELZINGA: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member so appropriately put it, it is a national sweetener policy. We are working actively with the sugar producers and with the federal government in the hopes of establishing that. We feel the national tripartite stabilization program is a first step towards the development of that policy, and after signing of the agreement, which we're hopeful can take place in the very near future, we are going to work towards the establishment of an overall sweetener policy for Canada.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Will the minister assure the House that Alberta is eager to sign the stabilization plan at the earliest opportunity -- and I would humbly recommend that the signing should take place in Taber, as that's the heart of the beet industry and where the processing plant is located -- notwithstanding the lack of commitment by the Manitoba government to support its beet growers?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, maybe I can report to the hon. member that just within the last few days we have had discussions with the federal minister responsible. He has indicated his willingness to sign wherever the individual producers wish to have the agreement signed. We appreciate the representation made by the hon. member, and we will give full consideration to signing it in Taber.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, assuming that Manitoba does not sign the agreement at this time, some concern has been expressed by our growers that if Manitoba comes in at a later time, there could be a provision richer than the agreement that would benefit our members. Can the minister assure the members of the Assembly that the agreement to be signed will contain a clause that will assure Alberta growers that they will receive the same benefit that might accrue later to Manitoba growers?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to leave the hon. member and the Legislative Assembly with the assurance that there will be provisions to allow entry into the program on the same basis on which the original individuals and groups do sign. I should indicate though, in all honesty, that the Manitoba government is not participating because they feel the program is too rich and they are not that forward in supporting their agricultural community.

MR. PIQUETTE: To the Minister of Agriculture. Will there be adjustment made to the national red meat stabilization plan to address the concerns of the cow-calf operators?

MR. SPEAKER: The question is clearly out of order. It's a long way from sugar beet production.

MR. TAYLOR: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Taber-Warner erroneously gave the information that Taber was the centre of the sugar beet industry. It is actually Bow Island, Mr. Speaker.

If I may question the Premier on this particular one, I was wondering whether or not he could give access to the cabinet ministers for the opposition members so that the question period

wouldn't be taken up with easy questions from his own back bench.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member is out of order. The Chair recognizes the Member for Edmonton Centre followed by the Member for Edmonton Gold Bar.

Health Care Services

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, may I on behalf of the Official Opposition congratulate the entire Conservative caucus on their bold, courageous, visionary, profound decision not to deinsure the annual medical checkup. All Albertans thank them. The only question is: when was the last time the Tory caucus ever had an annual medical checkup?

MR. SPEAKER: The question has been asked. What is the answer to the question?

MR. GETTY: Speaking for the caucus. Mr. Speaker, we all have them from time to time, and I'm very pleased to report that while it's sad, I think, to all members of the Legislature that one or two members may be ill, and sometimes seriously, the majority are in very good health and performing very well.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, was the Premier offering an opinion there or a medical assessment? But my question is for the minister . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, two questions have now been asked and there seems to be no one willing to respond. Question three?

REV. ROBERTS: My question is for the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care, Mr. Speaker. We have had, as we all know, quite a discussion this week about the declining access to hospital beds and health services for Albertans throughout the province. Can the minister now discern the ironic relationship that exists between the way he's handling his portfolio and his own last name? Because it's becoming glaringly apparent to all Albertans that we are not in fact getting any more health services in this province; in fact we are getting a whole lot less, less, less.

MR. M. MOORE: I don't really think, Mr. Speaker, that comments of that nature deserve any response at all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

REV. ROBERTS: I decline a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton Gold Bar followed by the Member for Cardston.

Education Funding

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is in regard to education. During the past week the Minister of Education has defused the issue of services for special needs students by telling us correctly that her department will maintain special education funding at the current levels. This doesn't change the fact, however, that individual school boards faced

with a 3 percent or 7 percent reduction are cutting back special needs services, in some cases forced to because of contractual obligations. The learning disabled student is already at a grave disadvantage without these kinds of moves. Mr. Speaker, my question is: does the minister realize that boards having to drop these services may lead to a situation where special needs to learning disabled will be provided in some parts of the province and reduced or absent in other parts of the province?"

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the block funding which goes to special education in this province will be consistent next year and this year, as I have indicated several times in the question period and as the hon. member has noted. How boards deal with the complexity of their own budget is a matter for boards to decide. I am fully aware that every school board in this province is working hard to maintain the quality of education to all students in Alberta, including the special needs, and I know they will continue in that effort.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, under the circumstances, will the minister be suggesting to parents of learning disabled students that they should contact their local boards to see if any level of special needs programming will be retained and to use the time between now and September 1 to move to another community where the needs will be provided?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member of the opposition is making a statement which is not true. The students throughout the province in special ed, and all students, are going to continue to have the highest quality education provided to them as they have in the past. School boards are faced with a challenge, however, when it comes to dealing with special education. I have no question in my mind that the way in which special education is addressed and the way in which programs for all students are addressed in this province may be different next year over this year. But that is the challenge in education today. It is the challenge of dealing with the number of dollars, ensuring a quality, and entrusting to school boards, as elected officials in this province, every faith that they will do that. I am not saying for one minute, nor have I said, that it would be the same next year over this year. But school boards are dealing with it as opposed to members of the opposition who continue to thwart their efforts.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, it will not only be different; it will be inconsistent. Given the passing of the buck to school boards and the confidence the school boards can absorb these cuts, even in Calgary, is the minister telling us that in her estimation we're doing enough in this province to serve the learning disabled student?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the use of public dollars is to do the very best possible job within the resources available. We are doing an excellent job in this province. We are reducing a portion of the school budgets, but not until September 1, in an effort to ensure that that quality remains high. The block funding to special education, as I have said on many occasions to boards, is going to be consistent next year over this. How boards deal in the next six months with the challenge of maintaining a program and delivering it and ensuring that the needs of all students in this province are met is a challenge which boards are facing and they are doing it very well.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary. Will the minister assure the House and the parents and families of Alberta that she's going to be consulting with school trustees to find some way -- some way -- that we can assure the same level of services to those special needs students, that they'll be there and they'll be available throughout the province of Alberta?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I consult with school boards and school trustees on a constant basis in this province. I know they are all working very, very hard to ensure that these services they deliver are the very best possible. Can I guarantee, which is what the hon. member is constantly asking, that the services to special education in particular or to all students in general will be exactly the same as last year? No, I cannot, Mr. Speaker. But what I can guarantee is that school boards are doing everything in their power to ensure that the quality of education in this province remains at the high level it is and that they deal with the fiscal problems as best they can. They are addressing the need on a priority basis. They are defining what is the most important part of delivering a basic education program in this province. They will continue to do that.

MS LAING: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Are she and her government not responsible to the people of Alberta and, under the Charter of Rights, to ensure that all children in this province receive an education that meets their needs and addresses their abilities?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is asking whether or not every student in this province has a right to an education. What they have is the right of access to an education. There are responsibilities for government dollars to be spent in the most effective way, and that will continue to be the goal of all educators.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Education indicate whether her department will be able to provide any special support to school jurisdictions that have a ratio of handicapped students perhaps higher than other school jurisdictions and are experiencing financial difficulty meeting these needs?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to get into that in more detail during my budget estimates, but I can say that in maintaining the special education grants at the same level, one of the effects of that is to free up dollars for the severely and multiple handicapped young people in our school system to ensure that those boards that are dealing with a higher incidence of that particular kind of disability will have access to contingency funding.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Cardston.

Game Ranching Industry

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Inasmuch as our agricultural sector is suffering a reduction in revenue and is in real need of some diversification, we have had a game farming program in this province for many years. Could the minister state his position to allow or to not allow game ranching, which is necessary to realize the potential of this industry?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is aware,

under the signature of two of the ministers from our government, we introduced a discussion paper so that we could allow for input from the Alberta population into this very important area. I naturally do have my personal feelings, as does the other minister, but I think it would only be fair that we allow for that discussion period to go on until April 1, at which time we will bring together the various documents that have been presented to us so that we can make a rational decision. And I want to leave the hon. member with the assurance that I'm going to do everything I possibly can to assure the economic viability of our agricultural sector, but we want to take into account all of the input that we've asked for up until April 1.

MR. SPEAKER: Time for question period has expired. Might we have unanimous consent to finish the complete line of questioning?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Supplementary.

MR. ADY: To the minister again. If the program is allowed, is the minister prepared to have it moved to his portfolio, where it would properly be inasmuch as it would be an agricultural program?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is aware, we are a very democratic party. These decisions are made by both our caucus and our cabinet, and at the appropriate time I'm sure that once a decision is reached, we will go on to make that further decision if it is required.

MR. ADY: Can the minister give us a closer time frame of when this decision might be reached?

MR. ELZINGA: Well, once April 1 is here, Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister for wildlife and myself will go through the presentations that we have received and. I would assume, with the valued input from the hon. member who's just presented the questions and other hon. members of this Legislative Assembly, will reach a consensus as to how to proceed after we've received that input. But I would like to underscore what I indicated to him earlier: our deepest thanks for his valued input, plus leave him with the assurance that we're going to examine all avenues so that we can ensure the economic stability of our agricultural sector.

MR. SPEAKER: Additional supplementaries. Member for Calgary Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Supplementary to the hon. Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, who has undergone a conversion on the road to Damascus and has changed his views on this issue and now publicly states that he opposes game ranching in Alberta. I would appreciate if he would tell this House what problems and difficulties he has envisaged with respect to those proposals that were behind his sensible change of views on that particular issue.

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker. I am responsible for the wildlife in the province of Alberta, and outdoorsmen throughout the province have made many, many representations on their views.

When the matter is brought before us for consideration, I would represent their interests and suggest that game ranching be indefinitely postponed, as that is their view and they've made strong representation to that point. I concur with the Minister of Agriculture that we're going to review in detail the public input we've received and would hope that discussions carry on. Early in May I would hope that the public review process could be analyzed, and we would then come to a decision.

MR. SPEAKER: A final supplementary, Member for Edmonton Glengarry.

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you. On the issue of game ranching, considering that there is a game growers' association -- and I believe it has been recognized -- with members on government advisory committees, how can the public be assured that game ranching is not in fact a foregone conclusion regardless of what the public input may show to the contrary?

MR. ELZINGA: Mainly because, Mr. Speaker, the standards of our employees are a heck of a lot higher than the hon. member.

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, on a point of privilege . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. OLDRING: As one of the members of this Assembly that was left on your list of questioners, I want to record my protest. I've only been here a short time, but I've never witnessed such a flagrant abuse and disrespect of this Assembly's time as I witnessed today with the ill-conceived, nonsensical questions put forward by the Member for Edmonton Centre, and I resent it. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair seems to be hearing a number of comments, people eager to get into the debate on whether this is a point of privilege or a point of order. Am I supposed to recognize it? It's neither a point of privilege nor a point of order but perhaps indeed a legitimate complaint with respect to the fact that day after day there are indeed hon. members left high and dry on this speaking list. And so I assume it's just part of the frustration, that many members in the Chamber may feel that they do indeed want to get into question period, and it is indeed accurate that today again I have at least four more members, perhaps even five, who were not . . . [interjections] Order please, in all parts of the Assembly. [interjections] I'm sorry, gentlemen. Order please.

The discussion has taken place. The Chair has mentioned that it was neither a point of order nor a point of privilege but perhaps a legitimate complaint. [interjections] Hon. Member for Edmonton Meadowlark, I'm sure the leader of the Liberal Party should be able to stand up and state what is indeed his complaint without you doing the coaching. [interjections] Hon. member. The Chair does recognize the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: The point of order, Mr. Speaker. I don't think there's any question, and as independent surveys have shown, that the backbenchers on the government side here get more questions than anyone else, any other Legislature across the

country. I maintain they have direct correspondence and direct access to the cabinet ministers. To come into this House and take up time with a bunch of puffball questions is absolutely ridiculous.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Member for Calgary Elbow.

MR. RUSSELL: I'd like to correct an incorrect impression left by the leader of the Liberal Party. If he feels that his members do not have access to cabinet ministers' offices or departments, that's a problem within their own caucus. Certainly, all members of the Legislature have equal access to offices of ministers of the government.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Member for Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order. Over 600 sugar beet farmers in southern Alberta would be very pleased to learn the disregard felt for them by the hon. Leader of the Opposition on so-called puffball . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. members. Sorry, the Chair does not recognize Edmonton Highlands at this moment. There was another point of order from the Member for Calgary Fish Creek. Speaking to the point of order.

MR. PAYNE: Well, Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat taken aback, if not offended, by the characterization "puffball," but I realize it was perhaps an unsuccessful attempt at a one-liner for humour rather than a valid expression of what happens in the House.

Speaking for my own questions on behalf of the residents of Calgary Fish Creek, those questions that they present to me and ask me to bring to the House are decidedly not puffballs, and I know they would like me to have this forum for their questions.

MS BARRETT: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker. It occurs to me that certainly the Official Opposition has made recommendations to the Government House Leader on several occasions with respect to changing the structure of question period to allow more people in. Maybe -- maybe -- this is not just our problem; maybe it's also a government problem and it ought to be looked at that way.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair would like to share some statistics with this Chamber as to what occurred last summer. There were a substantial number of questions at that time, and the Chair has indeed called for a breakdown. At that time 89.3 percent of the questions raised in this Assembly were raised by either the New Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, or the Representative Party. The Chair also attempted in early February to convene -- and indeed did -- a meeting of all House leaders and brought up the issue of question period. So the Chair has been seeking on behalf of the Assembly to reach an amicable consensus with regard to the approach to question period. The Chair can only continue to be the servant of the House as to what has been agreed by consensus by House leaders of all political parties. Question period is ended.

REV. ROBERTS: Another point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: I just doubt it, but let's hear.

REV. ROBERTS: Yesterday in my absence. Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care left some incorrect information with the Assembly in terms of my proposals for the redevelopment of the Mill Woods and General hospitals. He, in his description of my proposals, suggested that I did not provide for any full-scale emergency services at the Mill Woods. This is grossly inaccurate. I thought I was doing the minister a favour by this proposal, which is more than the member for Holy Cross can say when asked for his comments on that kind of inaccurate information.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair really believes, while listening, that while the member may feel that he does indeed have a legitimate complaint as to the exchange of information, once again we're coming up with pseudo points of order in terms of inaccuracy of information or disagreements about interpretation of information. The Chair does respectfully request the Member for Edmonton Centre and the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care to perhaps enjoy a cup of coffee in the members' lounge and deal with their differences of opinion.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

head: CONSIDERATION OF HER HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Moved by Mr. Alger:

That an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To Her Honour the Honourable W. Helen Hunley,
Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Amendment moved by Mr. Martin:

By adding at the end of it:

"but regrets the absence of any programs aimed at achieving a significant reduction in the unacceptably high number of Albertans currently unemployed."

[Adjourned debate March 11: Ms Barrett]

[Some applause]

MS BARRETT: Thanks. Thank you to government members. That's very nice. I hope you'll be able to stick around for a few minutes. I'll try not to carry this particular discussion too long. The subject at hand, however. Mr. Speaker, is unemployment. And I note today . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair apologizes, hon. member, but there should be a little less noise in the gallery and on the floor of the Chamber. Thank you. Please, Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Well, thank you again. We note today that Statistics Canada has released information which now shows that, officially speaking, the unemployment rate in Edmonton has risen to 12.9 percent, the unemployment rate in Calgary has risen to 11.8 percent. This, Mr. Speaker, is happening

while the overall unemployment rate in Alberta increased by .1 percent to 10.9 percent, despite the Canadian drop of .1 percent. It's fairly easy to see that what's going on in the province and in the country is that the new jobs are not being created here. They're being created elsewhere, a very important thing to note.

The Minister for Career Development and Employment continually talks about this famous 20,000 jobs that the government has created, so yesterday afternoon I spent a lot of time in the library, Mr. Speaker, going through every bit of statistics I could lay my hands on. The easiest one I found right away, in StatsCan, indicated that last month, in any event, out of the 144,000 Albertans who did not have jobs, 85,000 were job losers. They're not leaving their jobs; they're losing them. The other fact is that re-entrants constitute now some 28,000 of the unemployed -- 21,000 who have been away from work for more than a year and 7,000 who have been away from work for less than a year, all of whom are looking for real employment opportunities.

I recall the Speech from the Throne last year, Mr. Speaker, in which a number of measures that were to be taken by the government -- this is the April Speech from the Throne, by the way -- and made more specific in the budget that followed just a few days later were really quite specific. They were quite positive; they showed the government's agenda for what was going to be done. And it looked good. Little wonder that we had an election called the night that the budget was delivered. Now Albertans, I think, have every right to ask for those kinds of measures to be outlined in the Speech from the Throne. The hon. minister for economic development enunciated today that sometime during the sitting we will get some new announcements. I'm not sure that's enough, not with the growing number of people in the ranks of the unemployed.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Now I want to address one other subfactor that relates to employment opportunities and employment programs that might be available should the government decide to implement them, and that is an anticipation of this government's and particularly the Provincial Treasurer's response to: we have a deficit. It's true we're going to have a deficit, and I already pointed out, I think on Wednesday, that I think that no matter what happens, we're going to have a deficit. So the question to look at now is: how much of a deficit can we shoulder compared to how much more unemployment can we shoulder? -- and weigh the differences.

Yesterday the Bank of Canada once again dropped its lending rate; it is now at 7.28 percent. That's the Bank of Canada rate. Now, prior to the announcement of that drop, the prime rate was standing at 9.25 percent. With inflation running at about 4 percent per year, Mr. Speaker, and the Bank of Canada rate at 7.28 percent per year, what we're looking at is a real interest rate of about 2.28 percent. It can be off a little bit because it's not always easy to project what the consumer price index inflation factor is going to be, but most economists agree it'll be around 4 percent in the country.

Now as it happens, Mr. Speaker, Canadians tend to borrow from Canadians to sustain whatever deficit it is that they decide to support. The last information I have comes factually from 1984. It's from the Bank of Canada Review, and it indicates that foreign-held public debt as a percentage of net public debt in Canada was 8 percent. That's not a profoundly high

figure. I can think of other countries that have much higher figures of foreignly held public debt. So by and large, we're borrowing from ourselves now at a real interest rate that is very low. 2 point -- sorry; I've lost it again -- well anyway, less than 2.5 percent. That's a real interest rate that is quite low and quite affordable.

On the other hand, if you look at the mounting unemployment in the country and in the province, what you're talking about is sustaining a greater and greater cost in the name of not only the direct social services that are necessary, such as unemployment insurance and social allowance and other provincial programs, you're also looking at costs down the road, which I'm sure all members are familiar with; that is, costs related to higher crime, costs maybe related to higher literacy, costs related to lack of infrastructure.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that the unemployment crisis is actually propelling us into the status of what I called a few days ago a have-not province. It occurs to me that there's a parallel between this province and what our future looks like here and what goes on in Third World countries. And I don't want to overstate the case, I just want to look at a parallel here.

There's a good reason why Third World countries stay Third World countries, undeveloped countries. The big reason, looking at it from a global perspective, is that they don't sustain much public investment in their infrastructure. In other words, it's true that if your primary crop is something like coffee beans, yes, it's true: international investors will invest in those coffee bean plantations. But no one else bothers to invest in the infrastructure that would help those countries develop a more diversified economy. So, yeah, the cheap labour is attractive and the basic resource is attractive, but nothing else goes on. That's why those countries stay impoverished.

That's what happening here in Alberta. You can have a look at the investment prospects as compiled by the Conference Board of Canada, and it's pretty dismal. The third quarter of 1986 indicated that the bulk of potential investors and job creators didn't think highly of investing in Canada or Alberta. They don't see much hope, Mr. Speaker.

I also note that Alberta and Canada have a really high excess capacity rate. Now, the Canadian excess capacity rate in 1986 -- I've only got up till the third quarter -- is about 15 percent, but we know that the Ontario economy is doing very well relative to the Alberta economy and that excess capacity is related to the rate of unemployment obtaining in a province. Theirs is about 5 or 6 percent below ours. What I conclude from this, although I haven't any proof because I don't think the statistics are actually collected -- or I sure haven't been able to find them -- is that the excess capacity rate in the province of Alberta has got to be well in excess of 20 percent. It will be primarily related to the energy sector but also to those industries which rely on the energy sector for its or their businesses.

What we're seeing here is a multiplier effect that I don't think is going to get better without some particularly positive measures. The only way we can do that as a government is to actually decide that there are certain industries that we would like to see developed more, particularly secondary industries, working from our strengths, our two pillar industries, and to get people back to work not in a PEP or STEP or ESP concept, which is that pillar-to-post, temporary employment to unemployment insurance syndrome, but actually talk about

longer term job creation.

I said a few days ago that I don't want to be unduly harsh on this government, and I don't. Because quite frankly I know the big trouble the province is in, and I don't think that anybody in Alberta expects you to eliminate unemployment overnight. It's a foolhardy assumption, and it's not one that I've ever promoted. What we expect, though, is particular targets to be established. Yeah, government would be criticized if it targeted to reduce unemployment by 1 percent this year; yeah, you'd be criticized. But if you kept targeting by 1, 1, 1 percent in consecutive years, before the next election you'd have unemployment down by 3 or 4 percent. And I'll tell you something, Mr. Speaker: it would be the government that would benefit from that, not the opposition. I think that's pretty clear.

The fact of the matter is -- I've said this a million times -- we live in a mixed economy. Government constitutes a fairly high component in the gross national product when we add it up. It's nowhere near as high as the government participation in the economy that obtains in Sweden's economy. On the other hand, Sweden has only had unemployment in excess of 3 percent in three out of the last 14 years, and it has never gone beyond 3.5 percent.

Maybe what we ought to do is take that famous chisel that I now believe is being taken to the medicare system and to the education system, the advanced education system, take that chisel and a little hammer and knock away a little ideology out of the government and start talking about the real facts of life. The real facts of life are that governments participate in an economy and have the ability to direct an economy in a direction that they believe is appropriate. This, by the way, is also done in the United States, where they now have a much lower rate of unemployment than we do. And in fact, the difference between government participation in gross national product and gross domestic product between the United States and Canada is only 1 percent. So much for that so-called free-enterpriser economy in the United States, eh?

Well, it seems to me that if we keep talking about entrepreneurs wanting to take risks, which is what I hear from the government all the time, we have to recognize that they're not taking those risks. They don't see any chance of taking those risks because it isn't worth it right now. In other words, if you don't have the infrastructure and that dynamic necessary for secondary and tertiary development and expansion of the service industries -- service industries, remember, are demand-driven; that means having money in your pocket -- if they don't see those opportunities, they're not going to come here. I think it's up to us to lead the way.

Now, I remember what happened in the 1983-84 fiscal year in which then Premier Lougheed and his finance minister, Lou Hyndman, were projecting a deficit in excess of \$1 billion, and everybody got the big scare, and as a matter of fact, programs were cut because of this deficit. Some of them were cut in a very silly way, if you don't mind my saying, particularly the changes that were made to the social allowance program and the cutoffs of the blue care card access to medicare. While some of those problems have been fixed, some of them haven't. But the fact of the matter is that that deficit scare was just a scare, Mr. Speaker; it didn't happen. We ended up with a surplus that year.

The other thing that Albertans cottoned onto that year is that you can have pretty clever accounting techniques if you want. In other words, you can have a trust fund that's full of

billions of dollars in money and assets and an active revenue sheet, the ledger sheet, of the operating funds and revenue of the government which shows a deficit. The question is essentially: if you've got a whole bunch of money in the savings account and you run out in your chequing account, are you writing a cheque on a deficit or not? That's not the way my bank -- well, actually my credit union -- works. And I don't think that's the way real accounting takes place, because a trust fund does constitute wealth; it constitutes assets.

What I'm really getting at here, Mr. Speaker, is that I don't think the unemployed are going to buy the notion that because we're facing a temporary operating deficit, they should live without jobs and that they should find themselves being shoved from pillar to post and live without hope. I don't think we should accept the coming brain drain. I don't think we should accept the people leaving the province with their skills. I don't think we have to accept any reduced expenditures when it comes to the operating of community schools or, in fact, advanced education or, in fact, medical care, which our party and the leaders of our party fought for decades to establish. I don't think we have to do that at all. I think what we have to ask is: can we afford not to engage in creative programs that will lead to the long-term stabilization of this province and this economy? Can we afford not to?

Sweden has made that choice over the years, and you know what? They've got a much more stable economy. No, they never get the fantastic booms that Alberta gets once every couple of decades; it doesn't happen. But you know, for a country that has way fewer natural resources than Canada, they've never, ever had the busts that we've had. They've never had those troughs. That's because those people know that they have certain mechanisms that they can employ to keep people employed, to allow for social priorities to dominate and make sure that they've got stable progressive growth year after year. I think . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: They sell arms.

MS BARRETT: Well, I don't like that either. [interjections] I am getting a lot of information from various backbenchers. I wonder if we could talk about that afterwards. I find it difficult to take information from four or five sources while I'm trying to speak.

What I was getting at is that the unemployed themselves don't want to have to leave. Mobility of labour is an assumption in Canada, but it's an assumption that has limitations, Mr. Speaker. Not all of these people can pack up and leave. It's happened in my own family; my own brother has had to leave his wife and children here to go to Ontario to find work. I've got another brother who doesn't have any work. I've got another sister who's working only part-time because full-time employment doesn't exist for her. This goes on and on throughout everybody's riding, I'm sure.

Let's not assume that the mobility of labour works both ways either. I remember that in the late 1970s in this province we actually had a shortage of labour, and people did come in, in some instances, though not fast enough to fill the void and get people working quickly enough.

The unemployed people in the province were looking for some indication that there were going to be programs to help stabilize the economy and help reduce the rate of unemployment and let them back into the work force. I've already described how many of them are out of the work force not by

their own choice at all. The unemployed and the employed also recognize that if this had been last year's throne speech, there would be hope. They also recognize that it's very unlikely that we're going to go for an election on March 20, 1987, after we receive the budget.

It's for these reasons, Mr. Speaker, that I believe the throne speech should have outlined measures which would provide for long-term economic stability and growth and job opportunities and jobs themselves instead of what it did do, which was too little.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you ready for the question on the amendment? All those in favour of the amendment by the Leader of the Official Opposition, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The amendment is defeated.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung]

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SPEAKER: The amendment before the House is the amendment as moved to the throne speech debate by the Leader of the Opposition. All those in favour of the amendment, please stand.

For the motion:

Barrett	Mitchell	Strong
Chumir	Mjolsness	Taylor
Ewasiuk	Piquette	Wright
Hewes	Sigurdson	Younie
Laing		

Against the motion:

Ady	Gogo	Osterman
Betkowski	Heron	Pengelly
Bogle	Hyland	Reid
Bradley	Isley	Russell
Brassard	Jonson	Schumacher
Campbell	Kowalski	Shaben
Cherry	McCoy	Shrake
Clegg	Mirosh	Speaker, R.
Cripps	Moore, R.	Stevens
Day	Musgreave	Stewart
Dinning	Musgrove	Weiss
Downey	Nelson	West
Fischer	Oldring	Zarusky
Getty	Orman	

Totals:	Ayes - 13	Noes - 41
---------	-----------	-----------

[Motion on amendment lost]

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon caught the eye of the Chair first.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, in speaking on the main throne speech, it's the first chance for the Liberal Party to make some of its opinions known, and I know the House has been sitting with bated breath all week waiting to see just what we would say. I notice a frantic rush to hear the speakers in their offices, where they can get more direct interpretation and have their advisors tell them what to say when they come sprinting back to the House.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Speech from the Throne started with magnificent words, quote:

My government is concerned about the hardship created by unemployment and weakened business conditions, especially in energy, agriculture, and construction.

Well, it's an empty promise, since the speech contains nothing for the unemployed and never again mentions the problems that the province faces, especially in "energy, agriculture and construction."

We've seen question period after question period go by when we can bet that as sure as the sun rises and sets, the Premier will get up once, if he's in the House, and brag about the strength of Albertans to take on adversity and fight through these rough times. It's very hollow encouragement indeed for the fellow that's sitting out there fighting these rough times that hasn't even had to face whether or not he would take a 10 percent cut, as the members of the Legislature have had to face, hasn't had to face whether or not he's going to get to trade to a better car or not, as the members of the cabinet have been able to worry about. He or she hasn't had to worry whether or not their assistants are going to be paid for. They can't even get a job as an assistant, let alone have an assistant. This is the type of -- the throne speech is very hollow encouragement indeed.

And we talked about employment. The throne speech mentioned a "labour market strategy." It was capitalized as if to signal something new, capitalized in much the same way, I suspect, that many of the back-bench questions are given to them by their cabinet ministers when they come in for question period. But the capitalized portion in there -- very interesting: labour market strategy. Now this strategy should provide hope to the intolerably high number of unemployed in the province. We have a very high unemployment no matter which way you look at it, and to point out that it's due to depressed oil prices escapes the fact that there is no oil in most of Canada's 10 provinces. But how far would you get in Newfoundland by saying that the oil prices are depressed? Or how far would you get away in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, or Quebec or Ontario by saying that the oil prices are depressed? No, we talk about the oil price is depressed -- sure, we do produce a lot of oil. But whose fault was it that we developed an economy that's almost entirely dependent on selling off the capital assets that really belong to our children and grandchildren? Now we say, "Well, it's because the oil price is depressed."

I will compliment the government, however, on their long overdue establishment of a women's career resource centre. But unless this government starts to seriously address the employment situation in the province, it probably won't be too long before we have to establish a career resource centre for unemployed Tories.

Let's look at agriculture for a minute. We have tried to bring some legislation, tried to set up a committee that would look at how we could restructure the whole area of aid or price support to agriculture. It got very little discussion, but one day a Tory did get up to make his comment on it, the hon. Member for Stony Plain. All he did was go into -- what? -- the crop insurance plan. Well, the crop insurance plan has little or nothing to do with restructuring the whole system of how we run a market economy or how we run an economy that gives aid to the farm family. The committee he spoke of, that the hon. Associate Minister of Agriculture has had touring the province, has done good work in its own way on crop insurance and flood insurance and a number of areas. But it's a much broader look needed than that. In fact, I think the time has come when this government has to look very seriously, very seriously . . .

MR. HERON: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon makes reference to certain things I said yesterday, which is not true. I made reference to the Agricultural Development Corporation. Nothing to do with the hail corporation, sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Back to the Speech from the Throne.

MR. TAYLOR: When it comes to splitting hairs, the Member for Stony Plain probably will take the top prize. But the fact is that he was talking about the fringe of agriculture, what to do, and I'm talking about a basic restructuring.

And now let's talk a little bit about energy. [interjection] While we're on the subject of waking up -- the speech claims that the energy industry is gaining confidence. Well, that is rather intriguing to hear. I don't know what confidence they're gaining, because certainly the rig count is down. I suppose the speech was written maybe in December -- or its first brief, the first draft -- and it might be called a typographical error. They hadn't been able to get a chance at the rig count in January and February and the sudden plummet in the rig count.

Nevertheless, there were some questions that have to be looked at very, very seriously in energy, and the throne speech didn't go into them. There is a problem building up on the horizon, the conventional oil projects versus the synthetic ones. Conventional oil, for the information of the House -- and I guess most are familiar anyhow with it -- has been the prorated or has been the surge tank, you might say, of oil production. Those people that have heavy oil plants and tar sand plants, usually when they get a permit from the conservation board want a permit to go ahead because they need 100 percent throughput, get first call on the market. The conventional oil producer, the person that has drilled a well, has the surge or the make-up. If the market is large, of course, the conventional oil wells produce large amounts. If the market is down low, the conventional oil wells are the ones expected to cut back because the very permission that granted the tar sand plants and the heavy oil plants within it, in order to get the capital funding for it, carried a guarantee, so to speak, that they would get first suck at the tap. In other words, they get the first oil production.

There has been nothing in the throne speech to indicate that as this government's fascination, if you want to call it that way -- you might almost call it an obsession with megaprojects and large corporations -- proceeds, you can see them setting us up for that when they say that Canada is going to be short of energy in the future and we have to worry about energy guarantees. Therefore, that is a euphemism usually for the major company

and the big government to say, "Well, we know where this oil is at; it's in that heavy tar sand; it's in that heavy oil; therefore, we're going to put money in there to guarantee that return." And of course the large corporations love that; they own the tar sands. Most people I don't think realize it, but there are less than 10 companies that own 95 percent of Alberta's tar sands. Consequently, when you go into developing tar sands, you're talking to only a few of the megacompanies of the world and not the small oil producers around Alberta.

Also, while we're talking about that, what's interesting in the conventional oil versus the megaproject concept is that conventional oil is really not able to say how much oil is out there. In other words, they uncover it as they go out to drill. In fact, if you go back 10 years, for instance, and look at the Canadian Petroleum Association figures, the reserves they had at that time -- that is, the reserves for Canada in times ahead -- were probably less than they have today. In other words, that horizon continually moves forward. I will use an example. In the United States in 1927 they had a 12-year supply of oil and 18 as to conventional oil in the market that they were serving. When the end of the war came in 1950, which was 27 years later, they had an eight-year supply. In other words, the continual finding of conventional oil as you explore is something that necessitates and awaits the drill going down to find it, whereas the megaprojects and tar sands or, as they call it, synthetic oil -- we know the reserve is there, and all it is is a question of developing a method to get it out economically. One area, we know the reserve is there; we've got to get the economical way to get it out. The other area, we don't know what the reserve is.

So when people and when throne speeches and others start talking about energy security, such terms as that, you have a natural fear that they're preaching the line sent out of New York and London: let's put huge megabucks into the synthetic oil industry. And that I can tell the people of Alberta would certainly be a retrograde step not only in jobs created -- because so much goes into capital when you do a synthetic crude plan -- but also in how it is spread through the province. The tar sand and heavy oil plants are only in a small sector of the province, whereas conventional oil ranges all the way from Waterton in the south to Slave River in the north and Jasper in the west and to Chauvin in the east. So it spreads out through the small towns. Also, because it's scattered over such a wide area, it brings in much income for the provincial government in the sale of leases, whereas the tar sand plants, which have already been sold -- as I mentioned, already 95 percent owned by a few big companies -- there is no land to sell.

When we looked at jobs, though, one of the things that has to bother you -- maybe I'm getting ahead of myself; I'm looking at education, maybe, rather than jobs, but they're inexplicably tied. You cannot separate education and jobs on two levels. Education is what is necessary for a modern society to stay fully employed. If you argue that unemployment is in fact a disease, the only vaccine that has really worked for the last 50 years against unemployment has been education. You can study countries or areas, and nearly always it's the level of education which their people are at that will dictate to you what the unemployment rate is. Consequently, education is very much tied to employment. And particularly now, as our society has developed more and more, become more technically oriented, education is tied to it. So when we start talking in the budget or in the throne speech and indicating that we're cutting money to education, we're jeopardizing our children's future at getting jobs and competing in the rest of the world and, maybe more so, even

jeopardizing the pensions some of us with silver hair are expecting to get in the years ahead, because it's our youth working and supplying income tax and funding pension plans that will decide what our retirement pensions are and how secure they are. That's one part of education and jobs.

The second part -- and this is what's truly amazing to me. It shows you how much the people across on the other side, Mr. Speaker, have bitten the old antediluvian philosophy of before 1950 that if you can keep the extractive industries and the manufacturing industries going, you're going to get jobs. They don't seem to realize as they're talking about creating jobs that when you put a dollar into education, 65 to 70 cents of that dollar goes directly into jobs, whether it's to pay teachers or bus drivers or janitors. A wide range, everyone from a PhD down to a grade 8 dropout, works in our education system, and they absorb 65 to 70 cents of every dollar spent on education. Something is wrong.

If you came here from Mars and saw this government sitting here with, let's for argument's sake say \$500 million, 500 million shekels, 500 rupees, whatever you want to call it, and they said, "I'm going to go put it into a megaproject," in every megaproject, every job that's created takes only about a nickel out of every dollar because the other 95 cents is spent importing fancy equipment; long, heavy patents; and all the rest that goes into developing megaprojects and all of that. That's the job creation you're getting. It would naturally follow that this little man from Mars would say, "Well, if you have unemployment, wouldn't you spend money on education?" Because your money goes somewhere like 50 times as far in creating jobs and at the same time the fallout that it encourages, that comes from that, creates more jobs as you turn out educated people -- fantastic.

No. It's because we haven't found a method or that nobody's sat down and found a method of measuring the benefits of education directly. Free enterprise is always ready to tell us. And I think I've probably practised as much free and as much enterprise as anybody has in this House, sometimes with good effect, sometimes with not good effect. But what I want to tell you is that when we have the private sector, we've developed ways of how to measure jobs. This is in part because we sit there and we measure how much profit we make out of a barrel of oil, how much we make out of a pair of shoes. But we haven't sat down and measured how much our society makes out of a plumber, makes out of a teacher, makes out of a doctor. We don't seem to realize that the enhanced income tax that that person pays and the jobs and the multiplier effect return a huge amount.

It might be interesting. This is just an experiment, and I hesitate to bring it forward, knowing some of the right-wing fanatics I see sitting in the back row there. But if you were to sit down and develop a system whereby free enterprise could fund a student and that student would pay a certain percentage of their income for the rest of their lives to free enterprise, I think you'd be surprised how fast my financial capital would start showing the rest of us how much return there is in educating a person.

It's just that the private sector has no direct return in educating that student that you don't see them moving into that field. But we the taxpayers long ago decided that it was too delicate an area to turn over entirely to free enterprise, that public education is one of the basic backbones of our free democracy, that everyone has a right to it and everyone has a chance to take advantage of it. Part of it is that they pay it back in income tax in

the years ahead. Consequently, though, we have not taken the time out to realize how much it -- education -- returns down the road. We can measure easily what a barrel of oil does or a pair of shoes because we always have Esso or Bata or somebody telling us over and over again. But nobody has sat down, or they've very little worked out how a well-educated worker in our society turns out.

Now we go on with the throne speech. Maybe I thought we'd be saved by the speech referring to -- here again, the speech writer for the Tory party has to be one of the most outstanding magicians in the world. The ancient alchemists were thought to be able to turn lead into gold, but the Tory speech writers can turn a tired old party into something with "exciting new opportunities" in a whole series of industries. That was in the throne speech, believe it or not: exciting new opportunities in a whole series of industries. The only opportunities I've seen so far are the puffball questions.

Nevertheless, let's move on. They go on to say "the science industries." I'd like the government to name them. I think they mention the film industry. This is a sector worthy of some support but one that is not known to employ thousands of people. Food processing. Is this some hope, is this some indication that the Associate Minister of Agriculture has finally got them to get the Crow rate paid to the producer? Maybe that lobbyist is earning his money after all. Maybe something is sneaking through. A glimmer of light indicates that maybe the food processing -- that's the only way it could take off.

Forest products. Well, I haven't seen any representation from the provincial government, Mr. Speaker, to try to take the 5 or 8 percent federal sales tax off building supplies, which includes timber. That would help. But if the dialogue of the depth that now exists between this government and the 20-some Tory MPs down in Ottawa continues, I don't think we'll ever get that excise tax taken off. Nevertheless, that was a glimmer of hope that I could see through the fog.

Now, diversification. The government talked about diversification. I think this is again a case that if the government talks long enough about it, they'll start to think it will somehow happen. You remember that in last year's throne speech they talked about diversification at a magnesium plant. Well, the ancient government of which the member on my right from Little Bow belonged to at one time had a Premier -- I can still remember that; maybe this is what they're taking a leaf out of -- and one election he promised they would build a Jubilee Auditorium. Four years later he announced they'd dug the basement. They could see they were starting it, so they won that election. Four years later he completed it. He won three elections with one auditorium, and this is the same way that maybe will be used with the magnesium plant. Last election we announced a magnesium plant. Now it's disappeared. It sounds like they are going to dig the foundation for it for the next election. And who knows? It might be in the election after that, just in time for the Liberals to open it.

When I go on through the throne speech, of course, I want to hand out one posy. [interjection] I'm having a little trouble with my friends on the right. Yesterday they wanted to go over and join you people. We had to nail their chairs down to the floor. But today they're back again, only voting with you but on this side of the House.

The question of tourism. Now, I know, somewhere lurking back in the bowels of this Legislature, there is the Minister of Tourism listening on his PA, and I would like to get across to him that I applaud the government and his recognition of the

importance of tourism and the establishment of a tourism education council. Alberta has boundless potential for tourism and development, and I think the government is doing its best to exploit it. And I can add little more to him. I think that Tourism is doing a great job, and whether you come to that museum down in Drumheller to look at dinosaurs behind glass or you come up here to Edmonton and look at the dinosaurs to the right of Mr. Speaker, it nevertheless is an area that is a great thrill to anybody coming to the province.

Now, in the field of labour, I'm looking forward to the introduction of a new labour code. It's a little hard to figure out just what's going to come about. The Reid report was interesting; it touched a lot of bases. For somebody that must have been very tired after circling the globe to come out with something like that indicated a certain amount of tenacity and perseverance. But possibly they left the person that wrote the report at home while they went on the trip; it's hard to say. But I'd like to look at what the Reid report, the labour report, is going to look like after it comes through the caucus mill back there.

I do applaud the government's consultation with the Union of Public Employees over the downsizing of the public service. I think that the Premier had some moves in the right direction, and if he's lurking back in his den with his speaker on, besides giving him the dickens all the time, Mr. Speaker, for not having the same space under the dome as the other parties have, I hope he will nod towards his speaker and give a friendly bow in acknowledgment of the fact that I think that he handled the downsizing of the public service reasonably well. [some applause]

In health and social services . . . Go ahead and applaud. I wonder what I've been doing wrong.

I also have praise for the government's plans to review the hospitals system, to establish a minister's advisory committee on the ambulance system -- that's long overdue -- and bring in a new Mental Health Act which emphasizes the rights of patients. This is moving into the 20th century with a vengeance, and I think it would be small-minded of me to even say that it took years to get there. Instead, I want to hand out the compliment for moving forward. Once again I think that, indirectly, we would have to praise the electorate of Alberta, Mr. Speaker, for having put in a large enough opposition so that the government is reacting and bringing forward some of these plans, including seat belts, which was just announced the other day, after all these years.

But my limited optimism quickly disappears as I read on. Under Native Affairs I saw that there is no mention of a First Ministers' Conference on aboriginal rights. How could such an important conference be ignored in the throne speech? We're the province with one of the highest percentages of native peoples anywhere in Canada. Clearly, I think we have to give some leadership. We have to show that we're interested in the native problem, helping them move forward along not only their own agenda but trying to co-ordinate our agenda in with them. You know, clearly the government demonstrates discomfort with reconciling its hostility to the notion of native rights with the fact that we'll have to sit down in full view of the Canadian public and deal with this issue. We've run away from native rights for years. This government is probably one of the most sinned governments when it comes to leaving native rights behind. But I pray that when the first ministers do meet on this very important subject, this government doesn't blacken Alberta's eye by refusing to be part of a national consensus, as we have done in some other time.

Women's issues. If we refuse to be part of the national consensus on native issues, I think that the same thing happens here when it comes to women's issues. If you'll pardon the pun, we seem to be the odd man out on women's issues. For years, when I look at their plans in this area, and for the next session, it doesn't seem if we're going to accomplish much. Consequently, the Alberta Liberal Party has put on the agenda a move towards at least a pay equity system within the public sector, just within the public sector, because we feel that by putting it in there, it will spread through to the large corporations and from there on through the normal laws of supply and demand through the rest of industry.

Now, the throne speech said it had plans to develop "a governmentwide plan of action to provide a framework and direction for enhancing women's equality." The absence of any reference to this in the latest speech, my recollection of what the government has actually done for women, plus my desire to take the government at its word can only mean that its advisory council, that little piece of window dressing, represents its governmentwide plan. Now, if that Tory-appointed, cabinet-answerable-only advisory group is considered "a framework and direction for enhancing women's equality," then the elephant has laboured long and mightily to bring forward the most tiny of mice. I think we ought to see a lot more, and I think our people of Alberta deserve a lot more than just a women's advisory council.

As I've mentioned, we're going to sponsor pay equity, and also along with women's issues, we're going to sponsor our own Bill on child care standards, and we'll demonstrate that the government's inability to tackle these important issues is not shared by all this Assembly.

Federal/provincial relations. Finally, Mr. Speaker, we come to a very important area and, for this government, a very sensitive area: federal/provincial relations. The speech boldly states, "My government is determined that Alberta receive its full share of the benefits of Confederation." Mighty words. Mighty words for a government that spends most of its time in retreat. Syncrude fell through, federal assistance to agriculture has been less than adequate, and the latest federal budget has to be an insult to everyone in this province. The federal Finance minister says, "Gee, isn't it too bad that the western economy is dependent on world commodity markets?" Well, I recall when the eastern economy was dependent on world commodity markets and we put a national energy policy in that said the price would be looking after the easterner. And what happened? Now the Tory turns around and says: "Well, well. Let free enterprise reign, because you in the west are going to get less." How far do you think your government would go if the price of oil shot to \$40 a barrel tomorrow? Just how far? I would bet you that you would have the price of oil controlled so fast you wouldn't even get a chance to put the first two syllables of the words "Brian Mulroney" together. This is how fast it would take here.

The Premier has made much recently of some phantom Liberal-New Democratic alliance that has conspired to ravage the west. Now, the conspiracy view of history, that somehow or another there's somebody up there that's going to get us, that there's somebody out there lurking behind those posts that's going to leap out and get all those little right-wingers, seems to be something that's basically bred into this government. I don't know just how they go about arriving at that. Certainly there's somebody out there trying to get you. But I would suggest that it's your own federal MPs. I would suggest that if you're looking for anybody that's trying to shaft you, you have to go to

your own MPs.

As much as I get great fun, Mr. Speaker, at baiting the bears over there -- I should say the pussycats -- throwing little pufballs that they play with in their cages, I'm afraid that time is moving me to the end now. And all I can say is that for a speech that appeared to be such mighty strides forward, they obviously had their shoes on backwards and they were really tippy-toeing to the rear all the time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Associate Minister of Agriculture.

MR. TAYLOR: Pussycat.

MRS. CRIPPS: I won't say meow.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to join in the throne speech today. I have to commend you on refurbishing the Legislature and the Assembly, although I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, you've got to be an acrobat to get in these chairs. And the lighting still leaves something to be desired.

Mr. Speaker, I was going to respond to some of the points made last Monday, but I think it's long past due and I'll ignore them. Every time I walk through the doors of the Legislature I'm reminded of the awesome responsibility that we have as legislators to the people of this province: responsibility to our ancestors to protect the heritage and the freedom; responsibility to Albertans today to provide opportunities for personal initiatives, to build on strengths, to maintain our excellent educational, medical, health and social services -- and I'm glad that the Liberal speaker last week acknowledged that it doesn't matter how much money is spent, but it is how well you spend it -- to provide for those with special needs and to encourage the incredible optimism, enthusiasm, self-reliance, ingenuity, and resourcefulness of Albertans; and responsibility to future generations to protect our heritage of air, water, and environment, to differentiate between want and need so that we don't mortgage their future; and to provide leadership that weighs today's decisions in terms of tomorrow's ramifications.

Mr. Speaker, as an elected representative, each of us has a challenge to keep faith with the past, to provide good government for today, and to build for tomorrow. I'm reminded of the prayer which says: God grant me the courage to change those things which I can change and accept those which I cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference.

On Saturday, Mr. Speaker, I attended the opening of an auction mart in Drayton Valley. The owner talked about making use of poplar instead of burning it, and we're doing that now. He talked about turning grass into a finished product by cattle and meat packing plants, and boxed beef, and we're doing that now. He said he had a dream. Mr. Speaker, today's dreams are tomorrow's realities. Dreams are what the future is really made of.

Let me talk about the Drayton Valley constituency. There's no question it's been devastated, as all other communities, by low oil prices and low agricultural commodity prices. Each of the communities, particularly the towns and villages, is looking for new diversification and a broader business base. Each and every community is concerned about the education system, post offices, how government reductions in spending will affect them. At the same time, each of these communities is well aware that neither they nor the government can, in all good conscience, spend beyond their means.

But let me tell you some of the positive things that are happening in my constituency. Each of the incorporated communities in my constituency -- Devon, Calmar, Thorsby, Warburg, Breton, and Drayton Valley -- has excellent serviced lots for both housing and industrial development available. They're looking forward to new businesses and new homes in their communities. Drug stores have moved into Calmar, Breton, and Drayton Valley. New food stores have opened up in Thorsby and Breton; new garages in Breton and Drayton Valley, although I'm sorry to say Calmar had one burn down. Phase two construction of the research centre has been announced in Devon. A new village office, meat processing facility, and go-cart track have been constructed at Warburg. All of these businesses are new jobs in the community or the maintenance of jobs which were already there. The Drayton Valley auction mart has opened a new facility, and the reopening of the Thorsby auction, a long-standing community business in Thorsby, is welcome. Auction marts are very important in rural Alberta in that they are the farmer's barometer of the marketplace, a market for his product, and a place to meet friends and neighbours.

Probably the most significant development in Drayton Valley constituency was the construction of an oriented strandboard plant by Sturdi-Wood in Drayton Valley. They produced the first board at 3:15 p.m. on Saturday, February 14, and have already had their product approved by the American international Plywood Association. The Sturdi-Wood board plant brings a third dimension to the resource base of the town and provides 450 jobs, which helps alleviate some of the high risk attached to a one-industry town and, by the way, to some of the jobs lost during the last few years.

Forestry, Mr. Speaker, is a renewable resource, and we are just beginning to utilize the hardwood. I'm especially proud of the Alberta government's commitment to ensure long-term availability of the forest and of our reforestation program. I'd encourage all members to go through the Smoky Lake nursery -- see you, Nick -- and research centre at Smoky Lake. Our commitment to utilization of the forest resource, to reforestation, to management, and to the preservation of the wilderness and the wildlife heritage is second to none.

Mr. Speaker, the national energy program of 1980 had a devastating effect on the Drayton Valley constituency. We immediately felt the effects of the cutback in the oil industry, particularly in the oil well servicing industry, and have lost jobs throughout the constituency. The Drayton Valley constituency, particularly Devon and Drayton Valley, have been working to overcome the national energy program and the loss of jobs due to the low prices and the instability of oil and gas today.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency stands proud as a pioneer in the oil and gas industry in this province. On February 13 I had the privilege of attending the 40th anniversary of the Leduc No. 1 Well, the most significant event in Alberta history. Leduc No. 1 ushered in a new era of economic activity, of diversification, and of Alberta leadership. Leduc No. 1 led to the development of a specialized oil technology in cold climates, to a vibrant and progressive industry, to an oil and gas supply for Alberta and to Canada, to a world recognition of Alberta expertise and leadership, and to Alberta services second to none. The importance of Leduc No. 1 is exemplified by the designation of the site last November as a provincial historical resource.

Mr. Speaker, to the engineers, the geologists, the tool-pushers, the roughnecks, the hands -- most of them green -- working in freezing cold and summer heat, in snow, rain, and

oil, drilling for black gold, and to Imperial Oil and crew: on behalf of Alberta, thank you for your courage, belief, ingenuity, determination, commitment, intuition, and instinct, and finally, to the technical skill, quiet determination, and sheer nerve of the geologist who said, "Drill here."

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to pay special tribute to the oil wives who followed their husbands to Devon and Drayton Valley and other towns to live in skid shacks and trailers and eventually modern homes. These women are the unsung heroes of the oil industry. They and their husbands and families, and the pioneers before them, are the founders of the communities. The West Pembina oil field with 7 billion barrels of known reserves is one of the largest known fields and is also one of the most reluctant to give up its oil.

Mr. Speaker, over the years we've moved from the oilmen who discovered the resource, pioneered production in a cold climate and built pipelines and pipeline companies to move it, to a new enhanced recovery technology which can recover another billion barrels over the next 40 years. Enhanced recovery is very important to my constituency. It's not a pipe dream; it's a technical reality. And given the right conditions and regulations, we can make it a tangible reality. Esso Resources, Texaco at Mulhurst, Mobil, and Amoco are looking at major enhancement recovery opportunities in the Drayton Valley constituency.

Mr. Speaker, fairness in the taxation system in natural resources, such as the depletion allowance and flow-through shares for the oil industry, is critical. We all recognize the importance of Alberta's contribution to Confederation in the form of low oil prices and, if you want to go back before that, low grain prices during the war. Now we're asking to be treated on the same basis as the rest of the country in taxation and natural resources: given an opportunity for equity investment and resulting activity.

Mr. Speaker, last week the Solicitor General designated the Alsike centre as an impaired driving program centre to raise the awareness level of impaired driving offenders of the seriousness of alcohol abuse and driving while impaired. We had another very tragic illustration of that this week. I'm particularly pleased that the program will include Alcoholics Anonymous, the drug abuse commission, and People Against Impaired Drivers. I hope that this will in some way reduce the number of impaired drivers on the road, which, as many of you know, has long been a concern of mine. I still believe the only way to resolve that problem is for it to become publicly unacceptable to drink and drive.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to note the final decision of the new municipality of Drayton Valley will be made this spring. I'm glad that the people of these communities are finally going to have an opportunity to determine their own future.

I guess if there's one thing that I'm concerned about, and I know all Albertans are concerned about, it's the young people who are unemployed. No question that we are all concerned. It's a major concern of theirs, and I'm glad to hear the House leader for the Official Opposition finally say that they don't expect us to be able to resolve all of the unemployment problems. But, Mr. Speaker, it has to be a major disappointment for a young person to go out -- not only a disappointment; a disastrous feeling, I guess -- looking for a job and find that nobody wants them or needs them. One of my concerns is that unemployment may become a way of life.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture is the other cornerstone of my constituency, and it's not a particularly good time to be a Minister of Agriculture, or a farmer, for that matter. But it certainly is a

challenging time. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak today, because this is the end of Agriculture Week. This week's theme, Partners in Progress, reflects the many and varied partnerships that exist in this industry. I believe the decision to appoint a woman to Agriculture is an example of the government's commitment to recognize the many contributions of women to the family, the community, the province, to business, and to our country. The appointment is also illustrative of the government's recognition of the partnership in agriculture. Many farms in the province are successful because of the contribution that both partners make in the business of farming.

And women want to be recognized, Mr. Speaker, for the full partners that they are in marriage, in agriculture, in business. Women also want to be recognized for themselves: independent, capable, and ambitious. Maybe, just maybe, they'd also like to hear that it's fashionable to be a mother and a companion. Cooking, gardening, being there when the children are coming home, and volunteering are just as valuable and maybe even more valuable in terms of a contribution than bringing home dollars from the workplace. Either way, I know that we all have a commitment to ensuring that our daughters have the same opportunities, equal to those of our sons. International Women's Day last Sunday also recognized the important role that women play.

I want to thank my partner in the agricultural portfolio. Peter Elzinga, for his contribution to the betterment of agriculture in this province, and for the excellent working relationship that we have. I know that Peter brings to this partnership his excellent knowledge and insight into the federal government, whose support in our endeavours is key on policy and trade issues. I hope that I can contribute my grass-roots knowledge and insight to the industry in a valuable manner.

I want the Members of the Legislative Assembly and all Albertans to know that we have a Premier who is interested in agriculture, a Premier who has made it his business to understand agriculture and the problems in agriculture and is willing to try and resolve them. As an Associate Minister of Agriculture I am extremely pleased that the Premier chairs the agricultural and rural economy committee of cabinet and cares enough to take a personal interest in agriculture.

I have no illusions about the problems in agriculture, nor the difficulty in resolving them, based on the province's economic picture, our dependence on world markets, and the incredible subsidies by the European Common Market and the United States. And we cannot begin to win that war of treasuries. The billions of dollars poured in by the United States and the European Common Market are less than 1 percent of their gross national product. The European Common Market has 375 million people. There is a vast difference in the effect of the internal subsidies in these countries on their export and on ours. For instance, the EEC exports \$2,000 worth of agricultural product per farmer, the United States exports \$6,000 worth of agricultural product per farmer, and we export \$24,000 of agricultural product per farmer. You can see that the impact of the European Common Market internal social economical decisions has 12 times the impact on our farmers that it has on theirs.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

That's why the Leader of Opposition's saying that we can subsidize our way out of the problems is so illogical. Mr. Speaker, Agriculture Week and Partners in Progress, agriculture, and agribusiness contributions contribute billions to our provin-

cial economy through a wide range of activities that includes everything from growing crops and livestock to packing your groceries at the supermarket. One in three Albertans is involved in some facet of agriculture.

In 1985 Albertans consumed an astounding \$5 billion worth of food products, \$3.4 billion through retail food outlets and \$1.6 billion through hotel and restaurant trade. Fifty percent of those goods were produced here. Also in 1985 more than \$4 billion worth of agricultural products were exported. Consumers are the major beneficiaries of the new products, the new packaging, and easier and quicker prepared foods.

I'm excited about the things I've seen in agriculture. We're a seed stock producer because in many cases we're disease free. We have specialty crops. I had the opportunity to tour the bean plant at Bow Island, and they export to 60 different countries, and they've just expanded. The sugar plant at Raymond, an alfalfa cubing plant, Lakeside Packers and Feeders, BioTechnica, and the canola crushing plant at Sexsmith: there are exciting opportunities. There are new crops, beans and peas, more than ever.

Alberta has always been considered, Mr. Speaker, a poor supplier of alternate crops. You know, we had markets for pearling barley and buckwheat, and we've lost them because we're not considered to be a stable supplier. So we have to make a concerted effort to market new crops, and then we have to become, and be seen to become, a reliable supplier. Oats were described as a new alternative crop the other day. Ninety percent of the crop in the west end of my constituency is oats. But there are marketing opportunities and especially secondary processing opportunities.

Some Alberta crops available to our secondary processors for human consumption are at a disadvantage in comparison to other provinces. We have to work to ensure that the valuable contributions of secondary processing in this province have the same access to supplies as elsewhere and aren't disadvantaged by being tied into a single market or by transportation from other provinces.

If there's one thing I want to do in my term as Associate Minister of Agriculture, it's improve the marketing opportunities of our farmers. I believe that the farmers themselves, their commodity organizations, their producer associations, need to be vitally involved, along with the government of Alberta and the government of Canada, to take advantage of every opportunity. We have always been considered hot and cold in marketing, here today and gone tomorrow. Marketing is building up relationships, trust, consistent service, and quality products on a reliable basis. We not only have to be visible, effective marketers, but maybe we have to change our methods of marketing and become barterers, too, if we're going to trade in the developing world, which is hungry and desperately needs our food products but does not have the cash. Let's look at a new triangle concept, by barter if necessary.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to mention briefly the hail and crop insurance program. We've implemented the cosmetic, I call them, recommendations that can be implemented without negotiations with the federal government and other provinces. And we will negotiate with the federal government to implement the major recommendations.

I'm looking forward to the review of the ADC committee, and I don't underestimate the difficulty of the heavy financial burden that we have in agriculture today. Agriculture will continue to be our most important renewable resource. The processing industries will continue to create new products, new

processes, new marketing opportunities. In doing this, it will continue to contribute to investment, employment, and value-added opportunities.

A hundred years ago we opened up the west -- pioneers who were determined, committed, and suffered hardship and uncertainty but who had a vision. I know that we will accept the challenges of opening up a new frontier by being bold, dynamic, innovative, and responsive to changing times and circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, there's a fifty-fifty chance that I think all of the Assembly should think about occasionally. The optimist is wrong as often as the pessimist, but he has an awful lot more fun along the way. And there are 10 two-letter words that we might think about very seriously, and they are: if it is to be, it is up to me.

Thank you.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this debate on the Speech from the Throne. In so doing, I want to recognize and acknowledge on behalf of the constituents of Calgary North Hill the esteem which we all share for Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor. She is a person who has exhibited throughout her life in public service personal characteristics of the highest quality. Her service to the people of this province in various capacities over her years, but more particularly as the representative of Her Majesty, has been substantial, and I believe we are most fortunate that she carries out her responsibilities with dedication, enthusiasm, and graciousness mixed with good humour and personal warmth.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is worth noting that many Albertans are not fully aware of the nature of her duties, nor the heavy schedule which she sets for herself. Many citizens have the opportunity to see or hear her only on occasion. Her day-to-day responsibilities are certainly not designed to bring headlines or television news; rather, they are directed towards personal contact with a multitude of groups and associations and individuals to recognize achievements of some and encourage others, at the same time making all of us mindful of the importance of our democratic institutions and traditions and of our fortune in living in this country and in this province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate my colleagues the hon. Member for Highwood and the hon. Member for Red Deer North as the mover and seconder of this motion. My congratulations extend beyond their eloquent contributions to this debate. The hon. Member for Highwood sets a personal example for all of us who are more recent members. He remains close to his constituents and their concerns and in turn represents them with vigour, determination, and a nice portion of good humour.

As the member of the constituency having the highest percentage of seniors in the province, I am particularly pleased that the hon. member is providing leadership to the seniors' secretariat and the advisory council. His sincerity and dedication to the interests of seniors will ensure that those bodies will function in the interests of all seniors in a very meaningful way.

The enthusiasm of the hon. Member for Red Deer North for his constituency and the city of Red Deer as a whole, which we heard earlier in the debate, is refreshing and appropriate since we recognize that unfortunately everybody can't be a Calgarian. However, in addition to his enthusiastic promotion, the hon. member, I know, is a hard working and dedicated member and represents his constituency in a very fine way and makes a strong contribution on their behalf.

Mr. Speaker, may I join with previous speakers to congratulate you, sir, on the competent and energetic manner in which you continue to fulfill your responsibilities not just in this Assembly but by your services on behalf of members generally, as well as overseeing the significant improvements to this Assembly and to this historic building.

Mr. Speaker, since May 8, 1986, much has happened, and all of it has not been good news for many Alberta families. The constituency of Calgary North Hill is no exception. Since becoming the member for this constituency, I have been very fortunate in developing a broad base of communication with many constituents, and I continue to enjoy the opportunity of meeting them at the door every second week. In addition, advisory groups of community associations, seniors, small businessmen, and resident councils of health care facilities and seniors' complexes have proven most valuable in learning their concerns and hearing their ideas.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of my constituency. The dedication to community, the spirit of volunteerism, the caring, the determination of our seniors to maintain independence and remain as vital participants in the community, the pride of entrepreneurship of our businesspeople, the vitality of younger families moving into an older, established area, the sense of neighbourliness and working together: all are such valuable elements of community life. Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud that we have them in abundance in Calgary North Hill.

I particularly wish to mention the Confederation Park Senior Citizens Centre and the Dr. Vernon Fanning Extended Care Centre. The senior citizens' centre never ceases to amaze me, Mr. Speaker. It is not a drop-in centre in any sense of the phrase. It is an action centre providing human and physical resources and facilities, co-operative planning and co-ordination of a multitude of activities for the 7,000 or 8,000 people who participate in its programs and activities each year. The executive director, Mrs. Jean Tollefson, I believe would be the first to acknowledge the tremendous contribution of the volunteers, and the fact that there are two or three staff members alone certainly speaks as evidence of the contribution of those volunteers. The centre, its staff, and its volunteers are a credit to any community and deserve our support and our recognition whenever possible.

The Fanning centre is an example of where we should be directing our efforts in extended care. It is built adjacent to a seniors' residence, which is particularly important where one spouse requires the specialized care of the centre. The spirit of participation in current events and public issues is very keen. I meet with the residents' council regularly, and I certainly value their advice. I feel that their personal experience and know-how will be critical in the process of review and evaluation of our current health care facilities. Again, the executive director, Mrs. Maureen Allen, would acknowledge the substantial contribution of the volunteers to the life of that centre.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to turn to the throne speech, and in particular I would like to deal with the subject of fiscal responsibility, as that is a theme that runs throughout the Speech from the Throne. Mr. Speaker, Her Honour described 1986 as a difficult year, and as I talk to the residents of Calgary North Hill, one cannot help but be moved by the individual difficulties facing so many families. Unemployment, downturn in business, stretching the dollars to meet day-to-day needs are things that many of us have not had to face before in this province.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Over recent years our economy moved along, and we enjoyed prosperity which at times in hindsight was perhaps a bit too fast and a bit too much. All of us certainly developed a high level of expectation which was difficult to manage. Business and government were part of that phenomenon as well. Business expanded in the anticipation of ever-increasing opportunities. Our government responded by establishing a level of programs and services for Albertans second to none anywhere.

Suddenly, Mr. Speaker, the rules of the game changed. The international price of oil dropped to an extent beyond the belief of most of us. Business cut back. People were laid off, not just in the energy sector but generally because of the spin-off effect. Construction and development dwindled. Social assistance cases increased, and our government revenues declined to the point where a substantial deficit is anticipated for this fiscal year. Mr. Speaker, that is, of course, a very general and simplistic description of the situation in which we find ourselves today.

It seems to me that as a government we can respond to the situation in one of two ways: we can ignore our deficit situation and spend our way out of this temporary downturn, or we can bite the bullet of financial responsibility and control our deficit before it comes to control us.

Mr. Speaker, the speech of Her Honour clearly identifies the second alternative as a commitment of this government, and I am proud that we are not about to take the easy way out; rather, the responsible course of meeting the challenge of managing with less. I believe that we can meet that challenge, and at the same time maintain the high standards of our programs and services for individual Albertans. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the people of Alberta expect this government to make that commitment to fiscal responsibility, and to develop a plan to balance the province's finances in an orderly way. After watching the federal Liberal governments over the years build deficits to the point where nearly one in every three dollars of revenue received is now merely required to pay interest on debt, the people of Alberta rightfully expect that we will not be following that particular course. If more and more of our revenue is required to service debt, less and less will become available in the future to support the high standards of programs and services which we have come to expect and enjoy, and which are the envy of all Canadians. Albertans, I believe, recognize that problems cannot be solved by throwing money at them.

Mr. Speaker, while it is easy to say that we will be fiscally responsible, it is much more difficult to implement a policy of managing with less and at the same time be fair and equitable, to be conscious of need, to maintain standards of care, address priorities, and be responsive to the ongoing needs. It's like patting your head and trying to rub your midsection at the same time; it's easy to say but difficult to do. However, therein lies the challenge, and we as a government, as indicated in Her Honour's speech, are determined to meet that challenge.

We are not going to run around the province like 20 members of the opposition giving cookie cutter impressions of Chicken Little shouting: "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" Rather, this government will meet the challenge by being realistic as to its present circumstances, by being responsible in the allocation of our financial resources, and by being responsive to the needs of the community we serve.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a minute or two to expand a bit on those three Rs -- being realistic, being responsible, and being responsive -- because I feel they are the essential components of fiscal responsibility.

Being realistic is not only having a full appreciation and un-

derstanding of the new financial circumstances in which the province now finds itself; it involves a positive recognition of many of the factors that we have got going for us as a province. Through good fortune and indeed good management we have a base or foundation that already exists upon which we can build to meet that challenge. In an economic sense it is important for us to recognize our strengths and to build on those strengths. Our people are creative, industrious, and innovative with an entrepreneurial spirit. We have an infrastructure of educational institutions which has resulted in Alberta having the highest percentage of students who have taken postsecondary education and training. We have vast natural resources. We have developed financial assistance programs and established an investment climate that has and will stimulate the establishment of new business and assist in the expansion of existing facilities and enterprises. We have a business environment which encourages risk-taking and innovation. We have programs to encourage diversification and open new market opportunities on a worldwide basis.

Mr. Speaker, a stable, diversified economy means jobs, lasting jobs, and I am pleased that Her Honour's speech states that this a priority of this government. Much has been accomplished in the area of science and technology, in forestry, international trade, tourism, but much more remains to be done. In fact, Mr. Speaker, much more has been done by way of economic diversification than most people recognize. I would suggest that while any degree of unemployment is unacceptable, our unemployment statistics would be much worse, considering the thousands of jobs lost in the energy sector, if it were not for other opportunities that do exist in our economy.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to our economic strengths, Albertans have social and personal strengths that will assist us in meeting this challenge. Albertans are caring and they respond to challenge. I believe that the Rick Hansen Man in Motion campaign is but one example. Albertans have a sense of personal responsibility. They are not leakers. They believe that there is more to personal responsibility than merely paying taxes to a government so that it in turn can look after all of us from cradle to grave regardless of need. However, there is more to meeting the challenge of managing with less than having realistic assessment of our strengths. As a government we must be responsible in the allocation of our financial resources that are available. In an economic sense this means that constant evaluation of economic priorities and our programs is essential to get, as they say, the biggest bang for the buck. It means prudent management. The throne speech addresses that responsibility by clearly identifying specific areas of government priority and commitment.

In this regard, I am pleased to see the clear and unequivocal commitment to people in need. Mr. Speaker, 40 percent of the expenditure of this government is transferred by grants to various boards and municipalities for education, health care, and municipal services. With those grants go the responsibility for allocation. That is not passing the buck other than, of course, in the literal sense. Rather, it is the deliberate policy of having the decisions with respect to allocation made by those who are closest to the scene and who are capable of determining those needs and setting priorities in those particular areas of responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, over the past several months I have had the opportunity to meet with many of these board members. While you will never see it in the newspapers, many such board members indicate their appreciation of the province's position. They confirm that these decisions should be made locally and indeed

acknowledge that the close scrutiny required in their budget process is healthy.

I was pleased that during the question period on Friday last the hon. Member for Calgary Fish Creek received assurances from various ministers that any double-whammy impact upon specific areas of need resulting from the decisions of local boards would be addressed. In my view, that is an important element of the responsibility of allocation of our financial resources.

Mr. Speaker, the final critical component of this challenge of managing with less is to always remain responsive to the ever-changing needs of the community we serve. All of us as members have a responsibility to determine those needs and establish a base of communication in our constituencies that results in those needs being addressed. To accomplish this requires a high degree of consultation and a spirit of co-operation. The throne speech challenges all of us, indeed all Albertans, to join in this co-operative spirit to meet the challenge of our new fiscal realities.

Mr. Speaker, I have confidence in Alberta and in Albertans. We will meet this challenge of fiscal responsibility and at the same time maintain the high standards of programs and services for all Albertans.

Thank you.

[Two members rose]

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Vermilion-Viking was on his feet first.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, seeing the hour, I beg leave to adjourn debate today.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member has moved adjournment of debate. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Motion carries.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, before moving that you call it 1 o'clock, I'd just like to advise the House that it's not the intention that we would sit Monday evening. On Monday afternoon government business will be further consideration of Her Honour's message.

[At 12:50 p.m. the House adjourned to Monday at 2:30 p.m.]

