

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Monday, March 30, 1987 2:30 p.m.**
 Date: 87/03/30

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

At the beginning of this week we ask You, Father, to renew and strengthen in us the awareness of our duty and privilege as members of this Legislature.

We ask You also in Your divine providence to bless and protect the Assembly and the province we are elected to serve.

Amen.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

Bill 231
Pollutant Spills Act

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your patience. I beg leave to introduce a Bill, that being Bill 231, the Pollutant Spills Act.

This Act would require in law a duty to act on a person having control of a pollutant that is spilled and would require that person in the event of a spill to do everything practicable to prevent, eliminate, and ameliorate the adverse effects of the spill. As well, the person would have to notify the Environment minister and the affected local municipalities immediately of the spill.

[Leave granted; Bill 231 read a first time]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table two documents for the Assembly. The first is a letter from the government to the Alberta Federation of Metis Settlement Associations, and the second is the notes for the opening statement of the government of Alberta to the First Ministers' Conference on aboriginal constitutional matters.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file with the House a copy of a discussion paper on the proposed draft legislation instructions for a revised Metis Betterment Act.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the annual report of the University of Lethbridge as required by statute.

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to file four copies of the government of Alberta's submission to the Canadian Transport Commission public hearings with respect to incentive freight rates for grain.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to table the annual report of the Department of Recreation and Parks; and while I'm

on my feet, it's also a pleasure to table the ninth annual report of the Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly some 46 students from grades 1 to 10 and their parents who are members of Christian Home Educators. They are accompanied today by Aline Stasiewicz and several of the other parents, and I would ask the group to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Member for Barrhead, the Minister of the Environment, it's my pleasure today to introduce some 100 grade 6 students from the Barrhead elementary school. They're accompanied by their teachers and one parent, and they're seated, I understand, in both galleries. I'd ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

Health Care Costs

MR. MARTIN: I was waiting for the announcement from the hon. minister there.

I'd like to direct a question, then, to the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. Mr. Speaker, in a full-page advertisement this week the chiropractors have warned the government that proposals now under consideration will result in higher patient fees, denial of services, and relocation of medical specialists outside of the province. Now that this information is plainly on the public record, has the minister decided to reconsider his plan to implement a hit list for medicare cuts, knowing that lower and average income Albertans who need specialty services such as chiropractic services are the ones who will be hit the worst?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I don't recall having been warned recently by anyone, including the Chiropractic Association, about any impending cuts in the fee schedule resulting in such terrible things happening. As a matter of fact, I believe that if we are responsible in developing a situation where our reductions in cost, which must occur in the health care system in this province, are fairly distributed across a number of professional groups and don't result in any one individual, or family being hit hard by increased costs, we will have done a great deal of service to the health care system in our province. That's the balance I am trying to achieve in the discussions we're having with all professions and with the government caucus.

MR. MARTIN: Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. The fact is, Mr. Minister, that lower income people and average income people will be hit with any cutback in these services. It's my understanding the minister is trying to save \$65 million, and I suggest that this is on the backs of average Albertans. But my question is: has the minister sat down and done a cost analysis of how much this shortsightedness might cost if people put off using these specialists when they need them? In other words, hospitalization later could be very expensive.

MR. M. MOORE: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's shortsighted to be trying to live within our means with respect to health care. We can always borrow more money and let the

next generation finance it, which may well be the NDP solution but is not what I call one that's responsible.

So we're looking at ways, I repeat again, that we can reduce the cost of medicare overall and not lay too much responsibility on any one individual. And certainly some reduction in the amount that's presently paid by the health care insurance plan for services that in some provinces are not paid for at all is, in my view, a responsible position to take.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. The minister always comes to other provinces and I have them in front of me, and most of them offer the same services that we do. There are a couple of the poorer provinces that don't. So that's a bit of a red herring, if I may say so.

My question is: specifically, has the minister concerned himself with how much money they would save? If you cut \$65 million there, has there been any cost analysis to know what that might cost later in terms of extra hospital costs?

MR. M. MOORE: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not our intention to create a system where we would increase the costs in the health care system by shifting them from costs that we now pay to medical practitioners to hospital costs. That's certainly not our intention, and we will try as best we can in whatever decisions we make to ensure that there's no shifting of costs from one area to another.

MR. MARTIN: It's very nice that you're going to look at it, but obviously you don't know and you're just guessing at it. But my question has to do with the minister's interpretation of the Canada Health Act, what he calls "a new definition of medical necessity." The minister's definition, I might point out, is not the same as most Albertans'. My question is: why should the government, and specifically this minister, decide what is of medical necessity? In other words, average Albertans, I would suggest to the minister, are in danger of losing their freedom of choice in selecting health care options.

MR. M. MOORE: Well, Mr. Speaker, as far as I know, the decisions that have been made over the period since 1971 when we first implemented the medicare system in this province, the decisions that have been made with respect to what services were covered by the Alberta health care insurance plan, have been made by those people who have the elected responsibility to do so, after having received advice and information from society in general, from health care practitioners, from others. I believe today will be the fifth occasion in this Assembly that I have asked the hon. Leader of the Opposition to present to me his list of ways in which we can cut costs in the Alberta health care insurance plan. Thus far I have received absolutely nothing, which leads me to believe that that's the extent of the thinking that's gone on over there.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the minister asked that. Supplemental to the minister. I'm sure he is aware that to get a blood test diabetics now have to pay a \$50 doctor's fee and the blood test, of course, is done by the government, yet those tests could be done by the diabetics themselves. Has the minister made a similar survey where patients such as diabetics, and maybe some other areas, could save the plan the money -- not the \$60 million but a big step towards \$60 -- by having them do their own tests in their own home rather than the now round about, expensive method?

MR. M. MOORE: That matter has been considered, but the hon. member is simply not accurate in his belief that blood testing now takes place in laboratories or hospital or doctors' offices to replace the blood glucose monitoring strip that the hon. member is referring to. That's being considered, and my colleague the hon. Minister of Community and Occupational Health may wish to respond further to that question.

Conflict-of-interest Guidelines

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the second question to the Premier. It has to do with conflict guidelines. The Premier's company apparently owns close to 500,000 shares in a company which, I understand, is seeking significant financial concessions from the government. Has the Premier instructed the trustees of his assets that his estate should not do business with the government?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I wonder where the hon. member is getting his information.

MR. MARTIN: Supplementary. Is the Premier then saying to this House that he is not aware that a company his family holds shares in is requesting to do business with this government? Is that what the Premier is telling us?

MR. GETTY: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that's right. I have worked with companies. I've worked with Imperial Oil; I've worked with Midland Doherty; I've worked with Genstar; I've worked with Midwestern Industrial gas. I don't know what any of them do. Royal Bank -- I don't know what any of them do in relation to the government, nor do I care.

MR. MARTIN: Well, does the family own shares in all of them? I'm talking specifically of Nortek Energy resources. Surely the Premier is aware that his family has 500,000 shares; he should be aware now. My question is specifically: knowing that, would the Premier take some action to make sure that there isn't any unfair advantages with this company operating, trying to get money from the government?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not know that. If the hon. member knows something that the gentleman who handles my blind trust would know -- but I don't know it. And if he knows something else, he should make it available to the House, I guess; but I don't know it.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. Ignorance is not bliss. My question: instead of playing dumb about this, would the Premier come honest and say why it is that this company he now knows -- maybe it was in blind shares, but he is now well aware that this company is seeking to do business with the government. Why is he trying to plead ignorant about this at this time?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I'm rising on a point of objection here. I'm sorry; the hon. leader is questioning the very premise of a . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. minister. At the end of question period.

The Chair is very concerned that when blind trust agreements have been entered into by all the cabinet, it is very diffi-

cult then for questions to be answered by ministers with respect to a blind trust.

Supplementary question.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I rise with great hesitation, but there has been something completely wrong in our system, because previously a point of order could be raised when the point was valid. We have to get together -- the House leaders and someone else -- because there's been something drastically wrong in this session. The point of order must be brought up at the time that it is relevant to the discussion.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. The practice of the House has been with respect to *Beauchesne* 369:

A question of privilege or point of order raised during the oral Question Period ought to be taken up after the oral Question Period, unless the Speaker considers it to be an extremely grave matter.

It is indeed a serious matter, but it will be dealt with at the end of question period.

DR. BUCK: But, Mr. Speaker, that has not been the practice in this . . .

MR. SPEAKER: [Inaudible] the challenge of the Chair. Thank you, hon. member.

DR. BUCK: Well, I'm just bringing it to your information that it hasn't . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, supplementary.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, in the absence of any written outline on how a blind trust is handled, can the Premier tell us how often he expects to report on the past activity of his blind trust during the tenure of his term of office? Are we going to have to wait for years and years, or is it like the federal, you would report on the past activity each year?

MR. GETTY: I'm not sure I understand what he's requesting, Mr. Speaker -- that there would be some kind of reporting on my part of whatever someone is doing that I don't know anything about. I don't follow it at all.

MR. SPEAKER: Quite understandably. There's . . .

MR. TAYLOR: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: At the end of question period. Order please, hon. member.

MR. MITCHELL: That's a perfectly acceptable question.

MR. SPEAKER: In your opinion, Member for Edmonton Meadowlark.

Leader of the Liberal Party, main question, please, followed by the Member for Little Bow.

Job Creation and Job Training

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, my main question today is to the minister of manpower. The Liberal Party, of course, and I'm

sure a great deal of the public await with great anticipation to see how this government intends to make or force social allowance recipients to work for their assistance. Can the minister confirm that it is his intention to insist that social allowance applicants join his work for welfare scheme? [interjection]

To the Minister of Career Development and Employment, then. I'm sorry if he doesn't understand what "manpower" is.

MR. SPEAKER: The question's been received. Supplementary question.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplemental. Can the minister then confirm that the government is willing to do without hundreds of millions of dollars given to Alberta through the Canada Assistance Plan if the federal government decides that his and the social assistance minister's scheme -- the work for welfare scheme -- does not fit the terms of the CAP agreement?

MR. ORMAN: That's hypothetical, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TAYLOR: Okay, Mr. Speaker, next supplemental to the minister then. What contingency plan has the minister prepared to offset the loss of these CAP funds, or does he believe the work for welfare program will be able to absorb that loss?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, I think the design of the program will be such that we will not need a contingency plan, and we do not intend to go ahead with a program that will adversely affect the CAP program funding.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, you must be pleased with the two of us. We're very rapid fire here.

What percentage of the work for welfare program will be a retraining or vocational aspect, or is it to be solely a wage subsidy program?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, today we announced that the basic concept of the . . . I guess we announced the name of the program; it'll be the employment alternatives program. The details of the program we have not announced. We thought it was important to incorporate in the labour market strategy because it indeed deals with people who are part of the labour market. There are a number of complicated matters, one of them that the hon. gentleman has referred to, and that has to do with our relationship with the federal government. There are complicated matters in terms of interdepartmental working. Social Services and my department. These are areas we are working on, together with examining other jurisdictions, to be absolutely sure that the program we bring forward is acceptable to the employable on social assistance, acceptable to the businessman that will be participating in the program, and acceptable to me and my colleagues. I will not be pushed forward into announcing a program or details of the program until I am absolutely comfortable with the structure and makeup.

I anticipate that by this summer we will have a program that will be up and running, that will deal with our real, genuine concern with the growing number of employables on social assistance. The biggest problem with finding work, Mr. Speaker, is that the individuals do not have a record of recent work experience; a lot of the individuals we find as employables on social assistance have been out of work for a protracted period of time. We want to overcome that and we want to give them that

recent work experience, and that's basically the outline of the program. I'll be more than pleased to bring forward that program to the hon. gentleman once we have confirmed the guidelines.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Supplementary question to the minister. In the absence of the Minister of Social Services, could the minister indicate whether a person will be able to supplement their social assistance under the program now being discussed without that amount of supplement being deducted from their social assistance payments? Is a principle like that being examined at the present time?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, that brings up another one of the very delicate matters that we have to deal with in designing this program. The state of mind of people on social assistance in many cases is one of real concern that they cannot participate in the labour market. We do not want to jeopardize their participation in a program by forcing them off social assistance immediately into a job creation or a work experience program. That is one of the components that we have to work very closely with in social services to make sure that everything is in place to make an easy transition for the individual to move from social assistance into the labour force, into a work experience program. So that is a very good point, one of the ones I should have mentioned to the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon. It's another one of the areas that we have to examine and make sure is in place so that this program is acceptable to everybody involved.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton Belmont, supplementary.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The employment alternative program that was announced today by the minister in Calgary seems to have something that coincides with the cuts that are proposed by the Minister of Social Services. Can the minister assure the Assembly that it's something more than just coincidence, that there's not a hidden agenda to put the poor against the poor and just put them to work?

MR. ORMAN: I don't know whether the hon. member just came in, Mr. Speaker. I think I answered that question in the two previous questions. This program is absolutely to put employables on social assistance to work -- there's no question about that -- but it would be to the individuals that have an inclination to work.

I have been inundated in my office, Mr. Speaker, with people who are employables on social assistance looking forward to this program. I'm not getting the calls they would suggest of people horrified by the prospects of a job creation program; that's not the case. You must understand that the individuals who are categorized as employable on social assistance do not meet our traditional mind set in terms of individuals on social assistance. These people absolutely want to work; they're looking forward to this program. And it will not be mandatory for anybody involved. It will be program that's acceptable to everybody involved.

Natural Gas Pricing

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Energy. It's with regard to the reports that the Ontario government is forcing the price of natural gas down to some un-

realistic levels. I understand that the Ontario Energy Board has refused to accept freely renegotiated TransCanada Pipeline contracts with the Ontario utilities and with producer endorsements on the grounds that these contracts give better rates to high-volume customers than residential users. Could the minister indicate at this point in time whether that is accurate and what the cost will be in terms of royalties to the province of Alberta?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is accurate in that the Ontario Energy Board made a decision some months ago that the distributors in that province should renegotiate their contracts with the Western Gas Marketing agency, who were negotiating on behalf of producers in this province that had contracts with them. That particular decision was of grave concern to us in that we are going through a process of deregulation whereby previously we had an Alberta border price in place and instead we were looking to have contracts freely negotiated between buyer and seller, and if the results of the Ontario Energy Board decision in the end turn out that they in fact would be setting prices for our gas, that would be entirely unacceptable. Since the Ontario Energy Board made that decision, the utilities and Western Gas Marketing have been carrying on discussions and negotiations, and the Ontario Energy Board has given them until, I believe, the end of next October to arrive at some kind of agreement. In the meantime, there are other steps being taken that may have significant bearing on those negotiations, one being our recent Energy Resources Conservation Board hearings on surplus tests and upcoming surplus test hearings by the National Energy Board.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. In terms of the effect on Alberta producers, could the minister indicate what effect that is having, and is that a counteracting action in terms of the \$300 million and some program announced by the federal government as of last week?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, the decision of the Ontario Energy Board some months ago is having no effect on our producers at this time. The original contract of, I believe it was, \$2.03 per mcf or per gigajoule -- whatever the difference is, it's not much between the two -- we are still having the gas sold at that price, and that's netted back to the Alberta border price of \$2.03. So the decision is not having any current impact. It would only have an impact if in the end that decision were to hold.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary. The minister indicated that there had been consideration with regard to a border price for natural gas or introducing one. Is that still a consideration if Ontario continues to act as they possibly could under the present circumstances?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, we are trying to work with the federal government and other provinces to see that the original objectives of the natural gas pricing agreement or deregulation are achieved. However, there are some major obstacles to overcome before we will realize that deregulation process to have been complete. One is the decision that the hon. member has referred to in Ontario. Another one is the current hearings going on in Manitoba by their Public Utilities Board regarding contracts between producers in this province and the utility in that province. If in the end it appears as though we've gone from a system whereby we originally established the Alberta border

price in place in determining prices to a system whereby consuming provinces are establishing our prices, that would be entirely unacceptable and we'd just as well go back to our original Alberta border price.

MR. PASHAK: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Energy. Given their government's commitment to deregulation, what steps has the government taken to ensure that Alberta consumers get some benefit from deregulation?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker. I thought the hon. member would have been aware of a significant program that's been in place for many years in this province, the natural gas price protection program, which has shielded Alberta consumers for years from the costs of natural gas.

MR. CHUMIR: It is quite clear that deregulation is working to the disadvantage of Alberta, Mr. Speaker, and I have a question for the Premier; that is, whether the Premier has talked to Premiers Peterson and Pawley to ask them how these actions towards driving down the price of natural gas in Ontario and Manitoba accord with the glowing promises of support and help for the Alberta oil and gas industry that they made at the Premiers' Conference last summer and which the Premier applauded so loudly.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Main question, Member for Calgary Fish Creek followed by the Member for Edmonton Kingsway.

Toxic Gas

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the weekend a number of Calgarians were hospitalized because of the movement across the eastern part of the city of a cloud of toxic gas. I recognize that the Minister of the Environment is not in the House today, but I wonder if the acting minister could advise the Assembly as to what progress officials of the Department of the Environment have made in determining the source and nature of that toxic gas cloud.

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, as the Acting Minister of the Environment, I've been informed by the department through the minister's office that the department is continuing its investigations, that air samples are presently being analyzed. They were fortunate that the mobile monitoring lab was in Calgary and is in Calgary right now and was mobilized immediately in the area of the cloud or the fog at that time.

MR. PAYNE: Well, supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the acting minister or perhaps the Minister of Community and Occupational Health could provide any diagnostic information that officials or hospital staff might have gleaned from their examination of the people hospitalized.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I'm advised by physicians from the Calgary Board of Health that a number of the individuals involved and who were exposed have been seen. Their health is found to have been much improved since early Sunday morning, but this will be watched very closely in the days ahead.

MR. TAYLOR: Supplemental to the Acting Minister of the En-

vironment. He mentioned the fact that there was a testing lab in the vicinity at the time. I recall that that lab is expert at detecting only the nitrogen and sulphur compounds. Was the lab able to get a sample, or are they holding a sample of any sort?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, as I said a moment ago, samples of the air were being analyzed, so I assume they captured them at the time and are being analyzed right now.

MR. PASHAK: To the Acting Minister of the Environment, Mr. Speaker. What steps is the government taking to ensure that such incidents don't occur again?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Minister of the Environment has instructed his staff accordingly, and I'll pass that question on to him. I'll take it as notice.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton Kingsway followed by the Member for Calgary Mountain View.

Credit Union Stabilization

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday in this House the Treasurer said, and I quote from page 405 of *Hansard*:

There has been clear evidence of defalcation on behalf of the [Edmonton Savings & Credit Union] board . . . There's clear evidence now that there have been some unusual transactions . . . Some of the matters which are before the courts right now deal with possible fraudulent charges of that board . . . There are some potential charges of mismanagement and perhaps even fraud

and a number of such statements.

Mr. Speaker, I've been unable to find any evidence of any pertinent charges, civil or criminal, having being filed against the board of the Edmonton Savings & Credit Union or against its president, Jim Sklarchuk. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. Order. First, hon. member, the Chair is indeed willing to allow you to ask the question, but it is indeed irregular for members to keep quoting from *Hansard* documents all the time. The question, please. One sentence.

MR. McEACHERN: Will the Treasurer now confirm that to his knowledge no actions of any kind are currently under way in any court flowing from relations between the Edmonton Savings & Credit Union and the Credit Union Stabilization Corporation?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I was going to take an opportunity at the end of question period to correct some remarks that I did make with respect to ESCU. In the context of the discussions with ESCU as it's reported to me from the Credit Union Stabilization Corp., it was my attempt on Friday to advise the House that I was reluctant to answer certain questions in the context placed by the member in that there were potential -- underscore potential -- opportunities for at least civil litigation to take place. That is still the case, and I hope that my comments which showed that it was before the courts did not mislead the House. If they do, I apologize for that. But still the fact remains that the potential exists for civil litigation to take place before the courts.

While I'm at it, Mr. Speaker, I think now that new evidence shows to me that the words "fraud" or "fraudulent" should not be used in reference to this transaction. However, there is still serious cause for concern with respect to the way in which the board of directors has operated. Because it is so sensitive and because there is a possibility for negotiations to remove these problems, I would hope that any further questions can be handled in the context of the delicate nature of the discussion between the Credit Union Stabilization Corp. and the Edmonton Savings & Credit Union.

MR. McEACHERN: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I would remind you that you did say: "before the courts right now." Twice in his comments last Friday the Treasurer referred to "clear evidence of defalcation."

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question, question.

MR. McEACHERN: This is the question. Defalcation does mean embezzlement and unusual transactions by the board of the Edmonton Savings & Credit Union.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order, hon. member. The hon. member has to deal quite carefully with the way the supplementary question is framed. The member has now made a judgment call as to using -- and the Chair believes with a certain lack of discretion -- the word "embezzlement." So please frame a question succinctly but take great care.

MR. McEACHERN: Will the Treasurer lay that evidence on the table of this Assembly so that those persons whose reputations have been tarnished by his remarks may at least know the nature of the allegations against them and thus be able to respond in their own defence?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, the record should show of course that it was not me that raised this question; it was raised by the member himself. And of course in bringing as much evidence forward as possible, I had to put on the table the evidence I had, which is that there are serious concerns about certain transactions between the board of ESCU. And that is all I can say at this point.

MR. McEACHERN: Supplementary question. Will the Treasurer now direct the Credit Union Stabilization Corporation to rescind its administrator's order of March 20 imposing on the board and officers of the Edmonton Savings & Credit Union the requirement that they exercise none of their powers of authority without the prior approval of the administrator?

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course if the member knew the legislation under which the Credit Union Stabilization Corp. was operating, the organization itself has no opportunity to reverse its order because in fact the Edmonton credit union is in fact bankrupt. As I reported on Friday, the accumulated deficits of Edmonton Savings & Credit Union are the largest of the credit union system, some \$93 million, and the only responsible position which the Credit Union Stabilization Corp. could take was to ensure administration was in place. And it is in fact that administration that raised the questions about the transaction that I referred to.

It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that when this government has made such significant moves to save the credit union system

itself across this province -- guaranteeing the deposits initially when the first concerns were raised; putting in place both a plan to deal with the losses in real estate and significant losses on transactions over the period, some \$300 million -- that this has now clouded the initiative of this government. It's unfortunate that this has happened. I want the record to show clearly that we're using everything we can to ensure that there's a negotiated settlement here. And I recognize and respect the views taken by the board of ESCU in protecting their own shareholders and depositors. It is that very reason that makes it important for us to find a resolution to this problem, and that's exactly what we're attempting to pursue here today.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, will the Treasurer fire the principals of the stabilization corporation in that they're trying to force the Edmonton Savings & Credit Union into a merger against their will?

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, of course, the facts should show that first of all the entire credit union system is in favour of the consolidation moves which have been recommended to it by the stabilization corporation and to a great extent by the central credit union system itself. So the majority of the credit union members are in fact in favour of this consolidation, and this consolidation is at the heart of the funding bailout, if you like -- which will be used, I'm sure, here in a few minutes by my colleague across the way. The savings plan for the credit union system really hinges upon the consolidation, and it should be noted that in the case of Edmonton Savings & Credit Union itself, it is a consolidation of several credit unions over the past 10 years. So the concept of consolidation in fact engenders the notion of efficiencies, profitability, and a workout which makes this entity viable in the longer term. That's what's at the heart of this, and that's why this government has acted, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MITCHELL: Interesting and complicated equation with many factors ...

MR. SPEAKER: Put the question, hon. member.

MR. MITCHELL: ... one of which is the membership which has been left out of this open negotiation process -- their feelings, Mr. Speaker. Can the Treasurer explain how a job advertisement which appeared in Saturday's *Edmonton Journal* for a chief financial officer for the new Capital City Savings & Credit Union can claim that Capital City has already been created by amalgamating eight city credit unions when Edmonton Savings & Credit Union members have not even met to consider the amalgamation? They will be doing that on Wednesday.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I think it's right. Eight out of 10 have agreed to the amalgamation.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Calgary Mountain View followed by the Member for Edmonton Gold Bar.

Food Banks

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Premier this afternoon. In February of 1988 almost 4,500 journalists, media people, and reporters will be broadcasting news from the 1988 Winter Olympics to all over the rest of the world, and they'll also be broadcasting news and

impressions about the kind of city and province they find here. Will the provincial government be taking any steps to make sure that Calgary's Food Bank will be out of business by that time?

MR. SPEAKER: The Premier declines to answer. Supplementary question?

MR. GETTY: I was going to say, Mr. Speaker, it's a very tricky question.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I'll ask him another one then. Is the Premier satisfied that the image of Albertans lining up for the basic necessities of life, like food hampers, is an image of Alberta that he wants to portray to the rest of the world?

MR. SPEAKER: The question is [inaudible].

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, then, maybe I'll keep right on, Mr. Speaker. Does the provincial government have any contingency plans to give higher social allowance payments in February and January of 1988 so people won't have to be making use of the food bank during those months?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member would direct his questions to the Minister of Social Services when she's available in the House. But let me say this: there's no question that this government is doing everything possible to protect the people of Alberta against the impact of certain matters that have been hurting our economy and providing problems, but we're doing everything possible to help them. And I know that the people of this province are looking forward by 1988, and much sooner, I hope, to having a much stronger economy, a much stronger province. And they've got some faith and some desire to build this province; they aren't running around being negative and gloom and doom like the member across the way.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Is the Premier saying then, Mr. Speaker, that he believes Albertans do not want to have an image of fellow Albertans lining up at the food banks broadcast all across the world in 1988?

MR. SPEAKER: Well, the line of questioning is totally irrelevant at this stage. It hardly conforms to the matter of urgency, especially when we're in this month of the year 1987 as compared to February of 1988.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Edmonton Gold Bar followed by the Member for Edmonton Strathcona, [The Member for Calgary Buffalo rose] No, the total question is out of order, hon. member, [interjections] At the end of question period . . . Thank you very much, hon. member.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Edmonton Gold Bar followed by the Member for Edmonton Strathcona,

Aids to Daily Living Program

MRS. HEWES: I thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 13 in this House the Minister of Community and Occupational Health stated that he was committed to the Aids to Daily Living program and would continue to provide benefits to all Albertans who need them, and then he imposed a 25 percent user fee on 20,000 of them who use the program, a rather arbitrary decision

regarding who could afford them. I'd like to ask the minister, since the minister has imposed user fees for the ADL program on a family of four with a single wage earner, a taxable income of less than \$11,000, why has the minister chosen to start targeting families with a handicapped member, at least one, at this low end of the scale?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, what we've put in place is a program that will continue to deliver the most comprehensive set of benefits anywhere else in this country, and we are continuing to provide that to nearly 100,000 Albertans. That includes senior citizens, it includes recipients of social allowance, people on Alberta income for the severely handicapped, those receiving handicapped children's services, and those on the province's polio program. And therein are some 90,000 Albertans. Another 10,000 will be protected. Families with a total income of \$24,000 or less in a year will continue to receive all of these benefits free of charge.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, we've asked approximately 20,000 Albertans who we believe can afford to pay to pay a small portion of the cost of their benefits. We've identified those people who we believe can pay for these benefits, who can afford to pay for these benefits, and if they cannot, if there is found sometime in the process that they are unable to pay, there is a responsive and sensitive appeal process in place to protect those people.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, an arbitrary decision, as I said. No question about it. Is the minister aware that the families and individuals on whom he has imposed the user fee barely now meet the poverty level and that the additional \$1,000 can put them under that critical line?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, we're talking about 120,000 Albertans. We're talking about 20,000 who we're going to ask to pay. And we believe, looking at the benefit list and the number of benefits they've received in days past, that very, very few, less than 70, will receive benefits in excess of \$4,000 a year and therefore will be asked to pay the \$1,000 maximum. And I repeat: if a hardship case is found in anywhere from \$100 to \$1,000 -- and remember that is a \$1,000 ceiling -- if there is a hardship case found that protection is not given in another part of the program, we will look at that individual case and make sure there is no disincentive for that individual to be working or that undue hardship is imposed upon him.

MRS. HEWES: Many of these people, of course, are hardworking, tax-paying Albertans who pay income tax, where it should be picked up. Mr. Speaker, how can the minister possibly justify cutting these services at the same time he expands the bureaucracy, an increase of 7.8 percent, who are administering the programs? Is that how the government makes itself more efficient?

MR. TAYLOR: And your own salary, 10 percent.

AN HON. MEMBER: And yours.

MR. SPEAKER: Would the minister please respond to the original question.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I think we can get into the matter of administration of the entire department within the estimates

of the Department of Community and Occupational Health, and I welcome the debate in establishing this brand-new department of Community and Occupational Health. But as for the administration of the program, we have introduced this change in the program, and at the same time we have kept our administrative costs to a minimum and increased the cost of administration by some \$150,000 this year to introduce this change in the program.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary is to the Premier. Does the Premier, along with his caucus, expect people to lead independent lives? When you place this user fee on a handicapped person, somebody already disadvantaged, managing just to crawl over the poverty line and who will now be dragged back down below it: do we really know what we're doing to people with these kinds of things?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister actually just dealt with that matter. But I would say this: it is clear that governments in the past, and certainly the ones made up of the Liberal Party supported by the NDP, have consistently spent more money than they've ever been able bring in as a government; and they've consistently layered on the backs of the voters of Canada, the people of Canada, huge debt which has almost bankrupt this country and had a far greater impact on the people of Canada than such a program as being discussed today; and the spend, spend, spend of the Liberal Party and the NDP will never be supported by the people of Alberta or Canada. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Member for Edmonton Centre for a supplementary.

REV. ROBERTS: A simple, cost-effective measure for the minister. Has the minister of occupational health looked at the suppliers of the aids to the Aids to Daily Living program to see if cost benefits can't be improved by getting suppliers who might offer those aids at a less expensive rate so that the government doesn't just spend, spend, spend?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, most definitely is the answer to the question. We have introduced three years ago and continue to apply cost controls and price controls and quantity controls to this program so that it is delivered in a very cost efficient way.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Court Reporting Services

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is the Attorney General. Will the Attorney General acknowledge that in reducing the size of his department, he has given notice of dismissal to 30 or so senior court reporters, the criterion for selection for dismissal being that they do not use the million dollar plus computers that draft the transcripts?

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. minister, the time for question period has expired. Might we have unanimous consent to complete this set of questions?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed?

MR. HORSMAN: Yes. Mr. Speaker.

MR. WRIGHT: Will the Attorney General confirm that when the computers were introduced six or seven years ago, the pen writers were assured that their positions would be protected, as a result of which some stopped adaptation courses they were taking and others did not take such courses? Are these dismissals therefore not in breach of faith?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, this matter was raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton Strathcona with me some time ago, and I undertook to ascertain whether or not there were any indications that such an undertaking had been given. We have not been able to ascertain any such undertaking having been given at the time. However, if there is such evidence that the hon. member has or anyone could bring to my personal attention, I should be pleased to receive it.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware that inquiries were in fact made of these reporters. How can the Attorney General explain this decision when the result is to dismiss 20- or 25-year veteran reporters who produce superior transcripts with a 69-cent pen and keep fledgling reporters who produce inferior transcripts with a million-dollar machine?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, that is a matter of opinion that is not shared by all members of the Bar and not shared by people in the department. It may be the opinion of the hon. Member for Edmonton Strathcona, which I respect.

MR. WRIGHT: I'm very much obliged, Mr. Speaker, but there are 52 judges that might have an opinion too. Has it occurred to the Attorney General that perhaps the reason is that those who advise him made a very expensive mistake indeed in buying this equipment and are attempting to justify their decision by getting rid of the 30 living disproofs of the wisdom of it?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, that may very well have been the case in the opinion of those people who continue to wish to take transcripts by pen and by others who are used to that particular procedure. But technological advances have taken place not only in Alberta but in other provinces, and it has been the experience, as related to me by practitioners and by the Bar and by the department, that the new system is working effectively. It is difficult, however, for me to seek out the opinions of members of the bench because that becomes a difficult thing to do for an Attorney General, to discuss all these matters with members of the bench. I want to avoid doing that if at all possible. But I do appreciate the concerns that have been raised relative to the possibility of some undertaking having been made, and if evidence of that nature can be brought to my attention. I shall be pleased to receive it.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary. Member for Calgary Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Supplementary to the minister. This dismissal and change in the process re court reporters has disturbing implications both substantively and procedurally. Why is it that the government had to dismiss 25- and 30-year veteran court reporters in a manner so that they heard about their dismissal only through reading about it in newspapers rather than having been dealt with directly?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, the subject of changes within the Department of the Attorney General I trusted to the appropriate officials within the department, to give the appropriate notice to the people involved and at the same time to assure those members who might be affected that they would be given every opportunity for early retirement and the options which were made available in that respect to all government employees. And that, I am assured, was done with consideration.

In the case of Calgary, I've been informed that the court reporters in Calgary are all preparing to make a transition into the private sector in order to provide the services to the Bar and that that is an appropriate way of making a transition. And if their services. Mr. Speaker, are so well admired by the members of the Bar that they prefer that type of service, they can obtain it from those same people in the private sector that they now obtain in the public sector. That, I think, is an appropriate way of dealing with this matter.

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired. Points of order. First the Chair recognizes the Minister of Advanced Education.

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to comment on the point of order that was raised during the questioning of the hon. Leader of the Opposition to the hon. Premier with respect to details of the Premier's blind trust. There are two points here that I would like to make; one is a point of order and the other is a question of privilege.

First of all, with respect to the point of order, I submit that the questions were entirely out of line, asking the Premier for decisions or details of his blind trust. By its very nature and description the blind trust is just that and is a device which has been developed in Canadian parliaments so that people who have been in business and enter public life are able to assign their business interests and the decision-making that goes with them into a blind trust. And it must be blind; otherwise, there would be the opportunity for elected members to have unfair advantages over other members of society. For the hon. leader to put questions about details of the Premier's blind trust I think was entirely out of order.

The point of order, as serious as it is, is not half as serious as the question of privilege which followed, because until we check *Hansard* tomorrow, we won't see the exact details of the reference to the Premier's honesty that was referred to in his answer when he made the comments that he didn't know. Under the circumstances that was the only answer that could have been given. For the hon. leader to then call upon the Premier to get honest or come honest -- and we can check the comments in *Hansard* tomorrow; I was listening very carefully -- I think is a question of privilege against the Premier, and I submit those remarks should be withdrawn.

MR. MARTIN: I thought the Premier could do his own point of privilege; he didn't need the hon. member. But the question I have is a simple one. Nobody has questioned the Premier's honesty. But surely we were ... [interjections] Don't point your finger at me. I'll finish. I listened to you.

The point I was trying to raise: it's been brought out publicly. I was giving the Premier a chance to answer those questions. If it is no longer a blind trust, if it's been proceeded

with and people think there's a problem, it's no longer a blind trust. People are aware that there's a problem. And all I was trying to get to the Premier is: would he instruct his trustees, for example, not to do business with the government? Even if it's blind or not, that simple explanation could be made.

Surely this government must recognize that morality in government is one of the major issues not only in Alberta but in Canada on this day. And there's been a lot of problems with blind trusts. We're trying to find out a policy that we can deal with these blind trusts so that these things don't come up, so all of us, you know, when we sit in this Assembly, will not always be looked at by the public. And surely that line of questioning is significant here and fair, especially when it's being publicized all over the province at this particular time. We want to know what's going on. That's why we asked, Mr. Speaker, and I don't understand the point of order from the hon. member, frankly.

MR. SPEAKER: With respect to the point of order which revolves around the matter not of a blind trust, Member for Calgary Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Well, it is in fact the issue of the blind trust and the significance of the direction of questioning, Mr. Speaker. The issue that I see being raised here in the issue of public interest in support of being able to ask a question along these lines is that of determining the propriety of the blind trust mechanism as a manner of dealing with conflict-of-interest issues. That is the mechanism that is used by this government and indeed by many governments in this country, and the question to be faced is whether or not that is a proper mechanism for controlling conflict of interest.

For example, Mr. Speaker, the type of issue that arises is that on a certain date on entering government or the cabinet, a cabinet minister may have a certain large holding in a company which is transferred to a blind trust. Six months later a very significant business arrangement involving that company and the government arises, and the question arises whether it will not be in the mind of that cabinet minister that six months later that may be there. The question arises: what duty falls upon a cabinet minister in that instance? And suspecting that that might be the case in voting and making decisions, should the minister disqualify himself from any decisions? This is a very difficult issue I raise, not to make any imputation or implications as to what the answer may or may not be in this particular instance, but certainly it does raise very valid and serious questions that should be addressed by all of us as legislators as to the methodology of controlling conflict of interest through the blind trust, and are there better ways.

That I think is the heart and thrust of relevance of this particular line of questioning. It goes beyond questioning the Premier in respect of specific holdings to raise that broader issue that we should be seeking answers to: what are the best ways of dealing with this very difficult issue that we all face in one form or another?

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Westlock-Sturgeon to the point of order.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order of blind trusts, which, as you would know, I raised later when I tried to ask a supplemental.

I have before me, of course, the former Premier's statement

of May 2, 1973, when he first introduced the idea of conflict of interest, and then going on to his statement on July 1, 1973. It says quite clearly that

ministers shall not own, directly or indirectly, shares in any public company whose business might be materially affected by the decisions of the Government of Alberta. Ministers have, however, the option of establishing a trust upon the condition that the minister exercise no influence . . .

This was, I believe, the point the Premier was getting to. This again, like the Member for Calgary Buffalo, is not trying to point fingers but to point out that in a blind trust it is, as the word implies, blind.

But if the minister, the Premier, or myself know that my wife, my children, or my grandchildren have registered so many shares in a corporation, it's no longer blind. We may not know what the operator is doing, but if we have registered the shares in our family name, we then know that our assets are listed there. So it's not correct in this particular case, where it is registered, to say that the blind trust covers it.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, when I'm speaking on a blind trust, there are blind trusts and there are blind trusts. There's the Sinclair Stevens type of blind trust where they didn't talk at night when they went to bed. Nevertheless, there was a blind trust which everybody conceded was well known.

MR. SPEAKER: Keep the examples in this House, please.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'm speaking on a blind trust. But a blind trust that I've been associated with quite often -- not with government but with other conflict of interest of business -- you still have to report sometime at the end what things went on during the period of time afterwards. In other words, you may not have any decision in the day-to-day operation of the blind trust, but one year, two years, or four years later the blind trustee -- if you can call him that, I hope; and maybe some of them are that bad -- then makes a report to the person that they are trustee from. And this is absolutely missing from this legislation.

So I counter that the questions were quite correct. First of all, they were applying to something that was in the public domain. It was no longer blind; the asset was well known to belong to the Premier's family. Secondly, in the regulations it is silent as to whether or not that blind trust will be reported on. I think both of those are evidence enough for the hon. Leader of the Opposition to pursue his questioning.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say one thing because they're referring to the family. I don't know what's in the blind trust nor does anybody in this Assembly. The common statement that they do is completely without any truth. They don't know what's in that blind trust. Neither do I. How they somehow are now experts at what's in my blind trust is a bit of a joke. [interjections] Are you going to tell me that something you read in the *Journal* is accurate all the time?

MR. MARTIN: You didn't deny it.

MR. GETTY: I didn't have to; I don't know. Come on. [interjection]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order please. [interjections]

With respect to the point of order, the matter of the blind trust is not the issue as to legislation before us or a motion be-

fore the Assembly or anything of that nature, as the Member for Calgary Buffalo and the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon tried to argue. If they wish to deal with that issue as to whether a blind trust is indeed a blind trust, to suit their understanding of those terms, then they have other means to bring that forward for discussion by the Assembly.

The matter is the line of questioning that went on. The House should be well aware of the fact that during at least the previous Legislature, and perhaps before that, the previous Premier did indeed instruct his cabinet ministers to put their assets into blind trusts and to make their declarations. That has been the tradition not only of the Legislature from 1982 to 1986 but certainly is also true of this Legislature. The necessary declarations are indeed on file in the office of the Legislative Assembly. So that when a matter of a blind trust has been entered into, the House must indeed be of the opinion that all arrangements have been entered into in good faith and have been carried out in such fashion.

To then enlarge the question with respect to one's family and reports that have been carried in newspapers, again within *Beauchesne* there are sufficient references that the House is not bound, nor an individual member, to confirm or deny what information has been carried in a source outside of the Chamber.

For purposes of this discussion, the Chair recognizes full well that the necessary documentation has been entered into with regard to the Legislative Assembly, and there is no need for the Chair to have any question arising as to whether or not those requirements have been met.

Now, with respect to the matter of privilege as raised by the Deputy Government House Leader, on that issue the matter purporting to the accuracy of statements made that indeed the Chair invites the Premier, the Deputy Premier, and the Leader of the Opposition to peruse *Hansard* overnight. The Blues will be available later this afternoon to see whether or not the question of privilege should be carried forward through to tomorrow.

The Chair understands there was also a point of order from the Member for Clover Bar.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I just want to bring the point to your attention that unless my memory is failing me more than I think it is failing me, it seems that in previous sessions of the Assembly a point of order could be brought up during question period. Because it seems that now -- and it's just a very, very valid and a good example that when the Deputy Premier rose in his place and wanted to interject, I thought, a legitimate point of order, it was not available. By the time all the questions have been asked and we go on to the point of order, it's irrelevant by that time. So unless something has changed in the last year or two, it always seemed to be that we could interject a point of order when it was relevant, Mr. Speaker. That's basically what I'm trying to bring to the attention of you, Sir, and the members of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary Forest Lawn on the point of order. I'm sorry. The Attorney General.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, on this particular point of order, I think members will recall that while I no longer hold the position of Deputy Government House Leader, there was a conference of House leaders of all parties, at which time it was decided that it would become the practice of the Assembly to hold points of order until the end of the question period, so as not to interfere with the time available for questions. I thought that

was the reason the practice had been established at the commencement of this Legislature, and that, I think, is a legitimate point. The clarifying point you referred to in *Beauchesne* is, of course, something that may want to be examined as to the urgency and the necessity of raising a point of order at a particular time during question period. But I think I'm correct in saying that that was the agreement of the House leaders last year, and I think perhaps should be followed in order to preserve the 45 minutes that is available in question period and not take up the time with endless points of order.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, with respect to an answer that I gave to the Member for Little Bow on the Heritage Savings Trust Fund on page 406, on March 27 . . .

MR. SPEAKER: The remarks are not to this point.

Briefly in response to the Member for Clover Bar, as pointed out by the previous Deputy Government House Leader, with respect to the 21st Legislature it was indeed an agreement of the House leaders and the Chair to quote *Beauchesne* 369 much more frequently, to indeed have the points of order, points of privilege, and the purported versions thereof come up at the end of question period so that hon. members would indeed stand more of a chance to get into question period. But the Chair appreciates the direction.

The Provincial Treasurer.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, on 406 of Friday last's *Hansard*, in response to the Member for Little Bow, *Hansard* has me indicating that the income stream transferred from the heritage fund to the General Revenue Fund is \$1.3 million. The record should show that it is \$1.3 billion.*

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. the record has been corrected.
A point of order.

MR. TAYLOR: A point of order. Mr. Speaker. It was on the question, if you recall, when the Member for Calgary Buffalo wanted to add a supplemental to the question of the Member for Calgary Mountain View with respect to food bank closures. I thought that although you might argue that some of the supplementals that crept in after the original question weren't quite kosher in your opinion -- correct -- the original question was to the Premier to ask him what his plans were to close the food bank in Calgary before the Winter Olympics. I think that was quite a legitimate question, and to have the supplemental that our party intended to ask thrown out didn't seem to me to be correct, on a point of order, Mr. Speaker, because if the original question was all right and it sounded fine, I would think that although some of the supplementals by the original questioner may have been facetious in your mind, I can assure you the question that our party was going to ask was not facetious.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton Kingsway, followed by the Member for Edmonton Meadowlark.

MR. McEACHERN: It would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, in a question of this sort, the ruling as to whether or not the supplementary question should be ruled out of order should hinge more on the reason for ruling the further line of questions out of order. If the line of questioning is out of order, then obviously supplementals are off. But if it is merely that the speaker who is

asking the first set of supplementaries is getting out of hand and you choose to cut him off, then that wouldn't necessarily impose the same restriction on a following person from another party asking final questions.

MR. MITCHELL: I rise just to emphasize the point made by the Member for Edmonton Kingsway, Mr. Speaker. Taken to its logical conclusion, it could mean that one party which has a legitimate supplementary question to ask on a specific issue could be denied the opportunity to do that because of the ineffectiveness of questioning of another party. That seems to be a conundrum and a dilemma that would limit the impact of these other parties.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, the Chair is always willing to take advice from all quarters of the House, and the Chair does not lack from receiving advice from all quarters of the House.

The Chair at any time has the right to decide whether a question is in order or not and whether a member will be recognized or not. The Chair also has a great interest in challenge, whether it's myself in the Chair or the Deputy Speaker or the Deputy Chairman of Committees or any hon. member, should one be called to sit in this interesting position in the House. The Chair always has the difficulty to listen and to decide whether indeed questions are in order or out of order.

On this day the Chair really felt that something which started out relating in large measure to the Olympics of February 1988 hardly came within *Beauchesne* 359(5) as a matter of some urgency. But again, the Chair will take all hon. members' comments into consideration.

Further points of order? Further points of privilege?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker. Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor will now attend upon the Assembly.

[The Speaker left the Chair]

head: **ROYAL ASSENT**

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order! Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

[The Honourable W. Helen Hunley, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, took her place upon the Throne]

HER HONOUR: Please be seated.

MR. SPEAKER: May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has, at its present sitting, passed certain Bills to which, and in the name of the Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

ACTING CLERK: Your Honour, the following are the titles of the Bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed:

No.	Title
2	Daylight Saving Time Amendment Act, 1987
24	Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1987
25	Appropriation (Alberta Capital Fund) Interim Supply Act, 1987
26	Appropriation (Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund,

*See March 27 *Hansard*, p. 406

Capital Projects Division) Interim Supply Act,
1987-88

[The Lieutenant Governor indicated her assent]

ACTING CLERK: In Her Majesty's name, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these Bills.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order!

[The Lieutenant Governor left the House]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SPEAKER: Be seated, please.

Does the hon. Government House Leader wish to call supply?

MR. CRAWFORD: I think we're waiting, Mr. Speaker, for the Sergeant-at-Arms, and then Committee of Supply will be called.

head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

[Mr. Gogo in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

Department of Recreation and Parks

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister, would you care to make some opening comments to the committee?

MR. WEISS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd be delighted to take a few minutes and go into some of our pertinent details with regards to the department. In addressing the House today, I'd like to briefly review some of the major activities involving Alberta Recreation and Parks over the past year and talk about the initiatives currently being undertaken to meet the fiscal and social challenges which lie ahead in the coming year.

I'd like to begin, Mr. Chairman, by offering a few words of recognition to the staff of this department, who have shown a tremendous sense of dedication and professional commitment to developing and delivering government programs and services on behalf of all Albertans. My personal thanks for the co-operation and assistance they have provided to me. Some of them are seated in the gallery now, Mr. Chairman.

During the past year I have taken some time to meet with employees throughout the province to hear their ideas and discuss their concerns, and I must say that I have been left with a renewed sense of appreciation for the work carried out by these men and women. In this difficult time of austerity I've seen a real willingness to work together toward a common goal of achieving fairness and equity in bringing our many services and programs into balance with the fiscal realities of today. That concept, Mr. Chairman, of working together is a critical factor in reaching a truly fair balance, not just employees of this department working together but all Albertans and all members of this House.

Cutting budgets is never an easy task. While downsizing has perhaps become a relatively common political phrase in Alberta today, it is a term which carries a cost with it, a cost which must be borne by all Albertans. But in making these tough adjust-

ments, I have been fortunate to work with a group of people who have continued to show their willingness to put the public interest at the forefront of their decision-making.

Current economic conditions in Alberta are affecting the way we do business and the way we live our daily lives. They're also changing the way we set our priorities and, just as important, our expectations of government. This department began meeting this new economic reality during the past year and will continue to work toward developing innovative management techniques and strategies to ensure that we can continue to respond to the fiscal and social requirements of coming years.

Last November, when the department, after a great deal of preparation and planning, canceled a major policy conference at a cost-savings measure of some \$65,000 plus, I was encouraged to see how positively both the staff and the participants responded, to see how positively both of them were involved. The immediate reaction was not one of defeat but rather was seen as a new challenge to find a way to complete an integral public review process at less expense to the taxpayers of Alberta. I'm very pleased today to say that we were able to hold this important policy review early in the new year at a substantially reduced cost. The hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View attended one of those sessions. We were pleased to have him there.

When we asked those interested groups and individuals to help share in the cost of holding the policy conference, they reacted with understanding and co-operation. The end result is that we were able to accomplish our objective of providing a forum for Albertans to review and comment on important policy issues, and were able to do it in a way that reflected today's economic climate and the realities of it. When I spoke earlier of the need for co-operation and commitment to work together to reach common objectives, Mr. Chairman, it is this type of co-operation to which I was referring too.

I am particularly proud, too, of the department's co-ordination and hosting of the recent annual Energize conference, an in-depth series of workshops for recreation board members, municipal councillors, and mayors from across Alberta to help them extend their initiatives in the field of recreation within their communities. Energize '87 was the most successful to date, with some 450 delegates attending from all corners of the province. By all accounts these Albertans who are responsible for delivering recreation programs at the community level have voted Energize as a highly successful endeavour.

This conference also provides the department an opportunity to recognize Albertans who have demonstrated an outstanding commitment and dedication to advancing the development of recreation in the province. The eight individuals who received awards this year, Mr. Chairman, exemplify the social fabric of volunteerism that contributes so much to the quality of our daily lives.

I'd also like to extend a special thanks to the city of Red Deer for their participation in hosting this conference and to the 50 students from Red Deer College and the University of Alberta who contributed their time and energy to make it a great success. We're pleased to have had it in Red Deer. [some applause] That's the Red Deer caucus, just in case anybody didn't know. This, too, is an example of the co-operative partnerships that we must continue to foster in coming years to ensure that we maximize our potential and our energy.

We have had other winners as well. At the Canada Winter Games, hosted in Cape Breton in February, Team Alberta represented by over 250 young athletes captured 35 medals at this

national-level sporting event. These games provide an important rung in the ladder of amateur sports development, a benchmark against which our young athletes can gauge their performance at a national level. Whether or not these young athletes actually take medals home for our province, they're all winners in their own right. Mr. Chairman, for they have won the right to represent Alberta, I'm sure all members will join with me in applauding their effort and hard work, as well the substantial contribution made by the many coaches, managers, officials, and volunteers who play such a vital part in the successful development of amateur sports.

Mr. Chairman, I have for all members of the Assembly a pin of the A-Team, that was used in the games, and I would like to ask the pages if they wouldn't mind to distribute to all hon. members.

On an international level, I'm pleased to say that during the past year the province of Alberta has successfully concluded a sports exchange agreement with China. This agreement will help foster improved international relations through the mutual development and exchange of athletes, coaches, and trainers. With similar agreements now in place with Japan and Korea, Alberta has strengthened its international link with the Pacific Rim countries which continue to play a significant role in our overall economic development and trade agreements, an accomplishment I'm sure all members of this Assembly would be pleased with.

Of equal importance on the international stage are the upcoming 1988 Winter Olympic Games in Calgary. Several months ago I was honoured and pleased to be able to participate in a major step toward completing this government's substantial commitment toward the hosting of this prestigious world event, with the official opening of the Nakiska ski area and the Canmore Nordic Centre. Since their opening last December, Mr. Chairman, both of these facilities have hosted world-class sporting events such as the NorAm and World Cup races in men's and women's downhill at Nakiska, and regional, national, and world cup races in biathlon, cross-country and Nordic combined skiing at Canmore. I had the pleasure of attending most of those events.

With the successful hosting of these Olympic test competitions, these facilities have met the challenges and demands of the world's best in preparation for next year's Olympic Games. Successful hosting of events such as these is more than just testing the facilities themselves, Mr. Chairman. They are also tests for Albertans as we prepare to host the world, and I must say that I'm impressed with the energetic, positive, and friendly welcome we provided these international competitions and spectators. The town of Canmore in particular has opened its arms as a community with enthusiastic willingness to embrace the challenge of being on a world stage. My compliments to the Member for Banff-Cochrane.

At Nakiska, in spite of difficult, unreasonable weather -- and Mr. Chairman, I cite unreasonable weather in the high 70s -- the operator worked extremely hard to provide the best conditions possible to meet the stringent demands of the world's best skiers, as well as recreational skiers who have come to expect the best in the world. Perhaps in retrospect this has been the best challenge as we prepare for the 1988 Olympics. Testing these facilities in the face of adversity has meant an added burden but one which has been borne well and with success. This is the type of co-operative partnership at which Albertans excel.

That sense of co-operation has continued to occur on other fronts as well. During the past year I've met with my colleagues

from across Canada and with my counterpart at the federal level to discuss areas of mutual interest and concerns, as well as address issues of particular importance to specific regions. Through these meetings we've tried to address opinions and attitudes that have varied on certain national and regional issues. There has been a continuing sense of participation, of working together, which I stress, to resolve the problems before us. It is a healthy exchange, Mr. Chairman, and one in which this province will maintain an active participation.

I'd like to take this opportunity as well to congratulate the federal government on their initiatives in the area of national fitness awards programs. I was fortunate to be able to participate in this program a few weeks ago in Calgary and would like to say that this department heartily endorses these efforts by the government of Canada to encourage and promote a greater awareness of the importance of good health. This program is a positive example of government and private business working together towards a common goal. The program, which is run jointly by Fitness Canada and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, recognizes companies for their outstanding contribution to fitness programs. This year three Alberta-based operations were recognized, a tremendous accomplishment to think that three across Canada were singled out. Those, Mr. Chairman, were Shell Resources Canada, Dome Petroleum, Texaco Canada, and Texaco Resources. I am sure that I speak on behalf of all members when I applaud these companies and other Canadian businesses which recognize the importance of health and fitness to our daily lives. With spiraling health care costs in Canada, such initiatives reflect an important step toward preventive health care.

At the beginning of my remarks today I spoke of co-operation, partnerships, and the need to work together to reach common goals, to maximize our efficiency, and to assure a fair and reasonable approach to the development and delivery of the programs and services we are responsible for. That attitude and philosophy has prevailed during the extensive deliberations we have held in preparing the department's 1987-88 budget within the financial guidelines established. Fairness and equity continue to be the key words as we prepare to reduce expenditures and improve the cost/revenue ratio of the department, Mr. Chairman, I'd like all hon. members to keep those words in mind: fairness and equity. It has been a difficult challenge, but in facing this challenge, Alberta Recreation and Parks has initiated steps to help reduce overall government expenditures and bring fees for the provision of services more closely in line with the cost of providing those services. And to add to the challenge, the department adopted an underlying principle to maintain the highest and most efficient level of service possible while meeting these fiscal requirements.

Mr. Chairman, to help offset the current government deficit, in keeping with overall government principles, the department is reducing expenditures in both program and service areas and moving toward the establishment of a fee structure which will ensure that direct users support a more equitable share of the cost of maintaining and operating services and resources. We believe that Albertans, in realizing the economic realities we face today, are prepared to accept a greater responsibility of sharing a larger portion of the cost of providing the management and operation of certain programs, services, and resources.

We also feel that Albertans recognize that established programs which they have come to expect over the years may have to be reduced or extended over a longer period of time in order to help offset the present deficit situation we find ourselves in.

Higher user costs and a reduced level of service are realities which go hand in hand with diminishing financial resources. That fact is no different than the operation of a business or the running of a household, and like good business practices or household management, Mr. Chairman, we have attempted to reflect these realities in the most fair and equitable manner possible. To that degree, I feel this department has been successful in preparing a budget that speaks to the economic realities we must live with while minimizing negative impacts on the public we serve.

For the benefit of the members of this House, Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to take a few minutes to highlight the salient initiatives undertaken in this budget. To more clearly address these initiatives, I'd like to speak to them in areas relative to the recreation side and follow with the parks side of the department.

In recreation, those areas that are managed as recreation-related programs, a number of key undertakings are reflected in the budget. Over the next few months the department will be consolidating the number of regional recreation offices throughout the province. This consolidation of services will reflect in the result of closure of six regional offices. This strategy also involves the redesigning of regional boundaries and the redistribution of workloads. In future, consultative services will be provided more to the municipality as an entity rather than to individual groups and/or associations within the municipality. Additionally, more consultations will be held on a regional basis with a number of municipalities at one time, as opposed to separate consultations with individual municipalities. Through this consolidation move the department is able to significantly reduce administrative operating costs while still maintaining a higher degree of regional consulting services. This consolidation will result in the closure of regional offices in Medicine Hat, Edmonton, Vegreville, Barrhead, and Wainwright and the continued closure of the High Level office. In addition to this operational change, the department's commitment to its various grant programs will be modified through a combination of grant reductions, program extensions, the transferring and amalgamation of programs, and elimination of some programs.

Now, with the community recreation/cultural grant program, for example, Mr. Chairman, a two-year extension of the program in concert with a new per capita reduction formula has ensured that while immediate financial commitments have been reduced, the total program commitment of approximately \$240 million remains unchanged. And that is very important to all members of the Assembly.

This new formula will see the previous two year's per capita commitment of \$20 reduced to \$16 this year and \$12 for the following two years and then reduced to \$10 for the two extended years of the program. This approach will provide municipalities a longer time frame in which to plan their grant programs and will immediately reduce the cost of providing the program by some \$9.6 million this fiscal year. My thanks to the Provincial Treasurer and colleagues for recognizing how important the decision to extend this program was to all Albertans.

In addition, a general 10 percent reduction has been applied to a number of recurring grants. Recurring grants, Mr. Chairman, are those which departmental clients expect to receive from one year to the next on the basis of existing legislation or regulations. They include grants to provincial recreation and sports associations for fitness development programs, amateur sports events, regional festivals, and international sports exchanges. This general 10 percent reduction, in conjunction with the elimination of grants of approximately some \$83,000 to the

Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation and just over \$172,000 to the Alberta Sport Council will help the department realize a total estimated savings of over \$500,000 in the '87-88 fiscal year. I should point out, Mr. Chairman, that both the Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation and the Alberta Sport Council will continue to receive support through lottery funding as opposed to general revenue funds. The source of funding to the Alberta Sport Council to support the Alberta Summer Games and Winter Games and the Alberta Seniors Games will also be transferred to lottery funds as opposed to general revenues, thereby saving the department an estimated \$300,000 in the coming fiscal year and ensuring that those programs will be delivered in future years.

With the municipal recreation/tourism areas program, it is estimated that a total of 25 constituencies will receive funding in fiscal 1987-88 with a total commitment of some \$2 million, including some carryover sites such as in Redwater-Andrew and Wainwright, which have been recommended for split grants between '87-88 and 1988-89. MRTA, the municipal recreation/tourism areas program, announced in 1986 is intended to provide assistance to municipalities in the development, upgrading, and operation of outdoor recreation facilities as a means of creating new recreation and tourism opportunities for Albertans.

I'd just like to add, Mr. Chairman, that this program generates many economic spin-off benefits to the province and is actively supported by the communities. For example, of 18 municipal recreation areas established with the assistance of the \$1.4 million in government funding in '85-86, it has been shown that an additional \$1.5 million has been invested by the communities. Beyond creating new tourism opportunities, this program, through a partnership of government and community support, is providing job opportunities and enhanced business opportunities right within the communities in which they have been established.

In the parks area, Mr. Chairman, a number of changes will be brought in which will help reduce overall operation and maintenance costs and increase revenue sources for the government. Perhaps of most importance to Albertans is the adoption of a new fee schedule for services provided in provincial parks and provincial recreation areas. Beginning April 1, 1987, this new fee schedule will come into effect and will cover a wide range of services provided in Alberta's provincial park system. Camping fees, for example, will be increasing over the next two years. The present rates of \$3, \$4, and \$5 for the basic semiserviced and full-service sites will be rising to \$5, \$7, and \$9 in this fiscal year and \$7, \$9, and \$11 respectively in 1988.

Alberta seniors, Mr. Chairman, will also play a role. They'll be asked to contribute to the cost of running our provincial parks system by paying one-half the daily fee for the service received. Many seniors have indicated to the department over the years that they are more than willing to contribute to the cost of operating our parks, paying their fair share. Collecting fees at half the regular rate from Alberta seniors continues to maintain Alberta services to seniors in this area as some of the best in Canada. With at least half of the provinces charging regular camping rates, we're not out of line and fully realize that our seniors are prepared to accept this challenge as well.

In 1988 we'll also be asking those who use provincial recreation areas to contribute to the cost of operating these sites with a charge equal to the basic camping rate of \$5. In addition, the department will cease operation of some 23 provincial recreation areas throughout the province. Mr. Chairman, this is very important. These sites have been selected based on a principle

of low use and high cost. Now, wherever possible, the department will be encouraging local municipal authorities, community groups or associations, or private-sector operators to take over the management and operation of these sites. In those cases where an alternative operator cannot be found, these sites will be permanently closed and rehabilitated. I should add, Mr. Chairman, to all hon. members that even if all 23 sites were closed that would affect less than 4 percent of our user public. So I think it's just good fiscal management and responsibility that we address those areas.

Additionally, 11 provincial parks and recreation areas will be converted to seasonally staffed operations, with most off-season operational duties performed by seasonal staff from nearby offices. The cost saving through the closure and/or divesting of provincial recreation areas and the conversion of seasonally staffed operations at these selected sites in '87 and '88 is estimated to be some \$650,000 for the department and the government.

In the area of cottage leases within provincial parks, Mr. Chairman, the department has applied a new flat fee of some \$400 per year plus an additional \$2 per front foot for waterfront property. This new fee is in keeping with lease fees charged by Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife and corresponds with charges applied in other provinces. This increase follows an assessment of land values carried out in November of 1985. Under the old regulation which was in existence at that time with the leaseholders, lessees paid an annual fee of 10 percent of appraised land value. If fees, Mr. Chairman, were adjusted to reflect the recent appraisals, rates would have increased in a range from some \$600 to \$4,300 per year. It is felt that with this flat-rate approach cottage owners are spared a possibly unmanageable sudden increase, while at the same time beginning to pay a greater portion of what is really an exclusive use of a public resource. Cottage owners also will have certain free services reduced as the department continues to move toward ensuring that users will pay a higher portion of the cost for services received. In the past, some services were provided as a courtesy, such as road maintenance, garbage collection. These will no longer be provided to cottage holders on a no-cost basis. These free services will no longer be provided by the department, a move which will save the Alberta taxpayers about \$100,000 in the 1987-88 fiscal year.

Other initiatives are also being employed concerning the occupation, operation, and provision of some services. Beginning with the '87 camping season, campground operations will be offered as a private-sector opportunity in three provincial parks. Wabamun Lake, Crimson Lake, and Carson-Pegasus provincial parks have been selected to allow for the private operation of the campground services within the park, and I stress to all hon. members, Mr. Chairman, campground services. These private-sector opportunities will only deal with the services within the park. The department will maintain responsibility for the replacement of facilities, for resource conservation and protection, land management, and recreational, interpretive, and educational programming.

Wherever camping services are privatized, the contractor will be required to maintain the facilities to standards set by the department for all provincial parks. In addition, the fee schedule will be consistent with that applied by the government in all provincial parks. This move is consistent with the government's policy to encourage private-sector involvement in the delivery of services when it does not diminish or negatively impact existing levels and quality of service. In a number of other areas

where a fee for service is charged, increases will be applied to levels which are more closely in line with costs of providing those services.

In addition to general camping fee increases, the department is currently reviewing the fee schedule for recreational, industrial, and agricultural dispositions in provincial parks. It has been a number of years since these fees have been revised, and it is anticipated that relatively significant fee increases will be instituted. These fees have been assessed in relation to charges in other provinces and with Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife. Basic principles taken into consideration include cost recovery, equity with market considerations, and the elimination of certain noncompatible activities.

The reductions proposed in the 1987-88 budget have been carefully developed so as to adequately reflect the government's commitment to reducing the provincial deficit in a fair and equitable manner once again, Mr. Chairman, while maintaining the highest level of service possible. With the budget reductions outlined here and the new fee schedule for services, the department has made what I believe are careful and comprehensive plans to ensure that Alberta Recreation and Parks becomes increasingly cost-effective without significantly sacrificing the quality of services expected by the people of this province.

Mr. Chairman, I feel this budget is prepared in a fair and equitable manner and in keeping with the principles outlined in the budget presentation made before this House by the Hon. Dick Johnston on March 20. I commend this budget for the Alberta Recreation and Parks covering the 1987-88 fiscal year, and I look forward to the questions and comments of hon. members of the Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister, you have covered the wide range of your votes. I would add the authority for the votes is found in the government estimates beginning on page 290. Minister, in view of the fact that you spoke to all the votes, would you entertain questions on all votes at the same time? Is that agreeable to you, minister?

MR. WEISS: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then perhaps we would begin with the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View, followed by the Member for Cypress-Redcliff. In view of the fact we have seven members wishing to put questions to you, minister, it may be appropriate if you would entertain all questions before you respond, but that's your prerogative. The hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to begin my remarks this afternoon by first of all paying a few compliments to the Minister of Recreation and Parks. Over the past 10 months or so I've had occasion to deal with him a number of times, and he's struck me as being quite conscientious. He's been open to the questions I've put to him, he answers his letters from me, and I appreciate also the information he provides to me on an informal basis from time to time. He also, as he mentioned in his opening remarks, allowed me to participate in the consultation that he had at Heritage Park in Calgary a couple of months ago, and I appreciated that very, very much. So I think that he's working very hard over there, and the Department of Recreation and Parks, I think, should feel good about the minister they have working on their behalf.

I must say, however, Mr. Chairman . . . [interjection] I

don't want to get carried too far away here. He's building on a foundation that was laid by others before him, and he also has to contend with a number of government backbenchers who have certain ideas about how his department runs. So I have to say that there are still some things that I believe are not at all satisfactory in his department.

I'd like to start my remarks this afternoon, Mr. Chairman, by referring first of all to Kananaskis Country management, which falls under the responsibilities of this minister. You know, that's a beautiful park, and God did a good job, even if she put Mount Allan in a chinook belt creating lots of problems for the minister and his department. I also have to say that the Conservative government has not improved on that park as much as they might have us think they have improved on it.

My main concern, Mr. Chairman, is with the way business has been done in Kananaskis Country. I know the minister spoke in his opening remarks about the need to reduce operations during difficult economic times, and he talked about economic realities. But I want to know whether the business decisions that are made in that department respecting Kananaskis Country bear any relation to economic realities and good business management. I'd like to know how some of these decisions get made. I mean, \$25.3 million of taxpayers' money has been invested in the Nakiska resort at Mount Allan. Now, how much is the province going to be making from that lease this year?

You know, a normal operator, if they took over a ski resort or wanted to proceed with a ski resort, would have to finance the infrastructure. We saw last year that the Alberta Opportunity Company put a gentleman, a businessman by the name of Bob Lyon, into receivership because he couldn't carry on with the financing of the infrastructure of his ski operation. But here we have a case where the public is financing the ski operation at Nakiska, and there doesn't seem to be any recognition in any of the financial arrangements affecting that lease that the public is paying -- I would presume the equivalent of about \$2.5 million a year -- to finance that \$25 million capital equity in the resort. So I'm surprised to read in the lease arrangement which the minister tabled last week that there's no annual minimum payment to in any way reflect that public investment of \$25 million. What we see is a number of areas in the lease where the province would generate some revenues but only after the first \$3 million of ski lift tickets have been sold and only on the basis of 15 percent of food and beverage sales, retail merchandising sales, and 5 percent on ski school and other sales at that resort.

Now, I've been informed by some operators of ski resorts in that area of the province that you would likely expect \$8 to \$10 a day to be spent by a skier on these other items. So if we say, for example, that there were going to be 100,000 skiers at Nakiska this year, that would equate to approximately \$1 million in sales in food and beverage, retail merchandising, and the ski school, just to make some ballpark guesses at what might be coming to the provincial government under those terms of that lease agreement. Well, if there are \$1 million worth of sales, the province will be making a maximum of approximately \$150,000 a year from all of the operation that's taking place at the Nakiska resort at Mount Allan. I don't see, Mr. Chairman, how that bears any relation to economic realities. I mean, I don't see that in any way reflecting a good business decision. You invest \$25 million, and you make \$150,000 a year. I'll even grant the benefit of the doubt and estimate that at even another 50 percent increase, but it still doesn't come anywhere close to meeting the cost to the public of developing that resort.

So I ask myself: in the midst of these economic times does the government really mean what it says when it talks about economic realities and a good businesslike approach to the operations of government? Based on the evidence that I've seen so far, I wonder whether that actually plays any part at all in the decision-making of the department or of the cabinet.

I see also -- I don't know that any reference has been made in this documentation; I'd like the minister to address it. There's talk of joining with the Olympic committee to finance on a fifty-fifty basis another chair lift at Mount Allan. That would be split as a \$3.8 million project apparently. Half of that would fall under OCO, and the other half would be financed either entirely by the province or jointly with the province and Ski Kananaskis. That would be approximately \$1.9 million. Has a decision been reached yet between OCO and the provincial government to pay out \$1.9 million for a ski lift at Mount Allan? And in view of all the other cutbacks that the government has announced in recent months and weeks -- cutbacks in support to the disabled, cutbacks in education, in the Agriculture department, virtually every department of government -- how high a priority is it of the provincial government to spend \$1.9 million to help build another ski lift at Mount Allan?

Now, assuming that that were to be built, it also becomes part of another question, and that is the disposition of the assets. The minister made reference to the privatization of a number of parks operations within his government's mandate purview. There's also in the lease that was signed with Ski Kananaskis a clause that would allow for negotiations to sell that particular resort to that particular operator three years into the operation of that lease. And I would ask the minister: does the minister have any particular objectives that he wants to achieve by selling the Nakiska resort to the private-sector operator? And in terms of those objectives, is one of the objectives of the government to at least recover the full amount of money that was invested in the Nakiska resort at Mount Allan? And if it's not an objective of the government, why not, after having invested \$25 million, is it not an objective to recover that if that resort were ever sold? As well, if they're going to proceed with the \$1.9 million expenditure on a ski lift, does the same question apply there as well in terms of recovering that from the operator if that resort were ever sold?

Just a final question in regard to the Nakiska resort at Mount Allan. Will the minister confirm that my figures and my estimates in terms of the amount accruing to the provincial government this year from that lease are accurate? He's apparently said that they will be receiving less than a million dollars. Will he confirm that the amount going to be received by the provincial government in this fiscal year will be somewhere in the order of \$100,000 to \$200,000?

Mr. Chairman, I think the same questions are relevant in terms of the lease agreements with the operators or the builders of hotels in the Ribbon Creek area. We've had an extensive debate on that already in the Legislature earlier in this session, but it still raises the question as to what business considerations does this provincial government give when it enters into leases and sales agreements with private-sector operators in Kananaskis Country. As we've seen in previously released documentation regarding the Kananaskis golf course, again there's maximum public investment and a minimum rate of return to the public. In fact, in the end, it may be that that asset is going to be controlled or is controlled by a group that controls it as a result of negotiated agreements.

I have a concern about the sale of the Nakiska resort because

the lease seems to indicate that the provincial government cannot go to public tender in terms of trying to get the best offer being made to them for the sale of that asset, so I have a question in my mind, not only at the Kananaskis golf course but also at Nakiska as well. Do those leases lock the province in to the extent that it can't even put these projects up for open tender to get the best deal or the best offer from the private sector, given that the province has made the decision that they're going to proceed with selling these public assets?

So there are lots of policy questions, Mr. Chairman, that I put to the minister that I'd like him to address in his estimates, regarding the sale and lease of public assets in Kananaskis Country.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to redirect my comments a bit. The minister is responsible for support to the XV Olympic Winter Games, and I've previously asked him about the number of tickets available to the provincial government as a result of their being a part of the Olympic family. I would ask the minister when he would make available the information. When does he anticipate the final accreditation decisions being made so that we would know how many tickets the provincial government will have access to in terms of the Olympic events? And will he also tell us how those tickets are to be allocated amongst members of the government or amongst people appearing at various events on behalf of the government in the form of various hosting arrangements?

Mr. Chairman, the minister spoke briefly about the community cultural and recreational grants program. I just want to highlight again for the minister that the decision or the information was provided to local municipalities very late in their decision-making process of this fiscal year. They had to deal with the information about the level of grants in a very short time period before those allocations could be finalized for many of them. And I can only speak with direct experience as a former member of city council in Calgary that that kind of information, coming when it did, has created a great deal of difficulty for that government in terms of readjusting its priorities and getting information on to community groups in terms of their allocation this particular year. And I would ask the minister now that, I presume, these dollar limits for the next four years have been finally announced, that there were not going to be any further changes: if the minister has any information in coming fiscal years that that budget and that program is going to be further cut, could he at least not make those decisions or make those announcements early in the year, such as was done with information provided to the school boards and the advanced education institutions, so that they can incorporate that information in their decision-making?

I note also from the Auditor General's report that there were certain concerns raised about grants disbursed for the development of major cultural and recreational facilities. The department concurred with the recommendation but mentioned that the program that this recommendation was based on has been terminated. The question I would ask the minister is whether those concerns expressed by the Auditor General still apply to the CRC grant program, or in setting up the CRC grant program, have they done that in such a way that those concerns of the Auditor General are no longer valid in that program as well?

I mentioned that the minister invited me or allowed me to sit in on a consultation he had with numerous user groups in Calgary regarding the policy statement review, and I took from the minister's comments at that meeting that he had given direction to his department to restructure that particular document.

It's been almost three years now, I guess, in the formulation, and it's been sent back to the drawing board, I take it, for some major revisions, I would ask the minister: how long will it take for this process to be completed? Will the consultation that he held with the various user groups across the province affect directly the decisions made about that document? And how will the fiscal restraints under which his department is now operating affect that policy statement?

The minister made mention of the termination and cutback of the regional recreation consultants, and he mentioned four or five centres across the province in which this is to occur. Well, I would say, Mr. Chairman, that this is a program that is particularly effective in terms of the smaller municipalities in the rural areas. These people provide consultative and support services to rural municipalities and small towns. It gives them advice and assistance on how to run their facilities and their boards -- their recreation boards, among others -- and I have a lot of concerns about how this particular cutback is going to affect the operation of those public facilities, I recognize that there is going to be some consolidation in an attempt to bring various municipalities together, but the bottom line is that there is an obvious reduction of service in this area provided by his department, and I know it's going to have to be monitored. But I'm just going to say that today I have a lot of concerns about what that means for rural recreation boards and committees in the smaller communities throughout our province.

I would also ask: in terms of cutbacks that are being made to various programs in this department, I take it that the city of Edmonton has requested from the minister some commitment for the Capital park extension. I take it that the city of Edmonton has requested a \$100,000 commitment so that some work can be started west of the High Level Bridge. If the minister could give that commitment in this Legislature this afternoon or sometime as we review his estimates, I know that the city of Edmonton would appreciate getting that information from the minister at the earliest possible occasion, and I hope that this occasion presents itself to him to make that commitment to the city of Edmonton.

He also dwelled at some length on the parks maintenance aspect of his budget. I wonder what the effect of these cutbacks is going to be and what that will do to the state of repair of our various parks. Because, you know, these are the kinds of decisions you can make one year and get away with it, but if it's a cutback to the base budget over many years, what you're going to do is simply postpone doing timely maintenance to a public facility to the point that it's deteriorated down the road. It's very, very expensive to replace and to rebuild. So I worry, Mr. Chairman, that this may signal a permanent shift in his department, and I have concerns about what will happen to the provincial parks in this province. If the minister would take some note of those concerns, and if he wishes to address those, that he has a contingency plan in place, I would appreciate hearing that as well.

Some provincial parks are going to be closed to the public, at least on a seasonal basis, but I wonder if in some cases these provincial parks are going to be closed to the public on a year-round basis and, if so, which ones. Perhaps the minister could go into a bit of a list as to which ones we can expect to see closed.

I want to pass on a compliment from the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche; he may not be able to get into the debate this afternoon. The department undertook an expansion at the Long Lake Provincial Park and at the Churchill Provincial

Park, and he wants to convey to you through me that that was well received and he is very appreciative of what that department has done. But at the same time, there is concern expressed about the Owl River Recreation Area. What is the government's intent going to be with that particular recreation area in northeast Alberta?

Now, the minister made some reference as well to parks fees that are going to be charged to users of parks. I'm not happy with the park fee increase, but if I'm given a choice between raising fees for the disabled, raising fees for Aids to Daily Living, or introducing fees in our hospitals and school systems, I guess I'd have to support those reluctantly. But I have a question about the fees in connection with the privatization of these campground services. We've seen what privatization has done in the Kananaskis area. I'd like to know what the province expects to get from leasing these campground services out to the private sector. What will be in the nature of those leases? Will there be payments made to the provincial government, or will we see a loss of revenue and still, at the same time, the province being responsible for the replacement of facilities and, indeed, ultimately responsible for the maintenance of those campgrounds? So do we have a loss of revenue on one hand but still see the provincial government being forced to bear the costs for these campground services, which ultimately will basically increase the expenses of this department and will not result in any savings whatsoever?

Mr. Chairman, I've been notified by some people who are concerned about the loss of campground facilities at Keho Lake in the county of Lethbridge, and I take it that the provincial government was responsible for a payment of money to that county in order to replace certain facilities that the provincial government was responsible for flooding, I believe. I'd like to ask the minister of recreation: in terms of the agreement signed between the provincial government and the county, was provision made to replace the campground facilities as part of that grant provided to that county? I ask this because it's a question that has been directed to me by members of the public.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to make an appeal to the minister, not on the basis of any of the comments he's made this afternoon but I think on the basis of his commitment to parks in this province. I would ask that this minister and the cabinet and all the members of the government not put at risk Nose Hill park. That's a point that I'd like to bring forward on behalf of my constituents in Calgary, that we can do lots of things, on one hand, for parks in this province and, on the other hand, can take it away for a large number of people in our province and in one of our major cities.

If there's any consideration being given at any point, from now and in the future, to reintroducing legislation that would make it impossible for the city of Calgary to continue to acquire lands to complete Nose Hill park, I would say to this government: do not proceed with that legislation. It will not be to the benefit of the people of Calgary; it will not be to the benefit of the government of Alberta. There are lots of people, when you think of the entire parks system in this province, who are very, very concerned about what that park means to them as residents of Calgary, and they do not want to see that threatened any longer. A clear statement from the government that they're not proceeding any further with legislation that was introduced at the last session would be greatly welcomed and widely cheered and acclaimed in the city of Calgary as well as throughout the entire province.

So, Mr. Chairman, I've presented lots of concerns and many

questions, and I know that other members of this Legislative Assembly also wish to enter into the debate this afternoon. I look forward to those comments as well as the answers to my questions provided by the Minister of Recreation and Parks.

MR. WEISS: Perhaps I could revert to your original comments. You suggested that perhaps I could hear from all hon. members and then respond. I think in fairness to the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View, with the number of queries he has and concerns, I would appreciate the opportunity, if all members would indulge, to try and respond to him now. And if other members fail to get in -- I certainly hope that wouldn't happen but would like that opportunity, if I may do so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, hon. minister, that would be, in the view of the Chair, your prerogative. I would point out that there's approximately 39 minutes left of these estimates and we have six additional speakers, Mr. Minister, so perhaps you could bear that in mind.

MR. WEISS: Thank you very much. To all hon. members and to the Member for Calgary Mountain View, I appreciate your opening remarks and wished you would have sat down then, and perhaps it would have been fine. But I can understand why you followed through with the others.

In particular, as you talked about Mount Allan and, in your words, said the challenges -- you referred to it as a problem; I refer to it as a challenge and would hope that you would see it as that. You talked about the decisions and the amount of expenditure, the \$25.3 million. If you go back -- to the hon. member, Mr. Chairman -- think of the reason for the development. The reason for the development initially, of course, was that we provide not only a legacy for all Albertans in a world-class facility for recreational skiers but would provide a facility for the Olympics that would be there on hand to allow the Olympics to be part of the venue through the province of Alberta, hosted by the city of Calgary. So I think we've done that in the initial development.

I won't comment about Mr. Lyon, as referred to in another development, as far as the merits of that and his loan application. That would have to be dealt with on an individual basis, and perhaps the hon. member with economic development would respond at another time as to that individual application.

I'd like to remind the member about the initial start-up costs. The start-up costs are horrendous; there were certain unknown factors. I'd like to think about it in this way. I use an analogy that it's almost like income tax: the more you make, the more you pay. In this particular case, the member has referred to the fact that there was no annual payment. That is true, but the operator's stability, to be in place not just for the Olympics but ongoing, is a very important one. So the operator must have not only the expertise in the operation of a ski hill facility but the overall expertise and financial and business acumen that goes with it. I believe we provided that to the benefit of all Albertans in selection of that operator.

The risk in the first one or two years, as any hon. member is aware -- any hon. member who has operated in business certainly realizes that those are the high peak years of failure. If we would have set a higher rate of return initially, that could have in all probability caused the overall development to fail. If the hon. member has reviewed back to the original proposal calls, he will find that was a condition that was offered not just to this successful proponent but to all potential operators of the

ski hill. So what we've said is. "Look, we're prepared to grow with you. go with you. if you're prepared to take the risk with us as well." So the decision as far as the operator I still believe was a good one. a solid one.

As to the number of skiers that was used, some 100,000 skiers. I don't even believe we'll reach that number this year, probably closer to 75,000. in view of the initial start-up problems, the late start-up. the snow conditions as well, and to actually get everything in operation. So that's why I'm pleased we had such things as the preview events that took place and found that we have a world-class facility. In the words of Nancy Greene, who said it herself, it's the finest downhill facility in the world. I think the hill has met the challenge; it's up to us now to prove that we can come through.

The decision re the lift is an interesting one because, really, it's hypothetical -- to the Chair and through to the hon. members -- and no. it's not been dealt with. I can assure the hon. member that it isn't the intent of this department or this government to fund -- and I say "to fund" -- some \$2 million, if that's the figure that was quoted, or thereabouts, to develop a new lift or chair for this particular facility at this time. If there are other ways and means that it can be done to assist and if that is needed, that's what this government's prepared to address. But it doesn't have \$2 million to develop a ski lift at this particular time.

I recognize as well that OCO, the Olympic Organizing Committee, has a responsibility for providing some amenities and facilities for the lift due to the Olympics. Those are the areas of discussions and negotiations we'll be looking at and, hopefully, be able to redirect. I hope that would be point-blank as far as an answer to the hon. member about the commitment of this government.

When he talks about the selling of the assets to the operator, Mr. Chairman, very briefly, I'd like to say and summarize this way. The term was used by the hon. member: the objective is to get the best deal. Well, I've been in business before and I've negotiated deals and I've negotiated deals where I thought I'd make money and I lost. I don't think that's the case here. It would be to this government, if I were the minister responsible at that time, to negotiate what I would say is the best financial arrangement to the mutual benefit of all parties at that particular time. Keep in mind as well that the operator must meet certain conditions. It isn't a locked-in or closed, ironclad agreement. The operator must provide, is the word I use, the expertise in hosting the Olympic events. He must provide the ongoing hill with the operation as far as functioning and the capabilities for the recreation skiers.

Those are the areas that we'll be monitoring and following up very closely. We want to make sure that that is the right operator. I say very confidently today that I believe it is, and I believe, in dealing with the issue in Motion 154, it's shown in the overall co-operation of the operator at that particular time, who was not hesitant at all to release the financial details of those overall contractual agreements. I'd like to once again remind the Assembly of the reason, perhaps the delay, in the filing of those items to the Assembly. And I believe that if it was of a contractual agreement of a personal concern, I would treat it as I would with an individual or any member in this House. If there were an agreement with any of us, I would seek their permission first before I would divulge the contents of that, and that's what we did in this particular case before releasing the contracts.

The particular amount of income that is to be realized in this first year, some \$200,000 or thereabouts, as suggested by the hon. member: I'm not able to supply that information at this

time to the Assembly, Mr. Chairman, because it's an unknown, unknown as to the overall amount of skiers, the amount of dollars that are being generated in the revenues through other sources. We might have an exceptionally long year with snow conditions that would prevail so that we'd be able to look to reach higher numbers of users in relation to the other ancillary benefits but not to the overall number of skiers, because of course that's the major part.

The Olympics accreditation is an interesting one, and I'd respond to the hon. member and all members of the Assembly: no, I'm not able to provide to the hon. member the number of tickets that will be required at this time. And as I've said to others, until such time as the organizing committee of the Olympics is able to finalize their arrangements with other parties as well as their contractual agreements, the number of tickets is not known. I can assure the hon. member, though, that for any tickets that will be left, we've asked that they be allocated for public disposition, and they will not be required by government or other departments.

To clarify a misunderstanding -- and I say "a misunderstanding" because if I were to read into the words about the cost of the tickets, I'd like to assure the hon. member that all tickets will be paid for by somebody. There is no intent of this department or the Provincial Treasurer to be funding tickets for individuals. What might be happening -- and I would say in fairness, and I'm sure the hon. member will understand this -- is that if, for example, a hosting provincial Premier were to be attending an event, we would in all probability provide a complimentary ticket for that particular event to the hon. member. But as far as a carte blanche releasing of the tickets to families and spouses and others of that nature, it is not the intent to happen that way at all, sir. So we'll be controlling it, monitoring it, and ensuring that they do not get out of hand.

The CRC grants -- it's a tough one. It's a tough one to have to cut any program. As far as the time frame, I personally had spoken to many recreational groups and consultants in departments prior to the announcement and prior to the budget, of course. There was a letter, and it was indicated by the Member for Edmonton Belmont, that went out on January 30, prior to the deadline. Also, to all hon. members, that was a similar date that was used in previous years, so it wasn't something that was exceptional or abnormally late. It was a letter that -- that time frame was used in previous years, although I must admit when the letter went out on January 30 in previous years, the full amount of the dollars granted at that time was put in that letter. But all members of the Assembly, in that case, were aware that there would be no financial divulgence of any figures prior to the hon. Provincial Treasurer's release of the budget on March 20.

I'd like to assure the member, though, that no announcement will be forthcoming as it relates to grants because of extension or further reduction, and I say that because there will be no further cuts. This program is in place. I've extended my compliments to all hon. members in their understanding to have the program extended, because I thought and fought for the extension, believing that it was a fair one and equitable, as I've indicated. Some \$240 million will be extended over that full five-year program, where at least we're locked in, and I call that a contractual, moral commitment on behalf of this government to extend that to five years with the same amount of dollar-level funding, so that no community recreation group or municipality will not know what they're doing for the next five years. They'll be able to work on that basis.

I realize there are initial hardships to incur. But I think one of the problems about the grant program, and I say "grant program" to all hon. members, is that people take grants for granted. I don't mean any pun in that, Mr. Chairman, but when they take a grant program and expect it to continue year after year after year, that's not a grant. The whole purpose of the grant program was to be a catalyst or to assist new groups or new cultural or recreational components to get going into the community. And there are many of these new community organizations coming up and asking for this assistance. That's what I believe the grant process is there for, not for continually funding year after year some of those community groups who automatically come in and say, "I need that money because that's what I had last year," without any accountability as to where that money went. I don't want to sell anybody short. To those in need the program is there if they meet the conditions and the criteria.

I believe, Mr. Chairman, that the Auditor General will be well satisfied with the concerns as indicated by the hon. member, and I believe he will be able to address those in any forthcoming audit review. The executive summary is interesting, because I feel very strongly and committed to that. I'm pleased that the hon. member and other hon. members would be in attendance, because that I think the whole process is to have the input by those citizens who are involved in working within the system. And it's those that we're going to listen to and continue to listen to, so it's not that it is carved in stone, but we hope to have that out as early as July of this year if not sooner. The reason I say July is because there are some printing timetables and factors to be involved, but we're near meeting those deadlines now, and we hope to have them out well before, but let's use the time frame of July at the latest.

I believe we'll be able, Mr. Chairman, to maintain the level of service in view of the overall commitments that were still made and comments in that policy workshop. The consolidation is an interesting one, because while, as indicated, it does provide or would appear to provide a reduction of service, I believe we can continue providing that service with more effective management and a closer monitoring of what we have been doing. Now, in looking at the overall workloads -- I personally assess these and the needs from the various areas -- we've tried to be fair and realistic, and not one area was purposely affected by the term "politics." They were addressed on a fair and a need and an equitable basis, and I'm very proud of that decision both by the department and in working with the agencies involved.

The rural rec boards: yes, there are some concerns there. I believe that they're pretty strong and we're going to be able to pull together. A person will not be going out into the area maybe on a once-a-day basis but will be going once every three days on a service basis but will be able to still respond to their needs and work just as closely with them as they have in the past.

The Edmonton city Capital City Park area is one that we'll be working with the Edmonton MLAs on. We're working on it. I can't honestly give the member a commitment at this time, but I can assure him that we recognize the need, as all hon. members do. It's a very important one, and one that I hope we can address responsibly as well.

The cutbacks of services to the parks, Mr. Chairman, is a very fair comment, very fair because I don't know. I don't know what the overall or everlasting effects will be at this time. As a department we have to accept that responsibility, and I don't mean to be repetitive and use the word "monitor" again,

but we will have to monitor. We'll have to see that parks will be not deteriorating. If they do, at that point we'll have to come back and ask all hon. members to understand that the needs are there, and we'll have to be then requesting additional dollars, whether it be on a special warrant or through other fund sourcing, to keep and upgrade and maintain our systems that we have in place. So I'm not condemning the member or being defensive about his remark at all. I think it is a very fair one and one that we should all be concerned with.

The seasonal operations is one that I shouldn't take the time of naming all to the member at this time but have taken the opportunity to provide him a little bit of information. There are several of them here, as indicated, with savings to the department of some \$650,000 in '87-88. I just happened to notice as a matter of comparison that there is only one member from the opposition affected in those closures; all the rest are government members, so I'm certain that I'll receive more flak from the government side than I will from the opposition side. That publication I'd be pleased to see, that the hon. member gets a copy of. Rather than keeping him in suspense, the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche, the Cross Lake site will be affected on a season basis.

But season is season. It's not four seasons, what we believe is our logo within the Recreation and Parks department, because we try to cater to the needs for four seasons. But season will be where the park had limited use in the winter months, it will be closed. And I think that has to be assessed on an individual basis. There are areas, in far rural areas perhaps, that are not even being used that you and I are paying for. So we will try and shift some of the responsibility as far as the staffing and costs and operation in those areas. The Owl Lake one in particular, to the hon. member, I would accept as notice and be reporting back and be pleased to provide any answer to the member.

The privatization one is an area that we feel very strongly on. As I've indicated, there will be three parks that we will be looking to privatize this year. But privatization is not -- how would I say it, Mr. Chairman? -- forgiving the responsibility of the resource itself, because I believe we have to accept that as stewards of the resource, and we will be maintaining that responsibility. But it's in the areas of looking after it, in the overall management of supplying services to it; for example, supplying the water, the pump-outs, the toilets, the upkeep in some of the roads, areas like that, the firewood. I hope that all hon. members realize that the cost of firewood alone is somewhere in excess of \$600,000 to this department. And if you're a noncamper, why should you subsidize me in this particular case if I'm a firewood user? I think there has to be some responsibility. Otherwise, I'm going to come out to your house and get free firewood, and I know you've got a good stand out there. I was out there yesterday, to the hon. member, and looked at your stand of wood. So please keep in mind really what the word "privatization" means.

Keho Lake: I believe the hon. member referred to the loss of the facility, and with regard to the county I would accept his advisement and would be pleased to report back to him properly on that one.

The Nose Hill park is a very interesting one and a very interesting one that affects all of us. But it won't be dealt with by me; it will be dealt with by the members of this Assembly should it reach this Assembly, and I was under the impression there were ongoing meetings and discussions as it relates to Bill 52 . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please, Mr. Minister. Is Nose Hill within your estimates?

MR. WEISS: Thank you for reminding me, Mr. Chairman. I just couldn't see beyond my nose at that particular point. The reference to Nose Hill, though, ties into the overall commitment to this department and I hope, to all hon. members, with regards to the support of Capital City Park's development. And that's a very important issue as it relates to the two major urban communities in Alberta but also to the urban parks, a very, very, important part of our system. [some applause] Thank you. I would hope hon. members would support this and that we would be looking to increased funding through other sources, whether it be Heritage Savings Trust Fund or others, and I would encourage members to provide backup information and gain support so that we, too, can see these two programs being implemented and that the issue of Nose Hill park would then be addressed in future needs as well.

And with those closing remarks, Mr. Chairman, I wait to hear other responses.

MR. TAYLOR: A point of order, Mr. Chairman, if I may. I know that the hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff is next. But possibly in the enthusiasm of the minister answering questions and speaking, we've literally had all the time except for a few minutes occupied by the minister giving his statement and then the answer, and now another government member is ready to speak. I don't think it's fair, Mr. Chairman, and I wonder whether it's fair, though, to ask whether the minister would, along with the House leader, agree, if we can't get through the speakers this afternoon, to bring back his estimates to let us finish another time. It would certainly be a lot nicer . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's a question to the hon. Government House Leader.

MR. TAYLOR: Could I ask that as a point of order?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's a question to the hon. Government House Leader.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Chairman, we would select certain departments for bringing back at some time during the 25 days, and Mondays are sort of good for that because we have two sessions on Monday, I can't commit to this particular department, but I'd say it's a possibility. The other one that members I think want back is Agriculture; that may in fairness come first.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order and not to take away from the House leader's comments, I think it might be said for all members that if members were to ask questions rather than make speeches or, in the words of the Member for Calgary Mountain View, to call this a debate, we might all be better served.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair would refer hon. members to section 62 of *Standing Orders*. The fact remains we've had one speaker in committee today, and there's approximately 16 and a half minutes left in the estimates of this department. Member for Cypress-Redcliff, please.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A few questions and comments for the Department of Recreation and Parks.

Firstly, a question to the minister on the status and timing of the Elkwater townsite plan as it fits into the Cypress master plan and when he expects that plan to come back into the public again with recommendations for it.

A few comments about the closing of the regional office in Medicine Hat and the moving, obviously, I suppose, of that area into Lethbridge. It was that way quite a number of years ago, and then the Medicine Hat office was added. I hope that we're able to serve that area as well, and in addition to that, I hope that when things get through the region through the regional office, when they do come to the main departmental office in Edmonton, I would hope that we can make arrangements so that things come through those offices quickly and that we're not putting another layer in there when people are trying to get their CRC grant proposals, et cetera, through.

I suppose one thing the minister could look at: southern Alberta is a large area, and perhaps the office could be moved to Taber. It's a little closer to Medicine Hat than Lethbridge is, and it may be a little more central to the whole area.

Also, a few short comments on the leases at Kananaskis on the ski hill, on the hotel or the centre there. I would hope that the minister could guarantee us that the rate of return on those investments was greater than the rate of return that we as public receive on Petro-Canada, being a rate of return of even less than that covering the interest on the investment. I wonder if the minister could make some comment on that.

Thank you,

MR. TAYLOR: If you don't mind, I could tell him what the profit is on Petro-Canada. Sure. [interjection] Mr. Chairman, actually Petro-Canada is making a lot of money. They're doing it by gouging the consumer.

However, let's get on for a minute. To the hon. minister, I want to also compliment him on the way he's taken hold of his department and the co-operation our caucus received a number of times when inquiring of his department about the different grants, because, as he says, they soon seem to be cemented into place, as anybody that's in the oil business -- I'm sure the Minister of Energy will tell you how grants soon come to be expected. It's the same thing here.

The only problem I've had is maybe the town of Gibbons. We seem to keep losing that one. The only request we've had to really develop part of the Sturgeon River valley into a park -- and as most of you know that are close to Sturgeon River valley or in agriculture, it has the highest land number of anything outside the Blindman valley in the province. The city of Edmonton has pushed a lot of urban development into the Sturgeon valley. The Sturgeon valley, or a great part of it, is in danger of being extinguished by the fact that we have encroaching urbanization and small acreages. So anything, Mr. Minister, that would go to help preserve part of the Sturgeon Valley and the Gibbons area development would certainly be appreciated, and I think generations in the future would thank you for it.

I might also add, Mr. Chairman, speaking to the minister, I think probably he's one of the few people -- I wouldn't say "he" so much as that's one ministry that I think could probably be expanded, because if in the old days highways, water lines, pipelines were the utilities of those types of industries, the service industries of the future, which make up two-thirds of the jobs now, depend very much on providing a service or an idea; you might say the idea industry, whether it's in management, design, research, banking, teaching, finance. All those areas have a utility too, and one of their utilities is recreation and cul-

ture. Both of those areas are very important to anybody who's going to locate a service program. People do not want to move and set up a consulting or engineering or a service industry in an area that does not provide a great deal of culture and recreation.

Consequently, it surprises me over and over again when I hear my friends on the left ask about the return on Mount Allan, the return on Nakiska. I really don't think you measure the return that way. I think it's an antediluvian idea and one goes back to the puritan ethic, where if you have a golf course, only the rich can afford to pay for it. If you have any kind of recreation, it's supposed to make money; otherwise, you're giving an advantage to those in the public that shouldn't. I think it's a complete failure to understand that recreation and parks and culture today are as highways and the utilities companies were of the past. They're the basic framework you need to get the type of service industries you need located in your economy. Consequently, to ask for these things to be budgeted out I think is wrong.

But I will go this far. In the Nakiska area, I really don't understand -- and there again I go back to my friends on the left -- why we contract out anything, why the government doesn't build the whole works. Now, this makes any NDPer blush in shame, I'm sure. But I would have much more government intervention than they have ever suggested, with the idea that private enterprise has a place. They can contract after you've built the facilities, after you've done the thing; then you can put it out for competitive bid. But you can't win when you put a recreation facility out to private enterprise, I may remind my friends on the left. If a fellow does a shrewd contract, then we've got everybody complaining it doesn't return enough, as we hear now today. If the fellow is losing his shirt, what's he going to do? What are you going to do? Shut down the skiing? Cut the golf course? You have to bail him out.

So there's no way that you can win when you put a public facility of recreation and culture to private enterprise to be built. You're going to get it in the neck either one way or the other. If your deal is too sweet, everybody gives you hell, and if a deal isn't sweet enough, he just comes back and says, "Look; it won't get built unless you subsidize me." So you might as well have the government do it in the first place and allow only private enterprise to come in on contracting.

I might also mention, Mr. Minister -- this is just a point . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Member for Wainwright?

MR. FISCHER: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman. I thought we just talked about asking questions and giving time for some of the other members to speak.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, hon. member. *Standing Orders* are very clear on this point. A member may speak as often as he wishes, no longer than 30 minutes at a time. And the Chair does not make the rules; the Chair applies the rules.

MR. TAYLOR: I could remind the hon. gentleman from the back row there that the opposition has now spoken a total of 19 minutes. If he feels that's too much, I think he maybe should register that beef someplace, since the last two . . . [interjections] I'm only the second one in the opposition speaking.

However, to go on, I might also just take a moment. I noticed when reading your annual report that you've got something -- and I thought this would interest the minister because he comes from the town of McMurray. It's the "Snye," not the

"Syne." I think you saw that . . .

MR. WEISS: The Snye.

MR. TAYLOR: "Snye," is it? Yes. You've written it down as the "Syne." You might give some of your officers or whoever supports you a little dickens, because at least the park that's in your own constituency should be spelled correctly. I remember landing in it in the late '40s and ripping the pontoons off the plane I had at the time, so it is rather vividly etched in my mind. [interjections] I was flying low at that time.

If I go on a bit further here, in the raises for parking facilities, did the minister consider at all, because it's so easy to do in parking facilities, raising the fees out of the province more than those in the province? After all, if the taxpayers have helped pay for a lot of that, there might be some reasoning for raising fees for out-of-province licence plates. It's very easy for whoever is charging the fees to check whether a licence plate is out of province or not.

I also have another question. I don't know. Is the Alberta Game Farm under your jurisdiction? If it isn't, that is going to be a very simple "no."

The other area: is the minister doing more to see, as far as recreation and parks are concerned, in the Lac La Biche area? I believe there is a certain amount of concern that some of the recreation development in the area of a marina is interfering with not only fishing areas but also the bird sanctuary. The fact is that the whole area of Lac La Biche is a federal bird sanctuary, yet we seem to have development going on there that is counter to saving the environment and also maybe setting back the recreation facilities, because Lac La Biche should be increasingly thought of as an environmental park, if you want to call it that, with a fragile ecology that has to be nurtured.

Lastly, and this is just a gentle slap, because I am trying to learn to be gentle because I seem to arouse the people there so much. Very kind. Rather than taking off your shoes and holding a match to you, Mr. Minister, as you would usually do, I find it a little puzzling in your vote 1 that you have your 3.4 percent increase in the minister's office and yet you've cut so many areas of administration: a 27 percent cut in the grants, which I'm not questioning; 24 percent in the purchase of fixed assets. I'm just wondering what they are doing, Mr. Chairman.

That, I think, will bring me very close to the end. I could talk on another . . . [interjections] Wait a minute, wait a minute; I might talk another three minutes and move adjournment of the debate just to make sure the back-bench Tories don't get a chance to say anything, but instead I won't.

Thank you.

MR. FOX: Mr. Chairman, if I might, on a matter of information. If this department is brought back for future consideration, would the list that you have now be in effect, or would it be a new list?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair follows *Standing Orders*, hon. member, and it's first up gets the Chair's attention.

MR. FOX: Thank you. I have a few things I'd like to say to the minister, and I'll keep my comments brief. In reference to the municipal recreation/tourism areas program, I would like to commend the minister on the success of the program and thank him for consideration given by his department to a project in the Vegreville constituency last year, the Elks Kinsmen Park in

Vegreville, which is the home of the world-famous pysanka Easter egg. I know that Vegreville is quickly becoming one of the major tourist destinations in the province of Alberta, and recognizing the improvements being made along Highway 16 in terms of traffic flow and things. I think this further development at the park in Vegreville will prove to be very prudent indeed in terms of developing additional tourism potential of the area.

I would like to raise something here that I have raised with the minister in the past. There seems to be a large number of groups across the province that are keenly interested in accessing funds through the program, and I can understand that that's difficult given the situation we're in right now. But seeing as how the program offers initially a \$100,000 grant to start a project with subsequent operational commitments of up to \$20,000 a year for 25 years, I have suggested to the minister, and I'd like to get his reaction to it, that some groups may be willing to forego the ongoing operational commitment if it would improve their chances of getting the initial start-up grant. There are groups who have no way of raising the funds to invest in a facility to improve it, the \$100,000 initial grant, but they would be able to find ways of operating facilities in an ongoing way.

I know that several of the program applications I've dealt with have involved areas where there is an ongoing operation there already. Their application through the municipal recreation/tourism areas program is meant to further develop and enhance the facilities available at that site. So they are able to, in some cases, operate and would like to have some special consideration given to the start-up grant.

Given the time, Mr. Chairman, I move that we adjourn debate.

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

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

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

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the report and the request for leave to sit again, does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, as the House will be in Committee of Supply tonight. I move that the Assembly now adjourn until the Committee of Supply rises and reports.

[The House recessed at 5:29 p.m.]

