

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Friday, May 1, 1987 10:00 a.m.**

Date: 98/05/01

[The House met at 10 a.m.]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

From our forests and parkland to our prairies and mountains comes the call of our land.

From our farmsteads, towns, and cities comes the call of our people that as legislators of this province we act with responsibility and sensitivity.

Lord, grant us the wisdom to meet such challenges.

Amen.

head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table with the Assembly the annual report of the Public Service Commissioner for the year 1986.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the annual report of the Department of Energy, ended March 31, 1986.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

MR. ZARUSKY: Mr. Speaker, since this is Forest Week, I would like to thank the minister for the pine that's been sent to all our offices, which comes out of Pine Ridge Forest Nursery in the Redwater-Andrew constituency near Smoky Lake, and Smoky Lake was the forestry capital of Canada in 1982.

Seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, to celebrate this occasion we have two special guests: the mayor of Smoky Lake, Mr. Ernie Brousseau, and the secretary-treasurer of Smoky Lake, Mr. Elmer Oshann. I would thank them for coming to help us celebrate this occasion and ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Rocky Mountain House.

MR. CAMPBELL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today, on behalf of my very good friend and colleague the Member for Chinook, to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly, 22 students from grade 9 at Consort school. They are accompanied by two teachers, Mr. Kjearsgaard and Miss Verigin, and also two parents, Mrs. Gould and Mrs. Williams. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I ask them to rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton Gold Bar, followed by Edmonton Kingsway.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I'm honoured to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly, 28 students from the grade 6 class of St. Gabriel school in the

beautiful constituency of Edmonton Gold Bar. The class is accompanied by Mrs. Bahry, their teacher, and Mrs. Bleznik, their bus driver. They're seated in the public gallery. I'll ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to introduce today my nephew Kevin McEachern, who's in town for a hockey school. I would like the Assembly to give him a warm welcome.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for . . . The Chair has gone blank today. Edmonton Glengarry.

MR. YOUNIE: Too many of us getting up to introduce people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take great pride in introducing to you and through you to members of the Assembly, 52 grade 6 students from Bishop Savaryn school in the riding of Glengarry. When I get a chance to meet such delightful students, it makes me a little homesick for my previous occupation, and I realize how much I did enjoy it. They are accompanied by three teachers, Mr. Garry Marler, Mr. Larry Kowalczyk, and Mrs. Rose Auger. I would like them to rise in the members' and public galleries and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Stony Plain.

MR. HERON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly, 24 students from the grade 6 class at the Brookwood elementary school in Spruce Grove, the school that our two children attended. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Beth Willett, and one parent, Mrs. Dorsch. They are seated in the public gallery, and I ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**Department of Transportation and Utilities**

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to announce to this Legislative Assembly that tomorrow, Saturday, May 2, 1987, thousands of energetic young Albertans will take to the province's highways during the annual 4-H cleanup campaign.

Mr. Speaker, this campaign, now in its 11th year, has progressed to the point that last year almost 64,000 bags of litter were gathered from along 8,500 kilometres of Alberta highways. Tomorrow we expect to surpass those numbers as more than 9,000 young people from Alberta's 4-H clubs and Junior Forest Wardens, along with several thousand adult supervisors, do their best to keep Alberta beautiful.

While these dedicated workers are doing their share, the rest of us have a very important part to play as well. We must drive with extra care and caution wherever we see these youngsters working. While many of our volunteers are young adults, others are still quite young and can be unpredictable around traffic, especially with the activity generated during a cleanup campaign.

I ask all motorists to slow down and obey signs when they come upon a cleanup site. Alberta Transportation and Utilities has taken several steps to ensure the safety of these workers. They will be dressed in bright clothing, with orange safety vests, and will use orange litterbags. The area where the work is taking place will be well signed, and the RCMP will provide

additional support. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the department has also organized a provincewide advertising campaign designed to make motorists aware of the cleanup.

These volunteers are performing a very valuable service for all Albertans, and I take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge their outstanding effort. I am certain that all my fellow members join me in wishing them a safe and successful cleanup campaign.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to agree with the government from time to time, and certainly we in the Official Opposition support this very worthwhile project. I've seen the work that's happened in the past 11 years, and it's very worth while. So I would just like to join with the government in congratulating these young people in taking their civic duties so seriously, and I, like the minister, hope that motorists are aware and that we don't have a tragedy out of this. So I would just conclude and with the government congratulate these young people and thank the government for bringing this project forward.

Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to announce that we are recognizing National Forest Week May 3 to May 9. This year's theme, "Forests -- a Shared Resource," was chosen to emphasize the shared usage of Alberta's forests and the multitude of activities and products that we derive from them.

A year ago this government gave a firm commitment to increase the value of our forest products output, to create new jobs, and further diversify Alberta's economy. A new thrust in forestry was announced by the new government. Over a dozen new projects are under way or completed. Over 1,100 direct jobs have been created. Over \$700 million have been invested by industry, and many more projects are under consideration. Meanwhile, our resource base has more than doubled in capacity through the improved management techniques and the introduction of aspen as a reliable and market-accepted wood fibre.

The forests are a shared resource. The Bighorn Wildland Recreation Area, over 980,000 acres, has been established to preserve recreational values and wildlife habitat, which shows Alberta believes in this year's theme, "Forests -- a Shared Resource." Recently the government announced the establishment of the Beehive Natural Area, 26 square miles of old-growth forest, a living museum to be enjoyed by future generations.

Many activities are planned during next week. I invite all Albertans to participate. Grande Prairie will host the Northern Alberta Forestry Show from May 7 to May 9. Edmonton will also host a wide variety of forest-related activities during National Forest Week. An Arbor Day tree planting ceremony will be held on May 8 at the Muttart Conservatory, with the federal minister of forestry, the hon. Gerald Merrithew, in attendance. This year the Alberta Forestry Association has announced Edson as Alberta's provincial forest centre for 1987.

National Forest Week is a time for all of us to reflect on how fortunate we are to have such an abundance of healthy and productive forests. I encourage members of the Assembly to take the opportunity to participate in the National Forest Week activities and promote Alberta's very important forest resources within their constituencies.

The Pine Ridge nursery has provided each member of the Legislature with a spruce seedling. These seedlings are being

delivered to each MLA's office. Mr. Speaker, with your prior approval, samples have been placed on the Clerk's table. Also, information relating to Alberta forest management and lapel pins from Alberta Forest Service have been placed on each MLA's desk. The nursery is capable of producing some 38 million seedlings per year, predominantly white spruce and Lodgepole pine, which is our provincial tree. These seedlings are planted throughout the province to ensure that future generations will enjoy healthy, young, and vibrant forests. We invite you to plant a tree during Forest Week. We will continue to plant more trees than we cut.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm hardly going to disagree with the announcement about National Forest Week from May 3 to 9. I, along with the government, agree that there is great potential, I think, for much more diversification with this industry.

I have, though, a couple of cautions. We talk about the forests, our shared resource; I agree with that very much. It seems to many people, though, that we've overemphasized the development of the forest rather than the recreational value of the forest, and I talk about the Eastern Slopes policy, because many people come to Alberta in the tourism industry simply because of the natural beauty of the province. I also, of course, and my colleague has raised this many times, caution about a headlong rush into herbicides, because again that can destroy, I believe rather quickly, some of the shared resource of the forest.

I would like to just comment briefly about Pine Ridge nursery and compliment both the government and the people that work there. I've taken a tour of that particular nursery, and I believe they're doing excellent, excellent work. I would suggest to all members that if they haven't been out there, it would be well worth a tour. I think the future is in types of industries like that and the work that they're doing.

Thank you.

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Taxation Policy

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, so much for being positive. I was going to break out in a rash if I continued.

Mr. Speaker, to the Provincial Treasurer. I notice that the government has established a task force which will reassess the whole range of taxes on business. But for some strange reason the Provincial Treasurer, who is responsible to the House for fiscal policy matters, was omitted from yesterday's announcement. My question to the Treasurer: will the Treasurer explain why the government is prepared to launch a full review of the fairness of the taxation system to big business while it has introduced a budget which is remarkable in its unfairness to average Albertans?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, it's hard to enter that particular discussion because, of course, as all hon. members are aware, he opens not just the narrow element of his question but the full debate about the fiscal policy of the government. There is, I think, ample opportunity in this House to deal with all of those, whether it's in discussion of the estimates, discussion of the appropriation Bills, or, for that matter, in the speeches on the general resolutions. So what is encompassed in the member's question, of course, is not just one that can be answered specifically. I'd be glad to go on in some detail, to recite the elements of the

budget, but I know the uneasiness which the Speaker feels when I do that. I will on this morning, Mr. Speaker, simply ask for more directions on how I can respond.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, we'll certainly give the Treasurer ample opportunity to respond. As the minister is well aware, I've been trying to point out to this government that the corporate income tax base of this province has been eroded steadily by a series of tax reductions, credits, allowances, rebates, till last year we paid out more than we took in. My question is: now that the corporate income tax has been eroded in this province, is the government preparing to do the same thing with property taxes paid by corporations?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, the elements of those revenue items which are included in the calculation of income tax have in fact reduced in this province over the past two years. I don't think you have to be a financial genius or an economist of great repute to understand what has happened when you see the devastation which has been wreaked upon the energy industry, in part by centralist policies, socialist policies in particular, and in part by economic forces. It must be a simple conclusion to decide that of course if the income of a corporation is down, obviously the taxable income will be down.

Yet we are doing an awful lot in this province to ensure that that fundamental base of revenues to our province -- by way of historical perspective, Mr. Speaker, in 1984-85 the province of Alberta collected approximately 25 percent of the total corporate tax paid in Canada. We relish and cherish the investment opportunities that those corporations bring to this province. They have done a significant amount to generate new jobs, new investment, and new economic activity. Mr. Speaker, they have to have an opportunity to do that, and that opportunity comes from a set of policies which supports the private sector, which rewards investment, which rewards success, and which provides a climate for that kind of activity. It is clear right across Canada and in all the European markets and North American markets as well that Alberta is that centre where that economic regime exists, where that tax package is in place to support investment. And we know that with the price coming back, and the price of energy in particular, that that will return to this province very soon.

We intend to make it happen. We have shown our determination to generate that kind of new investment, and it will come, Mr. Speaker. We don't want to hear from the doom-sayers across the way who deny that opportunity for this province.

MR. MARTIN: As usual, he's getting warmed up now. He's giving us the claptrap that we're used to when we ask questions, Mr. Speaker.

I would remind this minister that the Alberta corporate income tax system paid out \$26 million more than it took in last year, so somebody has to pay the taxes. At the same time, we had a lower growth rate, so that just makes a mockery out of what the Treasurer is saying. I'm saying to the Treasurer: isn't it time that the government set up a task force on the fairness of the taxation system for average people, rather than worrying about their corporate friends?

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, the public knows who it is that has engendered mockery upon this parliament. It is right across the way in Edmonton Norwood. No question about it, if

we had the socialist regime driving the economic performance of this province, that investment would flee, new jobs would be ended, and the economic growth which this province needs would be eliminated. That's the kind of . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps now that the Chair can hear what's happening, the minister would like to continue with his response.

MR. JOHNSTON: Of course, Mr. Speaker, as I've said earlier, this budget does provide for additional increases in the corporate tax rate for large corporations. Some 36 percent increase in the rate structure is an attempt to balance the equity between the additional tax increases on the individual and the tax increases on the corporations. Now, Mr. Speaker, we have found in our analysis and the review of the economic policies which have been provided to the people of Alberta over the past 10 or 15 years that in fact it is the small corporation that generates jobs, and it is that sector of the economy, the private sector of our economy, that we would like to see expand and generate new opportunities.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, this tax regime does not include any income tax increases for the small businessman. That small businessman who's arranged himself under the private corporate status does not have any increase in his taxation. Therefore we think that's a fair balance, because we do recognize that the new investments, the new job opportunities, and the new opportunities for economic growth will come from that sector.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear now that the people of Alberta accept this as a balanced position, and any negatives that come from across the way really are an unfortunate statement and will in fact detract from new capital investment in this province. And if that's what the member wants, that's what will happen and it will be his responsibility.

MR. SPEAKER: Fair balance of question and answer. Final supplementary. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, it's always interesting to hear from the Treasurer about all the new jobs that were created, but we're always wondering why we have the highest unemployment. Even in his budget he says it's going to go up -- all that investment that's coming in.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. The minister has said that this task force was created because they asked us to look at their tax load. Isn't that nice? Now, average Albertans want the government to look at their tax load. My question is: will the minister explain why some people get this type of action out of the government while others cannot?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, one of the key aspects of the Alberta economy and the efforts we've undertaken to expand job creation opportunities is to ensure that there is an environment in Alberta in which people are prepared to invest and create job opportunities. The major part of the activity that takes place in Alberta is related to a variety of industrial activities: the petrochemical industry, manufacturing. In Alberta there is a machinery and equipment tax that is charged. Alberta is only one of two provinces that levies a machinery and equipment tax. After consultation with my colleagues the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Education, we felt it would be useful to examine the impact of the machinery and equipment tax on

investment in Alberta and job creation, but it would be unfair to examine that tax in isolation of others because we believe it's important that Alberta continue to have a favourable environment in which to attract investment. The purpose of the task force, Mr. Speaker, is to provide us with information and advice to ensure that that environment continues to exist in Alberta.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, back to the Treasurer, in the line that we want to make sure we are not losing any corporation taxes. Could I ask the Treasurer whether he has examined the proposed Dome deal to see whether there will be any corporation taxes that may be owing from the past that will not be paid, or any corporation taxes that would normally have been paid if sold to someone else that will be hidden by being sold to Amoco? Are we going to lose money on that deal?

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Minister, that will have to be a separate issue. That's not a follow-through.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair will recognize the member at the end of question period. Further supplementaries on this issue, Clover Bar.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister of economic development. Is the minister of economic development aware that on the machinery and equipment tax communities like Fort Saskatchewan have already taken a 5 percent, 5 percent, 5 percent rollback? The question to the minister is: is the government looking at some type of shielding for the communities going to be very, very adversely affected if that machinery and equipment tax is removed?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I don't think it would be appropriate to prejudge the deliberations of the task force. The task force's objective is to provide us with information. We recognize that municipalities depend upon municipal taxation sources, whether it's a machinery and equipment tax or the regular assessment on buildings. This is a factor that would have to be taken into account prior to any decision being made by the government to change any of the systems. I'd like to make it clear that simply undertaking this assessment, which is appropriate at this time, doesn't necessarily mean that changes will take place in the system.

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question, Leader of the Opposition, followed by the leader of the Liberal Party.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to designate my second question to the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

Economic Diversification

MR. PIQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, to the minister of economic development. One year ago during the provincial general election the government used the provincial Treasury to supplement its campaign platform with many promises of new initiatives to diversify Alberta's economy. I would like to ask some questions this morning on policies of two government departments which have worked to frustrate attempts by many Albertans to achieve diversification of their local economy.

Regional economic development councils in Alberta and

small power producers can be very successful in harnessing the energies of small businessmen in rural Alberta in diversifying rural economy. Would the minister confirm that his department is planning on terminating or greatly reducing financial assistance to local REDCs during the next two fiscal years?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, the preamble was quite extensive, and I have difficulty relating the early part of the preamble to the final part of the question. And my colleague, the Minister of Transportation and Utilities, may wish to comment on the early part of the preamble with respect to our policy on small power producers and the establishment of a process that he has put in place recently.

With respect to our regional economic development boards, when those entities were established and funded I believe some eight years ago, it was clear at the time that when the funding was advanced, it was on an interim basis to provide initial support to the communities to establish a capability in those communities to harness their own energies in encouraging economic development. When my predecessor announced the program as minister of small business, he advised all of those communities that the program was temporary, that the program would be sunsetted. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, it should have been sunsetted four years ago. In light of that earlier understanding, I have provided notice to the eight regional economic development projects that their funding will be reduced in the current year and terminated the following year.

MR. PIQUETTE: I find your answer to be very hypocritical in the attempt of the government to diversify the economy.

What alternative funding would the minister make available to municipalities in order to help their REDBs continue to operate at the same level or a higher level so they can maintain diversification?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, it's obvious the hon. member didn't listen to my answer. I don't think it's appropriate to use those sorts of expressions. It is certainly not hypocritical when the individuals in the communities involved were given notice some five years ago that the program would be phased out. I fail to understand how the hon. member reaches that conclusion.

With respect to the economic development approach of the government and support to the municipalities, my estimates, I believe, will be dealt with on Monday, and I'd be pleased to discuss it at that time.

MR. PIQUETTE: To the Minister of Transportation and Utilities. The government response to a five-year attempt for a grid access by small producers has been answered in typical fashion with a one-year-long study. Has the minister's department assessed what impact the decision to delay diversification into small power by another year will have on Athabasca and other local economies?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, the question is such that I'm not sure what in essence we're dealing with. First of all, he used the Athabasca project, if I may, in responding. After becoming the Minister of Transportation and Utilities in about September of last year, I called the proponents in Athabasca and suggested that we should get together to clear up what appeared to be some misunderstandings that I wasn't doing something or someone wasn't doing something. In the interim, in working with the Small Power Producers Association, we have put in place the

public inquiry -- and I use the term "inquiry" in the sense, not public "hearing" -- so that the PUB and the ERCB jointly can hold a public inquiry and make recommendations to me as minister as to, one, what is a small power producer; the types and size of generators, the number, types, and capacities; their total capacity that could be interconnected without negatively impacting on the reliability of the present system; the principles and methods and the process that should be established.

That was right at the end of March, the early part of April, Mr. Speaker. The Athabasca project is one that is of some concern to me, because some time has gone by since the initial discussion of any public importance -- it was in, I believe, May of last year -- and to date we have yet to have an application from the proponents. We're waiting and the PUB and the ERCB are waiting. I had a meeting this morning with four of the persons who were working for the plant up until yesterday. I believe the company laid off some people yesterday. I indicated to them that we were still waiting for a proposal and that it was not -- and I underlined the word "not" -- the government holding anything up at this point. The proponents have to come forward to us and to the PUB and the ERCB. Until they do, I can't respond.

MR. PIQUETTE: Okay, that's fine. I understand what's happening. But what Southview Fibra Tech wanted to have from the minister and the government is a written expression of support. Now, would the minister be willing to give to this company a written letter of support so that this project and investors will maintain their interest and re-employ the 30 people that have been laid off?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, if I had some idea what the written letter of support was for, I might entertain attempting to put that in place. But until something comes from them, I can't support a shadow.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Edmonton Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, to the minister of economic development. Has the minister taken the time to evaluate the success of these boards, or is this decision to cut their funding simply a superficial cost-cutting initiative which bears no relationship to the positive contribution that boards like these make to future economic development in areas other than energy and agriculture, areas where we have to find ways of diversifying our economy?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, yes. There has been a series of examinations of the effectiveness of the eight regional economic development boards. Some have been more effective than others, and we've worked closely with the individuals involved in the communities. The decision was a difficult one, but it was based on the understanding that there would be a phaseout and also the fact that there's a certain level of unfairness in providing that support to eight groups of communities and not to another 15 that have requested it.

One of the recent initiatives of the government, Mr. Speaker, the business incubator project which I announced about three or four weeks ago, is an important element that will to a great extent provide additional support for all communities in Alberta and not just those that have access to the regional economic development program. Also, we have strengthened our small business sector in terms of liaising with all of the communities and

not just the eight that are funded partially by this program.

MR. SPEAKER: Main question, leader of the Liberal Party.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to designate my first question to the Member for Edmonton Gold Bar.

Senior Public Service Appointments

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Social Services. The Deputy Minister of Social Services has announced his intention to leave the civil service shortly. As we have seen, very few deputy ministerial positions are openly advertised, contrary to the Labour minister's comments of last month, and to date no deputy ministerial positions are filled by women. To the minister: will the position be openly advertised and aboveboard, or are we to have another vacancy filled by direct appointment, as have been seven of the last 10 deputy ministers since 1985?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member and all hon. members of the Assembly that I will do my very best to assure especially the people of Alberta who are being served by this department that they will also be served by another very competent deputy minister, and I will leave no stone unturned in seeing that that is accomplished.

MRS. HEWES: Well, not too helpful there, Mr. Speaker. At this point the score is 27 men and zero women. Will the minister assure the House that her department will actively seek out competent women to apply for the position? After all, if we don't seek them, they're going to be turned off by this government's chauvinistic attitude.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, the last time I looked, the minister was female and certainly would be encouraging it.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, that's a very attractive sidestep.

Mr. Speaker, my next supplementary is to the Minister of Labour. Last month the minister told the House that positions are open on an equal basis to women, yet we still of course have no female deputy ministers. Will the minister consider asking his colleagues to put in place a proactive search process that would seek out competent women for deputy ministerial and senior management positions -- proactive, not reactive?

AN HON. MEMBER: State your gender.

DR. REID: The last time I looked in the mirror, for the benefit of that gentleman, I was male. [interjection] No. Mr. Speaker, no comments of that nature. Perhaps I should add that when I wear my national dress, I have not changed my sex.

The situation is that we will assure Albertans, as the minister has stated, that we will appoint an extremely competent individual. And I hope applicants will come from both sexes. If the most suitable applicant is a woman, then obviously we would appoint that person to the post. On the other hand, if that is not the case, I don't think Albertans are best served by appointing somebody because they are female rather than because of ability.

MRS. HEWES: Hopeless, hopeless answers, Mr. Speaker.

ANHON. MEMBER: Hopeless government.

MRS. HEWES: Yeah. To the Minister of Advanced Education. Let's try another department. I understand that your department will also have a deputy ministerial opening very shortly. Will this minister, in the absence of any commitment elsewhere, assure the House that his department will hold an open competition in order to allow the best candidate, male or female, to win out?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I certainly have no problem in giving the hon. member assurance that the best possible person will be sought out and appointed notwithstanding sex.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton Calder, supplementary.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Social Services. In reference to her deputy minister's resignation, will the minister guarantee that this senior former member of the department, architect of the move to privatization, will not receive any contracts with the government for the next two years, in particular overseeing the contract of the work for welfare program?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what's in the hon. member's mind with respect to restricting people in other occupations. But with respect to the policy within our department and all government departments that the most competent people who have demonstrated expertise in various areas that may be required -- that expertise is sought after. I would only guarantee that it would be done in the fairest way possible.

Native Child Welfare

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Social Services, and it's relative to child welfare and responsibility for adoption and guardianship of native children on our Indian reserves. The minister has said that the child welfare is, and I quote, "a bloody disaster" in dealing with natives. Could the minister indicate then what immediate step is being taken to remedy that situation?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the process is ongoing. I think that it is fairly widely known that the department is working with the native community across the province and has succeeded in the last number of years, and particularly of late, in entering into agreements with the various communities, so that they may have more opportunity to guide in particular the child welfare policies specifically with respect to children that would be from their own areas.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, supplementary. Could the minister indicate how many Indian bands have now made agreement with the department in terms of child welfare cases?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, there are, I believe, three such agreements, and there are a number of bands encompassed under those various agreements. The last one was with the Yellowhead council, and I believe there were five bands involved in that.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, supplementary to the minis-

ter. Could the minister indicate whether there will be a further transfer of responsibilities that are now under the jurisdiction of the provincial Department of Social Services to the various Indian bands in terms of, say, guardianship or adoption processes?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, to answer the hon. member's question without giving some sort of legal interpretation of the Child Welfare Act, it would certainly be our intention where it is legally possible to delegate responsibility so that there is a more direct involvement by our native people.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, final supplementary. Could the minister indicate what the department will be doing in this process to ensure that the interests of the native child that may now be in white homes or in native homes will be paramount over the consideration of just moving the native child back onto the reserve or to the responsibility of native grandparents or parents or relatives for adoption or guardianship?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises probably the toughest question of all for those who care very much about the ultimate results of the decisions that they must make with respect to the children. As always, while we want very much for the native children to be raised where their heritage and the concern of their families is paramount, in some instances this is not possible, and foster parents who have been providing just extremely good service for children and guidance in their homes over the course of a number of years of course become very attached to the children and believe that they are in the best position to serve the children's interests. Often, unfortunately, judgments are different with respect to the various people that are involved, and these cases end up before the courts. I'm sure it is very difficult in those instances as well for the judges to render a decision, because after all, in all cases it ends up to be opinions of various people. I can only assure the hon. member that the people who are working in that area are trying to exercise the very best judgment possible.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton Calder, supplementary.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister. What steps has the department taken to ensure that native people are trained as social workers and that they are able to remain on the reserve and work with native children?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I hope that the hon. member will recall that last year we announced a bursary program for native people. A number have now accessed that. As a matter of fact, I met a couple of them at the signing of the Yellowhead tribal agreement, and they're very excited about the opportunities that are being presented to them, and I'm sure they will be serving their communities when they are finished their education.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary to the minister. Will the minister undertake to provide a continuous backup of consultants to the native services -- the psychologists, psychiatrists, health care professionals that are necessary -- so that the service, this very positive development, will be supported and won't be isolated from the whole of child care?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, our services certainly will be available to the native community. But I would say with some hesitation that over the past number of years, for quite a few years, we have been heavily involved with the native community, and I think that most people will be aware of the results of that. The very largest number of children in various areas that government is interested in -- and whether it's in the juvenile area, whether it's the child care welfare area with respect to my own department, the native children form the major component of those caseloads. Obviously, all of our expertise that has been brought to bear for many, many years with the very best of intentions has not resulted in the kind of long-term benefits for native children that we would have liked to have seen. While I think it is important to consider the outlook of the caring professionals in this area, who do have the academic expertise in particular, I think we must recognize that having had all of that applied, it hasn't always worked.

I would be looking for some very practical demonstration of what might be done, and to that end, Alberta is taking a lead in hosting an international conference this fall, for instance. Certainly, I'd invite hon. members to pay very close attention to that conference, to the kind of experiences from various native and aboriginal communities that will be shared there.

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

Use of Herbicides

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After thanking the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife for his kind gift this morning, I'd like to address the problem that this week he's made several statements that indicate he's not really aware of what's happening in his department where the use and safety of herbicides is concerned. He mentioned that forestry is a shared resource, and I'd like to point out that it's hard for wildlife to share a chemically sprayed forest or for fish to live in creeks which receive the chemical runoff. Assuming that he's had time to read the advertisement I sent him the other day, can the minister outline how many more acres of brush the Forestry, Lands and Wildlife department plans to aerial spray and whether or not it will intervene and hold public meetings before those sprays occur?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to address the issue. The advertisement you handed me the other day -- it's very misleading of you to do that. The grazing reserve program in this province has been very, very well accepted. We have some 31 of them throughout the province. Some 1,500 farmers use those grazing reserves, and they use the management tools on those grazing reserves, which are primarily in the white zone, to take care of the growth of grasses and/or trees, and spraying does take place like on any other agricultural area. We do have a very rigid process when it comes to spraying our forests and our forestry programs. If you want to add in and stop all of the farmers in this province, along with those farmers on those grazing reserves, from having the opportunity to maintain those grazing reserves for the use they have, that's a different issue.

I think that once and for all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague the Minister of the Environment to explain the very, very rigid process that he makes me and my department go through if I want to spray in the forests of this province. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair gets dirty looks from all around the Chamber, but I guess that's probably the way I look in the mirror; I invite those kinds of looks. The Chair is also hearing "agreed" and "no" and groan and all the rest of it. Therefore, the Chair will recognize Edmonton Glengarry, and perhaps he would like to speak directly to the Minister of the Environment.

MR. YOUNIE: On this I would prefer, Mr. Speaker, to address the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife on his admission that his department has ordered hexazinone and other chemicals from Du Pont. He admitted that in the House, and I'm wondering if he will give the names of other chemicals and the quantities of them ordered, or at least commit himself to tabling that information in the Legislature.

MR. SPEAKER: Surely this is a motion for a return, hon. member. Next question, please.

MR. YOUNIE: I will use that avenue then; thank you.

Concerning the minister's blind faith in federal licensing procedures, does the minister accept Agriculture Canada's policy of registering herbicides on the basis of tests paid for or done by chemical companies or labs such as Industrial Biotest Labs, or will he approach Agriculture Canada and express his opinions otherwise?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, this government has a very rigid process in accepting chemicals. The chemicals that were used last year were Velpar and primary Roundup, and as I stated earlier, on all applications my department has to apply to the Minister of the Environment to have approval of the type of chemical and the location that we are going to spray or use that chemical in.

This year we are not planning in the forestry areas any aerial spraying. They will primarily be ground applications, and most of them will be very definitely tied to an experimental base, to prove that we have the technology we need in future years.

Again, as far as the approval of chemicals, I'd turn that question over to my colleague the Minister of the Environment.

MR. KOWALSKI: Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I could just supplement that response. The question being raised by the Member for Edmonton Glengarry this morning was: should a proponent of a particular chemical have to pay for the research, or should it be the taxpayer of the country that pays for the research? On October 2 of 1986, when I served as the president of the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers, all ministers of the environment across the country of Canada, including the federal Minister of the Environment, supported a concept put forward as the cradle-to-grave concept with respect to chemicals. This simply means that if someone wishes to come and have for usage in our country a particular chemical, we are now requiring and requesting that that particular proponent show to us how that particular chemical will be used, et cetera, et cetera, and finally how that chemical will be disposed of at the end. We expect that the entrepreneur that wants to have that chemical for license in Canada should bear the cost of that, not the taxpayer of the country.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Edmonton Glengarry.

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you. In the House this week the minister of forestry said their rigid method is to do whatever Agriculture

Canada says, and they in turn do whatever the chemical companies say. That doesn't sound very rigid.

Now, in view of the number of chemicals that predate registration standards or do not meet the most recent standards, does the Minister of the Environment then accept the principle that such chemicals should be deregistered until they are sufficiently tested and proven to at least meet present standards?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I have absolutely no information ever brought to my attention that Agriculture Canada is simply a mouthpiece for the chemical industry in this country. Quite frankly, it's my understanding that when chemicals are brought forward to Agriculture Canada for review, that particular federal agency, department of the federal government, scrutinizes the potential usage of that particular chemical in our country. There's a very rigid testing procedure that is followed, and the province of Alberta, in the same way as other provinces in this country, provides and affords the usage of that particular chemical in the particular jurisdiction if it has been approved by the federal regulatory agency.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, supplementary.

MR. TAYLOR: Supplementary, if I may, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment. Back to the original of spraying on public lands. Does the minister require any form of permit, or does he keep track of the amount of chemicals that are used by municipalities and utility companies in spraying the public lands or the road allowances?

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're well beyond that. In addition to what the scenario is that's been outlined by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, we're also now very actively in the process of ensuring that we have a system of licences for applicators and that applicators of particular chemicals, whether they be a part-time person who is an employee of an agricultural service board or an employee of a local municipality, in fact do have knowledge to be able to read the labels, to apply them. There are frequent meetings and discussions throughout the province with the agricultural service board on a provincewide basis, and our officials are available to provide any guidance that's required or necessary. It's an ongoing basis. It's very sophisticated.

Recently, I had an opportunity to talk to the Industrial Vegetation Management Association of Alberta. I gave what I thought was one of my better speeches in the month of March. I'm just delighted. I looked for an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to table it here in the House, and I really want to thank the Member for Edmonton Glengarry for giving me that opportunity yesterday, and I would ask all members to read it, particularly all members of the media, to really understand our position with respect to this business in our province.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, supplementary question to the Minister of Agriculture. This has to do with what information is available from the Department of Agriculture, with direction from the Department of the Environment, to inform the agricultural sector how these chemicals should be safely used. Has there been any program? I know there have been some programs, but how extensive have those programs been?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, we work very closely with the

Department of the Environment and in conjunction with Agriculture Canada, and I would just underscore what the hon. Minister of the Environment just indicated to the Member for Edmonton Glengarry. If he does have any concerns with the conduct of Agriculture Canada, we would deeply appreciate that, because to our knowledge they have always acted in a very responsible manner.

As it relates to chemicals, again we work very closely with the Department of the Environment in doing our level best to communicate to the farming population some of the hazards that they could encounter in spraying various chemicals, and we refer again to 2,4-D, on which we have had communication with a number of individuals within the farming community. We also do have some documentation that we distribute as widely as possible. But I guess it's the same as everything else; we can always do more, and any way that the hon. member could suggest for us to do more, we'd be happy to investigate.

MR. HYLAND: Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment. I wonder if the minister has any information on how much all these extensive tests have increased the price of chemicals, in that 60 miles from my hometown I can go across the American border and buy the same chemical at about two-thirds or less the cost of that chemical in Canada.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I cannot definitively give a particular costing factor for a particular chemical. There are some 80,000 to 100,000 of them listed in the world. But I would like the hon. member to know that it is my view and it is my opinion that should there be a costing factor for research -- and that must be a requirement for the safe utilization of such a chemical -- and it's certainly not my intent as the Minister of the Environment to suggest that simply because of a few dollars here and there, we should forsake research and protection of our environment so that the user of the product might be able to use it at a cheaper rate. I think protection of our environment is much more important.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton Meadowlark and, if there's time, Edmonton Strathcona.

Unfunded Pension Liability

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two weeks ago we established that the Treasurer has a responsibility for an unfunded pension liability of \$5.4 billion which he hides in an obscure footnote to the province's balance sheet. At that time, he made a statement that his government put up \$1 billion some time ago to cover that unfunded pension liability. Could the Treasurer please explain how it is that \$1 billion covers \$5.4 billion, or do we all have to be chartered accountants to figure out how that adds?

So the Treasurer is establishing that in fact he has an unfunded pension liability of \$5.4 billion which will be paid out of government revenues, tax revenues, over the long term and therefore enhances this government's debt.

Second question: why has the Treasurer not complied with the Auditor General's recommendation that the province's pension funds be evaluated every year on an actuarial basis rather than every three years as is currently done by this government?

MR. JOHNSTON: Now, Mr. Speaker, that there is some sense

in the question, we can probably provide some reasonable explanation for the way in which the policy has unfolded. First let me say that there is no attempt here to hide the information from the people of Alberta. In fact, on numerous occasions we have both flagged the outstanding liability and expressed our own concern about the size of that contingent liability. But let it be very clear, Mr. Speaker, that in terms of generally agreeable ways in which the unfunded liability of pension plans can be presented, this province has followed to a T that generally accepted disclosure. It's been disclosed not only in the annual statements of the province, which are now being debated in the Public Accounts, but more recently, as a matter of course, I tabled in this Legislative Assembly the five copies of the pension plan operations which, for a matter of record, clearly state therein the amount of the unfunded liabilities.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, let it be very clear that there is no intention or attempt to hide any of that unfunded liability; and secondly, make it very clear as well that this province does share the same concern about the size of that liability and has taken actions already to ensure that the increase in that liability does not continue. But moreover, Mr. Speaker, he must balance his question not just with the simple actuarial number-crunching approach from the member across the way, but with a humanistic side here as well, because of course many people are dependent upon the way in which this pension fund affects their daily lives in terms of their dependency for income on these dollars. We as a government have seen the opportunity and the need to ensure that they are protected against inflation and that's why, aside from any contractual responsibility which now exists in pension liability, the pension fund, we have provided indexing of those pension plan contributions every year, contributions to the members. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, we have gone essentially beyond what is required by us in law, provided that additional protection, and therefore some of those liabilities are occurring, and of course we have to deal with them.

Now, Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Please. The time for question period has expired. Might we have unanimous consent to finish this line of questioning?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed?

Before the Chair recognizes the Member for Edmonton Meadowlark to continue, one must point out that under *Beauchesne* 363, the minister merely did not respond to the question, which is well within the accepted parliamentary practice, and therefore the member cannot assume that a non-response means that the minister either admitted or rejected.

The second supplementary, Edmonton Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: It is true, however, Mr. Speaker, that that is the shortest response that this minister has ever given to this House. Thank you.

It's also true that people do depend on those pensions long term, and will this government be able to meet that liability long term out of diminishing tax revenues to this government?

The third question: what impact has the government's early retirement program had upon the government's unfunded pension liability, or did the Treasurer take the time to assess that before implementing that program?

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I won't disappoint the member again; I will take some time to lay before the Assembly a very clear statement of our policy and attempt herein to bring into play the factors which we must consider in terms of developing that policy.

Let's be clear that in this province, and I guess across Canada, there is a new phenomenon taking place, and that is one of longevity, one to which we all subscribe and one to which we all contribute vast amounts of money to ensure that that happens. Therefore, these plans which have been put in place, Mr. Speaker, were based on an actuarial assumption which to some extent is now obsolete in that the facts show clearly that people are living much longer lives and therefore, of course, the obligation and liability course becomes extended. Now, I know the member understands that, but we should show that on the record, because of course it is in fact that longevity calculation which to a very large degree determines the size of this so-called undisclosed liability, or this contingent liability. And that liability continues to increase every year.

What has happened, as a matter of course, Mr. Speaker, is that we have not increased the contribution levels. Now, I guess I can only read between the lines, and perhaps I'm making the same mistake as the member across the way is, that if there is concern about the size of this unfunded liability then I would imagine it is implicit in his question that, in fact, we should do something about it. So I'm hopeful that the Member for Edmonton Meadowlark will support the initiatives we take when we increase the contributions by all of us, including all of those who are affected by that plan. And I'm assured that the Member for Edmonton Meadowlark agrees to that, and moreover, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps the member was suggesting we deindex the plan, that when inflation takes place we do not provide any inflationary protection. That's the second element, Mr. Speaker.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the payoff matrix and benefits, I'm assuming -- I can only assume since the member has raised the question twice now in the last two weeks -- that we have no alternative but to reduce and change the payoff side. And if that, in fact, is a fair set of principles and policies which we can follow, because fundamentally those are the only choices that are available to us, then of course I'll come forward with that kind of recommendation and look for the support of the Member for Edmonton Meadowlark, because it's essentially what he's saying.

MR. MITCHELL: It is interesting; he's putting words in my mouth. In fact, what I'm saying is that if the government hadn't spent this money over the last 15 years on frivolous expenditure . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order please, hon. member. The Chair and the House have extended the courtesy to extend question period. We are now six minutes beyond the end of question period. Could the member please ask the question. It's supplementary; it's not preamble and debate.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Treasurer: will the government be implementing the new Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants' rules for pension and accounting, which require that the long-term liability be specified and not just the present value, \$5.4 billion, which in fact is much smaller than what this government will be spending over the next 20 or 30 years on this particular pension liability?

MR. JOHNSTON: Again, Mr. Speaker, I'd be glad to talk about present value analysis, but I don't think too many of us would like to have that various actuarial calculation presented in the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, what I will do, however, is simply say that first of all, there has been no attempt at all, and it is in fact clearly misleading for the member to suggest that there's been some frivolous tampering with the fund policy. Because those funds are isolated, are distinct, and the word "fund" itself is clear. A fund set up under this Assembly means that it's separate from the General Revenue Fund and cannot be touched for any other purposes except the protection of the income benefits to those people who have served this province and have served under the responsibility of the academic pension plan or other pension plans which are our responsibility.

So, Mr. Speaker, that point must be clear, and it must be clearly understood that in fact that is the case. And it is misleading to suggest that this government has done anything but manage that fund with due prudence and due judicious decision. In fact, the fund has performed amazingly well. Had it not been for the investment decisions which we had taken and the very high rate of return which we have garnered for these funds, the unpaid for liability would be much larger.

Let's remember, Mr. Speaker, that we did take \$1 billion from the General Revenue Fund of this province and transfer it to the unsecured liability to ensure that these funds are in place. Mr. Speaker, that is a clear statement of our mandate and our objectives.

MR. SPEAKER: Little Bow, followed by St. Albert.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Provincial Treasurer. In terms of the early retirement program in that overall pension discussion that is just occurring, could the minister indicate what the policy is of government in dealing with those persons that are currently taking the early retirement program, in hiring those people back on private contracts?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, it is in fact true that the early retirement program was referenced. I didn't give a comprehensive response to that, and I'll take the time to do that now, with your permission, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, what we have done with respect to the early retirement program is to not at all interrupt or change the normal benefits which flow to an individual which have been accrued as a result of service and contribution. Those are inviolate and are not changed by the early retirement program, and in fact all we have done is enhance the short-term benefits which an individual receives upon retirement, and those short-term benefits are essentially in the form of wages.

With respect to the second element, Mr. Speaker, as to whether or not there is an opportunity for re-employment within the government, clearly there are clear provisions that in fact that cannot happen under the terms of the retirement program.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, St. Albert.

MR. STRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has done such an efficient job of looking after those pensions. That's why we have a \$5.6 billion . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, order please. The same

friendly advice given to the Member for Edmonton Meadowlark applies to the Member for St. Albert.

MR. STRONG: I stand corrected, Mr. Speaker.

Would the Provincial Treasurer please inform this Assembly and all Albertans why the seven pension plans this government administers and guarantees do not fall under the same rules applied to all other pension plans in the province, as contained in section 38(1) of the Employment Pension Plans Act, which states that

pension [plans] must provide for funding, in accordance with the prescribed tests for the solvency of pension plans . . . that is adequate to provide for payment of all benefits.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all there is no doubt at all -- there should be no doubt in anybody's mind -- that the obligation of this government to the people under the pension plan is clear. Not only have we ascribed to new plans, but we have taken under the umbrella or the protection of the government additional plans.

Now, the member who makes \$100,000 a year over there should be clear that his contributions can be increased if he wants to increase them.

Mr. Speaker, the only thing I can conclude of course is that the member is suggesting that we increase the contributions. Now, I hope if he makes a suggestion in all honesty here, if he is concerned about the contribution levels clearly, then he will be one who will support it when we bring in a policy which will increase the contributions, because that's essentially what he is suggesting. The only remedy with an underfunded plan is to either increase the contributions, reduce the COLA clause or the indexing, and reduce the payoff side. That's all you can do in these plans, Mr. Speaker. That's what in fact both members are suggesting, and I'll take that as advice.

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order, Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: My point of order, Mr. Speaker, is under *Beauchesne* 358. I realize that it has to do with your interpretation of whether my supplemental followed the original, Mr. Speaker, and you do an admirable job of being able to follow the ping-pong of conversation back and forward between question and answer. But I submit, Mr. Speaker, that I was asking on the corporation tax, which was what the original question by the Leader of the Opposition was about: what corporations were paying and how it would affect the citizens of Alberta.

Now we have on the emergency side of it -- the fact that should be answered soon -- that one of the biggest corporations in Alberta is talking about being sold to one of the largest corporations in the world. There's an income tax question involved, as has already been mentioned on the federal scene, and all I was asking the Treasurer, Mr. Speaker, in all due deference, was: how is the income tax question affecting the provincial government; are there any provincial taxes owing, and will the provincial taxes that would have normally accrued be cut by the sale to a large foreign corporation?

MR. SPEAKER: With respect to the point of order, the Chair also would like to cite back hymn No. 371 in *Beauchesne*, which deals with supplementary questions:

Although there may be no debate on an answer, further

questions, as may be necessary for the elucidation of the answers that have been given, within due limits, may be addressed to a Minister.

However, this is the point to be underlined.

The extent to which supplementary questions may be asked is in the discretion of the Speaker.

The Chair understands some of the confusion, because from time to time as I have reviewed *Hansard*, members of the Assembly in all quarters have sort of come to believe that in question period you start to ask a question of a particular minister, then the range of questions can be somewhat as if it were the same as estimates and to go almost all over the map or all over the department. So on this point the Chair appreciates the fact that Westlock-Sturgeon has brought the matter up. I think it has allowed us to have this discourse in the Chamber, because all of us need to listen more closely as to what the original line of questioning really is about, and then we can keep the rest of the supplementaries germane to the topic.

Further points of order? The Member for St. Albert.

MR. STRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I bring my point of order under *Standing Orders*, section 23(h).

The Provincial Treasurer made an allegation that I make \$100,000 a year. Now, for his information I would like to inform him that I don't make \$100,000 a year. As a matter of fact, I could bring my T4 slips into this Assembly, and they would show that I make less than \$65,000 a year. As a matter of fact, Mr. Provincial Treasurer, I donated over \$17,000 of my MLA's salary to a certain organization, and not like some others in this House, at least I don't earn outside earnings... [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order please. [interjections] Order! So much for that point of order.

MR. STRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Career Development and Employment.

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise on a matter of privilege pursuant to *Beauchesne*, citation 82, and give notice to this Assembly under section 15(2) of *Standing Orders*.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I was served by a member of this Assembly with legal action, and within the environs of this Assembly, while the Assembly was in session. In my view, this is a breach of all members' privilege, and I intend to pursue fully the matter with you, Mr. Speaker. I will provide a more detailed notice on this issue on Monday or Tuesday, and provide the notice to the House leaders. This is a regrettable matter, Mr. Speaker, and I beg your indulgence.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, similar to the notice given by the Minister of Career Development and Employment, I also am a defendant in an action taken by the four members of the Liberal Party against me, not as a minister of the Crown but as the Treasurer, and not as an action against the Crown. Under a set of very clear precedents which exist both in terms of the legislation under which we operate and in terms of the history of the parliamentary system of Canada and Britain, I will make available to you, Mr. Speaker, probably on Monday, a statement on what I consider to be a serious matter on a question of privilege.

MR. STRONG: Speaking to the point of order...

MR. SPEAKER: This is not a point of order. This is a point of privilege, hon. member.

The Chair has been given appropriate notice at the earliest possible occasion on behalf of both ministers, and with reference to Standing Order 15(2), the necessary matters will be carried through in terms of the action, the written presentations will be made to the Chair two hours prior to the opening of the House on Monday, and then matters will continue from there.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. SPEAKER: Might we revert briefly to the introduction of visitors?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? The Chair recognizes Redwater-Andrew.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS (reversion)

MR. ZARUSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you can see, the Redwater-Andrew constituency is alive and well today. This time I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly, 49 grade 6 students from the Lamont school, which is in the Redwater-Andrew constituency. They're accompanied by three teachers, Mrs. Bernie Letwin, Mrs. Donna Kliachuk, and Mr. Clarence Kitura; and also one parent, Mrs. Noreen McConnell, and parent/bus driver, Mr. John Danyluk. These students are studying legislative procedures at this time and are here to see government in action. I think they've seen some of it till this point. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Stettler.

MR. DOWNEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, 64 fine young grade 6 students. They come to us today from beautiful downtown Stettler in the heart of Alberta. They're accompanied by two teachers, Mr. Roach and Mr. Komishke; three parents, Mrs. Young, Mrs. Laclercq, and Mrs. Lowther; and their drivers, Mr. Hallet and Mr. Lameroux. I would ask that they rise in the public gallery to receive the warm welcome of the House.

head: COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Committee of Supply will come to order.

Department of the Solicitor General

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister, would you like to make some opening remarks?

MR. ROSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sorry for the slight delay.

First, I'd like to acknowledge the presence of four of the officials from my department and extend my thanks to them for very good service throughout the year.

Mr. Chairman, it's my pleasure to comment on the estimates of the Department of the Solicitor General. During the presentation of the estimates of this department last year, I alluded briefly to my initial experience as Solicitor General and to the varied mandate of the department. After having been Solicitor General for the past year, I am satisfied that in the majority of areas in the department the quality of service provided to Albertans and the commitment demonstrated by departmental personnel to their responsibilities is at a high level. However, I am also of the view that there are opportunities for improvement and that these improvements can occur within the framework of budgetary restraint. I will be more specific, Mr. Chairman, as I cover each of the votes.

The estimates of this department cover five main areas: departmental support services, correctional services, law enforcement, motor vehicle administration and drivers' licensing, and Alberta Racing Commission. With your indulgence, I wish to make some brief comments respecting each of these areas and share with you some of the plans and initiatives of the department for the fiscal year 1987-88.

Vote 1 essentially includes the funds required to cover the operating expenses of the support services of the department; namely, financial and computer services, the operation of my office, the deputy minister's office, and the Liquor Licensing Review Council.

Vote 2, correctional services, has responsibility for upwards of 14,000 adult and young offenders, of which approximately 3,000 are in custody and 11,000 are under supervision in the community. A provincewide network of correctional facilities and community correction offices are provided to ensure the effective management of this large client group. Additionally, numerous private-sector agencies administer a variety of community-based services to offenders under a contractual arrangement with the department.

Mr. Chairman, I want to advise the Assembly that on a per capita basis the correctional system in Alberta presently enjoys one of the highest standards in Canada. The Canadian centre for justice statistics in its '85-86 annual report indicated that Alberta spent \$30.45 on a per capita basis in support of its correctional system. This amount compares favourably with the Ontario per capita expenditure of \$29.30 and exceeds the per capita cost of most provinces. Because of its current high standards, the correctional system in Alberta can accommodate, in my judgment, a reduction in its overall operating budget for fiscal 1987-88 and continue to provide a satisfactory level of programming to the offender population of the province.

Strategy that has been adopted for the correctional system for fiscal 1987-88 involves a major rationalization and reallocation of resources in accordance with the following restraint initiatives: a prioritization of all correctional activities consistent with public safety, prison security, and the program needs of various offender groups; reductions in expenditures in most program areas that were providing an enhanced level of service; three, closure of some satellite facilities that were either underutilized or would require major capital expenditures in order to remain operational; four, reductions in personnel at all levels in the system; five, increased workloads of some staff to levels comparable to other jurisdictions; six, reduction of contracted services in these areas where services can be more effectively delivered by the department through integration with existing

programs.

Within this backdrop of budget restraint, I advise the Assembly that the effective management of the offender population of Alberta continues to be a most important priority. During the 1987-88 fiscal year the long-awaited detention and remand facilities that have been under construction in Medicine Hat and Red Deer will become operational. In concert with the new court facilities recently established in these cities, these new correctional facilities will effectively serve the criminal justice needs of Red Deer and Medicine Hat for many years to come. In addition to the opening of these two new facilities, I am optimistic that before the end of the 1987-88 fiscal year the new secure-custody young offender centre in Calgary will also be operational and will address the young offender temporary accommodation problems being experienced in Calgary.

Mr. Chairman, the effective intervention during the early stage of a young offender's encounter with the law is of paramount importance if the system is to be successful in diverting these young people away from a long-term pattern of criminal activity. Consequently, in addition to establishing modern facilities that enhance accommodation and programming capability within the young offender system, the department will also be placing more emphasis during this fiscal year on early-release programming for low-risk young offenders. This initiative is intended to prevent, to the fullest extent possible, young offenders from adapting to an overdependence on an institutionalized life-style and the negative effects that such an adaptation can have on their ability to adjust to normal community living upon release.

More specifically, the department will be actively promoting the establishment and greater use of community-based custody homes, again for low-risk young offenders, particularly young offenders from remote communities. The department will also establish a pilot project based on the attendance centre concept developed in England, where greater emphasis will be placed on compulsory day attendance of both young and adult offenders convicted of minor offences at a community-based facility, which will allow the majority of those participating in this program to live at home during the evenings and on weekends.

Mr. Chairman, I now want to turn to a sometimes misunderstood program that is presently operating in an exemplary manner across the province which, however, to date has received little public recognition. I refer to the major contribution presently being made by more than 1,500 dedicated volunteers who, on their own time and often at their own expense, provide a valuable support service to the province's correctional system. These volunteers, who represent a wide spectrum of Alberta society, including schoolteachers, members of the clergy, policemen, nurses, social workers, persons employed in the business community, clerks, mechanics, and university students, all share one thing in common; namely, a genuine commitment to assisting those Albertans who come in conflict with the law to become more productive and law abiding citizens upon their release from the system.

I want to assure the Assembly that volunteers are not a substitute for paid professional employees, as opponents to this program may suggest, but are rather a valuable resource that complements the professional staff working in the system. The variety of life experiences and wealth of knowledge that these carefully selected volunteers bring to the correctional system enhance at no additional cost to the taxpayer the overall impact of correctional programming and the level of success achieved by the system.

I further suggest, Mr. Chairman, that the degree of success of our correctional system is contingent to a large measure on community support and community participation in the correctional system. Volunteers form a natural bridge that links the correctional system with the community and play a valuable dual role of both advocate for the system when the system meets its social obligations and constructive critic of the system on behalf of the community when the system fails to fulfill its mandate.

In view of the major contribution that volunteers have made to the correctional system, I want to take this opportunity to officially recognize and pay tribute to these very dedicated people.

One last initiative that I want to briefly mention at this time in relation to vote 2 is the establishment of an impaired driver program at the minimum-security Alsiike correctional centre. This program will integrate the community work component of this former minimum-security facility with an alcohol abuse program developed in consultation with the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission and with the support of People Against Impaired Drivers, otherwise known as PAID. This program will essentially target that group of impaired drivers who, because of their pattern of alcohol abuse and repeat impaired driving offences, have been sentenced to a period of imprisonment and have the greatest need for an intensive program of this nature in order to cope with their problem of alcohol abuse following their release into the community.

Vote 3. The primary expenditures of the law enforcement division for fiscal 1987-88 are the unconditional municipal police assistance grants of approximately \$28 million and the \$56.1 million required to fund the RCMP provincial policing agreement. Resources budgeted in previous years to operate the highway patrol branch have been transferred to the department of transportation to provide for more effective co-ordination between the mobile weigh scale program of the former Highway Patrol branch and the fixed weigh scale operation of the vehicle inspection stations of Alberta Transportation. This transfer of resources will also reduce the considerable overlap and duplication of activities that existed previously between the two departments, and a number of budgetary efficiencies will be achieved.

During the 1987-88 fiscal year all law enforcement agencies that have received an unconditional policing assistance grant from the province will be subject to a 3 percent reduction in this grant. While this reduction will require some minor adjustments by all municipalities that presently have their own police force or a contract with the RCMP, the impact of this reduction will not, in my judgment, significantly affect the ability of municipalities to provide essential police services to their citizens.

Additionally, there will be a slight reduction in the number of members that are contracted directly to the province under the provincial policing agreement. However, in view of the substantial increases in RCMP manpower between 1978 and 1982, these reductions can be achieved without placing Albertans at risk. In arriving at the decision to reduce RCMP manpower, I took into account the 70 percent increase in the cost of the RCMP services to Alberta over the last five years and decided that steps had to be taken to slow down these rapidly escalating costs to the province. At the current rate of increase the combined federal/provincial cost of one RCMP member will be in excess of \$108,000 by the year 1990, with the province being required to pay more than \$75,000 per member as its share of this total cost. Consequently, funding to service the RCMP provincial policing agreement will be reduced during fiscal '87-88 by \$1.2 million, or 2 percent less than what was ap-

proved for fiscal 1986-87. This decision will require municipalities under 1,500 population that are presently receiving services under this agreement at no cost to these municipalities to work closely with the local RCMP officials to prioritize policing activities in their communities to ensure that RCMP manpower resources are utilized in the most productive manner.

In addition, I believe that the law-abiding members of all Alberta communities should become more attentive to crime in their community through the establishment of local police community crime prevention initiatives such as Rural Crime Watch, Neighbourhood Watch, Crime Stoppers, and Block Parents to assist the police in the early detection and reporting of crime.

While my decision to reduce expenditures in the law enforcement area during 1987-88 may, to some, appear to represent a somewhat negative picture, I am nevertheless pleased to report that a number of positive initiatives have been undertaken recently or are planned to be undertaken during the 1987-88 fiscal year. Since my appointment 11 months ago I have met with the chiefs of police from across Alberta, the commanding officer of the RCMP for Alberta, and the commissioner for the RCMP for Canada for the purpose of discussing and reviewing a number of police policies. I have also met with representatives from the various police associations which represent the rank and file within the police forces, with members of municipal police commissions, members of municipal councils, and with representatives of Indian bands. I am pleased to report that as a result of these various meetings, discussions, and consultations, I am satisfied that Alberta presently enjoys a high standard of policing and that the police forces across the province are in the hands of competent and dedicated professional police officers.

There is, however, room for improvement in a number of areas. And in recognition of the mobility and sometimes ingenuity of the criminal element, it is imperative for all levels of government and all police agencies to work closely together in the co-ordination of the various facets of policing. I am optimistic that the new Police Act, while not likely to fully satisfy all diverse interests of the groups that fall within the parameters of the Act, will nevertheless go a long way towards resolving long-standing difficulties caused by the lack of clarity in the current legislation regarding the respective roles, responsibilities, and relationships of municipal councils, police commissions, chiefs of police, and the police associations. I am hopeful that with the support of both sides of the Assembly these badly needed amendments will be passed during the current session, and I welcome your support in this regard.

Mr. Chairman, adequate training of municipal police officers is important to the satisfactory performance of a police service and for the safety and security of citizens who must rely on the judgment of police members in response to both routine occurrences and crisis situations. I am pleased to report that the first co-ordinated basic training program, for policemen from the municipalities of Camrose, Medicine Hat, Taber, Coaldale, Lethbridge, Redcliff, Lacombe and from the Louis Bull Indian Reserve, was recently held at the Solicitor General's staff college in Edmonton. In fact, I had the pleasure of attending the first graduation last night.

This training course was developed and delivered co-operatively by a consortium involving the Edmonton city police, the Calgary police service, the RCMP, and the law enforcement division of this department. This initiative was particularly important to those smaller municipalities that cannot, for financial and related practical reasons, establish independent training pro-

grams and facilities, and is an example of how a quality police training program can be developed through the utilization and sharing of existing resources at very little cost to the parties involved.

In view of the success of this recent initiative, I want to take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge the support of the police commissions, the chiefs of police of the cities involved, and the commanding officer of the RCMP for assistance provided in this joint police training venture.

An area of considerable importance to the province that I now want to turn to, Mr. Chairman, is that of policing on Indian reserves and the long-standing desire of some Indian leaders to become more responsible for policing in their communities in much the same manner as presently applies to non-native communities. I am pleased to report to the Assembly that a policy initiative has been taken recently to permit the establishment of full-service policing on reserves that wish to move in this direction. Under this new policy, trained peace officers employed by Indian bands can be fully empowered to enforce both provincial statutes and the provisions of the Criminal Code and can additionally be authorized to carry sidearms, as do members of non-native fully empowered police forces.

Within this same context, I am also pleased to announce that the Louis Bull Band is the first native community in Alberta to establish a fully empowered police force with the full endorsement of this department, the federal department of Indian affairs, and the RCMP. The RCMP will provide support services to the Louis Bull Band police force in complex Criminal Code situations in much the same manner that the RCMP provide similar support to other smaller municipal police forces across Alberta.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the leadership and level of commitment demonstrated by Chief Simon Three Fingers, of the Louis Bull Band council, and the chairman of the Louis Bull police commission. The level of co-operation demonstrated during the planning and development of this new initiative was exceptional and again demonstrates that historical impediments to progress can be overcome in a responsible manner when there is determination and goodwill on the part of all parties.

Mr. Chairman, I want to draw to the attention of the Assembly how important it is to this government, to this department, to the police community, to the motoring public, and to the families and friends of victims of impaired drivers to reduce the tragic loss of life that impaired driving inflicts on innocent Albertans. You may recall that during my address to the Assembly last year I referred to this important policy area. Over the past nine months a number of initiatives have been undertaken in the department in an attempt to address this problem area. I have already made reference under vote 2 to the Alsike impaired driving program for persons imprisoned for impaired driving, and I will also make further reference to this problem area under vote 4. However, in relation to vote 3, a task group representative of all police forces in Alberta has been established under the auspices of the law enforcement division to provide for more effective co-ordination of impaired driving initiatives in an attempt to more effectively target impaired driving on a province-wide basis. This task force has already made a number of proposals that are presently under active review by the department from an implementation perspective.

Vote 4. The motor vehicles division is primarily responsible for the licensing and registration of motor vehicle operators and the registration of motor vehicles, the administration of the Mo-

tor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund and the Driver Control Board. Mr. Chairman, over the past six years approximately 3,000 Albertans have died as a result of motor vehicle accidents. Needless to say, this highway fatality statistic is of a magnitude that warrants the intervention of both government and non-governmental agencies and indeed the 1.8 million Albertans who constitute the motoring public, in an attempt to reduce the death and serious injuries that result from highway accidents.

In recognition of this perennial problem and the fact that the great majority of motor vehicle accidents are the result of human error, the department will be taking the following new initiatives during fiscal 1987-88: one, improved driver training standards; two, more effective controls over the testing and licensing of new drivers; three, stricter monitoring of persons who have a history of poor driving; four, more frequent retesting of drivers who demonstrate a pattern of careless driving; and five, more effective monitoring of persons who have had their licences suspended.

More specifically, the training curriculum used by driving schools is presently being evaluated by the department to ensure that the course content and methods of instruction used by driving schools in the future adequately covers safe driving skills, knowledge of the rules of the road, defensive driving, and a thorough understanding of the seriousness of impaired driving and its social and economic costs. Additionally, young people learning to drive for the first time must be fully aware that impaired driving is a serious crime that can lead to a sentence of imprisonment for those who do not learn early in their driving career that driving is a privilege, not a right, that requires the exercise of restraint and an acceptance of responsibility when sharing the road with others.

The licensing standards for driving schools will be improved to ensure that there are adequate controls over the management and operation of these schools. We have recently consulted with the police, the Alberta Motor Association, the Professional Driver Educators Association of Alberta, the Young Drivers of Canada, and the Insurance Bureau of Canada. All these agencies fully endorse this initiative to improve standards and to ensure that the training school industry achieves the level of credibility necessary to warrant the public's confidence in the quality of driver training by these schools.

Additionally, all driving schools will be required to engage qualified instructors in accordance with a certification process to be jointly developed by the Professional Driver Educators Association of Alberta and the motor vehicles division of the department. This initiative, to be known as the driver instructor certification program, will require that no person will be legally permitted to instruct at an authorized driver training school unless prior certification has been received under this program.

In addition, the existing policy whereby driving schools are permitted to both train and test their students is also being examined. Since no other province presently endorses this practice, apparently because of the potential for abuse, it is necessary for Alberta to determine how abuse can be effectively prevented under the current system or, if this goal appears too elusive to achieve, to have all driver testing consolidated under the motor vehicles division of this department.

I also wish to advise the Assembly that a two-year probationary drivers licence will be introduced for all new drivers to ensure that the driving habits of first-time drivers are more closely monitored than has been the case to date. An examination of accident statistics indicates that the 16 to 21 year old age group is most likely to be involved in accidents. Consequently, the

underlying purpose of the probationary licence will be to more effectively detect and hopefully more successfully correct the unsatisfactory driving habits of new drivers during the early stage of their driving career.

An initiative will also be undertaken during fiscal '87-88 to ensure that any driver, irrespective of age, who is developing an unsatisfactory driving record is made fully aware of the fact that they represent a potential hazard to the motoring public. In this regard a computerized early warning system will be established by the motor vehicles division to first identify and to subsequently require persons who are developing such a pattern of violations to report to a newly established driver management branch. This new unit within the department will be responsible for reviewing the records of these drivers and for referring the most serious cases to the Driver Control Board, which has the authority to suspend the driver's licence, to order a driver to be retested by a driver examiner, or to have a driver examined by a physician for a possible medical problem that could contribute to a motor vehicle accident.

I also wish at this time to report to the Assembly on the progress of the interdepartmental/interagency task group that was established late last year to review the problem of suspended drivers. This task group has made a preliminary report which includes more than 40 recommendations, and each recommendation is presently being assessed from an implementation perspective. Additionally, a number of initiatives have already been taken as a result of the findings of this task group, and other initiatives will be taken in the near future. For example, driver licensing procedures have been changed to make it more difficult to purchase a duplicate licence, respecting those persons who have been charged with impaired driving and face the prospect of losing their original licence if convicted or are in jeopardy of losing their licence through an accumulation of demerit points.

Additionally, persons who have recently arrived in Alberta and are applying for a licence for the first time are issued a temporary licence and are provided with a permanent licence only after a driving record check is made of the recent arrival's home province or province of last residence to determine whether the person is under suspension in that province. The motor vehicles division has also established a procedure to more effectively identify suspended drivers who use aliases and are more likely to attempt to secure more than one drivers licence for the purpose of being able to continue to drive while suspended.

Additionally, the motor vehicle systems of Alberta and British Columbia are presently experimenting with a computer linkage to determine the benefits of an on-line computer interface in detecting suspended drivers, identifying other types of problem drivers, and for other motor vehicle and driver management purposes. If this experiment proves successful, I am hopeful that other provinces may also take a similar initiative, with the ultimate goal being to have the motor vehicle systems of all provinces linked through a nationwide computer system. I plan to pursue this possibility further with the ministers responsible for motor vehicle administration across Canada during fiscal '87-88, when the results of the B.C./Alberta pilot project are more fully documented.

I also want to advise the Assembly that the suspended driver apprehension program, which was implemented in co-operation with the police and agents of the Attorney General last September, has to date resulted in the detection and referral to the police of more than 600 suspended drivers, many of whom were suspended as a result of impaired driving and who would other-

wise have avoided detection under the system in place prior to September 1, '86. However, we cannot boast of this initial success, as persons who are presently driving while under suspension continue to present a problem on the province's highways, and more needs to be done in this regard, including the need to heighten public awareness of the existence of this program.

Mr. Chairman, during the last session of the Legislature I reported that the demerit point . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister, I would like you to complete in one sentence, if you could. Your time is up.

MR. ROSTAD: That's it.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the outline of the Solicitor General of his estimates. Looking at vote 1, dealing with departmental support services, I'm puzzled as to where the comparable figures from previous years come from. I've looked at the actual figures for last year as far as I can, and the numbers do not seem to tally at all. Particularly, the comparable figure of \$323,387 in vote 1.0.7 does not exist the previous year, and I wonder if the minister would care to explain that.

On correctional services, which is vote 2, Mr. Chairman, one does note that there were considerable difficulties with the youth development centres last year. Not so long ago there were reports that the centre at Strathmore, for example, which is designed to hold 64 residents, was holding up to 92 residents -- youths, of course. This contributed to an alarming tendency for them to escape and also, we understand, contributed to many of them never having got to the Youth Development Centre at all because of lack of places. So they would be released straight onto a type of probation which was inappropriate to those particular youths; otherwise, they wouldn't have been sent to the places of confinement in the first place.

We realize that there were transitional problems in administering the Young Offenders Act, primarily the federal Young Offenders Act. At the same time, there is a surplus of spaces in the conventional prisons, Mr. Chairman, and I wonder the extent to which the Solicitor General and his staff have investigated the possibility of segregating areas in the existing institutions in which there is a considerable surplus of space for prisoners, so that the young offenders could be incorporated there, separate and apart from the adult prisoners of course, although achieving economies in support services: housecleaning and janitorial services, food, laundry -- that sort of thing. It seems to me that there could be considerable scope for economies at this time instead of building completely new premises.

We do note the sad fact, Mr. Chairman, that the incarcerated, youthful native population represents 28.6 percent of the total population in the last reporting period, being April 1, 1985, to March 31, 1986, although the proportion of them in the population of Alberta as a whole, of comparable age of course, is only 3 percent, which is an enormous difference in proportion. This trend is also apparent in the adult correctional facilities, where some 27 percent of the adult population is native compared to a similar proportion of the population as a whole. I know that it is a source of abiding concern to the government, as it is to all of us, and perhaps the Solicitor General could tell us what is being done and what more he thinks can be done to reduce this disproportion.

I appreciated his words concerning the use of volunteers in the prison service. No one should discourage volunteers who

visit prisons and other correctional facilities doing their good work. There is, particularly in a time of restraint, a temptation to use them to displace paid and trained professionals, Mr. Chairman. When, for example, the John Howard Society is used, some of them are paid; others who operate under the aegis of the John Howard Society are volunteers. It was originally an entirely volunteer organization, of course. There is a block grant, as it were, to the John Howard Society. They do excellent work, both professionally and as volunteers of course. Nonetheless, they have in a number of instances taken the place of provincial social workers. Perhaps the Solicitor General could deal with that rather tricky area of the provincially employed social workers feeling that they are threatened by the John Howard Society takeover of some part at least of some of the facilities. I know that we have that concern expressed to us quite often.

Mr. Chairman, one thing that I note in vote 2 is that the institutional services, meaning the support of prisons and the like, remains almost the same as last year, yet the prison population is declining, and indeed there are a number of vacant beds in these prisons. The phraseology used is like hospitals or hotels, but that, I'm told, is how they refer to spare places in prisons. There is quite an active campaign to sell our services across the country and thereby -- and I don't detract from this endeavour at all -- make better, more profitable use of our facilities. That being so, I'm just wondering why it is that the costs remain about the same. Perhaps the initiative has not met with much success, and of course most of the costs are fixed costs that don't vary very widely with the usage by prisoners. But there are in fact -- contrary to popular supposition, I understand -- a considerable number of vacancies at Fort Saskatchewan, Grande Cache, Calgary, and Lethbridge at the prisons there. There is almost a Parkinson's Law, or variety of it, when it comes to prisons. It's a curious thing, but it seems that to some extent inmates expand to fill the space available. I don't quite know how it works, but it seems to work, so perhaps some attention should be paid to reducing this phenomenon.

On vote 3, Mr. Chairman, concerning, for example, the disbanding of the Highway Patrol -- I know that the government objects to that word. The responsibilities, as I say, have been transferred to the department of transportation. And municipal grants to the police and the issue of suspended drivers others will be dealing with. I hope we can get to them.

But on one aspect of vote 3, which is the support for the RCMP contract. There are, I believe, some 16 municipalities which are being policed by the RCMP where the populations exceed 1,500 -- some of them doubtless are hamlets, in fact -- where there is no RCMP contract; that's to say, no specific contract between the municipality and the RCMP, which is contrary to the provisions of the Police Act, both the Police Act as it stands now and the Police Act that is proposed to be brought in. I understand this variation from what should be occurred gradually -- not so gradually, I suppose, at the time of fast population increase over the last half dozen years -- but has not been corrected. I wonder how it is that the department is squaring in its obligation to give a separate deal to the RCMP where the numbers of the municipality that they are policing exceeds 1,500 with the fact that in 16 cases it has done that. That's my information anyway. What plans are afoot to correct this?

In fact, while I'm on the subject of the RCMP contract, perhaps the Solicitor General could take this opportunity of telling us what, if any, are the arrangements for the reimbursement of those municipalities from whom Mounted Police will be drawn

to police the Winter Olympics next spring. We've been told that there will be policing by the RCMP. We cannot presume that all of them will come from outside the province. Some of them presumably will be withdrawn from their regular duties within the province. How will this sit with the various contracts which support them in their regular places of assignment? And I trust that when we are told the particular number -- I don't know whether we've known the particular number, but a number will be coming in that amongst the law enforcement will not be counted -- the musical ride, if they intend to appear at the Winter Olympics.

I'm glad to hear that under vote 4, Mr. Chairman, the question of the conflict of interest which clearly arises when driver training schools have to test their own pupils has been addressed and is being addressed. Opposition is that the testing should be a function of the responsible department, as it always was, and there will be no easy, cheap, and reliable way of ensuring a method of consistent and uniform testing by the schools of their own products. It's similar to the controversy that has existed for some time about the school system itself, I suppose, and the mark disparity in marking practices between various parts and various schools in the province, which has led to some unfairness.

Mr. Chairman, there was an almost 100 percent increase last year in the budget for the Alberta Racing Commission. Perhaps the Solicitor General could make a brief comment on the uses to which that was put and whether it was really worth it, particularly in a time of unprecedented budget deficit in this province. We see that it's been reduced 5 percent -- it's about five, Mr. Chairman -- this year, and it might occur to one that a rather more vigorous attempt could have been made to save money in respect of this almost \$7 million budget.

Mr. Chairman, last year it was plain that the computer in the department was not functioning as it ought to have been. If one compares the reports of this department from 1977 onwards, one can see that the initiative that was taken and came into effect about September 1 last year was largely to remedy the shortcomings in what had been announced as fact in the late '70s and early '80s. And I refer to the communication that was supposed to exist between our computers and the RCMP computer and the electronically stored data in other provinces. It still obviously is not complete. The sooner it is complete, the sooner we will have a more certain system of catching offenders who either attempt to get our licences so they can take them back to their province of origin or come from other provinces while under suspension or disqualification. It's a serious problem. We've known that there have been fatalities caused by drivers who have escaped detection because of using these licences. I know that the department is aware of the problems. We can only hope that they will be solved better than they were in the early part of this decade when, it seems to me, the department in practice just about gave up on the problem of two-way access to the RCMP computer.

On that point, Mr. Chairman, perhaps the Solicitor General could tell us what steps have in fact been taken that have improved the system over what we were told was the case last year, and is it in fact the case that we can retrieve now from the CPIC computer -- that's the one that the RCMP administer -- all that we need to know about suspended drivers and disqualified drivers in other provinces that are in that system? The Mounted Police, quite properly, have guarded their computer information on the criminal records of citizens jealously and have in the past refused to make a distinction between the purely driving records

and the criminal records, all of which are in the computer. It seems to me that that distinction could quite easily be made, and I ask the Solicitor General whether it has now been made.

As I say, Mr. Chairman, there are questions concerning the Highway Patrol, probation officers, policing cuts, and driver testing that I will leave to others in our caucus, and I earnestly hope that we will have the time to do that.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Does the minister wish to respond, or would he prefer to hear from more members of the committee?

MR. ROSTAD: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to hear from at least one more, and then I'll respond.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Stony Plain.

MR. HERON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to zero in on those estimates which deal with the costs of policing in Alberta, specifically those dollars expended for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police force. At the outset of my comments I would like to say and make it crystal clear that I personally am a strong supporter of the Mounted Police. I have several members of my immediate and extended family who have served and who presently serve in the RCMP, and my own father spent 37 years in law enforcement in this province. So it is out of respect for the tradition and a force, a very fine force, that I want to raise a few issues.

Certainly our Royal Canadian Mounted Police have worldwide admiration and respect, and I feel proud and appreciative that we have a force of this nature. I also feel that we have some trends which you, Mr. Minister, must address if we are to have the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in this province into the future. I have been singled out by members of the force to meet with them and to air some of these complaints and questions.

I suppose I could start off by saying: what is the exact percentage of the RCMP budget paid by the citizens of Alberta? I look forward to your response, since the figure presented to me states that over 70 percent is provincial money for essential police services, and just a moment ago you said that by the year 1990 it is expected that policing costs will reach \$108,000 per man and that you warned us of the \$1.2 million year-to-year reduction in policing costs. I think these are signs that we have to look at better value for our dollar. But there are also some signs and questions I think that we as politicians can ask in the sense that we can provide some direction to this very fine police force. I think there are some things happening which could have very serious long-term ramifications and that could perhaps even facilitate their exit from Alberta and put us in the same position as, say, a province like Ontario with an Ontario police force and Quebec with a Quebec police force.

I was glad to hear you say a few moments ago that you had rapport with the rank and file, you admired their high standard, their dedication, and that you said, "There is room for improvement."

I'd like to zero in just for a few moments and address some observations and questions to you in the areas of promotion -- this is, in the area of staff morale for those members who live and work in Alberta and who will retire in Alberta -- and ask if you have had personal input to some of the things which are occurring. Specifically, you have members who have written their tests for promotion, are eligible for promotion, are placed,

let's say by way of illustration, at number 70, and they find that promotion lists are stretching down to number 200, because number 200 has proved fluency in the French language.

Now, if that's a criterion set by eastern Canada for this province, so be it. But do we, in picking up that very significant portion of their costs, have inputs to that decision? I have a specific example where a person was overlooked in a promotion and the reason given that he had not proved fluency in the French language in the recent five years. But the flip side of that is not true: that a Francophone does not have to prove English fluency in seeking promotion within that force and with a promotion within Alberta. So I feel that we could have some contribution to that criticism brought forth to me by high-ranking members of the force.

I'd like to also ask: what is the outlook for employment in the province of Alberta? I would like to think that if my own son chose to join the RCMP, he could. But I find in a recent situation a high-ranking officer who always would admire the idea of his son joining the Mounted Police had this dream shattered recently when his son's grade 12 French was not good enough to allow him to enter the RCMP. In all other respects this fine, outstanding physical athlete was acceptable. But he's not accepted. I would ask you, Mr. Minister, to investigate the number of Albertans hired and also to ask questions like: what number of the present force are from out of province?

I see nothing wrong with the idea of transferring men from one province to the next to gain exposure and training, but I certainly don't want it to be a one-way street. If we as taxpayers are picking up 70 percent of the bill, I would like to think that for every man hired here there's a man hired elsewhere, but certainly that it would not be disproportionate.

I had two constituents come to me recently; their sons were turned down. I checked into these boys personally. In excess of 200-pound athletes, outstanding athletic contribution, academic contribution to their school, but it was said that they weren't fluent in French. They had passed their French 30. So I'm wondering: who are getting these jobs in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police? Are we here in Alberta providing employment for Quebec and Ontario, who do not have the RCMP policing their provinces?

I want to make sure that in making these observations and asking these questions I'm not labeled with a point that was brought up here some weeks ago, with favouring Albertans to the point where you cannot see them go out of province to get experience. Definitely I encourage young people to get their education, to be mobile, to move, to get transfers to other provinces, and that. But I certainly think there has to be a fairness across all our borders.

The other area I would like to zero in on -- and you triggered it, Mr. Minister, when you spoke of seeking greater efficiency, greater economy. I think that our police force in the last few months has moved from a preventive role to a punitive role. I use by illustration the removal of the rotating lights on the police cars. Again, I have had complaints from citizens and the Mounted Policemen that the slick roofs are simply not the way to go, that by far the more desirable position would be to have the rotating lights on top. I recently had a complaint and occasion to drive into the east sun where the alternating red light was the only one visible, by far inferior to the rotating lights up on top of the car.

I personally believe that the statistic gatherers -- and there are members in the force that do that -- do a disservice to our police force and that in your own statistics, Mr. Minister, you

will be able to show that in the past decade tickets issued in the province went from 400,000 per year to 800,000 and back; I believe they're somewhere around 500,000. There is no positive correlation to the accident statistics or death rates with the number of tickets issued. In my opinion, the vast majority of them simply are minor aggravations to our citizens at large.

[Mrs. Koper in the Chair]

I firmly believe that we have to give that direction to the police force if we desire a change from the punitive to the preventive sense. I had occasion to witness a young member of the force cross the median at a high rate of speed with a slick roof, and it wasn't visible to me at first that he was a member of a police force and that he was trying to stop a speeder from the opposite direction. I think we have to stop some of this action in terms of crossing the medians and driving carelessly unnecessarily for a \$20 parking ticket.

I shudder at what this punitive image is doing to our tourism. I had occasion to be on a ski bus recently traveling from Edmonton to Jasper. Over the course of that weekend that bus was stopped three times -- in my view, unnecessarily. I think that some of the things we have witnessed with our police force recently should be brought out for your attention. For example, I was mildly surprised to see a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police checking the parking lots to see if the cars had a \$2 sticker on them early in the morning. Consider what might have happened: a person who was tired from skiing or may have had a glass of wine decided to stay overnight, and overnight his ticket expired, his park ticket; he's now faced with a \$20 ticket issued by the RCMP. I see nothing wrong with that person staying overnight and exiting the next day. Certainly there must be other ways, and I guess if you're looking for rationalization or enjoying greater economy of this force, you can certainly avoid these kinds of minor irritants plus the duplication.

Last summer I had it brought to my attention that a person who was out with his motorboat, waterskiing with his family, was checked three times in one weekend for life jackets and fire extinguishers: checked by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and he had the appropriate check sticker put on; checked by the Fish and Wildlife; and when he went into Zeiner Park at Pigeon Lake, he was checked again by the park wardens. I feel that if we're going to be cutting policing by \$1.2 million, this is perhaps the best place we can start.

I mentioned some weeks ago in this Legislature the situation where you have RCMP officers checking people out at a picnic enjoying a bottle of beer. And you know, that day there were three RCMP officers -- two in plain clothes -- radioing to issue tickets to people having a beer, a situation that's common in most parts of the world. I believe we can certainly move in a direction of removing some of these minor irritants when we compare our liquor and policing laws to other provinces'. I'm certainly not convinced that greater accessibility of liquor leads to more problems. I think it's an attitudinal and educational dung, and I encourage you, Mr. Minister, to pursue more liberal liquor laws and remove this minor irritant from the lives of Albertans.

I would like to applaud your initiatives in terms of creating Indian police forces on the Indian reserves. I've received excellent feedback on these initiatives, and I feel that the natives over time will have good police forces and give them more control over their own self-destiny.

I certainly raise these questions not to add any further harassment or criticism of our fine RCMP Police force but to encourage your personal intervention in providing guidance to ensure that everyday support of Albertans of this fine force is not lost and that with some RCMP members viewing extra citations or extra tickets as increased revenues and our government being forced to implement cutbacks, that they're not caught in the squeeze and by 1991 Albertans and politicians are looking for a new police force. I think we can obtain good value. I think we can obtain good, reasonable policing in the major areas of police control.

I applaud your comments of a few moments ago and your strong support of removing the drunk driver from the highway. Certainly, the grim statistics support your efforts and endeavours in this direction, particularly your support of PAID, the People Against Impaired Drivers, or REID, Research and Education into Impaired Driving. Certainly, as all members of this Legislature have probably experienced a grim story in their constituency involving the drunken driver, I firmly believe that we should encourage the harshest possible treatment for those who are driving while suspended.

I also would ask you to take a look at the area of those people who are driving without insurance. Last winter I had a personal experience where a driver was charged and convicted for an illegal traffic manoeuvre. I was unable to stop, and my vehicle was involved in a minor accident. But because he chose to drive without insurance and he was appropriately charged, I had to pay the \$500 deductible. Now, if he had insurance, I would not have had to pay that, so it would be my suggestion to you that people who choose to drive without insurance not be allowed to get their driver's licence back until they've made suitable financial arrangement for the damages they've caused.

I just back up; I say that any efforts that we in the government can give you to remove the drunk driver from the road will certainly be given to you, Mr. Minister.

I would like to move on to an experience I recently had with your department and the Liquor Control Board. One of my constituents requested a wine boutique in the constituency; to me, an innocent enough request, given that 70 percent of the jobs created in this province are by small business or those employing under 100 people and we have a stated objective of moving that to 75 percent. The wine boutique seems to make good common sense to me if you have an area of good demand and a person who is financially responsible and when you compare his or their request against what is being done in other provinces.

Present regulations say that there is a pilot project which only allows for 20 wine boutiques. But here is where I make the criticism; that is, that the project is under review for a two-year period. Surely we can evaluate the positives and negatives of a small merchandising operation in under two years. If it's found to be positive, I firmly believe that there are employment opportunities that we're missing. I make that statement having, as we all have, some firsthand observations of what is done elsewhere.

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

Mr. Minister, I trust that you will respond to my questions and, in doing so, that you will consider some of what I said as suggestive criticism and that we can probably remove some of what I would refer to as very minor irritants and problems, recognizing that you have a very, very large department, and we certainly don't have time to go through and give credit for the many, many initiatives and actions you've taken to make Al-

berta a better place. But I ask that you give some of the things that I have made some consideration and what I hope will prevent serious changes in the future.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister.

MR. ROSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize to the Assembly for not completing my opening remarks before the bell. I was reading somewhat slower than usual to ensure that everybody could digest it. But I do have copies for anybody that would like to know what other initiatives we are undertaking in the department.

I appreciate the comments from both the Member for Edmonton Strathcona and the Member for Stony Plain. They've brought up some what I think are interesting points, and I would like to respond to some of them before we continue on.

In relation to the question asked by the Member for Edmonton Strathcona as to vote 1, the corporate planning branch, I'd like to point out that this branch was created from various divisions, I guess more specifically from the corrections and the finance and administration. He's absolutely correct that it was not in existence last year but is responsible for a lot of the initiatives that are now being undertaken and is not added to the costs of operating under the department support services in vote 1.

His question in vote 2 relating to the youth development centres, more specifically the Strathmore Youth Development Centre. He indicated there'd been a number of escapes, and I guess that's a given at any time you incarcerate people, that most people that are incarcerated don't enjoy it and have some very inventive ways of leaving the premises prior to their getting permission. But I would like to point out that the statistics he was referring to, in the sense that we were overloaded substantially more than the allowable capacity, were in fact a year ago, and it is not the experience now. In fact, at Strathmore now we are under the capacity of 64. We utilize the temporary release program in most places, but it has been discontinued where we do experience a number of instances of leaving.

I might point out, when he made the comments about probation not necessarily being appropriate for people that are incarcerated or that are brought up before a justice in court -- I'd like to actually take issue with that, because I think that in most instances if we use probation or a variation thereof, we have a chance to put that person into the community under the supervision of people who are trained to care for them and to help them change their attitude. Usually, with young offenders it's more an attitudinal thing, because they haven't been incarcerated long enough or with hardened enough criminals that they can pick up on their habits. So I think there's a strong answer for keeping the young offender out of the facility.

In the Young Offenders Act we find there's a higher percentage of the perpetrators that are incarcerated than we would like, but that is the way the federal Act has been drafted, and we've been doing an awful lot of lobbying with the federal Solicitor General to initiate changes whereby we can accommodate early release and/or prevent the incarceration. Alberta has a somewhat higher percentage of incarceration than a lot of other provinces. I don't think we have a population that misbehaves or has more of a criminal element than any other population, but I do think we have a judiciary who think that if you're in court, you must deserve to be incarcerated. And I hope that as a society working to make that visible to the judiciary -- that that is not the best way and it's a very expensive way to operate.

In answer to the utilization of the adult facilities to accommodate some of the young offenders, I appreciate the suggestion, but I think that might be fraught with more problems, in the sense that we're mixing a young offender with an adult offender population. Even if you could envision a particular wing being kept separate, there is the common use of, whether it's gymnasiums or whether it's yards or whatever -- and you start to get a role model within the institution. I think the answer -- and we're finding it right now, that the transition we experienced last year gave us some problems. We aren't finding the crowding or overpopulation in the institutions, and with the Calgary young offenders centre coming on stream, I think we'll find that most of our problems in terms of the actual inmate population will be solved.

In relation to the question on the high percent of prison population being natives, citing 28.6 as the '85-86 as against 3 percent or thereabouts of the population generally, that's a concern not only of the Solicitor General; I think it's of the government and of our society generally. We're the receiving department in respect of having the prison population; I guess we're also the initiator in the sense that it's the police that do in fact arrest them. But over the past weeks we've heard initiatives that the Social Services department is trying. One initiative that is being commenced today and that I've mentioned earlier in my remarks, the Louis Bull police service, I think is one answer. The native population has always said that they have a cultural difference and a certain way that they should handle their own affairs, and I think one of the answers is to have a police force run by the native population, that knows the cultural differences, that can develop a community base, so that the natives respect the police and police respect the citizens.

I think the Minister of Social Services in her child welfare initiatives that have taken place with a band in northern Alberta and, as well, the Yellowhead Tribal Council, is another way of attempting to keep the native population incarceration percentage lower. It isn't something that's going to be accommodated or accomplished in a short time, but I think it is a possibility.

In answer to the concerns about the John Howard Society or similar type organizations taking over jobs from social workers or whatever else, I can assure the Member for Edmonton Strathcona that there have been no layoffs of provincial staff as a result of any privatization or of taking any of our programs and giving them to an organization such as the John Howard Society. These agencies are used mainly to complement programs that we run with our own Solicitor General staff. I wouldn't be foolish enough to say that to my knowledge there isn't any; there might be one or something like that, but it would be totally insignificant, and we aren't at all interested in just getting rid of a government employee to give it to the private sector.

In reference to the vote, and more specifically the institutional services, vote 2.2, being the same level, we have actually two reasons for that. We have about 250 federal inmates in our system, and although we get some money from the federal government for that, we get the costs but we don't get the money. The Treasurer gets the money, that for a budgetary reason. Medicine Hat and Red Deer are two new facilities coming on this year that have to have some added budgeting in as well. So although we are running with -- most of our sentence institutions are near capacity. With the inclusion of the federal inmates, we are able to keep our budgeted amount at the same level.

In relation to vote 3, your concerns with the RCMP and the 16 communities now having a population over 1,500 who don't

have a contract with the RCMP. I can't answer why that was allowed. I guess because some of them were very close. I think it's unfair to the number of communities that are over that, that are paying for their policing, and I think it's time we brought these in. Now, we have an initiative whereby these communities can, if they're happy with the level of policing they're getting now, pay a portion of what the provincial cost of policing would be. I can use the example of the community of Beaumont, which does not have a contract with the RCMP and is presently using policing from the Leduc rural detachment. If they're happy with that and it results in approximately one man-year RCMP officer from Leduc doing the policing there, we would calculate what that cost is and have Beaumont pay a portion of that. We are also willing to phase in the cost to these communities so that they aren't abruptly hit with a very large police bill. We've asked each of these communities to sit down with our department, with the law enforcement division, and we'll work out some way of accommodating them.

In relation to the Winter Olympics, none of the Olympics security will be drawn from the communities that have a contract with the RCMP. The plan is not complete at this stage. The security requirements are complete, but the accommodation of how we're going to do it is not totally complete. As an example, Red Deer has a contract with the RCMP. Their RCMP detachment will not have to give up people, but there may be in some of the rural detachments some people accommodated. There will be a significant number coming from other provinces as well.

I appreciate the member's comments in relation to driver training, because we do feel it's a real conflict of interest for a school to be in fact attempting to train a driver and then testing the driver. I think there are some very valid unfortunate results out there where people don't get adequate training, and if we can't accommodate that in our present system, it will be changed such that Motor Vehicles will be taking over testing completely.

In relation to vote 5, the Racing Commission, there was a substantial increase accorded that vote last year, albeit it comes from a pari-mutuel tax, those who participate in the enjoyment of the industry, and not from the General Revenue Fund. I take it that it has been extremely successful. The equine industry in Alberta is approximately a \$2 billion industry, and this is just one component of increasing the sale and development of Alberta-bred horses. By putting the money under that vote into purses that enhance the Alberta-bred stakes, we have had an increase in the development of Alberta-bred stables and the sales of Alberta-bred horses in and outside of Alberta have increased. The reduction in vote 5 that we've accommodated this year has not been out of the purses but has been out of the administration of the commission.

In relation to the question on the computer, the member refers to some of the problems that we as a department encountered and were highlighted by the Auditor General in some of his previous reports. In the last report of the Auditor General, although he has again, as he invariably does, pointed out one of our inadequacies, he has said that he commends the department on the speed and effectiveness in action taken in response to his '84-85 recommendations. I feel that the department is working extremely hard in achieving his directions, his requests.

The CPIC/MOVES -- CPIC being the Canadian police information computer system, and MOVES being the motor vehicle computer system -- do have an interface, as we discussed last year. The RCMP have always sheltered a certain amount of

information within CPIC which has been acknowledged as being required. They have agreed to give us some more, but we are still continuing to negotiate on getting some more of the information in there -- and I'm not talking security type of information, but as it relates to moving violations and driving records. The interdepartmental task force that was set up between our department, the Attorney General, the police, and some private-sector groups has been able to achieve great results and we now have a uniform reporting system so that information, when it comes from our computers to court services or to the police to be used in court services, is in a standard format and has as much information that we can give them at this time. But we're continuing to work with the RCMP through Ottawa to allow them to give us a bit more information.

The final reference was to the Highway Patrol. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the Highway Patrol is still a highway patrol; it is still patrolling the highways of Alberta. It was found not to be a rationed fit within the Solicitor General's department and that it was enforcing motor transport rules and regulations, conditions of vehicles, et cetera, as well as operating a mobile weigh scale. That was, in our judgment, a better fit with the department of transportation, where in fact it used to be until 1974 and the minister at that time thought he wouldn't like it and it should be put into the Solicitor General's department. I think it will, with efficiencies, still be able to police the motor transport vehicles, because it wasn't stopping the average motorist -- that was not its mandate -- and there was some confusion out in the public as well as within the Highway Patrol themselves as to exactly what their mandate was. I think the results in the ensuing year will show that that was an efficient and effective move.

I could now address some of the concerns of the Member for Stony Plain, whose main comments were from vote 3 as they relate to the RCMP and our provincial contract. Presently we pay as a province 64 percent of the RCMP costs. Now, a particular municipality can have a contract with the police which is outside the provincial contract, such as Red Deer, and they pay 80 percent. This goes up on a 2 percent per year basis, and in 1990-91 the 10-year contract ceases and a new one comes into effect. At that time the province will be paying 70 percent of the RCMP costs. The 70 percent that I alluded to in my comments related to the fact that RCMP costs have gone up 70 percent in the past -- '78 to '82, I believe it was. Not that that was our share. Our share right now is 64 percent, and we are starting the wheels rolling in renegotiating this particular contract at that time. There's no intention of not continuing RCMP. I agree with you that there is not a finer police force, a more exemplary police service, although I recognize all of our municipal police forces as doing a very superb job in Alberta. I had the pleasure of meeting with the commissioner of the RCMP in Ottawa on, I believe, March 12, where promotions specifically were not discussed.

We do not as a province have any responsibility or input to promotions. That is a purely internal concern of the RCMP. We have a contract which sets out that we will have adequate policing and we will negotiate where they'll set up forces and that type of thing, but the internal running of their force we have absolutely nothing to do with. But coincidentally in my conversations with the commissioner I did have a discussion as to the recruitment of RCMP officers and how that was effected, and that there were a number of complaints that citizens of Alberta, because they didn't speak French, were being passed over in getting into the force. He assured me that that was not the case

at all, and in fact it is not a requirement that you have French to be a member of the RCMP.

On the recruitment, there are points accorded to various accomplishments such as your education, your sex, ethnic origin, your language or facility in other languages, and of course through an accumulation of these particular points, knowing your various talents, you would stand a better chance of getting into the force or not getting into the force. I am certain that with the cutbacks we're experiencing -- and the commissioner assured us that he understood our reasons and the rationale and basis of our reasons and agreed with them, and said that we could accommodate our 2 percent cut without affecting the policing and the delivery of policing within Alberta,

So in answer to your outlook for employment in Alberta, we will be continuing to contract with the RCMP, and I hope we don't have to go through an experience of further contraction. That certainly isn't in the books. Our economic outlook for next year I think is positive and in all likelihood we won't have to take further restrictions. I might mention that in the policing serious crime decreased 16 percent in the '82 to '85 period, whereas the enhanced policing that we were getting from our police forces and the increasing costs of the RCMP, which mainly relate to labour, went up 70 percent. So there had to be, without going to this \$108,000 cost, a rationalization of this particular service.

In terms of efficiency, again, how each force handles the delivery of their policing service is an internal matter; it isn't with us. We're satisfied with a level of adequate policing, and that's where we come in. Now, with the RCMP there isn't what there is with other municipal police forces, a police commission. That's the commissioner in Ottawa and his direct link to the Treasury Board. The Solicitor General in Ottawa has nominal responsibility for the RCMP, but they're almost an independent factor on their own. The use of the slicks in traffic is not a significant percentage of the cars used by the RCMP. They're usually used where there's a high incidence of traffic violations. Again, my predecessor thought we should perhaps not have slicks. There was a period of time when they weren't on and the rack was used on all vehicles; there wasn't a significant difference. But what has happened is that ghost cars, the cars with no RCMP markings, have been taken off the road. They are still being used of course as transportation for officers and that type of thing, but they're not used in the apprehension of traffic violators.

I'm always happy to see a police officer use discretion, on any occasion. However, we as legislators -- and I speak in this Assembly of the people present, but also bylaws are passed by local governments that are enforced by police -- make the rules, and I think it's on us to change the rules rather than the police abusing the rules. You used an example of the bus. I don't know the circumstances of it, but if it was stopped three times, I'm certain there must have been something on the first investigation that would give the policeman a reason to stop it. As an example, if intoxicating substances were being used on that particular bus, that's against the law. Now, if we as legislators would like to change that law, that's our duty; the policeman's duty is to in fact enforce that law. So in fairness to the police force, who I think are doing an exemplary job, I think we should let them do it, although I hope they would do it with discretion.

The ALCB reference is actually not a vote before the House with the Solicitor General, but in answer to your concerns on wine boutiques, the two-year analysis of this program is from the inception of the program, not from the completion. So it's an ongoing thing, and we just want to make sure that all the warts are out of it prior to expanding the program. I do think it's a good initiative and will probably prove out to be enhanced in the future.

Thank you.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion, do you all agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: So ordered.

[At 1 p.m. the House adjourned to Monday at 2:30 p.m.]

