

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Friday, May 29, 1987 10:00 a.m.**

Date: 87/05/29

[The House met at 10 a.m.]

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

PRAYERS

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Dear Lord, as legislators we make laws for all Albertans.

We ask for your guidance in making certain those laws are fair and just.

Amen.

head: PRESENTING PETITIONS

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to present the following petition that has been received for a private Bill: the petition of Frederick L. Benini, Mervin L. Henkelman, Peter D. McKeen, David Starko and Ronald C. Swist for the Federal Canadian Trust & Bond Corporation.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

MR. CLEGG: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, 20 students from the grade 6 class at the Spirit River school in the constituency of Dunvegan. These students are accompanied by one teacher, Mr. Leon Tkachyk, three parents, Mrs. Lynn Phillips, Mrs. Heather Kerschbaumer, and Mrs. Donna Denis. They are seated in the public gallery, and I ask them to stand and receive the customary welcome of the Assembly.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Edmonton Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly, a guest from Prince George, British Columbia. Beth Kilbreath is visiting with her family, who just happen to reside in that wonderful constituency of Edmonton Belmont. She is accompanied today by her sister-in-law Marie Lacombe, who just by chance happens to be the wife of the man that carries the Mace, Sergeant-at-Arms Oscar Lacombe. Mr. Speaker, Beth Kilbreath and Marie Lacombe are in the public gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the members of the Assembly.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and to Members of the Legislative Assembly, two groups of students from our constituency of Sherwood Park. Let me begin with a group of 39 students, which are in grade 6, from the Father Kenneth Kearns school. They are here with two teachers, Mr. Bruce Plante and Mrs. Marie Gulayets. They're in the members' gallery, and I would ask if they would rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that we have 60 students in grades 5 and 6 plus 7 and 8 from the Madonna school. They are with five teachers, Mrs. McCargar, Mrs. Hess, Mrs. Charette, Mr. Player, and Mr. Berezni. They are in the members' and public galleries. I would ask them also to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly. Maybe I could just indicate, too, that I look forward to getting together with both groups after question period.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Transportation and Utilities.

head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I'd like to beg leave to table the annual report of the Department of Transportation for 1985-86.

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Grain Prices

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier today. The communiqué on agriculture from the western Premiers says, and I quote:

These current circumstances and the complexities of the GATT process require an increased level of domestic farm income support until progress in the international policy arena is reflected in price and income improvements . . .

Mr. Speaker, this is a fine sentiment, and I agree with it. But the problem as I see it is that the provincial government itself has not responded in any way to the further decline in grain prices this year. My question to the Premier: will he indicate his willingness today to reconsider his earlier refusal to consider a provincial component on the increased domestic farm income support advocated by the western Premiers? If the Premier would do that today, it would put more pressure on the federal government.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't do that and certainly not before being able to meet with the federal government to get their reaction and hopefully have them, since this is something throughout Canada -- grain farmers throughout Canada are involved -- make the kind of payment they made last year, only more.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Premier. It's throughout the country, but a significant number of those farmers are right here in this province right now. The call for federal deficiency payments is well and good, but my question today specifically: if the federal government doesn't do anything, is the Premier now closing the door absolutely on provincial participation at this particular time?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I just think it's premature, and I think it's well recognized by Alberta's farmers that this government helps Alberta's farmers more than any farm organization in Canada.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, history lessons are well and dandy, but the point is: since just in this year there's been an 18 percent drop in grain prices that will come due August 1, and there's been a 5.9 percent increase in transportation -- my ques-

tion simply to the Premier is: in view of this, rather than sit and wait for the federal government, what announcements and what initiatives is this government going to take? Or we won't have many of our farmers around in a couple months.

MR. GETTY: It should be clear, too, Mr. Speaker -- the hon. Leader of the Opposition I would think knows this -- that it's the grain farmers that require the assistance, and it's the grain farmers that we are asking Ottawa to help with the deficiency payments. Those who farm in the areas of cattle, hogs, and poultry are doing very well, and they are helping. One of the things that I would like to see more and more of the grain farmers in this province do is to diversify and ensure that they are broadening their economic base in the farm operations.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I can't stress the urgency of the matter. Time is running out. We're not talking about a hypothetical situation. Many of our grain farmers are in dire straits and won't be around next year. Even if the government didn't do anything, it would probably be better. I remind the Premier that on Monday the provincial government will add 23 cents per gallon to the cost of farm fuels.

My question is: would the government in view of this at least consider a moratorium on fuel cost increases until the grain farmers receive at least some price and income improvements from the federal government?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, first of all, as discussed yesterday in the House, the grain farmers are going to receive a large payment before the end of June from the federal government. We have asked the federal government to consider another one before the end of 1987. Also, my review with the grain farmers is that they have put in their crops and have in fact built up significant storehouses of the gasoline they require, in many cases even for the end of the year for the actual taking off of the crops. They tell me that because they've had this lime up until June 1, they've been able to adequately get their crops in.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary to the Premier, Mr. Speaker, if I may. In view of the fact, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition has already pointed out, of the very serious nature of the debt situation of many farmers, to the extent indeed that the federal government announced yesterday that they're appointing a second board to look after people going broke, will the Premier not reactivate the legislation that's been in force here for many years of bringing forward the debt adjustment board to see that no foreclosure can take place of any farmer without going before the debt adjustment board?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader of the Liberal Party would have to make the point that that would help the farmers in Alberta, and he's been unable to do that nor has it proven true anywhere that's been tried.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Agriculture. In the minister's view, in discussions within his departments and other ministers of agriculture and looking at the world situation for the surplus of grains especially, can the minister indicate when we expect a turnaround in agriculture in Alberta and western Canada?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, as the Premier has indicated, I think it's important that we recognize that our main difficulties

are in the grain sector. The livestock sector, the poultry sector, and the dairy sector all do have that stability presently.

As it relates to the grain sector, Mr. Speaker, I'm accused so often of being too optimistic, but I am hopeful there will be a turnaround. That is why we have been so aggressive in the stance that this provincial government has taken as it relates to trade talks to remove the subsidy levels as best we can and to have an influence on that so those subsidy levels of the European Economic Community and the U.S. are removed so our farmers can compete on a playing field that is level. We're going to continue to actively pursue that.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Stettler, a supplementary.

MR. DOWNEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Agriculture. I wonder if he could tell us -- there has been some recent news in the grain markets that futures prices are trending upwards, and there has been some positive news from the federal minister of trade. I wonder if the minister could advise the Assembly whether he sees an agreement between world grain exporters that could firm up grain prices.

MR. ELZINGA: Yes, Mr. Speaker. This underscores what I indicated to the hon. Member for Clover Bar. That is our feeling. It is interesting to note, too, if I can point out two items, that when we look at the statistics as they relate to farm decline, the number of farmers we do have in the various provinces, in the province of Alberta the farm decline was the smallest of any province in Canada, mainly due to the large support that is received from our farming population from this provincial government. We're going to continue with that strong commitment, as the Premier has indicated, in many forms.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, if I could, just on the gasoline. I just had my tanks filled yesterday, and our supplier had indicated to us that he didn't see that he was going to be very busy over the next couple of months because most farmers . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: With respect, hon. minister. It's a long way from gasoline.

Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to designate my second question to the Member for Edmonton Highlands.

Women's Health Services

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the outcome of yesterday's meeting between the women's advisory council and the hospitals minister resulted in a possible commitment that cabinet may reconsider removing sterilization from coverage under medicare. I wonder if the minister responsible for the women's council will undertake to assert to the hospitals minister, on behalf of Alberta women and their families, that the best thing to do is to permit no cuts at all in this preventative reproductive counseling and sterilization process.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, I haven't had an opportunity to discuss with the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care his meeting yesterday as yet. I look forward to doing that and to investigating possibilities which he explored with the council yesterday in their meeting.

In terms of the overall cuts. I believe what we have to do always is to ensure that those who require medical assistance -- women in this particular case, as the hon. member mentions -- are receiving it and will receive such counseling properly. Ministers in previous question periods have outlined ways in which that is anticipated to take place, despite the certain reductions which the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care has outlined.

MS BARRETT: A supplementary question. It wasn't just reduction; it was elimination, striking out. Mr. Speaker, the hospitals minister didn't bother to consult with the affected quarters prior to announcing his sneak attack on women in Alberta. Has the minister responsible for the women's council taken the time to do that on behalf of the women who are affected? If he hasn't, will he now commit himself to doing that prior to allowing these cuts to be implemented?

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that one would agree with the analysis that there was not an investigation of the potential effects prior to the minister's announcement. All of the alternatives were considered and the various options that are available looked at in that respect. I certainly would undertake to continue to discuss with women's organizations and to monitor the situation as it relates to women's health services in the province with my hon. colleagues who are responsible in that particular area.

MS BARRETT: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. That's like an admission that he hasn't already. Given the ho-hum, who-cares attitude displayed by the hospitals minister on this very important issue, will the minister responsible for the women's council commit himself now to undertaking public hearings across the province on this very important preventive measure being cut from medicare? Will he commit himself to that please?

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, public hearings wouldn't be sufficient in terms of evaluating the ongoing needs of women in the health care area. We need to be sure, through a more grass-roots level, that in fact the services which women require are being provided, and that is undertaken through the Department of Community and Occupational Health and through the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care. I certainly would undertake to work with those hon. colleagues in ensuring that the proper services remain and that women who require the services indeed receive them.

MS BARRETT: Well, final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, perhaps this time to the grass-roots minister, the Minister of Community and Occupational Health. The minister has been saying in this Assembly for the last couple of weeks that local health units can implement reproductive counseling programs if they want. Will the minister agree now to providing a special additional fund which those health units which currently don't have such a program can call upon in order to develop and strengthen such a program?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member was listening the other day, on Wednesday, I mentioned to the hon. Member for Edmonton Gold Bar that this report, *In Trouble -- A Way Out*, a very good prepared by a number of individuals in the community health system -- that we were taking the information from that report and asking those 27 medical officers of health

to work with our community health people to come back to us by July 1 with some appropriate recommendations on actions that should be taken.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Edmonton Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary is to the Minister of Community and Occupational Health. The report to which he relates of course is specifically about teenage pregnancy. Will the minister now undertake to consult not only with those public health units but with the private agencies who provide counseling through FCSS and other sources as to their ideas about how the appalling gap that has been created by deinsurance can be filled?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a very good point, and it's one that we discussed with the women's advisory council yesterday. Health units can take on this responsibility but so too must local municipalities. Of the 110 municipalities who contract with this government to deliver family and community support services, two of those municipalities do so. So we would encourage the other 108 municipalities to carefully consider their priorities, recognize that this is a problem, and they should set their priorities to reflect the nature of this problem. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The leader of the Liberal Party.

Senate Reform

MR. TAYLOR: Main question, Mr. Speaker, and thank you. My question today is to the Premier with respect to the Meech Lake area. A great many people, including ex-Premier Lougheed and David Kilgour MP, have pointed out that the Meech Lake accord is going to make Senate reform more difficult to achieve. In actual fact, the Premier misled the House yesterday when he said that "we ... have Senate reform guaranteed" in the new Constitution. We don't. We merely have an agreement to discuss.

The question then, Mr. Speaker: will the Premier admit that we don't have Senate reform in the Meech Lake accord, just a guarantee of discussion and that he may have made this mistake in the House to hide the fact that Alberta got very little out of the Meech Lake accord?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it's remarkable how the Liberal Party, having totally broken apart over the issue of the Meech Lake accord, now is trying in some way to undermine the progress that was made in that accord. It's really remarkable that rather than thinking about the things that we've accomplished for western Canada and Alberta in particular, they should now try and somehow break it down because their own party is in such a shambles with regard to that accord.

MR. TAYLOR: When you have nothing to say, you come out and attack. I can, Mr. Speaker, assure the Premier that this party speaks with one voice. [interjections] One voice. Like you, Mr. Premier, I have no control over my federal counterparts.

In fact, I mentioned ex-Premier Lougheed. Does he agree with ex-Premier Lougheed, his predecessor, that Senate reform is now more difficult to achieve due to the need for unanimity?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, ex-Premier Lougheed congratulated me very strongly on the progress made on behalf of Alberta at the Meech Lake accord. Frankly, his view is like mine: Senate reform is complicated. It always will be; that's why we haven't been able to do it in 120 years. But never before has it ever been insisted that it be placed in the Constitution, which is arguably the most important act in this country. Therefore, by annual meetings, perhaps more -- and I believe there would be more than one a year -- we will have debate, presentations by various provinces, presentations by the federal government, papers developed. I believe we are going to end up coming around to seeing that the position this Legislature has taken and that Alberta supports and British Columbia supports, the Triple E Senate, is the one that we'll select.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, the Premier believes. Many people believe in the second coming too, but that takes some time. Quebec is apparently now attempting because of the formation of an all-party committee -- one which the Premier has refused to do in this House -- to change their accord. Would the Premier reopen negotiations on references to Senate reform to get just a little bit more than what he has had up to now?

MR. GETTY: First of all, Mr. Speaker, Quebec has not got an all-party committee to try and change the accord. That's a completely false statement, and the hon. member shouldn't try and mislead the House. I think it's probably because he doesn't know the facts; I don't think he's doing it intentionally.

[Mr. Payne rose]

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I notice the OCO representative got up in a hurry, and I was just going to give him some minutes.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier -- who was using my own words back; if anybody misleads the House it has to be him -- the western Premiers are obviously supportive of rejecting pressures to alter the intent of the accord, but Quebec is doing it. Quebec is altering the intent of the accord. Why are you then opposed to altering the intent of the accord if you don't think . . . Is there nothing worth altering? Do you think you have a perfect accord?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, Quebec is not altering the intent of the accord. No participants to the accord are altering it, and because the hon. member has taken the time today to talk about altering and that I'm misleading the House or something with regards to the accord, I think I have the opportunity now to just refresh members' minds about what the accord says.

What has happened, Mr. Speaker, is that over a period of years, under federal governments under the Liberal Party, there has been more and more centralization in Ottawa. They have in many cases tried to run around the Constitution, the Constitution which gives certain responsibilities and powers to provinces in the same way it gives them to the federal government. In doing that they have offended many parts of the country. For instance, they could not even get Quebec into the Constitution.

Now, in this accord we have achieved bringing Quebec into the Constitution, something the Liberal Party was incapable of doing because of their idea that they had . . . [interjection] Now, Mr. Speaker, I sat and listened to him. Surely he should have the courtesy to listen himself and not turn our House here into the kind of mess that their party is doing in Ottawa. I would

hope that. . . [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. This is really not to anybody's benefit. Will hon. members let the hon. Premier answer the question.

MR. TAYLOR: A point of order.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The point of order will be raised after question period. Members who put questions to a minister must anticipate the answers the ministers are going to give.

MR. GETTY: I would hope the people who watch this on television and in the galleries would recognize the way they're trying to break down the decorum of this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, what they were unable to do is bring Quebec into the Constitution under that kind of centralized government the Liberals believed in in Ottawa, where they felt that the provinces should be pushed down, treated like second-class cousins, and unable to accept the fact that that is not the way a strong Canada would be built. Therefore, we now have been able to reverse some of that damage that has been done. Quebec is now coming fully into the Constitution. We have first ministers' meetings on the economy guaranteed in the Constitution. It's never been done before in history, and that enforces the quality of provinces around the table in these meetings on the economy. We have Senate reform in the Constitution. It can't come out; it will be in there. We will discuss . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: With respect, hon. Premier. The answer to the question is somewhat beyond, I think, the intent of the question. Hon. Premier.

MR. GETTY: I just wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, when a member does say that I've misled the House about something in the accord, I think that, with respect, there is a chance just to refresh people's memory about what the accord does.

I just wanted to point out that we have established the matter of equal provinces, provincial input into the Supreme Court, provincial input into Senate appointments, and we have restricted the spending power. [interjections].

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. Premier. A supplementary, Calgary Fish Creek.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the benefit of the Lochiel representative and the other members present today in the House . . . [interjections] . . . I would like to direct another supplementary to the Premier. Given that in my constituency and in other quarters of the province there appears to be some concern that the Meech Lake accord is being put into place with an element of rush and hurriedness and that there's an inadequate opportunity for our constituents to participate in that process, I wonder if the Premier could clarify what additional opportunities the members of this House on behalf of their constituents will have to participate in the implementation of the Meech Lake accord.

MR. GETTY: I would be pleased to, Mr. Speaker. Assuming that an accord is signed on Tuesday, that accord must then come before the Alberta Legislature, it must also go before every Legislature in Canada and must be passed. It must be unani-

mous; every Legislature must support it. Therefore, it will be debated. It must also go through the House of Commons, represented by all Canadians, and that must also be passed. Full debate, all parties, as long as it takes. All of them must approve it. Then the Alberta Act must be amended, and again there is debate opportunity. And the same will happen in every province and in the House of Commons. So there is no rush; there is no secrecy. There is an accord that we believe is a significant step forward for Canada, and it will be treated with all the respect all the time that is necessary.

MR. MARTIN: My question to the Premier: if there is a final agreement on the Meech Lake accord on June 2, will the Premier be bringing this resolution back to this Assembly during this session, or will we have a fall session? Is there the possibility of having public hearings on the final accord?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the commitment I make, as I've just made, is that it will be brought to this Assembly and debated here, and it will be passed here. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, order please. Order please. Before we proceed, the Chair does not wish to take the time of question period, but the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon used the term "misled" with regard to a question of the Premier. The hon. member should be advised that that is unparliamentary, and he perhaps might take appropriate action. The hon. Premier perhaps made a comment in the same vein. The Chair would ask both gentlemen to consider those remarks prior to the end of question period and take appropriate action.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, if I said anything that would lead anyone to think that he intentionally misled the House, I would withdraw that comment.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, I mentioned the word "mistake," but I intentionally took out the word "intentional" when I looked at my draft.

Pesticide Container Disposal

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I would like to address my question to the hon. Minister of the Environment, and this is about my concern about protection of the environment. Recently there's been about over half a million pesticide containers collected in Alberta, and apparently the people that are collecting these containers don't know what to do with them. Can the minister indicate what policy is in place, if there is a policy, as to what to do with these pesticide containers?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, in the last several years there have been approximately 650,000 pesticide containers collected throughout the province of Alberta. There are two types of them. The metal ones have been basically going to recyclers here in the province of Alberta, and we've had a continuing problem of what to do with the plastic ones. Until last summer essentially those plastic ones were shredded and then deposited in landfills. During the summer, I basically indicated that I wanted that situation stopped and declared that there should be no more shredding of plastics, and I've asked that all the plastic containers be stockpiled at some 100 collection systems throughout the province of Alberta until we determine or find a solution as to how we might ultimately dispose of those pes-

ticide containers.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. What direction has been given to municipalities as to the acceptance of the material into their landfill site areas?

MR. KOWALSKI: Frankly, I'm asking all municipalities throughout the province to not landfill them. We have at many waste disposal sites throughout the province of Alberta a part of that particular site cordoned off, and basically we're asking the municipal authorities to simply store them there. There are a number of initiatives we're looking at, and I'm rather hopeful in fact that in not too long a period of time we will find some useful use for these containers.

I might add that if there is any entrepreneur in the province of Alberta who wants to come to me with a proposal as to how that individual might make use of the plastics contained in those pesticide containers, I'd be very happy to give him all the feedstock necessary so that he could get on with the recycling project.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. What direction has been given by the department to the people who are handling the containers as to what they do with the material? Quite often there is a cup or two of it that's left in. What do they do with the actual material that's in the containers?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, individuals who use the pesticide containers, and for the most part they're farmers -- in recent years associated with most pesticide containers has been a piece of paper that's been provided to them by the Crop Protection Institute of Canada which shows how they might safely rinse out the material. And for the most part, there's very, very little material left in the container itself.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary. Has the minister given any direction that these containers now be stored at the hazardous waste disposal site in Swan Hills?

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's no indication whatsoever that we're talking about anything hazardous. We're basically talking about a plastic container that had contained a particular chemical. In other countries of the world there are recycling projects where basically the pesticide containers are taken, melted down, and turned into a new product. As an example, in the country of Holland these plastics are recycled and then turned into fence posts. That is one of the types of recycling alternatives that we're basically looking at.

In addition to that, the recent report that we made public that was written by the Environment Council of Alberta had several very useful recommendations with respect to the ultimate disposal of plastic pesticide containers, and I expect to have before me in the next several months several proposals from private entrepreneurs as to how we might utilize the resource that's contained in those containers and turn them into another product.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: A supplementary, Edmonton Glengarry.

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you. The minister said they aren't hazardous and yet said that he's told the landfill operators not to allow them to be just dumped and buried. In view of that con-

tradition. I'm wondering what the minister is doing actively to ensure that the small municipal landfills are forced to comply with his request and to make sure that they aren't being burned in landfills or left lying on the ground where rainwater can wash the residue chemical into the ground.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's absolutely no contradiction. I don't know where the member has been. We're talking about encouraging a recycling industry. The reason I basically indicated to municipal authorities throughout the province not to land fill them . . . I understand the person is a former teacher. "Land fill" means to dig a hole in the ground and to put something in the ground and then to cover it and forget about it. What I have said is that you must store those pesticide containers, and hopefully we will find an alternative use for those particular containers -- in other words, to encourage a recycling industry. Certainly that's not a contradiction; that's a very altruistic motive and objective that the people of Alberta truly believe in: the need to clean up and improve our environment.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: A supplementary, Vermilion-Viking.

DR. WEST: Yes. Could the minister indicate if the reason an entrepreneur isn't stepping forward with a way of getting rid of them is because of the moneys involved? If so, is the minister looking at ways to enhance that position?

MR. KOWALSKI: One of the difficulties with the recycling industry with respect to plastics, particularly in the province of Alberta, is of course the fact that Alberta is one of the leading plastic manufacturing provinces or jurisdictions in the world. So economics certainly does come into play with respect to this. I think the possibility of finding an alternate use for these containers will be before us before too long, and I've also indicated very publicly that should a research proposal or an active entrepreneurial proposal come towards me that might require the province of Alberta to direct a few dollars towards a recycling project, the government would be very happy to entertain such a proposal.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have six members wanting to ask questions. Let's move along. Hon. Member for Red Deer North.

Social Allowance – Single Employables

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Social Services. From the time the minister reduced welfare benefits to single employables, I've heard from different sets of parents in my constituency reporting that their young people who had previously moved out of home and had been living with other young people on welfare had now returned home to live with their parents. These parents were concerned that the young people were not working . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Question, hon. member.

MR. DAY: It's my first sentence, Mr. Speaker. The second sentence is: these parents were concerned and were asking about the various job and career opportunities available to their young people. Can the minister inform the House if her department is aware of similar cases around the province of single

employables returning home and receiving assistance from their families?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I think it's noteworthy that the family is still recognized as the basic unit in our society and that young people in fact are welcomed home if they are in need.

It's noteworthy that just a few years ago in another ministry, I recall disseminating some information to students, and it was done by way of a booklet called *Moving Out*. I've had many parents say to me that they hope that one now will be produced called *"Moving Back In."*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Member for Red Deer North.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary. Along this whole question of homelessness, can the minister confirm whether the Single Men's Hostel here in Edmonton is only operating presently at about 20 percent occupancy rate?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, obviously we are always concerned that there will be emergency accommodation available to people, and it is true that right now the hostel is operating at about that figure. I think my last count was that there were some 48 people out of a capacity of 249, but I think it's important to note that this figure does vary. We've had as high over the last few months as 70 people being there.

MR. DAY: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Aside from government job and training programs, can the minister tell us, in light of the fact that on any given day the *Edmonton Journal* want ads offer an average of a minimum of some 250 job opportunities to unskilled workers, do her caseworkers bring these job opportunities to the attention of single employables along with some corresponding follow-up and monitoring?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, yes, the information is provided as best possible. Obviously, the people who are on social allowance are not in on a regular basis, and I would believe that with the appropriate amount of initiatives the canvass would be made by those individuals of the jobs that are available. In fact, in order to continue to qualify for social allowance, a canvass must be made, and it must be shown by way of a form that in fact the individual is looking for jobs.

MSMJOLSNESS: A supplementary to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister indicate to this Assembly whether or not each and every district office has posted accommodation that is available for \$180 per month?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, what we have done is asked that the offices post notices that are from two perspectives: one is those seeking accommodation, and the other part of it is those who have accommodation to offer.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Edmonton Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Yes, Mr. Speaker. To the minister. Can she inform the House if caseworkers for income security working with unemployed employables are able to see the client in less than the six months' time that was in evidence around the begin-

ning of the year? They had to wait six months for an appointment on employment with a caseworker.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, that particular time frame has been shortened significantly. We've developed a new set of guidelines, and it is my hope that with appropriate monitoring those guidelines will be met.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Vegreville.

Telephone Services

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications about rural telephone systems. I read with interest in the minister's magazine about a device marketed by Trison Instruments of Sherwood Park called the PLC-1, the party line converter. Now, this device is currently being tested in the Vegreville district, and it removes some of the hassles of party line use by giving people the opportunity to hear only their own rings and have conversations in privacy and use answering machines. I'm wondering if the endorsement of this device given by the Conservative rural caucus last week means that it will be substituted for the individual line program promised in last year's election.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I can answer categorically that the commitment of 1985 and 1986 to provide individual line service stands.

MR. FOX: A supplementary to the minister. I'm glad to hear that, but we need to see some indication of commitment. I understand there were some 75 exchanges due to be turned on as of March 19. That was reduced to 14 in April and now 26. When will the minister present us with a schedule that clearly outlines when this is all going to take place?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, the commitment given was to provide individual line service in a period of approximately five years, and that commitment stands.

With respect to the work that was done in 1986, it is my understanding that roughly 15,000 households now on party line would be able to be put on individual line as soon as the Public Utilities Board, which is currently considering the matter and I think began hearings several weeks ago -- I believe the hearings reconvene next week -- as soon as that decision is rendered.

Following that, when households know what the costs will be -- according to the Public Utilities Board the houses are jacked because they will require for individual line service the same kind of telephones and telephone connecting apparatus as exists in the individual lines in the city situation. That does require a change, as I understand it, of telephone, and it requires the re-jacking of the houses. That's all that is withholding the commencement of not quite 20 percent of the party line subscribers at the moment.

MR. FOX: Is it the case, Mr. Speaker, that this program is proving to be more expensive than originally anticipated and that it's causing some difficulty, the requirement that AGT be forced to pay 25 percent of this campaign commitment?

MR. YOUNG: No, it is not, Mr. Speaker. It's a case of some intervenors, as I understand it, who are making their case for whatever reason. That, I understand, is resulting in a longer

hearing than was anticipated. But my reviewed analysis of the costs of the program does not indicate a change in the cost of the program. In fact, the burden to Alberta Government Telephones is that required for modernization, and modernization has been going on in any event, and this would not in my view cause Alberta Government Telephones any extra cost.

MR. FOX: Well, Mr. Speaker, even though we're almost a year and a half into that five-year period, and assuming that the minister is correct, that things are on schedule, will the government be supplying this PLC-1 to people in the interim, especially the people whose lines aren't scheduled to be converted until the end of the five-year program?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, the field testing of the party line converter is still in the stage of field test. And the hon. Member for Vegreville is correct; some of that testing is being done in the Vegreville area, but some is also being done in other parts of the province. The tests are not complete; they've been ongoing, I think, a maximum of three weeks but possibly four.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. In view of the fact that his original program calls for a \$400 payment for installation, which seems very unfair to a rural subscriber, is his department giving any attention to cutting that fee to something more in line with the rest of the phone users in the province, something in the vicinity of \$50?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, the election commitment stands. And as far as I am aware at the moment, the subscription cost would be possible to be paid in a lump sum, or it could be as low as \$4 a month over a period of years. I do not believe that would be an unfair charge considering the kind of service and the fact that service in rural areas is considerably more expensive than it is in urban areas simply because of the distance for which individual lines must be extended.

MR. ADY: A supplementary to the minister. Can he give us some idea as to what kind of resistance he's received from rural telephone subscribers about the \$400 charge? Has he had an indication that they feel that it's excessive?

MR. YOUNG: On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. All of the requests that I'm receiving are pleased to get the lines in as quickly as possible. And offers of paying more in fact than the proposed charges by those people who believe they urgently need them -- I think that will be true for most rural Albertans, that they will consider the benefit to be well worth the small price that's involved.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Calgary Mountain View.

Canadian Airlines International

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I'd like to begin with a question to the Minister of Labour. Yesterday Canadian Airlines International announced that despite previously stated intentions, it was going to be laying off up to 1,900 of its employees -- almost 15 percent of its combined staff -- many of whom work in Edmonton, approximately 400, and 1,100 in Calgary.

To the Minister of Labour. Is it the government's position that these major cutbacks in the Alberta work force of this air-

line is acceptable? Or is it their position that should these cutbacks be made, the government will use whatever leverage it has to have those cuts reversed?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed unfortunate if there are going to be cutbacks in employment in Alberta as a result of the development of the Canadian airline industry. One has to weigh that against the benefits to the productivity and the ability of Canadian airlines to compete in a highly competitive environment, not only in North America but around the world. If we can have two Canadian airlines rather than one that are in that competitive position, then there will be some detriment to employment if that is the decision of the private sector.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time has expired for question period. May we conclude the normal series of questions?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Any opposed? Calgary Mountain View, a supplementary.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister of career development. Seeing that as far as the takeover of Woodward's by Safeway is -- the minister is not going to do anything on saving those jobs. Is he prepared in this instance to do something to protect Albertans who are losing their jobs with Canadian Airlines International?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, I too read the report in the newspaper this morning, and I am in the process of making some inquiries. I would prefer to have more substantive evidence than a headline in the paper.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, a supplementary. Mr. Speaker, to the minister of career development. I assume the people laid off by this airline will not be eligible for the work for welfare program. Is the minister concerned that Alberta is losing good skilled jobs at a rate faster than those that he can manufacture with his low-pay jobs, work for welfare scheme?

MR. ORMAN: I have just, as I do on a regular basis, reviewed the labour force statistics in this province. It's quite indicative of a trend that I am pleased to notice, and that is that in unadjusted terms, the number of people unemployed in this province in the last three months has dropped from -- well, I would say it dropped by some 6,000 people. As a matter of fact, in terms of unadjusted terms for the unemployment rate, Mr. Speaker, it's dropped from 11.6 in February to 11 percent in April. There are indicators that the economy is strengthening in Alberta. It is very important for us to match a skilled labour force when we see indications that there's going to be a demand for a skilled labour force. That's our intention.

Now, in terms of the situation with PWA and Canadian International Airlines, Mr. Speaker, if there are adjustments being made by that company in their business decisions and they reflect people losing their jobs, it's unfortunate. But we must understand that when there are business arrangements made between two companies that involve takeovers, usually it means that the health of one company is in a state such that another company comes in and takes it over. If we step in and stop mergers and takeovers, we could be creating a situation that creates much greater unemployment as a result of intervening in the

financial arrangement, and I don't want to become involved in something along those lines.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, the statistics that concern these workers are whether they are going to be working or not. As a major shareholder in Pacific Western, presumably the government must have assured itself prior to this merger that there'd be some economic benefit. To the Premier. Would he tell us what he considers the economic benefits to Alberta to be, given the large loss of good jobs and skilled workers to this province?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the government is not a shareholder of Pacific Western Airlines. Secondly, I have a great deal more confidence in the people in Alberta able to obtain work and get jobs -- if they have skills, then they will get jobs. If we can help them with those skills, we will. The hon. minister pointed out that quite often on an occasion like this you have a company like Canadian Pacific Air Lines who were taken over who were very very weak and might well have just closed down completely and thrown many people out of work. We now have an occasion wherein a company that believes in Alberta, Canadian Airlines International, has their head office here and is going to compete all over the world. What we believe will happen is that because of the strength of that company in its new merged form, it will grow, compete in a healthy way, and end up having far more people and play a greater role in the strength of this province in the future.

MR. TAYLOR: Supplementary back to the minister of manpower. On the creation of jobs or the possible loss of jobs, has the minister met with Amoco and/or Dome to see what the loss of jobs will be in Alberta?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. This is a long way from an airline, and quite frankly the Chair is uneasy about the whole question of an airline, in that whether or not that's even within provincial jurisdiction. [interjection] Order please. Now, that question is clearly not related to the question of the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if either the acting Provincial Treasurer or the Premier can inform the Assembly on how many shares or what percentage of shares the Alberta government holds in either Pacific Western or Canadian Airlines International.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, subject to the Provincial Treasurer checking if there is something in the heritage trust fund -- a small few thousand shares -- the province has sold completely its ownership interest in PWA.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, my question is on the loss of jobs on the Safeway takeover, not the airline. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Question period is concluded.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon had raised a point of order earlier in the question period. Do you wish to pursue that?

MR. TAYLOR: I'm talking about the earlier one, not the loss of jobs. Obviously, they're trying to hide behind Amoco's skirts here.

This is with respect to when the Premier went into a rather long-winded reply. Under *Beauchesne* 358(2) it says:

Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, should deal with the matter raised, and should not provoke debate.

While I'll admit that the Premier did not provoke debate -- he only provoked laughter -- nevertheless, I think that falls under this question. He was trying to provoke debate.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, to the point of order . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Premier.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it's really remarkable. The hon. member says, "Why aren't we talking more about the Meech Lake accord?" Then when I tried to, he upset the House and made a big racket over there so no one could hear us talking about the Meech Lake accord.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I do want to raise a point of order, and it relates, as it happens now, to the point you raised in connection with the use of the expression "mislead." In his opening question this morning the leader of the Liberal Party, the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, stated quite clearly that the Premier had misled the House yesterday. I refer you to *Beauchesne*, citation 320, and the list of expressions not permitted to be used, of which "mislead" is clearly one, and variations of phrases in which that word occurs.

Mr. Speaker, I raise this first of all because of the rules. It is clearly outside of the rules within which we operate. But secondly, we should consider ourselves and conduct ourselves as we truly are: the highest court in Alberta. It is important that we realize that that is what we are and that we so conduct ourselves. We are fortunate to live in one of the freest countries of the world, and the way to maintain that is to begin with proper decorum in the House. I ask that the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon address with courtesy the consideration to the use of the word "mislead" this morning.

MS BARRETT: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think the Deputy Government House Leader ought to spend a little more time with the Government House Leader. If he'll look a little bit further under his citation, he will find out that on page 112 of *Beauchesne* under the same citation it says: "Since 1958, it has been ruled parliamentary to use the following expressions." You carry over to page 112 and you will find the word "mislead."

MR. TAYLOR: Seeing I was the subject of the thing, all I can say is amen. I did it very carefully. I was referring to a statement the Premier had said: "we now have Senate reform guaranteed in our Constitution," page 1467. "Mislead" is quite all right to use, mislead is what the Premier did, and I don't see any reason to back off on that at all.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Well, considering the hon. member, I believe, backed off, it's a case of backing again. With respect to citation 358(2), whether or not provoking debate I suppose is in the view of the Chair. I don't think there's any quarrel about that. I appreciate the hon. member's courtesy to the Chair this

morning.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before we proceed, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS (reversion)

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's really my delight this morning to introduce to you and all members of the Assembly, some 69 grade 6 students from Onoway elementary school. Onoway is a very sparkling little village only about 40 miles west of the city of Edmonton. These students are accompanied by three teachers, Mr. Jim Fegyvermeki, Mrs. Pat White, and Miss Colleen Jackson, and they're accompanied by one parent who also doubles as the bus driver, Mrs. Eileen Clarke.

Mr. Speaker, our guests are in the members' gallery, and I would now like to ask them to rise, smile, and receive the cordial welcome of the House.

head: COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

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

ALBERTA HERITAGE SAVINGS TRUST FUND CAPITAL PROJECTS DIVISION 1987-88 ESTIMATES OF PROPOSED INVESTMENTS

Department of Public Works, Supply and Services

1 - Capital City Recreation Park

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

MR. ISLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The vote we're dealing with today hon. members will find on page 11 of the capital projects division. It's a request for \$400,000 "to reimburse the City of Edmonton for the acquisition of land in the North Saskatchewan River Valley" as part of the Capital City Recreation Park. Our role is simply paying for the land. The city of Edmonton does the negotiations with the landowners, acquires title, and Public Works, Supply and Services simply reimburses the city of Edmonton. It is anticipated that with the \$400,000 request this year, if approved, plus approximately the same amount in next year's budget, we should complete all acquisition.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Edmonton Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What is the area that is the subject of the acquisition, and over what length of time is it proposed to develop what in it, if I can ask that to the minister, Mr. Chairman?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Chairman, the total area of the park is 1,857 acres. Much of that land was acquired before the agreement with Alberta parks and recreation established in 1975 by the city. There are currently 32 small parcels that remain to be acquired. The park is quite well developed. I understand that my department is in no way involved in the development or the operation of the park.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton Beverly.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure for me this morning to rise and speak to vote 1 on the Capital City Recreation Park in the city of Edmonton. I want to initially commend the minister and the government for their contributions over the years to the development of this particular park. I think it has served the community of the city of Edmonton very well. I think we can all as citizens and as visitors and tourists that come to this city, who get the opportunity to partake in this park via the trails during the summer for walks or for skiing and picnicking -- I think it's a good park, I think it has enhanced the beauty of the city of Edmonton, and for that I think all of us can be appreciative.

It's a unique park. It's a unique urban park that basically starts here at the base of the Legislature and proceeds to the northeast sector of the city and, I believe, encompasses some 16 kilometres. The plan is to make the park environmentally sensitive. That is, it's not developed as a manicured park but simply with trails and public access to the river valley where people can go on leisurely walks. They can go there for intensive hiking or they can go simply to visit, for bird-watching, and purely enjoying the nature that exists in the river valley.

Also within the valley are historical sites that were developed because of the river flow and the early start of the city of Edmonton. Many of the historical sites have been preserved and are within the Capital City Park system. There we have athletic fields, which are utilized extensively during the summer particularly and to some extent during the winter. There are also informal play areas which are utilized by families on outings on nice sunny evenings and during the weekends, and of course we do have some golf courses within the Capital City Park program. So, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, I think the money has been well spent. I think it has contributed immensely to the development of the city but perhaps even more particularly to the preservation of the river valley in the city of Edmonton.

However, I notice the minister has said there will be another \$400,000 available for next year on that basis. That completes the commitment of the province for the development of that particular park, and I think that's where I want to make some comments. Because I know that, as I've indicated, the river valley in the city of Edmonton is really a jewel. The city of Edmonton is very fortunate to have the river valley as it is here, and the development of that river valley for the enjoyment of the citizens is something I think we want to achieve.

But I think it goes much further than that, Mr. Chairman. The river valley, if it's developed as the city has envisioned it to be, will be a very attractive tourist facility as well. Because within the park there are plans for major developments that would go basically from Big Island on the southwest, as I indicated, all the way to Hermitage park in the northeast and in some areas even beyond that. The city has indicated and has supplied evidence to the government for additional extension of the Capital City Park program, and today I would like to ask the

minister to consider that. I'm sure the minister has seen the particular brochure supplied to members of the government that outlines very extensively the kind of program the city envisions in the development of the river valley. The concept of parks within the park -- they want to be able to establish facilities, amenities that would include a variety of projects such as small interpreter centres, picnic shelters, piers for people to have access to the river, and indeed there's also the intent to establish a Japanese tea garden; also development around the Muttart Conservatory of additional flowers and gardens that would really enhance the downtown area. But particularly it will have a drawing feature of attracting people to the river valley, again as I say, not only citizens of Edmonton but I think the whole river valley has potential of development into a fine tourist attraction.

So I would urge that the government consider the request of the city. Of course the city knows, and I certainly am aware at this particular time, that there's maybe some bit of a problem considering the restraint and the recession that exists in the province at the present time. However, I think we shouldn't stop now. The minister must be aware, Mr. Chairman, that they would like some seed money to start some programs going west from the Legislature or west of the High Level bridge to start developing some trails. It would require a couple of pedestrian bridges that would then tie the downtown area of Edmonton with Hawrelak Park and the other parks in the western part of the city.

The city's growth now is really concentrated in the west end, and consequently the need for development of the river valley and park facilities into those areas I think is a requirement. I would urge that when the government and cabinet consider this request from the city, they give it serious consideration. I think in the long term it'll have a great deal of benefit to not only the residents in the city of Edmonton but by and large the residents in this province and beyond, because as I said earlier, I think the river valley makes a fine contribution to the city if it's developed properly.

The kind of program, the kind of position paper the city has presented, suggests to me that they have a very fine, well-thought-out program for development of the valley that would enhance the use of the valley rather than simply that it be grown with trees and so on. We have to allow the people to use it. Certainly not everyone can get into a vehicle and drive out to a lake or to some other facility. We have to develop within the cities opportunities for people to go out and enjoy the environment and the facilities we have. I think the city does have those kinds of thoughts in mind. Again, I simply would urge that the government consider the plea and the request from the city of Edmonton to continue funding of this particular Capital City Park extension, because in the long term I think it'll benefit all of us.

I will then take my seat now and perhaps hear some comments from the minister and perhaps other comments from my colleagues, because there are certainly concerns relative to this particular vote.

MR. ISLEY: Just very briefly. First of all, I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton Beverly for his support of this project. I think I didn't come through quite clear on future expenditures, the 32 parcels that remain to be acquired. It's estimated that it will take about \$2 million. If we can acquire the \$400,000 this year, that could take another four years at that rate. I would again make clear that the involvement of my department is only reimbursing the city for the land acquisition. They determine

the pace at which they acquire that land, and to date they have been pretty well responding to property owners as they come forward.

My colleague the Minister of Recreation and Parks has a much more significant relationship with the city on this park. The expenditures through that department to date are in excess of \$37 million. You would have to discuss the details of that with the hon. Minister of Recreation and Parks.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. [some applause] Thank you, Red Deer. I would simply like to rise in support of this particular allocation of funds. I share my colleague from Beverly's comments and sentiments about the contribution the Capital City Recreation Park is making to the residents of the city of Edmonton. I would like to emphasize the need for its extension to the west end. The west end is an area of the city which is experiencing tremendous growth -- new homes, starter homes, therefore new families and a great number of children -- and at this point the west end does not have the benefit of an extensive network of parks as is the case for oilier parts of this city. Therefore, the \$400,000 allocation contemplated by this particular vote is to be congratulated and encouraged. I would ask the minister whether he could clarify his funding intentions for the future for this Capital City Recreation Park.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, a sort of procedural question. I guess we are just sticking to vote 1 for the moment and we'll go on to the other vote later. So I will . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: There is only one.

MR. McEACHERN: No, there's the Kananaskis one on the next page also. Oh, Recreation and Parks instead of Public Works, Supply and Services. Okay. I catch on fast.

AN HON. MEMBER: Friday morning.

MR. McEACHERN: Right, it's Friday morning.

I guess I would make the same complaint on the particular way things are laid out that I made yesterday on the hospital ones. You'll see that for implementation there it says:

Public Works, Supply and Services provides a grant to the City for eligible land acquisitions.

It's the heritage trust fund that supplies the grants, if I understand that this document is about the capital projects of the heritage trust fund, so let's please be a little more careful in the wording and make it clear that anybody reading this would know where the money is coming from. That was just a fairly minor point, but I do wish that would get cleared up.

Some \$42 million has been spent on Capital City Park, and I . . . As somebody who likes to ride a bike -- and I haven't had much time recently but have done in the past quite a lot -- I've really enjoyed the bike trails in the east end of the city and throughout the Capital City Park. But one of the things I find a little frustrating is that it's hard to get to those trails. You have to take your car and drive halfway down or ride the streets or the

sidewalks or whatever to get there. It should be linked up with Emily Murphy and Hawrelak Park and Kinsmen a little more specifically. So it's been a good project, and it's a wonderful park. I'm very supportive of the idea, but I would like to see it developed and continued into the west end.

I realize that the government is trying to wind down the money going into the capital projects division. They are expenditures after all. But I'm wondering if the departments won't be taking up some of the responsibilities of these kinds of projects, because I don't think they should really be allowed to die. I see that the province has put in some \$42 million. The question that arises out of that in my mind, and the minister may or may not have an answer: how much did the city put in over the years? What kind of agreement was made? How much did the city put in? Half or twice as much or whatever? I would hope the minister would seriously consider in future budgets, whether it comes from the heritage trust fund capital projects division or whether it comes from his department, to continue to make agreements with the city to develop that park into the west end,

I guess just a little caution when he's doing that, I don't know that it is specifically related to this vote, but when you are talking parks in the city I think it is fair to mention that it's also important that a city have little recreation parks that local communities can use in their own areas. Because oftentimes the whole family has to pack up and get in the car and go down to use this wonderful river valley we have -- and we are indeed very lucky, one of the nicest cities in the world with our big, deep river valley and the park facilities in there -- but during the week and most of the time kids like to be able to run out into the local playground. I just would be concerned. I guess it's more a city matter than a provincial matter, but if you're making any new agreements with the city, make sure they understand . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, I do feel it is, as you say, a city matter, and I would suggest you come back to the vote.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, when you're talking about money, the Capital City thing has been a joint venture between the city and the province, and I was hoping for further agreements to extend it into the west end.

MR. BRADLEY: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Will the hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest please resume his seat.
Member for Edmonton Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, I was about to wind up. I was just saying that if further. . . [some applause] Oh, knock it off.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order in the committee. Please let the member continue.

MR. McEACHERN: I'm in no hurry. I've got all day.

AN HON. MEMBER: No you don't. [interjections]

MR. McEACHERN: Well, I've got half an hour; put it that way.

AN HON. MEMBER: It just seems like all day.

MR. McEACHERN: Yeah. Of course, you wouldn't want to pay any attention or listen. You might learn something.

A HON. MEMBER: Now that you're back in the world of reality, let's hear it.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, I will just wind up on the final point of making the plea that the Capital City Park should be extended into the west end, that [in] any future agreements with the city, while they might be specifically in that regard, the people in Public Works, Supply and Services that might be negotiating or paying the bills -- whether officials from the Department of Recreation and Parks would get involved or not; I would sort of assume they would since we're talking parks here -- keep in mind an overall plan for the city and not just put all the eggs in the river valley basket but also consider the need for local recreation areas and parks around the city.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

MR. ISLEY: Yes. All I can do, I believe, Mr. Chairman, is clarify the first issue. I recognize that the money comes from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund capital projects division. The reason it's listed under Public Works, Supply and Services is that we are accountable to the House for the expending of this land in land acquisition, in this case by the simple reimbursement of the city of Edmonton.

As I understand it, most of the other points the hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway made probably would be better made to the city of Edmonton in encouraging the type of parks development you wish to see in the city you represent. And the agreement that exists is between the city and the Department of Recreation and Parks. We're simply the service department involved in the land acquisition.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Member for Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I have an inquiry about this vote, and it has to do in fact with the Capital City Park. It came to my attention last year after the flooding in Riverdale and Rosedale that some of the land in that area is considered what's called water conservation territory. I understand that the province can compensate a municipality when it purchases land like that. Now, the reason it's become a bigger concern since the flooding is because one of the roads in Riverdale which has been a main access to that river valley community in Edmonton has been closed for reasons that I suppose don't need to be mentioned, although they're certainly regrettable. In any event, I've talked to people within the city of Edmonton and within the community leagues, and I believe someone in my office contacted somebody from the Department of the Environment to inquire as to whether or not money would be made available under this vote so that the province, in having purchased so much land already for the development of this park, could also purchase land that is a little further away from the actual river valley, land that is currently not considered part of the park but is a connecting part of the park, if the minister understands what I mean and I'm sure he does. It's commonly known, I think, as 100th Avenue in Riverdale.

If it's his intention to make a purchase under this vote of that particular block of land -- the reason I'm asking is because if the minister was prepared to do this, then the minister could deter-

mine whether or not that road survives as a road. It is currently privately owned, and the people within the community would like to see it publicly owned so that it can become a usable street again. It's a very important consideration in terms of fire trucks being able to have proper access to part of that community, and it seems to me that it would be warranted, given that it is right in the middle of part of this very long winding park. So I wonder if the minister would explain if he has a position on this, if the city has approached his department to purchase it under those provisions, if it even belongs in this vote, and what his intentions are?

MR. ISLEY: I would doubt very much if it belongs in this vote, but I would have to check further, Mr. Chairman, to make sure it doesn't. The only mandate we have under this vote is to reimburse the city of Edmonton for land acquired for Capital City Park. Those boundaries are defined. If the hon. member wishes to share the particular location she's referring to, we can certainly check to see if they're in the boundaries.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Member for Edmonton Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Yes, just a couple of points. I understand and you understand that the money comes from the heritage trust fund, but the wording in the booklet is that "Public Works, Supply and Services provides a grant to the City." And that may be the mechanism. So that should be "administers the program," as it is in some of the other sections. Okay? That was my complaint on that.

I guess I want to ask a question also. Several people have spoken about the need to extend that park into the west end, and I don't hear any comment from the minister or anybody else on the government side as to their intentions in the future. Do we expect to see this \$400,000, which is a wind-down kind of number, because it was \$850,000 last time and a million dollars the year before that -- is it going to be zero next time? Is this project winding up? Is it going to stop where it is or are we going to see some commitment by the provincial government to work with the city to extend that park into the west end, or do you have an answer for us?

The other thing that sometimes -- one says there's only the one vote before the committee and that's true, but just a quick question. Looking at last year's book, Public Works, Supply and Services did have a second vote, the Fish Creek Provincial Park in the Calgary area. A fairly quick question really, but would the minister comment. Has that project actually wound up or have the ongoing costs been handed over to the department of parks and rec or the city of Calgary, or just what's the windup of that particular project since there was a vote of some \$350 million last year but there is none this year?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to, with this particular vote, add my commendation to the minister and to the government for its investment in this Capital City Park. As the Member for Edmonton Centre, I know that a lot of

my constituents who live in apartments and the density of single apartment dwellings downtown access and use the park extensively. Also, I know the number of tourists -- people who come to this city that I personally have taken down on the bike trails and so on are quite amazed and find them to be the most outstanding trails they've hiked on throughout the world. So from my own personal constituency point of view and my own personal point of view, it's a great investment now and in the future, and I really want to commend the minister and the government on such an investment in creativity in working with the city of Edmonton on it.

I have had a constituent just in the last couple of weeks concerned about the Ortona Gymnastics centre, which is the one just down the hill. There's some concern about its being demolished, and the gymnasts who practise and work out of that centre, who have won world awards apparently, are very concerned about their lack of status in terms of where they're going, I guess it is a city matter in terms of a new building or a new lease, but if the minister has any comments on that. But in the main, just bouquets to them over there on this.

MR. ISLEY: Yes, I would acknowledge the comments of the Member for Edmonton Centre and suggest that the last concern is definitely a city matter.

Going back to the Member for Edmonton Kingsway, I should maybe make clear that to date we have spent \$4.49 million in reimbursing the city for land acquisition. It is estimated that we should be able to complete all of the acquisition for Capital City Park for an additional approximately \$2 million, \$400,000 of which you're voting on today. It's my understanding that with respect to Fish Creek Park in Calgary, land acquisition is virtually complete there.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the vote?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question,

Agreed to:

Total Vote 1 -- Capital City Recreation Park \$400,000

Department of Transportation and Utilities

1 -- Universal Rural Private Telephone Line Service

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Chairman, this particular vote relates to the universal rural private telephone line service. The interesting fact that is stated when you read the implementation side is that because we had the mechanism in place to provide for the payment of grants, we are the department that has the funds placed in Transportation and Utilities. We work then with AGT when they submit to us progress payments for the grants, and we provide them. In other words, my role in this particular one is that as they are submitted to me for payment, I pay them. There is \$18.4 million in place, and I think in light of the fact that there were some questions answered a little earlier today relative to the progress of the program -- because as the minister slated very clearly, the program is still on track and moving ahead as was indicated in the 1986 announcement.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to raise some further questions, perhaps a little better opportunity to get

some good exchange of information here about the individual line service. It was discussed at some length in the Assembly last year when moneys were allocated -- I believe almost twice as much money last year as this. It was clear that parties on all sides of the House really supported the intent of this program, and that is to deliver genuine individual line service to some 100,000 rural subscribers in this province. The feeling again on both sides is that the time has come, and may in fact be overdue, when people in rural Alberta have a right to and deserve the kind of communication service that their urban cousins enjoy.

The problems with party lines are well documented. Not only does it really limit a person's freedom -- lack of privacy, the ability to carry on conversations in confidence with people, because you're never sure who's listening -- in this modern technological age; it has limited a person's ability to access some of the equipment that may be available, like telephone answering machines, remote-control telephones, computers, things like that. [interjection] Was there something else?

MR. ADAIR: No, [inaudible] all of the hardware.

MR. FOX: Yes, all of those things.

So you know, it's a good program, and we on this side have been supportive of it and encouraging of the program. My concern is, however, that the five-year time frame that was laid out when the program was conceived last year is being used up, and not a significant amount of construction has been done to this point. I've tried on a few occasions to get some commitments from the hon. minister about a schedule: what exchanges would be hooked up and when. I've understood from his comments that it's all pending a decision by the Public Utilities Board. So I think it would be relevant for the minister to explain for the benefit of hon. members and people who are anxiously waiting for this service just what is this process with the Public Utilities Board? How can this regulatory agency take so long to make a decision? As I understood, the decision they had to make is whether or not it was permissible to charge people \$450 for their hookup or \$4 a month over a five-year period, or something like that. If that's the only decision the PUB has to make, why is it taking so long?

I'm sure the minister is well aware that the construction season is pretty limited and that we need to be going ahead with it right away. I can certainly understand the constraints that budgetary considerations have put on a variety of programs, and it would be foolish of me to think or suggest that this program would be unaffected by the kinds of limitations that have been placed on the province by financial conditions we confront. But I do think we need to see as soon as possible a schedule, so people can plan. There are a number of people, businesses especially, who make business plans regarding the kinds of communication devices they need and require and certainly would be influenced by knowing just when their exchanges would be involved.

I might take this opportunity to bring a case to the minister's attention. The minister said in the House on April 10 that

Where commercial entities are on those party lines, we have tried to make adjustments as they've been brought to the attention of either Alberta Government Telephones or myself.

Now, there is a case that's been brought to my attention and it involves some people in the Canmore district. I suppose it would be foolhardy of me to lobby on behalf of people in Canmore if it meant that exchange might get turned on sooner than

some in my own constituency, but I do just bring it to the minister's attention. Canmore being an area subject to some pretty intense activity over the next little while with the Olympics upcoming. There is a case here brought to our attention by a Mrs. Freels in Canmore, where she operates a business, and there are three other businesses on the party line. It makes it pretty difficult for them to keep up with things, and they're just wondering what sort of accommodation can be made, what sort of priority is being assigned to that Canmore exchange.

In terms of the funding for the program, as I understand it it is to be funded 75 percent by the hon. minister's department -- at least the nonsubscriber share of the cost is 75 percent by the minister's department and 25 percent by AGT, topped up by the \$450 amount. I'm just wondering, in terms of AGT's budgeting is that proving onerous for them? Is it placing constraints on the corporation, and is that the fiscal limit to implementing the program a little more rapidly? I've heard some concerns -- and I'm not quite sure how the minister would want to deal with this -- expressed by people in the major cities about their being obligated to carry a part of the cost of the rural lines. I'm not sure I share that concern, because I think urban people have for a long time had very good service without having to pay very much for it, and they'd soon realize that if they had to live on a party line and pay the fees that rural people have to pay for their telephones. But I would appreciate some further comment on that particular issue by either one of the ministers that is responsible in terms of the funding for ACT.

I do have some further questions, and I think it relates, about the PLC-1 party line converter. It's my understanding that the device has proven successful. It's required a little modification for certain applications, but it does provide some benefits of individual line service: selective ringing -- you don't hear anybody's ring but your own and they don't hear yours if they can't pick up your phone and answer; you have the freedom to use modern pieces of equipment like answering machines and remote control telephones; and there are ways of preventing people from cutting in on your lines.

The concern I was expressing earlier is that if this device is intended as a substitute for the program, then it's unacceptable. But if it's something that will enable us to provide better service for rural subscribers in the interim, then I think it's a good idea. I'm just wondering what results have been found with the use of this device. What sort of costs are involved? How do we envision doing this? Will these be made available so people can purchase them on their own, or would the government provide that as part of the cost of this program? Or if they do buy it on their own, would that cost, say for people who are being turned on and hooked up in year five, be deducted from their \$450 cost?

It's impossible to do this in a fair way, because there are some that will be hooked up right away and some that won't be hooked up till year five. There's a political problem created for all hon. members, and I recognize that, because everybody thinks they should be the first. I would certainly appreciate it if the minister would comment briefly on just how he sees this PLC-1 party line converter fitting into the system. What were the details of the presentation you folks got involved with last week?

I await the minister's reply and may have further questions.

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Chairman, what I'll do is just open the comments and then turn it over to the minister of . . . [interjection] Pardon? You wanted to get in on the party line and it's busy?

As the minister stated a little earlier today, there were roughly around 15,000 subscribers that are ready to go as soon as the decision comes down from the PUB. I think the important part that the minister may want to comment on is the fact that the work is going on. We're not sitting around, in essence, or they aren't -- I shouldn't say "they"; ACT are not sitting around waiting for that particular decision. There's a great deal of work that's going on in that sense. Of course, as a result of that, the expenditures of last year were fully utilized. The \$30 million that was in there was expended and paid out through this particular vote by the staff in the administration section of our department.

So having said that, I would turn it over to the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications to respond to the other questions that you raised.

MR. YOUNG: Perhaps I could deal with the problem first of all of individuals such as Mrs. Freels and others. Unfortunately, there's no way of solving that problem without doing effectively an individual line service right across the province. The best that we can try to do is to make it a judgment whether one party on a line is so burdening the line that they should be removed from it. We try to make that judgment on an individual case. Unfortunately, it's an approach that's by exception, so we deal with one case at a time.

With respect to the AGT budget and whether deficiencies there are a problem for the progress of the individual line service: no, that's not a difficulty. We shouldn't be looking at Alberta Government Telephones' budget or resource allocation in terms of being a problem here. As a matter of fact -- and I had stated it several times before in the Assembly -- the AGT component for which they have the financial responsibility is the modernization of switches, and those switches have been ordered. It's a matter of getting the switches in; first getting them manufactured and then getting them installed. And the commitments have been made. To my knowledge, I believe they've been made for virtually the completion of the program.

I think that leads me to another element that needs some discussion or clarification. There is a perception in some quarters that the individual line service program is going to be a financial burden on urban areas, on the more densely populated and serviced areas. In my judgment, that is not so. The only way that can be construed, as I have analyzed the situation, is if one assumes that the modernization of switches need not have occurred were it not for this program. I simply can't believe that Albertans would be so narrow in their view toward fellow Albertans as to hold that position. It's a matter of fact that for a good number of services that are coming available, the step-by-step switching equipment was simply not adequate.

But I believe there's another advantage which will accrue, and that is that the digital switching equipment is smaller, has much greater capacity, of course, and can provide a great many more services. But from a serviceability point of view, I think it will be lot a less expensive to Alberta Government Telephones. So while there's an upfront installation charge -- capital cost -- I believe that the labour cost and the travel costs to make modifications subsequently are going to be much, much less, and the maintenance costs will be less. So I think that's going to balance out. And in any event, it is not anything different from what has been provided in some other parts of the system already.

I think the problem that the Public Utilities Board has encountered is that the program is not fully understood. It is felt

that there is a burden being put upon other subscribers, and I guess it is the process of hearing which clarifies that confusion, to some extent. It's unfortunate that this application got caught up, if you will, in a series of other applications before the Public Utilities Board. I think that the city of Calgary had already raised some questions about general tariff structures, and Alberta Government Telephones itself had put in an application for some -- I'll use the expression "rebalancing," and all of these things have become entangled. My understanding is that the Public Utilities Board is attempting to proceed with the hearing long enough to get from the intervenors a sorting out of the issues, and at that point then concentrate and make the decision on the individual line service component of it.

So I don't think, in short, that the individual line service component is going to extend nearly as long as the rest of the hearing, which may well go into 1988. It wouldn't be surprising from what I've heard.

I think that has dealt with everything except the PLC converter. I should mention that the PLC converter is a private-sector initiative totally and, if you will, came out of the blue as far as we were concerned and as far as Alberta Government Telephones is concerned. Alberta Government Telephones' involvement is one of co-operation that I have requested, because the PLC-1 is a very interesting instrument. It has a market in the United States of potentially millions of instruments, and in some other parts of Canada. It may not have a market in Alberta, or not a very significant market, because of the individual line service program.

I should mention that the features of the PLC converter are, number one, that it does privatize a party line to the extent that the ring to the party is only heard in the one household, or one subscriber. The telephone conversation is restricted to two parties until 15 seconds after another party on the party line picks up the receiver. In that 15 seconds there is a signal that goes to the two parties who are already discussing, and after 15 seconds then the third party can hear the conversation. But if it's somebody just picking up the phone to find out if the phone is available and they hear this beeping, they know the phone isn't available, they put the receiver down, and then the conversation can continue uninterrupted and not overheard.

The instrument requires, as I understand it, that each party on a party line must have one in their household or in their home, or none are effective, and that the houses have to be jacked in the same way as they would have to be for the individual line service program; in other words, modem telephones. At that point the subscriber is able to have a number of telephones, is able to have an electronic answering device, is able to use a cordless telephone, and for that matter is able to connect with a computer. The single deficiency, as near as it is possible for us to tell at this point, is that the PLC-1 does not increase line capacity, and that is the single deficiency from its ability to convert absolutely into private lines.

It has one other desirable feature that I didn't mention, and that is that when a third party takes the phone off the hook, as they may do, the converter, after about 15 seconds -- well, it's maybe a bit longer than that; but it's seconds not minutes -- deactivates that phone, if you will, from the rest of the system, so that only the one subscriber's phone is out of operation. Now, under the current party line system, it's my understanding that if the third party takes the phone off the hook even accidentally, the whole party line is down. And that is thought to be a significant problem in line capacity on party lines. It often may not be the use of the line so much as the accidental misuse of the

line or perhaps the reserving of the line for future use by another party.

I say again that we're very pleased with Tricon Instruments, that they've been able to develop this converter. It does have a very substantial market. It is local talent that developed it, and Tricon Instruments used the first microchip that was manufactured in Alberta for their particular instrument. That process -- and now I'm diverting away from telephones -- that microchip has the great feature that it's almost impossible to reverse engineer it, so that they don't have to worry about getting patents or whatever, because they've put the crucial engineering information into that little tiny microchip. So I take my hat off and compliment Tricon Instruments for their development.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of points to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities. Again I would point out that where it says "Implementation" at the top of page 15, "Transportation and Utilities will provide grants to AGT as work progresses." They may go through AGT, but they are heritage trust fund moneys, I gather. Otherwise, why is it under this vote? So again, could we have a little more specificity so that it's clear to anybody reading this where the money's coming from. I guess it's Alberta government money, and so whether it's heritage trust fund money or department money -- but if we are going to make that distinction, then I think we need to make it clear in the votes that we're covering where the money comes from. If Transportation and Utilities administers the project, that's fine; that's one thing. But to provide grants is another thing. That makes it sound like they're putting up the money, when it must come from the heritage trust fund if it's coming in under this vote.

The other question I have: in the 1986-87 estimates here it says \$30 million. But if you look back in last year's 1986-87 budget estimates of proposed heritage trust fund expenditures, it was not there. Now that makes me think -- and I thought I had remembered it that way initially; I don't have the documents with me to check it, but perhaps the minister could answer it -- that the \$30 million was in the general revenue budget last year and not in the heritage trust fund estimates. That's something that perhaps you could check out and sort out. Therefore, the comparable estimates for '86-87 of \$30 million -- I guess it's okay to recognize that it was made; I don't know that that money was ever all spent; I think the project is a little behind schedule. [interjection] Yes, but you see, it wasn't in these estimates last year, so we didn't pass them under this process last year. We must have passed them in the general revenue estimates. So it's a little bit of an anomaly to have them in this year's estimates recorded under the heritage trust fund. Anyway, perhaps the minister could explain if I've got that straight as to where those moneys were and came from and so on. I realize, I think, that the \$30 million was not all spent, that the thing is just getting under way.

In fact that brings me to a question I can't resist asking. The budget is a little tight, money is a little hard to come by, and these hearings may be a good reason for slowing things down a little bit. Are we going to see a couple of years of kind of slow growth with these rural telephone private line systems, and then when the next election comes two or three years down the road, see it speeded up and lots more promises made of lots more money? It seems to me that that looks like a possibility at this

time. It's certainly lime that rural peoples' services were brought into line with those of the city dwellers and. like the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications, I can't believe that the urban dwellers would resent the costs to that, if there were some extra costs to the taxpayers of this province, including city dwellers.

A couple of things have occurred to me. We pay AGT to do this work out of the heritage trust fund or out the department budget -- it doesn't really matter too much. I'm wondering about a couple of the musings both by the Premier and by the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications. The Premier was musing that at some point we might consider selling AGT, and I certainly hope he wouldn't do that. I could agree that AGT might be able to get some of its funds from elsewhere other than out of the heritage trust fund, but I guess I would wonder about how it would operate. If AGT were not a Crown corporation, then you wouldn't be able to sort of direct it to get involved in this project in the same way that you can now as a Crown corporation. If it were privatized it would be much more independent in its decision-making about whether it wanted to get involved or not and on what scale and what remuneration it would get. So I would be concerned if over the next few years it was decided by this government to privatize AGT and then have to turn around and renegotiate some of the arrangements you're presently making with them, because they are a Crown corporation and you can direct them to do certain things.

A question I have is: does any of this equipment that's being put in for these private telephone lines have any relation to or problem with something that the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications was saying the other day when he was suggesting that he had directed AGT to quit competing with some of the smaller firms in certain areas? Now, if I remember right, it was something to do with audio communication equipment and not specifically telephone equipment. But I wonder if there's a danger that having set a precedent -- saying that AGT cannot compete in this certain area of audio equipment or it should get out of that area to allow smaller independent companies to get involved -- having started that process are we then going to see other companies saying, "Hey, we'd like to get in and bid on some of this equipment for this privatization . . .

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Point of order.

MR. BOGLE: While the subject matter the hon. member is raising is of interest, it's far, far off the point in the heritage fund estimates.

MR. McEACHERN: But I would carefully relate it to saying that having started a process, could it not be expanded to that kind of level? In any case, I can't help wondering if this project could run into trouble two or three years down the road by the process started of cutting back. On saying: "Okay, AGT, you can't compete in this area," and "Okay, AGT, you'll have to back off in that area, or let other people compete." Some comments from the minister might be in order.

My final point would be that it strikes me as we go through the budget estimates and the heritage trust fund estimates that there is no specific place where we can have a really good analysis of the various Crown corporations. And I'm wondering

if the government wouldn't consider a legislative hearing process specifically geared at Crown corporations -- one Crown corporation at a time -- either through the Legislature in total or some committee of the Legislature, much like we do with the heritage trust fund hearings.

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Chairman, I'll try and start with the couple of questions that did in fact relate to the vote for rural private line telephone service and for the implementation section, which involves our department, which has the mechanism to provide grants to AGT in lieu of payment for work done. I believe last year that it may well have been in the department. I don't recall that, but I will check that. I also recall very vividly the questions and the answers and the debate that took place at the time that was going on. I think it's interesting to point out again that in my opening remarks I said the expenditure of last year, the \$30 million, was totally expended -- I said that twice, and I will now say it the third time -- and that we were indicating basically to all the members that while we are waiting for a PUB decision, which the hon. minister had indicated to you, the work was still carrying on and we were still making payments. Having said that, I would like to refer it to the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications.

MR. YOUNG: Very briefly, a question about the scheduling, and while that is subject necessarily to the vagaries of budgeting to some extent, the sort of broad approach that was being taken has always been to escalate the program in the later years. One of the reasons for that is because we have to have switching capacity, and switchings have to be manufactured. Therefore, that was the rationale in developing the tentative approach in terms of ordering of exchanges and their conversions; that we would begin with those exchanges which had switching capacity and leave to the end those that required the most work both in terms of plowing of lines and in terms of switching capacity.

With respect to the question of equipment and competition, I have asked Alberta Government Telephones to utilize private-sector resources as much as possible in this particular program, and I cannot think of how the earlier question concerning audio would relate to this one, other than for the strength of the corporation overall. And while I might get the forbearance of the Chair to extend the comments that I've already made, I don't think I will get the forbearance of the Chair to allow me to talk about AGT competition policy well outside of the individual line service program, nor about privatizing of AGT.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

AN HON. MEMBER: Watch out. Boomer.

MR. TAYLOR: Well he was wearing mitts, so he can't.

One of the things I found interesting was that he said the intervenor and the Public Utilities Board -- and maybe you could add something more to it -- is trying to point out that this is an extra cost to present phone users. Is that my understanding, that why the Public Utilities Board is having hearings is that there are representations being made to it that such a program will add unduly to the cost of those that are presently on private lines? I gather that's -- if I am wrong, I would love to be corrected on that. Maybe we'll just roll on, because I'm basing part

of my argument on the fact that if in the Public Utilities Board hearings evidence comes forward -- and I hope the government is sitting there countering intervenors to try to show that it was indeed as the minister said; and I agree with him -- that ultimately it's a long-term good to have as many people on private lines as possible, not only, as he mentioned, cheaper maintenance down the road, but the very fact that it encourages business. Therefore, business creates more money flow, and more money flow creates taxes, and this is how all of us get paid that are sitting here in the Legislature. That leads me to the question that if indeed the PUB finds that it is a good, why then will we charge anything to the people getting private lines? Because right now we talking \$400 to \$450 flat charge.

I feel it's unfair, Mr. Chairman, because the people in the cities in most of Alberta have not had to pay a \$400 or \$450 cost. That cost should be absorbed in the whole system. I think that when the PUB hearings are finished, what we will find is that it is a good to have a private line; in other words, it aids the economy in general. So why in effect penalize the ones that are getting private lines now, after all these years, with that huge capital cost of \$400 or \$450, admittedly only 25 percent of the total cost? But if indeed we can prove that that 75 percent they are now paying is not an extra charge, is not hurting the economy, well then 100 percent would not hurt the economy. In other words, I'm having a little trouble following the logic here.

If you argue that paying 75 percent of the phone bill -- and you've argued that before the Public Utilities Board -- is not going to jeopardize the services, is not going to raise the cost to the rest of Alberta, well why not 100 percent? And the beauty about the 100 percent is that then it's an equitable reason. Why should people in Milk River or Warner or Bow Island have to dig in now for \$400 into the system if indeed the whole tiling shows that it finances itself? That's one of the concerns I have. I find a little trouble following the government's logic when we argue that 75 percent is not hurting the present phone holders yet go out and charge 25 percent more. I'd like an answer to that, just how you follow your logic.

Now, if at least this -- if the Public Utilities Board finds, as I say that I think they may find, then the government should reconsider their position of charging 25 percent to the rural owner and say that indeed, after the Public Utilities Board, independent and all that, has found that it was good for the economy, therefore we're not going to charge anything to the individual that's converting over.

Secondly, I'm still concerned a bit about the lack of use of fibre optics. I know fibre optics are very high priced now in the line system, but I feel that rural users down the road, particularly farmers, which will really have very complex businesses -- if I look down the road in farming, in trying to guess ahead I would say that specialty crops, more varied types of produce would be coming off the farm. In other words, the monolithic farms of grain or beef alone are going to be disappearing, and farming is going to be a very complex enterprise that can use a tremendous amount of lime on a phone line.

A fibre optics course system transmits many, many more messages, almost a geometrically increased amount of messages, over the straight electromagnetic and wire line system. And we may have an opportunity here which the minister has just touched on, because I wasn't aware of it, and I was very intrigued by his explanation about this new type of converter that could be put on the private line. It may well be -- and I'd be interested in the minister's thoughts -- that we should at this stage rethink our whole process. Because of the fact that your

usual technological curve or costs come down very abruptly in any new technology, although fibre optics may be too expensive now, they may be quite reasonable within four or five years. By that time, we'd have of course privatized on the electromagnetic wire system, and we would then be looking at a huge cost to change over again. It may well be that these converters will give us the opportunity to wait this five years for technology to advance so fibre optics are as cheap as electromagnetic is today.

Now, I was wondering if the minister could talk to some of his researchers to sort of factor into their thinking process -- it says "heretofore unknown information about the converter," which sounds to me like a real world-beater. It seems to do everything, except the traffic on the line would still be plugged in there. But as the minister so well mentioned, a lot of the traffic was bound up before by either a phone off the hook or even just useless conversations. It's surprising how a little beep-beep-beep in the air on the party line, meaning that now Uncle Harry or Aunt Susie is listening in, will suddenly make them hang u p . [interjection] I've been on a party line for years; I know.

Consequently, there is the possibility that the traffic with this thing will handle just as much as the private line. It may give you that window of opportunity for the little gnomes there that do all the research, give us a window of opportunity there for four or five years when fibre optics will suddenly come down in price where it's reachable, and we'll have a much better system five years from now than if we bulldoze ahead now with converting to private and not using the converter.

Those are the two thoughts I'd like to put in very quickly, Mr. Chairman. One was that the PUB says 75 percent ownership is not hurting the rest of Alberta. Why don't we go to 100 percent of the cost, which makes it fair? The rural subscriber then pays the same as the city subscriber. Secondly, possibly factor in the idea that the new type of converter may give us breathing room over the next four or five years to see how the technology and costs advance in fibre optics so that we indeed could put that system in.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I listened with interest to the comments from the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications. It's very likely that he would be the one wanting to respond to my questions.

I wonder first of all -- he talked about the fact that we're dealing with a reduced budget here. You don't put the cart before the horse. You've got to order the equipment, have it arrive first, and then you get on with your scheduling. Of course, that makes sense. However, what we didn't get is a schedule of when he expects the digital switching equipment to become available and in what quantities at what time. I think that's very important for understanding why it is that such a relatively small proportion of the program, which is meant to be a five-year program, is going to take place in the current fiscal year from the trust fund estimates. I'd also be interested in knowing, although I suspect he's said it before, from where these switches are being ordered, like which company and where they are being produced.

Earlier today in question period the minister responded to a question by observing that intervenors had, in his assessment, held up the Public Utilities Board consideration of the rural indi-

vidual line service program, otherwise known as RILS. I wonder if he'd like to tell us who those intervenors are and the purpose of that intervention. Is it consumer groups, is it AGT itself, or is it private concerns? Is there a problem? Does he anticipate that this whole process is going to actually be held up to the extent that in fact the money that's called for under this vote would not even be expended during the current fiscal year?

Now, there's another thing that don't think the minister has explained clearly enough, and that has to do with the private line converters. Is it that those PLCs would be offered as a substitute to RILS on a home-by-home basis? Now, I know the minister said that even the PLC couldn't be used in homes which are equipped with phones that aren't on a jack system, so obviously in many homes that would imply upgrading of the system. If dial's the case, isn't it just as money saving to go ahead with the RILS itself as opposed to offering the converter as a substitute?

One of the concerns I have about the converter is that -- for example, it has offered a number of advantages over the current party line system, that's true, but as the minister has already noted, all of the homes connected to a single party line have to have it installed in order for it to work. The problem that I see is that in this age of technology and computerization of virtually every industry, including the two main segments of the agricultural industry -- that is, grain producers and ranchers -- they also would be using computer systems, to the extent that they can through their telephone system, to help them acquire information, to trade information. That can range from anything to do with current prices, daily quotations, to breeder information.

Now, if you put your telephone receiver into a computer modem, what happens when somebody on another part of the party line picks up the phone? I understand the 15-second delay period in which the person picking up the phone that's already in use would receive something like a busy signal for 15 seconds, at which point a noise would indicate a breakthrough on the line; that is, breaking into the current user's conversation. But if it's not a conversation that's going on, if it's actually, say, computer usage of the telephone system, what good does that do to the person who needs to break through on the line for emergency purposes? I'm not convinced that this is an acceptable substitute, and this is one of the concerns that I have. Technology is wonderful, but until we actually have private individual lines, there are going to be potential problems with this.

Similarly, information that is transmitted between computers can be copied by having access to that line. That was another concern of Alberta's producers: the privacy of transmission of information, whether it's communicated orally or digitally, through the telecommunications systems.

The minister also said that we may be looking at a downward revision in the overall cost of implementing RILS because the labour and travel costs associated with digital switchers are less than going with alternative, what I would call more high-tech routes. But is it not the case -- my understanding is that this is the case -- that even on digital switching equipment you still have to at least transfer, for example, two out of the four homes that may be on a party line to individual line service? If that's the case -- the minister looks puzzled, so I'll try to explain that a bit better. When you have lines going from substations or sub-stations into an area where you might have, say, four households on a particular single line phone, which does have different phone numbers associated to them, you have to replace at least two of those in any event to break up those lines into individual lines. If that's the case, and I think it is -- I've been told

that it is -- then I'd like some kind of explanation as to why it is that the digital switching equipment is being considered a labour or travel-time saving component. I can't see how it is. Maybe the minister would speak to that.

I think the minister was giving a fair assessment with respect to the PLC, inasmuch as it doesn't increase the line capacity. My interest in this is that . . . See, if you're going to spend an awful lot of money over a period of years in upgrading a system so that you can actually get to a point where you've increased line capacity -- that is, the band width, basically, for the operations of those lines -- and if you're going to do it partly as a matter of course in any event, because upgrading is a constant feature within any public telephone system, doesn't it make more sense, Mr. Chairman, to actually go for the best technology dial's available?

What I'm getting at is this: rural subscribers without optic fibre telephone systems will never, in their estimation and in the cable companies' estimation, be able to receive cable television signals. They're not going to be able to do it by any other means. Copper doesn't work. In fact, I think copper is now more expensive than optical fibre. The additional expense that is incurred by pursuing optical fibre rewiring of the telephone system occurs in those other two households, when you're doing the splitting, that might not have had to be split up. It means that you have to have a special energy pack available to each household so that the fibre continues to operate in the event of a power outage. And I know that it's very feasible to have permanent fixtures for battery chargers, so that you could have a six-volt battery installed in an easy way so that you could even replace it -- the ordinary householder could replace it -- if ever needed, so that they could have that power option in the event of a power failure.

I know the minister answered my questions last year about this, and I don't purport to be an authority. I purport only to be reporting and questioning on the basis of information that has been given to me over the last couple of years, since I was a researcher inquiring into this area. Some of the people giving me this information talk in language I can barely understand and decipher, but I question them back so that I at least know that what I understood, I understood correctly. And they have made this case to me, particularly including the money aspect, when it comes to splitting those lines from the last switcher into the individual household. So I'd be very keen to hear the responses from the minister, and stand corrected if I've been wrong.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Yes. I would like to make a slight correction -- or answer my own query, I guess -- for the minister. The document I have for 1986-87 is from the library. I asked to bring it around. It was the first edition, which was put out before the election. The \$30 million was put into the second one, which I didn't have here.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Chairman, I will try to respond to some of the variety of questions and observations.

Let's begin with the private line converter and make it very clear that the only person I have heard talking about that converter as a substitute for individual line service is the hon. leader of the Liberal Party, the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, who has proposed that as a way of determining, if I understood him correctly, whether there might be some breakthroughs in optical

electronics, which the hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands subsequently got into a discussion about. So if the converter has application, it would only be as an interim stage. It is certainly not getting to the end result we want to be in with the individual line service program and is therefore not a substitute. As a matter of fact, I think the hon. Member for Vegreville raised a question about whether it might be an interim step in his discussions today.

From the point of view of money spending that was raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands -- and I perhaps don't need to go any further in that -- I don't consider it a substitute, and I don't consider it would be a way of saving money unless one were to adopt the view that if we wait long enough, there will be a technological breakthrough and we will put in a different system.

And perhaps I could very quickly address the optical electronics alternative. The Alberta Telecommunications Research Centre has developed a research program which is focusing on that component of the telecommunications system between the switch and the residence. That is the area that it appears the least work is being done in across the country and internationally, most of it being focused on the superswitches, the main routes, and the large volume processing. They have looked at where they can be relevant to the Alberta scene, if I can put it in that context, to the western Canadian scene, and are concentrating their efforts there.

There may very well be breakthroughs in optical electronics. The science, the physics, would indicate that it's possible. The technology isn't known well enough, and certainly the economics are not there yet. We then get into a question of whether we should halt the program and wait for breakthroughs which may come, and I don't think that's an acceptable solution or approach, given that I've already received from hon. members on the government side all kinds of encouragement to hurry the program along. So I don't think we should wait. It is a possibility -- well, it's almost a certainty -- that there will be in the future a production of optic fibre at a cost which is economic for individual lines. Now, when in the future is the uncertainty. It's also a virtual certainty that we will have in the future the converters that are necessary on the ends of the fibre optics to carry a multiplicity of signals, but right now those are very expensive, and that is really a bottleneck area in the use of fibre optics.

With respect to digital switching equipment -- which is the equipment being ordered, by the way -- that is labour saving in my view and time saving in that adjustments can be made to the programming of that equipment without having to go to it. It can be done on the remote spaces, so it saves the time and travel and the actual labour of making changes, and that's not so with the step-by-step equipment and others.

The question was asked: where are the switches coming from? Most of them are coming from Northern Telecom, and Calgary is a manufacturing plant for switches. I think it is the Calgary plant; I can't be sure. Well, I guess I can be quite sure that that's where they're coming from, out of Calgary. There is a plant there employing about 450 people, and it would be the location. About 10 percent of the switches, as I understand, have been ordered from Microtel. I think it's Microtel; I don't have the name in front of me, but from memory I will call it that. I'm not sure whether that's Ottawa or whether that's Vancouver, which place.

Now, there were questions about who the intervenors are. I have not checked into all of the intervenors, and perhaps I should do that, but I do know that there is at least one

municipality, if not more. I'd be pretty certain that the Consumers' Association is involved, but I want to make it very clear that what we have before the Public Utilities Board now, according to my understanding, is a rather complex case, challenges being made to the need of AGT to obtain the revenue it's currently obtaining, and that's a general tariffs question.

Then there is a question of readjusting of long distance, a slight reduction in long distance rates; that's another component of the question. Then we've got the individual line service, and these things are at the moment, in my opinion, confused. That's why I think that the early stages of the current hearing will be to try to sort those issues out and then, having done that, focus on the individual line service and get that one resolved.

I believe that I've dealt with most of the questions which were raised.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a few more questions I'd like to ask of the minister.

I'm encouraged to hear him say that the only cost part of the program that involves AGT is the provision of digital switching equipment, which I presume is equipment that the corporation would want to be buying anyway in the normal course of business to provide an effective and complete modernized communications service to their subscribers, so it can't be interpreted as a drain on the urban areas.

Seeing as how the availability of a digital switch is essential to the individual line program and because the minister has said that his priority in terms of hooking the exchanges up under the program will be based on which ones have digital switches currently, or at least that's one of the priorities, I wonder if the minister would undertake to provide members of the Assembly with a list of exchanges that do have digital switches, if that would be something that would be possible.

Also, in terms of the Public Utilities Board decision-making process -- the minister has explained it quite well to us -- I'm wondering what sort of influence he has in terms of encouraging the board to get their act together and get a decision made, because as I understand the minister's comments, there won't be any progress made on this project this year until that decision is made. Is that the case, that no exchanges will be brought on stream pending the decision of the Public Utilities Board? So perhaps he might comment on that.

Also, seeing as how some moneys were spent on the program last year and I understand some exchanges were hooked onto the individual line service program, I'm wondering if the minister would provide the Assembly with a list of exchanges that were involved in the program last year. So the most important questions, I think, involve the timing of all of this.

I'm wondering also, in terms of the use of the private line converter, does the minister have any estimate of what the cost of the device would be, if it's available and if it's manufactured on a large scale?

I'm not sure that he commented on how the government or AGT may participate in the program if it was decided that PLCs would be made available to people in the interim, I'm still not sure what the cost is and who would pay it. Would the department or AGT participate in any way in the expense of providing these for exchanges that aren't to be hooked up until year three, four, or five of the program? The minister did say that in order for these devices to be effective, all parties on the line need to have one. In other words, the two, three, or four people on a

party line would have to have a PLC-1 before any of them would be effective. I'm wondering who would be responsible for the installation of these devices. Is it something that a person could buy and go out and hook on themselves, or because it's equipment connected to AGT's property -- in fact, the line into the house -- would it be something that AGT would have to install? If AGT is installing it, who would pay for the cost of installation? I think we need to know that.

Rural members who have had experience with party line telephone systems and indeed with people on those party lines recognize that in cases where there are difficulties between people on a party line, they don't want to co-operate much with each other. For example, you'll have one person who really resents the intrusions of another who always seems to be listening in and interrupting their calls and making it a great inconvenience. So that person would really want to get a . . . Sorry?

AN HON. MEMBER: Rubbernecker.

MR. FOX: Yeah. That person would really want to get the private line converter, but the person who is doing the interrupting might not perceive it as a problem, and they may dig in their heels and decide they don't want to co-operate in a three- or four-party co-operative project to get them all, especially if it involves an expense to them. So I'm just wondering if the minister might comment on that.

There's a couple of other questions that do relate that I've raised with the hon. minister in question period. It relates to the rural telephone system in a more general way, and that is the exchange boundaries. The minister has explained that the boundaries that exist in the province were drawn in a fairly arbitrary way years ago when the mutual exchange system was in place. As the minister has recognized, this has caused some real problems, and my suggestion to him at the time was that perhaps when the technology is available to us, and I believe it is with digital switches, we might offer subscribers a one-time opportunity to move their telephone from one exchange to another, because there are certainly people who are being missed by the extended flat rate calling program. They live close to the boundary of an exchange and for social, economic, or family reasons end up doing a lot of calling to the one . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Careful, Derek. [Inaudible] the vote.

MR. FOX: Well, it lies into the whole system. For various reasons they are phoning an exchange for which they have to pay long distances charges. I'm wondering if the minister, in the interests of taking a closer look at that, may be able to provide to hon. members a map that shows the boundaries of the telephone exchanges in the province, and that's where it has relevance to the individual line system. I have a map that the department provided that names the exchanges, with a little dot on the map, but it doesn't clearly outline what the exchange boundaries are. I think that would be a useful tiling in terms of better understanding how the rural telephone system works in a general way.

The other thing that I questioned the minister on that day was in terms of the number of subscribers on a given line, and I'm wondering if it's possible in the interim, until everyone is hooked up onto the individual line program, to find some way of ensuring that people are on lines with no more than one other customer. Is it possible in the interim to create enough party

lines, if you will, or splits with these digital pieces of equipment that we can have no more than two parties on a given party line in the interim?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

MR. YOUNG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, to deal with the question of digital switches. I'm sure it would be possible to get a list of the exchanges currently having digital switches, as it would be possible to get a map showing the boundaries for each exchange.

With respect to the question of hookups done last year on the individual line service . . .

MR. FOX: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman. There's so much noise in the Assembly that I can't hear the hon. minister.

MR. YOUNG: Last year there were and there have been no hookups under the individual line service program, and the reason for that is that Alberta Government Telephones is simply not permitted by law to hook up under that program until there is approval by the Public Utilities Board. The government can announce the intention and the policy, but the Public Utilities Board, by our legislated strictures on Alberta Government Telephones, must put the regulations in place. And that has not been done.

With respect to influencing the Public Utilities Board, we all recognize the independence of that board. However, I think what I can assure the hon. members is that I will provide the board with a transcript of *Hansard* of this morning for its information. I'm sure they'll be interested in that.

Now, there were a whole series of questions asked about the PLC converter, and Mr. Chairman. I can't answer those questions this morning. The advent of it is relatively recent, and I suppose there still is some question about the definitive proof of everything that I said it could do. In the sense that field tests haven't been completed and that needs to be done, although I must indicate that the information to date confirms everything that has been said, and my viewing of the device also confirms that. Therefore, I can't get into the question of cost or the possibility of government or AGT or others becoming involved in it. It just simply hasn't reached that point where any decisions have been made because we really didn't know what we had to work with until -- well, as I say, there is still a question mark there. Also, it's a private-sector invention, and it would be quite unfair of me to start speculating on cost, inasmuch as it may turn out that the government and Alberta Government Telephones have no role in it at all in terms of the costing.

With respect to who would be responsible for installation, assuming that it works and is approved by AGT as a connectable device -- I think AGT approval is required to attach it to a system -- then it is a relatively simple device to attach. There are three wires incoming that have to be attached and two into the residence. I would assume that any electrician with a little bit of training, and probably people who aren't electricians, could do it. There is one complication, and that is that the converter has a feature about it that can be changed depending upon what kind of switching equipment is in the exchange, and there is a whole variety of different kinds of switches out there. So they have to know what adjustment to make in the PLC converter based upon the knowledge of what the switch is that they're tying it into, and not everybody would have that kind of information.

Mr. Chairman, the final question that I think was addressed to me was that of a two-party line and what would be possible there. I can't answer that. We are trying to get some better judgment of that question: what would be required to reduce to a two-party line? I think that what we are going to get as an answer, unfortunately, is that there are just all kinds of permutations and combinations around the province, and in some exchanges where there may have been growth or whatever, there is a shortage of lines. Therefore, it would require some substantial plowing; in other areas probably not very much, because when plowing is done they overplow or overbuild in anticipation of growth. So if the anticipation isn't met quickly, then probably not much effort is required there.

I can indicate, as I have before, that the Alberta maximum of four parties per line is, I believe, the lowest of any jurisdiction where multiparty line service exists. So to that extent, we are already in a preferred position, albeit not at the individual line service level of quality which is the objective.

MS BARRETT: In his explanations responding to my questions, the minister didn't indicate the arrival times of the digital switching equipment that has been ordered by AGT from the Calgary firm, but I understood from earlier questions today in the House that that was one of the factors that was slowing the progress of the installation of RILS.

The minister mentioned that the price of fibre optics is also a consideration. The last time I checked -- and I could be wrong because copper does go up and down, as he knows, on the markets -- I believe the optical fibre itself was selling for 22 cents per foot. I think it's per foot; it might be per metre. Anyway, 22 cents for sure is the price that I got. I don't believe it's being manufactured in Alberta anymore. I think Northern Telecom moved their manufacturing of the optical fibre back to Ontario. In any event, it is being manufactured by Canadians.

Finally, the minister indicated the complications, and I understand them, with respect to the Public Utilities Board. But I believe there's always an option for an application going to the Public Utilities Board to request a decision by a certain date, and that can become fairly important in a project this size if one hopes or anticipates that it will be concluded by the targeted time period. That would be 1991; that is, five years after the government announced its intentions to proceed with this policy during the election campaign April-May 1986. So I wonder if the minister is aware of any request to the PUB as to a deadline that we would like that decision by, so that he and Albertans can know or have an idea of how quickly we will be able to proceed hereafter.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister.

MR. YOUNG: Thank you. Dealing with the last question first, the Public Utilities Board is aware of the concern and I know will be doing its level best to speed up the overall hearing enough to get the issue sorted and then spin off the one element of it and get a decision. It has been advised that lots of people are suggesting that the implementation of the program is being held up now because there isn't a decision of the PUB, and therefore it can expect to be less well appreciated in rural Alberta if it doesn't get a decision before long. So I don't think there's any doubt about that message having been communicated.

In terms of the time scheduling for the switches, I don't know of a specific time schedule, although I'd be certain that

there is one because the switches have been ordered for each switching area or each exchange. I know that they will be shipped when manufactured, so they will be installed over a period of time. Now, I want to indicate that the original configuration of the ILS program was a slow start, increasing rapidly in the third and fourth years. We're in the second year, and the slowdown will occur, as nearly as I can tell, even for budget reasons, only slightly in line plowing in this year. In short, it isn't going to affect the switches. It isn't going to affect the date at which the first turnups of exchanges can occur. I would hope that that can occur very, very soon.

MR. FOX: The other question I was hoping to get a response from the hon. minister on was whether it would be possible to provide hon. members with a map outlining the physical boundaries of the various telephone exchanges, instead of the one that's sort of commonly available and that just shows what the exchanges are. I think it would be useful for all members, especially rural, to know what the physical boundaries of their exchanges are in terms of trying to make good suggestions in the future about how it all might be rationalized.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Chairman, I will try to get such a map for members. I don't want to leave any wrong impressions. The map won't be very large, and it will simply show the particular exchanges and their boundaries, but the boundaries unrelated to roads or anything other than the centre of the exchange, if you know what I mean. It's going to be sort of like county lines, except it isn't going to be on a grid or what have you, but it will give the general impression. I think it will answer the need that's being raised.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question that's being called?

Agreed to:

Total Vote 1 -- Universal Rural

Private Telephone Line Service	\$18,400,000
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Department of Agriculture

1 -- Farming for the Future

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do have some questions, especially about vote 1, Farming for the Future, a \$5 million vote under the Department of Agriculture. We were in the midst of a good exchange the other night, and I'm not sure the minister had a chance to address all of them.

The first question I had regarded the amount to be voted. I was asking -- and the Member for Taber-Warner might want to get his name on the list here after mine -- is the \$5 million indeed an amount to be spent, or is this just an amount that, you know, is an objective? It's a \$25 million, five-year program, the objective of which is to spend \$5 million per year. The reason I question it, though, is because the minister provided us with information that showed that only \$3.87 million was spent in last year's program. I know the minister is not interested in creating a public relations effect by announcing certain amounts of money and then not spending them, but I am interested in knowing where the limitation was in terms of the amount of money spent last year. Was it that there were not enough legitimate or

bona fide applications received to fund? Or was it that a limit somewhat less than the amount voted on was set on funding for these programs?

I believe the figures that the minister used last year indicated that there were some 244 applications received and 94 approved. I'm wondering what was lacking in the other applications. Were they not on target, or was it just intended that we not spend the full amount that was voted on research? We all recognize the value and the importance of research in agriculture and the broad benefits to society as a whole, so we're supporting the idea that this amount of money be spent on agriculture. I'm just trying to learn more about the process through which decisions are made about how much money is indeed spent.

I understand, too, that through the implementation of this program, the department does have the ability to suggest some things that may or may not be done, that it is possible for a member of the government or the minister's department to suggest programs that may be funded under the Farming for the Future program. That's my understanding, and perhaps the minister might comment on that and again give us some assurance that we can count on some of the \$5 million at least being spent on the Farming for the Future program in the next year, some visible, public commitment to funding this kind of research.

I do have to comment briefly on what's been happening with research. While we can all feel good and pat ourselves on the back about a \$5 million commitment this year to research through Farming for the Future, it has to be noted that there have been cutbacks in a number of other areas in terms of agricultural research. The provincial government's commitment to the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute has been dropped. The province isn't prepared to participate in PAMI anymore, as I understand it. I think that deserves some further explanation, and it may be appropriate under this vote because there may be some overlap between programs PAMI has done in the past and what this program may do in the future.

I can't quite accept the notion that by pulling out of a three-province co-operative research institute, we will somehow avoid duplication. I think we invite duplication of research efforts and perhaps lose some of the ability of sharing the results of this beneficial research. I know the minister has received communications from hon. members in other provinces about the importance of maintaining our commitment to the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute so that rather than having three separate provinces that get involved in research projects, we see ourselves as a prairie-based industry that has a mutual interest in performing research and sharing in the results of that research. The benefits of the research done by PAMI have to be noted in terms of agribusiness in the province of Alberta too, the kind of small implement manufacturers that exist in Alberta to service the agricultural industry. One that comes to mind, I guess, is the plant that manufactures the Noble blade in Nobleford in the southern part of the province.

In addition to the cutbacks on PAMI, you know the complete reduction in commitments from the government to fund the weather modification program, the cloud seeding and such, and I'm wondering if the minister is prepared, under the Farming for the Future program, to make some commitment to the Alberta Weather Modification Co-op in terms of funding the different sorts of suggestions they make about cloud seeding. I know the minister has had numerous conversations with Mr. Jim Bishop, who's certainly a very effective lobbyist on behalf of the cause that he believes so dearly in. He's been an advocate of weather modification over a number of years and makes it a regular part

of his schedule to come up to the Legislature and make sure all hon. members have a really good understanding of the benefits of weather modifications, not just in terms of hail suppression but in terms of moisture enhancement. It's the contention of the Alberta Weather Modification Co-op that through a good cloud seeding program, using these Krick ground generators -- I should spell that for *Hansard* because it's an unusual word: K-R-I-C-K -- we can not only suppress hail, but we can induce rainfall, and I think the benefits of that are obvious.

So there's been a reduction in commitment to research in a number of other areas, and I'm just wondering: to what degree does the department see the Farming for the Future program moving into those areas? Because we don't want to leave these areas behind and not get involved with them.

What happens in terms of carryover funding from one year to the next if, for example, we spent \$3.87 million of last year's program, if I heard the Member for Cardston correctly? Is the money unspent carried over and available for programs in the future, or does it merely go back into the capital projects division of the heritage trust fund and then have to be revoted on the next year? Is this \$25 million, five-year commitment that the minister has referred to indeed what it purports to be? If we don't spend \$5 million next year, will we be able to have the remaining balance available in addition to what we vote to spend next year? Or is it money that goes back into the fund and we vote on another \$5 million next year that may or may not be spent? I'd certainly be interested in hearing what the minister has to say about that.

I think the Member for Taber-Warner made some very good comments about the importance of on-farm demonstrations, how we need to -- how we need to rise and report progress.

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

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

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

Resolved that from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund sums not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1988, for the purpose of making investments in the following projects to be administered by Public Works, Supply and Services: \$400,000, the Capital City Recreation Park.

Resolved that from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund sums not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1988, for the purpose of making investments in the following projects to be administered by Transportation and Utilities: \$18,400,000, universal rural private telephone line service.

The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the report and the request for leave to sit again, all in favour please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. So ordered.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, the order of business for Monday will be: in the afternoon, Committee of Supply, and in the evening, Committee of the Whole to do Bills on the Order Paper. On Tuesday evening, it would be Committee of Supply.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before we adjourn, the hon. Mem-

ber for Edmonton Avonmore yesterday during debate on Motion for a Return 176 asked for a ruling from the Chair with regard to the Minister of Education tabling a document. The Chair would reiterate the decision made several days ago: as that business occurred in committee, that business must be resolved within the committee.

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

