

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Thursday, April 7, 1988 2:30 p.m.**

Date: 88/04/07

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Oh Lord, we give thanks for the bounty of our province, our land, our resources, and our people.

We pledge ourselves to act as good stewards on behalf of all Albertans.

Amen.

head: PRESENTING PETITIONS

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I would like to present this petition containing 37 signatures of members of the university women of Alberta. The petition calls for public hearings on the Meech Lake accord and expresses their general concern about a number of features that are in the Meech Lake accord.

head: INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**Bill 258****An Act to Amend the Vencap Equities Alberta Act**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 258, An Act to Amend the Vencap Equities Alberta Act.

This Bill would create a subsidiary of Vencap which would be a seed capital firm. The purpose of this firm would be to provide funding only to small Alberta businesses and entrepreneurs.

[Leave granted; Bill 258 read a first time]

head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the annual report of the Department of Energy for the year ended March 31, 1987.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I wish to file with the Assembly two documents, the first being the 69th annual report of the Workers' Compensation Board of Alberta for the year ended December 31, 1986, as well as a discussion paper that I released last Thursday entitled *Shaping the Future*, a document on the Workers' Compensation Board that is being used in a public consultation process under the chairmanship of Mr. Vera Millard. Both of these documents have been provided to members, and I file them in the Assembly now.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Recreation and Parks.

MR. WEISS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to table four copies of the 12th annual report, ended March 31, 1987, for the Alberta Department of Recreation and Parks.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly, two old friends from Sechelt, British Columbia: Tom Woods and Lois Holmes. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by Calgary-Glenmore, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce a group of grade 6 students from Rio Terrace school in the riding of Edmonton-Meadowlark. I've had the pleasure of meeting with these students, whom I found to be extremely bright and asked some of the most interesting questions I've been asked by any group of constituents. They are joined today by Claire Desrochers, their teacher, and by two parents Mrs. Sutton and Mrs. Gardner. I would ask that they stand in the gallery and receive the welcome of the Legislature.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly, Dr. Mo Watanabe, sitting in the members' gallery.. He is a Calgary-Glenmore constituent. He is also the dean of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Calgary and the chairman of the hospital and health care utilization committee. I would like Dr. Watanabe to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not often in this Assembly that I get to introduce a special guest to the members, so I am particularly pleased this afternoon to be able to introduce 30 library technology students from the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. They are seated in the members' gallery with their teacher Mr. Borden McLeod, and I'd ask all members here to extend to them a warm welcome for coming from Calgary today.

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce a school group that is from my constituency today. They are 27 students from grade 8 in Leduc junior high school; they are accompanied by their teachers Mr. Fedor and Miss Hapienko. They are seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome from the House.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, it is a special privilege for me today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, five guests to our province from China and three guests accompanying them.

As a result of the successful Heilongjiang art exhibit at the Provincial Museum last fall, this delegation is in Edmonton to establish an outlet here in the city for the top 13 artists from Heilongjiang. This will be the first time the Chinese government has permitted the establishment of a retail art outlet out of the country to be owned and operated by one of their agencies.

The members of the delegation, Mr. Speaker, are Mr. Lai Zhaojun, head of the mission; Mr. Xiu Ming; Mrs. Xu Xiuzhi, interpreter; Mr. Tang Jinzhu; and Mr. Yu Ning. They are ac-

accompanied by Mr. Bob Maskell, chairman of the Edmonton Harbin Friendship Society, who is also the principal of the Victoria composite high school. They are also accompanied by Mr. Kim Mañ and Mrs. Lai-chu Kong of the Canada-China Friendship Society. I would ask that they rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly, some 27 students from grade 6 in the La Perle school in the constituency of Edmonton-Jasper Place, along with their teacher Mr. Harvey Thiessen, who are visiting the Legislature today. I would ask that they rise in the public gallery and receive the usual cordial welcome of the Assembly.

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Hunger among Schoolchildren

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the Minister of Social Services. It is well known that hungry kids cannot learn, yet in this so-called rich province there are hundreds and perhaps thousands of kids that are hungry at school and suffer learning problems as a result. My question to the minister: what consideration has the minister given to establishing a provincial program for meals in the schools where needed?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I welcome that question because it has received some attention publicly lately and, certainly, appropriately so. I believe that if it were a matter of speaking only to families who for some reason or other were not able to cope within the social allowance system and, in fact, the type of review that is provided under that system were the factor that had children going to school hungry, it probably would be an easy problem to solve. But it is not just children whose families are a little tight on income.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm well aware of that. The question is: what is this government going to do about it, recognizing that the problem is there whether they be working poor or on social allowance? What I'm asking about specifically: is the government prepared to look at a program to bring lunches into the schools? That's what I want to know.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I think we have unequivocally indicated our support for families in this province who have no other alternative but to come to look for income support from government. We have raised those rates; those rates will be going up momentarily. It is our belief that the dollars supplied for food allowance are sufficient and that if families have a problem managing within that amount, they should seek the counseling that's available to them.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, these are children, and they are actually hungry in this so-called rich province. It was embarrassing at the Olympics; in one of the schools *Sports Illustrated* brought in money to do that, and that's unbelievable. My question is: if the provincial government isn't prepared to do anything, has the minister inquired of the federal government, if they would involve themselves in some cost-sharing program so that we can solve this problem in Alberta?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, once again, there is basic support for families in this province. I would invite all hon. members to bring forward the names of families who are having difficulty managing on the income that's available to them, and I could assure hon. members that we would provide the counseling that would assist them in managing their income.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, we want food, not counseling. That's the point. Is the minister aware -- I hope she's aware -- that the federal government will, under the Canada Assistance Plan, fund 50 percent of the program? It would only cost us half. Is the minister prepared to look at this program and move with this with the minister of health and do something in this province and stop talking about counseling? We want food for those children.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is suggesting that families in this province, and particularly the parents who are responsible for those families, are incapable of learning how to budget better, then I would suggest to the hon. member that he is dead wrong.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, to the minister: we're not talking about family budgeting here. Let's concentrate on the children. Let's stop talking about the families and support to them. The communities are already supporting this need in large part. Will the minister, then, immediately undertake and promise this House that she will convene a meeting of community groups, school boards, school personnel, to find ways to work together to collaborate on a program that will feed hungry children?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Once again, Mr. Speaker, it is not the view of this government that we should intervene in family situations. We should provide basic support. The hon. members basically are talking about a universal program that will feed all children, because in order to really put forward dollars towards the children who need it, those children must be brought individually to our attention. I would suggest to the hon. member that if she reads the Child Welfare Act, she will know that if children are not being properly cared for by their families, she ought to bring that information forward to the minister or to the department and we will act upon it.

MR. SPEAKER: Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: certainly the thought of children coming to school unfed is a very distressing one. Does the minister's department actually have the ability to get in touch with these parents and sit down with them over a period of time and work with them to help them understand how to achieve success in this particular area? [Interjection]

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the hon. leader of the Liberal Party is laughing at the suggestion that we should get in touch with parents who are having a problem feeding their children or not, but I certainly would indicate to all hon. members that the children's families should be identified so that we may assist those families individually.

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

Health Care Insurance Plan Coverage

MS LAING: Thank you. To the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care: the minister said yesterday to my colleague, the Member for Edmonton-Centre:

I would ask the hon. member if he would give me one single case in this province where an individual has been refused medical services because of the inability to pay -- just one single case.

Is the minister unaware of the study, which I am now filing, prepared by Calgary Health Services, which documented cases of women unable to access services from their physicians because of an inability to pay and the minister's refusal to insure all of women's health care needs?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I'm perfectly aware of the study, and nowhere in that study does it indicate that a particular medical doctor has refused medical treatment because of the inability of an individual to pay. As I indicated yesterday, it is unethical for a medical doctor to refuse treatment to anyone on the basis of that individual's ability to pay. I state again to the ND Party: if they have evidence that doctors in this province are not living up to the standards of ethics that they subscribe to, then let us have that information and I will take the opportunity to forward it to the College of Physicians and Surgeons at the earliest opportunity so that they might deal with the practitioner.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, for the opposition to make such unfounded accusations against the profession I think is inappropriate.

MS LAING: Mr. Speaker, the report was made by the Calgary board of health.

I understand that the minister is going to reinsure some sterilization procedures, but he has still refused to reinsure contraceptive counseling. That should be under a separate fee code so that it can be obtained honestly. Is the minister suggesting that women be forced to obtain contraceptive counseling they need under false pretenses; that is, that they should obtain this counseling from the doctor under the guise of going for help for a hangnail?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, my colleague the Minister of Community and Occupational Health and my colleague the minister responsible for women's issues did announce this morning that we've made a decision to reinsure tubal ligations, vasectomies, IUD insertions, and follow-up visits. We also announced some other initiatives by the Minister of Community and Occupational Health in the area of providing contraceptive information and birth control counseling for women.

In addition to that, I indicated again, as I've done several times in this Legislature, that the health care insurance plan fee code schedule does indeed provide a lot of opportunities for women and men both to access contraceptive counseling advice from medical doctors under a variety of fee schedules, and there is no need whatsoever for an individual to lie about the reasons why they're visiting the doctor. That kind of information ought to be provided as a general matter of course throughout the course of visits during pregnancies, general checkups, and annual checkups and at other times when people are visiting their medical doctor.

It's interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. minister, perhaps the answer's gone full

term.

Supplementary.

MS LAING: Mr. Speaker, I would hope the minister would allow for people to go to their . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Question please, hon. member.

MS LAING: Does the minister not recognize that the choice of contraception must be made in the context of a woman's medical history, and that even if a woman receives contraceptive counseling at a health unit, she must still see the doctor for birth control pills?

MR. M. MOORE: That is all very, very recognizable, and it's perfectly appropriate for a doctor during the course of other examinations and indeed a responsibility for the medical doctor to provide that kind of information.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I don't understand what the concern is all about. Contraceptive counseling as an individual fee schedule item is not provided anywhere else in Canada. It's expected doctors will provide that as a matter of routine during the course of all kinds of other examinations and checkups.

MS LAING: Mr. Speaker, does the minister not recognize that obtaining birth control pills and fitting diaphragms are part of the same package of medically required contraceptive care as sterilization, and that by refusing to reinsure all these services, he is limiting access to the contraceptive care of their choice?

MR. M. MOORE: Well, the member is absolutely wrong, and I was aware of that information before I even got this job.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister. We're pleased that he has reinstated insurance in those particular services. Will he now undertake to reinstate fully the insurance services to people for chiropractic, physiotherapy, optometry? These are the services that keep people active and working in our communities.

MR. M. MOORE: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, members will recall that last year we were faced with a very difficult budget year and had to try to do some things to make sure that our health care insurance plan wasn't rising at the rate it had been over the last several years, and we made a number of moves.

With respect to the provision of eye examinations, physiotherapy, chiropractic, and podiatry coverage, we did not eliminate that altogether. In fact, what we did was reduce the amount that's paid by the health care insurance plan somewhat. We then in the case of eye examinations ensured that children and seniors were still covered for a standard eye examination, and all kinds of other eye problems are still, of course, covered under the health care insurance plan by the services of ophthalmologists. So we haven't taken any of those services completely out of the health care insurance plan.

All of those things are, obviously, under examination from time to time. As I've indicated earlier in the House, the time frame at which we might make any changes relating to areas where there is an annual limit available to each individual or family or a one-time annual visit is July 1 because the health

care insurance program runs from July 1 to July 1. It's very difficult to make any changes midyear and have the insurance plan be able to keep track of what people have received. So any changes there wouldn't come till July 1.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Member for Calgary-North West.

DR. CASSIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, to the minister of health. I'm appalled that the members opposite and health units and certain other groups have continued to confuse this whole issue on contraceptive counseling. Contraceptive counseling is a medical procedure that's always been available, and it really confuses the public. Would the minister once more tell the public of this province that contraceptive counseling has always been available, as is counseling for diabetes and hypertension, under the traditional fees?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, with the hon. member's kind assistance, I think we've just done that again.

Loan Guarantees

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier on the question of loan guarantees. In May 1987 Mr. Ronald Blake, assistant deputy minister of economic development in Alberta, told a House of Commons committee that all loan guarantees are sent to the provincial cabinet priorities committee, then to the Treasury Department for final approval. Also, Mr. Speaker, every Albertan . . . Do you want to wait till you're fully briefed by the Treasurer?

Also, Mr. Speaker, every Albertan who has ever borrowed money from a bank knows it's almost impossible to do it without a personal loan guarantee. Very simple, to the Premier has the government got Mr. Pocklington's personal guarantee for the guarantee that they issued him last month?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'd ask the hon. Provincial Treasurer to respond to the member.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, as I've said in the House before with respect to anything we've done with the Pocklington, the Gainers, or the Palm Dairies groups, we have taken full personal covenant wherever possible and have in a very detailed and complex fashion established a master agreement setting out the terms, setting out the kinds of guarantees, the kinds of assets which are pledged. It is my understanding that with all loans personal guarantees have been given.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I think the gentleman should table it. He said his understanding was that [interjections]

All right; let's go further then. To the Premier again: has the government got the secret backers' of the Alberta Newsprint or the Zaozirny group -- whatever you want to call them -- personal guarantee for the \$200 million guarantee that the government put up there?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, we have already said that in matters of this kind of transaction between someone who's trying to develop and trying to invest in this province, we'll take whatever cautions we can to ensure that the government's guarantee is well protected. Since there have been several questions raised with respect to guarantees, I should say the follow-

ing: first of all, with respect to Alberta Newsprint, I would not be prepared to talk further about the kind of arrangement that has been put in place.

What might be helpful to the Legislature, Mr. Speaker, is simply to run through a series of checks that we look to when we establish a guarantee. In that context I think it's important to note that last Friday the Conference Board of Canada indicated that Alberta would be one of the fastest growing provinces in Canada as a result of the kinds of investments taking place in this province . . .

MR. TAYLOR: Did he give you a personal guarantee or didn't he?

MR. JOHNSTON: Yes, Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, we get personal guarantees wherever possible.

The point is, however, that the use of guarantees is an important initiative to develop the comparative advantage we have in this province, and that's essentially what this province has been doing. Simply to run through some of the items, Mr. Speaker, so I can help the member, because I know it's a difficult issue for him to deal with . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Personal guarantees are not taken.

MR. JOHNSTON: Yes, personal guarantees are always taken where possible, Mr. Speaker.

We do the following: first of all, we ensure that we have a good asset to begin with, that the project itself is viable, that it has the ability to repay the debt. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we limit the amount of our loan, usually to a target amount or to some specific asset which can be secured under the provisions of the guarantee . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. Provincial Treasurer. Perhaps we'll leave some room for supplementaries.

MR. TAYLOR: Then obviously, Mr. Speaker, no guarantees. What has the government done in the case of the Zaozirny group, for instance, to ensure that they just will not flip the deal to some multinational for a big profit and walk off?

MR. JOHNSTON: First, Mr. Speaker, throughout the questioning both today and yesterday there has been continual reference to the Zaozirny group. Let it be clear that it's my understanding Mr. Zaozirny was only acting as an agent for the investors in that company. He was not, in fact, a participant in the investment of this very valuable newsprint project which is going ahead in this province.

Let me go on to say, Mr. Speaker, that while you may ask the specific question about the form in which the guarantee is placed, the point I was trying to make, sir, was that when we do a guarantee, we factor the guarantee based on the project itself, the kind of assistance the province can provide. We do have a set of criteria which we obviously check off before the guarantee is given, including such things as -- and these questions have been raised before. The transferability of the guarantee, for example, requires Alberta approval. There's a fee for the guarantee, as the Premier has pointed out before. There's a reduction in the guarantee based on the reduction of the debt. There are all these conditions put in place to secure fully and wherever possible that the government's assets are secured by our guarantee.

It's a very, very difficult and very precise process, Mr. Speaker. The general nature of the program is such that it has to be patterned to fit the project itself. But we do have a checklist. It's very carefully scrutinized by members of this government, and it's working. The investment is coming back to this province, and that's what's significant.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, the final question. Obviously, on the checklist the first thing that was required was a blue and orange membership card in the Tory party. Can the share ownership of either the Zaozirny or Pocklington deals be changed without the permission of this provincial government?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I don't know of any Japanese groups -- for example, in the case of the Daishowa group -- that have a membership in the PC Party. That's a red herring, Mr. Speaker, and he knows full well it's a red herring. We look at this and the intention of the investor, we look at those people who bring money to this province to generate jobs, to generate new activity. They're the people who get the acceptance. They're the risk-takers, and they're the ones who are welcome in this province.

MR. WRIGHT: What grounds does the Treasurer have for believing that Mr. Pocklington's credit is pledged only to the Treasury?

MR. JOHNSTON: Again, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Pocklington guarantee, it is unfortunate we're dealing so precisely with respect to one investor's credentials. We have wherever possible made available all information that was available to us. I've indicated before that the transaction with respect to the loans would be done on a commercially confidential basis.

With respect to our guarantee, Mr. Speaker, it is a guarantee which is covered by a master agreement, and that master agreement was drafted by members of the same profession as the member across the way. Presumably it must have some efficacy, and it's tested all the various assets which were involved in this particular group of companies. We've taken full guarantees. We've taken full position; we've taken full mortgage position. It's been done by members of the law profession. I have every reason to believe it's soundly done, and it's done to protect the interests of this province, and it's done to encourage development of this province. That's what's happening.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Stony Plain.

MR. HERON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the Provincial Treasurer please confirm that when a loan guarantee is granted for a fee, if the risks of the business are properly assessed, there may be no outlay to the Alberta taxpayer?

MR. JOHNSTON: As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, that's probably on balance a fair assessment, and it should be noted that for these guarantees we collect revenue. We use our borrowing power right now to ensure that the cost of the money going to these important projects is financed at the very best rate.

What we don't do is allow the person who is using our guarantee to shop the guarantees, so to speak: to take it and shop it around the world for a specific pledge. What we do, however, is judge where the loan is going to be made, who the provider of the money will be, and then we provide the

guarantee based on our assessment of the creditworthiness and, obviously, to earn a return to this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair would like to direct some late-hour reading to the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon and certain other members of the House, to look up *Beauchesne* 359(7) plus another reference in 360. The Chair is a bit concerned about some of these questions or comments that are arising.

A question must adhere to the proprieties of the House, in terms of inferences, imputing motives or casting aspersions upon persons within the House or out of it.

... especially members outside of the House, who have no opportunity to defend themselves or their reputations.

Also, with regard to *Beauchesne* 360:

A question may not:

- (2) seek information about matters which are in their nature secret, such as decisions or proceedings of Cabinet.

The Chair just respectfully brings it to the attention of the House to give some consideration to it.

Farm Foreclosures and Quitclaims

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Associate Minister of Agriculture, and it follows my questions raised yesterday. Now, the minister indicated in her remarks that she was looking at alternatives relative to the crisis that's faced by a number of young farmers in this province. My question is: would the minister be prepared to implement a short-term hold policy on foreclosures and quitclaims until the government announces this new policy that's in the works at the present time?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, there are very few foreclosure actions in process at this time.

A quitclaim is an agreement between the borrower and the lender to eliminate the debt and the equity that's involved. So the quitclaim is an agreement between the two parties. I certainly won't put a hold on any quitclaims at this point in time, because people phone my office and say, "For goodness' sake, have ADC make a decision on my quitclaim application." So to put a hold on them on a unilateral basis would be detrimental, I think, to some borrowers in the province.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. The minister could outline some of those conditions where certain quitclaims could have conditions as to where, upon the request of one party, the quitclaim could proceed. But new policy will affect the outcome of those quitclaims.

My question to the minister is with regards to land sales that are in process. Tomorrow bids are coming in on a number of parcels of land to ADC, and also next week a number of bids are coming in. Would the minister be prepared to hold any decisions on those bids until new policy is announced by the government?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, if bids are coming in on land at this point in time, I know it will take some time to process those bids and look at them, open them, evaluate them. So I would not expect bids to be in advance of some of the decisions we're making.

On the other hand, in yesterday's question period the Member for Little Bow said that people in southern Alberta are now working the fields and are going to plant in the next 10 days. It

would be totally unfair to a bidder who has made an offer on ADC land to hold up that bid because of new policies which we might be bringing in, when he eliminates his opportunity to plant a crop this year. Because of the 'dry conditions in southern Alberta it's very important to get that crop in early, and the member well knows it.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. It's totally unfair, maybe, to the purchaser, but it's equally unfair to the young farmer who's getting kicked off the land when the man purchases the property -- equally unfair. The minister should consider that.

Is the minister ready to reconsider the question I raised yesterday with regards to a lease-back to some of these young farmers on either a one-, three-, or five-year basis, or a convenient basis as may be determined by the minister?

MRS. CRIPPS: In the first place, Mr. Speaker, the land that would have been tendered is already owned by ADC, so that land is in place now. In terms of looking at a five-year lease on ADC quitclaimed property, that's a major decision because we have to be fair to all of the people who may want to look at the rental of that land, not only the person who has been on it but some others. I certainly have great empathy for the people who may have gotten themselves into financial difficulty and for the problems they have, and I can assure the Member for Little Bow that we will work with every borrower to try to resolve that problem, if there is a solution.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the associate minister. Yes, the ADC does own the land. Young farmers want to lease it back and stay on the land; they're there today. My question to the minister is with regards to the objective of the government in terms of forced exits or in terms of bankruptcies, foreclosures, quitclaims, and the policy thereon. In '83 there were 300 . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. With respect, hon. member, the supplementary is getting very long. Could we have the question, please?

MR. R. SPEAKER: The projected number of forced exits in the province of Alberta will be over 800 this coming year. I'd like to ask the minister: what is the level of forced exits that is acceptable to the minister, that is used in government policy planning in terms of the future of agriculture in this province?

MRS. CRIPPS: I don't think any level of forced exit is probably desirable. A lot of those exits are decisions that are made by the farmers themselves. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that there are approximately 800 exits from agriculture every year in the province of Alberta. There's also a number of entrants into agriculture every year in Alberta. You have to remember that 14 farmers out of 100 borrow from ADC, and of those 14 farmers two are in serious financial difficulties. On the other hand, we have 3,109 accounts in ADC which have prepayments totaling over \$5 million.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche, supplementary.

MR. PIQUETTE: Yes, Mr. Speaker. To the Associate Minister of Agriculture: why is the minister pushing quitclaims on

farmers, which result in an average loss of about \$120,000 to the Alberta taxpayers, rather than creating a debt set-aside program and eventually recovering all the moneys owing when the agricultural industry recovers?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche is totally incorrect. I am not pushing quitclaims on anyone. The decision for a beginning farmer, or any farmer for that matter, to quitclaim is usually made when both the borrower and the lender come to the conclusion that there is no other alternative in terms of meeting the debt obligation. I am at all times looking at other ways of dealing with the financial difficulty. One of the things I think we have to take a serious look at is the effect of the commodity prices on their ability to pay. I think that's paramount. I think it's a valid consideration, and I'm certainly willing to look at any aspect of that area that may make it more easy to meet the debt obligations in the long term.

MR. DOWNEY: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. I wonder if the minister could describe for the benefit of the House and in the interests of the painful process of farm exit what the process of proportional quitclaim does to minimize those occurrences.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, we've introduced a proportional quitclaim as one of the options that ADC has available to them in order to work with a young farmer to reduce the debt obligations by taking the amount of the loan that he has, the amount of arrears, and the amount of equity and proportionally reducing the debt; at the same time, proportionally reducing the equity which he has but in some cases allowing him to remain in agriculture. At the same time, one of the options there, of course, is to allow for a year of leasing with an opportunity to renew the lease, providing the work-out plan shows that he's satisfied he can do it and ADC is also satisfied that there is some possibility of restructuring the loan.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Final supplementary on this topic, Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like Charles Dickens. There's not enough food for the children, and they kick you off the land if you can't make your mortgage.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, I'm sorry; it's a supplementary question.

MR. TAYLOR: Okay, Mr. Speaker. The question to the Associate Minister of Agriculture is with respect to the process of quitclaiming and putting land up for sale and then closing the deal. Would the minister not go at least this far: that the original owner of the land has a chance to match the price for which the land is sold? Because often -- often -- this land is turned back over to a new buyer for a lot less than what they were willing to settle with the original owner to keep them on the land.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, the member raises a question that causes me great consternation, both in terms of thinking of the young farmer who has had the land, who I have great empathy for, and in terms of thinking of the farmers who did not for some reason qualify for ADC loans. I'd like to read one sentence from a letter I received last week:

Any time land came up for sale I could not even think of buying it because these farmers would pay any price to acquire it

to get more land. They used their sons and ADC money So in dealing with land, we have to be very, very careful that whatever position we take not only is fair but appears to be fair to all taxpayers.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Health Care Insurance Plan Coverage (continued)

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. Now that he has seen the errors of his deinsurance experiments with respect to contraception, he must also acknowledge that deinsuring eye exams for those who are 19 to 64 years of age last year was a very regressive step as well. In fact, in the throne speech it says:

Over the next year my government is committed to substantially increase efforts to prevent disease, to promote health.

Eye exams by optometrists can clearly provide for the detection and prevention of eye disease, poor vision in the workplace, high blood pressure, diabetes, and so on. Will the minister now reinsure basic eye exams by optometrists for those people who are 19 to 64 years of age?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I just answered that question earlier in the question period.

REV. ROBERTS: Well, we are forever in hope on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Does the minister therefore not agree that it is not only bad preventive health policy but it's also a false economy to deinsure the services of optometrists but force patients 19 to 64 years of age to see a GP, who then bills the plan and then refers to an ophthalmologist, who then sees the patient, so you get two billings to ensure that there is safe eye care instead of this service that was provided by one single optometrist?

MR. M. MOORE: The hon. member is misinformed on two different issues, Mr. Speaker. First of all, again, it is an unethical practice for a general practitioner to refer a patient to an ophthalmologist for a standard eye examination under the guise of some other medical problem if that's all that's required. If the general practitioner refers a patient to a ophthalmologist for a standard eye examination, the ophthalmologist charges the patient the full amount of the eye examination just as an optometrist would.

It's also inappropriate for the hon. member to suggest that everyone between 18 and 65 should have an annual eye examination. There's lot of medical evidence to support the fact that there is absolutely no necessity for the average individual to have an eye examination other than about every three years.

REV. ROBERTS: Well, it's a debatable point, but not in rural Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: We're not debating.

REV. ROBERTS: Is the minister therefore saying that he will fund for rural Albertans, who don't have access to ophthalmologists in many towns of rural Alberta, the cost of their travel to see the ophthalmologist when they're referred by a GP to have to come to the city, when in fact they're bypassing a

local optometrist who could provide the same service, for heaven's sake?

MR. M. MOORE: Again, the hon. member doesn't understand the work that is done by optometrists and ophthalmologists. There's a considerable amount of medical care handled by ophthalmologists that is referred to them by general practitioners that involves other than standard eye examinations. It's always been the case that we've been short of ophthalmologists in areas, particularly outside of the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. Nothing we've done in the health care insurance plan changes that at all, but we're hopeful of getting additional professionals out into other communities, particularly with our agreement to pay part of their malpractice insurance premiums and those sorts of things.

But as far as a general practitioner referring an individual from rural Alberta to an ophthalmologist is concerned, they would only do that for a standard eye examination, in which case the individual could go to an optometrist. In the case of more serious eye problems they would refer the individual to an ophthalmologist, who may be in Edmonton or Calgary or some other city, and the health care insurance plan would pay the bill. But not if it's just a standard eye examination.

REV. ROBERTS: Will the minister try to put an end to the confusion that exists not only in his own mind but in the mind of the optometrists' association? They have met with the former Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care and the Premier and are quite discontent with the current arrangement, are forced to direct bill the people under 19 and over 64, when he could meet with them and finally come to some cogent agreement or arrangement with the optometrists' association and put this matter to rest, as it should be under a health promotion effort.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe the public is confused about the current position of the government with regard to this matter. I think it's only the hon. member who's confused, and I have no way of dealing with his confusion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Edmonton-Gold Bar, supplementary.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The minister has already said that July 1 is the deadline. Will he, then, undertake to meet with them before then and find out what in fact is happening, meet with the optometrists, ask them what's going on out there?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I have met with Dr. Graham Dawdy, the president of the optometrists' association, who comes from Bonnyville, on several occasions to discuss the concerns which have been expressed by the members of the optometry profession. I expect to be talking to him again in the near future about the issues, and there certainly isn't any lack of communication between his office and mine.

Policing in Edmonton

MR. WRIGHT: My question is to the Attorney General. Mr. Speaker, in a recent case in Edmonton some people charged with assault and obstruction of the police, themselves complained that the police had assaulted them. There was an in-

vestigation of it in the usual way in the police department. The supposedly neutral investigator of this complaint thereafter assisted the prosecutor in the prosecution of the case against the complainants. Is this consistent with departmental policy?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I didn't quite catch the question. I really don't want to deprive the hon. member of his supplementary, but I didn't quite get the one point he made in his comment, so . . .

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, the . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Please, hon. member, you haven't been recognized till the hon. minister sits down. But now that that's occurred, you are now recognized. Please rephrase the question. Thank you.

MR. WRIGHT: I'll be glad to help the Attorney General. I'm sorry if I was not clear.

The investigator in the police department investigated the complaint in accordance with the procedure under the Police Act -- supposedly a neutral investigator, of course. That investigator then assisted the prosecutor from the Attorney General's department in the prosecution of the case against the complainants, and that is a no-no, I would have thought. My question is whether this is consistent with policy.

MR. HORSMAN: I would have to take that question as notice, and I would appreciate the hon. member perhaps giving me some more particulars of the issue. I am not familiar with the particular case.

MR. WRIGHT: I'd be glad to do that. Perhaps this will jog your memory. In the same case the departmental prosecutor did not disclose to the defence the names of a considerable number of witnesses he knew of but was not proposing to call and did not call. Is that consistent with departmental policy?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, I would have to have more particulars, and I'd have to take the question as notice. I'm not familiar with every case that's prosecuted in the province in all its details, and I would seek the assistance of the hon. member in coming to grips with some of the particulars that he has in mind in trying to seek advice on this matter.

MR. WRIGHT: I'd be glad to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps I should try the Solicitor General then. This matter, Mr. Speaker, was one of the latest in a series of worrying events that suggest that all isn't well at some levels, at any rate, of the city of Edmonton Police Department. What grounds does the Solicitor General have for believing that the Edmonton Police Commission, which is charged, of course, with the duty of policing Edmonton satisfactorily, is in fact discharging that duty?

MR. ROSTAD: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona points out, the authority for the policing of Edmonton is under the Edmonton Police Commission. I have been in contact with the commission as well as our law enforcement division of Solicitor General. We feel that the incidents that have come to the fore lately are unrelated and just by coincidence happened to come together at one time. We feel, in our investigation, that the citizens of Edmonton are getting adequate

policing, therefore does not necessitate the intervention of the Solicitor General's department. If further investigation determined that that wasn't the case, we would look for their request for our intervention.

I might point out that if a citizen and/or police officer feels they have been wronged, there is a procedure set out in the Police Act whereby they can complain to the chief of police. He will investigate. If they're not happy with the disposition, the complainant then has the opportunity to appeal to the Law Enforcement Appeal Board, which is chaired by a justice of the Queen's Bench as well as two private citizens.

MR. WRIGHT: Final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Even so, in view of the number -- seven -- variety, and gravity of the charges simultaneously pending against different Edmonton policemen, what consideration has the Solicitor General given to exercising his powers under section 33 of the Police Act to have the matter looked into either by the Law Enforcement Appeal Board or otherwise?

MR. SPEAKER: Time for question period has expired. Might we have unanimous consent to finish this series of questions?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.
Solicitor General.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member I think has pointed out himself that it's the variety and gravity of the offences, and if you look at the seven offences, other than the fact that they are alleged criminal offences, there is no other common thread. Because of that I do not think, nor do the experts in my department or the Police Commission, that there is a large-scale problem with the quality of policing that the citizens of Edmonton are obtaining. I might further point out that if the commission feels there is something wrong with their policing department, they have the right to initiate the action.

MR. CHUMIR: In light of the series of problems, I wonder whether the minister would acknowledge the need for some independent input into the system of investigating complaints against police and implement a system which has some of the merits of the new systems implemented by the RCMP and by the city of Toronto in recent years.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may recall that Bill 16 that was tabled in the House last session did point out some improvements to the present system. Without being anticipatory, he may look forward to tabling of the Police Act again this session.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Social Services wishes to supplement answers given earlier in this question period.

Hunger among Schoolchildren *(continued)*

MRS. OSTERMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Important information came to my attention, and I thought it was appropriate to discuss this very important issue in the Legislature by supplementing the information. The Official Opposition has provided a background paper as of this date to do with school-

children and a lunch program.

What I wanted to observe for hon. members in the House who are very concerned about potentially hungry children is that the hon. Leader of the Opposition and his party have made several references to the excuses. He says, "One indication of the government's commitment to social justice is the lameness of its excuses," and has listed thus and so. Mr. Speaker, the heading of the excuses cites a quotation by myself, which is accurate, and goes on under the same heading, with only one quotation mark, to go on and cite other statements which are not government's nor my own.

If you were as innovative in helping children and suggesting that parents access help from government and other counseling places, you would be helping children.

MR. MARTIN: You may make excuses or not. I was asking a specific question, and I ask that question again: what are you prepared to do to help hungry children in the schools? Is it nothing other than give lectures to parents about what a bad job they are doing?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, government members are prepared to do what the Official Opposition is not prepared to do; that is, assist parents in being good parents and exercising their responsibility.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I would move that the following questions stand and retain their places on the Order Paper: Questions 146, 148, 149, 153, 158, 160, 166, 167, and 168 and that the following motions for returns stand and retain their places: 152, 154, 156, 157, 162, 163, 164, and 169.

[Motion carried]

head: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

150. Ms Barrett asked the government the following question:

- (1) With regard to the temporary staff service program terminated by Personnel Administration at June 1, 1984, for each of the last five fiscal years during which the program was in operation, shown separately for each year, what was
 - (a) the average number of people employed by the program, full time and part time, shown separately;
 - (b) the average rate of pay and the range of rates of pay of people employed in the program;
 - (c) the number of people employed solely to administer the program; and
 - (d) the total annual cost of the program?
- (2) For the 1984-85, 1985-86, and 1986-87 fiscal years, shown separately for each fiscal year, what was/were
 - (a) the total cost of meeting the government's temporary staff needs through private-sector agencies;
 - (b) the names of all corporate persons contracted to supply temporary staff to the government;
 - (c) if known, of those individual persons contracted as temporary staff through private-sector agencies, the number who worked more than 30 hours per week for more than three weeks;
 - (d) the names of those five corporate persons paid the most in public funds for temporary staff services

contracted by the government, and

- (e) the average cost per temporary staff worker per hour paid by the government to private-sector agencies contracted to supply temporary staff?
- (3) Will the government table in the Assembly all studies on the basis of which the decision was made to terminate the temporary staff service program and secure temporary private-sector agencies instead?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, the information that is asked by the hon. member isn't available; therefore, I have to reject the question. Perhaps I can talk to her outside the House about some [inaudible]

159. Rev. Roberts asked the government the following question:

For each of the fiscal years 1983-84 to 1987-88 inclusive, what were the amounts of money

- (1) paid to dermatologists out of the Health Care Insurance Fund,
- (2) ordered by the Auditor General to be repaid to the health care insurance plan by dermatologists and so repaid, and
- (3) ordered by the Auditor General to be repaid to the health care insurance plan by dermatologists but not so repaid,
 - (a) because of intervention on the part of the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care, and
 - (b) because of some other reason?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, with respect to Question 159, the first question, that information is contained in the annual reports of the health care insurance plan, of which the latest available is the year ended March 31, 1987. It's already been made public.

With respect to questions (2) and (3), no such order was ever made by the Auditor General.

161. Mr. Ewasiuk asked the government the following question:

Who were those people in unions, identified in each case by personal name and the name of the union of which they are a member, whose "advice and counsel" were sought by the Minister of Community and Occupational Health, as noted at page 1859 of *Alberta Hansard*, June 12, 1987, regarding a "20 percent increase in the cost of claims with a zero percent increase in the numbers of claims" prior to his giving the Workers' Compensation Board "the proper direction" in this matter?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I won't be telling the hon. member who I've met with or who I've spoken with, and I wouldn't be so presumptuous as to do so. I've got to wonder that even if I did provide the information to the member, what would he do? Would he go out and scold the people that I've spoken to? Would he try and whip them into shape? I've got to sort of wonder what his motives are.

Mr. Speaker, I meet with hundreds of Albertans throughout a month, and a lot of those conversations are in confidence. I wouldn't presume to break those confidences even though the hon. member might.

165. Rev. Roberts asked the government the following

question:

Will the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care table copies of that evidence, documentary or otherwise, on the basis of which he contended on March 22, 1988, at page 52 of *Alberta Hansard*, that "not building any [health care] facilities in rural Alberta" is "the NDP's stated position"?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to provide some information to the House with respect to Question 165. I'd like to file with the House a copy of page 19 of an NDP document issued sometime last November that indicates -- and I'll read as follows -- "consolidation of rural hospitals which could result in a substantial saving" is supported. It doesn't say whether that's consolidating Vegreville and Athabasca or Athabasca and Vegreville, but that's the position.

Also attached to it is a news release which I issued on Wednesday, December 10, taking issue with the Official Opposition's view that rural hospitals should be closed and stating the government's view that we should continue to provide service to all Albertans.

head: MOTIONS FOR RETURNS

151. On behalf of Mr. Sigurdson, Ms Barrett moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing those studies or documents that support the contention that "... in the next decade there will be some 238,000 jobs created in Alberta, not including the 40,000 jobs that are anticipated through free trade, " made by the Minister of Career Development and Employment during the Oral Question Period, Monday, November 30, 1987, at page 2111 of *Alberta Hansard*.

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, with regard to Motion 151, I'd like to make a few comments before I turn him down. The 238,000 jobs that are referred to are internal projections based on the assumption that the employment rate will increase by 1.8 percent per year over the 10-year period from 1989 to 1999. This compares with the projection that was made in 1977 that employment would grow by 2.7 percent, which created 272,000 jobs during the period 1977 to 1987.

Mr. Speaker, it's well within reason that you use estimates to determine a variety of events, particularly employment and job creation. I'd also like to refer to the question about the projection for 40,000 jobs that would result over the next 10-year period with the advent of a free trade agreement. That comes from the Economic Council of Canada's projections.

I don't think it's unreasonable that we do make projections in this House. As a matter of fact, the Member for Edmonton-Belmont on April 6, 1987, made some projections following my budget estimates last year. That was:

25 percent of all Albertans next year can look forward to unemployment -- more than 25 percent, in fact.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Belmont, who is requesting this information, is in fact projecting. Last year he projected we'd have 25 percent unemployment during this year. He also suggested during that debate that

if all we were to do is to ban overtime... 40,000 manufacturing jobs would be created.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I submit that the hon. member, too, is making a projection based on information he has, and I am simply doing the same thing. We have done the same thing in our throne speech and our Budget Address. We suggest that with a

\$2.5 billion capital expenditure, that will create 27,600 direct jobs, 38,000 indirect and induced jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's beyond reason to be able to project, and I did talk to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands about projections based on expenditures. We agreed to disagree on the manner in which the number was calculated, but we did agree that in fact these projections are made. I think it's well within reason that this government use projections to try and determine the environment and, in my particular case, the economic employment environment for the coming year. Simply, that's what I have done with those comments, and I suggest that the opposition might try doing the same and come to grips with what is going on in this economy.

So suffice to say, Mr. Speaker, that I will not be providing the opposition with internal data. They can do the same kind of research that I do with my department and go to the libraries and talk to the Economic Council of Canada and get a sense of what is happening in the economy here in Alberta.

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I have to take objection with the... Is there a problem?

MR. SPEAKER: Just checking with the Chair about... Since the member moved on behalf of Edmonton-Belmont, technically, then, this would be closing the debate.

Edmonton-Kingsway was trying to get the eye of the Chair. Thank you.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nobody has said that you shouldn't make projections and do some analysis. What we asked for were the documents that backed up that analysis.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, we have a minister here, not a "you." Thank you.

MR. McEACHERN: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker.

The minister is quite entitled to make projections, but he should table in this Assembly the reasons he makes those projections. Last year we found a similar kind of circumstance, where he was making all kinds of brags about how many jobs had been created by different programs and yet he would never produce the documents to show that that in fact happened or why it happened or anything else. We're back at the same thing again, coming up with some numbers off the top of his head which cannot be substantiated and then refusing to in any way, shape, or form tell us why we should believe those figures. So he's just pipe dreaming, and the member should go back and do his homework and file in this Assembly the reasons he believes these certain things are going to happen.

I see no reason why he should get away with saying, "Well, you know, somebody else can go and do the same research we did." We don't have the kind of budget he has; he has a full department behind him. It's not possible for us to do the same degree and level of research -- if, in fact, he has done any research. But just as usual, he's talking off the top of his head, and therefore he has nothing to back up what he's claiming and is then refusing to come across with the information when we ask for it

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Edmonton-Avonmore.

MS LAING: Mr. Speaker, we do not deny the government's

right to make projections. We want to know the basis on which those projections are being made. We need to see these studies to see, in fact, how realistic the projections are and on what information he makes his projections so that we know whether he's just making things up.

The other thing is that the Economic Council of Canada was very unhelpful in determining the number of jobs that would be created or lost after a trade deal was negotiated, because it did not take into account the service sector. It did not assess what the impact on the service sector would be because it did not think the service sector would be included in the trade deal. We already know that the service sector will lose a great number of jobs due to the trade deal. The jobs are already being lost in that sector because of centralization in United States head offices. So again we have to question the validity of these studies and how realistic the projections are.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Glenarry, followed by St. Albert. Anyone else want to get on the list at this time? All right. Thank you.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Speaker, surely the minister cannot object if, having refused to show the evidence on which these projections are based, we conclude and invite others to conclude that he has no basis for his projections, that he is misleading people who suppose that because it comes from the government, it's true. There is still a number, albeit a dwindling number, of people who do suppose that. So if, therefore, he wants to accelerate that process and allow us to continue to invite people to believe that the government is misleading people with its statistics, let him continue with the course that he set last session and continues in this.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Glenarry.

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just one small point about what I consider to be a most unfortunate attitude involved in what the minister said -- that being, "I've done the research, I have these facts; why don't you go out and spend taxpayers' money duplicating that research" -- instead of a minister of the Crown taking what I would consider to be an adult and responsible approach instead of a childish and petulant approach, and that is to share the information he's got on which he bases these. To say let's duplicate the efforts and do it twice is, I think, a reprehensible and most unfortunate attitude that the voters and taxpayers won't forget next election.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for St. Albert.

MR. STRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This minister has a penchant for grasping at numbers. He grasps them out of the air anytime he can, and when he's asked and asked repeatedly for justification on where he's grasping these numbers from, he refuses to give answers.

Now, I get many, many phone calls in my constituency office from unemployed Albertans. Certainly rather than this minister painting a rosy picture of all these jobs being created in the province of Alberta, he'd be much better off saying to us in this Assembly and to Albertans where those jobs are being created. What types of jobs are they? Are they jobs in drafting? Are they jobs in engineering? Are they jobs in the construction industry for tradesmen, electricians, plumbers? What types of

jobs are we creating? Or are we creating \$3.80 an hour jobs in the retail sector of our economy or flipping hamburgers at McDonald's for high school students?

That information is very, very important, so that some of our young adults getting out of grade 12 and going to university can make decisions on what professions or what careers they are going to take at university based on some evidence of what careers and what professions they should be establishing themselves in, careers and professions they are going to have an opportunity to work at when they graduate out of the universities, not like almost 6,000 teachers that can't find jobs after we have spent as taxpayers in this province -- and all of us sitting here I hope are taxpayers; I know I am -- having jobs for those people when they come out of the universities instead of those teachers with their degrees having to go out and get McDonald's hamburger jobs for \$3.80 an hour for five years, getting totally frustrated and moving and relocating out of the province of Alberta. That's been suggested to them by this government too.

Now, it seems rather ludicrous, almost bizarre, Mr. Speaker, that this minister won't answer questions but repeatedly grabs numbers out of the air on how many jobs we've created in the province of Alberta, whether they're estimates, whether they're determinations, whether they're internal projections we've figured out. Now, I think that's very important.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this minister also suggested in his little prelude to the debate that what we have to do on this side is come to grips with what's going on in the economy. I think we have come to grips with what's going on in this economy. It's a disaster, an absolute disaster for the last five years. I get hundreds of letters in my constituency office from Albertans asking questions on when this economy is going to turn around. We keep hearing the promises. We keep hearing the projections of jobs. But where are they? They're not there. But we do have ministers of this government standing up and saying that things are turning the corner. Well, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately they're not turning the corner. Yet when we ask for detailed facts, detailed information from this minister, we get nothing except some, I guess, churlish attitude that you don't know what you're talking about.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to this minister that he take his rose-coloured glasses off, get out in the trenches, and go and ask Albertans who are starving to death, who haven't had decent jobs for five years in Alberta's economy, who have lost everything including their homes to foreclosure, or farm families that have lost their land to some of the 700 quarter sections ADC's sitting on -- that what he should do and what this government should do is start taking a look at exactly where Alberta's economy is going, rather than standing up and painting rosy pictures and offering illusions to the people of this province with what's happening. Now, that's what this government has to do.

Mr. Speaker, I take some exception to the minister. It's almost an insult to my intelligence and an insult to the intelligence of Albertans that this minister can throw out all these numbers on job creation and yet not answer in this Legislative Assembly for his grasping and groping and throwing out numbers. In addition to that, we asked: where are these 40,000 jobs going to be created in the next 10 years under free trade? Or is it 10 years? Is it one year? Is it 18 months? Is it 20 years? What is it? Where are these jobs going to be created? Are they going to be created in a manufacturing sector? Is that where they're go-

ing to be created?

Is this government going to get into truly diversifying the economy of Alberta, or is it just going to continue to give loan guarantees to the Pocklingtons of the world while Albertans lose their homes or get stuffed with billion dollar tax increases and another insult, \$150 a family back. Well, Mr. Speaker, the \$150, if you're not working, amounts to zero. Where are these jobs? What types of industries are we going to get into? Are we going to get into plastics industries? Are we going to start producing telephones? They're made out of plastic. Are we going to start producing more plastic pipe, plastic lawn furniture, plastic kitchen furniture? Are those the types of jobs that are going to be created?

You know, I think all of us here are left in the quandary of where these jobs are going to be created. Because I know lots of people who would sure like one. And again, Mr. Speaker, what do I say to the residents of my constituency in St. Albert that come in and say: "Bryan, I can't find a job. Can you help me?" As long as this minister and this government won't answer for the statements they make, it is very difficult for any of the Members of this Legislative Assembly to offer any advice to young people going into universities, to young people going into other types of postsecondary educational facilities, to people that have to retrain because the type of profession they chose isn't as valuable in our economy now as it was five, 10, or 20 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, this minister has to recognize, again, that if he's going to make statements on behalf of this government and on behalf of himself, he is going to have to justify those statements not only to the Members of this Legislative Assembly but also to Albertans. Now, let's start calling spades spades; let's start getting answers. And let's not listen to the rhetoric, because Albertans are getting sick and tired of it. Mr. Minister, I wouldn't be here unless a whole bunch of them were dissatisfied, and maybe you won't be here after the next provincial election.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments on the minister's unwillingness to present or produce these documents and studies for the Legislature this afternoon. I find it interesting that at one time -- and I'm sure the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs could refresh my memory with the exact dates -- his department issued a question-and-answer paper on what effect the trade deal was going to have on Alberta. This came in two versions, the first one and the second one. The first one -- and he would remember the dates; I don't have it at my desk this afternoon -- in answer to one of the questions, indicated 40,000 jobs were going to be created in this province as a result of this trade deal. However, this past winter -- and again I can't remember the exact date; it may have occurred after the minister's statement referred to in this motion on November 30, 1987 -- that paper was reissued by the Department of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. It was interesting that in the reissued version, Mr. Speaker, there was no direct answer to the question as to how many jobs were going to be created in Alberta as a result of the trade deal. No estimate was provided.

I found it interesting that a day after the new version was released, the federal Finance department produced one of their studies about the impact of the trade deal, and the number of jobs they estimated would be created were substantially less than those estimated by the Economic Council. The question all of this is raising in my mind, Mr. Speaker, is: which study do

you believe?

There are lots of estimates and projections that everybody is making about this trade deal, but when you actually try and pin people down, there are only a few studies we have to go on. By the way, one that has not been released by the federal government was done by, I believe, the federal immigration and manpower department. The minister, Mr. Benoît Bouchard, mentioned in the House of Commons last fall that there was a potential loss of up to 500,000 jobs in Canada due to the trade deal, and when questioned about that, of course, the study which his department had done had been kept secret. So there are lots of studies around. That's why we need to have these studies made public, Mr. Speaker, so we can question and look at the assumptions, because as you put in different assumptions, you're going to come out with a different end result. That's why it's not enough for the minister to simply be able to stand up and say, "Well, I've made some projections." Let's see the studies; let's see the assumptions on which those were based.

He made reference in his answer as well this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, to the Economic Council study on the trade deal. It's interesting that when that Economic Council study was released, there were four members of the council who distanced themselves from their findings because they felt the conclusions of that study weren't fully defensible, given the assumptions and the information that went into it. As well, that study assumed that the service sector would be excluded from any trade deal between Canada and the United States, which subsequent events have proven was not the case. So perhaps some of the very key assumptions of that Economic Council study are no longer valid and, therefore, their results and projections are no longer valid either.

It just makes the point that without having the studies and the documents in front of us to examine the reasons, the assumptions, and the information that went into the study in the first place, the results are open to interpretation. Until we can see those, obviously we're not going to accept the minister's word for it. It's unfortunate that he feels those studies are either so indefensible or not properly formulated that he's not able or willing to put them forward on the table and submit them to public scrutiny. If they are as valid as he says they are, let's have a look at them, and if they can be defended, great. But the fact that they haven't even been put before the public indicates to me that they can't be defended.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you ready for the question? [interjections] Order please.

The hon. leader of the Liberal Party.

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, Mr. Speaker. In jumping into what appears to just be a two-way fight, I've risked the chance of getting punched from behind at the same time. But I want to say a couple of words here with respect to the forecast by the hon. minister. I don't think there's any question there's more to it than just a callow minister that may be a bit inexperienced shooting from the hip or shooting from the lip -- I'm sorry; whatever it was -- that didn't know what he was talking about. I think there may be a little more to it than that, Mr. Speaker, in that when you look at what's gone on and what the government is trying to do, there is an obvious effort by the government to try to paint a rosy picture, a much rosier picture than what exists.

Even simple mathematics would indicate, Mr. Speaker, that the minister should be going back to the drawing board. Now, he may argue that math was not one of his strong points in

school, but last year, for instance, the average monthly caseload of those on welfare increased by 7,000 cases a month -- 70,000 cases on welfare last year on the average per month versus 62,800 the month before; in other words, an increase of about 7,000 per month. So it would seem logical -- and certainly there's not been a large influx of population into Alberta. If anything, they've been moving out. If your welfare cases are going up, obviously you're not creating the jobs or what he's arguing that will.

The other thing that's interesting, Mr. Speaker -- I'm quoting now from Richard Plain, a University of Alberta economist who, last time I looked, certainly wasn't being paid by the Liberals and, I don't think, the NDP either. He's considered to be a fairly right-wing economist.

Despite all the contrary evidence, the government will likely persist with its rosy predictions...

"They've got to do that, no matter how gloomy it gets, even though the tears are running down their cheeks," he says.

"They're trying to keep business confidence up... trying to encourage those projects on hold to go ahead."

They likely believe they

... must continue with optimistic forecasts despite the gloomy truth.

"They can't very well stand up and say things look pretty mixed even though they know very well the economy is... on its knees.

"It's a confidence thing although one might sometimes wonder if they're beginning to believe themselves."

Now, Mr. Speaker, I stopped quoting there, but what I wanted to get at here is that obviously this government, in its wild announcements of the number of jobs they're creating, the number of projects, the guarantees they put out without even following to check whether they're personally guaranteed, the question of the environmental impact studies not being assessed and projects going ahead without open hearings to see whether or not they are viable, is a government that's panic-stricken. They probably picked one of the greenest, most novice of their ministers to come out with such wild statements about the number of jobs that are being created, solely with the idea that if they hopefully somehow or another keep yelling and yelling that indeed the sky is not falling, that the sky won't fall. But the fact is, as far as it's concerned over there, Mr. Speaker, that's a blatant disregard for the integrity of the Legislature. They're making wild statements about jobs being created when our own statistics show more and more people on welfare each month last year. It's the type of thing that I think brings ill repute to all members of the Legislature.

I would like to see the minister just get up and say, "Sorry, I was a boob, I didn't know what I was talking about," and withdraw. But instead, he's persisting with the wild figures he has put out with no foundation on fact.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

MR. OLDRING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't intending to speak to Motions for Returns this afternoon, but after listening to some of the diatribe that came from across the House today, I felt compelled to make at least a few comments. I must say that I've never heard such rhetoric. I mean, I'm used to the Liberals and the NDs talking about doom and gloom. We do expect it in this House, and it certainly seems to be a tradition they're maintaining. But I think they even exceeded their own doom and gloom predictions this afternoon. I just can't comprehend how they can feel so pessimistically about this province today.

I know that the real reasoning behind Motion 151 wasn't the statement by the minister, it was the fact that it was good news, that things were turning around. They couldn't stand the thought that some of this good news might get out to Albertans, so they have to try to twist and distort information and denounce the facts. You know, again I guess there's none so blind as those who don't want to see and none so deaf as those who don't want to hear. But last year this province led the nation in new jobs for technically oriented people. We led the nation, and they're saying, "Where are the new jobs?"

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. With respect to the hon. member, the motion deals with whether or not the government should produce a certain document or studies. Would the hon. member give in the debate the reasons perhaps why the government should or should not.

MR. OLDRING: Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to stay on topic, and I'm trying to respond to the comments I heard this afternoon. Again, the question was asked very clearly from across the way, "Where are these new jobs?" A record 1.152 million Albertans were at work last year, a record number of jobs in this province. I think again we have a minister that has some confidence in this province. He indicated that he's had an opportunity to research it very well. He encouraged some of the members opposite to quit wasting some of their research dollars and start putting them to some practical use. But again, he's researched it. He indicated from his research -- he indicated the formula that he was utilizing for the next 10 years to come up with the 238,000 jobs. And they don't like it. They don't like the way the government's fiscal programs are starting to work. They don't like the way the government's diversification programs are starting to work.

Where are these new jobs going to be? Forty thousand people in Alberta are now employed in advanced technologies. Twelve hundred companies are busy employing new technologies here in this province. Over 5,000 new direct and indirect jobs in central and northern Alberta as a result of our forestry diversification -- that's going to have to make up some of these 238,000 jobs. Tourism: over 100,000 people are employed in tourism today.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to belabour this debate. We've heard a whole lot of verbal diarrhea coming from across the way. I think it's obvious they don't want to deal with the facts; they don't want to see the good news coming out of this side of the Legislative Assembly. I'm sure it'll continue, and I'm sure they'll continue to try to discredit it.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion in question: of course, some of the people speaking from the other side are begging the actual question. We're talking about whether and why the minister should be producing extensive research and documentation to back up various statements that were made at particular times. Certainly the Member for Red Deer-South has enunciated very carefully the results of many of our employment programs, so the figure of 238,000 in itself is not crucial or central to the argument in question.

Rather, the larger question addressed by the motion brings some thought and consideration: should, in fact, a minister of the Crown every time she gets up to speak be required to have

an extensive, exhaustive, documented list of studies readily available at her fingertips to quote from -- which under certain rules of *Hansard* you're not allowed to do anyway -- and deliver to the opposition? We're living in a time of certain budget and fiscal restraints, and just to consider the monetary considerations alone of this motion passing I believe are significant and create another reason why the motion should not pass.

We saw just recently in this House where another minister, the Minister of the Environment was -- what should I say? His heels were nipped and yipped at for a considerable period of time by members of the opposition asking for studies, and we saw a very responsible and good example of what can result from that type of demand. The studies, of course, in that particular instance were readily available in as close a place as this building, as are the studies quoted by the minister, and the Minister of the Environment, to the wonder of us all, produced on his desk here just recently in this Assembly a gigantic pile of studies, documents, blueprints, on that particular area. Mr. Speaker, that was a very clear demonstration of two things: number one, that indeed the facts and studies were available and that a minister of the Crown, any minister of the Crown, would not stand up and talk about studies if they were nonexistent; and number two, he showed the foolhardiness of a minister being required to carry wheelbarrows or truckloads of studies around with him before he can open his mouth and talk about what studies have shown.

Now, in the demonstration from the Minister of the Environment, as I've said, two things were accomplished: number one, a very clear demonstration that indeed those studies were available; but number two, it was a little bit of an exercise in the ridiculous, I guess you could say, in showing what would be the result of a minister every single time being required to come up with those types of studies. Now, the members opposite, with apologies to our own members -- and again we talk about the Liberal/socialist détente, so I'm talking about the LSDs here; I'm not talking about our own members -- the Liberal/socialist détente continues to weekly unite forces and come up with this argument that these particular research documents should be made available. And I don't know if they expect -- for the minister to respond to that. The minister is standing on a point of principle, very clearly demonstrating that the whole process of government would become so overloaded and burdened with hours and hours of the minister taking the LSDs by the hand down to the Library, showing them how the catalogue system works, showing them how to call on a librarian, to access all these studies. So the minister is, indeed, standing on a point of principle when he is saying it is ridiculous for him to have to produce mountains of paper that back up the various statements he has made.

The other question that the motion is begging . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Ken does it. Come on now, Ken does it.

MR. DAY: The member opposite just whimpered out -- sorry, I don't want to offend anybody using that word -- "Ken does it, Ken does it" We know he was referring to the exercise performed by the Minister of the Environment which I've already addressed. As usual, the member opposite does not listen, but I've explained why the Minister of the Environment did that to show the LSDs what a ridiculous argument it is that every single statement referring to a study or referring to research has to be accompanied -- and burdening down our poor pages and the various other transportation systems available to government to

wheel in these mountains of research.

So to wrap up Motion 151, Mr. Speaker for the minister to bow down to such a request would not be a wise move, and indeed, his reluctance to do that is not based on the fact that those studies are not available. He is, in that action, suggesting to the members opposite that they take their -- I believe it's somewhere around \$1 million that they are given for research, and if they are truly concerned about this particular area, they would take a minute amount of that. When you figure the time for a researcher to walk from their offices, which we've graciously given them on the main floor of this building, to the Library and access that catalogue card and begin to pull out the reams of documents and studies that are available . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: They don't have to walk up the stairs.

MR. DAY: No, they wouldn't even have to walk up the stairs; there's no energy lost there, and we are conserving energy in this province -- that amount of dollars would be so insignificant. But to give in to this request, Mr. Speaker, that we access and release hundreds of thousands of dollars every time a minister talks about research or about a study would be nothing short of absolutely irresponsible.

So, Mr. Speaker, I concur with the hon. minister, and on the basis of common sense, not LSD thinking but common sense, I would ask that the members of this Assembly once and for all put to death this foolish motion and get on with the business of government.

Considering the hour, Mr. Speaker, of being after 4: 10 o'clock, I would move that the question be taken.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: May the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands conclude debate on Motion 151 on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Belmont?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed? Hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, thank you. First of all, I'd like to recognize that we've been exposed to a little bit of gibberish here in the last little while. I'd like to recognize that the Speaker is one of the few people that even use the words "honourable member" any more. The reason I want to point that out is to respond to some of the comments that were just made by the members for Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South. Perhaps there's a particular disease that infects MLAs from those two districts. I'm not sure. But first of all, when it comes to an MLA's ability to argue cogently being reduced to that of hurling insults across the way against people who have asked honestly for information, I believe the word "honourable" probably should not be applied, Mr. Speaker. In the second place, the last member for Red Deer, that is the Member for Red Deer-North, says that he wishes the opposition would spend some of that about \$1 million that they, he implies -- "they" being the government -- so graciously give us, the Official Opposition.

I'd like to correct two false assumptions. One is that the entire budget for the Official Opposition -- which was cut by 20 percent, by the way, last year and not restored this year -- is \$780,000 approximately, all of which is used almost exclusively on staff handling phone calls and correspondence. I'd like to also add that I've never seen the Member for Red Deer-North in

the library, and I'm there almost every day. So please stop hurling silly insults.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Red Deer-South made the same sorts of comments, so ditto my response.

The minister did indeed talk to me outside the Assembly around about this time last year over a similarly contentious issue. At that time I admitted to him that I was not an oilman and he admitted to me that he was not an economist, and we agreed that we would have to disagree on certain data collection methods. I argued expressly with the minister that I thought that some -- not all -- of his calculation methods were inappropriate, and as I do have some experience in economics, my argument still stands.

The problem in this instance... I mean, we have our suspicions, Mr. Speaker. We suspect that the minister has a number of econometric models operating at any given time and that he plucks arbitrarily, according to the mood of the moment, a particular set of indicators that he thinks he can flog. That's a suspicion; I can't prove that. I can't prove it until the minister tables those documents. The problem in this instance has nothing to do with whether or not the minister is being arbitrary in plucking those particular indicators. The problem is that we don't know whether or not this is meant to be a net figure. We do not know if he calculated into those projections the implications of the Mulroney trade agreement, if it's implemented. We do not know if he included the fact that the service sector was ultimately included in that deal. And remember that was only signed in October, initially, and then reaffirmed in January of '88. We don't know any of that information. For all I know, the minister could be honourable. For all I know, the minister could have really accurate information that proves, in fact, that his projections are correct.

As an economist I happen to know, for instance, that if you have an overall aggregate economic growth rate of, say, 1, 2, or even 3 percent, it is fallacious to assume that you will necessarily have a corresponding rate in the increase in employment. We've been able to prove that right here in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, where we've had rates of growth in the economy and, in fact, corresponding decreases in the rate of employment. Those are serious matters.

Now, in his opening argument the minister said, "Well, one of the reasons that we do this is we have to make projections, just like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Belmont makes projections when he cited, for instance, the probability that up to 25 percent of Albertans can look forward to a period of unemployment in the upcoming year." Well, I can't remember the precise details, Mr. Speaker, but I'm quite sure that here in Alberta over it should be about the last three years, about one in five Albertans experienced unemployment at at least one point during one year. So it could be -- and that comes from Statistics Canada; I happen to know exactly where the Statistics Canada catalogues are in the stacks . . . [interjection] Pardon me?

MR. ORMAN: I was using the Forget commission.

MS BARRETT: You were using the Forget commission report. Did you say that? Mr. Speaker, if you'll indicate, I'll put it on the record. Did the minister say that when he referred on November 30, 1987 -- did he refer to the Forget commission report when he cited this information? The minister is nodding. I don't recall, and I don't happen to have page 2111 of *Hansard* in my possession at this moment, Mr. Speaker. But that may be so. On the other hand, if he was talking about some sort of in-

ternal document -- which he did allude to at the opening comments this afternoon, about 45 minutes ago -- then it's the internal document that we seek.

The right of the minister to conduct research, for heaven's sake, at a rate of -- what? -- \$1.63 million a year just for his department, just for planning and research, is not in contest here. The right of all Albertans to understand the contents of that research when referred to in the Assembly is being contested, Mr. Speaker. I think fair is fair. I think the minister has been honourable; he has explained outside of the House his models. I don't agree with them. Of course, I don't tell him how to run his oil businesses. But at least this: when he wants to talk about his oil business in the House, I'm sure it's easy for him to give us the proof that what he's saying is true. I bid the minister do the same thing in this instance.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those in favour of Motion for a Return 151 please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The motion fails.

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

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Barrett	Martin	Strong
Ewasiuk	McEachern	Taylor
Gibeault	Mjolsness	Wright
Hawkesworth	Piquette	Younie
Laing	Roberts	

Against the motion:

Adair	Elzinga	Orman
Ady	Fischer	Osterman
Alger	Fjordbotten	Payne
Anderson	Getty	Pengelly
Bogle	Heron	Reid
Bradley	Horsman	Rostad
Brassard	Hyland	Russell
Campbell	Johnston	Schumacher
Cassin	Jonson	Shaben
Cherry	McClellan	Shrake
Clegg	McCoy	Sparrow
Cripps	Mirosh	Stewart
Day	Moore, R.	Webber
Dinning	Musgreave	Weiss
Downey	Musgrove	West
Drobot	Nelson	Young
Elliott	Oldring	Zarusky

Totals:	Ayes-14	Noes-51
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[Motion lost]

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, in view of the hour and the House

rules, I would move that we call it 4:30.

[Motion carried]

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

Bill 202
School User Fees Elimination Act

MR. YOUNIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, after 14 years of teaching high school in this province, you cannot believe how delighted I am to have my name on a Bill that, if passed -- and I hope I can convince the members opposite of the fairness of this Bill and get it passed -- would remove one of the worst ongoing irritants that teachers face on a day-to-day basis, and that is the necessity of hounding students for fees for one thing and another that should be a natural part of their educational experience. I believe that even perhaps if I can't win the support of all the members opposite, such a concept as outlined in this Bill would win the support of the majority -- in fact, I think the vast majority -- of teachers and virtually all of the parents in the province who are saddled with the whole process of collecting these fees.

It is based on a very important principle, and that is a principle that there are some things in this society that should not be dependent on one's income; that is, the basic necessities of life in the form of shelter and food, basic health care, and education of one's children. And the quality of that education, just as the quality of health care and the ability to feed one's children, should not be limited by one's income. That should be a natural right of being part of the society. Unfortunately, with the fees that started in this province some years back and have escalated over time, we are seeing where the options open to children in school and the quality of education they might receive, especially at the senior high school level, are becoming more and more dependent on their ability to pay a wide range of fees, and I would like to look at some of those.

First, I would like to make a point about implementing the kind of policy outlined in this particular Bill. I think it is obvious that it would be impossible to eliminate those fees immediately without helping boards with the loss of funds. Boards have become more and more dependent in terms of the options they can offer students and the quality of education they can provide, and become more dependent on these fees. I am absolutely certain they would rather not be as dependent on them as they are. In fact, I'm convinced that they would rather not have to charge them at all but it is a fact of modern education in this province that they have become dependent on them, that in fact those fees sometimes approach and even exceed \$200 per year for a student in senior high for courses that are basic education. A former Minister of Education in this province actually had the audacity to suggest that parents could use their family allowance cheques to pay for school fees. I can't think of anything that shows a greater lack of sensitivity for the problems that many people are going through in the present economy.

A way that we could implement this would be to return to what we had in this province in the past; that is, a funding of basic education from the province at 85 percent of the cost of that basic education. Fees were instituted as a coping mechanism to deal with funding cuts from the province that municipal tax bases tried to pick up as much as possible. School boards

decided that perhaps they could augment this a little without raising municipal taxes as much by instituting fees.

A lot of people argue that these fees are only charged for frills, frills like trips to Europe. If that was all, then perhaps I wouldn't have so much trouble with them. But I would like to maybe give a few examples and see if members opposite would call these frills: workbooks in accounting 30 to the tune of \$26 -- one school in the province does charge that amount; \$45 to take phys ed 30 -- that seems to me to be an awful lot; \$5.50 for a workbook in French. The list goes on and on. I'll go into some of them in more detail, but I think those kinds of charges for basic education -- and by the way, in this particular school those are over and above a fee of \$1.10 for each credit the course is valued at, so a five-credit course has a basic charge of \$5.50, plus whatever fees apply to workbooks and expendable supplies, and they can get quite high. Those are not frills. To call it a frill to have a workbook in accounting is obviously just ridiculous. They're required, and therefore they should not be billed to the students directly.

I think the best way to go about it would be to return to the level of funding that the province used to give sometime back instead of the miserly approach they have taken over the past decade, and it's gotten worse and worse. Even in years when there were increases, those increases typically fell short of inflation, and as anyone can figure out, if your cost is increased more than your income, then you have in fact had a shortfall. That should be obvious to everyone involved, especially to members opposite, who brag to be the best in economic matters.

I would like to point out one change I would make in this Bill, and although it's the next stage at which we get into the details, I would like to just briefly touch on it at this stage because it reflects on the philosophy behind the Bill very closely. That is to change section 152 in the Bill as members have seen it. We have said that that would just be deleted, and that would have the laudable effect of removing a charge from parents' shoulders when they have to enroll a child in a jurisdiction where they are not resident for some course that the child must take there because he can't get it where he does reside.

However, to just delete it would mean that the board would have to accept this child even though his parents do not reside there and they don't get the municipal taxes, and they would have no one to bill. Presuming the members opposite will see the common sense of this Bill and help us get it through this stage and I can present them with the amendment in detail, what it would do is require the minister to set up a fund that a school board would bill for students who come from other jurisdictions for courses required to complete their education. As I said, it's a very important part of our philosophy not only that we remove these unfair and burdensome fees from parents but that we do so in a manner that does not put an equally unfair burden on school jurisdictions. So that amendment will take care of what might be a problem there.

The Conservative government over the past decade has frequently referred to providing free education for all children. I would suggest that that is not a true statement until the user fees charged in our schools are eliminated. If you have to pay \$5.50 to take English 30, that is not free. If you have to pay \$50-some to take phys ed 30, that is not free. If you have to pay \$8.50 to take biology 30, it's not free. So I would urge this government to either quit using the term "free education" when they talk about the education they provide for children, or I would suggest that to maintain the honesty of that statement they would have to help pass this Bill and eliminate these user fees that are

put on parents.

As I said before, I think that we have the present government and its predecessors over the past decade to blame for all of these things. I can remember when I first started teaching; fees were just becoming a popular thing. They were very small, and the funds were used by particular departments. So the English department would collect English fees. They could do things with them that they otherwise wouldn't have been able to do, buy things that they wouldn't have been able to buy, and they seemed like a good idea. And of course, at that particular time period it was boom time in Alberta and virtually anyone who wanted a job could find it. The government claimed that then, and they were fairly close to accurate, I think. They might have been able to argue with at least a little bit of legitimacy that these small fees being charged were not a great burden.

We now have many people living on \$5-an-hour jobs that are the only thing they can get in one of the government's make-work programs. With that they're trying to feed children, they're trying to buy clothing for them, and they're trying to keep a roof over their heads. Then they're told when they come to school that they have to pay for their three children anywhere up to \$300 or \$400 or maybe even \$500 in various user fees if they want their children to have the full benefits of the school system involved.

The Minister of Social Services today talked about counseling these parents. Well, when these parents living on this horribly limited income, because it's the best that the economy created by this government has to offer them, are trying to balance their budget, how will that minister counsel them to choose between shoes for their children, food for the table, or school fees so they can take a course like phys ed 30? That's a choice those parents should not be faced with. The government has made it so that they are faced with that, and I think it is unforgivable.

Based on this fee sheet I have, which is from a school in the province, I would like to give you a sample choice of programs for a grade 12 student. It would not be an unusual assortment of courses to take; I haven't just picked out the most expensive. It would be a reasonable set of courses for a student to enroll in: English 30, social 30, accounting 30, phys ed 30, typing 30, record keeping 30, French 30, and art 30. The total cost of that would be \$44 for the basic course fees, another \$104.50 for the expendable supplies fees, and that would come to a total of \$148.50. Then if the student wanted to avail himself of a locker to put these supplies in, students' union fees so he could take part in students' union activities, and a yearbook so he could remember this expensive but enjoyable year in Alberta's free school system, he would pay another \$21 for those three, making a total of approximately \$170. Now, that would not cover some field trips that teachers might want to take during the year that would cost \$5 or \$10 per chance, and so on; it would cover just the basic fees at the start of the year. That seems to me to be exorbitant.

If you look at a program that would be typical of your average matric student heading for university -- and again I think this would be fairly typical: English 30, social 30, phys ed 30, biology 30, chem 30, math 30, and French 30 -- you would see a total fee of \$94 for the basic courses and the expendable supplies fees, another \$21 for the students' union, locker, and yearbook fees, for a total of \$115.

Now, if you're making \$70,000 or \$80,000 a year as a cabinet minister in the government, that would be a negligible sum. You would take it out of pocket money you put aside for fun evenings and so on. If you're trying to get by on the \$700

or \$800 a month income that you would get from a lot of jobs that are all that are available for people anymore, that would be an exorbitant fee. They would in fact be asked by the school board to set up a monthly payment schedule, and that is done. Book fees have gotten high enough that some people have to set up a monthly payment schedule for those fees. Even on a monthly basis it would curtail other very important parts of what they want to do, not just the frills in their household budget. They wouldn't be choosing between paying fees and buying a new colour TV; they wouldn't be choosing a number of other things.

Now, many members opposite, I'm sure, know what else goes along with starting school. You have put children through the school system, so you know that children like a number of

things, including maybe one new outfit to wear to school, new runners for phys ed class because the old ones wore out through the summer, a new winter jacket. The students' union is going to be selling sweatshirts, and then they might like one of those. A lot of those things would be impossible for many, but many would make the sacrifice. Then school starts, and they've got this \$100 or more per child -- perhaps even \$200 per child -- touch from their friendly government to help cover what the province has refused to cover.

I think the whole idea of school fees violates some principles of modern education, principles that have set western education apart. One is that education should not be elitist; there should not be better education for those with money. We have accepted as a matter of principle that one of the greatest opportunities we can give children to overcome many of the class barriers that our society sets for them is a good education. Alberta is, I believe, the only province in Canada -- it's something else we're first at; we're always told what we're first at -- that allows the kind of fees that are charged our students. We're first in that as well. And it limits what they can do. It makes for an elitist education system where a student has to pay money to get the kind of prerequisites that will get him what he wants in university or in college and thereby limits his opportunities in life, limits his chance to establish a good career and avoid being a burden on the welfare system. So the government, instead of solving problems with this, is creating problems. I don't think Alberta is in a position to accept that kind of attitude, where the ability of a child's parents to pay should be a factor in how good his education is.

Another very bad effect of this -- and as a teacher I saw it happening, so I don't care how many members opposite want to get up and say it's not a factor; it is a factor -- is that by charging these fees you set the school administration, the school board, and the teachers in the classroom as the bad guys who have to hassle parents for these fees. They hassle the parents by hassling the students. It would be different if somebody drove to the home of the parents and said, "We want this money." You give the student a note, and the student has to take it home. Of course, when the student gets a note from the teacher, all his friends say: "Hey, what did you do? What's that for?" To say he can keep it a secret is patently absurd. So you set this adversarial role. Now, as a teacher I want one role with my students, and that is as a friend who is trying to educate them, not one who wants to hit their parents up for a couple of hundred dollars and maybe decide whether or not his parents can afford to pay his hockey registration fee in the community hockey league instead of his phys ed and social and English fees at school. I want to be a person who's there for only one purpose: to educate them.

What we saw in Alberta when the fees started getting higher and higher was parents saying, "I won't pay them." Some did not say, "I can't pay them." They said: "I won't pay them. This is wrong, and you will not do this to me." School boards, in fact, started taking parents to court to recover these fees. What does that do to a student in the classroom when it hits the local newspaper that his parents are the ones taken to court by the school board because they won't pay \$50, \$100, or \$150 in fees? It sets that student apart and hampers his educational opportunities quite severely, and I don't think that is right. It's part of an adversarial role that we should not be setting up.

Now, the response of school boards to that circumstance -- and I think it was a response forced on them by an insensitive government -- was to tell school boards to withhold supplies for students until the parents sign a promise to pay. Well, it doesn't take a very bright person to figure out who in the school system hands out the supplies and therefore who in the school system is going to withhold them. It's the teacher in the classroom who says: "Here are books for you, Mary. Here are books for you, George. Sorry, Jim; you can't get any; your parents haven't signed a contract to pay." Now, what does that do to that student in the classroom?

I was told that that would be one of my duties as a classroom teacher, to witness that promise to pay or a receipt for the fees; either one would do. Many had to wait a month until they could manage to get the cash together or work out a payment schedule. But I had to see that before I could hand out the supplies. I handed them out anyway. The school board could have fired me. They didn't, so there must have been something else about my job that impressed them; they certainly weren't impressed with the fact that I refused that directive. But I would not do that to students. I told the administration: "If you want to call a student to the office and do it, you do it. I will not do it. That's not my job, and nobody has a right to make it my job to be a collection agent."

The policy was changed the next year, and it's not happening. I don't think too many school boards are trying to follow that any more; they're working out other less adversarial ways to do it. But unfortunately, at first it looked like that was going to become a provincewide trend and parents were going to be coerced, by withholding of supplies for students, to pay. Fortunately for children in this province, school boards, school administrators, and teachers had more compassion than the provincial government, and they would not go that route. I think just the very idea of coercing parents that way is obviously wrong and sets up a kind of role we do not want to set up.

Overall, I think it should be obvious to all members of this Legislature that there has to be a better way of funding basic programs in our schools than billing students directly for the courses. I even have trouble accepting it at a postsecondary level; for grades 1, 2, and 3 students I think it totally unacceptable. I trust that the members opposite will see that and we will debate this in a very amicable way and vote on it and pass it, at least at this stage, before the afternoon ends.

Thank you.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take part in the debate on Bill 202. As I understand the Bill, it's designed to eliminate almost entirely the opportunity and the ability for school boards, either directly or through schools, to charge fees and to have the flexibility necessary to operate our schools. Looking over the particulars of the Bill, I notice that a number of things which currently are charged for in schools would not

be able to be charged for. The only exception that I see being left in the existing legislation with this Bill coming into force would be that they could levy a fee for transportation. If we were to follow the proponent's area of reasoning here, perhaps that's one of the areas that should be completely covered by government and some of the others that are covered remain as having a fee attached to them.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to give some examples of what would be affected by this Bill; certainly the basic materials and textbooks and supplies related to the courses. It would no longer be possible for school boards to levy charges for early childhood services programs nor to charge for field trips, transportation to athletic events, tours of any kind, or any transportation that might be involved with the extracurricular or cocurricular program of the school. It would also not be possible for a school board to charge for programs offered to adults by way of extension courses or evening courses. The whole area of caution fees, and perhaps a little but effective type of charge such as a fine for a library book, would not be allowed. So without going on too long about that aspect of the Bill, Mr. Speaker, I think we should always take note of the nature of the Bill that we are debating. Certainly this would put out of action any type of reasonable charge for any particular purpose, and these types of activities have been an essential part of school operation and they work effectively.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the sponsor of the Bill, the hon. member, has quoted a number of examples, and I think it's very important to provide some balance to what I regard as very extreme quotations of amounts and so on as far as the fees that are actually being charged. First of all, I'd like to note that if we were to look at the proportion that other revenue, which is mainly fees, has made up of the total school budgets of the province, we would note that in 1950, 4.67 percent of the revenue going to school boards in the province of Alberta came mainly from this source of revenue. If we went to 1964, we'd hit a low of 2.21 percent; 1972, 4.08; 1980, 5.08; 1986, 4.85 percent. The important thing here, Mr. Speaker, is that the relative ratio of revenue to school boards from this source has changed very little over the years. There's no evidence that there's any great and alarming increase in the amount of money that students and their parents are having to pay across the province as a proportion of the total costs of education. I feel that that's a very important thing to consider. It's been an ongoing activity in this province, and it's not getting out of line; at least there's no evidence at this particular time.

Also, when we're talking about a description of the current situation, I think a much more typical example, Mr. Speaker, might be a charge for textbook rental and supplies of \$40 per elementary student. I have gone through a number of lists of items that may typically be added as far as a high school student is concerned, and I find that the average would perhaps be \$75 for a basic program for a typical high school student.

I also note that many of the school boards of the province have placed a maximum charge per family, usually in the neighbourhood of \$100 or \$150. When we get up to talking about charges of \$200, \$250, the usual exceptional item there is the cost of a driver education program, something that is offered in conjunction with the school but certainly has its relationship to reduced insurance fees and so forth and is typically, I admit quite a large amount for people who have to take that course for that particular year.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the costs are certainly there, but they are not quite as high and they are not unreasonable when you

consider, particularly when we're talking about high school students, the various items that they spend many times that amount on in a typical year. It's a matter, I think, of setting priorities, and that is a good experience for high school students to have.

I also noted, Mr. Speaker, reference to figures in excess of \$100 for expendable supplies. I was not sure whether this was something being charged by the school boards, but I think more likely this is a reference to the typical expenses that students have always had to incur and still have to incur, even in those provinces where there are no basic school fees, for things like scribbled, pencils, and other expendable supplies.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on at great length about more examples and more statistics in that area, but I would like to offer four or five points in opposition to the general theme of this particular Bill. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I think it is essential, if we're going to have some control and some reasonable outlook towards the actual costs of education, that parents and students, particularly senior students, have an awareness of the cost of education. Yes, I am a proponent of the idea of a user fee for services of this type, particularly when we're talking about items, whether it be project material, but particularly textbooks, workbooks, yearbooks, and things of that nature, which are put directly into the hands of students for their use and, in some cases, become their property.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I think the fact that there are fees charged for different activities does help build a sense of responsibility in students. I do not see nor do I hear of students complaining about the concept of fees for the items, for the equipment, for the projects, and so on that they have to purchase or pay rental on. There is nothing wrong, in my view, with this particular matter of building responsibility, getting people used to the idea that these things cost money, that they need to be cared for whether they remain in their possession or are returned to the school.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, we should keep in mind that when you go to a system where everything is paid for by the government, it inevitably leads to school boards and schools having to deliberate over what now is going to be allowed. I'm familiar with some school systems where this system is in place, and we find that the flexibility to do things, the ability of a school or a teacher to choose to do some unique or creative activity is limited by the fact that any additional charge, any additional fee, is prohibited. A great deal of time is taken at school board meetings to decide what is going to be allowed for the coming year under that particular list of covered items: 12 pencils, six scribbled, a textbook but no workbook? That is not an exaggeration, Mr. Speaker. That is one of the offshoots of this business of every single thing being covered by the tax dollar and nothing left to the individual responsibility and resources of the parents or, as I've said, in the case of the senior students, often the parents and the student together.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other items in this particular Bill that would now be prohibited, as I understand it, would be the ability of school boards to come to a mutual agreement over the payment of tuition fees and the exchanging of students. I might add that that is something that is covered and in fact given an additional push or thrust in Bill 59, the School Act, which was introduced in June of last year. I feel that there is a great possibility to allow for students to cross boundaries to take the programs they need and so forth if school boards have the ability to come

to those types of agreements. But to eliminate the ability to charge a tuition fee or even to enter into an agreement on an exchange of funds is not, in my view, a very realistic way to go about providing for students moving from one jurisdiction to another.

The final argument that I would like to advance in opposition to this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is that we really have to ask whether it is the general taxpayers' responsibility to pay for items related to specific types of extracurricular and cocurricular activities. Many of these activities are very good. They lead to the enrichment of programs. But is, for instance, a yearbook something that the general taxpayer should have to pay for out of the revenue flowing to school boards? I think not.

With those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude. I see no particular merit in this Bill. I think, as I indicated with the statistics I quoted, fees remain at a reasonable level in proportion to other income available to school boards. We should pursue the present system.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes Calgary-Buffalo but then interrupts the House, please, to conform with Standing Orders.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to Standing Order 19(1)(c), with respect to the debate on the motion for an address in reply to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor's speech, I am required to put the question on the motion at this time. The motion, as moved by the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore and seconded by the hon. Member for Lloydminster, reads as follows:

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

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

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

[Motion carried]

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

Bill 202 School User Fees Elimination Act (continued)

MR. SPEAKER: Resumption of normal business.
Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise to speak on this Bill. I would like to note that it's nice to see the New Democratic Party catching up on this issue, which I raised in the Legislature last April 28 and 29 and indeed last week in the House in question period. However, notwithstanding the fact that the member is a bridesmaid in getting this matter before the House at this stage, I do recognize his heartfelt and long-

standing concern with respect to this issue, and I do congratulate him for his initiative in presenting the Bill.

The issue of user fees, Mr. Speaker, is indeed an important issue, because such fees can imperil equal access to education amongst students in this province. The equality of access is at the heart of our school system. It is a fundamental of any public school system. I might note that amongst the other obvious benefits the community derives from such equality of access, this enables us to avoid the excesses of class systems which plague other parts of the world. These class systems are in many ways a product of unequal access to education, the ability of students who have the financial means to obtain a better quality of education and thereby obtain a step up in life which gives them advantages throughout the whole of their careers.

So I have concern, Mr. Speaker, as I have expressed in this House earlier, over the increasing use of fees in our schools. I have indeed concern about the neglect of this issue by the government. It is unhappily symbolic of the neglect by this government of the needs of lower income people in this province generally. This is a neglect which is evidenced by their failure for some many years now to address the issue of the minimum wage, notwithstanding some validity of concern with respect to availability of jobs. Still, they have taken an extreme position on that issue. It is reflected by their taxation and fee policies. By way of example, I would point out the regressive policy of charging fees for medicare, which is in distinction to most of the provinces that pay for medicare fees out of progressive taxation. It is shown by their recent tax measures, particularly those in the budget of March 1987 withdrawing the renter tax credit, which was so helpful to lower income individuals, and by their imposition of a 1 percent overall tax on all taxpayers at that same time.

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

Now, the imposition or the move towards imposing user fees in our schools is a provincewide phenomenon, worse in some areas, less in others. This phenomenon is a result of the pressure on our school systems to increase their income as a way of meeting budget shortfalls. I must say that although I am concerned about this particular problem, I find it easy to be sympathetic with the trustees who are levying these fees, because they are faced with a squeeze based on increased demand for educational services at the same time as there is decreasing financial input into education by the provincial government. We need only look at the statistics of the decrease of the provincial share of funding public education: down in the last 15 years from 85 percent of total cost to from 60 to 63 percent of total cost, depending on what jurisdiction we're dealing with. The problem is compounded by the fact that the structure of schooling is changing as well. We have more programs, we have more options in our schools, and we have commensurately greater expense. This is additionally compounded by the transportation issues: the problem of transporting students to different programs in different schools, particularly in the larger cities.

Now, transport is not an easy issue, nor indeed are many of the issues relating to user fees, but the transport issue is complex in particular because of the variety of situations that can arise. I have, for example, some great concern with respect to an issue which arose in Calgary last year relating to the plan of the Calgary public school board to charge a fee of \$25 per month per student for transport to French immersion and bilingual programs. Twenty-five dollars per month, in case we don't

have our calculators handy, is \$250 per year per student. I had brought to my attention the situation of families with three students in French programs who were going to be faced with a levy of \$750 a year to send their children to French programs in our public schools. Well, there's no mystery about what the result of that would be: very simply, lower income students were excluded from these programs.

It became ludicrous when one thought about how it became a lottery as to where the program was offered and whether or not the student would be required to pay that transport fee. For example, if a French program which was not offered citywide happened to be offered in your particular neighbourhood, no fee was levied. Some students got the course without fee. On the other hand, if the lottery resulted in the program being offered in some distant area, some students would be excluded from taking such courses as a result of the transportation fees.

Now, this problem was in fact compounded by the proposal at the same time to levy a \$25 per month lunchroom fee on students. These students, of course, are transported by bus. They're away from home; they can't get back home; they have to have lunch. They have to be in a lunchroom -- \$25 a month.

So the bottom line, as I saw that issue and what concerned me, was that we as taxpayers were paying for these programs, paying a substantial sum of money for the programs, and we found that lower income students were unable to have access to these programs that our general tax revenues were paying for because of proposals to levy transportation and lunchroom fees. Now, happily the denouement with respect to that particular proposal is that the fees were much reduced. I am happy to have been involved in lobbying some of the members of the Calgary public board with respect to that issue. I think it was important. I think they did the right thing in reducing those fees, but there still is a problem with respect to them. There still are some fees, albeit much reduced.

Now, insofar as transportation is concerned, some boards have related transportation fees to the concept of whether the program is designated as a program of choice or a program of need. For example, a learning disabled student who was directed to go to a certain school would be considered to be involved in a program of need, and there would be no transportation fee. An example of a program of choice might be, at least in the minds of some boards, the French program that I noted. The problem, of course, in respect of this concept is that it becomes a lottery once again as to whether or not that program of choice is located in your area. It's complicated by the reality that we as taxpayers are paying for those programs and want to see the fundamental principles of equality of access in our system adhered to.

We are having and seeing an increasing number of these issues with the relatively new open boundary policies of some of our schools. Now, there's less difficulty in this situation where the choice is not based on the nature of the program but is idiosyncratic to the student. For example, if a student wants to go across town to a specific -- is the word too big for the member from Red Deer, north or south? There's less difficulty where a student may wish to go to another school because, for example, his friends are there. But what do we do where a school is offering a unique program not offered in the student's neighbourhood; for example, a crafts program, as some schools are now developing, or the international baccalaureate program, which is restricted to certain schools? Should the lottery of location in these instances exclude lower income children?

Now, these comments that I have been making relate to the

issue of transport. I have even greater concern with respect to the levying of direct fees. I'd like to talk to some extent in a general sense about the Calgary public school board. I find their fees to be particularly high, but I would like to make it clear that they are not by any stretch of the imagination the only board in this province that is charging high fees. So I mention them because of my particular familiarity with the fee structures in that jurisdiction.

In our public schools in Calgary fees for junior high students can range as high as \$150 per year; that's per student. Fees for high school, depending on the mix of courses that are taken, can range up to \$200 or \$300 per year, again per student. Just last year, to deal with the budgetary problems, a new \$25 instructional resource fee was enacted for junior high school students. That was effective last September. The public school board is going to commence charging for elementary school supplies in September, and there has been some talk of further fee increases to cover additional costs arising out of proposed and actual transit fee increases by the city of Calgary.

While a case can be made for levying very modest fees for consumables such as supplies, the magnitude of the fees being charged in fact strikes at the heart of the principle of equal opportunity of education for all children regardless of their financial circumstances. Many families, particularly those with more than one child -- and we have to remember that there are many families with more than one child. They're working poor. They're people who are going to food banks, who are not being helped by our social welfare system. Many of these families are experiencing great hardship as a result of the fees. The result is that many children are not getting equal access to an education.

Anyone who's involved in education and takes the time to look into these matters will know that the fee structure is having this impact on equality of access. Some schools, it is true, do try and compensate and provide for lower income students. Some schools will waive fees; others will try and make provision to allow some students to make some extra money doing a bit of work. But this doesn't always work. In fact, it may often not work because many students, I think our experience in life will tell us, won't even try and take the courses because of the disinclination to face the embarrassment of admitting that they're unable to afford the fees.

I raised this issue in the House last April 28 and 29 in questions to the Minister of Education. I must say that I was very, very deeply disappointed -- and I think it was clear at that point in time -- by the minister's approach. I may be the lawyer but I would never dream of taking the legalistic approach the minister did at that time of stating that the complete answer was that the government was living within the law of not charging "tuition" fees as are prohibited by our legislation. Well, who cares whether the fee is a tuition fee or whether it's not a tuition fee. The issue is whether we are levying fees in some form, the result of which is to deny equal access to our programs to all children.

Now, quite frankly, I must say that I don't know the magnitude of the problem, and I don't have a definitive formula which would set out the dividing line as to what should be the responsibility of the parents and what should be the responsibility of our school system. I don't believe anybody has. With all due respect to the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, I don't believe he has either. And that's the difficulty with this situation at this stage of assessing the problem. What we do know is that we are moving in the wrong direction. We're moving in the direction of increasing reliance on these user fees. We know that there

are problems, and we know that the government does not have the initiative or the desire to address the problem, because we get kissed off when we raise these questions in the House. That's the best sign of what the government's attitude is.

So what I suggested, and what I still suggest, is that we need an objective, in-depth review of the issue. Let's look at it. Let's sit down, and let's get a group together to hear parents. We need to do this publicly. We need to hear educators. We need to hear other concerned citizens who can tell us openly and publicly, not behind closed doors in order to avoid the embarrassment of reality, but openly and publicly, so we can see what the problem is.

I asked the minister last year to please review the issue. I don't know whether I said please, but I meant please. She said that she would. I asked last week in question period for the results of this review, and I think those who scan *Hansard* will note that the answer made it clear that there has been no review in any meaningful sense of the word.

This moves us on to Bill 202, and it in fact goes beyond the specific concerns that I've raised. It provides lots of answers, and I've discovered that New Democrats have all of the answers, at least they think they do. And that's the merit of ideology. It makes things very easy if you can put everything in a little pigeonhole. I don't enjoy the comforts of ideology. I like to think about things. So I believe it's important to raise these questions, the important questions in our society, the fundamental ones, and this is fundamental. It strikes at the heart of public education. Let's be aware of that. We have to address these fundamental questions, and then we have to take steps to ensure that we get answers based on information and not on ideology.

Now, Bill 202... [interjections] We're not going to get into a debate about ideology, Rumpole. Bill 202 suggests that we eliminate all fees for materials, that we eliminate all early childhood service fees, that we eliminate all fees for extracurricular activities, that we eliminate all fees charged by nonresident school boards, that we eliminate all fees for extension and adult courses. I believe it's certainly worth reviewing those concepts.

My instincts are to agree with many parts of those suggestions. I might note that I'm particularly inclined and favourable towards providing for the elimination of all fees between separate and public schools within a given geographical area, because these fees discourage the very healthy mixing of students of differing religions, which is happily taking place within these systems on an ever-increasing basis. I might admonish the government, with respect to the direction their recent taxation proposals have been taking, that by creating frictions between the two systems, they are pushing the systems in the direction of starting to levy those fees, which they used to do with great regularity in the past. So I urge care in that direction. While my instincts are to agree with many of these issues, these are merely instincts, and overall they raise more complexities and questions than they provide in the way of bottom-line answers.

So as I prepare to close, I congratulate the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry for his sensitivity to this issue and for presenting this Bill. I am not ready, without further information and an analysis, to endorse his definitive answers. He's going in the right direction, but I say: let's get the facts and implications reviewed in detail, and then we'll decide what the answer should be.

MS LAING: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of this Bill. I believe that user fees are a way of setting up a two-tier system

of education and betray our commitment of equality of education for all children. Many parents cannot afford the user fees for the materials, the textbooks, the rental of equipment, and even busing to programs they want for their children. The children are not able to take courses that would allow them to become fully developed in their own human potential. I'm talking here of courses like music, sports, and participating in activities that enrich education and make it a truly educational experience rather than just the transmitting of knowledge; things like field trips. So the children, I believe, through the use of user fees are denied full participation in their educational process.

I think we need to look at the impact of user fees, first, on parents. Let me tell you that none of this comes from ideology; it comes from first-hand experience. Parents want the best possible education for their children, and I have never yet met a parent that does not want the best possible education for their child. But many parents cannot afford to pay these user fees and often feel very guilty that they cannot pay for the best possible education for their child. These are low-income families who may experience unemployment or underemployment or employment in what have been traditionally low-paying job sectors, particularly women. We certainly know that wages for traditionally women's work have meant that women that had families lived below the poverty line. These families, then, are denied what they want to give their children: the best possible education.

As the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has said, it's not a case of one child; it's often a case of two or three or four children. Even if these fees are only \$50 a child, which doesn't seem like very little to me, they cannot afford to pay for three or four children. They have to pay these fees in addition to the costs they have for runners, scribblers, erasers, pencils, and those kinds of things. So the beginning of school presents a formidable cost for these parents, be it a single mother or underemployed or unemployed fathers. We ask: what are these parents to do when they are faced with the bills that come home from the school? Are they to cut down on clothing, on food? We've certainly heard enough about budgeting in here and the fact that sometimes parents don't have adequate money for food. The minister says that they spend money on other things. Well, very often the other things are clothing or rent.

In addition to that initial cost at the beginning of school, there is the cost of field trips and exercise books, which carry on throughout the year. When we look at some of the research that has been done, in 1983 -- some time ago -- we find that in Alberta, high school user fees ranged from \$25 to \$188 per year

per child. Think of having three children in high school -- not an impossibility. In junior high school the fees ranged from \$12 to \$174 per child. Elementary fees even ranged from \$15 to \$50 to as high as \$111 per child. How does one come up with the money for several children? This would be a hardship even for many middle-class families. Then again we have busing fees, which work a hardship on parents in rural Alberta, where we know the economy is in a state of crisis. In urban centres busing fees and lunchroom fees mean that children attending the kinds of programs their parents have chosen for them may not be able to continue their education in that. So I think we have to consider the impact there.

But there are other concerns. What is the impact on the teacher/student relationship when the teacher has to hound the children for fees?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, if I may. If the hon. member would consider adjourning the debate, I would like to then move a motion so that when the House assembles at 8 o'clock, it assemble in Committee of Supply.

MS LAING: I so move.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: It's been moved by the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore that the debate be now adjourned. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I would move, then, that when the House assembles this evening at 8 p.m., it assemble as the Committee of Supply.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: It's been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn and convene at 8 o'clock as the Committee of Supply. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

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