

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Friday, April 22, 1988 10:00 a.m.**
Date: 88/04/22

[The House met at 10 a.m.]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

As Canadians and as Albertans we give thanks for the precious gifts of freedom and peace which we enjoy.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly we rededicate ourselves to the valued traditions of parliamentary democracy as a means of serving our province and our country.

Amen.

head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 1987 annual report of the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm tabling today the annual report of the Crimes Compensation Board.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce visitors today from the constituency of Calgary-Bow, from the great city of the Calgary Flames, who are so incensed by last night's loss that they're on the verge of winning four straight. In any case, from Calgary-Bow, Donna Fulton and Linda Thomson in the members' gallery. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's my honour this morning to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, a charming young lady from the Bonnyville constituency who is seated in your gallery. Her name is Tanya Whittaker. She is a grade 6 student at the Medley River school and is the first-prize winner in the 1988 parliamentary essay contest. She did an excellent essay on the topic, How Can the Commonwealth Help Make the World a Better Place, which I can commend her on.

Tanya's accompanied today by her parents Stan and Trudy Whittaker, her sister Andrea, and her teacher Mr. Paul Atwal of the Medley River school. I'd ask that they stand and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. ALGER: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest I am delighted this morning to present to this august body a young lady who also competed in the annual parliamentary essay contest, that is designed to encourage our young folks in a greater awareness of Parliament and of the parliamentary procedures and systems. Rosanne Lewis was runner-up to the winner with her beautiful essay on How Can the Commonwealth Help Make the World a

Better Place in which to live. I would like to present her now in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome and congratulations of the House. Mr. Speaker, Rosanne Lewis.

I regret that I forgot to mention her parents are here with her, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Olds-Didsbury.

MR. BRASSARD: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly, seven energetic young students from the W.G. Murdoch school in Crossfield. They are accompanied by their teacher Roger Hankey, and I wonder if they would stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MS MJOLSNESS: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted this morning to be able to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly, 18 grade 8 students from Sir John Thompson school, located in the Edmonton-Calder constituency. They're accompanied by their teacher Mr. Bob Krzak. They're seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

MR. ALGER: Mr. Speaker, rarely, if ever, do I get the opportunity to introduce groups of students from the deep south. This morning it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Legislative Assembly, 20 delightful students from the Cayley junior high school, accompanied by their teacher Arnold Nugent and their supervisor Jennifer Richmond. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm plaudits of the House.

I would also like to introduce, Mr. Speaker, 64 equally bright students from the Senator Riley high school in High River. They're accompanied this morning by Mr. Bill Young, Mrs. Lois Ross, Mr. Dee Goble, and a parent Mrs. Mason. I would ask them to rise and accept the warm plaudits of the House.

Thank you for coming,

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, one moment, please.

Yesterday at the end of question period the Chair was presented with a unique set of arguments about asking the same question of various ministers, when we were dealing with the matter of a purported point of order regarding repetition. The Chair would like to point out, in particular to the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, the quotation from *Erskine May* which is this:

A question which one Minister has refused to answer cannot be addressed to another Minister and a question answered by one Minister may not be put to another.

There are a number of other citations which could be brought to bear if we encounter the same kind of challenge.

Leader of the Opposition, please.

Labour Relations Code

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the Minister of Labour. Experts on civil liberties and labour legislation throughout North America are in agreement that section 81 of the government's new labour code goes against fun-

damental freedoms; for example, not even allowing an individual to mount a boycott against an employer. Clearly, this is against freedom of association and freedom of expression. My question to the minister: will the minister clarify whether, in fact, this was the government's intention, or is it just a drafting error?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to explain to the hon. leader that it does represent the intent of the government. This was a decision that was made.

If the hon. leader would compare the present Labour Relations Act, Bill 60, and Bill 22, section 81, he will see subtle changes. Those changes, Mr. Speaker, are based upon certain rulings of the Supreme Court of Canada, and I would like to read them into the record for the sake of the hon. leader, in case he's not aware of them.

There is always some element of expression in picketing. Action on the part of the picketers will always accompany the expression, but not every action on the part of the picketers will be such as to alter the nature of the whole transaction and remove it from Charter protection for freedom of expression. That freedom, of course, would not extend to protect threats of violence or acts of violence. It would not protect the destruction of property, or assaults, or other clearly unlawful conduct. Another quotation:

A balance between the two competing concerns must be found. It is necessary in the general social interest that picketing be regulated and sometimes limited. It is reasonable to restrain picketing so that the conflict will not escalate beyond the actual parties.

And a last one, if I may, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. We're getting into legal niceties, which aren't really part of question period.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd ask the minister to listen to the questions and not have the answers ahead of time. I was talking about individuals' boycotting. I would ask this minister if he has any evidence of anywhere in the western world where this type of law has been brought in where you can actually say to the individuals that they cannot boycott an employer's products.

MR. SPEAKER: The same question as yesterday.

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, I was going to come to that precise point. The situation is that in Canada that is the law as promulgated by the Supreme Court of Canada:

A limitation on secondary picketing against a third party, that is, a non-ally, would be a reasonable limit prescribed by law which can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

That's why section 81 is written as it is.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to know from this minister -- we've checked with labour experts right across North America. They're frankly amazed and appalled by this labour legislation. I'd like to ask the minister whom he sat down with and talked to about bringing in this type of law. Where was it that he was getting the pressure from? Was it Peter Pocklington and only Peter Pocklington?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, I read the decision which was written by the chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I would ask this minister to stop

playing around and tell the truth. There is no other labour legislation in North America or western Europe. Why is it that we're bringing this draconian type of measure into Alberta when nowhere else in the western world is it brought in?

MR. SPEAKER: With due respect, the same question as yesterday.

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, I just answered his question.

MR. SPEAKER: And it's still here.
Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, may I try? I'd like to make my supplemental to the Attorney General. Has the Attorney General looked at the new legislation with respect . . . Or has he recommended that in order to pass the new legislation, we opt out of part of the charter of human rights?

MR. HORSMAN: I don't know what the hon. member is referring to, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms or the Alberta human rights legislation. But assuming he's referring to the Charter of Rights, I think I answered the question yesterday. But that's a legal question, and it is also a subject for debate during second reading on the principles of the legislation.

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question, Leader of the Opposition.

Home Care Funding

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to direct the second question -- it's a follow-up from the other day, on home care -- to the Deputy Premier. There are 426 individuals in Edmonton and Calgary in acute care beds waiting for auxiliary beds. That wastes \$59.7 million, tax dollars, a year. There are another 46 in acute care waiting for nursing home beds; that's another \$6.6 million in public funds. If that wasn't bad enough, there is another group of 266 rural care patients waiting for some type of long-term care. My question is: does the government still say it is adequately funding community care programs for the elderly?

MR. RUSSELL: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised at that question after having spent two days on the estimates of the department of community health. The Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care is here in the Assembly this morning to answer questions that relate to the hospital system.

MR. MARTIN: It's not the hospital system, Mr. Speaker.

Well, supplementary question. We're talking about government policy, and these are questions that were asked of the Premier and he answered, and I take it the Deputy Premier is in charge now. My question, then, to come back in a different way: it was said a couple of days ago that home care funding in this province was the best, again, in Canada. But we did some checking. It's approximately \$13.40 per capita here, \$24.97 in B.C., \$21.59 in Saskatchewan, \$30.23 in Manitoba. You may not like it, hon. Attorney General. My question is: does the government still stand by the statements they made yesterday that we're adequately funding home care in this province?

MR. RUSSELL: Well certainly, Mr. Speaker. The hon. leader took great pleasure in advising me of the figures used in

Manitoba, and we know what the people of Manitoba thought of that last government's policies.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that's what the people in Alberta want to hear, about what we're doing in home care.

My question is to this minister -- obviously, it's been proven in the Mirosh report, the government's own report. It says, "The demand for home care services exceeds the supply." Yet we get this stubborn government that refuses to do anything about it. Why does the Deputy Premier and this government refuse to admit that home care is inadequately funded in this province?

MR. RUSSELL: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. leader is going to put questions like that in the House, he should make sure of what the facts are and what the record is. Let us go back to the time when there was no home care in Alberta; there wasn't any at all. It was brought in at the time when our present Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Helen Hunley, was the minister responsible, and it has grown dramatically, each budget, since that time. It's a very popular program, we know. It's contained in reports prepared by the government that the demand will always be there, and we are responding to that demand.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, that is such drivel.

Would this government admit the truth, then, that since the last election they've actually cut back on the amount of money they're spending on home care? That's the reality; admit it, Mr. Minister.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, we'll stack up our home care program against any in Canada.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say as supplementary information that not all home care is reported under the home care program; for instance, with respect to community and occupational health. I know there are some governments in this country that deliver everything as direct government control. In our view, there are many citizens in this province who can be funded and purchase their own home care, and it is under a different heading. I think there is a great danger in making a complete comparison, figure to figure.

MR. CHUMIR: To the Deputy Premier. The Calgary board of health, which is \$1 million short with respect to its home care budget this year, has also been claiming for years that it is the victim of a \$1 million shortfall in its general funding as compared to Edmonton on a per capita basis. It's been asking this government to deal with that. When is the government going to address that problem, Mr. Speaker?

MR. RUSSELL: Well, Mr. Speaker, I sense that the hon. member is making a pitch for the philosophy of his brothers in the government of Ontario: don't ever try and contain government expenditures; just keep increasing taxes. If that's the platform the hon. member is putting forward, we're prepared to deal with that.

But I go back to the matter of home care in Alberta. It's a superb program. It has been growing steadily. We know there is an increasing demand, and we are responding to it within the confines of the province's ability to support those important services.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

Storm Forecasting

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do this with a certain amount of fear that it's repetitious, but it isn't, if you will listen carefully. It's also with respect to weather modification, but it's to do with the report by Environment Canada, and it's to the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications. This is with respect to the report by Environment Canada on the Edmonton tornado July 31, recommendation 6, Mr. Speaker, which is much shorter than the Minister of Labour recently said.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

MR. TAYLOR: Somebody else is sitting and honking there, too, I see. It's a disease.

The Government of Canada and the Governments of Provinces affected by severe summer weather should encourage and support research to improve early detection and prediction of severe local storms including tornadoes.

For example, recent proposals by the Alberta Research Council staff members for severe storm research deserve serious consideration. We can ill afford to lose research expertise in severe storm forecasting, radar data processing . . .

So to the minister then: was there any attempt to find funding from the federal government in view of this recommendation for the Alberta Research Council's expertise in this weather modification program?

MR. SPEAKER: With regard to storm forecasts.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how to observe your admonition. But to address two points. Number one, there is some discussion ongoing between the federal and provincial governments and especially among researchers about improvements in storm forecasting. They generally are discussing this under the title of mesometeorology. There is also discussion ongoing concerning financial arrangements, if those should be possible.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, supplemental to the minister. Was the minister not aware that since the radar and machinery used to track violent summer storms had been shut down by his refusal to re-fund the department -- was he not made aware that it would jeopardize Environment Canada's ability to forecast things like the tornado that hit Edmonton last summer?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, there is quite a variety of radar equipment. In fact, I believe that some of the co-ordination that's now being examined would see a potentially better use of the existing capability. I'm not aware that the closure of any of the radar equipment that had been operating would in any significant way affect a future program.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I would advise him to read the Hage report. Was he not, then, aware that 42 scientists had been laid off from the centre who were there expressly for forecasting and mapping storms in this area that hit Edmonton last summer? Was he not made aware that laying off 42 scientists would have seriously jeopardized the possibility of forecasting violent summer storms?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear that the purpose of the meteorology staff or expert research staff connected with weather patterns was primarily directed to

weather modification, and that had relatively little to do, I think nothing to do virtually, with forecasting in the Edmonton area. They were concentrating on the area in the Red Deer region, having to do with hail suppression and manufacture of artificial rain.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, Red Deer to Edmonton -- you can't modify the weather unless you can forecast the weather.

Maybe the last question then, Mr. Speaker, should go to the Deputy Premier. Would the Deputy Premier -- in view of the fact now of our water shortages, the fact of summer storms that we are not able to get warning of, and the fact that we cut down a great deal of export of expertise that we were selling here -- not now reconsider the whole process of funding for weather modification?

MR. SPEAKER: This is clearly repetitious of the last four to five days, and the Chair can supply references once more.

The Chair recognizes supplementaries. Main question, the leader of the Representative caucus.

MR. TAYLOR: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon. Duly noted.

Natural Gas Marketing

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Energy, who has been neglected somewhat in question period. The natural gas consumers in Ontario are in the process of banding together to force Alberta to cut natural gas prices. The association of municipalities has formed a natural gas buying consortium called Gasamo. Could the minister indicate the status of that consortium and the potential effect that it may have on the sales of natural gas from Alberta?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, there have been attempts made by a number of municipalities and organizations in the province of Ontario and Manitoba to try to buy gas directly from producers here in Alberta rather than continue to get their gas through the distributors, who generally have had long-term contracts with producers here in the province.

As part of the natural gas deregulation process over the last couple of years, we've maintained the position that gas going into the core market -- the market for residential and commercial users needs to be assured of a long-term supply. We have asked the Energy Resources Conservation Board and the Public Utilities Board to give us a report on how that core market should be served. They gave us their recommendations. We are now having discussions with Ontario and Quebec to see if we can work out with those two provinces an arrangement whereby their core market would be served in the same way that ours would be if we accepted the recommendations of our PUB and ERCB. So those discussions are ongoing. We've had a very co-operative reaction from the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and I'll be meeting with both ministers very shortly to see if we can resolve the matter.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, supplementary. Could the minister indicate the work that's going on with the province of Saskatchewan in terms of agreements with Ontario and Quebec? Are they co-operating with Alberta and giving support to the

Alberta position?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's share of the market is relatively small into the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. They have indicated in the past that they agree with the concept of the core market, but at the same time they didn't want to hold back some of their producers who weren't getting sales from getting some direct sales into Ontario. So Saskatchewan have not been as co-operative as we would like to have seen them on this matter, and that is why some of those municipalities in Ontario are trying to arrange these sales. However, if we can reach an agreement with the government of Ontario with respect to a policy on how the core market can be served in that province in the same way that it would be served in this province, then we wouldn't need to worry about what other provinces such as Saskatchewan might do.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, supplementary to the minister. Failing an agreement with Ontario and/or Quebec, has the minister a follow-up strategy such as referring the matter to federal government legislation, the combines legislation, which would indicate that there's a combine formed here that affects very significantly the economy of Alberta?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, all indications at this point are that we would be able to reach some kind of an agreement with both provinces. Officials have been meeting over the last month or two, and as I say, I'll be meeting with both ministers shortly and expect that we'll be able to reach some kind of an agreement. Alberta or any province that owns its resources has control over its resources, and we have a gas removal permit process that is in place. We don't want to use it in an unco-operative way, so I won't speculate on how it could be used.

However, we do expect that there would be an agreement. We have seen in Manitoba, for example, actions on the part of that government to try to get around long-term contracts and to try to take over a utility in that province. They were spumed by the National Energy Board in trying to get out of the contract, recently appealed that case to the federal courts, and lost the case there. I point that out as an effort by a province to get around the process of co-operatively working together with the producing province. And I think, as I said earlier, the reaction we're getting from those two provinces is the best we've ever had, in my memory, on gas and oil matters in those two provinces.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Little Bow?

Calgary-Buffalo, followed by Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. CHUMIR: Yes. I'm wondering whether the minister could give us a report as to whether any institutions in Alberta, such as the universities or hospitals, are proceeding to arrange long-term natural gas supply contracts pursuant to their right to do so under the recent ERCB report, Mr. Speaker.

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is inaccurate in saying that they have the right to do so in view of the recent report. The report from the ERCB and the Public Utilities Board was a set of recommendations to the government, and we have not accepted those recommendations at this point. We have not accepted them at this point because we want to discuss those recommendations with Ontario and Quebec, and if we can get agreement from those two provinces to follow up

on those recommendations, then we will do the same thing here in Alberta.

MR. PASHAK: Mr. Speaker, the minister mentioned the core market concept, which serves to keep the price of natural gas up for Alberta residential consumers. Would the minister make an attempt to justify why Albertans must pay up to 80 cents more per gigajoule for natural gas for the commodity portion of their natural gas bill than some American buyers, even residential buyers in the United States?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the only difference between the comments from the hon. member in this Legislative Assembly and those in Ontario is simply the province, with a preoccupation to try to have the producers in this province carry the burden of long-term supplies for consumers in this country, whether it be Alberta or elsewhere. Alberta consumers have been protected, unlike any other consumers in any part of this country, for many years through the natural gas price protection program, and Alberta consumers will continue to get the lowest priced gas of anywhere in the country.

Meeting of Pricing Committee of OPEC

MR. DOWNEY: On a different matter here, Mr. Speaker, my questions are also to the Minister of Energy. I understand that next week in Vienna the OPEC group of countries is holding meetings and that they have invited some non-OPEC participants. I would like to ask the Minister of Energy if Alberta has been invited to participate in those meetings.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, the pricing committee of OPEC, which consists of the countries of Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Venezuela, Nigeria, and Algeria, is having a meeting on April 26 with a number of non-OPEC countries for the purpose of seeing how it might be able to stabilize prices. This meeting follows up a number of meetings that the pricing committee has had with individual countries over the last few months, and the 26th meeting would be followed up by a consultative meeting with the OPEC countries to see how they should follow up as a result of the meetings on the 26th. Alberta was invited to attend these meetings, as was the Texas Railroad Commission, which is a regulatory body in Texas concerned with the interests of producers. In the interests of our producers in this province we have accepted an invitation to attend that meeting.

MR. DOWNEY: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister of Energy exactly what the status of the meeting is, whether it will be able to come up with any meaningful resolutions, and what Alberta's status will be at that meeting.

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the meeting, as I indicated, is to try to stabilize prices, and the OPEC group are indicating that they want non-OPEC countries to try to cooperate with respect to production quotas or cutting back on their production. They primarily invited the exporting countries of the world, not the producing ones, because Canada is really just barely a net exporter. So our share of the oil on the world market is not a significant factor in the world marketplace. However, we feel it's important to be there to assess the market situations and developments as they occur at that meeting. We've been invited to be either an observer or to be there and

the OPEC group would arrange meetings with ministers and officials from the other countries.

MR. DOWNEY: My final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Should discussion emerge at that meeting and if the province of Alberta were asked to cut back production in the interests of price support, would Alberta be amenable to that suggestion?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, our purpose in being there is to assess the situation, and that's why we have sent the chairman of our Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission, Mr. Dale Lucas, along with Joel Thompson from my office. The purpose of them being there is to observe, as I indicated, the proceedings. If they decide as a group that there would be some production cutbacks, we would have to assess that at the time. However, we have been cutting back in our production in the last number of years with respect to the fact that we've had shut-in oil in this province. The pipeline capacity has been such that Alberta producers haven't been able to sell all the oil they've been producing. We want to assess the market situation and see what follow-up would be necessary after those meetings.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Forest Lawn, followed by Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. PASHAK: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Energy. What action does the minister plan to take to ensure that we have the price stability that's essential for major projects, such as the Husky Oil upgrader, other than to be constantly subjected to the vagaries of OPEC decisions?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, how do you answer a question like that? I presume from the hon. member from the ND Party that they would want to try to be outside the world market situation some how or other by imposing prices for Canadian oil that's produced. I know that the oil industry and others would think the idea is absurd.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, supplementary to the minister, adding on to the hon. Member for Stettler. With respect to cutting back production in Alberta, has the minister looked at how that fits into the proposed free trade agreement with the U.S.?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, both questions are hypothetical in that we don't know what the result of that meeting is going to be. As I said earlier, we are there to get an assessment of what's happening. Once we find out what happens, we will then decide on what we would do.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark, Bow Valley, Calgary-Mountain View.

Overmedication of the Elderly

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, according to a noted geriatrician here in Edmonton that I've recently had conversations with, not only do many elderly patients who are referred to his office come in overmedicated, but he also feels that many patients in nursing homes are given increasing doses of laxatives instead of high fibre food, and mood altering drugs, propped up in front of the TV, instead of hiring better recreational and

rehabilitation staff. Has the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care himself been alerted to the problems of overuse and misuse of drugs for the elderly, and if so, what steps has he taken to alleviate this very sad situation?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, certainly as Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care I do have concerns about the accusations that are made from time to time about overmedication, overuse of drugs by certain practitioners with respect to treating elderly people. The College of Physicians and Surgeons, as well, has expressed concern and does offer guidelines from time to time. I'd like also for the Assembly to know that if hon. members or relatives or friends of patients in nursing homes or auxiliary hospitals believe there is some misuse by a particular physician of the prescription of drugs to a patient, that should be reported to the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

We all would like to see a situation where fewer and fewer drugs is used and greater emphasis is placed on other types of therapy. That's why we have followed so closely the recommendations in the Hyde committee report on nursing homes to provide additional funding for physiotherapy and occupational therapy programs, why we have followed so closely the recommendations on improving our nursing home and auxiliary hospital system by adding additional components to our structures to allow for baths and pools and that kind of therapy which is often much more effective than drugs. We're doing a lot to counter that, but if the hon. member has some specific medical practitioners in mind, I would be pleased if he would pass them on either to me or to the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

REV. ROBERTS: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister himself said that there are 1,000 too many physicians in this province. As far as I know, it's only physicians who can prescribe medications, and they give them a lot to the elderly. So it's far more serious than the minister outlays.

What is the minister in fact doing in response to the Goldberg drug utilization report, which indicates that not only are Canadians among the most medicated in the world but that elderly in the community are on three drugs a day, that elderly in long-term care centres are on eight medications a day, and that there's other considerable evidence of misuse of drugs among the elderly? What are you doing about this?

MR. SPEAKER: All right, hon. member.
Mr. Minister.

MR. M. MOORE: Unfortunately, the hon. member hasn't had an opportunity yet to read studies and reports about the situation in Alberta, and he refers instead to a Canada-wide publication that may not be applicable in total to this province.

In addition to that, the hon. member wasn't listening very closely yesterday morning, when I was speaking in Calgary to the Association of Registered Nurses, because I certainly never suggested that there are 1,000 too many doctors in Alberta.

The facts of the matter are that the prescription of drugs is something that is a concern to medical practitioners across the country, a concern to people like members of the College of Physicians and Surgeons and to myself. But the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care in Alberta doesn't suddenly stand up and say that doctors should quit prescribing drugs. We have to do other things and try to give them the tools to move in other ways. Certainly the funding we've provided and the expertise that's being developed at the Youville here in Edmonton and

that I hope will develop at the Colonel Belcher in Calgary is going to go a long ways to assisting our medical community in learning new ways to deal with people other than simply prescribing drugs.

In conclusion, I don't subscribe to the hon. member's accusations that there is vast overmedication in Alberta. There may be some, but I don't think the situation is . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.
Supplementary.

REV. ROBERTS: Well, Mr. Speaker, the only independent government review of the situation was issued last week by the Christian Labour Association, which also said that there's a shortage of staff and an increased use of drugs in nursing homes. We're talking about utilization here. Has the minister directed the government's own Watanabe utilization committee to look at a review of drug utilization for elderly in Alberta?

MR. M. MOORE: The utilization committee which is being chaired by Dr. Watanabe, the dean of the Faculty of Medicine in Calgary, is looking into that and a number of other areas as well to try to reduce the utilization in various areas of medical care. I haven't directed him to specifically look at overutilization of drugs, because I believe that those matters are probably better dealt with by the geriatric experts in their pursuit of trying to find better ways to improve the health of our senior citizens. The hon. member mentioned in his opening comments that a noted geriatrician here in Edmonton whom we both know has indicated that he believes there is concern with respect to the overmedication of senior citizens. It's that kind of assistance that this government is helping to put forward that is going to resolve the problem.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, the situation needs far more aggressive action than what the minister is lamely talking about here.

The Goldberg report also suggests that 20 percent of geriatric hospital admissions are due to the overuse or misuse of drugs among elderly in the community and that they get into hospital inappropriately. Is the minister doing anything in terms of taking an aggressive look into this situation, an inquiry, to see whether these kinds of needless hospitalizations are taking place as is indicated here?

MR. M. MOORE: The hon. member, Mr. Speaker, is so short of research money that he has to get all of his information based upon situations that exist in other parts of the country. How about taking a look at the medicare system in Alberta, which is second to none in Canada for seniors? How about taking a look at some of the recommendations that are being made that we're now following up on in terms of care and treatment of our elderly citizens? To drag up a report that is made based upon situations existing in other parts of Canada might indeed alarm a lot of people. I have indicated that I believe we ought to be continually concerned about overmedication and overprescription of drugs for seniors, and we are. But the hon. member has a responsibility, if he believes there are some individual cases that have been brought to his attention, to bring them either to my attention or to the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Continually, Mr. Speaker, just in conclusion, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre gets up and maligns the medical profession and a lot of other people with absolutely no evidence,

and it's about time he either put up or shut up. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjection] Order please, hon. member.

Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, in spite of the fuming of the volcano over there, the point is that there's a litany of complaints with respect to nursing homes. It's rather hard to blow the whistle on the family doctor or the family nursing home. Will he not now consider putting an independent advocate for senior citizens, senior citizen homes? Why will he not consider putting that in now?

MR. M. MOORE: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I do not have the ministerial responsibility for senior citizens' homes. That rests with the hon. Solicitor General. If the hon. member is talking about nursing homes or auxiliary hospitals, nursing home and auxiliary hospital patients have always had an opportunity to make whatever concerns they need to make known directly to the nursing home operator. If that isn't effective, then they have an opportunity to make them known directly to me, which many of them do.

We have an independent committee called the Health Facilities Review Committee, chaired by the hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff, which visits unannounced nursing homes and auxiliary hospitals to make certain that any problems associated with the care of our seniors in those homes are dealt with. Oftentimes that committee makes its visit on the basis of an individual request from a citizen or a relative of a citizen that's in one of those homes that writes directly to me. There is that full opportunity that's been put in place by legislation passed in this Legislature called the Health Facilities Review Committee Act, and the report was just tabled three weeks ago.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Privatization of Social Services Delivery

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is unclear about its economic development priorities. It supports large business, neglects small business, undertakes unnecessary commercial enterprise, and begins to privatize social services. Now Albertans are faced with the spectre of government utilizing social policy as an instrument of economic development. Will the Minister of Social Services admit that the social policy paper Caring & Responsibility will in fact lead inevitably to the privatization of a broad range of social services?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I think that the paper under discussion allows Albertans to comment on a whole host of social services in a very broad way -- it is not just the Department of Social Services -- and to make their views known. I think also that the paper gives us an opportunity to measure our programs presently in place and those that might be contemplated in the future against a set of principles that all of us can agree on.

MR. MITCHELL: So the answer is yes.

To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: will the minister please comment, then, on how there is some clear indication that his government is now turning to social service delivery as a means of stimulating the private sector and of de-

veloping the economy?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how the hon. member reached his second question from the first, but I would suspect that it's the fair amount of tension that he's been under recently.

Mr. Speaker, in the initial question the hon. member was grossly in error with respect to the government's view and support of small business. We've enunciated over a period of months the support to small business and the fact that it is critical to the growth and job creation in this province, and it is the key priority for us with respect to economic development. Should opportunities present themselves for small businessmen, whom the hon. member and I both agree are so important to the economy of Alberta, to participate in providing services to citizens that are of a social nature, we would certainly encourage it.

MR. MITCHELL: We keep hearing the same story time and time again, but we look at the facts.

When will the government be emphasizing a priority on real economic development strategies rather than focusing on the privatization of such services as social services, important human services, and rather than neglecting an emphasis on small business?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I think it's clear to all of us that you cannot separate economic activity from social obligations and social programs. They are closely linked because of the capacity of the citizens of Alberta, either through their government or otherwise, to provide programs to the citizens that are directly linked to the level of economic activity and growth in the economy. We're well aware of that, and that was a clear comment in the paper that was recently released.

MR. MITCHELL: Is the minister therefore saying that it is his government's intention to pursue social service delivery in the private sector in some sense of achieving cost efficiency regardless of that the risk is in terms of effectively delivering important human services?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker. . . .

MR. TAYLOR: Plead repetition and sit down.

MR. SHABEN: No, I'm not going to sit down, Mr. Speaker.

I'd already indicated that we believe there are opportunities for individuals who are in business for themselves and are in business for profit to provide services to citizens. There are many professionals who do it now, so there is no reason why companies cannot in certain instances provide service. But it is not the intention of the government to sacrifice quality of service in favour of profit. Anyone who believes that the government is the only institution that can deliver social programs to people is stupid.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to come back, because there is a great deal of confusion, to the Deputy Premier, who released the paper. Would the Deputy Premier list, then, the services now covered by government that they're looking at privatizing, so we can take a look at it?

MR. RUSSELL: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't quite know why the hon. leader would raise that question, because the policy state-

ment is very straightforward. It is a statement of government policy. It indicates that we believe as a government that people have a responsibility to look after themselves and also have a responsibility to those who have the misfortune of not being able to look after themselves. That's very clear, and I don't know how, out of a statement like that, he can say that this is going to lead to the privatization of government services.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed?

Any additional supplementaries?

Additional information, Minister of Social Services, briefly, followed by Cypress-Redcliff.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I thought it was important that I draw to the attention of the House and, of course, *Hansard* that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark answered his own first question. It certainly was not answered in the affirmative by the Minister of Social Services, and I can see how the hon. member labours under some problems with the kinds of conclusions that he draws from an answer given. The Department of Social Services from time to time entertains submissions from the public, maybe from the private sector, and many times from the public-sector community organizations. Those proposals give over information as to how services can be better delivered and enhanced for the citizens of this province. I hope the hon. member isn't suggesting that at no time we should ever entertain those proposals and that only somebody wearing a civil service T-shirt can look after the people of this province.

MR. SPEAKER: No, hon. member; not now. Sorry. Take your place. Your supplementaries are gone, sir.
Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister. In the outline of groups associated with some privatization of the Department of Social Services, I wonder if the minister can inform the Assembly how many small businesses and how many jobs are created through the privatization of that department?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, it would be difficult for me at this point to quantify the number of businesses that are now involved with social services that were not previously there a few years ago. From my information it would be my judgment that an overwhelming percent of any service changes are now being done by community organizations, and other than professionals who are hired by our department to do assessments and treatment of people, there are very few businesses involved in social services delivery.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Chair understands that two members may wish to raise purported points of order.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with regard, I believe, to your ruling that -- it didn't matter that much, because

I don't think he knew the answer anyhow.

MR. SPEAKER: What's the point of order?

MR. TAYLOR: The point of order is with respect . . . [interjections] I'm sorry.

It's with respect to the fact that you ruled that the question on weather modification was repetitious. The point I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker, is that it's a modern science, and we're used to asking questions, but we would never think that one question on energy should stop the whole session or a question on welfare should stop the whole session. Weather modification, Mr. Speaker, is nothing more -- and energy is a very good comparison -- than a broad generic term today to cover astrophysics, oceanographers, meteorologists: very many features indeed. The Alberta Research Council had a department, as they do in energy and as they do in coal, on meteorology, as they used to call it.

So today the questions on weather modification I asked were with reference to the warning system that we have in place for violent summer storms for populated areas such as Edmonton. It had nothing to do with the rainmaking capacity or hail suppression or the snowpack. These are all different elements of the same science that's called weather modification. Mr. Speaker, I know in the early stages it may be almost a Pavlovian reaction to hear the words "weather modification" and immediately think of the black box in the early days of rainmaking in the west. But the science for modifying weather has progressed as far in the last 100 years as the science of looking for oil and water, which used to also be considered a witch box.

So today's question, I don't think, overlapped in any way at all any earlier questions on a very broad science indeed.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, and the citation from Standing Orders or *Beauchesne* is?

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I searched *Beauchesne* thoroughly, and I couldn't find the words "weather modification" anywhere.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair is still not prepared to modify its position, "weather" or not the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon concurs.

The Chair would point out with due respect to the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon that the line of questioning today did indeed, for the major question and the first two supplementaries, deal with the matter of radar detection of storms, citing the example of the tornado. However, in the final supplementary the member forgot the carefully crafted atmospheric conditions of his whole line of questioning and then threw in the weather modification question again, which the Chair believes is for the fourth time in recent history.

The Chair again has sufficient references here, not only out of Standing Orders -- Standing Order 23(c), about needless repetition, which goes back to the last question, hon. member -- but also *Beauchesne* 359(8) comes into play again. Also with regard to *Erskine May*, page 342:

Questions already answered, or to which an answer has been refused. . . . Questions are not in order which renew or repeat in substance questions already answered or to which an answer has been refused or which fall within a class of question which a Minister has refused to answer.

Again, with *Erskine May*, page 343:

A question which one Minister has refused to answer cannot be addressed to another Minister and a question answered by one Minister may not be put to another.

An answer to a question cannot be insisted upon, if the answer be refused by a Minister, and the Speaker has refused to allow supplementary questions in these circumstances.

Therefore, the Chair does not regard it as a point of order on that issue.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark for . . . [interjection] All right. No, that one fails. Edmonton-Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 23(i) and (j), I'd like to point out a case here, I think a classic case of the pot calling the kettle black. In the question period today it seems that the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care was imputing some motive to me about maligning physicians, when in fact I and one thousand other witnesses yesterday heard the minister say something like, "We have 3,000 physicians in this province," and he might have used the word "probably" -- but he said, "We probably need only about 2,000 of them, maybe 2,500." Such a reference yesterday was, I think, causing great distress for the minister. I have never maligned . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps some order please, hon. member. Order please. For clarification: the statement was made outside of the House yesterday? Where was the statement made yesterday? [interjections] The Chair is speaking to the Member for Edmonton-Centre, please.

REV. ROBERTS: So the minister in saying that I stand up in this House and malign doctors, as he did in question period today, I find to be completely unsubstantiated, avowing a certain motive to me which I think is probably closer to his own heart. I have never maligned physicians. I was asking today about a utilization review of the use of drugs and medications and that there be a separate independent government inquiry into this matter. I feel the physicians and the nurses of this province are struggling hard with changing circumstances to meet the needs of Albertans, and it's unfortunate that few of them are any longer friends of this minister. I'd ask that these remarks be withdrawn under Standing Order 23(i) and (j).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, on the hon. member's point of order, the remarks the hon. member is referring to were ones made by myself yesterday morning in Calgary on a panel before the Association of Registered Nurses annual convention. I was on a panel with the president of the Alberta Medical Association, a noted nurse from Ontario, and the president of the Consumers' Association of Canada. It was a very good panel; we had a very good discussion. The hon. member's comments do not represent in any way the attitude that I brought to that meeting, and the hon. member should confine his remarks about my remarks to what happens in this Assembly, as I did this morning. The only thing I want to repeat is that the hon. member, when he decides to malign people in this Assembly that are not here to protect themselves, ought to either put up or shut up.

MR. SPEAKER: At this point in time the Chair will review *Hansard*, and advises the Member for Edmonton-Centre and the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care to examine the *Hansard* record to see what was spoken in the House on this day. Any comments made outside the House have no bearing upon what occurs here, and any complaint that is raised by the Member for

Edmonton-Centre in that regard is null and void with respect to what took place in the Chamber. However, the Chair regards the issue at the moment as being just a matter of complaint -- disputation as to facts between two members of the House -- and directs both members to look at the *Hansard* record and the matter will just simply flow.

The Chair would recognize the Government House Leader to give some direction to the House as to business of the House before Orders of the Day is called.

MR. YOUNG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the information of the House with respect to business for the coming week, on Monday afternoon next it is proposed to deal with estimates for Hospitals and Medical Care, and on Monday evening it is not proposed for the House to sit. On Tuesday evening: estimates for the Department of Municipal Affairs. Mr. Speaker, following consultation with the House leader for the opposition, it has been agreed that Executive Council estimates will be dealt with on Wednesday afternoon next. On Thursday afternoon after question period, pursuant to motion passed, the business of the House will be adjourned until 8 o'clock in the evening. Therefore, on Thursday evening, April 28, the estimates for the Department of Labour will be called, and on Friday morning, April 29, it will be estimates for Public Works, Supply and Services. All this, Mr. Speaker, in the hopeful expectation that the flu will not strike any of the aforementioned ministers.

MR. SPEAKER: Before Orders of the Day are called, the Chair has been informed of another point of order.

Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order which relates to a policy I believe you implemented last year concerning ministers' supplementary information at the end of question period, which results in the member who originally asked the question being permitted a supplementary question, if I'm not mistaken, or even two. In the heat of the question period debate today, I understand how that particular ruling might have been missed, but a circumstance did arise which calls it into question and which I believe limited my ability and my right within this House to ask a supplementary question under circumstances of the government or a minister providing supplementary information.

The circumstance I'm referring to is this. I asked a series of questions on social service delivery, then was answered four times by the various ministers. Then a member in another party asked a supplementary question to my set. The Minister of Social Services got up and answered not that question but an earlier question of mine, or added supplementary information to her answer to that earlier question of mine. My reaction would be that normally that kind of supplementary information would have been provided at the end of question period and I would have been accorded the courtesy of being allowed a further supplementary question.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member, for raising the concern; nevertheless, the rationale is false. What indeed transpired was that main question number seven, as raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, was put, together with three supplementary questions. Then the Leader of the Opposition spoke on a supplementary, and before the Member for Cypress-Redcliff came in on an additional supplementary, the Minister of Social Services gave supplementary information.

That is not the supplementary information given at the end of question period. It was a matter of giving additional information which flowed from the question and its supplementaries raised by the Member for Edmonton-Norwood, the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MITCHELL: Why would you . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry, hon. member.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

head: COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

[Mr. Gogo in the Chair]

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

Department of Education

MR. CHAIRMAN: The terms of reference for the committee for the three votes are found on page 125 of the government estimates book, as well as page 49 of the supplementary information. Would hon. members wishing to put questions, comments, or amendments to the votes before the House indicate to the Chair.

Hon. members, the Chair has a list of about 15 to 18 members who have been attempting to get into estimates the past two departments of Community and Occupational Health as well as Environment, so the Chair will use its discretion in the order of those requesting information following the comments by the Member for Edmonton-Belmont.

Hon. minister, would you care to make opening comments to the committee?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This has been a busy year for education in this province -- as every year is, but this one's been particularly busy. People often ask me why it seems that the Minister of Education is always commenting on so many things of interest, and I'm always responding by saying it's because education matters and it matters to every one of us. It's something that touches directly over half the Alberta population, and for that reason government's commitment to education as its number one priority is one we take exceedingly seriously.

Before I begin, Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a few remarks about the leadership within the Department of Education and speak generally to the quality of public service we have in this province and specifically to the abilities within my own Department of Education. There are clearly lonely moments for all of us in public life. That quality is not restricted to those who are elected, but certainly those who are part of the public service must make decisions too that are difficult and, at times, heart-wrenching. I would like to commend and thank personally the people within the Department of Education, in particular my deputy minister, Dr. Bosetti, whose commitment to young people in this province is second to none. Clearly, we have an education system, and within our own department the bottom line is about students. We make no apologies for that and it will continue.

To the department staff who are clearly under the leadership of the deputy minister from an administration point of view, my

thanks not only for their hard work throughout a tough year that was dealing with the fiscal scene of the entire province and Education's part in controlling that cost, but also for the work that has been done on the social policy paper and on the School Act. As well, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to give a special word of thanks to my own personal office staff. We have a pretty fine group, and we also have a pledge that when any one of us gets down the others are responsible for bringing us all up. So for my executive assistant, Mr. Osbaldeston, and to the three women who work in my office I give a special word of thanks.

I would like to begin the discussion of the estimates for Education by focusing on what I believe is to be the most important component of Education; namely, what are we trying to achieve? It's not a question of how; it's a question of what. As I said when I made the announcement in January of the 2 per cent increase in basic education grants for 1988-89, education is fundamental to every Albertan, but it is especially fundamental to our young people. We have to ensure that they have the capacity and the ability to embrace and shape the future. Our government's priority on education is not a priority on preserving the past or even a priority on maintaining the status quo. It is clearly a priority on ensuring that the education system provides students with high-quality education and prepares them for the challenges they will face in the future.

Members of the committee, I believe the estimates we're discussing today reflect this government's commitment to education and, most importantly, to the young people of Alberta. In my term as minister, I've become increasingly aware of the quality of education we have here in Alberta. As Albertans, we certainly can be very proud of that quality, and it certainly relates to the commitment we have as a province to ensuring that young people receive an excellent education, one that addresses their individual needs and their aspirations and gives them the skills, the attitudes, and the determination to make positive contributions to the future of this province. We're fortunate to have had a wide range of people involved in education, people who share that commitment to excellence. We have dedicated and capable trustees who offer their time and their expertise. We have teachers who are highly skilled, who are professional in their dedication to high standards of education and, most importantly, who care about their students. We also have leaders within the Department of Education, many of whom have changed over the past year, have taken advantage of the excellent early retirement package which government proposed. To those people who have been part of the foundation which we enjoy today, I offer my thanks.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous job Alberta teachers do for our young people. It's a job that too many of us take for granted. It is a job where the responsibilities and the expectations have grown dramatically in response to a changing society. It is a job that very few of us could do well. Finally, it is a job which is vitally important to the children and to the future of this province. At the recent annual representative assembly in Calgary, I had the opportunity at the Alberta Teachers' Association to meet with a number of teachers from all parts of the province and was reminded once again that although individual teachers may disagree on certain issues and on certain directions, they share a very deep commitment to excellence in education for our young people.

I do want to speak briefly on the quality of education, I know from my meetings with other ministers across Canada that our system of education is very highly regarded by other provinces. I know from the visits we have had from experts

from Japan and China and other places that other people come to Alberta to see firsthand the excellent programs offered in our schools, to see our financing system, our legislative system, and our curriculum system, which is student focused.

On many occasions I've described what I believe to be the case, and that is that Alberta education is on the leading edge. I've mentioned that one of the key reasons for this is the quality and dedication of our teachers. In the use of technology in schools, for example, Alberta continues to lead the way. With the distance learning project, that I'll refer to later, we'll be able to expand and develop our capabilities even further. In curriculum, we're moving ahead with new junior and senior high school courses, with new resources and new teachings that will better meet the needs of all our students.

Some citizens may criticize the direction we're taking in secondary education. Some have said that the focus is too narrow, that there's too much emphasis on core subjects and not enough room for options that are interesting to students. I have no apologies for the fact that the focus may be interpreted as a narrower one. We've made a clear statement that we believe the best preparation for our young people lies in a firm foundation of basic knowledge and skills. We've also made a statement that schools cannot be expected to serve all the diverse needs of students. There has to be room for community agencies, for parents, for service groups to get involved in providing students with opportunities to develop their special interests and talents outside the school. Schools and teachers can't be expected to do it all.

Finally, I've never understood why it is that subjects that are considered core courses are labeled as boring while optional courses are interesting and keep students involved in school. I see no reason why our core courses can't be stimulating, interesting, and fun for students. That is our aim. We're moving to a format for core courses which provides a required and an optional component. In that way, our expectation is that all students will learn the core materials, while the optional component may be used for enrichment or remedial work.

With the additional support . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, please. Order in the committee, please.

Hon. minister.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: With the additional support provided in the budget estimates for the secondary curriculum, I am confident we will continue to move forward in implementing new secondary courses and programs, and I'm confident these programs will serve the interests of all students and prepare them well for the future.

Interestingly, Mr. Chairman, the government of Ontario and the government of British Columbia have announced that they are now just entering into that all-important review of secondary curriculum which Alberta is now implementing, having launched it five years ago.

So in what other ways is education in Alberta at the leading edge? We have a system of developing, administering, and marking provincewide examinations that is second to none. We've developed a diagnostic testing program in reading, as well, for our elementary students, which is achieving international acclaim. Both diploma exams for grade 12 students and achievement exams in grades 3, 6, and 9 have students as their focus. There's an additional focus as well. The information we receive from our provincial testing program is invaluable in as-

sessing the results of our education efforts overall and in determining whether our standards and our achievements are improving.

We now have some very exciting indications that the achievement of students is increasing in Alberta. Since 1983 overall achievement in students in grade 3 science and grade 6 mathematics has increased, while in grade 9 social studies achievement has remained about the same. For example, the level of accuracy of grade 6 students on the mathematics exam has increased from 90.5 percent in 1983 to 95.8 percent in 1987, a clear indication of improvement. A special review of the quality of student writing on English 30 diploma examinations shows that the performance of students increased significantly in 1987 over the results in 1984. Members of the committee, this is concrete evidence of the fact that not only do we have an excellent education system but our collective efforts to improve that system are paying off and they're paying off for students.

Another indication of Alberta being on the leading edge is something that I consider to be my very own school in this whole system of education, and that is the Alberta School for the Deaf. It is the only school of its kind that is operated by the Minister of Education, the other school being the Alberta Correspondence School. I was very pleased to announce on April 21 that Mr. Joseph McLaughlin was appointed as principal of the Alberta School for the Deaf. Alberta continues to be on the leading edge, for Mr. McLaughlin is the first deaf principal of a school for the deaf in Canada. He is also the first deaf senior manager in Alberta education. I want to commend him and the community for the deaf in this province for the very kind acceptance and the kind remarks they have made about Mr. McLaughlin's appointment. I wish him well.

Another area in which Alberta education is at the leading edge is in school buildings. Our schools are recognized internationally for the quality of design and the environment they provide for students and for staff in their innovation. This government's commitment to maintaining excellent schools is reflected in the capital estimates that are represented here today. It is not only important from an aesthetic point of view that our schools be attractive, but certainly as an environment which encourages learning, it is clearly a statement of our commitment.

Finally, I would like to talk a little bit about leadership in education. The leadership component is vitally important to the quality of education in Alberta, and in this regard we are fortunate to have trustees, teachers, and community members, as well as very dedicated staff in the Department of Education, all of whom provide the needed leadership in education. As minister, I can say it is a pleasure for me to be able to work with so many people who share the goal of making our education system the best we possibly can for our young people.

For these reasons, Mr. Chairman, I want to convey a very strong message to you today and to all Albertans that we are on the leading edge in education and we are determined as a province to stay there. The budget estimates presented today reflect that determination. I'd like to highlight just a few key components of those estimates.

First of all, the increase in basic per-pupil grants is the highest of any of this government's services and reflects our Premier's statements that education is our number one priority. I expect to hear criticisms from the opposition that 2 percent just isn't enough and it doesn't make up for the grant reductions of last year. We can debate forever how much is enough, and I doubt we'd ever reach a consensus. But I believe our decision to increase grants by 2 percent is a responsible one for this gov-

ernment to have made considering the continuing current financial position of the province. I have every confidence that as the economic picture of the province continues to improve, we will be able to provide increasing support for education. But to do so now when the revenues are simply not available would be an irresponsible act on behalf of government and one which would mortgage the future of the very children we are trying to serve in our education system.

Secondly, the estimates provide for a significant increase in the equity grants, grants designed to assist poorer school districts in meeting the needs of their students. With a 6.6 percent increase, government funding for equity grants will increase to \$56.3 million. Over the past few months we've been focusing on how best to address the issue of equity in funding education. The results of those discussions will obviously be reflected in the new School Act, which will be introduced in the next couple of weeks. The only comment I would like to make at this time is to reinforce the fact that Albertans have told us clearly that they strongly support the view that all students must have access to equitable educational opportunities regardless of where they live, and that is the goal we must address.

Thirdly, Mr. Chairman, an additional \$4 million has been put in the budget to help school boards and teachers with the implementation of the new secondary education courses and programs. Certainly, as I talked to school boards and continue to do so as we look at the financing they must be a part of, this was one area that school boards and teachers were unanimous in saying, "We need a little more help." The funding will ensure that we're able to move forward with implementing the new courses for junior and senior high students. An additional \$581,000 has been added to our initiatives in distance learning. This brings our total funding for these initiatives to \$1,081,000. This, to me, is an extremely exciting venture which will expand opportunities for students, especially those in the rural areas who are threatened by shrinking communities and the possibilities of school closures. I've talked to the people who are involved in the current projects in the southern part of the province. Their enthusiasm for the project and its potential is tremendous.

The province's continuing commitment to serving students with special needs is reflected in a 2 percent increase in special education grants, bringing the total amount of provincial funding in this vitally important area to \$80 million.

To conclude, I'd like to stress once again that this government's commitment is a commitment to excellence in education. My message to Albertans is that we have a system which deserves their support. It's a system which puts students first and doesn't apologize for it. It's a system which dares to try new ideas and new approaches. It is a system dedicated to excellence. And it is for these important reasons that we have an education system which is at the leading edge. As a government, we're committed to staying there and continuing to strive for that excellence.

Members of the committee, I welcome your comments and thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to participate in the estimates of the department of the highest priority, otherwise known as the Department of Education. It would appear, however, that the department of the highest prior-

ity is determined by the size of the increase, which in this case is 2 percent, as opposed to the actual needs of the department and those involved in education, young Albertans.

Now, given the size of the Department of Education, that 2 percent increase amounts to an increase of \$15,925,850, which is a rather substantial increase in almost everybody's book except, I would suppose, somebody like Peter Pocklington. But even with that almost \$16 million increase, the department estimates for 1988-89, this year, are still \$12,546,166 less than the total actual number of dollars spent in 1986-1987.

Two years ago we invested \$1.3 billion in the education of young Albertans. This year the government estimates to spend \$12.5 million less than we did just two short years ago. Now, Mr. Chairman, that begs the questions: did we have a period of deflation in Alberta? Did the Department of Education record substantially lower levels of enrollment, thus allowing for substantially fewer dollars to be invested in our children's education? No. In fact, Mr. Chairman, the reverse is true. We did not have a period of deflation; we've had steady inflation. And as for enrollment, I'm advised that we had no decline in the school rolls but rather, in that two-year period in question, we had an increase in the number of students. So we've got \$12.5 million less in a system that has suffered the consequences of cuts, inflation, and an increase in the enrollment of students.

When we consider all of that, when you look at that, you have to ask: is this truly the department of highest priority, or was this 2 percent increase that was announced by the Premier just an announcement of political expediency? Could it be, is it possible, that there was a political agenda that required a response, a quick fix, to what could have amounted to the political defeat of many members here, perhaps even to the defeat of the very government itself? Is it possible that this 2 percent increase was designed to buy the government time rather than meet the needs of children that are in the school system today?

Some members, Mr. Chairman, will no doubt think I'm taking a cynic's view of this, but I'm not. I would suggest that I'm very skeptical. But if it's any consolation to the Minister of Education, I'm not only skeptical of the actions inside her department but I'm skeptical of the actions of almost every department of this government.

Mr. Chairman, when we speak of budgetary matters in the Department of Education, we have to also speak of concepts in education. The minister highlighted a couple of them, and I too would like to go through them: concepts such as the value of a quality education, the concept of universality and access. Concepts of equity and fairness fit in there as well. Mr. Chairman, all of us benefit from having a well-educated population, regardless of our own level of education. We benefit because people who are educated are able to provide us with services that we couldn't provide for ourselves, and if those services or products aren't available, an educated population is able to develop those products that we require.

It wasn't very long ago that I had a constituent come into my office to complain about his property taxes going up; going up year after year, he said, and he didn't get any value out of the increase in property taxes. Well, I sat down with the member from my constituency and told him that aside from inflationary considerations, the reason the property taxes have been going up year after year after year is in no small part due to this government's declining contribution in terms of a percentage -- in terms of a percentage, Madam Minister -- to the total need of educational funding. I told him that when the Conservative Party came to power in 1971, the province contributed about 85

percent of the total needs of education, and now, after 17 years in power, the province contributes about 64 percent. It's a major drop, and that drop has done some damage to our system. That continual decline, that continual shift -- although some might say "shaft" -- to the property tax base has created many of the problems we have today in our educational system.

The taxation of a property base is a regressive one in that it taxes people on the basis of what they own rather than on the basis of their ability to pay tax, which is how the graduated income tax system is supposed to work. Many school boards realize that there's no more money to be taken from the property tax base. They are fully cognizant of the fact that regardless of what they do to the mill rate, there is no more money to be bled from the property owners. School boards also know, Mr. Chairman, that there's no more money available from the Department of Education, this department of highest priority.

So what happens when there's no money available from the community base and there's no more additional money coming from the province? What happens? We get friction. We get friction between public and separate boards; we get friction between teachers and the boards; and from the meetings that I attended regarding education, we see friction being developed in the community because this government has failed to adequately fund the needs of education.

Go back; take a look at commission reports. The minister wondered what level of financing would create a level of content in the province. Well, commission reports to previous ministers have advised that the province must increase its commitment to the total global requirement. I expect, Mr. Chairman, that no doubt the minister and some of the backbenchers will get up and tell the Assembly that this government has consistently increased its dollar contribution every year except 1986-1987. Well, I'd respond that it's quite so, quite correct. But even with that increased number of dollars there has been a decline in the percentage of total contributions, and therein lies the problem. Government members can keep their collective heads buried in the sand and tell the good people of Alberta that they have increased educational funding; it wouldn't be a lie. It would be true; they have increased the actual number of dollars going to education. But they wouldn't be telling the entire story. I suppose that half-truths are better than no truths at all. But, Mr. Chairman, it really is a disservice to people who are in the system of providing education to our children; it's a disservice to them to hear how wonderful life is when they know that it's just not the case.

I think, Mr. Chairman, it would be beneficial to remind members of the recommendation made in the 1982 report of the minister's task force on financing schools in Alberta. In a letter back to the minister, the commissioner of the task force wrote:

Simply put, the Task Force takes the view that the current local share of total schooling costs is too high, or, if you will, that the current provincial share . . .

And remember this is in 1983.

. . . (approximately 66%) is too low. The provincial share should exceed the historical high of some 80% reached in 1976; the Task Force has recommended that it would be most appropriate for the provincial support level to be set at approximately 85%.

The task force recommended

that the province strive, as a matter of policy, to establish and maintain its share at 85%.

Now, Mr. Chairman, that hasn't happened. In fact, regrettably the reverse is true. Since 1982 the province's percentage contribution has declined to about the 64 percent level today.

Just to get back to my story of the constituent who approached me to complain about his property taxes and not receiving any value for his contribution, I pointed out to him that he receives a value that may not always be visible and immediately noticeable. For example, the mechanic who reads the automotive manual prior to fixing his vehicle -- that's one of the values that my constituents receive. The store clerks who either fill in a credit card debit slip or make change have received the benefits of a publicly funded education system. Everybody receives the benefits of their knowledge and their ability.

Mr. Chairman, before leaving the concept of educational value, I want to note something that I find strangely ironic. The government advises us on a continual basis that there's going to be a change in jobs, that we're going to have more service-sector jobs very soon. In fact, I believe some ministers have indicated that we will have hundreds of thousands -- I believe it was 200,000; I stand to be corrected, but hundreds of thousands -- of service-sector jobs at the turn of the century. Now, when you have service-sector jobs, what you have is jobs that require greater interpersonal skills, and you have to have more tolerance when you deal with the public. You have to have more understanding of what makes the human being tick psychologically. These interpersonal skills -- they're not innate; they are acquired through a learning process.

Now, the irony in all of this is that the cuts to funding that we had last year and the fact that the increase for the Department of Education, the department of highest priority, still fails to meet the level that we had two years ago, not to mention the inflationary considerations of the past years, is going to have a direct impact on the quality of education being provided to students today. The irony is that the children who entered grade 1 last September will be graduating in the year 2000, the year that we're supposed to have all of those service-sector jobs available to Albertans. One wonders whether or not those students will be ready for those service-sector jobs that require all of those interpersonal skills. Because, quite frankly, without a commitment from this government to properly fund the investment needs of education -- and it is an investment -- at the 85 percent level, all we can do is hope that the kids are going to be ready for those jobs.

Mr. Chairman, I got up this morning, and on my way to work I looked at the *Edmonton Journal*. At the bottom of the page I was pleased to see that the Minister of Education indicated the government was about to scrap the corporate pooling concept -- or was considering scrapping the corporate pooling concept. Well, I read the options funding paper. I've listened to discussions that the minister has had with other people. I've received information from a variety of school boards and teachers.

MR. SHABEN: Which option do you favour, Tom?

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, to the minister of economic development, I favour more money coming out of general revenues at the 85 percent level, which is the same recommendation that came out of the task force. That's the option. [interjections] You don't have to have any options. All you've got to do is go back and read the previous reports. Don't spend any more money; just act on previous recommendations. Save Albertans some money; act on previous recommendations.

AN HON. MEMBER: Go to the money tree.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, Mr. Chairman, to the member -- no,

I'd better not. I'll stop before I get into trouble.

You know, the government wants to increase the funding to education. Option four said that by pooling the corporate taxes we'd be able to take that money and send it back out and be able to fund it at the 80 percent level. Well, again I'm somewhat skeptical. The record of this government taxing corporations in the first place is abysmal. It's abysmal -- and that's being generous. Albertans want to see a fair system of taxation, fair for individuals that are being taxed through the income tax system and fair for the corporations, but they're not. They don't see a fair system of taxation, Mr. Chairman; in fact, they see the reverse. If the government wants to collect corporate tax for educational purposes, then you want to raise the corporate tax provincially and through the general revenues pay out a greater share of the educational needs of young Albertans. Don't usurp the authority of the local jurisdictions to tax nonresidential properties in their communities.

Mr. Chairman, another concept that I want to touch on is universality in education. It's one that my colleagues in the New Democratic Official Opposition subscribe to, and regretfully, we fear that through the actions of this government the concept of universality is slowly being eroded. We demand by law that children from the age of six to 16 attend school. There are some exceptions, but not many. And surely to goodness, when we make that kind of demand, we ought to make sure that we do not impede the process of attending by allowing user fees. For the same reasons that I and my colleagues opposed extra billing for medical services, we are opposed to user fees in the school system. I believe that the Bell family in Niton Junction should be congratulated for their efforts in this past year. Clearly, they believe that universality means access regardless of the ability to pay. Indeed, they went a step beyond that and demonstrated through their actions that they believe the public purse is responsible for providing education, and quality education, to children.

I will expect, Mr. Chairman, that no doubt the minister and members opposite will stand up and tell me that there are avenues available for appeal for those who cannot afford to pay the educational user fees. Well, save your breath, because I'm aware of those avenues. But some people aren't. And even some people that are aware of those avenues of appeal -- some of the working poor, some of the people that are on social assistance -- feel that they are obliged to pay regardless. They are obliged to pay because they don't want to be treated differently than their neighbours, and they don't want to be discriminated against. For those people, perhaps their pride and their commitment to their children is their barrier to the concept of universality.

In my constituency there's a school that offers bilingual programs in Ukrainian and French. Children travel from all over north Edmonton to access programs at this school. Parents have to pay a transportation fee to get to the school. And for those parents who send their kids on the buses -- it's too far for the child to go home for lunch -- or for those, indeed, who even live in close proximity to the school and who have parents that work, they have to keep their kids at the school over the course of the noon hour, and a lunchroom fee is charged. A lunchroom fee; you have to pay in order to eat in the lunchroom. Why? Because there's a lack of funding to support the programs that are in place at the school. The school had to implement a lunchroom user fee to help pay for a lunchroom supervisor, and there are other examples of user fees as well.

I had a woman write me from the Lakeland public school

district. Transportation fees: \$30 per student to a maximum of \$120 per family per year. School-based fees: \$20 per student for grades 1 through 6; 7 through 9, \$24; grades 10 through 12, \$25. Other fees: a \$20 industrial education fee; \$10 per course, field studies material; a recorder for music, \$4 -- you don't get that money back. "Locks are available in the school office at \$4," and it says, "Please DO NOT use none school locks." The accompanying letter said:

These fees have the potential of generating in excess of \$50,000 revenue. This will help offset an estimated "unsupported" transportation cost . . . of \$400,000 . . .

The fee schedule was adopted so that major changes to service did not have to be made. If it does not achieve its goal, the Districts will have no option but to consider taking steps which will reduce the current level of service. We request your co-operation and support.

From a school close to Edmonton, user fees: Accounting 10, \$11 for the workbook; Accounting 20, \$11 for a workbook; Accounting 30, \$26 for a workbook; Art 10, for three credits, \$9 for materials fees; Art, \$12; Biology 30, \$3 for materials fees; Food Studies 10, \$10 in materials fees; Food Studies 20, \$15 in materials fees; Food Studies 30, \$20 in materials fees . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order in the committee.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Industrial Education 10, 20, and 30: \$18 in fees. Music 10, 20, and 30: for Choral, \$10 in materials fees; for Band, \$10 in materials fees and \$35 for rental. Physical Education, \$4; Physical Education 10 and 20 for the five-credit program, \$5; Physical Education 30, \$45.

In the department's Directions to 1990, we see that under "Trends," for educational fees it says:

Revenues: There has been a steady increase in the revenues collected by Alberta's school jurisdictions from sources such as book rentals, transportation fees, and tuition fees from non-resident students. Total revenues collected increased from \$79.5 million in 1982-83 to \$89.6 million in 1984-85.

We're increasing user fees, which slaps in the face of universality. What about "Implications for Education"? It says:

There may be more need and opportunity for joint ventures between the public and private sectors to raise revenues and/or to provide for alternative educational programming.

Where's the government's responsibility to provide the necessary dollars to ensure that there are the necessary funds for our children? So much for universal access regardless of one's ability to pay. For many Albertans, options in education are just that: options -- not available to the poor. That's shameful, and it is due to the department of highest priority not adequately supporting the educational needs of young Albertans.

What about hunger -- hunger in the classroom? Recently there's been a great deal of media attention paid to children that go to school hungry. It's not just an inner city problem. It's a problem that we see in increasing numbers in urban areas, suburban areas and, indeed, in some of the rural areas throughout our province. Kids that sit in the classroom with their stomachs growling are not able to concentrate on the lessons their teachers are giving.

Educators have told me that they have in their classrooms children who perhaps only eat once a day. That's shameful. It's not always the case that it's just poverty. Sometimes with new Canadians, immigrants, it's societal: different systems. For some families where the parents go off to work first thing in the morning and nobody has the opportunity to raise the child, the

child may not make breakfast for himself or herself and may not make a lunch to pack, and they're only getting one meal a day as well.

Mr. Chairman, I believe we have an obligation to respond, and we must respond to this soon. It's not good enough for members to say, well, it's not the responsibility of this department or that department. It's not good enough for us to just shuffle aside the children that have this problem of hunger in the school system.

DR. WEST: Oh, come on, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking says, "Oh, come on, Tom." Well, you know, you ought to go a little ways, too, because kids are going hungry. Deal with the problem of kids being hungry, not with the policies of government -- with the hunger of children. That's what's important, not the damn policies.

AN HON. MEMBER: Just keep your clothes on, and worry about their morality.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'll worry about it. Don't you worry about it.

I, along with you, happen to be one of the fortunate ones that eat, and I eat rather well. I also happen to be concerned about those who are less fortunate, and maybe you'd like to stand up and address that concern, hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to address a couple of concerns about rural education. My colleague from Vegreville will no doubt want to address these matters as well, but I want to highlight a couple of specifics. Again, coming from the Directions to 1990 put out by the Department of Education, we see that there's the problem of rural/urban migration.

There will be continuing migration from the rural areas to the urban centres. Alberta's rural population will decline from 23% in 1981 to less than 14% in 2001.

Mr. Chairman, we have to have a commitment from the minister and from this government that there are going to be adequate funds to ensure that rural schools have the money to properly and sufficiently educate children in the rural areas; otherwise, there's not going to be anything there to keep children and families in rural communities in Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, hon. member.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Education in this province is indeed in a period of difficulty, and it could become a crisis if the direction continues. The government states education to be a priority. Indeed, it should be. It's an investment in our most important resource, our people, and our future depends on it.

However, let's look at the facts. If this is a priority, then the term is being damned by faint praise in terms of the actions of this government. If this is love, what is neglect? Last year the government cut education funding to the tune of 3 percent. After the cuts in other programs and after inflation, the net effect was a drop of 8 to 10 percent in funding. This resulted in the loss of teaching and related jobs, resulted in the emasculation of community schools, the intern program disappeared into thin air, and there was, indeed, a general decline in the quality of educa-

tion. If the members of the government don't believe that, then they haven't been talking to educators and they haven't been talking to a high school student who told me about the shortage of books in her school and the fact that books would disappear if they were left on a table in a library unattended. And that doesn't mean that we need to chain our books to libraries, Mr. Chairman.

The budget this year is slightly improved, but it is, in fact, a continuation of the major disappointment being experienced by those who are interested in education. The budget has not in fact reversed the general direction; we're still falling behind. The increase in grants to schools of 2 percent is less than inflation, and indeed after all the smoke clears, the net increase during this fiscal year to our schools is only 1.3 percent.

We see no moves towards the restoration of community school funding or of the intern program. This is indeed a continuation of the trend which has seen the province's share of education funding decline from 85 percent in the early 1970s to approximately 60 to 63 percent at the present time.

The result of this is increased pressure on school boards, and one of the areas of particular concern to myself as to the previous speaker is the pressure which is being placed on access to education for lower income Albertans: in effect, the universality issue. I believe that it is a problem, that it is an area which has been very much neglected by the government. The minister earlier said horsefeathers, I believe, to this concept. Well, horsefeathers, in fact, quite appropriately describes the government's policies in this area. Indeed, one would suspect that the Marx Brothers have been setting policy.

One of the primary concerns is the increased levying of user fees in many of our school systems. I've spoken of this a number of times, have questioned the minister on it. We're seeing direct fees; we're seeing transportation fees; we're seeing lunchroom fees. Recently in Calgary the latest initiative in this regard is the suggestion that a fee of \$50 be levied on students who are taking French courses, largely because the cost of materials for those courses is higher. The quality of access to education is clearly being reviewed. It is a serious problem, and I would ask the minister what has happened with respect to the review that she indicated she would make of this issue when I raised it in the Legislature last year.

Now, another result of the government's cutbacks and indeed the structure of funding policies is that schools with special demographic problems are experiencing serious problems. These include particularly inner-city schools, but they also include schools in other lower socioeconomic areas. They include areas where there are many single-parent families, where there are many immigrant families with language problems, and the result is that students in these areas come to school with more problems. They need more attention than do students in more affluent areas, and the result is that the quality of education for the general student body is suffering, and it is not equal to that quality for other schools notwithstanding the reality of equal funding.

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

Equal funding does not mean equal treatment in this instance. I've heard tales of libraries without adequate books, the difficulty in being able to afford to buy computers. We hear of cases where schools in more affluent areas are raising funds privately for this purpose, a source which is not available to schools in lower socioeconomic areas. So what we see is a class

system, in fact, being fostered within our very school system. Previously we had programs such as the equal opportunity funding, which in some small way helped. The community school program was indeed a very excellent initiative, particularly in lower demographic areas. I commend the minister to perhaps look at a means of enhancing funding for that program in these areas. But overall we need special funding, special treatment for schools in these areas, and I would ask the minister why this area has been neglected by the government and whether she would consider some form of equity funding program for these schools.

Another area which is having difficulty, Mr. Chairman, is the rural school districts in general. Many, indeed most of these areas, have very low taxation bases. They suffer from difficulties of distance, sparsity of population. Every year we hear of more schools closing. This not only impacts the schools but imperils whole communities. We need special programs to help. We need more of a program that was commenced in 1984 by this government pursuant to the recommendations of their 1982 funding task force, and that is the equity funding program. Now, up until the present time that program has been held at 50 percent of the level which the government announced, which is only 40 percent of what was recommended. I find the delay in completing that program to be inexcusable. The minister has announced an increase of some 5 to 6 percent this year. I'm wondering what level this brings us up to in relation to the stated target back in '84 of 80 percent.

As I noted, the task force in 1982 recommended that these jurisdictions be brought up to 100 percent of the average taxation level. Why, Mr. Chairman, are we not meeting that goal? Indeed, I might ask the minister: how much would it cost? I understand from Department of Education officials that to have brought the system up to 80 percent from its present 40 percent level would have cost approximately 15 . . . I see the minister shaking her head. My understanding is that the program now is halfway completed. That's halfway of an 80 percent goal, so that means 40 percent of the equity funding would have been implemented. My perception from her department was that it would cost \$15 million to bring it up to the 80 percent level. Perhaps the minister could comment on that and advise how much it would cost to bring it up to the 100 percent level, because it should be, really, a very token amount.

Now, another initiative to help rural areas -- a very good initiative, and I commend the government for what they have been doing in this regard at the same time as I fault them for moving too slowly and too parsimoniously in that regard -- is the distance-learning initiative, the bringing of technology to rural areas. I, in my mind's eye, include the concept of the sharing of teachers amongst different schools in those areas within this category. It's an excellent program. We've added only \$581,000; this is a doubling, but it's a small amount. As I say, it's only a pittance with respect to the major program as opposed to the tokenism that is needed. So, minister, why so slow in this regard?

Now, I'm particularly concerned that we, as far as I'm able to see, don't move in and address the particular needs of areas where the school is being imperiled, such as in the Innisfree area at the present time. I'm wondering why, when a school is imperiled, we don't accelerate that area as a target for implementing some of these distance-learning tools and technologies. So I'm wondering whether the minister might comment on why the government does not in fact target and focus what we now know about the technology on these particular problem areas, because

I understand that so far the program is not merely a success but is also economically beneficial. Perhaps the minister might confirm just what experience the government is having with respect to the economics.

Now, in terms of language programs I'm very concerned about these bilingual French programs, Ukrainian programs. The minister indicated that funding has been increased, and I can't divine from the budget numbers by how much it has increased. I do know that I have received a tremendous number of complaints from parents who are interested in having their children take, particularly, French immersion and bilingual programs. Now, I'm very partial to these programs for a number of reasons, but particularly because they bring credit to the public school system, and we need programs which make our parents and members of the community happy. We see far too much in the way of criticism of our school system, and when you do have happy parents, it says that you're doing something right. And something is being done right with respect to these programs. They're very popular, and they indeed bring competition right within the public school system rather than destructive, corrosive competition from outside from private schools, which would tend towards the destruction of the public school system.

Now, I earlier referred to fees in the Calgary area. I know that these are almost universal in some form or another with respect to French, and indeed in many parts of the province students can't even get access to these programs. There are many examples, but one I'm aware of is the area of Camrose. A large number of parents are having difficulty getting their local boards to implement a bilingual French program. So, minister, it's very clear that in light of the benefits of these programs and in light of the reality that we have in a country which has bilingual policies, particularly access to jobs at the civil service being an issue, in light of these features I think it's important that we do our very best to encourage access and quality of programming in this area. Certainly the government's funding incentives to local boards are very important in light of the extra cost, as has been focused on in the Calgary area.

Now, I have similar concerns with respect to other languages such as Ukrainian, and I'm wondering whether the minister can give us a bit of a rundown of what is being done or the position of her department on this area and her future plans.

Now, the next topic I'd like to comment on very briefly, in light of the time constraints we're operating under here, is that of the learning needs of children with learning disabilities. We've come a long way in the last 10 years. Many educators and parents are working hard to improve education for this almost newly recognized problem. However, the job is too big for the quantity of resources which is being provided at the present time. Last year we, unhappily, went backward; the grants remained flat. They were reallocated amongst differing school jurisdictions, but with inflation, other criteria and, in fact, the readjustment within departments in which many of these programs were treated as low priority, we distinctly digressed. The increase now that I see in the budget, albeit on a fiscal year basis, is only .6 percent. I see that the response centre funding -- the response centres are supposed to be at the centre of this -- far from being increased, is actually down 1.2 percent, and I'm hearing expressions of concern about the inadequacy of the service as it is at the present time. So this is certainly a very disappointing scenario, and I wonder whether the minister would advise why we're not doing better in this area.

Next, Mr. Chairman, the issue of how our school systems

deal with the needs of handicapped students. I recognize, and we all recognize, I believe, the increased role of public schooling in dealing and having to deal with these types of problems. We're coming through an era of deinstitutionalization, more of these children with special needs in the community, and a greater demand on our schools to fulfill what is a health function as well as an education function. The Calgary public board of education, I understand, has estimated additional cost to it of \$2.6 million for health related costs alone. We need the minister to rethink our funding of this type of child in light of the new role of the schools, and we need greater co-operation between our departments.

I believe that the school system is the system which should be responsible for all children, by the way. And that means that I don't believe there is any role for a noneducatable concept, although it may be that some extremely problematic children might not be educated directly within the schools themselves but, for example, might be educated at a school associated with a hospital, such as the Townsend school associated with the Calgary children's hospital.

But that being said, we're not doing as well as we should be doing in terms of funding or co-ordination, and I'm wondering how the minister is proposing to deal with this deficiency so that we get adequate funding and co-ordination.

School closures, particularly in inner-city areas, are also a serious problem. They have an impact on the communities. The government's approach to this stage has been to set out procedural rules in order to ensure that there is due process. There's a requirement for the minister's approval. These are all procedural and negative, and there seems to be nothing positive being done to ensure the continued viability of these schools. Indeed, I recognize that all schools cannot be saved; nor should they be saved. But it seems to me that we could attempt to apply some creativity in order to attempt to see if we can reduce the costs of schooling where there are few students in a school. It's almost like the rural problem to which I've alluded earlier, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps we could consider some equivalent of the distance learning concept for inner-city schools, bring some technology into these areas, perhaps encourage a sharing of some administrative staff such as principals, as I know does happen in some of the schools. I'm wondering whether the minister might comment on the feasibility of the government taking a role in this area.

The intern program was an excellent program with some deficiencies. It wasn't operated properly, but it had many positive upsides, and this indeed was the conclusion of the task force which reported on the intern program sometime late last year and recommended that it be reinstated, albeit with some changes. I would encourage the minister to positively consider this and solicit her comments in that regard.

Now, hunger in our schools seems to be another horsefeathers topic on the part of the government. There seems to be a feeling that this is the role of parents, and there seems to be very little concern about the problems of the children themselves. It seems to be hands-off despite increasing awareness on the part of members of the community. Now, I don't pretend that this is an easy problem with easy answers; it does present conundrums. But what does concern me is that in an era when there's so manifestly a problem, when an American corporation, in the middle of the Olympic Games, donates \$13,000 to keep a program open and this makes the front pages of our newspapers, it seems to me that we should have a greater response from the government. I've raised this thing a year ago, and I've heard

nothing from the government with respect to any studies, any reports. What I'd like to know is: what is the magnitude of the problem? Does the government have a report or any indication as to the difficulties? Does it have any possible solutions? Why isn't it doing anything? If it does have a report, I'd like to see a copy of it, and if it doesn't have a report of the magnitude of this problem, it should get busy and get one.

Now, yes, most of these initiatives require more funding, Mr. Chairman. They require action on education as a true priority and not as a subject of empty rhetoric. We used to be number one in education; we're now number four and falling rapidly. I think the people of Alberta want us to be number one. I think we're proud of that and I think they want to see adequate resources to go into these areas.

Now, the government says, "Well, we're not made of money." Well, the government does in fact have money for its pet projects. It has \$6 million for horse racing, double the previous year. It has benefits for Peter Pocklington. It has 38 percent more for the -- up to \$13 million out of the Premier's office alone. It has \$11 million to refurbish my old alma mater McDougall school for the government's southern Alberta office to a degree of opulence that would make Louis XIV blush; it's like Versailles south. We have a \$200 million pot of lottery chestnuts residing in the vaults in the back offices of the Minister of Career Development and Employment. Oscar Wilde once defined a cynic as a person "who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing," and that's what we're seeing in this government amongst those people over there. More horsefeathers, I assume.

Now, back in 1982 the government's self-appointed task force on education funding recommended that the government's share be boosted up to 85 percent. I don't know whether 85 percent is the proper number or isn't the proper number. I recognize that there has to be, if local boards are spending money, some responsibility, some discipline, in terms of having the spenders raise some funds. You know, it may be that 80 percent is the right level; it may be 78 percent. But the fact is that we do need more coming in from the provincial coffers, and instead of that we have been moving, in the last two years since I've been in this House, in the opposite direction. A recommendation in '82 to move in one direction and the actuality is that we've been moving in the other direction: this is the type of thing that is causing us so many problems that I have referred to earlier, and particularly it is one of the reasons why we need these equity programs in our rural areas. I would ask the minister to please explain what is the government doing to increase the provincial government's share of the total funding pie.

With that I take my leave and advise the minister that I look forward to hearing her speak later this afternoon at the home and school association meeting. Perhaps she will answer these questions at that point in time. Thank you.

"Horsefeathers," she says.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. First I'd like, before looking at the estimates and some of the specific votes which the opposition have yet to do -- and I believe that's what we're about here today, looking at the estimates, looking at the votes -- to congratulate the minister on her responsiveness in the last year, year and a half, as she's gone about the province meeting with various groups: the boards, teachers, superintendents. The

feedback that I have received from that has been very positive. The minister made herself available in Red Deer to meet directly with people concerned, and if there's a word that describes this minister, I think responsiveness is one that both sides of this House can agree on in terms of meeting and listening and trying to work out the various challenges that are out there. So I congratulate the minister on that and continue to encourage her to do so, as I know she will.

This minister faces some very unique challenges; really we're looking at the challenge of maintaining quality education within budgetary restraints. The difficulty that's comprised in that challenge is that some people directly equate quality with dollars, and the only way you can have increase in quality is increase in dollars. I think when we compare around this province different of our public schools and even different of our independent schools, we see that different ones are able to operate quality programs with different amounts of money. I think we've got to come to grips with that reality: that absolute dollars do not guarantee absolute quality. And let's take that in a positive way as our challenge. I know the minister is doing that.

We hear some figures constantly about percentages, the government percentage of giving in education, and we look at those on a microlevel. I'd like us, if we could, just to pull back a little and look at education spending on a macrolevel. In 1977 the total education budget of this province was a little over \$500 million. In 1987 the budget was around \$1.5 billion. Now, that's something under a 300 percent increase in funding over 10 years. So as we look at these other figures, 63 percent or 84 percent, we've got to sit back and take stock, not literally, of the situation and say under a 300 percent increase -- 300 percent increase -- over 10 years, and the student population has increased about 2 percent. Now, we allow some inflationary factors, around 4 percent per year, and we still have a gigantic increase in spending by this province, by this government, on education.

[Mr. Gogo in the Chair]

It's interesting. I see the response to fiscal responsibility here in this budget, and basically throughout the province I see three responses. And pardon me for generalizing here, but one group [is] responding from what I call the point of view of political opportunity; that is, they see fiscal responsibility as a political opportunity to stir people up -- stir up parents, get students all stirred up, and teachers stirred up -- throw fiscal responsibility to the wind, and use some very real challenges against us, and against not just us but against parents, pitting children in a pitched battle here. I think that is highly irresponsible, to use fiscal responsibility and the fiscal responsibility of this budget as an opportunity, a political opportunity, and that's what's happening. We saw it in the response from the member opposite, the NDP, and the opposition parties in general standing up on these estimates. Not one idea on how to work together to make this work -- not one idea. We had 30 minutes of rhetoric that did not help one student in this province one iota, and I say that's deplorable. That is political opportunism at its worst.

Now, the other group that's affected is a group of people who aren't really fully aware of what's going on, and they get frustrated. They don't know, they throw up their hands, and they question what is going on. The third group is a group that I'm happy to say can be found in Red Deer, in the constituency of Red Deer-North, among the principals and the teachers and

the schools that I have met with individually, sat down with and said to them, "Tell me what the effects on the front line are of the budgetary restraint that we're going through." And when you talk to principals in Red Deer-North like the principal of the Pines school, Mr. Rob Goring; the principal at the G.H. Dawe community school, Mr. Hornby; or Mr. Dionne at St. Pats or any of the schools that I've sat down with and talked with; the public board under Mr. Bob Schnell; our Catholic school board, Mr. Joe Docherty -- sitting down with these people, I'm not going to stand here and say that they're just ecstatic about the budget cuts, that they're just delighted with it. But their attitude has been: it's a challenge; we've got to sit down and see how we can make it work. And I appreciate that particular response.

Does that mean they're patting me on the back as their MLA or saying that they're going to vote for me next time? No, they're not saying that. And they're saying that there are some crunches out there. But they're taking a positive attitude, and they're saying: "We're going to make it. Somehow we've got to sit down and make this thing work." That's the third group, and I believe that's the attitude that will carry us through these times of fiscal restraint based on responsibility.

As we go through the process and look at these votes in estimates and compare with other provinces, and also when our deficit plan is achieved in the next couple of years and we see that we've removed the deficit, I believe people will be thankful for the fact that we'll move into the 1990s without a deficit, which, of course, saps our dollars and takes away -- it causes us to spend dollars on paying the interest on our debt instead of putting money in education and other programs. And I think as people responsibly sit down and look at that, that's going to help them understand the whole situation. Does that mean they're going to vote for us next time? Mr. Chairman, I don't have the answer to that question, but I do know that the next government, be it this side of the House or whoever, is going to take over a government that is not crippled with a deficit. We've taken that responsibility, and I'm thankful for how the Minister of Education has been handling this particular challenge.

Mr. Chairman, to the minister, just quite quickly on some issues I have heard as I've met with the teachers in the various schools in Red Deer-North. Some of the things maybe we can help at this time; maybe we can't. But in the area of program evaluation -- that's vote 3 -- and program delivery, I hear from the teachers, and these are the people on the front lines that I believe we've got to be listening to, that there is a frustration. Again, as you sit back sort of at a macrolevel, there is a frustration with a trend -- and it happens in all jurisdictions, all provinces, different states -- of shifts of direction in education which cause different programs all of a sudden to be apparently warranted and wanted. The teachers are telling me, you know, without citing specific examples, where there might be a sort of wave in one direction which would last for about five years, and then that for whatever reason doesn't appear to work, so those courses and all those textbooks are put aside, and then another wave in another direction.

They find that frustrating, and they're asking if there is a mechanism that they can have input into these changes before they hit. Again, the specifics of that would take too long to get into in the few moments I want to take here, but that's been an area of challenge to them and of some frustration. If the minister could address that either today or in her ongoing deliberations, that would be appreciated.

They also talk about social problems in the community, with increased family instability and some of the children in some of

the schools that are becoming increasingly difficult for them to handle, where they have to concentrate a lot of class time just almost on a one-on-one basis. They're asking what can be done there. I think we have to be sensitive to that need. They just don't have the time to put into a one-on-one type of counseling situation. Can the minister continue to work or even work more closely with the Minister of Social Services in seeing how those types of problems can be handled?

We hear about hunger in the schools. That is a very sensitive issue to the minister, but I don't believe it's one that we handle by taking out the gigantic barrel, dumping dollars on food programs. I think we've got to ask the teachers to let us know which kids are actually coming to school unfed. As a matter of fact, I think they're required to do that. That's a negligent and abusive situation. And would they do that, so that we can sit down with the parent or parents in these situations? Social workers could do that and work with those parents or work with that parent to help them understand how to manage things in such a way that those children, indeed, could be fed.

So some of the social difficulties that we're facing are coming upon our teachers, and I believe they need more help in that particular area.

There's many more specific items that these teachers have brought to my attention, Madam Minister, which, as I have in the past, I will continue to bring forward to you for individual scrutiny to see what we can do in individual situations, but I won't take up the estimate time on that right here.

Along the lines of the whole question of funding, which is covered really by the entire estimates before us, we're hearing from our boards, from our superintendents. As that equity funding discussion continues, they're saying: "Please, vitally involve us in the discussion process. We have some understanding of how things can flow one way or the other, and we'd like to be involved in that particular process."

That, I believe, constitutes the remarks which I would like to make at this time, Mr. Chairman, to these particular estimates. Certainly as the School Act is tabled and comes out for second reading, I'll be looking forward to engaging more in the specifics.

Thank you very much.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Chairman, I thought I'd get in and just respond to some of the points that have been raised thus far.

First of all, to the Member for Edmonton-Belmont. I want to thank him for, obviously, reading -- and quoting, in fact -- from some of the speeches which I've been giving around this province. I'm glad to know that he believes that quality of education is important and glad to see him reflect some of those words in his own. I also compliment him on his new math that he's trying to reflect. The grants to school boards without question are accounting for a volume increase in terms of students: 2 percent increase in all grants to school boards on the large granting areas.

The effect of government protecting school boards to a degree last year by delaying the 3 percent reduction is reflected this year; the two percent increase takes effect on September 1 as opposed to April 1, but all the while realizing that the decrease last year did not take effect till September 1 of the year. That, therefore, results in the financial assistance to schools appearing to be less than the 2 percent committed in January of 1988. In fact, that is not the case. The grants will increase by 2 percent.

I do want to speak briefly to -- well, it might not be brief --

the continued misunderstanding in both the Liberal and ND parties of how education is financed in this province. They all run to the quick-fix solution of an 85/15 funding formula, not recognizing that the difficulty is that even if school boards were to raise 1 percent or 2 percent or 15 percent, there is an inequity in terms of the ability of those school boards to raise that money. The both parties, in terms of their education critics -- of course, I will continue to say I'm an education advocate -- will condemn us the local contribution, the use of the property tax, defining it as regressive, and yet they will argue out of the other side of their mouths and talk about the need for local autonomy. You see, Mr. Chairman, you can't have it both ways.

The move to 85/15 percent that was recommended by the minister's finance committee, created before I took over this portfolio, is one which, obviously, the committee felt was an important recommendation to make. As much as this may come as a surprise to members of the opposition, I don't accept every bit of advice that's given to me, and I frankly don't accept a guaranteed 85/15 funding for education in this province. The primary reason why I don't is because I do believe that a local role in education is a very important one. The ability of school boards to supplement what the province gives them from their local tax base is a principle which, I believe, has served education well in this province.

When the opposition argues for 85/15, what they're basically saying is: let the big hand of government come in and define what is the basic program and the province will fund 85 percent of that. I see the Member for Vegreville shake his head at that point. Then I guess what he is suggesting is that the role of school boards be to the point where they should spend all they want on education, open-ended budgeting, and then the province would pick up 85 percent of that. Well, as a member of this Legislature, as someone who is concerned about the future of our students and passing on to them the same kind of fiscally responsible position that was passed on to me as a legislator, I simply cannot give an open cheque book, nor do I support giving an open cheque book to school boards in order to spend whatever is there and then the province pick up 85 percent of it. So, Mr. Chairman, although it may appear to be a quick fix, in my view it doesn't serve the students, who are, in fact, at the core of the system.

The Member for Red Deer-North was absolutely right it all becomes a matter of dollars and cents over there; that's all that matters in education. Well, what matters to me is what kids are getting in education. Equity, in terms of, "How do we give fair opportunities to our kids?" is a fundamental issue in education today. The opposition can argue for the status quo on funding and equity funding; I'm not going to do that. To me education is growth, education is change, and we serve our students when we reflect that in the questions we ask as a government as to how to improve financing for education in this province.

The Member for Edmonton-Belmont as well spoke to the growing number of jobs in the service sector in Alberta. That is absolutely true. Our jobs-producing service sector is growing at twice the rate of our traditional jobs-producing goods sector, and he's absolutely right that courses and changes in the curriculum are needed to reflect those kinds of changes that are taking place. That's why I'm pleased to hear his endorsement of the changes that we're putting through on the secondary ed as well as changes within the elementary education program. Certainly interpersonal skills, development of attitudes, development of values, discussing with young people some issues that they have to face on a day-to-day basis in terms of life skills is a very im-

portant part of our curriculum. That's why we've made the new Career and Life Management, for example, at the high school level a mandatory program for high school students, and it certainly is something that, I believe, is an important part of our curriculum.

Access. We've had some discussion here today about universal access. Well, I share with the opposition their concern that we have not, at least in a legislative way, recognized the right of every student in this province to access an education. That's why it is so important that we be proceeding on a new School Act, Mr. Chairman, because for the first time we will recognize the right of every student in this province to access education. That's a very key component of the focus on the student, which the new School Act is, and which I will look forward to discussing further when the Bill is tabled in the Legislature.

The member is also correct in the potential for user fees, for transportation fees, to have an effect on that access. That is why under the appeal section in the new School Act the issue of having access and the question of whether access has been affected by those fees is part of the appeal section, which was never there before. But the use of user fees is something we have been monitoring. There have not been the monstrous increases in user fees as implied by both the Member for Edmonton-Belmont and the Member for Calgary-Buffer, but clearly, the user fees for things such as textbooks, I believe, is a very important part of being able to deliver education. Otherwise, those parents are out there purchasing school books which they can rent through a school rental basis. Some would say, "Well, just give the books to the kids." Well, interestingly enough and human nature being as it is, when the kids or their parents have to pay a small fee for the rental of those textbooks, amazingly enough those textbooks stay in far better condition in order that kids the following year can use them as well.

The Member for Calgary-Buffer spoke to being partial about immersion programs in our school system and was encouraged by the increase in grants for language programs within this province. In terms of future plans I believe it's important to put all of the opportunities for language learning as well as the rights to language learning reflected in the School Act into some form of language policy, and certainly that will be an important future focus for my ministry.

Private schools. We again hear the Member for 'Calgary-Buffer reiterating his point of view that there should be no public funds for private education in this province. What he fails to recognize is that the Supreme Court of Canada has looked at exactly that balance between public and private education in this province and has said that, in fact, Alberta has struck a balance. Because in the face of the Charter of Rights and liberties, which the Member for Calgary-Buffer is constantly throwing at us, in the face of those rights for religious freedom balanced with the province's role for jurisdiction over education, there has to be a balance. In the eyes of the Supreme Court we have reached that balance in this province, and I tend to think that the Supreme Court is some group in this country that we should listen to. The reflection of support for private education is part of not only this budget but also the new School Act.

Certainly in terms of the numbers of students in private education I am pleased, frankly, as a proponent and a product of public education in this province that that number is consistently just below 3 percent. I think it's an important source of competition for the public system. I also think it's an important release valve for those who deem that their rights for religious freedom

or other rights are something that they need to opt out of that public system and into the private system to access.

The learning needs of special education and the response centres. The response centres budget includes the School for the Deaf, which I mentioned in my opening remarks, includes the funding for the sensory multihandicapped kids in the province, and the reductions were part of the fiscal year, school program year changes that took place -- in fact, not as large an increase as was reflected by the Member for Calgary-Buffer. The response centres certainly have reduced their supplies and services budget, which is important, I think, in keeping with our department's leadership and management in terms of overall fiscal restraint.

The question from the Member for Calgary-Buffer with respect to the equity grant: it is at 75 percent of full implementation, and next year, '89-90, under the current plan would take it to full implementation, which is 80 percent of the average assessment per pupil across the province.

Finally, I guess, with respect to both the positions taken by the New Democrats and the Liberals in the Assembly this morning, the Member for Red Deer-North is absolutely right. There weren't any new ideas that came out, only a reflection of: "What are the inputs on education? You've changed the funding; you're changing the legislation; you've reduced this here and done this here. Everything's wrong therefore." More important, Mr. Chairman, particularly where kids are concerned, is the output side. Are kids achieving? Are they being evaluated? Are we meeting their needs as best we can? Focusing on the output side, in my view, is going to serve our students far better than simply looking at the size of the classroom, the dollars per se, although certainly important. I will, no doubt, get into that issue further.

Both the ND and the Liberal appear to be saying that the province should take over the operation of all schools. The concerns about fees and about local property taxes being applied appear to contradict their desire to see local autonomy. As I said earlier, others can argue for the status quo; we are looking at the changes occurring in the face of our society, in our family, not the least of which is hunger within our kids. We're looking at ways by which we can meet the needs of students and ensure that their educational opportunities, when they emerge from that school system, are such that they can be the future leaders of this province.

With respect to Red Deer-North, finally, on the questions about program evaluation and delivery and in particular about teacher involvement in curriculum change: I think teacher involvement is fundamental to curriculum change. Certainly as we're implementing the new secondary curriculum objectives, changing the courses, looking for new resources, the input of teachers is essential to that process. It is also essential that once a new course is being developed, teachers are taught in that course. That whole component of teacher in-service is why within the \$4 million increase in the secondary curriculum implementation, a specific portion -- it's about \$20 for every junior/senior high student in this province -- of the \$20, \$14, will go to a credit at the learning distributing centre for the school boards to purchase the actual textbooks for the new program, and \$6 conditionally will be given to school boards for teacher in-service purposes. So it's a very important point, and certainly the input of teachers is important.

The longer term, which was the other issue raised by the Member for Red Deer-North. In terms of flipping back and forth with waves of new ways of learning, I think the flipping

back and forth has been something we've observed through the '60s and '70s in terms of education changes coming into the system. The increase of standards is a direct reflection on the lack of standards that was the prevalent view during those two decades. Our government's priority on defining the objectives, looking to the future, saying, "What are our students' needs?" as opposed to, "What programs are available?" will in fact focus those programs in terms of meeting the needs instead of trying to fit kids into programs. So that is a real change in focus, and a statement of objectives over a long period of time to meet those needs of individual students is a major change in the way, I believe, we're focusing on the needs of education.

I will sit down, Mr. Chairman, and look forward to the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: Well, Mr. Chairman, I listened with great interest to the comments of the Minister of Education. I'm anticipating that we will designate Education to come back again, because I'd certainly very much like to deal with many of the topics she raised, particularly the topics that had to do with educational funding, because I think they're most critical.

I think we really do have to look at the split between what the province provides for education and what local school boards are. I'm not sure that it should be 15/85, but on the other hand, I think 64/36 is perhaps not appropriate either. And if we carry the minister's remarks to their logical conclusion, perhaps the province shouldn't provide any funding at all for local education. Now, I'm not advocating that, and I'm quite sure the minister's not advocating that either. But we have to strike that balance, and we have to get some fairness.

As the minister is well aware, the large urban school boards are particularly concerned at this moment because of proposals that have gone forward regarding corporate funding. If that proposal should go forward and if the fears of some of the boards are realized, it would mean that a lot of students who are already disadvantaged in inner-city urban schools would be further disadvantaged, and I'm sure the minister wouldn't want to see that occur. But it does mean that we have to look more broadly at the whole question of educational finance.

I would have a suggestion to make to the minister, and that is that she set up a commission, committee, to look at educational boundaries among other things, that would also look at the question of educational funding and educational finance.

I also listened with great care to the remarks she made about funding for private schools, and I'd like to come back and address that. I think that the whole system of public education is put at risk to the extent that the province provides any funding at all for private schools that are not recognized in the Constitution. There are only two types of school systems that are recognized constitutionally, and that is the public school system and the separate school system. They can be either Catholic or Protestant.

Now, having said that, I recognize that if those systems are not capable of meeting the needs of special needs students, then an argument can be made for providing special funding for schools that, say, provide for those students that have learning disabilities. And that occurs in the province. My preference, of course, would be that those needs are met within the public school system itself, and I would like to see financing directed to those schools for achieving that purpose.

I know that the minister, the department, makes money available for special needs, but there's no certainty or guarantee that that money actually is spent for the purposes that the govern-

ment has determined are desirable or advisable. There is no effective mechanism to make sure that funds are spent for the purposes to which they're intended. That's particularly clear in the case of where the government provides funding for those students who have English as a Second Language needs. The government does make money available, but the money goes into school boards. There's no guarantee that that school board then takes that money and provides direct classroom instruction to meet that need. It sometimes disappears into the larger global budgets of those boards, and students are disadvantaged.

That's a particular concern in a riding like mine that's highly ethnic. At the Forest Lawn high school there are at least 40 different ethnic groups that are at that school. Some of these children come into the school, into grades 10 or 11; they may be 16 or 17 years of age. It's their initial acquaintance with the English language. There is some funding that carried forward for English as a Second Language purposes, but that is only provided for a three-year period. So the Forest Lawn high school, for example, will have to provide additional years of instruction in English as a Second Language. Those costs come out of the budget of the school, so all other students in the school are affected because of that diversion of funds from regular programming into those special areas.

In view of the hour, Mr. Chairman -- I guess it's not appropriate to adjourn debate in estimates. But would the . . .

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. PASHAK: Agreed that the minister should rise and report progress . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before we proceed, hon. member, reference was made to the fact that Education may be designated. The Chair would simply comment that the Chair has no jurisdiction. It's clearly under Standing Order 58 and lies strictly with the prerogative of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Deputy Government House Leader.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee rise, report progress, and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

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

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House adjourn until Monday at 2:30. I move that we call it 1 o'clock.

MR. SPEAKER: We'll take the first motion: that the House stands adjourned. Those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

[At 12:57 p.m. the House adjourned to Monday at 2:30 p.m.]