

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Friday, April 29, 1988 10:00 a.m.**

Date: 88/04/29

[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: INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure for me to introduce to you and through to you all members of the Assembly, some distinguished visitors to our Legislature from the United Kingdom. They are in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and they are members of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. This particular parliamentary committee is in many respects parallel to the select committee of this Legislature on legislative offices, and it relates to the office of the Ombudsman. The committee has been holding discussions across Canada, and today they are meeting with our Ombudsman to hold discussions with him and his officials.

May I introduce the members of the select committee to the members: Sir Antony Buck, QC, Member of Parliament and chairman; Mr. Ronnie Fearn, Member of Parliament; Mr. Frank Haynes, Member of Parliament; Mr. James Pawsey, Member of Parliament; Mrs. Sally de Ste Croix, clerk of the committee. Accompanying the delegation is Mr. Alan Whitmore, vice-consul of the British consul general's office here in Edmonton, as well as our Ombudsman, Mr. Aleck Trawick. I would ask all members to join in welcoming our distinguished visitors to the Assembly today.

head: INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**Bill Pr. 8****Rosebud School of the Arts Act**

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill Pr. 8, Rosebud School of the Arts Act.

The purpose of this Bill is to provide for the constitution and powers of the school.

[Leave granted; Bill Pr. 8 read a first time]

Bill Pr. 6**Old Sun Society Community College Act**

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill Pr. 6, the Old Sun Society Community College Act.

The purpose of the Bill is to provide for the constitution and

powers of the college. The Old Sun Community College was founded in 1971 and in 1978 became an independent institution operated by the Blackfoot Band in my constituency.

[Leave granted; Bill Pr. 6 read a first time]

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and Members of the Legislative Assembly, three prominent businessmen from Japan who are seated in the members' gallery. They are visiting our province, one of them for the fifth time. I'd like to introduce Mr. Takashige Sudo, Mr. Shichio Teraoka, Mr. Woshio Kanawama. Also attending with our three Japanese friends are Mr. and Mrs. Jack Bozac, Mr. Harold Wharton, and Mr. Tom Sparrow. I would ask that these gentlemen and Mrs. Bozac rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Beverly, followed by Cardston, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had a number of pleasures to introduce a variety of school classes to this Assembly, but today it is particularly special for me because I'm introducing the grades 5 and 6 Overlanders class. The significance of their visit to me here is that they are not only a school in my constituency, but they are also a school that is my neighbour. Many of the students here are, in fact, my neighbours. They've caroled at my door at Christmastimes, and they have delivered my papers.

I am delighted to introduce them to the Legislature, Mr. Speaker. There are 51 students here; they are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Nova Gould and Mr. Walter Sudyk. They are seated in the public gallery; I'd ask them to rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the Member for Olds-Didsbury I'd like to introduce three members of the grade 10 class and their teacher from the Koinonia Christian school. They are Shari Hartzler, Shirley Leaver, and Tammy Pieper, and their teacher Sharon Quantz. They are here visiting the Legislature. I would ask them to rise, and give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislature, a class of 18 grade 6 students from Our Lady of Victories school. They are accompanied today by their teacher Marilyn Landreville. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the members of the Legislature.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, some 27 young, creative Albertans. As part of our efforts to improve the health of all Albertans by aggressively promoting the benefits of good health habits, we joined forces with others in the community including AADAC, ACCESS, Greyhound bus lines, and CHED Radio of Edmonton. We teamed up to attack the growing incidence of cancer and began focusing our efforts on Alberta's young citizens. We worked together on a Break Free campaign to promote the dangers of smoking and to encourage teens to think about the risks of smoking and to get them com-

municating with each other on the problem.

The way they communicated, Mr. Speaker, was through a contest. Some 450 young Albertans entered our provincial contest. They designed posters, they wrote songs, and they produced videos, all of them showing how they would tell their peers to break free of the tobacco habit. That is why it is a pleasure for me today to introduce 27 of the 35 winners from across the province, along with 11 parents and chaperones. These creative young Albertans represent 14 cities, towns, and villages, and they're in Edmonton today to attend the Break Free provincial awards banquet this evening. I would ask all of the winners and their parents and their chaperones, seated in both galleries, to rise and all members of the Assembly to pass along the traditional welcome.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, Mr. and Mrs. Bob Matlock from Milk River. Bob is a member of the Milk River town council; his wife Gail is a member of the tourism action committee, and earlier this morning they had a meeting with the Minister of Tourism on the new tourism interpretive centre to be located at Milk River. I'd ask members of the Assembly to join with me in welcoming Mr. and Mrs. Matlock as they rise in our gallery.

head: **MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to announce that we, along with the rest of Canada, are recognizing May 1 to May 7 as National Forest Week. National Forest Week is sponsored across Canada by the Canadian Forestry Association and regionally by the provincial forestry associations in co-operation with many agencies and industries.

National Forest Week has been held since the 1920s and was originally titled Forest Fire Prevention Week. It has grown and evolved into much more than simply a fire prevention campaign. It is now a week-long opportunity for those of us involved in forestry to inform, to educate, and to tell people just what our forests do for them and what they can do for our forests. Here in Alberta I believe that we have a lot to tell.

The theme of National Forest Week of 1988 is Forests, a Shared Resource and emphasizes the shared usage of Alberta's forest resource and the multitude of activities and products that are derived from them. Our forests are becoming an increasingly important factor in the provincial economy. As a renewable resource it has the potential to be an even more important factor over the long run than Alberta's oil and gas industry. Wood and wood products already contribute close to \$1 billion a year to the provincial economy.

One would think that contributions like this would [not] go unnoticed, but our forests and the forest industry as a whole have not had a high public profile, particularly in the province's urban centres. That is why National Forest Week is so important. It's our responsibility to make sure that people are well informed and have a good understanding of just what is going on in our forests. Alberta's forests are used for a variety of purposes, Mr. Speaker, and contribute greatly to our economic and social well-being.

To celebrate National Forest Week, we have planned a number of events that focus on the forest resource and its contribution to the people of the province. The town of Cochrane has

been designated as Alberta's provincial forest centre by the Alberta Forestry Association and will host a variety of celebrations and events, including an official opening of Jumping Pound demonstration forest, a joint project funded by the Alberta Forest Service, Alberta transportation, the Canadian Forestry Service, and the Canada/Alberta Forest Resource Development Agreement. An auto tour through this demonstration forest will allow the people of our province and from all across North America to see how our forest management practices have changed over the last 100 years and how sound forest management can benefit the forest and its inhabitants.

A full slate of events are scheduled for the 10 provincial forest regions in the green area and in major towns and cities throughout the province, including tree-planting ceremonies, posters, photo and essay contests, school talks, logging competitions, tour displays, and demonstrations. My department has recently completed a 24-page magazine, Alberta's Forests, which will go out to 500,000 Albertans today. The magazine's main focus is to inform Albertans about our vast renewable forest resources, an explanation of our management practices and of the benefits we derive from our forests.

We have much to be proud of when it comes to our forest management practices in Alberta, and I encourage members of the Assembly to take the opportunity to participate in National Forest Week activities and promote Alberta's important forest resource within their constituencies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, if I might on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition respond to the ministerial statement about National Forest Week. It's nice to see government announcements being made on occasion in this Assembly, which is the appropriate forum.

I would like to say that we in the Official Opposition will always be supportive of important initiatives in the forestry industry as long as we can be assured that they are designed to make use of but not abuse that precious resource. We're concerned that proper procedures always be followed and that the appropriate environmental impact assessment acts be done before projects go ahead.

We are also concerned, especially the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche, about local employment, that these projects that are being announced and that will take place in our frontier regions, if you will, be done in such a way that they provide some benefit for the local people, especially aboriginal peoples who want to be assured of employment on these important projects that in some cases encroach on land they claim as their own.

The other thing that I think is of concern to the Official Opposition in terms of forestry projects is tied in with the implications of the Mulroney trade agreement, and that is local procurement. We're anxious and welcome some government participation in projects as long as we can be sure that local procurement will be a guarantee, that we can use Alberta resources and Alberta projects to make these projects happen.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

Agricultural Assistance

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my first question to the Associate Minister of Agriculture in response to her announcement this morning about the indexed deferral plan. Now,

I am pleased that the government has finally seen the wisdom of my private member's Motion 227 and adopted the first part of that, and I acknowledge that initiative on the part of the minister to institute "a debt set-aside program with an interest-free shelter on the deferred principal."

I acknowledge that, Mr. Speaker, but farmers in Alberta are frustrated by the fact that it seems to take years of compounding debt problems and low commodity prices for this government to finally come forward with some sort of moderate response to that situation. I think that's got to be recognized, that it's often too little too late by this government.

The question to the minister deals specifically with the interest deferral provision of this loan. Using her example, Mr. Speaker, if the given producer's payment is reduced from \$22,000 to \$15,000 because of low commodity prices and the \$7,000 put in an interest-free deferred account, can the minister assure us that if the \$15,000 payment doesn't meet the interest-required payment on the \$200,000 original loan, that amount that's shy will also be put in the deferred account and not be subject to interest?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, we're very pleased to make the announcement on this program this morning, which shows that the government has support for rural Alberta and for beginning farmers. In terms of the example that you used, any arrears outside of the interest deferral or the deferred portion of the program would continue to have interest at 9 percent. You have to recognize that there is retroactivity built into the program which may in some cases, if commodity prices have been low, increase the benefit that in this case a wheat farmer would probably be able to achieve under this program.

MR. FOX: Well, supplementary then, Mr. Speaker. This program does recognize the problems that some farmers are having paying debts, but it doesn't recognize at all the size of those debts. I would ask the minister that she take that suggestion of mine back to cabinet and reconsider it, that the amount that the deferred payment is shy of the interest owing on that loan be also put in with the deferred account.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. FOX: Be patient there.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, I can tell the members of the Assembly that this program has been developed with great care and consideration and a lot of thoughtful input from many beginning farmers in the province. One of the chief benefits of the program is that it is the interest deferred, and payments that are made in the normal manner, whatever their amount, would also be applied to the principal as in the normal course of payments. So their principal is actually on a declining basis.

MR. FOX: I take that as a no, and I think farmers considering taking part in this program might want to compare the total amount of their debt after three years as compared to when they participate in this.

My question to the associate minister, Mr. Speaker. The ADC covers about one-third of the total farm debt that this province has some responsibility for. You're also involved to some degree through the Alberta farm credit stability program. Do you have any intentions to institute provisions of this nature for the almost \$2 billion that's lent out through that program?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, this program recognizes that the majority of borrowers at ADC are beginning farmers, and in fact the majority of beginning farmer borrowers in this province are covered under the ADC program. In order to ensure fairness to all of the agricultural sector, the Alberta government did introduce the farm credit stability program, which offers all Alberta farmers 9 percent interest at a fixed rate for 20 years. So we believe we've treated the entire agricultural community fairly. In fact, the program has been well received by the agricultural community. But there is no intention to introduce this type of program into that program.

MR. FOX: Final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. This will, by the minister's own admission, help approximately 5,000 farmers if they choose to participate and help them to a fairly limited degree. I'm wondering if the minister is satisfied that this is a sufficient response to the crippling debt crisis that affects not only so many farmers in Alberta but also the communities that they support.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, this is just one of many programs that we have which are of great benefit to the agricultural producers of this province. I do believe that this program will in fact strengthen rural communities, maintain purchasing power, maintain our rural schools, and maintain the fabric and the community organizations in small rural communities. It also gives the farmers operating capital which will certainly assist them in this year's growing or cropping.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. It refers to the paragraph at the bottom of the first page of the announcement relative to "deferral of payments on a retroactive basis for 1986 and 1987." My question to the minister—does this apply to only loan portfolios that are in arrears, and what benefit will go to those young farmers who have made their 1986 and '87 payments?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, that's an excellent question, and it's one that we discussed when trying to develop the program. It will not affect only those farmers in arrears. The one, I think, biggest aspect of this program is that it is fair to all ADC borrowers, so if a borrower is in a current position and has a commodity which is far below the ordinary market value, he will be able to take advantage of the retroactive benefit.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister: while complimenting her for putting a band-aid on a rather massive hemorrhage, could I go a step further and ask the minister what process will be followed if a secondary creditor lays a mechanics' lien or tries to do a foreclosure over and around the ADC?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, that question is entirely outside of the program, and that would follow the normal process of discussion between a borrower and their financiers.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Vermilion-Viking, final supplementary on this topic.

DR. WEST: Yes. To the minister. Many of the young producers in my area will welcome this program, but they certainly don't want the impression left that they're abrogating any of their responsibilities to their loans. Will the minister assure this

Assembly and the people of Alberta that in this program each producer will pay back the total loan and address his or her financial commitment to the Alberta development corporation?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, it's been a concern of the entire agricultural community that there is a plight in terms of the debt obligations of many of the beginning farmers in their community. I believe that the entire agricultural community supports some assistance to the beginning farmer, and the borrowers who have talked to me have said, "We recognize our debt obligation, and all we want is an opportunity and an option so that we can meet those debt obligations." This program does exactly that. It gives the borrower some flexibility in meeting his loan repayments and recognizes the problems that can be attributed to low commodity prices. But in the long term, the debt will be repaid,

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
For the opposition,

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I designate the second question to the Member for St. Albert,

Labour Relations Code

MR. STRONG: Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Minister of Labour. This government has apparently admitted that its new Labour Relations Code is flawed with respect to the picketing and consumer boycott provisions of section 81. Unfortunately, the flaws don't end there. For example, Bill 22 contains no provisions to repair the damage done by Bill 44, labour relations in the health care field. This is the legislation that made criminals out of 11,000 nurses who felt compelled to strike because they had no opportunity for fairness under the legislation.

To the minister, Mr. Speaker: in view of the fact that neither the Alberta Hospital Association nor the United Nurses of Alberta asked for this legislation, why do Albertans see regressive labour legislation of this type in Alberta when the minister continually speaks about fairness and equity in labour relations in Alberta?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Albert is, as usual, indulging in deception. The situation is that the hon. Premier and myself met with nurses from the University of Alberta hospital while the rest of the nurses were on strike through the United Nurses of Alberta. One of the concerns they expressed was the perception of unfairness with the parameters given to negotiators and arbitrators. In the compulsory binding arbitration provisions in the current Labour Relations Act there was a concern that the requirement for consideration of the specific document produced by the Provincial Treasurer laying out the fiscal policy of the government was seen as being an unfair intervention. For that reason that provision has been removed in Bill 22.

MR. STRONG: Mr. Speaker, supplementary to the minister. In Committee of Supply during estimates the minister stated that he wasn't in favour of quick fixes, and Bill 44 is an example of a quick fix that failed.

Supplementary to the minister, Mr. Speaker: why doesn't the minister heed the advice of the Alberta Hospital Association and the United Nurses of Alberta and repeal the provisions of

Bill 44 in his new Labour Relations Code?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, the government represents 2.4 million Albertans. In representing those people, we have to bring in legislation that is seen as fair and as reasonable for all the interested parties. When it comes down to closing the hospital services in this province, as happened on three occasions in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Albertans very definitely indicated that they felt that that was: an essential service that should not be closed down, and for that reason the no-strike provisions were introduced. Those provisions have been amended in Bill 22, apparently to the satisfaction of the majority of Albertans. The parties concerned in disputes in the hospital industry are not the only two parties involved. The rest of the general public who use the hospitals are equally involved in these disputes.

MR. STRONG: Mr. Speaker, during the final days of the nurses' dispute earlier this year the Alberta Hospital Association demanded the suspension of dues payments to the union. Supplementary to the minister. Will the minister explain why this unfair demand has now found its way into section 111 of his new Labour Relations Code?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, that's only a small change in the current provisions that exist in the current Labour Relations Act, and they are carried forward with slight changes into Bill 22.

MR. STRONG: Mr. Speaker, we now find that cabinet can terminate the bargaining rights of a union and its members under section 113 of the new Labour Relations Code. To the Premier: is this the type of legislation the Premier promised Albertans when he said that there would be a level playing field and fairness and equity in labour relations in the province of Alberta? Is this what he promised?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, several comments for the hon. member. First of all, in his original question he said something about changing the Bills, admitting that there's some change going to happen, or something. There's nothing changed from when they asked the question five days ago, four days ago, three days ago, two days ago, and one day ago, despite the comments from our headline-seeking friends in the *Edmonton Journal*. There has been no change in the government's position, and that is that the Bill is going to proceed through the House in the normal way and that the hon. members in every democratic parliamentary system have the right, as do members on our side, to study the Bill, to debate it at second reading, study it clause to clause. There's been no change. For the hon. member to somehow take that there was a change is not so.

Now, secondly, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is talking, I believe, about the government's ability to decertify unions. And, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear that capacity is there when somebody is breaking the law and illegally carrying out actions in this province. We'd better be clear with these people who don't have respect for the law. The laws will be made in the Legislature in Alberta, not in the streets chasing around their friend Dave Werlin or somebody.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by Calgary-Glenmore.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The point here, Mr. Premier, is that it's a bad law.

To the Minister of Labour. No-strike provisions clearly don't maintain emergency services -- we've just experienced that -- quite the reverse, in fact. Will the minister now tell the House and the people of Alberta who it is that supports this legislation? Certainly it isn't AHA; it isn't AMA; it isn't the nurses; it isn't the community. Who supports the legislation he's put in?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, because the hon. member obviously referred to my answer. I want to make it clear that there are lots of laws people don't agree with but that does not give anybody the right to break the law. I now take from the Liberal Party's position that they believe in breaking the law. We want to make it clear to the people in the balcony and those watching on television that the Liberal Party's position is: you break the law in Alberta. Well, I'll tell you, the government's position and the people of Alberta's position is that the laws are made in this Legislature. We respect the laws of this province, and we don't make them in the streets.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier, When there are essential services such as the nurses' essential services in place, are there other methods for these groups to communicate to the government when they are unsatisfied with their relationship in the hospitals?

MR. GETTY: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, there is an intensive consultative process available to any organization, any group in Alberta that wishes to express their concerns. We have, obviously, just recently, with the creation of the Premier's Commission on Future Health Care for Albertans, asked them to give an immediate interim report on concerns that nurses have, whether it's about their legislation or other matters. I understand there are meetings going on with nurses' groups and other health care groups right now on this matter, and we're looking forward to the recommendations of that commission.

I might also say, Mr. Speaker, that as I travel throughout Alberta, Albertans tell me that the essential areas in the hospital services are areas that they want maintained, and they want the law maintained. Also, we must point out that there is a fair arbitration process available to anybody who is still unhappy with their negotiations.

Water Resources Management

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I ask a question that I think will cover a couple of ministers. It's with respect to the drought we're experiencing now in much of the rural areas of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, coming from Medicine Hat as you and I do, we know that drought is one of the most debilitating things that can hit a rural family, the rural economy. To see one's crops and dreams wither. . . . Also, seeing that it's one of the major -- the government has said many times that the backbone of the province is not oil and it's not manufacturing; it's agriculture. So it certainly calls for a full demand on their time.

The first question is to the Minister of the Environment, who's been made chairman of the water supply area. Has he further checked? I noticed yesterday that he answered in his questions that there were no water injection projects around the area. I have checked with the ERCB, and there are a number of water injection projects out in eastern Alberta, in the drought area. Has he made a study of how much fresh water is being used by the oil companies to push out oil?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, for a point of clarification. Yesterday the hon. leader of the Liberal Party referred to an area that's known as the Goodridge Lake area. A public meeting was held on Wednesday night with the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Public Works, Supply, and Services, and the MLA for St. Paul. That is the area I was referring to yesterday, in which I was talking about this whole business of oil and drought.

If the hon. leader of the Liberal Party wants to stand up and say that, well, now he's confused in his own mind, as I tried to point out to him yesterday, I'd be very happy to take him on a little tour of Alberta, take him some 50 miles to the east of there, and I would show him where the oil developments are. Then he would not be confused in his own mind.

But to be very specific with this question, of course there's been a review. We set up in 1986 and 1987 the Cold Lake-Beaver River groundwater review committee. It's a very public committee that's been holding meetings and has held meetings in the area. It includes public representatives in the area. I've met with them on several occasions, and I've indicated publicly on several occasions now that there would come a point in time at which I would be declaring and outlining exactly what the groundwater allocation levels are going to be in that area. I've deliberately postponed doing that, hoping to get a better understanding of what's really happening with climatic change in our province over the last six months.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, postponement isn't the question. Right now we have the drought. Groundwater is fresh water, for the benefit of this House.

Has the Minister of the Environment approached the Minister of Energy to ask him whether or not he cannot put pressure on the oil companies to have them use fossil water, not groundwater? Not fresh watering service, fossil water -- dirty, salty, sulphurous water -- rather than fresh water. Has he approached him?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is most definitely yes, and more than approached. The Minister of Energy and I get along handsomely well, and we have concurrent discussions on important matters like this on an ongoing matter. I would like to assure the leader of the Liberal Party that ministers of the Crown of this government communicate, talk to one another, and are very concerned about what is happening. There have been ongoing discussions with respect to this matter. In fact, not only has the Minister of Energy been consulted by the Minister of the Environment, but a number of oil development firms in this province have also been consulted on this particular subject matter, and they have also been asked to accelerate concerns with respect to recycling of water in the north-eastern part of the province of Alberta to reduce and minimize the amount of water intake.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, showering together at the same club is not consulting. What I'm interested in is whether or not the Minister of Energy will make use of salt fossil water, not a facetious remark by the Minister of the Environment.

May I switch my attention over to the Minister of Agriculture for a minute and ask whether the Minister of Agriculture is prepared now, at this date, to back date another two years the insurance policy that used to apply for drought to farmers so that they can recover some of the capital they've lost in the drought over the last couple of years, so that they can survive on the

farms?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure what the hon. member is requesting. The way he's worded it, I would assume he's asking for us to have some retroactivity as it relates to the forage insurance -- that falls under the associate minister -- that we just recently extended beyond Highway 16 to the northern part of the province. I should indicate to the hon. member that our figures indicate that the uptake has been somewhere in the vicinity of 35 percent in that new area that we recently covered. Acknowledging that fact, it would be very unfair to make a retroactive payment to all farmers in that area when there would not have been the uptake for all farmers participating. But even acknowledging the unfairness of his proposal, we are examining the proposal that we did receive from the farmers when we were present at the meeting that the Minister of the Environment referred to, in Goodridge last Wednesday evening.

MR. TAYLOR: Just think, Mr. Speaker; this government is fair. Once they've got the money, you can't get it back from them.

Mr. Speaker, the last question is back to the Minister of the Environment. In view of his proud announcement that it had started to rain the day of his appointment -- and, of course, it quit raining as soon as the Liberals did well in Manitoba -- is he now prepared to dig up \$5 million a year to put back into weather modification, one of the best programs when it was operating in western Canada? Will he now reinstitute that program to see whether that may not help a little here and there around Alberta?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the water supply action committee is to do everything possible to make sure that we preserve, conserve, and utilize water that we have in our province. I have met recently with Mr. Bishop of the weather modification area. It's an area that I'm familiar with over recent years.

I'd like to just clarify once again that the other day when the leader of the Liberal Party indicated that if we had weather modification in this province, then perhaps we wouldn't need the Oldman River dam . . . I'd like to set before him the challenge, once again, to come and do a tour of Alberta with me. The weather modification area that has received the greatest amount of rain, of course, has been the Drayton Valley area. That's approximately 300 miles north of where the Oldman River dam would be, and there's absolutely no connection whatsoever. This, of course, is really my first opportunity to clarify that for all members of the House, including the leader of the Liberal Party.

I think that weather modification is an ongoing area that we would need to keep our minds and eyes open to, and we'll have an ongoing review of that matter. We've had a difficult time in terms of 1987 and 1988 in coming up with dollars. I'm not sure the government would be in a position to come up with dollars in 1988, but it may very well be that some time in the future we'll have to accelerate some activity in that regards again. Our priority, of course, is now, in this year of 1988, conserving, preserving, regulating, and managing water, not spending \$5 million in a hope that we would find a solution to it. I can do a rain dance, too, but I would like to be more sure that we could have some water here and now.

MR. TAYLOR: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Could I have the

services of an interpreter next time around?

MR. SPEAKER: Standing Order 17 applies. Vegreville.

MR. FOX: There's a quid pro quo there, Westlock-Sturgeon.

To either the Minister of the Environment or the Minister of Transportation and Utilities. I'm wondering if they could explain to members of the Assembly what the limits are through the farm water grant program to people hauling water from a lake to fill a dugout. What are the limits there?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Representative Party asked earlier this week when the specific information would be available. It's my hope that we'll have a printed document for all Members of the Legislative Assembly and all people in the province of Alberta by Wednesday of next week, and I would table that in the Legislative Assembly.

Farm Foreclosures and Quitclaims

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Associate Minister of Agriculture, with regards to the Agricultural Development Corporation and related to the announcement, as well, today. My question: regarding the young farmers who have already lost ownership rights to their land by quitclaim -- and some have negotiated it through the debt review board; they also have a one-year lease-back in some cases -- could the minister indicate what further considerations would be made for those young farmers in terms of giving them every possibility and opportunity to stay on the farm on a longer term basis?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, ADC will make every effort to work with borrowers to ensure that they have every option available to them to continue to farm. Where there are cases where it is impossible to meet debt obligations and where there is no ability to keep farming, they will still work to try and maintain that farmer in the community. On the other hand, they have to be very, very careful that they ensure fairness to all of the agricultural community in dealing with the land that they have.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Where collateral has been given by a third party -- and in most cases in terms of these quitclaims it's been the parents -- and the collateral is lost in terms of the quitclaim or the foreclosure, is the government or the minister considering any policy which would be more lenient in terms of a time frame of repurchase of that respective collateral property by the parents, the third party? Or in some cases the son is able to do it. At the moment, the policy indicates a 30-day time period. Has the minister reconsidered that matter in regards to a more lenient time frame?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, I think the member asks a very good question -- where there is extra collateral put up by a third party. I believe that some of the policies we've introduced recently, such as the assumption of the mortgage, might in some cases assist with someone who's in that predicament. I can only assure the member that ADC will be as flexible as possible while at the same time being responsible. But we will in fact work with the borrower and with the person who has given equity in order to obtain a loan to ensure that we try to resolve the problem as best we can.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. This is one question I've raised a number of times in this Assembly, but I'd like it summarized at this time. Would the minister clearly state the reasons the government, in their policy reconsiderations, will not support a work-out policy for younger farmers which includes a longer lease-back arrangement?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, usually when a borrower has a voluntary quitclaim or foreclosure action, it's an agreement between the borrower and the lender that the debt can't be repaid. The lender takes their loss by accepting the equity that is there, and the borrower accepts that he no longer has a debt obligation. Usually at that point in time there isn't the ability to continue farming, and therefore we look at those cases on an individual basis. But I can't give an overall policy. I do know that the government caucus has directed that we will not become a land bank, and that's part of the consideration. At the same time, we have determined that we will have some flexibility in land lease policy. The ADC is doing that at the present time.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, final supplementary to the minister. This is with regards to the policy announcement today. The policy announced today could have, I believe, assisted some young farmers in a better work-out arrangement. Could the minister indicate why the government did not see fit to put a hold on cases that were under discussion in terms of foreclosure, quitclaim, or land sales while this policy was being developed? Could the minister indicate whether that was a strategy by government, a deliberate strategy to thin out the young farmer population that may have been in somewhat severe debt situations in this province?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that that statement is totally wrong.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Vegreville. Pass?
Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, supplementary.

MR. TAYLOR: Which one? Okay; thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't want to make the same mistake again.

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. It is plain good business to hold land off the market. In point of view because it increases the value of the land that you're trying to sell that you've previously foreclosed, it keeps the value of the land up for the farmers who are already holding their land. Has not the minister had any independent economic advice to show that it would be better to lease out this land rather than to foreclose it and dump it on a falling market?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, young people who want to get into agriculture do so on an ongoing basis. There are many people out there who have now reached the age of 21, who weren't 21 in 1980 when land prices were high, and now want to become beginning farmers or young farmers, and certainly we want to give them that opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Member for Ponoka-Rimbey, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Land Acquisition and Rail Line Relocation

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to direct my ques-

tion to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The question is with respect to the ongoing effort to acquire for the city of Edmonton certain Canadian National lands in downtown Edmonton, and it's also related to the matter of rail line relocation.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that there is some urgency in this matter being brought to a conclusion because of pending changes in federal legislation. My question is: is the provincial government taking any role in assisting in the conclusion of these negotiations?

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, the short answer to the question is yes. We've been negotiating with the federal government for some months now with respect to the acquisition of the lands known as the CN lands in Edmonton. The negotiations are going well, and I appreciate very much the participation of the Member of Parliament for Edmonton South, Jim Edwards. I'm hoping that within the not too distant future we can reach a conclusion with respect to that site and possibly have it available for uses in the city of Edmonton shortly thereafter.

MR. JONSON: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I think yesterday's announcement with respect to the downtown campus for Grant MacEwan College was very much welcomed by the people of the city of Edmonton and surrounding area. The question is: is this downtown campus development necessarily tied to the acquisition of these CN lands?

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Advanced Education may want to supplement the answer. My understanding is no, the expansion of Grant MacEwan College is not dependent on the acquisition of the CN lands, though the study indicating the best location for the site has concluded that that would be a prime location. We certainly see it as a possibility, should we be able to successfully conclude those negotiations with the federal government.

MR. JONSON: One further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The involvement of the provincial government in negotiations usually brings with it, or at least sometimes, certain cost obligations. To the minister: what are likely to be the cost implications of being involved in these negotiations?

MR. ANDERSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member is perceptive in recognizing that there's often a dollar amount associated with negotiations. The prime question under consideration with respect to the CN land site is the movement of the rail lines and other items on the site and the costs associated with that. They were estimated to be in the neighbourhood of \$20 million, but that does not indicate the figure which we are expecting to be involved with at this point. Those negotiations are one of the main factors with the federal government, and I hope to be able to inform the hon. member and other hon. members once we've concluded that we've reached a negotiated settlement on that site which reflects a better price than that.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you. A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: The chairman of the board.

MRS. HEWES: Yeah, it was a great experience, short lived.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell the House if the govern-

ment is giving some consideration to a joint venture on that CN land -- apart from the railway relocation costs and those considerations for the development of the land -- with the city and private interests? Is that one of the things we're giving some thought to?

MR. ANDERSON: Largely the development of the site itself will be looked after by the city of Edmonton. We have a joint committee which has been awaiting the results of the negotiations with the federal authorities on this issue, which includes a representative from the city of Edmonton. Once we have a better idea as to the possibility of obtaining that site and when that would take place, the committee would be more easily able to determine what possibilities there are for it. There have been any number of plans suggested and a number of facilities for the benefit of Edmontonians that have been designed for that, but until we conclude as to the site itself and the amount of land that's available and how soon that will be, we're really unable to go much further on that. I know the city of Edmonton has been working hard on that site, and we look forward to further co-operation with that level of government, of course, in addition to the federal members that we're discussing the issue with.

Postsecondary Education Funding

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday this week we had a situation where the board of governors of the University of Calgary felt compelled to go public and say that the provincial government has put them in an untenable financial position. In fact, they said, and I quote, "The board feels the issue of appropriate and adequate funding now has reached crisis proportions." Not bad or serious or unfortunate, but crisis. They went further and said that about 800 students are going to be turned away from the University of Calgary this year and denied a university education. The question I'd put to the minister is simply this: how many more Alberta young people are going to be denied an opportunity to get the kind of education that people like him have had the chance to benefit from? How many students are going to be turned away, Mr. Minister?

MR. RUSSELL: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm disappointed to discover that the hon. member apparently hasn't been listening to the statements we've been making about alternate spaces for students who may be turned away -- and I emphasize the "may" -- as a result of various enrollment caps being considered by the universities.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, the minister mentioned in his budget estimates an additional funding allocation for people to attend Grant MacEwan College in northern Alberta, but he didn't mention any similar increase in operating grants for the people of southern Alberta for Mount Royal College. I'd like to have him clarify that. Is he saying now that he is now going to be providing some extra funding for Mount Royal to provide university transfer programs for those 800 students who will be turned away this fall?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, we have been working on an ongoing basis very closely with the administration of the University of Calgary with respect to their possible enrollment cap for this coming fall semester. We don't know for sure whether or not there's going to be one yet. I don't believe the university administration has made that final decision. But in the event

that they do make a decision that limits enrollment, we have alternative moves to consider. The member referred to one of them; that is, using the space that is available for transfer courses at Mount Royal College, at Red Deer College, and at locations that may be appropriate around the province.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, since representatives from the University of Calgary and the other universities of Alberta are presently attending the National Conference on University Research and the Future of Canada here in the capital city of our province, now can the minister confirm that the reason he's thumbed his nose at this conference is that he's so ashamed of his government's record of funding university research?

MR. RUSSELL: Well, I'm . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Speechless.

MR. RUSSELL: Yeah, I'm speechless at that kind of question. The hon. member appears to have forgotten that I could have gone to that conference and pointed out to Canada that this government funds postsecondary education higher than any other jurisdiction in Canada. I could have gone there and told them about the support for research, the per capita expenditure, the per student support, and the superb system of capital facilities. And that would only be the beginning of the list.

MR. GIBEAULT: I don't know how he could have missed such an opportunity to brag and tell us how we're number one in the universe.

But I want to ask the minister this: given that the board of governors of the University of Calgary has now given him advice that he apparently doesn't want to listen to, is it his intention to sack them the way he did the board at Westerra?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I expect more research from the hon. members during question period than to pick phrases out of some secondhand news release. In fact, I understood that those weren't allowable sources for quotes within the House.

AN HON. MEMBER: They're embarrassing, aren't they?

MR. RUSSELL: No, I'm not embarrassed. There's no embarrassment.

I'd like to take any hon. member from this House down to the University of Calgary campus, along with private taxpayers who are supporting that institution, and point out the superb facilities that are there. What did we have there last year? Six ribbon cuttings, six new facilities opened. There's not another campus like the University of Calgary in Canada.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Deputy Premier how he can argue that they're increasing facilities and increasing opportunities in the Calgary universities when the universities have had to raise their entrance requirements in order to cut down on the number of students coming in.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's another debate.

MR. RUSSELL: Yeah, that is another debate, Mr. Speaker. But the hon. leader of the Liberals does refer to something which is very important, and that is enrollment quotas. Now, for many years in universities across Canada the professional

faculties and schools have had enrollment quotas, and the grades really are smoke and mirrors because the minimum entry requirement in those quotaed faculties has really become meaningless. A cross-Canada survey shows that to get into professional faculties, because of the number limitations students require far more than the grade minimum that's been indicated. The only places where those grade minimums are important are in general arts and sciences and, in some cases, education.

Now, whether or not there will be the numbers turned away that have been talked about from the University of Calgary today is hypothetical. The University of Alberta has made a policy decision, aside from any financial consideration, that they are going to go to a maximum size of 25,000 students. And that's not based on financing; that's based on a number of other reasons. The University of Calgary is presently considering perhaps limiting enrollment of freshmen this fall for financial reasons, and those are the matters that are currently under discussion between the board and our department.

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? Carried.
Clover-Bar.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Advanced Education. Just last week I met with the president of the university and several other interested people and we were asking this question about limiting access. But the other question came up, Mr. Minister, and that is: what discussion has the minister had, with the University of Alberta especially, to look at cutting back in the very, very expensive faculties of Medicine, Dentistry, Law, and Engineering, where they are having a gross oversupply of graduates? What are they doing about the oversupply?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, for the last 15 to 18 months we've had ongoing discussions with the entire system, with institutions throughout the system, with respect to the matter of rationalization of services, and just last week we had our second forum on this matter over at Government House, which included the board chairmen and the presidents of all the institutions. I'm attempting to get the field itself through co-operation to identify areas of duplication, of nonproductive competitiveness, of obsolete courses -- all those kinds of things -- so we can go into the next century with a system that's got some rationale basis to it. The hon. member brings up a very important point.

MR. SPEAKER: Time for question period has expired. We have a continuing debate about two purported points of order. The first was raised by the Leader of the Opposition with regard to repetition. Further comments on that issue?

Member for Vegreville?

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, this is a ticklish issue to deal with, the matter of repetition in Oral Question Period. From our side of the House we're increasingly concerned that the government has found yet another excuse to avoid answering questions, and I

would like to submit a couple of things to you for your consideration.

Just because their answers are repetitive or redundant doesn't imply that the question that begged the responses is itself repetitive; and though we may choose to deal with similar topics on a number of days and for obvious good reasons -- the offensive Bill that has section 81 in it that we wish to point out, the government's hidden agenda and their desire to take away the rights of Albertans -- we're going to continue to hammer on that point, that topic, that issue, by asking a series of different questions over several days in the hope that, you know, some recognition will be given and action taken on that Bill. I think Oral Question Period is certainly the appropriate place in which to do that sort of thing, because though we can ask those questions during debate on those Bills, this is the only forum in which the government can be seen not to be answering them. With respect, Mr. Speaker, though the issue dealt with or the topic dealt with may be the same over several days, I think as long as the question itself is different, that's got to be considered. And though the preamble to questions may be the same -- I may ask a question using the same preamble day after day -- as long as the question is different, then I think we're doing our job and doing it effectively.

I would like to point out for the consideration of all hon. members, Standing Order 23(c), where it says that

A member will be called to order by Mr. Speaker if that member:

- (c) persists in needless repetition or raises matters which have been decided during the current session;

Well, "needless" presumably means that the question has already been answered, which is never the case here, or that the action sought is undertaken. We've demonstrated that once the action sought has been undertaken, as in the case of Bill 14, then we alter our course and proceed with some other questions or the questions deal with matters already decided in the session.

Certainly the debate on the Bills in question has not proceeded. We're not sure when it's going to proceed, so it's our intention, with your indulgence, to continue asking questions. And for the government to try and avoid explaining its position or understanding of its position on this point by point by just saying, you know, "Cool your jets; we're going to talk about it later," or the Minister of Social Services, on another set of questions, saying, "Well I might introduce a Bill some time in the future, so I'm not prepared to deal with that now," I think is stretching it a bit. We find that a little too limiting. With respect, Mr. Speaker, as far as I can determine, Standing Order 23(c) refers to matters during debate anyway, and there is some reasonable question, I think, whether or not it applies to Oral Question Period.

Again, this is a ticklish issue. I think there are a number of citations in *Beauchesne* that the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark drew to hon. members' attention yesterday. And I think the members opposite, the government ministers, make it very awkward for the Speaker at times to rule on questions when they persist in repeating, "I've answered that; I've dealt with it; the Bill's coming up;" the Bill went past; estimates yesterday, estimates tomorrow." They're seen day after day not to be answering questions, and that's what's repetitive and redundant and boring in this Assembly.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I've listened to this point of order with some amazement first of all, because the suggestions being made by members of the opposition, who got into the debate on

the point of order, that the government is trying to close down asking questions on the employment standards and the labour relations legislation is just simply not a fact. There's no place in yesterday's -- and I've been through it today. There's no place in there where the government has resisted at all in answering questions or suggested too much repetition. We have said that some of the questions have been answered, and clearly that is so.

Mr. Speaker, to go even further, I looked at your comments yesterday, and the most you said was that you were becoming very concerned. Then you cited the occasions on which questions had been asked. You cited April 21, 22, 25, 27, and 28, and questions were asked on those days. In many cases they were, by the judgments of the people listening to them and trying to answer them, repetitious in the sense that the answers had already been given. But, Mr. Speaker, no ruling was made that I could detect on your part. You just simply implied that your discretion was being tested to make a judgment, perhaps, at some future point, but no ruling was made.

I simply don't understand what the point of order is about. If it is simply to create an opportunity to allege that the government is resisting and trying to close down questions, that's utter nonsense and it's not correct.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. members. The Chair is a bit concerned to have this discussion go on and on, knowing full well that four hon. members have groups in the gallery whom they wish to introduce and have that courtesy of the House. The Chair listened, in its opinion, sufficiently long enough yesterday with regard to the purported point of order raised by the Leader of the Opposition. And the Chair concurs with the comments that have been made here, especially by the Government House Leader, that indeed the Chair was only giving an admonition to the Leader of the Opposition and dealt with six days in which very similar questions had been raised. The Leader of the Opposition had not been called to order; it had only been a matter of an admonition with respect to the matter of repetitious questions. And as has been pointed out, it was the Chair that was doing the operation at the Chair's own initiative, not anyone else's. Similarly related, the Chair also directs all hon. members to the statement as made to the House on a similar issue on April 19. Therefore, with regard to the first purported point of order, there is no point of order.

With respect to the second issue, which was raised by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, basically in an examination of the Blues it's a question of whether or not it is again a complaint that the answers are not being given to the satisfaction of the member. Once again, the Chair refers that hon. member, when the member does return to the House, to page 602 of *Hansard* of April 22, and again, the basic quotation goes back to both *Beauchesne* as well as to *Erskine May*. With regard to *Beauchesne*, it's 363, both subsections (1) and (2). Rather than read it into the record, I trust all hon. members will look at what all the words say and not just the carefully selected reading thereof. But again, the buttress to that is with *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. A question which one Minister has refused to answer cannot be addressed to another Minister and a question answered by one Minister [cannot] 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.

The Chair realizes the fine arguments being made that, in the opinion of some members, answers have not been given. Nevertheless, it's still a matter of complaint on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark that he doesn't like the answers or the lack of answers being made, and the Chair has absolutely no authority to direct a minister of the Crown to give an answer to the satisfaction of any member.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. SPEAKER: May we have unanimous consent to revert to the Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Member for Stony Plain, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, the Minister of Agriculture, and the Minister of the Environment

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS (reversion)

MR. HERON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly, 27 bright and cheery grades 5 and 6 students from the Keephills school. They are accompanied by their teachers Rick Hayes and Jacqueline Harlton; parents Wendy Prete, Glenda McDonald, Valerie Adams, and Wendy Wagner. I would ask that our guests, who are situated in the public gallery, please stand and receive the warmest welcome of this Assembly.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you today and to the other members of the Assembly, Ms Marie Jacober, an award-winning Canadian writer living in Calgary who has won the 1985 Writers' Guild of Alberta novel award for her work *Sandinista*. There was a sequel entitled *People in Arms*, published in November of 1987, which now brings up to three the novels that have been written by this Alberta author. I'd ask Ms Jacober to stand, please, and receive the very warm welcome of the House.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure, sir, to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly a group of 42 individuals comprised of grade 9 students of the Clover Bar junior high school. It's my understanding also that they are joined by some exchange students from Point Leamington in Newfoundland province. They are joined by teachers W.D. Gibson, O. Langdon; parents Mrs. Russell, Mr. Wilson, Mrs. Oberg, Mrs. Hewitt, Mr. Mabbott, Mrs. Pierson, and Mrs. Way. I would ask if they would rise in the members' gallery and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly. I look forward to meeting with them later.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that the group I want to introduce is now still with us.

I would like to introduce this morning 36 young people from the Rich Valley area, grade 6 students. Rich Valley is located approximately 50 miles to the north and west of the city of Edmonton. They're accompanied this morning by two teachers, B. Schoenthaler and D. Kenyon, and three parents, Mrs. Standeven,

Mrs. Walker, and Mr. Hove. I'm really delighted that both the Premier and the Minister of Education are here this morning to wave to them as well. May I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

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

**Department of
Public Works, Supply and Services**

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

MR. ISLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The budget for my department for 1988-89 demonstrates our government's commitment to winning the battle and the fight to eliminate the budget deficit. Although the amount to be voted indicates a decrease of \$1.5 million or .3 percent, our effective reduction is in the order of \$73.5 million or 15.1 percent. When one takes into consideration the extraordinary item introduced in vote 6, Land Assembly, this extraordinary amount, which is identified under reference 6.8 on page 279 of the estimates book, is in essence a noncash transaction which has been introduced for the purpose of repaying the government Land Purchase Fund for Edmonton and Calgary restricted development area properties that have been acquired by Public Works, Supply and Services. More information will be provided later in my remarks regarding this particular item. The reduction of \$73.5 million clearly demonstrates that my department is paying significantly more than just lip service to downsizing and economic restraint in our efforts to eliminate the budgetary deficit.

Proof that actual downsizing is occurring in my department is evident in a number of places but is probably most clearly demonstrated when viewing the 1988-89 estimates in comparison with the 1986-87 actual expenditures. Again, when one considers the extraordinary item of repayment to the government Land Purchase Fund, which I referred to previously as a noncash item, the 1988-89 estimates represent a decrease of some \$120.7 million or 22.6 percent. Such a decrease is strong evidence that downsizing in government is possible when a clear policy is established and when the government has a strong enough will to follow that policy. Such decreases have been accomplished through greater efficiencies within the department, through increased productivity from departmental staff, through privatization of subject -- I will discuss in more detail later -- and through the effects of governmentwide downsizing which has a direct bearing on the budgetary requirements of my department since we are a support service department. I feel that our government in general and my staff in particular should be congratulated for the dedication they have shown toward providing the necessary support services for government in a more cost-efficient and effective manner during this period of economic restraint.

My department has been in the downsizing and privatization mode since 1983-84. During that time period, a total of 1,001 permanent positions, which represents 29 percent of the comparable permanent position base of 3,467 for my department in the 1982-83 fiscal year, have been abolished. Included in the figure

of 1,001 permanent position abolishments are 187 positions which will be abolished for the fiscal year 1988-89. It should be pointed out that through careful manpower planning, it has been possible for us to abolish the 187 permanent positions without having to give notice to any employees. In fact, over the life of our downsizing program, only 37 employees have been served with abolishment notices, and 23 of those employees have been successfully relocated. Commensurate with the decrease in permanent positions is a \$6 million decrease, or 7.5 percent, in the manpower budget for my department. One of the contributing factors that made this manpower reduction possible was the success of the government's early retirement incentive program which was instituted last year. This program is one more example of our government's concern for the welfare of its employees at a time of downsizing and economic restraint.

Returning to the extraordinary item in vote 6 of \$72 million, which I have referenced already, I wish to point out that it represents the commencement of a repayment to the government Land Purchase Fund for Edmonton and Calgary RDA properties which the fund has acquired on behalf of Public Works, Supply and Services. The government Land Purchase Fund is a fund established pursuant to the Government Land Purchases Act under the department of Treasury and is used to acquire land for government needs. One of the main areas of activity of the fund has been to acquire lands in the restricted development areas for Edmonton and Calgary for use as transportation and utility corridors. To date approximately \$426 million has been spent to acquire over 60 percent of the properties, \$207 million through the Land Purchase Fund and \$219 million through the General Revenue Fund. Although the vendors have been paid for their properties by the government Land Purchase Fund, there is still the requirement of reimbursement as the properties are removed from the fund for program development purposes. This is why the \$72 million has been included in the estimates for my department, as it is our intent to remove certain properties from the fund for development in 1988-89. In essence, this is a non-cash transaction -- that is, the disbursement has been made through the fund -- which should not be taken into account when viewing the downsizing that has occurred in my department.

While on the subject of land assembly, I wish to take a few moments to highlight one of our more successful land acquisition programs. This particular program involves the lands required for the Oldman River dam, which is currently under construction. To date approximately 95 percent of the required land has been obtained without proceeding to forced expropriation and without any serious complaints from the owners regarding the acquisition process. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to the land assembly organization for working so diligently to acquire the necessary land needed to deliver the government's approved programs. In sync with our government's philosophy of privatizing those government operations where services can be delivered more efficiently and effectively by the private sector, my department has been actively pursuing privatization along many fronts. Our construction program has been highly privatized since the mid-1970s, but now virtually all design and construction for facilities built by my department is provided for by the private sector. Additionally, we are making increased use of the private sector for legal and construction surveys, municipal and landscape engineering, and geotechnical testing. Finally, over 50 percent of all printing of plans and specifications is now privatized. This is up from 25 percent in the 1985-86 fiscal year.

The property management area is heavily involved with

privatization of building management. To date approximately 590,000 square metres, or 26 percent of the total of 2.3 million square metres of government-owned space, is being managed through property management contracts with private firms. Increased use is being made of private-sector tradesmen -- plumbers, carpenters, electricians -- for building trades services formerly performed by in-house staff.

Another thrust for privatization has been in the EDP and telecommunications area. In-house consulting groups in the area of EDP systems development have been phased out, with the workload being transferred to the private sector. We have increased the use of private-sector consultants for systems maintenance. Private service bureaus are being used more extensively for processing and testing related to new systems. A special support service to Alberta's computer software industry is being developed through a multidepartmental committee, of which my department is the lead member. Lastly, in an effort to allow private-sector EDP firms to bid on a complete system package, my department is participating in a pilot project where all of the design, processing, and maintenance of a major system has been privatized under one contract as opposed to separate contracts.

In the area of telecommunications, the design and implementation of telecommunication projects is now totally undertaken by external resources, with in-house staff supervising the external firms, following the successful formula used for our other construction program. Privatization is also occurring in a major way in the area of supply management. Micrographic services -- that is, microfilming of government documents -- has been transferred completely to the private sector.

With the exception of the ministerial fleet and minor routine maintenance on other vehicles, the entire vehicles maintenance and repair program has been privatized. This extends, as well, to the operating and maintenance of the recently acquired CL-215 water bombers. We've got two of them and two leased.

The warehousing and distribution of building supplies has been discontinued, and major reductions have taken place in the types and volumes of items handled in office supplies. Private firms now supply the lines we have dropped. All distribution services have been privatized. All repair and service work on word processors and microcomputers has been privatized. The provincewide distribution of in-government mail is totally privatized, and contracts are in place for selected in-city deliveries and on-call messenger services.

Private-sector aircraft are increasingly being chartered for government business, with approximately 75 percent of the total requirement being provided by private charter companies. This has permitted the removal of three government-owned aircraft from the fleet, thereby providing direct benefits of approximately 1,200 flight hours to chartered companies.

The final area for the privatization initiative within supply management has to do with support to Alberta businesses. Considerable effort has been directed toward encouraging departments to use product specifications which support Alberta firms. Additional work is being provided to the consultant industry in Alberta through my department's efforts to privatize all in-house staff training needs and through the virtually complete privatization of all feasibility studies, financial analysis, building and land appraisals, and planning studies.

It should be pointed out that commensurate with the decreased in-house requirements for the various areas being privatized, there has been a decrease in positions and budgets for the administrative areas. This decrease is reflected in the

overall reduction of permanent positions and full-time equivalents which I mentioned earlier and also shows up clearly in the reduction for vote 1, Departmental Support Services. This government believes that the private sector will provide the engine for economic recovery for this province. Clearly, my department is more than prepared to provide fuel and the occasional replacement part for that engine to keep it running smoothly and provide the necessary thrust to sustain our economic recovery.

Although the estimates for 1988-89 show a 40 percent decrease in funding for planning and implementation of construction projects, I believe our involvement in the leased space market will help to offset this reduction. A prime example of this involvement is our commitment to the Olympia & York office building project, for which I previously provided figures on the number of direct and indirect jobs it would create. In addition, this project is a major contributor to the revitalization of downtown Edmonton.

Wherever possible and economically practical we are using leased space to accommodate civil servants, thereby providing support to private property owners. Given that population growth has leveled off and space is available within the market, it would seem to make good sense to take advantage of that available private-sector space and reduce our construction budget so as not to provide undue hardship to building owners. Another factor which allows us to do this is that market rents from the private sector are currently very favourable, which allows us to obtain the necessary office space in a very cost-effective manner. Government downsizing, a decrease of almost 4,000 full-time equivalent positions since 1983-84, has also had a positive effect on our total office space requirements.

The intensity of our capital program over the past few years has also contributed to our ability to reduce the budget for '88-89. During the last five fiscal years my department has spent in excess of \$1 billion on construction-related projects within the province of Alberta. This commitment to the construction program has resulted in a physical plant which is in excellent shape and has produced world-class capital facilities which are the envy of many jurisdictions. Some examples are new courthouses and judicial facilities for the Attorney General's department, new correctional centres for the Solicitor General's department, and many varied tourist facilities and interpretive centres for the departments of Tourism and Culture, which include such world-class facilities as the Tyrrell Museum and Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump. The tourism and cultural facilities are paying huge dividends in terms of attracting tourism to the province and in explaining and interpreting Alberta's history to its own residents. The expenditures for new structures and for renovating existing facilities are paying rewards in terms of decreased operating costs, which always represent the major expenditure of any facility over its life.

My department's expertise in building and related construction is well known and was most recently exhibited through the world-class facilities provided for the XV Winter Olympic Games in Calgary. These facilities, which were completed on time and within budget, will provide a lasting tribute to the creative energy, ambition, and determination of Albertans, and Canadians in particular, toward the staging of what has been called one of the most successful Winter Olympic Games in history.

My department has assembled a core team of dedicated professionals in the areas of architecture, engineering, and cost control, which enables Public Works, Supply and Services to consistently match program requirements to available budget funding while at the same time providing aesthetically pleasing

and functional operational facilities that incorporate the newest building techniques and energy conservation methods. In this regard I believe it is timely to look at the administrative consolidation of our government's overall capital construction program, given the fact that some of the individual programs have been significantly reduced. It is my intent to pursue this opportunity to further reduce costs. In this way our government, through a consolidated capital works organization, would be able to further maximize the value for money spent.

Mr. Chairman, these remarks cover the highlights of my department's '88-89 estimates, and I'd be pleased to discuss details arising from these estimates as we work our way through the budget

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to ask some questions and make some comments on the estimates for public works in place of my hon. friend the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, who is unfortunately unable to be here today and who is our critic in the area.

I listened with considerable interest, Mr. Chairman, to the minister's telling us about privatization and the benefits thereof. Undoubtedly, the main thing is to see that the job is done in the most effective manner, and if that means that the private sector is to be employed, that's fine. But my first question to the minister is: what studies are done on each occasion to make sure that that object is attained, that in fact the private sector when enlisted to do a job is going to do it (a) more cheaply and (b) at least as effectively as it was done before? May we see those studies? And where can we be directed to them in each case?

[Mr. R. Moore in the Chair]

To give an example -- which I hope is not typical but which I fear is typical -- I know of a government building in downtown Edmonton where the janitorial service was privatized, as they say. In a short space of time the building became much less well maintained than it was with the government janitors. In the first place, the cleaning staff was subject to a tremendous turnover from week to week; there were not the same people there. It's not just the cleaning but also the maintenance of the building. From week to week, almost, there were different people trying to maintain the building. They were unaware of the way the boiler worked, the systems worked, and so on. From week to week there was crisis. I hope this was exceptional, this building. I'm afraid perhaps it was not. The reply of the contractor was, "We are doing it to government standards." And they claimed they were. So when they got consultants in from Toronto or elsewhere to advise them, that was billed as an extra, I believe.

Now, this is a serious problem. The principle we do not quarrel with, providing it shows results. But does it? Perhaps the minister would let us in on the process that takes place before privatization of any service is done. Or is it just blind adherence to a principle? We do not believe in blind adherence to a principle, but we do believe there should be rational grounds for decisions of this sort or any other sort, for that matter, that can be demonstrated and which are open and which interested members of the public, including the opposition, have access to.

Dealing in some more detail with the estimates, Mr. Chairman, vote 2 deals with Information and Telecommunication Ser-

vices. One notes a 17.4 percent reduction in Telecommunication Operations in general. I guess that's not simply in the department but in all the services under the minister's responsibility. My question, then, is to how this comes about. Is it the effect of privatization of some of the services, and if so, where does the amount of money show up that maintains them? Or is he simply telling us that the same services are being maintained at a cost 17.4 percent less? Of course, he must explain if there are, in fact, some services that have been dropped.

Mr. Chairman, vote 3 deals with Management of Properties. There has been a small reduction there. That does suggest that the effect of privatization of the property management services, which the minister said has gone up, it seems, from 25 percent to 60 percent in the last three or four years, has not achieved any significant reductions. If at the same time it has attained significant reductions of service, we are not ahead at all; in fact, we are behind. Perhaps the minister could deal with that point.

Vote 3.3.2 in the elements book deals with Leases. The minister in his opening comments, Mr. Chairman, mentioned Olympia & York. Is that the name of the company that the minister, in fact, is dealing with? Are they the lessors of the property, or is there a different name of the leasing company? Is it Olympia & York who owns the site currently? The minister on an earlier occasion said -- at least I understood him to say -- that no expenditure will be made on the leases until the government takes possession. The minister, I believe, added at the time that there have been no significant or perhaps no prepayments of leases from his estimates, meaning his budget. Is that (a) in fact the case, and (b), have there been prepayments of leases from some other budget, perhaps the budgets of the departments that are intended to go into the building? If so, when were these made, how much were they, and what rates do they represent?

And speaking of rates, Mr. Chairman, the minister's quite right that still in Edmonton we have favourable rates, very favourable compared with what we used to have and, indeed, with the capital costs of many of the buildings. So it is wise of the government indeed to take advantage of that space which is available.

So that brings us back to Olympia & York. Certainly one recognizes the contribution that will make to the revitalization of downtown Edmonton. One recognizes the contribution it will make to employment in Edmonton, and perhaps that on its own is a sufficient consideration. Logically it should not be so, because logically, I suppose, one looks for the cheapest way of achieving the object of the department, which is to erect enough premises to see the public servants are housed and our plant housed and so on to achieve the job of government. But I agree there is a place in the equation for affirmative action, as it were, in creating jobs.

So my question regarding Olympia & York: to what extent is it motivated by the desire to provide revitalization and employment for people, and to what extent motivated by the necessity of finding alternative premises? One has in mind, for example . . . [interjection]. I'm coming to that. One has in mind, for example, that on our doorstep the Federal Building at some point not in the distant future at all, certainly before the Olympia & York development is completed, will fall vacant, which presumably will not be utilized by the federal government completely, if at all. I wonder whether that space can come available for the provincial government, whether they have any plans in that respect, and whether this does not form a reservoir of cheap space, one would suppose -- cheaper than new space, at any rate -- that would be suitable for the government service.

One, I'm afraid, must always suspect that the hand of patronage is evident when the privatization exercises are gone through. There have been enough and enough repeated incidents of the leases and contracts and the jobs being farmed out to supporters of the government. It's no secret I suppose that people in the position of selling space or selling services have to cozy up to the government, whatever the stripe of the government, if it is necessary to do that, because it is necessary to do that to get your business going. One has to concede that. But when the motivation is not simply getting the cheapest deal but helping your friends, which I'm afraid is the inevitable deduction made in so many of these cases, then that's the wrong side of the line. I know this is a tricky area. I'd like the minister's comments on it. I think people are asking that question, and it must be answered.

Under vote 3, Mr. Chairman, 3.3.3 speaks of Grants in Lieu of Taxes, \$36 million. Now, in the good times before OPEC let us down, the government went through a number of towns in Alberta, and villages too, doubtless, buying space for future development and future services to be provided. I am informed there is a considerable inventory of such spaces, not only in the cities but also in the smaller places in Alberta, and these are being held in inventory. The question I'd like the minister to answer in this connection is: has a list been made of these vacant lands or buildings -- or basically vacant; there may be short-term uses for them -- been drawn up within the department showing the acquisition price and the present value and the loss that, on the books, must be registered now? Does the minister think this is a problem, and what are the plans for dealing with such sites? One hopes that the pace of development of many places will pick up again so that in the long run perhaps these sites will be needed. But in other cases it will not pick up, and in some cases we know there will be no development. What, in general, are the plans for dealing with this predicament which the department finds itself in?

In vote 4 we deal with construction projects. It's good to hear that a pause has been made in the erection of a great number of buildings so that we can make better use of what we already have and, one hopes, deploy the money into maintenance of what we already have in good shape and the employment of people to provide the services. If the minister wishes to amplify what he has already told us with respect to what new projects are in the hopper, so to speak, that are covered by vote 4, it would be appreciated.

In vote 5 we deal with Central Services and Acquisition of Supplies. I wonder if we can ask the minister, Mr. Chairman, what the philosophy of acquisition is. I gather from his remarks, when he says that the tendering documents are drawn up in such a way as to favour Alberta concerns first where possible, that it is an Alberta-first policy. The danger there, of course, is that one can go the extra step and draw up specifications which are specific to one supplier only, namely the one that for some reason is favoured by the department.

AN HON. MEMBER: Come on, Gordon. Hit the fast forward button.

MR. WRIGHT: Pardon? I'm working through the votes, hon. Member for Stony Plain. Perhaps you haven't been paying attention.

So the minister perhaps can tell us what safeguards in this policy he has to make sure that the specifications are not over-specific so that they are confined to, shall we say, friends of the

government or, at any rate, those who are not offering the best deal on a particular job. I agree that the motivation is excellent, to make your tenders such that a preference is given to Alberta concerns. But surely there has to be a limit in one's preference if that would result in acquisition which could be substantially more cheaply made elsewhere. In this policy has the minister directed his mind to the difficulties that might exist when the Mulroney trade deal is in effect, if it is ever going to be in effect? That has been one of the problems in the negotiations, as the minister is aware. Perhaps we can have some assurance there, if he's in a position to give us assurance.

In vote 6, 6.2.1 deals with Historical Sites. There has been a cut in the allocation for, presumably, the maintenance and/or acquisition of historical sites. Perhaps the minister could deal with that and tell us whether it is a slowdown in the rate of designation and protection of historical sites or whether existing services are being reduced to some extent. What is the explanation there?

Under 6.3.1, I note a substantial diminution in the amount allotted to Provincial Grazing Reserves. It's 43.9 percent, Mr. Chairman, and perhaps the minister can explain how this comes about. One hopes that whatever it is that has actuated that will not reduce the protection of the public's resource and the right of the public to have access to these reserves.

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

Natural Areas Program has been increased by 94.1 percent, which seems a most commendable allocation of money in the budget. Perhaps the minister could tell us what is involved there. It seems to be a very interesting development.

Vote 6.4.1 is Municipal Waste Management, a 21 percent cut. This, on the face of it, does concern us greatly, Mr. Chairman. The amount drops from \$675,000 to \$535,000. In terms of the global budget that is not a great reduction, but municipal waste management is one of those very necessary areas that represent one's response to one of the worst problems of the modern civilized world; namely, what to do with our waste. So one views with alarm any reduction in the money allotted to it which, anyway, is not very, very large. Now, it could be that the minister can assure us that there is a subsidy to the same services that are in place in Calgary and Edmonton which will do the job that perhaps is being done by this section of the department and avoiding duplication. But certainly, even in a time of restricted budget Mr. Chairman, the research and development of programs in municipal waste management cannot be abated. In fact, if it is job provision that is a legitimate object of government management in this area, the cleaning up of pollution and the reduction of dump sites that are polluting the environment is a very job-intensive exercise.

Vote 6.4.3 is Surface Water Development and Control. Again, a very significant reduction there, significant in percentage terms and very significant in money terms, amounting to more than \$3 million: a 47.5 percent reduction. Perhaps this could be explained by the minister. Is it in some way related to the Oldman dam, or not? I'm not sure about that. On the Oldman dam, perhaps the minister can explain to us whether anything that has been done so far is inconsistent with the Oldman dam not going ahead but the acquired areas being used for offstream storage, so that if a more rational system of managing the problem in that area and a more rational approach to the environment prevails, the money so far spent will not have been wasted.

Mr. Chairman, there are others that wish to review the estimates with the minister, I know. I will give them a chance.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to make some comments and direct questions to the minister on two projects within the Taber-Warner constituency. They are the new provincial building, a plan for the town of Taber, and the new Milk River interpretive centre, planned at Milk River. Then I'd like to make a couple of comments relative to the minister's work on behalf of all members of this Assembly and the rapport that we've established with him through our Members' Services Committee.

First, with regard to the Taber provincial building. Taber is probably the largest town in the province that does not yet have a provincial building. The reason for that is very simple. In the . . .

MR. MITCHELL: It must be an oversight; it's got to be an oversight.

MR. BOGLE: Well, we have the attention of the hon. members to my right.

In the late 1960s through the insight of both the town council and the municipal district council, a new Administration Building was built in Taber so that under one roof all of the local services and provincial services could be housed. So we had a building with the MD offices, the town offices, both the public and separate school boards, and the local health unit, with additional space to be leased back to the departments of Agriculture and the Solicitor General. That arrangement worked very well over the years. Of course, there was always the concern by government that if a provincial building were to be built in Taber, would that in fact detract from the Administration Building, because rent was being collected by the town and the MD for the leased space back to the province. In the last number of years both the town and the MD notified the government that indeed the space within the building could be used for their own services, and at that time the province began to very actively look for a site on which to build a new provincial building. A site was identified. It's on the western edge of the town in a new subdivision and would be located right next to the Taber health care complex, which was in the planning stages at that time. The site in question is just over four acres.

Some discussion took place over the last couple of years that really the provincial building should be in the downtown core and not in a residential area next to the health care complex. Of course, that argument made a lot of sense for a variety of reasons. Unfortunately, there wasn't a large enough parcel in the downtown core to meet the needs of a new provincial building. However, with the development of a new health care complex, the old hospital site, a site of just over three acres, became available. The old hospital site is right on the edge of the downtown business core, having on its eastern boundary across the street the post office and a large drug store. To the south is the provincial court building and St Augustine's Roman Catholic Church. To the north across 50th Avenue are a number of small businesses. To the northwest is Knox United Church, and to the west of the building both Confederation Park, a park which was developed by the town in Canada's centennial year, and the Administration Building and recreation complex. So members will

appreciate that the old hospital site is really an ideal spot for the proposed new provincial building.

The needs currently identified by the province for its new building would be approximately 23,000 square feet. This building would accommodate the existing services in Taber including the Department of Agriculture -- and Agriculture includes, in addition to the department per se, the irrigation offices and the Hail and Crop Insurance offices -- the Department of Social Services and the mental health clinic, and the Solicitor General's facilities in the town. The announcement which was made by our minister on March 25 of this year was that this 23,000 square-foot building, with an expected cost of \$3.8 million, would go to tender in October of this year.

I was pleased that prior to the announcement and in working with the minister, he was able to arrange in his schedule a visit to Taber. That occurred on February 27 of this year, and at that time he visited with the town council. While the administrator was at the airport to pick the minister up, I had an opportunity to share with the town an idea, a concept. The concept was that now that the old hospital site was available, would the town consider taking the initiative in working with the owners of the site, the hospital board, and the other partners that have a direct interest in it -- the MD council in particular and to a lesser degree the town of Vauxhall -- to see if we could in fact persuade the province to give up its site in the new subdivision and come downtown and have the provincial services where they belonged? The mayor and members of council seemed very receptive to that idea. When the minister did meet, and of course the meeting was to discuss the timing of the new provincial building, the idea was put forward. The minister was then taken out the front door of the building so that he could see the site we were talking about, and the three-acre site is indeed a beautiful site. There are 40- to 45-year-old elm trees all around the edge. You can just visualize the kind of provincial building that could in fact be located on that particular parcel of land.

I am pleased that the town has been able to work out an arrangement with both the hospital board and the MD of Taber whereby the facility could be relocated. The offer that has been made back to the department is that because of the appraised values of the sites, obviously the downtown site, which is a little smaller, is worth more because of its location. So what is proposed is that two acres of the three-acre site be used as the trade. The town would then in all likelihood use the four-acre site next to the hospital either for community housing in combination with other single detached housing projects, retain their remaining acre, lease it back to the department for, say, 25 years, giving the department first option to purchase if indeed the land would be required by the department. Now, I'm not asking the minister to respond to that specific offer at this time, as appropriately the response should go to the town, but I do want to indicate for the record my very strong endorsement of this concept, as I believe in both the short and the long term the proper place for the Taber provincial building is indeed on the downtown site.

I next want to turn my attentions to the new Milk River interpretive centre, which was jointly announced by the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services and my colleague the Minister of Tourism at a meeting before about 200 members of the Milk River chamber of commerce and their spouses approximately two months ago. A little background is necessary. In 1974 a tourist information centre was established on the north bank of the Milk River, and the purpose of that centre, of course, was to provide information on various sites and facilities

that Alberta has to offer to our American tourists. During the last calendar year approximately 14,000 visitors were at the centre. While that does not rank high among the total Alberta tourist information centres, it's the second highest usage of American visitors, but even with that we're recognizing that we're only capturing about 10 percent of the potential American visitors coming into our province. Some of the reasons that are given for that is that the present site has poor visibility. It is on a piece of land that is recessed a bit, and there are some large trees in front of it. The access is not ideal for large trailers, and the concern is that the appeal may not be as advantageous as might be the case.

With the co-operation of the minister along with the Minister of Tourism and their respective departments -- and I might at this time say how pleased I am with the co-operation shown by the staff in both Public Works, Supply and Services and Tourism in seeing this project evolved in the very unique way that it has -- we were able to take advantage of the Canada/Alberta tourism agreement, which does contain a provision for funding the construction of information centres that were on international borders. It was certainly decided that the facility plan for Milk River could be expanded from just an information centre to include, in addition to that, an interpretive centre component, and the objective in building the interpretive centre is to dramatically increase the number of American visitors coming into our province by automobile through the Coutts crossing. The Coutts crossing, as members may know, is the busiest crossing in the prairies between the port south of the city of Winnipeg and the port south of the city of Vancouver. This is being planned by the very unique nature of the centre which is being developed. In addition, the interpretive centre will be identified as a destination point, which means that this will be the first information/interpretive centre marked as a destination point to American and Canadian auto clubs as well as tour bus operators and companies in the United States.

An example of what will be developed on the site, in addition to the building, which is fairly standard, is a very unique rock display in front of the building that will taper off but at its highest point be approximately eight feet high, and it will depict the hoodoos at Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park. Members of the Assembly who have had the opportunity to visit the prehistoric section of the Calgary Zoo would know the kinds of hoodoos that are being planned in terms of construction there. They are very authentic in their design.

In addition, it's planned that there be approximately a 30-foot dinosaur. I think the species that's being considered is the tyrannosaurus rex, the large meat-eating dinosaur. And of course, that dinosaur will have significance not only to the Tyrrell museum at Drumheller but also to the recent dinosaur egg discovery site located in the county of Warner and not that many miles from this centre. So we'll be able to further direct visitors who are coming in so that they take advantage of the opportunities we have within our own region as well as other parts of the province.

I'm extremely pleased with not only the care that's been taken by the minister and his staff in terms of some playground equipment and other activities so that youngsters can get out of an automobile and stretch their legs and run around a bit but the way that they're involving the local community by using the original home that was on the site and making it available on a lease basis for local businesspeople so that we can have anything from a concession stand to an outlet from one of the stores with souvenirs or the like. So that's a way of involving the pri-

vate sector, involving local businesspeople, both through the town council and the chamber of commerce. So that's something that pleases me greatly.

The questions that I would like to put to the minister with regard to the interpretive centre relate to when the project will go to tender and the projected construction start-up of the centre and whether or not we are still on target so that the new interpretive centre would be open by mid next year.

I'd like to conclude my remarks, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of all members of the Assembly, and particularly those members who serve on the Members' Services Committee, in complimenting our minister for the very co-operative way he has worked with us. In an ideal setting all members would be housed within the Legislature Building. That's just not practical. There isn't room in this building for all members, and therefore a number of us are located in the Legislature Annex building. We've found that with the co-operation of this minister we've been able to do things, both as opposition and government members, in terms of our space and our allocation and the equipment we have that hitherto was not possible. I don't want the minister to rest back on his laurels and assume that we're completely satisfied, because we're constantly thinking of ways to improve the services even more for members of the Assembly. Because that, after all, is the role of the committee. But as long as we've got ministers like the present minister of public works and supply to work with, I know that there's an open, receptive door to new ideas and ways of making the life and the working activities of all members of the Assembly more attractive.

So I'd like to conclude by thanking the minister on behalf of all members.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Chairman, first of all, let me thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and the hon. Member for Taber-Warner for raising some questions. I appreciated many of the comments of the last member. After sitting here in question period for five weeks without a single question, I was beginning to think that either (a) Public Works, Supply and Services wasn't doing anything that anyone appreciated, or (b) my staff was so efficient that they weren't doing anything wrong and nobody was receiving complaints, and (b) is what my staff was trying to tell me, and I didn't really want to agree with them.

I'd like to respond very quickly to a number of points and questions raised, first of all, by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. I believe, first of all, he expressed some concerns with our move toward privatization, requesting studies on the impact, et cetera, et cetera. I think I would be very fair in sharing with the House that in public works we attempt to act as opposed to use studies for an excuse not to act. But the process we've used in privatization is a phase process which you can monitor as you're moving. As I indicated, our privatization of property management is now up to 26 percent. That's been done over about a three-, four-year period. So you can very easily start comparing the results you're having there and the costs you're having there with what you're doing in the other area. I would submit in all areas our process has been phased and monitored. So I have no studies that I am prepared to share, and if I had studies, I wouldn't share them anyway.

Some concern was raised about a specific building in downtown Edmonton and using this as an argument against privatization of property management. Unfortunately, the member didn't

identify the building. I think I know which building he was talking about. It's a building in which we have mainly dollar lessees; these are nonprofit organizations that we give a very favourable rent to to carry on their activities. Unfortunately, there was still one commercial user in there who had far different expectations than the nonprofit groups.

MR. WRIGHT: It wasn't that one.

MR. ISLEY: It wasn't that one? Well, then you share the one with me, because that's the only complaint I've heard.

But I would say this. When you're moving to privatization and when you're starting to deal with small companies that are starting up, you're going to run into problems. We've run into problem companies, some that undertendered and found they couldn't provide the service, and changes had to be made. But we haven't run into any insurmountable problems, and we're finding better and better and stronger firms building up as a result of our initiatives.

His comments on vote 2 with a reduction of 17 percent went over my head. All I can see is a reduction of 8.9. Now, in analyzing the reasons for the reductions in vote 2, which is the telecommunications vote, the most significant reduction was as a result of a savings in a negotiated agreement with ET for services that we buy from them.

Vote 3, property management. I believe the hon. member mentioned something about me indicating that we'd hit 60 percent. The level that we've hit, as I've said before, is 26 percent. The Olympia & York project, of course, always brings mention, but this is the first time I've heard a member from that party recognize that there are some positives to Olympia & York. I believe I heard the hon. member saying, "Hey, the jobs in downtown Edmonton are good." It's the first time I've heard that in this House. "It's contribution to the revitalization of downtown Edmonton is good." Again, the first time I've heard it.

He had a specific question, I believe, as to whether or not we were dealing directly with Olympia & York or whether we had a contract with someone that was managing their project and whether or not we had prepaid any lease through my department or through any other branch of this government. The answer to the first question is that Olympia & York, to the best of my knowledge, are the owners of that building. They are the company that I negotiated the prelease agreement with, and they are the company's name that our agreement is with. At this point in time and until such time as we occupy the building, no prelease money has flowed through my department or any other branch of this government toward that project. It is, as I've indicated before in this House, totally a noncost method of leveraging construction jobs paid for by the private sector, and if the economy of this province keeps moving the way I feel it moving -- especially in the northern half with heavy oil plants, with forestry projects, petrochemical plants, I think, and the rates that we've negotiated with O & Y in late '86 and '87 being exposed to Public Accounts, as they will be in the early '90s -- I think we'll find that it's even at that point in time a noncost item to the Alberta taxpayer. As it is, I'm going to take some pride in my projections in '86-87.

He raised some concern about the federal building. By fall of this year I would think the federal building will be completely vacated. Currently the federal government is leasing it from us, but the federal building, although it is a well built structure, needs a total electrical, mechanical retrofit before the next users go in. So the space coming in our inventory will probably be in

the time range 1990 to '92, somewhere in there. On the other hand, if we're looking at future planning of Government Centre, we have another building in Government Centre known as the Leg. Annex, which again is in need of a major retrofit before too many more years. The unfortunate thing about it is that it is not of the same quality structure as the federal building, and the results -- and I'm sure we'll be verifying -- of the studies at this moment would show that it's cheaper to rebuild the building than it is to retrofit it. So my recommendation at some point in the near future is going to be the demolition of the Leg. Annex, and as you can see, that fits in with the needs of additional space in Government Centre. [interjections] I'm going to get support on that one, eh?

Grants in Lieu of Taxes. We continue to pay, and there has been an increase in Grants in Lieu of Taxes, because remember what we're really paying is the taxes that the municipalities would otherwise have assessed on that property. Public Works, Supply and Services has no large inventory of vacant lands or buildings anywhere around the province, and I believe the concern was raised as to whether we were adjusting the value of our buildings and land to market conditions. That has never been done. As near as I can determine historically, the minute public works builds the building or acquires land, it's valued at \$1, whether it's in the good times or the bad times: paid for 100 percent at the time of construction and valued at \$1 as far as an asset of this province is concerned.

A question was raised about specific projects, and I would refer the hon. member to pages 110 to 115 of the elements, which list every project that we're involved in, unless he had a specific concern with a certain project.

Acquisition policies. Our purchasing policies -- and there's a variety of them. I won't go into them in full depth today; I'll just outline two or three of them. If we're purchasing a construction service from the private sector out in small town, rural Alberta, any projects under \$200,000, be they renovation or small construction, we invitationally tender in the region. So if you have a town that has three general contractors in it, they're the ones we'll put the invitational tender out to, and you know we can certainly test as to how their bids reflect the marketplace. Anything larger than that is wide open tendering.

In the purchase of supplies we definitely give preference to Alberta manufacturers first and Alberta distributors second. I think well over 95 percent of our purchasing money is being spent in an Alberta company. We attempt to encourage new Alberta manufacturing by taking the policy that if we can find three Alberta manufacturers of a product, we use the selective tendering process. If we ever get nervous that they may be overcharging, to test the marketplace all we have to do is open it to the outside. The impact of the free trade agreement on most of the purchasing policies that I've outlined and that we use will be very minimal if and when the free trade agreement goes through on its present form, because it sets thresholds below which you're exempt from the agreement in purchasing.

My only comments on votes 6.2.1, 6.3.1., 6.3.2, 6.4.1., and 6.4.3, would be: remember that in those votes we are simply purchasing the land to provide the location for a project that we're doing for a client department. So if you're, you know, interested in particular programs, you'd have to go back to the client department that we're referring to. I would say that under 6.4.3 the acquisition of Oldman River dam land is included.

Moving now to the Member for Taber-Warner. With respect to the provincial building in Taber, I suppose my first reaction, when I heard you say it was the biggest community in Alberta

that doesn't have one, was to say, "Hey, no, that's in the minister's riding." I think of the tritown Medley/Cold Lake/Grand Centre: 12,000 people; no provincial building.

MR. HERON: Spruce Grove: 15,000.

MR. ISLEY: Spruce Grove? But we are not, Mr. Member, as successful a lobbyist as this man is, because I've just got my mine to the planning stage, and he's got his into construction.

I would compliment the Member for Taber-Warner on the leadership role that he's played, both with the provincial building down there and the Milk River tourist information centre, and the leadership he showed in initiating the transfer of the sites to bring the provincial building downtown, where I agree with him is the best location, and it's a fine location in that community. And I would share with him that we are well along in the negotiations with the town to acquire the full three acres at this point in time, as opposed to just the two and the leaseback on the one, and that we will do our best to save the lovely trees that you described.

The Milk River travel interpretive centre is something that I'm sure all members in this House should go view once it is constructed. You're going to view with envy, because again I think as a result of the leadership of this MLA in his home community and turning what would have been one of our normal travel information point-of-entry centres into a travel interpretive centre and tying it into the Canada/Alberta tourism agreement with the hon. minister on my left was a stroke of genius planning which is going to be the envy of many of his colleagues.

In two visits to Taber-Warner in late winter and spring I've concluded that the only thing that the hon. member doesn't control down there is the weather. My first trip was in February. I get off the plane in my overboots and my overcoat into nice, sunny weather, and I look out of place. Then he takes the hon. Minister of Tourism and me down there about a month or so later. We go dressed for summer, and he orders the only storm of the year. But in both cases the hospitality was warm, and I thank you for that.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Chairman, do I have the floor?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You were called.

MR. McEACHERN: I didn't hear you. Thank you.

I rise to ask some questions and to make some points that I consider important in the estimates of Public Works, Supply and Services. I note that the budget is about half a billion dollars, but I also understand that the department does a lot of the work for other departments. For instance, if you look at their mandate, it says that they are in charge of capital projects for "site acquisition, planning, design, tendering, operation and maintenance . . . leasing and control," purchasing supplies and services, and so on. So what I want to know from the minister is: is he in charge of the full \$1.1 billion in capital costs outlined in the estimates? You know, that includes all the departments. How much of the \$2.5 billion that the Provincial Treasurer was bragging about, the capital budget of the province that he talked about -- he said that there was a total of \$2.5 billion in capital projects when he brought in his budget; you'll find it in his budget speech -- is the department of public works in charge of? Also, you did mention that there had been some reductions, so I'm wondering if the Treasurer should revise his estimate

downward from that \$2.5 billion position.

I would also point out that last year he claimed that there was a \$2.4 billion capital works projects budget too, and I look forward to the public accounts of that next year to see whether or not in fact there was that much. I never could get him to enumerate exactly what added up to the \$2.4 billion, and I'm as skeptical of the \$2.5 billion this year. In fact, I wonder how much of that is going to be handled by public works and how you can do it if you're going to get a 39.8 percent reduction in vote 4 of your budget. I mean, a 40 percent cutback, yet you're going to have as big a capital projects budget this year as last year supposedly.

I might point out from page 61 of the Auditor General's report in reference to this department in capital construction projects that the department "does not evaluate the appropriateness of these projects." So what the Auditor General is really saying is that while the department may have cost-effectiveness procedures in place in most cases, nonetheless they don't in any way rule on the appropriateness of particular projects. Therefore, some other department which sets the project can ask for something that is not cost-effective or efficient or a particularly good idea, yet the department of public works, which carries out that project, makes no attempt to say: "Yes, this is a good project. Yes, you do need this; no, you don't need that in order to fulfill your purpose."

I think of some examples. The University hospital, the Walter C. Mackenzie hospital. I'm sure your department could have told them a much more efficient way to achieve their purpose than the rather barnlike building they've built, which certainly must be inefficient. I think of Kananaskis: much more costly and extravagant than was necessary. He was bragging today, actually about some of the buildings for the Solicitor General's department. I would tell him that that's all very well; the government is very good at building buildings but not so good at providing operating costs to run programs in those buildings. For example, someone from the Solicitor General's department told me the other day that most of his secretarial staff had been replaced and that he was having to do secretarial work himself, when in fact he was a very high priced person who looks after the portfolios of a number of handicapped adults in this province. So I would suggest to the minister that he start looking at cost-effectiveness in building some of those buildings.

For instance, there are some of the recreational buildings that the government has sponsored and helped to build across the province. Where is the money to run a recreational program in them, to hire a university student graduate so that you can have some ongoing programs in some of these facilities?

I think of the Royal Alex hospital. The government has promised them \$74 million to expand, but just the other day they were saying that they were going to cut back beds because they don't have the operating money to run the beds they've got. So I say to this government that they better stop and think about the appropriateness of what it is they're building. That's your department's responsibility, yet you're not taking it, by the words of the very Auditor General. I'll quote him. He says on page 61 of his report for the '86-87 fiscal year:

The Department considers . . .
And he's referring to the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services.

that it is responsible for planning and implementing projects, but not for the appropriateness of projects. As such, the organizations that prescribe the scope of projects are not accountable for the costs involved, a situation which is hardly conducive to the economic use of public money.

So you've been told by the Auditor General that you're not using public money effectively. I've given you some examples, and I suggest that you decide to do something about it. In fact, his recommendation 32 reiterates that point and suggests that you do something about evaluating the appropriateness of some of your expenditures.

You mentioned the tendering process, and I guess I have a couple of questions on that. Why is it used sometimes and not used other times? What are the criteria, particularly in reference to privatization of some of the services that are presently provided by the government? Why would the minister say that he would never make public any studies to prove that his privatization process is effective? I mean, why should we make policy here in a vacuum? If you have some stats and some figures that prove your privatization is working and is somehow saving tax dollars, then you have an obligation to bring that into the House to convince us in this Assembly that it's a good idea. So I don't understand why you would say, "If I had any studies, I wouldn't make them public." I guess it's part of the same secrecy that we were fighting about the other day with the department about the release of information on some of the contracts in Kananaskis.

I would like to also just mention a little bit about this privatization thing. It seems to me that there are more questions to it than just whether it saves taxpayers dollars or not. If you in fact by privatizing some particular service are getting it done cheaper -- and that I would question to some extent -- you may find that all you're doing is cutting the wages of some people till they are poverty wages. You are putting their job security at risk so that they can be fired or laid off the minute that project is over. They don't get any benefits, and because those workers then have less dollars as income, they can purchase less things in our society. Therefore, the whole economy is depressed. So the Alberta government has in fact probably added to the depression of this economy over the last four or five years by the privatization process.

I think they should really stop and seriously consider that. It seems like they've got lots of money for the Peter Pocklington's of the world and for big companies coming in to do forestry projects and lots of royalty write-offs for big oil companies, but you don't have any money to keep workers on a decent wage, performing a job which they can do adequately. As I pointed out with the Solicitor General example, if you start laying off people at the bottom end that are doing the services, the secretarial staff for example, then you find out you have higher priced people doing the jobs that somebody else could've done cheaper. So there are some false economies built into your ideas, I believe.

When you mention tendering, of course, I can't resist mentioning Olympia & York. I see no excuse for the way that was done. In fact, it raises an important point that the Auditor General makes. He says of the department in regard to office space requirements, on page 60 of the Auditor General's 1986-87 report

The Department's present systems are not capable of providing all the information needed to support decisions associated with acquiring major blocks of office space, whether by purchase, lease or construction.

Now, if that isn't an incredible indictment of a government that would go out and project into the future that they need some office space and make this Olympia & York deal when they don't know what the heck they're doing, by the Auditor General's own analysis, then I'd like to know what it is except political patronage and handing out money to their friends.

I also want to ask the question -- you were talking about the

properties that public works holds as being listed at a dollar. Is the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services involved in the Alberta Mortgage and Housing purchases of land banks near towns with the idea of industrial development taking place on those? A lot of land was purchased in the late '70s and early '80s with that in mind, and it's now one heck of a mess. I'm wondering if the public works department is the one that's administering that. If so, just a comment or two. I understand -- and I heard this number a year or so ago, but I heard it again yesterday to remind me -- that that project has been so disastrous that it's costing the taxpayers something like \$40 million a year in interest charges alone on the portfolio. I wonder if the member could comment on that.

The member mentioned this downsizing of the budget and the cutbacks of staff over the last while. In fact, it was mentioned by the Minister of Labour yesterday, and both of them have given various numbers associated with it and make out that it's a great idea. Now, I would admit that this government has been one of the most bureaucratic in the country, but a lot of it is top heavy. I think you've got to be very careful, as I said a few minutes ago, that when you lay off employees, you're not just putting in jeopardy their wages. They end up getting lower wages, they end up getting no benefits, they have no security in the long term for their jobs, and it may not save the taxpayers a heck of a lot of dollars. What it may do is just put dollars into the pockets of some Tory entrepreneurs who have decided to become the hirers of other people and may not in fact save anything. So it may just be a transfer of wealth from workers to Tory friends, quite frankly.

Mr. Chairman, that covers most of the points I wanted to make, so I will sit down and let some other people get involved in this.

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

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

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

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree with the report and the request for leave to sit again?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I would request that the Assembly revert to Ministerial Statements.

MR. SPEAKER: There is a request for reversion to Ministerial Statements. Those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

head: **MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**
(*reversion*)

Department of Energy

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to make an announcement this afternoon on an agreement for the Lloydminster biprovincial upgrader. The governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Canada, and Husky Oil Ltd. have reached an agreement that will provide the basis for construction of the Lloydminster biprovincial upgrader. All that remains is for Husky Oil to secure additional private-sector equity participation in the project.

The biprovincial upgrader represents a unique opportunity to build on existing resource strength to stimulate major economic development in both Alberta and Saskatchewan. The \$1.27 billion biprovincial upgrader will convert 46,000 barrels of heavy crude from Alberta and Saskatchewan into a high quality synthetic crude oil. The basic engineering has been completed, which will allow construction of the project to proceed as soon as the additional private equity is in place.

Husky estimates that the construction will involve 3,000 man-years of employment and another 330 direct jobs in the operation of the upgrader. In addition, approximately 1,500 permanent jobs may be required in producing the required feedstocks. The project may generate as many as 7,200 new jobs across Canada.

It is a major policy of the Alberta government to encourage development of upgrading capacity here, near the resource. Proceeding with the Lloydminster upgrader will add value to our heavy oil production and expand the net supply of light crude oil. This is important because production of light and medium crude oil is expected to decline and relatively more heavy oil is being produced. Canadian oil refineries have only limited ability to process heavy crude oil.

The project will be of specific benefit to eastern Alberta, especially to the heavy oil producing area ranging from Primrose and Cold Lake in the northern part of the province to the central Elk Point/Lloydminster region. Recent announcements indicate that industry will invest almost \$1 billion in this general area to develop upwards of 170,000 barrels per day of heavy oil production in the next two years.

The upgrader will have a significant economic impact in the city of Lloydminster and the surrounding region. Construction can begin as soon as additional private-sector participation is secured. Not only will the community benefit from the activity during the construction period, but there will be expanded permanent job opportunities in new areas of refinery and upgrader operation. Moreover, the upgrader will stimulate further development of the heavy oil resources in the region.

The next step in the project is to secure additional private-sector participation. Husky Oil, which has been involved in the project from its inception, will present the package to a number of potential private-sector investors. With this package and additional private-sector participation the upgrader will be available to process our increasing heavy crude oil production. Development of this package is the result of considerable co-

operation among the governments involved. In particular, the federal Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Mazankowski, has been instrumental in the discussions and development of this proposal, and we want to thank him for that. I'd also, Mr. Speaker, like to acknowledge the co-operation of the MLA for Lloydminster, for his help in working with the Lloydminster community and representing his community so well.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, obviously we agree with this project. In the Official Opposition we campaigned on it two elections ago and last election. It's one time I do agree with the Premier. It's important not only for Alberta, but it's important for Canada.

But in saying that, I don't know how many times we're going to hear the announcement about the Husky upgrader. It's been announced two or three times before, and I would say to the minister that I'm glad they have got together the three levels of government, but perhaps this is a little premature because, as the minister says, they still have to secure additional private-sector equity participation. I would have hoped that when the final deal was completed, then we'd announce it, but I expect we'll get another good news announcement about it. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd say it's a little premature yet.

Also, I want to know some more details than what we are getting. First of all, how is it being financed by the levels of government? Is it loan guarantees, where again we go back to the old way where the taxpayers take the risk and the private sector gets the advantages? Is it equity involvement, which we've suggested? There's nothing in there about that. I think they could have been a little more forthcoming, and maybe we will get it in the future, about what the percentage of money is between the three levels of government, because it's hard to comment without that. I would also be a little curious, Mr. Speaker, how many jobs are in Alberta and how many in Saskatchewan compared to the amount of money we're both putting in.

But certainly you'll see no objection to going ahead with this project from us. We may want to look at the best possible deal for the taxpayers of Alberta, and we may have that as a legitimate debate in this House, but I do say that it's nice to have this announcement. I expect maybe in another year we'll get another one when the private-sector company comes in, so they can announce it three or four more times. So all in all, I'll take this a step forward at this particular time, but I will wait to see what actually happens, if there are other private-sector people that want to involve themselves, before I start cheering.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Minister of Energy has the right to respond for three minutes if he wishes. No? Thank you.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, by way of planning for hon. members, the business of the House on Monday afternoon next will be Committee of Supply study of the estimates for the Department of Tourism. The House will not sit on Monday evening.

[At 12:52 p.m. the House adjourned to Monday at 2:30 p.m.]