

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Wednesday, May 4, 1988 2:30 p.m**
Date: 88/05/04

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

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

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

Amen.

head: **PRESENTING PETITIONS**

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of a number of investors in First Investors of Canada and Associated Investors of Canada who request that this Legislature institute a committee to investigate the possibility of a plan to acquire the assets of FIC and AIC from the receiver/manager, Coopers & Lybrand.

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 82nd annual report of the Department of Education for the period April 1, 1986, to March 31, 1987. Copies will be distributed to all members.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly, 10 members of the Principal Investors Protection Association from Edmonton. They are led by their president, Mrs. Cheryl Brown. They're seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the members of the Assembly.

MR. PIQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud today to introduce to all members of this Assembly, 97 grade 6 students from the Athabasca elementary school located in the beautiful, historic town of Athabasca. The town of Athabasca Landing was considered as a potential site for the capital of Alberta during the debates of 1906. It is located geographically in the centre of Alberta.

Accompanying these very bright and enthusiastic students are teachers Lois Schinkinyer, Dorthy Ryan, Larry Armfelt, David Maguire, Ron Golonka, Mrs. Bahry, and bus drivers Mr. Rounciville and Mr. Petrokovich. I would ask them to please stand and receive the warm welcome and applause from all

members of this Assembly.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, seated in the members' gallery are 26 young students from the Parkview elementary school. They are accompanied by their teacher Miss D. Meier as well as parents Mrs. Clouston, Mrs. McKinley, Mrs. Perry, and Mrs. Kemper. I welcome the students, the parents, and teachers to our Assembly today, and I ask all members to give them the traditional welcome.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

MR. SPEAKER: Forgive me, Leader of the Opposition. The Chair would just like to point out for the information of all members in the House that today it has been agreed that there would be one photographer in to take stock photos of all members. So that the the Chair is not inundated by a bunch of messages saying, "What's the procedure today," we just want to draw that to the attention of all members.

Leader of the Opposition, please.

Services to Opposition-Held Constituencies

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question to the Premier, and it has to do with ethics in government, something this government seems to have trouble with. Earlier this year our friend the Minister of the Environment gave a little speech to the Conservatives in Athabasca. In the speech, among other things, I take it, Mr. Speaker, he suggested that residents of the local area could not expect such things as government funding and projects unless they elected a member of the Premier's party. I am told that he's made similar speeches around the province, mainly in opposition ridings. My question to the Premier: has the Premier disciplined the Minister of the Environment and told him very clearly that these types of public statements are sleazy and unacceptable?

MR. GETTY: It's remarkable, Mr. Speaker, when you get information secondhand, how often it gets so badly distorted. As any member of our government would say, certainly we welcome the opportunity to help all areas of this province, but there are certain times when you are able to communicate more directly with the government under an active MLA in the government. That just is a fact of life. Nevertheless, I make a commitment to all the members in this Legislature that the government's desire is to assist Albertans in every part of this province.

MR. MARTIN: That's very nice, Mr. Speaker. But you have ministers making these statements, and by the Premier's answer I take it he is condoning the Minister of the Environment's statement. I would ask him clearly if this is a deliberate policy, this trying to blackmail, saying you have to have a government member before you're going to get anything?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has got his second question written out, ready to ask before listening to my answer. The policy that I stated in my answer to his first question is exactly opposite to what he's stated in framing his second question. Now, they can't come in here with the questions all laid out in advance and just repeat them by memory or by reading them and not pay any attention to the answer.

Might I say, too, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member, not having been present at the occasion when the Minister of the Environment was speaking, has a lot of nerve now coming and saying things that he said are sleazy and so on when he wasn't even there and doesn't know what he said.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, the Premier got up in his first question and said yes, that people do have more access through government members. That's what he said, and if he'd listen to the questions, he'd understand that

My question is, to the Premier: if he's saying now that that's not the case, then why hasn't he taken the Minister of the Environment and said, "Stop these sorts of public statements." There were people there, and if the Premier is unaware of that, then he's just not doing his job.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, obviously, the one person who wasn't there was the person who is now referring to another member in this House as sleazy, and I wonder, Mr. Speaker, whether you'd direct me as to whether that is something we should as a House accept as a way of discussing another member in the House. It's always been my opinion that while we are on opposite parts of the philosophical spectrum, we hardly bring credit to the House or credit to our parties when we handle ourselves in the manner that the Leader of the Opposition is doing today.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair would recognize the Minister of the Environment, on?

MR. KOWALSKI: I would like to give notice, Mr. Speaker, that I will be raising a point of order at the conclusion of the question period.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, the Premier may want to hide from what I said, but the reality is that this minister and perhaps other ministers have been making statements around the province, and the Premier made it himself during the election in the Member for Little Bow's riding. My question is: does the Premier fail to appreciate that these comments reflect a misuse of state power for a narrow, partisan interest?

MR. GETTY: Again, Mr. Speaker, he's obviously ignoring the answer to his first question, in which I said -- and I made the commitment to all members in the House -- that the government is trying to help Albertans throughout this province. Anybody who wants to distort that, I guess, can, and the hon. Leader of the Opposition is trying to.

If I understand now, Mr. Speaker, they're going to fall back on saying, "Yes, we can get away with somehow intimating you're sleazy, but we didn't actually say it." That's the cheapest kind of political attempt.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. While pleased to hear the Premier recognize that it is a rather sleazy practice to go around the province saying that -- and I'm pleased to hear the Premier say that -- could he give some assurance to the public of Alberta that he has instructed his ministers and his backbenchers not to go around saying things like that? Because it does bring discredit to all politicians, not just to the government side.

MR. GETTY: Well, there again, Mr. Speaker, we now have another person who wasn't there. First, he gets up and distorts what I said. I never said -- and that is absolutely false, but we're used to the hon. member trying to twist things like that, and it's nice to be able to get up and straighten him out, because he's tried again. There's no way I said that the Minister of the Environment was in any way conducting himself in a sleazy manner. That allegation came from the Leader of the Opposition, and for you to automatically fall in under it I think doesn't bring credit to you or your party either, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair rises to bring to the attention of all members *Beauchesne* 359(10):

A question ought not to refer to a statement made outside the House by a Minister.

And we also have the other matter of

imputing motives or casting aspersions upon persons within the House or out of it,

which is 359(7). But in addition, the whole range of questions needs to be examined in terms of 359(10). Let's not start arguing about what's going on outside of the House; we have enough trouble dealing with what's inside the House most of the time.

All right; the Chair recognizes Clover Bar, supplementary.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a question to the hon. Premier. It's a common practice in provinces other than Alberta where either you're in or you're out: if you're a Liberal and the party is in power, the road stops here; if the Conservatives are in power and you're a Conservative, the road starts there and goes on down the road. To the Premier: is there any direction to the members of Executive Council that all constituencies must be treated equally?

MR. GETTY: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Second main question. Leader of the Opposition.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway.

Income Tax

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Treasurer. On Monday of this week the Official Opposition produced figures from the government's own publications showing that the effective rate of taxation on individual Albertans has consistently gone up over the last 17 years, while the effective rate of corporate taxation has consistently gone down. The Treasurer responded to that, and I quote:

When corporations start to lose money as a result of the decrease in oil and gas revenue, obviously their tax proportion reduces.

So yesterday we produced government figures showing that, for example, corporations made a pretax profit of some \$7 billion in 1986 and actually got more money back from the corporate tax system than they paid into it. Does the Treasurer think it fair in any way that corporations in Alberta could make a profit of almost \$7 billion and pay no taxes on those profits and in fact wind up with extra money out of the tax system?

MR. SPEAKER: Sounds like yesterday's *Hansard*.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, I guess the last lecture on economics failed or fell on deaf ears. The Member for Edmonton-Norwood couldn't understand it, so they turned to the other expert.

Let me begin again, Mr. Speaker, by saying that, as I pointed out clearly in the last two days that this has been raised, the NDP analysis is fraught with futility and is faulty in its analysis. It is absolutely a misrepresentation of the statistics, and anyone can draw conclusions if they manipulate the data to the extent that the socialists have just done over the past two days.

But I will lay out again, Mr. Speaker, very clearly for the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway just what it is that this government is achieving in its fiscal plan and how equity and fairness prevails and is pervasive in everything that we do with respect to our tax policy. First of all, when you look at the analysis of corporate tax revenues and corporate tax paid, you must do two things which the NDP have failed to do. First of all, you must understand that corporate income and taxable income are very different concepts, far different concepts. Secondly, Mr. Speaker... [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order.
Provincial Treasurer. [interjection]

MR. JOHNSTON: It's difficult... [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Provincial Treasurer.

MR. JOHNSTON: Now, Mr. Speaker, as I've pointed out, those two different concepts certainly would, if you were to analyze it, show the following: that in fact the socialists have elected to deal with income as opposed to taxable income, and everyone well knows that in calculating taxable income, losses are deducted for arriving at the taxable income in terms of what you pay tax upon.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, here is the interesting fault in the NDP analysis. They were selective in deciding what it was they would use in calculating this income amount, but what they forgot to do was to add back or to properly handle the royalty tax credit, which in Alberta is handled through the corporate tax system. Royalty taxes are not in any way used to determine what the tax income is or the taxable income is. Therefore, here is the fact if you were to properly use the data that the NDP provided, you would find that the corporate income tax on average is higher than the provincial individual tax in this province by about .5 percent over the same period the NDP are looking at. Their analysis is...

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
A supplementary.

MR. McEACHERN: Hard facts, Mr. Treasurer, are what we use.

Can the Treasurer inform the Assembly whether or not this ongoing decline in the effective rate of income tax paid by corporations in Alberta is a matter of conscious government policy or is it just some remarkable accident, one that the government intends to correct shortly?

MR. JOHNSTON: Again, Mr. Speaker, I've already indicated that if you properly use the numbers and deal with what it is cor-

porations have paid in this province, remembering that there is a very volatile backdrop to the economy, that the oil and gas sector is volatile, as even the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway should know, in fact you'll find that the corporations -- using the same analysis the socialists provided -- have paid more tax. Now, if you want to read my lips: they paid more tax, not less tax.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Treasurer said: Maybe we could use cue cards here, so I could describe to the member...

meaning the Leader of the Official Opposition

... how the tax system operates.

Well, Mr. Speaker, for the Treasurer's information, the effective proper tax rate goes down...

[Mr. McEachern held up a sheet of paper]

MR. SPEAKER: Nice try, Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, but it really is a violation of *Beauchesne* 333 to be doing what the member was just doing. Perhaps... [interjections] Order please, hon. member.

Perhaps we could get to the question now.

MR. McEACHERN: Yes; can the Treasurer identify what it is about individual incomes that requires that they be taxed at an ever increasing effective rate while the corporate tax profits are taxed at an ever declining rate? What is it that demands that from this government?

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, again the member hasn't listened either to this budget or the last budget, because of course what we have done in dealing with the individual tax in this province is the following: we have over this current year reduced significantly the personal income tax in this province so that the flat tax which is applied against taxable income is reduced by .5 percent, 50 percent of that tax.

What that does, Mr. Speaker, is free up more people on the selective tax reduction. About 500,000 Albertans are now taken off the tax lists as a result of those changes, and as I have said repeatedly and will say again, this province has the best tax regime of any province in Canada, building on the strengths of the lowest personal income tax, not increasing the corporate tax, and of course -- of course, Mr. Speaker -- not having a sales tax in this province.

You know, Mr. Speaker, for awhile there during the period I kept having this recurring bad dream; I thought that the Leader of the Opposition had changed their Treasury critic.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Final supplementary, Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is it not the case that this government policy over the long term is to do away with the corporate income tax entirely and place the entire income tax burden on individual Albertans?

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, for once in his life he may have come to an important observation which is not so much in terms of the current tax regime that we're facing, Mr. Speaker, but in terms of the elements of the value-added tax. Now, if you talked in a very real situation -- if he is being serious about this as opposed to trying to take some critical credit for something he doesn't

understand -- then you might notice that if the value-added tax is imposed, there is in fact a shift to consumption away from income, and that of course is a fair argument. I said to the Member for Vermilion-Viking yesterday that we will be prepared to take on this debate in the national context, but to suggest that it's taking place here in Alberta presently is false, is wrong, and is wrong-headed, Mr. Speaker. This government has not done that at all. It has freed up more Albertans to allow disposable income to be put back in their hands. Retail sales are up; investment is up . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, please do not raise that piece of paper again for the third time in the House.

The Chair recognizes Westlock-Sturgeon on a supplementary.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Treasurer. While Albertans appreciate that he does not tax the corporate profits that are reinvested in the province, is he working on any system to tax the corporate profits that are transferred out of the province?

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm always flabbergasted when somebody reputed to have been in the private sector, who understands how the corporate tax system should operate is making statements of this order. You should well know that before a corporation can distribute any dollars by way of dividends, it has to pay tax first because it's paid on the taxable income as then calculated; whatever remains is then available for dividends.

What I've indicated before, Mr. Speaker, is that we have found in the case of Alberta oil and gas companies in particular, first of all, that in fact they have reinvested a very large percentage of the profits right back here in this province. Their cash flow goes back into oil and gas exploration, to the development of the kind of province we think is important. Secondly, with respect to the small corporations, our analysis is now showing that in fact many small corporations have done just the same, investing back into new jobs, into plants, into new equipment, new processes, new research. That's what we're trying to do, to encourage that kind of move by the private sector, because ultimately, unless you have that kind of a climate which we have here in Alberta, which the proof is now showing, then you will not have investment and then you will not have job creation. We think job creation is a big priority for us. That's why we're providing a comfortable place for the private sector to operate, for new investment.

MR. TAYLOR: You're comfortable but you're being made a sucker of. You're being sucked in.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Westlock-Sturgeon has asked a supplementary. We'll then not engage in this kind of discussion, please.

The Chair now recognizes Westlock-Sturgeon on behalf of the Liberal caucus.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, you excited me so much I forgot my main question.

MR. SPEAKER: Are you prepared to pass?

AIDS Policy

MR. TAYLOR: No, I was just seeing how quickly you could spring up there, Mr. Speaker.

To the Minister of Community and Occupational Health, Mr. Speaker. Because of the fear of AIDS many of the political jurisdictions around the world are working and experimenting with different forms of blood tests, whether mandatory or not. Yet to my surprise, here this government has introduced a Bill that will put an end to blood testing before marriage licences are granted. I'd like to know from the minister why at this particular time, when the public is so worried about blood tests, is the government contemplating dropping the mandatory blood testing before a marriage licence?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the test that was performed under the Marriage Act that is being amended by a Bill introduced by the Member for Cardston yesterday refers to the elimination of a test for syphilis that is no longer required in this day and age. Given that in 16 years one case of congenital syphilis has been found as a result of this requirement, we felt that it was no longer necessary to require that test prior to individuals' getting a marriage licence.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, one might argue that that proves it's working. Who wants to report with a negative test?

But that does not answer the question that their blood having been taken -- and admittedly maybe syphilis is not a concern of the minister anymore. But could the minister explain: why not run an AIDS test on it?

MR. SPEAKER: Would there be order in the gallery, please.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, in the case of two individuals, a man and a woman, making a decision to get married, we felt that that was a very low-risk group in terms of acquiring the AIDS virus. As a result we don't feel that that's an effective way of controlling or eliminating the disease.

MR. TAYLOR: Well, Mr. Speaker, for the information of the minister, heterosexuals are coming down with it a lot now, and they are usually the ones that are getting married.

Is the government doing any further thinking into the process of possibly making AIDS testing a possibility to anyone in the normal course of blood tests, say medicals or anything like that? Would the government pay for AIDS testing if the blood test does that?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the government does that now.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, the government I gather, tests on a voluntary basis if the request comes from the patient. Would he go a step further, though, and tell us what the plans are, if there are any plans, for mandatory testing for AIDS, say, in criminal institutions or in the civil service, where blood tests are taken as a regular process?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the government doesn't believe that mandatory testing, either for those couples before they get married or any other kind of mandatory testing, is the way to eliminate this deadly disease. The way to do it is through the program that we introduced last October, which we'll continue to promote: an education and an awareness process. We're not

going to take a medical approach; we're going to take a health approach to this disease. By informing our young Albertans, informing physicians, informing those in the working community how they prevent the acquisition of this disease: that's the approach to take. Mandatory testing is not.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, with respect to regulations around AIDS, is the minister going to bring in an amendment or some change of regulations which will make it permissible for embalmers to embalm those who have died of AIDS or other infectious diseases in this province?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, my colleague the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and I have been discussing this matter with the Alberta Funeral Service Association, and I believe you'll be seeing some changes in that regard in the days ahead.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Solicitor General. Is the minister in a position to indicate what educational programs are available or going on in our correctional institutes to enlighten the people in those institutions as to the dangers of AIDS?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, the administration of the correctional institutions and the guards and their associations within those institutions are currently reviewing that situation and coming up with an in-house program to ensure that everybody is aware of the dangers of AIDS, having a better mechanism to detect it and to implement some way of protecting not only the inmates but essentially the workers from contamination.

Western Premiers' Conference

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier, and it's with regards to the Western Premiers' Conference in Parksville, British Columbia, May 18 to 21. The matter of interest rates in Canada being established by the federal government has a thrust whereby the federal government believes interest rates should rise to counteract possible inflation that may be created in central Canada. Would the Premier indicate whether that specific item would be an item for the agenda, and would the province of Alberta be taking a very strong stand against any unusual increases in interest rates?

MR. GETTY: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the hon. member raising that issue because it is one of the points that the Alberta government will be stressing at the Western Premiers' Conference. It is also a point we will be stressing at the Premiers' Conference, all Premiers, in Saskatchewan this summer. I want to assure the hon. member that this government believes that the policy of having higher interest rates to support the Canadian dollar is wrong, and if you also tie it to a position of fighting inflation -- inflation that appears, in the minds of some, to be generated out of central Canada -- we say take a look at all of Canada, and you will see that much of Canada is now just coming out of some tough times. In fact, to help us in this growth and rebound in the economy that we're experiencing here in Alberta and other parts of Canada, we want to have lower interest rates. We want to have a lower dollar so that we can export and compete throughout the world, and those lower interest rates will help our small businesses and individuals in this province to make sure that this rebound in our economy continues.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier will the Premier have a strategy put together to try and unite the four western Premiers on the subject of Senate reform so that the presentation to the 10 Premiers in the summer will be a concerted effort from the west?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I have been working on that issue with the western Premiers in the past. Again, I'm pleased the hon. member raises it. We have, as he knows, been able to persuade the Premier of British Columbia to take a public position of supporting the Triple E Senate. We have all the western Premiers -- even before the Manitoba election we had the western Premiers all in support of Senate reform. I'm sure that Premier Devine supports Senate reform, and I'm hoping that he will also see his way clear to support the Triple E Senate. I've not been able to discuss the matter personally with the Premier of Manitoba. I'm looking forward to that opportunity. It will definitely be a point that we will raise at every opportunity when Premiers get together, either in Saskatchewan this summer or with the western Premiers in British Columbia and at first ministers' meetings. You know, we are looking forward to a discussion on Senate reform at the first ministers' meetings this year as well.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. The subject of the western diversification department in the last few days I've had the opportunity of working with one or two applications being processed through the department. My question to the Premier would the Premier discuss with his counterparts of the west the decision-making process with regards to the western diversification department, whereby now decisions are still made in Ottawa rather than finalized right here in the head office of Edmonton? Would that be a subject on the agenda, and could the Premier do everything possible to correct that default in decision-making now?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'd certainly be prepared to raise the quickness of the decision-making and also the fact that it should be made here, as the original intent was when the program was announced. I only say I'll be "prepared to," because it will depend to some extent on the information provided to me by my Minister of Economic Development and Trade, who is working with the Western Diversification Office on a regular basis. Perhaps he may want to add to my answer now.

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, we are, as the Premier indicated, in contact with the Western Diversification Office and I, in turn, with the minister responsible, Mr. McKnight. Contact is on a regular basis. We also work with the Alberta applicants in supporting them in representations, when they ask us, to the Western Diversification Office. There is some frustration, Mr. Speaker, by those who have applied and by ourselves with the pace of response by the Western Diversification Office to those applications. That frustration, I think, is shared by a number of members of the Assembly.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary is in terms of agenda as well. Some of the western manufacturers have the opportunity of getting some of the contracts for the manufacture of parts for the nuclear power submarines being contracted by the federal government. Would the Premier raise that matter so that a fair proportion of contracts associated with nuclear submarines could be awarded to western-based

companies?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, in the western Premiers' conferences that I've been involved in, the whole matter of contracting for federal purchases has been raised at every one, and we have in each one of those expressed our desire to see a greater balance in the awarding of contracts throughout the country. The hon. member raises the specific of the nuclear submarines. I will certainly accept his representation in that regard, discuss it with my colleagues, and see whether the Western Premiers' Conference is the right place -- it's strictly a matter of judgment -- to deal with that on a specific basis or whether we should deal directly with the federal government. I agree with his point and his representation, and certainly will follow up in the area that I feel will do us the most good.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, in regards to the high interest rate policy -- and I took it by the Premier's answers that there will be discussion about the rising dollar. I agree with him that that affects us dramatically in the negative sense in this province, but will there be any discussion? I mean, I think we have to look at the effect of the Mulroney trade deal in terms of interlocking economies also leading to a rising dollar. Will that be discussed?

MR. GETTY: It may be discussed peripherally, Mr. Speaker, but I know that the other Premiers and myself do not accept the proposition made by the hon. member that this is such a linking of our two countries that interest rates and the dollar will go in lockstep. In fact, we believe this is a trading agreement. It is that; it's nothing more than that. It is a trading commercial agreement that every nation in the world would like to have with the United States. They don't and we do. Rather than looking on it in a negative way, as the hon. member does, we're looking at it in a very positive way as a tremendous opportunity for Alberta.

Trucking Rates on Jointly Funded Projects

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities and concerns fair trucking rates. The Whitemud Freeway ring road improvements in Edmonton are financed 75 percent by the province and 25 percent by the city. Government rates for trucking are \$36.85, as I'm sure the minister knows, with a seven and a half cubic metre load. The city rate is \$32.50. Truckers currently on that job are being paid \$13 a load, which comes to less than \$26 an hour. After expenses this leaves the average trucker with only \$2 or \$3 an hour wages. My question, Mr. Speaker, is: why does the government not impose a fair rate requirement to go along with the provincial funding?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, in meeting with the group last Thursday, I believe it was, we indicated to them at that time that that particular job in this sense was a contractor's supply, where the contractor was working with the trucks, and it was an issue with the city of Edmonton, who decide where the projects are going to be and then tender them out on that basis. We provide the funds on a 75/25 basis, and they, elected as we are, make the decisions as to how they are in fact invested in those projects.

The other thing I think that's very important, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the contract that the city has with its various contractors indicates that the wages or the salaries or the fees must

be fair and reasonable. We suggested to the group at that point that they then must approach the city of Edmonton to make their case.

MR. WRIGHT: But it's still public money. You can put conditions on it.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, the contractor regularly overfills the trucks 50 percent, giving an effective rate for the trucker and his or her \$70,000 outfit of half the government rate. By what reasoning does the government consider that a fair way of treating working men and women?

MR. ADAIR: Again, Mr. Speaker, the question relates to an issue between the city of Edmonton and the contractor and the contractor's subcontractor, and the subcontractor and the truckers. I answered those particular questions in detail on Thursday, in response to other questions that were raised and indicated that once the truckers had explained to me that there was a concern over overloading and speeding, I then forwarded a letter to the mayor of the city of Edmonton expressing a concern about that and asking for him to deal with it.

MR. WRIGHT: I'm glad the minister then does acknowledge some responsibility to go along with the provincial funding.

To the Premier, Mr. Speaker. What's the point of having a government or municipal rate if it can be shrugged off simply by contracting out? Will the Premier ask his committee on municipal affairs, which was recently formed, to ensure appropriate stipulations of at least all provincially funded contracts?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it's the provincial/municipal council that the hon. member is referring to, which is to deal with broad principles between the provincial government and municipal governments throughout this province to make sure that we are working in a co-ordinated way. The hon. member has a different point of view than the government has about imposing conditions and imposing one level of government on top of another and insisting that you not just do things to serve your city, in this case, but in fact rather than that we also impose conditions on them in that regard. It's the very argument that we have with the federal government, in which the federal government, we've argued, should not, in flowing funds into Alberta, then impose conditions out of Ottawa on the province. Now, the argument stands up in the next step: that the province should not impose conditions on municipalities. They are elected. They are representatives of their constituents. If they are doing things that are wrong, their constituents will change it.

MR. WRIGHT: But surely the public expects conditions of decency attached to the expenditure of public money.

Mr. Speaker, back to the minister of transportation. In order to get closer to the alleged hourly rates, when paid by the loads truckers are forced to break speed limits and load limits and indeed littering laws. Will the minister not agree it would be a practical as well as a fair step to enforce fair rate clauses to go along with all government funding?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, the ideal situation would be to go to the open tender system, where you sharpen your pencil, put your tender in, and if you're the low bidder, you get the job. Some years ago we placed a set of rates for the department of transportation. A number of municipalities, a number of other groups have used that truckers included, as the base for what

rates should be. As a matter of fact, as I mentioned in my answers last Thursday, Mr. Speaker, there was a request to increase those particular rates, and I said that I was having difficulty in the sense that in today's times it would be "cheaper" if we were to tender those projects, and I was prepared to keep those rates in place at least for another year.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Calgary-Buffalo, followed by Edmonton-Glengarry.

Release of Government Information

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a question to the Premier initially. This provincial government is the most secretive government in North America and refuses to provide to the people of Alberta any information whatsoever with respect to over \$2 billion of loans, grants, and guarantees to private business in the last few years, yet the government refuses to enact freedom of information legislation on the basis that it runs an open government. Will Rogers once said: who are you going to believe, me or your own eyes? To the Premier why does this government refuse to release copies of grant, loan, and guarantee agreements where public money is being used so that Albertans can see for themselves the terms upon which this \$2 billion is being used? Why are we hiding this information?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member starts off with an allegation in his initial question that obviously is false. He starts off by saying that this is the most secretive government in North America. Obviously, I don't accept that allegation at the beginning. Secondly, the hon. member then makes a case that there is some general, sweeping position he'd like to make that the government should do those things that perhaps would dramatically damage the competitive position of Alberta companies, Alberta businesses, Albertans who are trying to build those businesses in our province, who are trying to compete with people not just in Alberta but throughout the world. Now, in some narrow political way he wants to say, "We've got to have that; lay it out here in the Legislature." That is when the government objects and says, "No, we must respect the competitive position of those corporations, those companies, often small businessmen." We are not going to follow his position, which is to damage them and prevent them from being able to compete.

MR. CHUMIR: Well, that's incredible nonsense, Mr. Speaker, because the government purports to give us full details in their press releases. So is the Premier saying that we aren't getting full details in these press releases and that there is hidden information in these agreements? If there isn't hidden information, then why can't we have . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. That's now three questions.

MR. GETTY: It's interesting again, Mr. Speaker, that we have an example of the hon. member asking his first question, having the rest written out in advance, ignoring the answer to his question, and going on as though he had got an unsatisfactory answer. I answered. [interjections] I won't repeat again what I said yesterday, but if they continue to be rude in the Legislature to the people in the balcony by trying somehow to prevent them from hearing what's going on in the Legislature, I think we should point it out.

Again, Mr. Speaker, in my answer to his first question I pointed out that the government provides all the information we possibly can, and he makes the point himself that in the press release he gets lots of information. He then can put items on the Order Paper -- motions for returns -- the House deals with it, and if it happens . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

If there's time, perhaps we could get on to having a supplementary question by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo without all the back chat. Thank you.

MR. CHUMIR: To the Minister of Energy: in respect of the latest deal, the \$191 million of public money being loaned for the Husky upgrader, what more is in the agreement that the minister hasn't told us about, and if there isn't any more, what's the problem with releasing the document so we can see for ourselves?

DR. WEBBER: If the hon. member has a desire to get more information, he can put it on the Order Paper.

MR. CHUMIR: Well, that's the usual.

To the Premier. We have \$67 million of government grants and loans to Gainers in support of Peter Pocklington, who left creditors holding the bag when his Fidelity Trust went under. Now, why can't we see the deal so that Albertans can see whether Mr. Pocklington's personal assets back up the deal this time or whether we're going to get left holding the bag alone if something happens to Gainers?

MR. GETTY: Again, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has the opportunity, as every member has, to place requests for information on the Order Paper. As I was saying earlier, when . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Hon. Premier.

MR. TAYLOR: Point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Westlock-Sturgeon. Duly noted.
Hon. Premier.

MR. GETTY: I should only point out, Mr. Speaker, that the Liberal Party representative has asked the question, and then when you're answering the question, the leader of the Liberal Party makes so much noise that they can't hear, and you, sir, must interfere to bring some measure of decorum to the House. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: I think that with due respect to all members of the House question period is finished.

The Chair recognizes, on points of order, the Minister of the Environment, followed by . . .

MS BARRETT: Standing Orders gives us a 45-minute question period.

MR. SPEAKER: That's right.

AN HON. MEMBER: You can't . . .

MR. SPEAKER: As a matter of fact, the Chair can. [interjections] That's fine. We'll just sit here for half a moment.

Now, having made the point, the Chair recognizes the Premier to finish his statement before we finish question period, and Clover Bar has been recognized for a supplementary.

MR. GETTY: I appreciate, Mr. Speaker, the very effective way you made the point I was trying to make. Therefore, I conclude by saying that all members of the Legislature -- parliamentary tradition, one that this House certainly respects, is that when there is additional information that a member wishes to obtain either a document or even a written question, as is custom in this Legislature, all they had to do was put it on the Order Paper and the House decides.

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?
Clover Bar.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Premier. Has the government given any consideration -- where public funds have been lent to individuals in the province, if the individual who has received the loan or grant gives permission that that information can be made public, has the government given any thought to allowing that information to be made public?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, yes, consideration is always given to that. As a matter of fact, the government will never table an individual's private correspondence without first checking with the individual -- sometimes, I guess, it would be a corporation -- if they agree that it can be made public. That's the policy of the government. We've always done that. It also is true of the House of Commons. They ask us before they can publish or put out in the House documents from us to them. We respect that with the House of Commons and also with other provincial governments and with individuals. The member's point is well taken.

MR. PASHAK: Mr. Speaker, given that the government is so selective in the provision of information, when will it support a freedom of information Act?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying earlier, with the open availability of information practised in Alberta, we have not felt there was any need for additional legislation. Now, once again, in our parliamentary tradition there is opportunity for members to introduce legislation or resolutions leading to legislation. I invite the hon. members that -- it would be an excellent initiative on their part. It would certainly accomplish a lot more than leading off with the kinds of questions we had in the House today, which weren't in any way productive in the Legislature.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of the Environment on a point of order.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today, in fact in the first question raised in the question period, the Leader of the Opposition made the following statement:

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year our friend the Minister of the Environment gave a little speech to the Conservatives in Athabasca. In the speech, among other things, I take it he suggested that residents of the local area could not expect such things as government funding and projects unless they elected a member of the Premier's party. I am told that he's made similar speeches around the province, mainly in opposition ridings. My question to the Premier: has the Premier disciplined the Minister of the Environment and told him very clearly that these types of public statements are sleazy and unacceptable?

Mr. Speaker, in rising to this point of order, I would like to cite from *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, fifth edition. I would like to cite, first of all, section 235, which basically causes, and I quote:

Any Member is entitled, even bound, to bring to the Speaker's immediate notice any instance of what he considers a breach of order.

By doing so, Mr. Speaker, I'm rising as a result of section 235, and I'd like to cite as the basis for the point of order that I'm raising this afternoon *Beauchesne* 357(a), which basically says:

A question oral or written must not:

- (a) be ironical, rhetorical, offensive, or contain epithet, innuendo, satire, or ridicule.

I would like to cite as well:

- (f) contain an expression of opinion . . .
- (h) contain inferences.
- (i) contain imputations . . .
- (q) contain or imply charges of a personal [nature].

As well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to cite, and I'm citing this on the basis of a bit of unknown here, because the Leader of the Opposition . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Forgive me, hon. member. The Chair is not prepared to have the member continue if the interruptions continue. It's difficult enough to try to keep up to all the notations that are being cited.

Minister of the Environment.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would as well like to cite from section 358(b):

not inquire whether statements made in a newspaper are correct

Mr. Speaker, I would like to cite also, in preparedness for this presentation I'm going to be making on this point of order, from section 359:

- (1) It must be a question, not an expression of an opinion, representation, argumentation, nor debate . . .

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

- (10) A question ought not to refer to a statement made outside the House by a Minister.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that I rise on this point of order because there are only two members of this Legislative Assembly who were with me on February 3, 1988, when I apparently made certain statements to some folks in Athabasca. One other member of this Legislative Assembly was there and that member is present in this House. It is very important at the outset for me to note that the Leader of the Opposition was not there, and neither was the leader of the Liberal Party.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think what's really important, because this matter was highlighted . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister.
Order please.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order in the press gallery. Mr. Speaker is standing. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: This might be a very interesting afternoon with me having to be jack-in-the-box. I will continue to stand and interrupt if the noise continues.
Hon. minister.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The comments that were made by the Leader of the Opposition today are very serious ones. I repeat one member of this Assembly was present at that meeting, dated February 3, 1988. It was held in Boyle. It was a speech that I gave to the Athabasca-Lac La Biche Progressive Conservative Association.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from that speech the exact words that were said that evening. I think it's kind of important in terms of the innuendo in the statements made by the Leader of the Opposition that all people in Alberta . . .

MR. MARTIN: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. If it's out of order for me to quote, then he can't quote a speech outside the House. He's made his points. He can't read his speech back in the House. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of the Environment may read the one or two brief sentences from the speech. There's no prohibition. This is clarification with respect to an allegation that was made by another member towards another member. [interjections] The Chair will indeed recognize the Leader of the Opposition in due course.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you.

MR. KOWALSKI: It should be noted that the speech I gave at Boyle that evening was some 20 minutes to 25 minutes in duration, but I would like to point out just several quotations in terms of the guidance that you gave, Mr. Speaker. One, to set the theme and the tempo, and I quote:

First of all what is politics and why is it so important that all of us become involved with it? Webster's Dictionary defines politics as "the art or science concerned with guiding or influencing governmental policies or actions."

Mr. Speaker, then what I went on to do in that speech is to point out the effectiveness of three former Progressive Conservative MLAs in that particular area: Mr. Frank Appleby, Mr. Norm Weiss, and the late Ron Tesolin. Then I went on to cite pages and pages of examples of important projects that were delivered to the people of that particular riding by effective Progressive Conservative MLAs. Then I also went on to point out that in addition to that, in essence, decisions are made in government by way of a system that we have known as a caucus system, the Legislative Assembly system, and it is a truism that the current Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche is not -- I repeat not -- a member of the government caucus. I pointed out as well, Mr. Speaker, 150 miles of primary highway that previous members have done, and I also pointed out that . . .

MR. SPEAKER: With due respect, hon. minister, it really should be put succinctly whether or not you made any comment that was germane to the point as raised today, please.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition is basically saying is that I said that -- he does say, though, "I take it," and I don't know what that means. He suggested that residents of the local area could not expect such things as government funding. I never made that statement, Mr. Speaker. That statement was never made in this speech, and I'd be very, very happy to table the complete speech for all Members of the Legislative Assembly and forward it to anyone else. The Leader of the Opposition says: I'm told that he's made similar speeches around the province, mainly in opposition ridings. All of my speeches are available to any citizen in the province of Alberta. In fact, we get quite a few requests for those speeches, Mr. Speaker, and I'd be very pleased to table them.

MR. SPEAKER: I understand that the estimates of the Department of Education are perhaps going to be heard this afternoon. Is this perhaps the end of this statement which is of educational value to all members of the House?

MR. KOWALSKI: I truly believe it is, Mr. Speaker. And I would just like to conclude by quoting the last several paragraphs, which are perhaps the most important, when I state:

The Athabasca/Lac La Biche constituency has a unique and exciting challenge before it. In order to win the seat back, the local constituency must continue to increase its membership and encourage good candidates to run for the nomination. Above all the constituency association must be unified and everyone must agree to work as hard as possible for the nominated Conservative candidate. Please do not make the challenge any more difficult than it needs to be.

Your constituency has the potential to be involved in our province's exciting future, the decision is yours.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, that's one of the most unusual points of order I've heard. I'm glad I'm able to get the hon. member on television the odd time, you know, and I'm sure we'll all wait with bated breath to read the rest of his speeches, the thoughts of Chairman Kowalski as he goes around the province.

Mr. Speaker, on the point of order -- and I'm sorry I offended the hon. Minister of the Environment, the Member for Barrhead. I was trying to make a point. As you know, under 357(1)(z) you can question government policies and statements made outside the House in terms of written questions, and I was trying to get a government policy that is a very serious matter; that is, what the government involvement is in opposition ridings. The point we're trying to make, and it doesn't seem to be clear to the hon. member or the hon. members outside, is that government is elected to serve all the people in the province fairly, not just those with government members. Why this is germane and certainly important to raise is that we have examples of this government going around bringing in backbenchers to go into government members' constituencies and hand out cheques. And this is particularly in opposition members' ridings. Now, this to me is an important morality issue for government, and I was trying to raise it in the context of the statements that were being made.

If the member says he's been misquoted and everybody else is wrong how they perceive that speech, I'll accept the member's words on it. But the point I want to make is that that is a very important issue, and we're going to have nominated Tory

candidates probably going around, not even elected, handing out cheques next. That's the point.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair then takes it as understanding, having listened to more than one or two or three words, that the minister has said he has been misquoted, the Leader of the Opposition has taken the word of the Minister of the Environment that he has indeed been misquoted, and it is the understanding of the Chair that the Leader of the Opposition then has withdrawn the word "sleazy"?

MR. MARTIN: Well, no, I . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. MARTIN: On a point of order, I never did call the minister, my good friend over there, sleazy. What I did say, and he quoted, was about statements that were made. If those statements were made, they were sleazy. I didn't call the minister sleazy.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it's the very point I made in the question period when I was referring to the hon. member, and that is that it is even worse to try and frame your comments in a way to still impute the word and yet to try, in a tricky, indirect way, to squirm your way around the rules. I think that probably not only is as bad; it's even worse. For the hon. member now to say, "Well, I framed my words in such a way that I left the imputation, but I really didn't and you can't catch me within the rules," I think is shameful.

MR. MARTIN: On a point of order, this government is sleazy, but that's not the point. That's not the point. They're doing it. They're doing it whether the Premier likes it or not. That's the reality.

MR. SPEAKER: With due respect, hon. members, the matter is getting even more curiouser and curiouser. It is not terribly helpful to have the last comment, because that, then, can raise yet another point of order about parliamentary language. With respect to what the Chair was trying to delineate earlier, in actual fact the word "sleazy" is not really a tremendously popular parliamentary word to be using under any circumstance. The understanding of the Chair still is that the Minister of the Environment claims that he did not do what had been purported to have been done and that hopefully the Leader of the Opposition would withdraw the word "sleazy" in that context and together in the House we would try to be a bit more appropriate about the words.

MR. MARTIN: Well, "sleazy" isn't unparliamentary.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, all right then. [interjections] Please, please, hon. member. Thank you.

All right. The Chair has been wrong in its interpretation. The Minister has said one thing; the Leader of the Opposition does not intend to withdraw the word "sleazy" in the context. The Chair has examined the list of words that are parliamentary and unparliamentary, and indeed the word "sleazy" does not seem to be there as a prohibition or as one that is acceptable. So it's one that has been used today, and it's been not terribly positive in terms of what the parliamentary process and deportment of the House is in this Chamber. I assume, then, that we have

reached what is a stalemate with regard to a complaint between two members.

There is yet another point of order as raised by Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, it's a point of order I raised. The Premier answering one of the questions from the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo used the practice of many members on the opposite side, saying that no, he's not keeping anything secret; if you want the answer to the question, all you have to do is put it on the Order Paper.

Well, I feel according to *Beauchesne*, either 322 or also in 357, questions to get information, that the Premier is coming very close to misleading the House in giving the impression that if we put the question on the Order Paper, we get an answer. For example, Mr. Speaker, the very question the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo asked today about the loan guarantee of \$55 million made on March 3 between the government and Gainers has been on the Order Paper for some time by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon. This is only one example. I can cite most of these motions, which are gone over time and again by the House leader.

So I believe that if it is possible for the Premier to mislead the House, he is doing so when he says, "Put it on the Order Paper and it'll be answered." Putting it on the Order Paper in this House has been tantamount to just forgetting it forever. So I believe you should call the Premier or any minister to task that says "Put it on the Order Paper" if it has already been on the Order Paper for a week. Surely it becomes quite clear then that whoever is answering on the front bench with that type of answer is doing nothing but trying to get out of giving an answer -- which is honest enough. But be honest about it. Say "I refuse to give an answer" and sit down, not say "Put it on the Order Paper" when it's been there for over a week already.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader of the Liberal Party seems to not be anticipating with much enjoyment the estimates of the Minister of Education, because he certainly seems to be filling the House this time with matters that are relatively frivolous compared to the items she will want to discuss on the education of our children.

But, Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader of the Liberal Party unfortunately missed one very important . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. Premier. We'd like to have a little less noise so we can hear what's happening here.

The Premier, please.

MR. GETTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for continuing to make the point I've been making about the opposition making so much noise in the House that people in the gallery or ourselves can't hear.

But in any event, the point of my reply to him was: put it on the Order Paper and the House deals with it. He keeps forgetting that point. It's the Legislature that deals with motions for returns. It's not somebody refusing to do something. The House deals with it. Again I encourage the hon. member to put resolutions on, move Bills, move motions for returns, written questions, and the House decides. No individual member decides; the House decides.

MR. SPEAKER: On this particular point of order. With due respect to this particular point of order as raised by the Member

for Westlock-Sturgeon, it is indeed within the tradition of this House, as well as the House of Commons in Ottawa, that various items may be directed to be placed on the Order Paper, whether as written questions or as motions for returns. It is also noted that that can be done voluntarily by a member, with the usual matter of the appropriate wording being vetted by the Table officers and the Chair before it appears on the Order Paper. Or it may also be directed by the Speaker to occur because of the question requesting information that is far too detailed and using up the time of question period.

For the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon to raise a complaint about the fact that something may have been on the Order Paper either as a motion for a return or a written question and it's been on there for a week or two, that again is a complaint which is not really well-founded, because the tradition of this Legislature as well as the House of Commons and other Legislatures is that written questions and motions for returns do indeed stand on the Order Paper for some considerable length of time. It's very rare that they are dealt with in the space of one or two weeks.

To complicate the issue further, the House has been in somewhat of a hiatus on this matter of dealing with motions for returns and written questions and, as yesterday, the Chair requested the House leaders for the various political parties to meet together to come to some resolution to the matter under Standing Order 34 to deal with these issues. It is the understanding of the Chair that a meeting did indeed transpire either late yesterday afternoon or earlier today. The Chair has been in receipt of a note from the Government House Leader, which the Chair hasn't had time to read in the flurry of activity this afternoon, but it does look like there is some resolution to the matter so that perhaps as early as tomorrow various items may be dealt with with regard to written questions and motions for returns. But again, the House was held up until such time as the House leaders for the various parties could come to consensus on the issue.

The other thing that should be borne in mind, hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, is that indeed when motions for returns do come for discussion in the House there is indeed the opportunity, the forum, for discussion which usually takes place on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the normal course of events. Therefore, the Chair really doesn't regard this as being a point of order but, again, a matter of complaint that perhaps there's been some misunderstanding about the process, and hopefully the comments will help to bridge over to what the new procedure will be, if not for tomorrow, certainly by next Tuesday.

Are there any additional points of order that we might deal with this afternoon?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Thank you. The Chair recognizes the Member for Stettler.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**
(*reversion*)

MR. DOWNEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this

afternoon to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, some 85 bright, young grade 6 students from the Stettler elementary school. They are accompanied by their teachers D. Falkenberg, R. Komishke, and M. Roach and parents Mrs. Lynes, Mrs. Stade, Mrs. Stonell, and Mrs. Scott. Also with the group, Mr. Speaker, is Mrs. Jean MacDonald, who is working with the private campground operators of Alberta. I would ask that they all rise in the members' and public galleries and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Calder.

MS MJOLSNES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to the Assembly, 20 grade 6 students from the Dunluce community school, located in the Calder constituency. They are accompanied by one teacher, Mr. Keir. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of all the members.

head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

[Mr. Gogo in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. Any points of order?

Department of Education

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, this is in reality a continuation of Education last day, and the Chair will follow the list of speakers they had. The Chair is prepared to indicate to members who is on that list. The first member will be the hon. Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn, immediately following the hon. minister, who may have some comments. Would members who may wish to make comments, put questions or amendments, indicate to the Chair and we'll compare them with the existing list.

Hon. Minister of Education, would you care to make some opening comments prior to going to the votes?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Chairman, I simply want to note that since many members did want to speak, I'm not going to make long opening remarks, just so everyone will know how reasonable I am. So I look forward to the discussion today on as important an issue as education is to all of us. I reserve the prerogative to jump up after speakers or after a group of speakers, depending on how the discussion occurs this afternoon.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. When we broke off debate on the Education estimates one week ago Friday, I'd raised a number of issues to which I hope the minister will respond. Briefly, I'd asked the minister to consider the establishment of a commission to review the question of educational boundaries and funding. With respect to funding, I'd made comments on the minister's corporate pooling proposals and on funding for private schools. The minister had previously indicated that such funding was in compliance with constitutional requirements. She made specific reference to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. So I'd like further elaboration on that

point from her; that is, funding to private schools.

I would also point out that I have received and responded to over 400 letters from Catholic ratepayers in my constituency of Calgary-Forest Lawn. They're concerned about legislative proposals that they believe would reduce funding to separate schools. But I think we could set this question aside until the new proposed School Act comes down. I understand there may be significant changes in the new Bill from that presented in the last session.

Mr. Chairman, with respect to educational boundaries, obvious gross economic inefficiencies exist. For example, the Calgary public school board, with 20 percent of the total provincial school population, spends approximately \$85,000 on board-related activities. The total board expenditures for the province are well into the \$4 million range. This perhaps reflects the fact that we have more school boards in the province of Alberta than they do in the province of Ontario. Perhaps by changing school boundaries we could at least achieve economies of scale. We have those problems with groups setting up four-by-fours, as they're called. Also, I think many boards are not just concerned with the provision of the best possible educational service to their students but are often detracted by economic development agendas and other manipulations of the tax base. Perhaps the minister would care to comment on that.

Mr. Chairman, I would now like to turn to some of the opening comments made by the minister. In these remarks the minister made the point that the most important educational question is not one of how but of what. In this context, an important issue is the preparation for the challenges of the future. Unfortunately, in my view at least, the minister failed to spell out what the challenges are, and in not coming to grips with this important question lies the explanation for many of the problems that beset public education today. I'd like to provide some suggestions for the minister on this important topic. In order to do this, though, I'd like to provide a short summary of changing educational objectives in this province since my days as a pupil in the city of Calgary.

Until the mid-50s it seems to me the emphasis in education was clearly elitist. Only 6 percent of the children that had started school with me in grade 1 managed to get senior matriculation status. High school diplomas, of course, were available to both academic stream students and vocational stream students. With industrialization that began to develop in this country after the Second World War and into the 1950s, there was a need for trained and educated people in our society and we began to introduce important changes into our school curriculum. Vocational high schools were built, for example, with federal funding, and a determined effort was made to make schooling more open and accessible to all. I think standards were effectively changed; I think they were reduced. More students were matriculated, more went on to university, and more went on into the skilled trades. So I think gradually we moved away from an elitist education to more of a student-centred education. Now the pendulum seems to be swinging back. The minister took great pride in extolling the virtue of increasing the core requirements in the school curriculum. Mr. Chairman, it's my contention that this move is again elitist. It's regressive and does not reflect the educational needs of students and the social priorities of the people of Alberta.

In order to justify that contention, let me try to describe Alberta society today, at least as I see it. First of all, we're urbanizing rapidly; our farm population, certainly as a percentage, is declining rapidly. Our birthrate is falling to replacement

levels. The majority of our new Canadians, especially in the cities, are what the census classifies as "others." These others include, in the case of the city of Calgary, approximately 6,000 people of Arabic descent, for example; 2,000 Cambodians; somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000 peoples each of Vietnamese, Indian, East African descent; an equivalent number of Filipinos; and more thousands of people from the Indian sub-continent. There are many people in the city of Calgary from the Caribbean. In addition to those already here from Chile, there are growing numbers of Latin Americans, especially from Central America.

These people, parents and children alike, Mr. Chairman, indeed require increased English as a Second Language assistance. This is especially important at the point children from these groups enter the school system. Now, one of the major negative consequences of budgetary restrictions is that second language programs are among the first to be reduced. In my view, this will have long-term harmful consequences. Cutbacks in this area will lead to ghettoization of populations and all the attendant problems that go with this: blunted aspirations, a sense of hopelessness and failure, increasing nonlawful behaviour and associated policing costs, and more importantly, the development of a closed class system and the potential that goes with that for revolutionary behaviour and violence.

A second major change in Alberta society today that is essentially ignored by government educational policy is that of the profound change to family life that is occurring and a concomitant change in the work force. There's a shift from full-time employment at reasonable wage levels to part-time employment at minimum wage levels without social benefit programs, access to health benefits, and that kind of thing. Many of the people who fall into this category are single parents, and they're, of course, overwhelmingly women. These people lead lives of, I'd say, quiet desperation. Their children often go to school hungry, they're often neglected and abused, and as a consequence of these factors, the children are inattentive in school and therefore take up a disproportionate amount of class time and teaching time in virtually all cases, at some real disadvantage to their other classmates.

Now, let me just illustrate this with a few examples, Mr. Chairman. In my own constituency a number of school principals have reported that at least half of all their grade 1 students who start school in the fall will not be there in the spring. Yet the school population will remain the same. That indicates a tremendous amount of mobility and is obviously damaging to any type of learning program. Other elementary principals mention that at least half of their students will require some type of counseling or psychological support during the school year, and again these are the first programs to be cut back when we have budget restrictions. A further comment, Mr. Chairman, with respect to hunger in the schools: some 46 of 132 schools surveyed in the Calgary area reported a significant problem; it's one we just can't sweep under the table. One school estimated that 40 percent of the children go to school without an adequate breakfast. Government action is, indeed, required. It's embarrassing when we read that *Sports Illustrated*, during the Calgary Olympics, had to bail out a hot meal program at the Colonel Walker school in Calgary when funding for that program came to an end. As I understand it, the federal government is prepared to put up 50 percent of the funding for such programs, so would the minister please recognize that there is a need and ensure that action is taken, particularly with respect to accessing these federal funds.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to return to the question of adding more subjects to the graduation requirements for high school students. There is perhaps legitimacy to the widespread North American concern that students who leave high school, even with diplomas, are deficient in essential skills, particularly reading and writing skills. But the province's solution to this problem flies in the face of the real needs of many of our students. If you come from an advantaged family, for example, and you're academically oriented, it is a plus to have an enhanced opportunity to develop academic skills, but if you're from a constituency such as mine in Calgary-Forest Lawn where education is not a general value -- not because the students lack the ability to learn, but because the culture dictates otherwise -- students are more interested in increasing their employment opportunities. That's what they want. They want jobs. They want to leave high school with some real prospects of getting meaningful full-time work. They don't want more academic courses; they want more job-related courses. What will happen as a result of government changes to the graduation requirements is that many high school students will now likely spend four years rather than three years in high school. They'll stick around to get both their diplomas, which are essential, and the job training they so desperately need. Of course, this should substantially increase educational costs as well, I might add.

Mr. Chairman, two further points on this subject that I would hope the minister might address. First, I understand that principals were not adequately or systematically consulted with respect to these curriculum changes; and second, with respect to the career and life management courses which are part of the curriculum change, it seems to me they could constitute an unnecessary frill, although I must admit that high school teachers I've talked to have welcomed the opportunity to engage in some creative curriculum building. But there is a concern they express with respect to those courses in that there is a component suggested for entrepreneurship. I think a component such as this is clearly propagandistic. I think that if we're going to introduce such content to a curriculum, it should be presented from the point of view of contrasting economic models, say, or comparing and contrasting economic models.

Mr. Chairman, to this point I've been dealing with some general concerns. I'd now like to turn to a more detailed examination of concerns that were raised in my own constituency of Calgary-Forest Lawn. I've managed to visit most of the elementary schools in the constituency as well as a large number of the secondary schools. Not too long ago, a parent in my constituency by the name of Irma Bates, who is on a parents' advisory group, became concerned about problems in her own school. She came to my attention, and I contacted her. So we worked out a program. What we did was set up a series of meetings in three junior high schools within the region. Each of these schools acts as a recipient of a number of elementary schools in the area...

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

Calgary-Forest Lawn.

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

First of all, before the meetings were scheduled, we gathered together a number of teachers and principals from the area. We invited a representative from the Alberta Teachers' Association, and they agreed that we should go ahead with the program. At that meeting, we also further agreed that we would invite mem-

bers of the school board to these three publicly held meetings, and we would invite members from all opposition parties as well, and from the government party as well. In fact, it just so happens that the president of the Forest Lawn Conservative association is a schoolteacher in the area, and he agreed to invite one of the cabinet ministers from the Calgary area to attend this meeting. The bad news to report is that the only other MLA that attended these meetings was a Liberal -- I won't mention from which constituency. But there were school board representatives at all three of these meetings.

I'd just like to comment briefly on the results. The Calgary board of education took the concerns that were presented at these meetings seriously. They recognized the area as a high-needs area, and they also recognized that there is some need for compensatory education in these high-needs areas, and there is every indication that they will take some action on these questions in the future.

As part of the process of these meetings, school principals were also invited to come to the meetings, along with parents, and present their concerns about what was happening in their communities. We asked them to look at the impact of budgetary cuts in their schools. I'd now like to enter into the record a representative set of concerns from one school in my community; that is, the Ian Bazalgette school. At their school the principal identified 11 concerns, Mr. Chairman, and I'd just like to go over them briefly with you.

The first one is that there were cuts to resource teacher allocation. This has meant a loss of a full-time teacher, with the result that administration has to do more teaching and that class sizes are now considerably larger. The second concern: the library clerk was reduced from a full-time position to a seventh position. This has meant reduced library hours for students who are already educationally disadvantaged. Thirdly, the school has lost half a secretary, in spite of an enrollment increase of 82 students. This is an important issue because it further reduces the opportunity of parents within those school districts to communicate with the school, and it also means that teachers now have to take on more secretarial duty.

A cafeteria was cut. The cook is now paid out of cafeteria profits. Now, that might not seem very much to MLAs who can use the cafeteria downstairs, but it means higher prices for students and nutritional problems, consequently, for students who are not able to afford the hot meals any longer.

A fifth point, Mr. Chairman. The schools have been required to collect a \$25 user fee. This adds to secretarial duties, and in addition, the schools have not been able to collect these fees. At one of the other schools in my area where user fees were tacked on, the parents did not have the cash, so they wrote cheques. A good number of those cheques bounced, so it actually cost more money to collect the user fees than the school made from collecting them. Sixthly, Mr. Chairman, the suspension of the educational opportunity funding has meant that this school lost the services of an EOF teacher as well as her aide. Seven, the increase in enrollment did not result in new staff, because the local board simply did not have the available finances.

Number eight -- and I think this is especially important -- increased fees in complementary courses have resulted in students dropping these courses. Music fees have gone from \$20 to \$50 for beginners and from \$30 to \$60 for second- and third-year students. The band program at this school is in serious jeopardy because of a lot of withdrawals from the program just simply because the kids can't afford the fees. And this is a particularly important issue in an area of cultural deprivation. In

the west side of the city of Calgary parents have higher incomes on the balance. Their children can take private music lessons. When they go to schools, they can get into band programs, but children in areas such as Forest Lawn -- and that area is not alone; the two constituencies to the north of me have similar problems and so does the constituency to the south. It's important that these children have their cultural opportunities maximized in the schools.

The ninth point that was raised by this principal is that the new curriculum requires new materials but no funding was provided for these new materials. Because the school can't afford new texts, teachers have to duplicate materials, and their duplicating budget has gone from \$18,000 to \$53,000 with, again, consequent reductions in other kinds of activities that might otherwise go on in the school, such as visits to the Alberta Legislature. Number 10: the loss of an intern teacher has removed flexibility for field trips, computer lab deployment, and team teaching.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, with respect to facilities, a new science lab could not be equipped and needed industrial arts renovations were canceled. The school itself is an older school; it was designed as a high school and is in serious need of upgrading.

Mr. Chairman, I would be pleased to provide the minister with a copy of the concerns that were provided by the principal in response to the request from the parents' group. I have a similar report from the Valleyview school, that outlines similar problems there at the elementary level, and I would be pleased to provide the minister with a copy of that too. I should point out that copies of these letters and their concerns went to officials of the Calgary board of education as well.

Mr. Chairman, the problems in our schools are enormous. They're becoming increasingly severe. I trust that the minister will find my comments helpful. I look forward to a response and to a continued debate on educational issues when the new School Act is before us.

I just have one final concluding remark to make. In her opening remarks the minister said:

The only comment I would like to make at this time is to reinforce the fact that Albertans have told us clearly that they strongly support the view that all students must have access to equitable educational opportunities regardless of where they live, and that is the goal we must address.

Now, I assume, Mr. Chairman, that the minister brought that remark forward in good consciousness, and there's much that can be applauded by that general concern. But in my view, Mr. Chairman, it does not go far enough. One of the principals who participated in these public meetings we held in Calgary-Forest Lawn made the point that there is nothing more unfair than the equal treatment of unequals. That's the principal from the West Dover school in my constituency. And I think that issue really has to be addressed in future educational policies in this province. We have to address the real needs of our students, and in some cases it means that we really are going to have to look at a system and policies of compensatory education.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Comments, questions, or amendments?

Hon. Minister of Education.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Well, Mr. Chairman, because the member had wanted to get in last time, I thought I'd just cover a couple of things because of the specificity of his comments right now -- first of all, to thank him for his comments. I know how

important education is to him, and I'm certainly interested in the input that he has received through the important meetings he has held in his constituency.

First of all, with respect to education boundaries, I don't think we can make the mistake of thinking that the adjustment of boundaries is a panacea for all of the problems in education, and I'm not suggesting that the hon. member is trying to put that forward. But certainly adjustments of education boundaries cause a great deal of concern and upset within communities, and I think we only need look at the Starland example that we had last year, in which the hon. member and other members were involved and watched how even though by the most practical analysis it is clear that savings and economies can be realized by joining two jurisdictions, that causes the people within the jurisdiction to get very concerned and upset. As a result, the boundaries were left as is, although certain economies have been realized between the two jurisdictions. But I'd just remind the member of that. And given that we have been going through the secondary ed review, the School Act the funding reductions which have all caused the education community to set the ions vibrating -- to use my expression -- I think we have to be very conscious that we ensure that people are comfortable with what is happening in education, and although I agree with him that there are some adjustments that probably could and should be made, in that kind of timing, that was not the time to do it.

The comment the member made about the four-by-fours -- yes, in some people's view that may be an inefficient use of the dollar proportioning amongst the students. But we can never forget that that is a right of the minority faith to form a separate school district, and we cannot do anything in the interest of economies which would deny that constitutional right.

There are some areas that are looking at adjustments. Certainly in the member's constituency of Calgary he will know there is a municipal annexation going on in the Calgary area, which is causing those on the outskirts to have to effect changes that will address education. Certainly the education component of that municipal decision is a key question that we must address in the coming months as that annexation proceeds.

Funding for private schools and whether or not it should occur and the member's request for some clarification with respect to the Supreme Court decision. The Supreme Court looked at basically the balance between the province's exclusive jurisdiction over education with the Charter's right ensuring that religious freedom is protected for the individual, and how those are balanced in the education system in Alberta. The Supreme Court, in fact, said that the balance has been struck in Alberta. There's basically a choice of a public system, with its two dimensions, delivering education to all students and school boards being responsible for all students; then the choice to opt out of that system if religious or other needs are not met and to go into private education; and then, the third step, presumably, being home schooling.

The support for the province for private education is something that has occurred in this province since the mid-1960s in terms of public dollars supporting private education. The question of degree -- is it enough, is it not enough; should there be more, should there be less -- is certainly a discussion which we can have in this Legislature. I would say that at this point it would be inappropriate to increase or decrease that funding, particularly when the public system is having to deal with adjustments locally. I think there is a balance there, but it's certainly something that we may wish to go into further in this Assembly with respect to the level of that funding. I think, importantly,

it's key to note that 3 percent, approximately, of students in this province are in private schooling. That has been a consistent number in terms of proportion of total student population for over the last 20 years, and I think that's a key indicator as well.

I want to make a few comments just on the member's perception that the changes in our curriculum are, for some reason, elitist. If that's a perception, I want to correct that and to tell the hon. member why I don't share that view. The secondary education changes that we are putting in place and are gradually coming through and are being supported in an extraordinary way this year by the Department of Education budget -- those changes are to address the needs of every student, not just those who are academically excellent. The adjustments we are making in that curriculum to, for example, give to students in the social studies area a choice of more than just the 10, 20, 30 course sequence, but to build in courses for kids who wish to take a different kind of diploma, who wish to have different opportunities through their education process. The changing of those sequences of courses is very key to meeting the exact point the member makes: that not all students are going to graduate from high school and go on to postsecondary; that we have to be looking at the needs of those students; and finally, that the integrated occupation program for students whose abilities to excel in the academic areas are not there but whose needs to be educated in order that they can be successful, self-sufficient, with positive self-images is a very key new component that we're building into our secondary curriculum.

So I would be happy to discuss it with the member further, but certainly the conclusion is that it is anything but elitist. It is, in fact, addressing the needs of students as we've seen within the resources available, which has to be a goal of education.

Just a couple of other comments perhaps about the changing demographics in our cities and across our province, certainly something that we as a government worked hard to address in a social policy paper. But there are changes occurring that the way in which we approach a changing population base with differing needs is key to meeting the needs of those individuals. We now have in a curriculum model addressing individual needs, in a financing model, and in the new School Act a legislative model for addressing those needs. And if we simply look at the input side in terms of classroom size, in terms of teacher, which are basically yesterday's ways of meeting those needs, are we meeting those needs the best way, given the changes that are occurring? I think it's exceedingly important that we look at the output side, that we look at how students achieve, how those kids who need English as a Second Language -- how their teaming is effected as they go through the system, and that is clearly one of the focuses we have as we look towards these new changes.

Finally, because I can't get into the School Act and I'm having to walk a very tight line here because we will get into the issues more in that debate, on the capital budget side, the needs identified by the member for a school in his constituency for capital renovations -- those are needs that should hopefully be discussed with his own school board where the case must be made, and then the board applies to the School Buildings Board. This year we have \$85 million worth of capital support going to those areas of greatest need, not to certain ones who are more valuable than others by whatever scale. Certainly if there are renovations needed, that is something that exactly we are trying to do as we meet the greatest needs first and then work through the system.

So I thank the member for his excellent remarks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to start out my remarks, and I know that this was covered well on the previous occasion that the estimates were under debate. But I would like to congratulate the minister on her work. Having had the opportunity to work with her over the past many months, I know how dedicated she's been to the task of leading Alberta Education and the tremendous effort that's been put into the preparation of the School Act. I'm sure she's waiting now with great anticipation to the reaction to the School Act, since the reintroduction of that Act is now imminent.

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

Mr. Chairman, I have some questions and some comments that I'd like to make on a number of topics related to the estimates. First of all, I note that in the votes there is some \$2 million to be committed to the Planning Secretariat of Alberta Education, and I would like the minister to outline the purpose and the function of that particular section of her department. But in particular, I wonder if the minister could share with us some of the projections which I hope are provided by the secretariat with respect to the future enrollments of this province, where the greatest areas of need are going to be, and what the financial challenges will be to provide adequate funding for those enrollments.

I'd like to comment on the school buildings program of Alberta Education. Certainly, Mr. Chairman, the building quality restoration program and the modernization program are excellent programs. They've done a tremendous amount to meet the facility and equipment needs of the schools across the province. Certainly my own constituency has very much benefited from those programs. I'd like to ask a couple of questions and make a couple of suggestions, however, with respect to this program, particularly the modernization one.

At the present time the Department of Education provides something in the neighbourhood of 85 percent of the funding or approved costs. I have to say that with good management many school boards are doing most of the work with their own maintenance crews and, for all intents and purposes, we're providing 100 percent of the funding when it comes to the actual costs of the project. And that's good, except I always think, Mr. Chairman, that it is a good idea if the user of a particular program in the province actually pays some of the actual cost. I wonder if the money could not be spread a little further. If the funding level under the modernization program was perhaps reduced to 75 percent, then the \$85 million or whatever might be the final total will go considerably further to serve various parts of the province.

The other question I have with respect to the school buildings program is that I wonder what the time line for each of these programs is. When will they expire? Is there any review being undertaken to ascertain what future programs should be in the whole area of school buildings and school repair and equipment and maintenance?

Mr. Chairman, I'd now like to turn to the area of distance education. I'd like to commend the minister for the long-needed initiative, one that was recommended in the secondary education review, that being the initiative to move more decisively into the area of distance education and endeavour to provide programs and services to certain sparsely populated or isolated parts of the province which could not otherwise hope to have the programs

that might be provided. I wonder if the minister could outline, in a bit more detail than she's already made reference to, the actual location, the amount of funding being provided, and the types of programs which have been instituted in a number of schools in the southeastern section of the province. In other words, Mr. Chairman, I guess I'm asking for a progress report in that particular area.

My second question with respect to distance education refers to a dilemma that I've found, at least, in trying to track down just where the planning and where the money is with respect to the development of educational software and various initiatives in the whole area of distance education. Perhaps I should not be selecting the Minister of Education for this, because I think there are at least two other departments involved. But perhaps she could give this a try. I wonder if the minister could provide to the House just what co-ordination exists among the departments of Education; Technology, Research and Telecommunications; and Advanced Education with respect to the related items of using broadcast radio and television, educational software development, computers, and all those interrelated items that are important to the provision of the distance education programs. I have not quite been able to figure out what exactly is going on there, Mr. Chairman. I understand that there are considerable funds with Athabasca University. I respect the work that that university is doing, but I wonder how that is going to impact or benefit the elementary and secondary educational programs of this province.

I'd like to ask some questions pertaining to the budget on the whole matter of evaluation, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I've had expressed to me a concern with respect to the evaluations that Alberta Education provides for schools in the province. It seems that in one or two cases at least -- and I'm not sure whether it is a matter of a lack of funds or there are some other problems -- Alberta Education's evaluations have usually been totally done by people outside of the system. I think teachers, administrators, and school boards have always appreciated that. There seems to be -- I don't know if I should call it a trend, but there are at least examples where now people internal to the system seem to be involved in the evaluation of schools. I would hope that is not a trend, because I think the independence, the outside look at a school or a system, is a very important part of these evaluations. I would like to know whether this is, as I said, a matter of lack of funds or lack of suitable personnel or just what is happening in that particular area.

On another aspect of evaluation, provided for in the budget estimates, Mr. Chairman, is some support for the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards, or COATS, as it's usually known. I note in the description of programs in the budget estimates that it looks like COATS is still planning and evaluating and planning and evaluating and reviewing teacher education programs and so forth. I wonder when COATS actually anticipates getting some cases to deal with in terms of teacher competency and so forth, and whether that is anticipated and planned for in this budget. Along with that, I would also like to ask the minister what the status is of a new Teaching Profession Act, because that might be still -- and is, in my view -- the better alternative to COATS.

On the matter of curriculum development, Mr. Chairman, there are three or four questions I'd like to raise there. First of all, I'd like to comment, though, that I'm pleased to see that the implementation of the secondary education policy is under way. I know there are concerns about change, and there always will be. I'm also pleased to see the additional funds being provided

for teacher in-service and for the purchase of textbooks and materials related to those courses which are new as a result of that policy implementation.

I'd also like to (comment that, as I recall, in the process of the review of secondary education in the province, one of the strongest themes that came forward during that review was that our current diploma requirements in this province were among the most minimal in North America in terms of the minimal requirements. That was much criticized. It was also pointed out that if we are looking to providing for the needs of young people in the future, we need to have a strong general education. We need to emphasize items such as communication skills so that the students graduating from our schools have a good grounding. I know perhaps the term "basics" is not popular with some people, but those essential skills are more important than ever. And I think that in the implementation of this curriculum, the varying abilities and prospects of students are provided for, as the minister has pointed out, in the two streams of social studies or the three streams provided for in mathematics.

I have a question, though, with respect to one of the initiatives as far as diploma requirements are concerned, and that is that there has been the effort to broaden the number of grade 12 courses that can be provided and will be recognized for entrance into college and university. This is sometimes referred to as the Class C type of subject, which might be physical education 30, electronics 32, art 30, and so forth. It was one of the recommendations of the review to enhance what are sometimes referred to as the optional programs by having achievement at the grade 12 level recognized by colleges and universities. Because, really, for many of the programs they offered, achievement in something such as art 30 is more relevant than the qualifications in math 30. So I would like to ask the minister whether any progress is being made in contacts which, I understand, have been made with the colleges and universities to get these class C subjects recognized and given proper status in terms of qualifying to provide entrance to postsecondary institutions.

Another question that I have, related to the programs and curriculum of our schools, and it also applies to the budget, is that at the recent meeting of the Alberta Teachers' Association there were a number of resolutions, most of them passed, as I understand it, which expressed concern about the increasing responsibility that is being placed on schools to care for the physically ill, whether that be long-term or temporary. It was not that teachers were not wanting to provide every educational opportunity to students, but they did express in those resolutions grave concern about whether or not they were adequately qualified and whether there were adequate support services and money to provide these support services to schools where there is that type of need.

I would also like to ask the minister, Mr. Chairman, to provide an update, a status report, on the native education policy. There are funds provided in this budget, as I understand it, for the continuation of the implementation of that policy. But I think it would be important for the House to know to what degree the funds provided last year have been taken up and just what is being accomplished with those funds and what is planned for this year.

Then as my final two topics I would like to ask some questions with respect to the overall funding of education in the province. I certainly appreciate the points that have been made by many members in the House with respect to the tight budgets that school boards may be facing as a result of the necessary restraint of the expenditure of the government itself in this area.

But I wonder how general this type of situation is in terms of the actual resources available to school boards. I read or hear from time to time that rather substantial surpluses are being carried by some of the school boards of the province, and I wonder if that money is being applied where needed to last year's or this year's operation of the schools. Because certainly I would think in those cases it should be.

Secondly under the topic of funding, Mr. Chairman, last year there was some discussion in the House during estimates with respect to something that might be called the educational equivalent of the AMPLE program provided under Municipal Affairs. I haven't heard very much about it since, and I haven't heard anybody admitting that they're getting any money under that program. So I wonder if the minister could just clarify to us. . . . [interjection] No, no. The education. . . . Sorry. Mr. Chairman, I will address my question through you to the minister. Just to clarify it, last year there was discussion about the advisability of having an educational equivalent to the AMPLE program, and I wonder if the minister would bring us up to date on the status of those questions and that discussion.

With respect to funding, the other question I had is that I realize that in due course we will see whether or not the idea of corporate pooling or some other equity program may come in in the whole area of funding. But I think there is a very immediate need in the area of our rural schools and sparsely populated areas. They're having a very difficult time meeting the program needs of students. I wonder if, in the formulas and the other things that the minister is working with, any special effort is being made to come up with the recognition of the various factors that are involved in providing adequate funding to this type of school.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I just had two or three quick comments and questions. The matter of a boundary commission or the review of boundaries has been raised in the estimates, and I would suggest that perhaps the offer, as I call it, of the Alberta School Trustees' Association to conduct a boundary study should be accepted. I know there might be some tensions in such a review, but the trustees would work in a collegial way, I'm sure, to come up with good recommendations on the whole matter of boundaries for the minister.

I certainly would support the reintroduction of the internship teacher program. I think that was one of the best complementary programs that we have had in the province recently in terms of the staffing of our schools, and I hope that as soon as fiscally possible that program will be reintroduced, and perhaps in an extended form.

Lastly -- truly lastly, Mr. Chairman -- I would just ask a question about letters of authority and temporary letters of authority. It seems odd to me that at this time of a teacher surplus we are still issuing, I would estimate, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 300 or more letters of authority and temporary letters of authority. Perhaps there is some logical explanation for that, but I would ask the minister to perhaps provide a rationale for that continuing situation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've a number of educational issues and questions I'd like to raise with the minister, a couple especially touching on the riding of Edmonton-Glenarry which I represent.

An issue which I've discussed with the minister on occasion -- and in fact her attitude has convinced me that whatever the Minister of the Environment may or may not have said up in Athabasca-Lac La Biche, it doesn't apply, at least to my ability as an opposition member to make my case to the Minister of Education about important issues. I appreciate her willingness to listen to those reasoned arguments.

[Mr. Gogo in the Chair]

Especially I'm concerned about the school that the Edmonton public school board had proposed for the Lake District area of my riding, and when funding didn't come through for that, a number of parents were in fact extremely upset. I've helped them with the initiation of a petition and letter-writing campaign -- the first 200 and some letters are going to be sent very soon -- that explains the number of reasons they have for wanting the school in their neighbourhood. Most feel that they were led to believe the school was on its way six years or so ago when they bought their house. That case was certainly made by the salesman who pointed to the vacant lot where the school would someday be, and now they aren't sure who to blame. They really want the school, and I don't think it's as important to decide who to blame as to decide how we're going to get funding to get them this school. They don't want their children to take long bus rides. They do want them to have the other kinds of services available in a community when the school is there, so that they don't have to go for those evening classes and so on to other neighbourhoods as well. They feel they've had a number of other problems, problems with sewage systems, problems with having only one road out of the whole area, and so on. I'm sure the minister will look at their arguments and that we can expect an announcement that will please the parents in the very near future.

While I'm on the matter of schools, I would like to point out as well that the board has long identified the need for a junior high school in that area of the city somewhere in the Calder or Glengarry constituencies, that the Castle Downs area is desperately in need of a junior high school, and they have said that it would be built as soon as they can manage to get the funding. Likewise, a junior high school is very much needed in the Mill Woods area. It has grown a lot and new schools haven't kept up with new people moving in to populate them.

REV. ROBERTS: They've got a hospital.

MR. YOUNIE: Although, as is pointed out, they have a hospital. But there aren't classrooms in it, Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Part of the problem seems to be with the whole system of capital funding -- the minister's looking most disconcerted -- in that boards feel that it tends to represent more the priorities of the government than the priorities of the school boards. I'm sure the minister has another opinion on that and will no doubt voice it, but that seems to be their opinion. They would like to see the funding both for renovations and for new schools come through in one block, and then they can set the priorities -- which is more important: renovating this school or building this new one? -- and meet their own needs. So they would like to see it blocked in that way instead. They feel that as elected boards they are there to make those kinds of decisions and they are most closely in touch with the needs of their local communities, and I would certainly tend to agree with them on that.

I've been concerned in the past as well in the Legislature about school user fees. I was even more concerned about them in a lot of ways as a teacher, because I was one who became one of the enforcers of school user fees. I struggled with the problem of seeing the office burdened more with work in collecting user fees at the start of the school year than in providing support for the instructional staff that the instructional staff would most need at that time, in bringing on extra staff to take care of all the collection of user fees and the paperwork related to it. In fact, it seemed to be an expense that was almost a waste and a misuse of staff time in a school that's supposed to be preoccupied with education and not collecting what in terms of a governmental budget are niggling amounts of money from parents. But for those parents, if they happen to be unemployed or working at very low salaries, they become insurmountable burdens, burdens causing social embarrassment for their children, who have to explain, "Why, I would have loved to have taken physics 30 this year, but I just couldn't come up with the \$45 that it costs in our school to take that," or even more.

I firmly believe that those user fees should not be necessary in the province. They, as much as anything else, tend to make a system of education where things that should be available to all become available to those who can afford them, and that should not be the case. I can't argue strongly enough that the minister should do everything possible to entirely and totally eliminate those kinds of user fees for textbooks and class materials and workbooks and so on. They should be done away with.

I would like to make a case that the minister should take some action to stipulate what is the maximum class size that a teacher can teach within a school system. I'll use my own background as an English teacher. I saw in schools where there were rules saying that you can't have more than so many students in a shop because that would be a safety hazard. A teacher can only monitor so many students and keep their hands out of the band saws and so on. I could create just as strong an argument that more than a certain number of students in an English class is a serious danger to their educational and intellectual well-being, that a teacher can only teach optimally a certain number of students. I would argue that in an English class that number is about the same as in a shop class, and the minister knows how much lower that is than the average English class in a senior high school in this province. It would probably be about half of most of them.

And one of the areas of education that has been most criticized, and I think sometimes most unfairly criticized, has been English. People accuse that students are leaving high school illiterate. I find that hard to believe, unless they've been leaving with failing marks in grade 8. But that notwithstanding, the accusation is made. If it has any truth at all, it's because too many English teachers are trying to mark and give writing assignments to 30 and 32 and 35 students, and nobody should tell me that there aren't classes that big. I was recently faced with a night class of students with a number of educational problems; that's why they were taking evening classes. I had very nearly 50 students in the class, on the rationale that most of them would drop out. I think you can see that that's a rather dangerous rationale, and I think that is something that the minister might want to take into account.

Over the last two years, and in fact even before then, as a teacher who included materials in English classes that related to environmental concerns -- I would like to make for the minister the case that environmental education should be required in the curriculum. It could be included in a number of areas just by

the materials we choose in the regular science program, in the English program, in many programs. Things related to environment could be covered, and I believe it should be absolutely required at every grade level. I would like to urge the minister to base that, because I'm sure she will see the need for it and do it and may already be doing it -- I would like her to consider a couple of principles to keep in mind, principles that I heard espoused at the recent AWA convention. One was that an environmentalist is one who is intelligent enough to practise self-preservation, and that we have to realize that we depend on the environment of this planet as much as any other species of animal, and ignoring that environment in the long run will not just lead to problems with the tourist industry and problems of other natures but, in fact, to our own self-destruction.

John Updike said -- and this is something I think everyone involved in government should keep in mind -- that we have only our own word for it that we have more right to preservation than a mealybug; if you ask for the mealybug's point of view on it, he might have a different opinion. I would like to point out that every species of animal, every species of plant has a right equal to the human species to preservation on the planet and also that we are losing species at a rate between 1,000 and 10,000 times faster than would occur in the normal course of evolution without human interference.

With these facts in mind I think the minister can see the dire need of those kinds of courses right through all levels of schooling, and I would ask her to consider that.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking? Hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

DR. CASSIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A number of the comments that I wanted to make have already been made by my colleague from Ponoka-Rimbey, but I would like to again ask if the department -- I appreciate the task that they've had before them in the last year with the School Act. If there's any program that we have missed, it's certainly the intern program. The teachers, the students, and the parents felt that this was a most valuable asset both to the student, to the teacher who is in the classroom, and also to the young teacher. I would hope that the department would be able to review and hopefully, when funds are available, to bring back the internship program.

I'd also ask that the department support the program at the University of Calgary, where they are trying to initiate a program of excellence in education to deal with the gifted. I think it's important that we identify those young people in our society that have special gifts and that they be addressed the same as we deal with those individuals who have special, special needs. I think it's important as a province and a country that we move towards excellence and we provide the opportunities for those young people so gifted to be able to move forward and to perhaps be the leaders in the future.

I would like to conclude my remarks. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

MS LAING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to just make a few brief comments, particularly in regard to vote 3, under which falls the jurisdiction of that favourite topic of mine, community schools, of which I have two wonderful schools in my community, in my constituency. I believe the community school program, which was an interdepartmental program, rep-

resented the best in innovative education. It has been recognized throughout the world in terms of its forward-looking strategy -- I guess that's the word I'd use -- in education and a model for what education can be. In fact, many people came from around the world to observe these schools.

Last year the program was cut back 50 percent, and the report that I hear is that there has been severe damage to these programs. Community school funding allowed for the co-ordination and enrichment of the curriculum through using the resources of the community and in meeting the needs of a unique community. So this ability to co-ordinate and enrich the curriculum has been seriously damaged. The community school funding also allowed for the schools to be available to community groups free of charge, and that was very important because many community groups serve segments of the population who do not have money to be able to pay fees.

I think we see at this time an increasing reliance by the government on volunteers in the community sector, but it's important to recognize that when we're going to use volunteers from the community, somebody needs to co-ordinate that in a community, that volunteer involvement, and in fact somebody needs to seek out and encourage and support that volunteer involvement. With the reduction in funding for these schools and for the school co-ordinator that meant there was, in fact, a loss of volunteer involvement in the schools. So the curriculum was less enriched, and there were lost benefits to the community in terms of the loss of benefits to volunteers, who also benefit in terms of self-esteem and a sense of usefulness from the work in the community school as well as their contact with children. Certainly we've heard of people of many ages from many areas feeling much better about themselves because of their involvement in community schools.

I have not heard of the other three departments that are involved in the community school program picking up the costs of the program so that the benefits from the community schools are not lost, and I'm wondering if that has happened. And I would ask also if the minister has done any evaluation in conjunction with the interdepartmental committee on community schools to determine the losses to the community and even the loss of opportunities for children and community people due to the reduction in funding to community schools.

I would like to also raise a concern about the increasing emphasis on core subjects. I have heard from many of my constituents and many who are not my constituents as to the impact of loss of funding for noncore subjects. One of the areas that I seem to have heard a great deal from was that of the loss of funding for music programs. There are two areas around this, in terms of making the curriculum more structured and more demands being made on exactly what students should be taking.

I would question one of the programs that was of concern to me last year, and that's the integrated occupational program. My understanding of that program was that grade 7 was to be a year of evaluation, after which children would be directed either into an occupational or an academic type program through the rest of junior high school and then into senior high school, so that the streaming would begin in grade 8. I'm wondering what assurances the minister can offer that there is discrimination made between children who are underachievers for a whole variety of reasons, including learning disabilities, family turmoil, hunger, inappropriate family responsibilities -- we hear of young children being responsible for younger brothers and sisters -- and ethnic and language backgrounds from those children who cannot achieve. Because we know that children can easily move

from an academic to a vocational stream, but the reverse is not true. So if a child goes into the vocational stream, it is very difficult if that child has in fact been underachieving rather than not being able to achieve, very difficult for that child to move back into the academic stream. So I would ask what guarantees are made that children are, in fact, not misplaced.

I also, following from this in this area, have grave concerns about achievement exams for children in elementary school. I would ask that the minister consult with local educators and school boards to find a more effective way of determining whether children are learning and achieving in the way that we would want.

The second area that I have concerns about in the area of requirement for core subjects is that optional subjects allow for many children who fall in the middle area of regular core subjects to achieve out of their own special uniqueness and to gain a sense of self. So I become very concerned when I see a back-to-the-basics mentality that does not recognize that we are all enriched by art, music, cultural activities, as well as sports. I would like to hear from this minister a commitment that those kinds of courses will be funded and that they will be available to children.

Thank you.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I have a question or two, I guess under vote 2, Financial Assistance to Schools, which deals with the constitutional position of the separate schools and how that is being treated by the department. I know it's under very urgent consideration, and I expect that some kind of decision has been made by now.

But the problem, I suppose, is that the provisions of the ordinances of 1901 appear to put the province in a straitjacket on the question of a fair allocation of school rates as between the separate and public systems. One of the options proposed in the white paper of the department was to take away the corporate assessment, which isn't treated by the ordinances -- well, at least it is partly treated by the ordinances. Corporate assessments where the religious adherence of the shareholders is known and where an election is made is treated. And under the option which formerly, at any rate, was said to be the most favoured option, option four of the white paper, it is proposed to take all the corporate funding -- the corporate rate base, not merely the allocated one -- and devote it to equalization purposes or equity purposes.

So the first question is: since the formula in the Alberta Act is that the rights of no citizen may be prejudiced with respect to the separate schools and is not simply a fossilization, as it were, of the very terms of the ordinances of 1901, is the minister satisfied that such an option would be constitutionally acceptable? Because in the end no legitimate rights of anyone with respect to the separate schools would be jeopardized, since it's plain that the object of the ordinances, in my view, was to treat the separate schools as nearly the same as the public schools as possible?

The second question is: supposing that that option were accepted or any option involving the corporate rate base were accepted, how would the actual rate of taxation of the companies be set? The fear of some, Mr. Chairman, is that an unacceptably low rate would be set. The fear of some might be an unacceptably high rate. My own impression is that there is all sorts of potential for doing equity and mending what is amiss in the constitutional straitjacket. But how is the rate to be set?

Those are my two questions, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a few brief comments, and I'm pleased to be able to get in on the debate on the estimates of Education.

The one particular area that I'm concerned about is that of the funding. My colleague from Edmonton-Glengarry did touch on it a bit. My concern, Mr. Chairman, is the way in which funds are allocated to the local school boards from the department. The concern over the funding in particular arises because of the fact that there has been a need demonstrated in my constituency for a junior high school in Castle Downs. The Edmonton public school board has also identified this as something they would feel is a very important directive in which to take but are unable to do so because of the fact that the capital funding is presently tied to renovations of schools.

Now, it is the feeling of the school board, as I understand it, that they cannot make decisions based on what they feel are local needs in the community because of the way the funding is structured. The capital funding as it is right now is currently tied to the modernization of schools, even if the local districts have different priorities to that. Now, the Edmonton public school board would like to see optional block capital funding based on enrolments, and I understand that they have met with the minister, so I'm sure she's aware of these concerns. Of course, this would enable school boards to establish their own priorities if they could have the block funding, and it would allow them to make some long-term planning for their particular areas.

The situation in Edmonton is that there is a need for certain schools to be built in certain areas, and I think the board has recognized that need and has expressed that desire to build these schools but are unable to do so. Again, it affects my particular riding, and I'm very concerned about this. The people have been waiting for a long time for a junior high school; currently the students in that area are being transported out of the area to a few junior highs in the outlying areas. I understand that money has been allocated to a particular junior high school for renovations. What the school board would like to see, however, is the construction of a new school. They are certainly considering such things as the cost of transportation, the time the students spend on the buses, and so on. So this is one of their priorities. So having said that, I am anxious to hear what the minister has to say on that.

My colleagues have talked about the need to eliminate user fees within schools. They have talked about cutbacks to education and what that has meant for the quality of education in Alberta. They have talked about the need and the value of community schools. The need to address the hungry children in our schools: that's been an issue. These are all issues to me as well. So I look forward to the minister's comments.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Education.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Some excellent discussion here this afternoon, and I'm going to try and provide answers for all the things I can and commit to providing them for those that I can't.

First of all, with respect to questions by the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey and his question with respect to the planning secretariat in the Department of Education, which is a new beast. But as members will recall, last year when the province

had to make the difficult decision to reduce support for education by 3 percent, albeit at a later date than other areas of government, certainly the commitment of the Department of Education to not ask of school boards that they do more than the department was prepared to do was realized by the fact that the Department of Education reduced by 10 percent, as opposed to the reduction to the boards being 3 percent. Part of that 10 percent reduction was effected by changing from four divisions down to three and configuring in a different way the way the department addresses the particular issues. I think I can say that the leadership of the department was extremely strong as we've moved through that change, and I believe the department is operating even better, if possible, than it did in the past.

Now, the planning secretariat will indeed be looking at things like future enrollments. It'll also be managing the four-year plan of the Department of Education to 1990, which is a key part of our core values statement, which I commend to hon. members in terms of a management document for a large department, which certainly the Department of Education is. Certainly policy development: as we move through important implementation changes of the secondary education curriculum and the new School Act. Program evaluation: the key part of what the planning secretariat will review. We'll get on to that a little bit more later with respect to the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey's questions.

Finally, the co-ordination of department planning to ensure that this group, which is a small unit -- it is not a large group; it's a very small unit that is under the direction, obviously, of a director but keyed into the management committee of the Department of Education. It is very important that it not become a large group working through its own way but it be very targeted research, and that is the whole intention of this planning secretariat group.

Several members have touched on the issues of distance learning, the opportunity which distance learning and what we've learned in southeastern Alberta -- and now we'll be going up into northwestern Alberta -- with respect to how we can deliver programs and educational opportunities to all students across this province. In terms of a progress report, I can tell hon. members that it is mushrooming, what we're learning about how students learn and how to best provide those opportunities to them.

I think we've been very conscious in this Legislature about a discussion with respect to fiscal inequities that exist amongst school boards. Distance learning is showing more and more an ability to meet program inequities, which surely, if we're looking at a student in any classroom in this province, however defined in terms of the school becoming a different thing than just a physical structure -- I think the potential for distance learning is exceedingly exciting. The co-ordination with the Technology, Research and Telecommunications department, Advanced Education, and Education is key. The member asked: how does it benefit young kids that the universities, and particularly Athabasca University, are looking to distance learning? I think, in fact, it becomes an area where Alberta can excel and be a real leader and continue to be a leader in education opportunities for all students, whether they be in basic or postsecondary institutions.

COATS, the planning and evaluating of teacher education, the competency cases. Given that COATS became effective on March 1, 1988, we have not yet had any competency review. The member made the statement that he saw amendments to the Teaching Profession Act as an alternative to COATS. I can sim-

ply say that the mechanism which COATS has now come to, with the agreement of all the major stakeholder groups, is a mechanism which is consistent with the professions and occupations policy in this province and could be folded into a new Teaching Profession Act. So in that sense it's not an alternative to COATS, but COATS is serving a function very effectively which when it started out on that journey was, as you will recall, treated with some trepidation by the stakeholder groups. I'm very pleased to say they are now very part of and committed to the process.

On the secondary educational policy -- and this was raised by several members -- what I didn't mention when I spoke to the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn was that on the vocational education side part of the secondary education review is causing us to look at the whole sequence of courses through the secondary ed process. I can tell him that vocational education is undergoing a lot of change. It's part of the whole technology development. Vocational education is now started on a very comprehensive review of those courses. Can we look at giving generic skills as opposed to trade-specific skills to young people in order that they have the flexibility to move from trade to trade? I didn't mention that to Calgary-Forest Lawn and I should have done.

The Member for Edmonton-Avonmore as well mentioned the IOP and felt that there could be a discrimination on the basis of underachievers. I believe we have -- I can't guarantee -- in place a system which will prevent that from happening just by our whole focus on achievement testing, making sure that we are addressing the needs of young students. We are bringing in parental consultation on all of those programs as well as teacher/principal consultation on those programs when kids do go into IOP, and as well we're leaving open as much as possible in order that children who decide not to stay in IOP can feed back into the academic level. I believe we've made it an important unit in our curriculum but widened out the opportunity for movement from academic if that's the choice that wants to be made.

On the AMPLE program, which was the Municipal Affairs program for those municipalities that had borrowed through the Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation. It was a chance to take advantage of the reduced cost of those loans which the government was carrying. The exact same advantage will be given to school boards for their unsupported debt as has been given to municipalities. That is occurring this year, and in fact the payout to school boards this year, I believe, is in the area of \$2 million as a result of those interest reductions.

Edmonton-Glengarry mentioned capital funding, and I do want to spend a few minutes on this. We have a process in this province which is not based on anything but need, need across the province for capital upgrading, for new facilities where they are necessary. As I said earlier, that is \$85 million this year. The process is one by which school boards identify their key priorities and then the province looks at those needs identified by each school board and then funds the greatest needs as identified by the boards. It, in fact, contrary to what the member said, is very much reviewing what school boards identify as their priorities.

Certainly the identification of priorities is a tough exercise for school boards. The hon. member will know that in his own constituency -- I'm talking to Edmonton-Glengarry -- the request that... He is now going to cause a good deal of letters to come to my office; I thank him for that input. That school was originally not even part of the Edmonton public school board's

request for capital this year; that school as well as Daley Grove¹. I think there may have been a misunderstanding on the Edmonton public school board's part that they were to identify only renovations, not new capital programs, but perhaps that's an important reminder to all of us that the purpose of this whole exercise is for school boards to identify their capital needs and then the province to assess them as best we can.

I think he would agree that the province has to be exceedingly careful, given that we do have 600,000 spaces for students in this province and 450,000 students, and we have to be very careful where we build those schools. When school boards say that they would like a block of funds based on their proportion of students as a part of the whole number of students and then be able to allocate those funds where they like -- I guess the hon. member's constituency shows exactly why that is a difficulty. It is not that school buildings have to be built where the student population is consistent; it's change in that population which is requiring new schools to be built in northeast Edmonton. That population has grown very quickly in a suburban area, and the schools aren't there to accommodate those residents in their own area. But that's exactly what we're facing in other parts of this province, and there may well be needs in some communities that there aren't in others, which is why we try to make that process as fair as possible.

What I did assure the Edmonton public school board, and I would like the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry to assure his constituents as well, is that if that school is part of the priority listing of the Edmonton public school board when it comes to us at the end of May, I can guarantee him that the need for that school will be assessed very carefully to make sure that where the need is there, the school will come too. I'm sure the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods will assure him that the process does in fact work, because I know he was very pleased with the announcement that the Daley Grove school in his own constituency will be funded.

As well, I'd give one other point. When people tell me that it should be simply that what school boards want should be what the province funds -- well, given that the province funds about 75 percent of capital structure in this school, I don't think any of us as legislators in this Assembly would relinquish that responsibility for those public funds. So surely the most important issue is need, and that's what we're trying to address.

Just a couple of other comments, because I know Edmonton-Highlands wants to get in.

REV. ROBERTS: And Edmonton-Centre.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: And Edmonton-Centre; okay.

User fees: several members have commented on the fact that user fees could affect access to education. I share that view, and that is why user fees will be part of the appealable section in the new School Act. I think we may well discuss that further when the Act is tabled in the Assembly.

Edmonton-Strathcona had several questions with respect to the ordinances and their applicability on separate and public school support. I can assure him that students in the separate and public systems are funded identically by the province. The ability of boards to supplement what the province provides does create some inequity, but that is not restricted to separate school boards in this province; it goes far beyond that.

When the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona said that the Minister of Education favoured the fourth option in the options 'This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

paper -- I just want to clarify that my purpose and the government's purpose in putting the paper out was to examine the issue, to focus the discussion, a very important discussion on education financing which has not occurred in this province in many years. Certainly there was not a preference for one option but rather an attempt to ensure that the issues were fully understood. I think that the inequities in the system are far better understood today than when that paper was first introduced in October, and I will certainly have more to say about the issue of funding and what the School Act will recognize when the Bill is tabled in the Assembly.

I think that's it for the moment, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to raise some questions with the Minister of Education around the whole area of health education and particularly with respect to AIDS in the schools. Certainly there's a great deal of need for attention in this area. The lack of good education around health and health care issues by our children and young people can cause unnecessary cost to the health care system and unnecessary personal suffering, so we must start early and in the classroom with very effective curricula and very compassionate and caring teachers to be able to really bring home so many important messages to our young people as they're growing up through the school system.

It's alarming, as we've noted: the still very high rate of teenage pregnancy in the province, the still very high rate of misinformation about AIDS, or, as I was talking about with the Calgary Health Services chairman the other day, the high rate of avoidable accidents that children in Alberta suffer. In fact, a number of accidents -- falling off bikes or getting hit by cars and so on -- can be avoided, and information needs to go out about that. There certainly is some progress being made in the field, and it's encouraging to note some of it.

I particularly am gratified and want to encourage the minister to work as earnestly and co-operatively as she can with the Minister of Community and Occupational Health and perhaps even the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care to see how programs that are health in the explicit sense can be linked with explicit educational programs. I'm particularly interested, for instance, in a comment I heard from a parent whose children go to a school and are visiting a nursing home on a regular basis. I thought what a terrific idea that is, to link up those intergenerational kinds of things. Yet she says that there's no money for it. They've got to put out of pocket and develop a whole new program to do that kind of linkage, yet it's something that I think could teach young people a lot about aging, and it would give old people a great deal of satisfaction.

I'm also encouraged by, as I think I said to the minister, a young girl from Vermilion whom I ran into. I think she was only about 12 or 13 years old. I asked her, "What about your health care curriculum in the school?" She said, "Oh yeah, we know all about high-fibre food." That's something I didn't know much about when I was 12 years old. She even knew all about blood pressure and how the heart works. She said, "We also talk about feelings," which really took me back. My goodness, if they can talk about those three things, then we can have a whole healthier generation of Albertans and have a whole lot less spending in the hospitals and medical care system.

DR. WEST: There are a lot of feelings out in Vermilion.

REV. ROBERTS: A lot of feelings in Vermilion; right.

But it's, no doubt, not just the content and the information, the biology and so on that needs to be solidly available but also the need for teachers and counselors and us all to know what the processes are of communicating these health messages, how students can be understood to enter into what behaving in some risk areas might end up for, how students themselves can make appropriate choices and follow through on those choices. So it's much more process oriented in terms of the education involved, the educational process rather than just laying the textbook or the information down for students hopefully to pick up. Now, I know they probably learn more about all this from *Degrassi Junior High* or the latest album from Bruce Springsteen, which apparently said more about moral values than the Pope's latest visit to the United States. But however they get the messages, we need to be careful and creative not only of the curricula but also in how those curricula get out and through. So we need more properly screened, trained, and process-oriented teachers and others in the schools who can provide involvement of young people in the stuff of life, particularly with respect to health.

Now, I'm wondering. I've heard comments about funding for in-service training going up. The Member for Ponoka-Rimbey raised that. I'd like to know where exactly that is, for it's so crucially important that that kind of in-service training and evaluation for teachers is made available and that a certain leadership from the board level and from the ministerial level and so on be also there. I witnessed the AIDS Calgary video called *Deadly -- the AIDS Virus*. It's a very powerful, very informative piece that can speak graphically to a junior high. I think it's designed for that. But they need to have very sensitive and compassionate teachers who can help to sort of debrief some of it and work through it. It can't just be seen in a vacuum.

The important issue, as I heard it once put, about the teaching of AIDS: how difficult and awkward a moral issue it is for students and young people to first learn about sex in the context of death; that in fact if they're involved in a sexual activity, they can contract a fatal disease. So the linking of sex and death in young minds is a very difficult thing. I remember taking a course in university about sex and death and the American novel which I had when I was about 20 years old. But for young people to try to grapple with some of these issues when they're 12 and 13 is very, very difficult and takes a great deal of sensitivity.

So I'd just like to conclude my remarks on AIDS with two other aspects. One is: what is being learned by our children and teenagers about AIDS? I know the minister must have read herself the Alberta AIDS survey, which the dutiful Minister of Community and Occupational Health had done. There was a lot of very important information about what our teens are not learning -- 41 percent of teens still think you can catch AIDS from mosquitoes; 31 percent think you can get it from kissing; 57 percent of teens think you can get AIDS by donating blood -- and a whole lot of other very useful information which shows that there is still a great deal of information that needs to get through and be assimilated and understood by our young people.

I am hopeful -- and I'd like some clarification from the minister -- that the universal availability of solid AIDS information is not something that boards may or may not opt into but only where parents will have the opportunity to opt out of. It seems to me that it must be a mandatory, universally available program for all children. If the parents want to opt them out, that's their concern. But it's not up to boards whether or not to opt in or out

of programs which have this kind of content in them.

Then, of course, the thorny issue about people with AIDS in the schools. Certainly I am convinced that with better education, increase of education about AIDS, we will have a dramatic decrease in the discrimination and misunderstanding about people who have AIDS. It's only if there is an exchange of bodily fluids, whether it's between students or teachers, teachers and teachers, or whoever -- if there is an exchange of bodily fluids in the classroom, then maybe that's a problem for people with AIDS in the classroom. But as far as I know, that doesn't go on. If it does go on, it should be ruled out. So if we don't have fears for that kind of activity going on in the classrooms, then we need not have fear about people with AIDS in the classroom or people who are HIV infected.

Now, I don't see in this that there was any polling done on that question, and I think it's a very salient question. But I know from the horror stories we've had from children or students in the United States or the case in Nova Scotia and others that there is a great deal of public outrage when this kind of situation occurs. But I think the policy needs to be firm and firmly implemented and that there should be some preparation done in this regard. When it becomes public that a teacher or a student in an Alberta classroom is an HIV carrier, how will that fear be managed, how will discrimination be avoided? Who will bring to bear the reasonable facts about the situation, and who will be

responsible for turning the situation around so that we have evidence of care and compassion, not ostracism and discrimination? For it seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that this care and compassion is the mark of a healthy society and that healthy relationships and promoting healthy behaviour is part of what we need to see so firmly evidenced in the classrooms of Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

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

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the report and the request for leave to sit again, do you agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[At 5:29 p.m. the House adjourned to Thursday at 2:30 p.m.]

