

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA**

Title: **Friday, May 6, 1988 10:00 a.m.**

Date: 88/05/06

[The House met at 10 a.m.]  
[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

**PRAYERS**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

We give thanks to God for the rich heritage of this province as found in our people.

We pray that native-born Albertans and those who have come from other places may continue to work together to preserve and enlarge the precious heritage called Alberta.

Amen.

**head: INTRODUCTION OF BILLS****Bill 25****Municipal Taxation Amendment Act, 1988**

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to request leave to introduce Bill 25, the Municipal Taxation Amendment Act, 1988.

This Bill when passed will significantly alter Alberta's rural assessment system and provide for the more equitable treatment of rural taxpayers. These changes were developed with the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, and additional sections will allow for the more efficient operation of our municipal tax system.

[Leave granted; Bill 25 read a first time]

**head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MS McCOY: I have the honour today to present the annual report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1987, of the Alberta Securities Commission.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file three copies of AIDS: A Perspective for Canadians, summary, report, and recommendations recently published by the Royal Society of Canada.

MS McCOY: I also have the honour today to file the 36th annual report covering the year 1987, pursuant to the Public Contributions Act

**head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce to you and to the Assembly, 11 grades 7, 8, and 9 students from Bindloss school. They are seated in the members' gallery, and they are accompanied by their teachers Mr. Jeff Pugh and Miss Karen Bongaards. They are also accompanied by parents Gail Andrus and Reg King. I would ask that they now stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. PENGELLY: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, 46 grades 7

and 8 students from the Bowden school. They are accompanied by their teachers Mr. Wagner and Mr. Riewe and parents Mr. Dyck, Mrs. Coche, and Mrs. Adams. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly, three gentlemen who have worked very hard at helping to develop Bill 25, introduced earlier this morning. They are people dedicated to serving Albertans and who have done an excellent job in that respect. I'm pleased to introduce Mr. Joe Smith, president of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, Mr. Jack Edworthy, the executive director of the same association, and Mr. Steve Cherwonick, a member of the Parkland Rural Residence Association. They're in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to stand and receive the welcome and thanks of the Assembly.

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce in the members' gallery Mr. and Mrs. Jim McLeod of Edson. They were here to see the introduction of Bill 25, which includes what I like to call the McLeod amendment. I would ask them to rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MS LAING: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly, 58 grade 6 students from Grace Martin elementary school, a school in the constituency of Edmonton-Avonmore. They are accompanied by their teachers Elaine Flaman, Cathie Jamieson, Lynn Krieger, Donna LaRose. They are seated in the public gallery; I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD****Education Funding**

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. I note -- and frankly we're glad -- that the Minister of Education has backed down from the more controversial elements generated by the draft Act from last year. I'm wondering now when the government will address the major challenge facing basic education, that of funding. Over the past decade provincial support for basic education has declined from more than 70 percent to about 55 percent. My question to the Premier. Will the Premier advise when the government intends to reverse the trend and restore provincial funding for education from general resource revenues? The Premier said it's the number one priority.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Education dealt with this very question yesterday from another member of the opposition, at which time she explained that government's funding for education has increased.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's just not the case. It's gone from 70 percent from the provincial level to 55 percent. We're not talking about it overall, what the municipalities are paying. The point is: there may have been an increase in dollars but it hasn't kept up to inflation. My point to the Premier -- and I want to make this clear. What action has the Premier taken? He said it was the highest priority to restore the shrinking priority of education coming from the province, not the

municipalities.

MR. GETTY: Again, Mr. Speaker, just to make it clear for the hon. member, since he seems to miss the point: the government's financing has increased for education. It is our priority. The education of our young people is extremely important, and we're going to continue to make it our priority. That's why, in this government, we provide more funds for education than any province in Canada.

I should also point out to the hon. member that whether it's municipal or provincial, it's taxpayers who are providing the funds. There's no big secret who the funds come from.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is just wrong. He hasn't checked his facts. Not only has the provincial share of education declined, but Alberta spends the least overall percentage of gross product in Canada, and we're now third -- third in per pupil capita. How does the Premier justify those figures in view of the fact of the statement he made just in the last minute?

MR. GETTY: First of all, Mr. Speaker, there are two departments of education in this government, and when you've put the dollars together, there's no question that we support education. It's unfortunate the Minister of Advanced Education isn't here as well as the Minister of Education. I'm sure they'd both want to make sure that the leader of the NDP did have the facts rather than be so misinformed by whatever researchers they employ. There's no question that the government has been increasing its funding for education; the funding for students' assistance has increased dramatically; equity funding has increased dramatically; funding for handicapped education has increased dramatically. This government's commitment for education is the first in Canada.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, that is totally misleading the House. To bring in Advanced Education is nonsense. We're talking about basic education. My question to the Premier. Obviously, he's self-satisfied and smug about the level of education funding, by those answers. So I want to ask him what advice, then, would he give local boards that are struggling -- if he knows anything about this province. Should they cut services, should they increase property taxes, should they use more user fees, or all of the above? What should they do?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, we should remove from the hon. leader of the NDP's mind that somehow there's a magic source of funds. The funds flow from the taxpayers, and to try and make the position that, oh, you'll take it from the provincial government; that isn't the taxpayers -- that's foolish.

Also, Mr. Speaker, all you have to do is talk to the boards throughout Alberta, as I have, and you will get from them their belief that the funds they receive here they know are the highest level of funds in Canada . . .

MR. MARTIN: That's a lie.

MR. GETTY: . . . and they are pleased with funding in this province. They know that there is a balance that the taxpayer can afford. They know that taxpayers now are borrowing in Europe and the United States and other places to fund education, but they also know that they are getting their fair share.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier, who once again exhibits a rather tenuous hold on reality. Could he help the taxpayers, help in their long-term plans, particularly of municipal government, by outlining what is his target in the future? We've moved down from 85 percent funding to 55 percent. Would he be able, in order to help the taxpayers and their local governments, to give a target that he's moving towards in the next couple of years as to the percentage that the provincial government would fund?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, we'll make the same commitment we made to taxpayers in our budget: that you'll have the lowest taxes in Canada and you'll have the best dollars for education in Canada. That's the target we have; that's the one we're living up to. Too bad the hon. member doesn't like it.

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

MR. MARTIN: I'd like to designate my second question to the Member for Vegreville.

MR. SPEAKER: Vegreville.

#### **Ethanol Fuels Industry**

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Agriculture. In his feeble attempts to justify this government's bias against a grain-based ethanol industry, as illustrated by these two reports, the Minister of Agriculture admitted yesterday that "there is a minor error." Well, that minor error resulted in underestimating the net economic benefit to Alberta by over 400 percent. I'd like to ask the minister if he's aware that in addition to this major error there are several statements made in both reports that are false and misleading, and that rural Albertans consider these reports to be as useful as Eaton's catalogues were in the old days.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member can make light of a very important industry to the agricultural community. We take it very seriously, unlike the members within the New Democratic Party.

I indicated yesterday that it was minor as it related to the net flow-through to the agricultural community. And that is minor. Contrary to what the hon. member has said, the net benefit will still be in a negative position, notwithstanding the error -- and I admit and regret the error as it relates to that report. The purpose of releasing that report was to allow others to have the opportunity for input. We're glad we've received that input, because they did uncover that error. Still, notwithstanding that fact and contrary to the statements of the hon. member, the net direct benefit to the agricultural community is still less than the incentives that would have to be offered.

If you will allow me, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to get into the figures whereby incentives would have to be offered to the extent of some \$22.5 million in the event that we were to go to a 3 percent ethanol, 5 percent methanol blend. If we went to a 10 percent ethanol blend, the incentive would have to be \$33.1 million, and the net direct benefit would be in the vicinity of \$11.5 million. Now, I recognize the hon. member might have shares in the ethanol industry or Ethanol Energies, but I'm speaking for the farmers, Mr. Speaker; we're going to continue to speak for the farmers.

MR. FOX: It's pretty hard for anyone to have shares in an ethanol industry with this government in position, Mr. Speaker.

The minister said yesterday also that nothing would make him happier than to see an ethanol industry profitable in Alberta. I'd like to ask him: if this is so, then why did the minister accept two reports and base conclusions on these reports when they don't even consider the broad regional economic benefits, the environment benefits, the agricultural diversification benefits? Not even considered in these reports.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is wrong again, as he was yesterday, and I just pointed out his errors that related to the net benefits to the agricultural community. Yesterday he also indicated that it would insulate our grain farmers from the world commodities; he's wrong on that. Those are set on the international market. He indicated that Ethanol Energies had made application for support; he was wrong on that. He indicated also that his motion was the only motion on the Order Paper as it related to doing something for this industry. His motion was still in the gestation period in his mind when the hon. Member for Ponoka-Rimbey entered a motion.

Mr. Speaker, on all those occasions he was wrong, as he is wrong on this. Because I indicated to him that we received these reports for information and we were going to follow through with a threefold process: number one, we're going to discuss them with other agricultural ministers in Toronto in July; number two, we're holding public meetings throughout the province in conjunction with Unifarm; number three, we've got discussions right now with federal authorities taking place to hopefully develop a national policy so that we won't have one province competing against another.

I would ask that if he has proof contrary to what we have, he would release that report, because there have been no reports done, Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge. If he has that knowledge, I would hope that he would be honest enough to relay it, because to date he has not been such.

MR. FOX: I can understand the minister being defensive, because what is wrong are these reports. And I'm happy to do his research for him, Mr. Speaker, but he usually messes it up. I'd like to . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, perhaps we could get to the supplementary question, thank you.

MR. FOX: I'd like to ask the minister if he's considering having the viability of an ethanol industry reassessed. Can he really put any faith in the officials and departments involved in the first study, that is wrong and filled with falsehoods, and the high-priced consultants that he hired that didn't discover those inaccuracies and added some more of their own?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I always wondered why individuals in the hon. member's constituency said he walked funny, and the reason being is his crotch is so full of slivers from trying to walk both sides of the fence. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: There have been some interesting comments made by both the Member for Vegreville and the Minister of Agriculture, some very interesting ways of getting around some unparliamentary language. Perhaps the minister could complete an answer?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I don't want anybody to think, notwithstanding the irony that's coming from the other side, that we don't take this issue very seriously. We have indicated -- and we have been very supportive, and we were hopeful that this report would have proved more positive. But unlike the hon. member opposite, we recognize that we have to make decisions based on fact, and we're going to . . . [interjections] And that is why, as the Premier indicated yesterday and as I underscored, this is just one item of the basis of fact that we're going to make the decision on.

I'm trying to leave that assurance with the hon. member. If his head is so thick that he can't get it through, I'm happy to repeat it again to him. This is just one step of a manyfold process that we are involving ourselves in to make sure that we examine all possibilities of ensuring that the net flow-through is to the farmers. That's who we're going to make sure benefits from an industry, in the event that we establish it on the basis of sound economics.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that having the oil-industry Premier represent agriculture's interests on the priorities and planning committee isn't helping, and I'm wondering if the minister isn't concerned that his obvious lack of clout in cabinet isn't resulting in this constant favouritism of the oil industry at the expense of agriculture.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, it's obvious we've got a lot more clout than the hon. Member for Vegreville.

It's also obvious we've got a Premier who cares very dearly about the agricultural community in that he is the chairman of the agricultural and rural cabinet committee. If one looks at our budgetary estimates last year, Mr. Speaker, over the year previous we find that we had a modest increase of some 7 percent, again which underscores our commitment to the agricultural community. We had a budget brought down that had in excess of half a billion dollars towards the agricultural community, much more than the previous -- and the rural area kicked them out -- New Democratic Party did have in Manitoba. Because we are supportive, and the farming population recognizes that notwithstanding the oft-repeated untruths coming from the . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Let's not get into untruths, misleading the House, and all that. We've had enough of it for one morning.

Westlock-Sturgeon, followed by Stettler.

MR. TAYLOR: This supplementary is also to the minister. Mr. Speaker, I know the minister says he's taking the issue seriously, but is he taking it intelligently? Consequently . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Is that the question, hon. member?

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, I'd like to ask the minister along that line, if he's taking it intelligently. Would he go back to some of the original thoughts in this House and because of the complicated nature of this problem hold public hearings -- not meetings with different groups, public hearings -- to get at the full issues and let all sides get out there and hammer out the economics in public?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the thoughts that have been conveyed by the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon. He recognizes, unlike some other members in this Legislative Assembly, the complexity of the nature, and I appre-

ciate his wisdom in that area.

But I should point out to him that we are going to have meetings. I indicated that in my statement when we released the reports, that we are going to in conjunction with Unifarm conduct meetings throughout the province of Alberta. We're going to conduct those meetings also in the provincial riding of Chinook.

MR. SPEAKER: Stettler, supplementary.

MR. DOWNEY: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm most pleased . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: That's really not called for. With due respect, members, the hon. member only had a chance to get three words out. [interjections] There are, indeed, nine other members who would like to get into question period. Question period is due to expire at 10:52. Perhaps we could get on a little bit more.

Stettler.

MR. DOWNEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary relates to the minister's comments with regard to formulating a national policy for the ethanol industry. I wonder if he could perhaps give us some more details on the state of the negotiations there, with a view, I suppose, to up front eliminating a balkanization of what could become a viable industry, as happened in the red meat industries over the last decade.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to reinforce what we indicated earlier, too, whereby we are having discussions. I've had personal discussions with the hon. minister, the Hon. Charles Mayer, at the federal level so that we can have proper co-ordination of the development of an ethanol industry.

I missed the first part of the hon. member's question. In the event that I haven't adequately answered it, I'm more than happy to do so in a private way.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Member for Westlock-Sturgeon on behalf of the Liberal caucus.

### **Lubicon Band Land Claim**

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Premier. His answer a couple of days ago on the Lubicon issue clearly shows that he's stalling and that the Lubicons are being jacked around a certain amount.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member . . .

MR. TAYLOR: Yes; is "jacked around" bad? Okay.

Mr. Speaker, also I believe it would appear now that the meeting with the Lubicons where he announced he would be going for a tribunal is nothing more than a PR trick. Now, I would like to ask the minister, for instance: has he received his letter mailed from the Lubicons in the middle of April that outlined what they thought was his and their agreement as to obtaining a tribunal? Has he received that letter?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member would have to be much more specific on letters.

MR. TAYLOR: A letter, Mr. Speaker, outlining the fact that they were going to go for a tribunal and that the Premier had agreed to accept Davie Fulton as one of the tribunal.

Could I then ask whether the Premier has contacted Davie Fulton to see whether he would be part of the tribunal? Attorney General, it's not to you; it's to the Premier. Have you contacted Davie Fulton to see whether there'd be a tribunal?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid the hon. leader of the Liberal Party is missing a lot of information on this issue, because the name of Davie Fulton was raised by Chief Ominayak, and he said that it is somebody whom he has a great deal of faith in. I pointed out to him that the federal government said that they would not accept Mr. Fulton as "the" arbitrator, and therefore together Chief Ominayak and myself worked out a way that Mr. Fulton could represent the Lubicon Band. That would be by his being their advocate to a three-person tribunal, the second person coming on behalf of the governments -- that would be the provincial government and the federal government appointing or agreeing on the second person -- and then the two of them agreeing on the third, as chairman. We worked that out between ourselves. I think it is a positive improvement in this discussion, and I hope that we can convince the federal government to allow a tribunal like that to proceed. It would not be the government's responsibility or role, obviously, to seek out the Lubicon Band's advocate. They have a relationship with him, and they want to deal with him.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, we don't need more photo opportunities; we need some action. What has the Premier done to get this tribunal -- this is what three people are -- to put those into place? What has he done with Indian affairs? Because Indian affairs said they've turned it down. So either I'm reading the wrong letters or you're reading the wrong letters. What is he going to do when they say they've turned it down?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Same question asked three times.

MR. GETTY: Not only three times today, Mr. Speaker; he and I have had the same question raised just a week ago, I suppose. Again I have to give him the same answer, because you've got to give him the facts. The facts are that we are working both through a negotiator representing the government, with the negotiator who represents the federal government. I discussed with the chief and I discussed with the chief's advisors some of these matters. I also had our Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental affairs discuss the matter with Mr. McKnight, and we are trying to convince the federal government that a tribunal system will work. I think that in my discussion with the chief he feels that we are making progress. We are on the side of the Lubicons on this matter, and I'm going to continue to be.

MR. TAYLOR: Oh, boy.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary question.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, it's taken my breath away; I'm having trouble . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Then we'll go to the next supplementary.

MR. TAYLOR: For the Premier to come out and say that he's

on the side of the Lubicons . . .

What does the Premier answer to the published reports by the federal minister in charge of Indian affairs that say he will not accept Davie Fulton? What does he say to that?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, he missed the earlier answer. That's exactly why we came up with the tribunal; they would not accept Davie Fulton as a single arbitrator. Now, I've said it already to the hon. member, and if he's not listening after he asks the question, that's unfortunate.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that the hon. member knows that we are working with the Lubicon Band, that we are on their side on this issue, we have already made an improvement. We have been able to get a firm offering of some 25 square miles. We are also talking about expanding that. We are talking to them about moving the location of the acreage that they would get from where they currently have a settlement to a much more favourable location protruding out into the lake, which they would like to have. We said we will do that; the chief is very pleased with that. We said that we want to ensure that this goes ahead, and we'd like to help flow in funds for constructing their community, for helping with health care, for helping with schools.

All of these things are progress, Mr. Speaker. We're dealing with the native band, and the Alberta government is helping them, is on their side. They are Albertans, and we are wanting to work with them, and we're going to continue to do it. The hon. leader of the Liberal Party somehow seems to be missing the facts.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Calgary-Mountain View, supplementary.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The Hon. E. Davie Fulton, an eminent Canadian jurist and a former Conservative Justice minister, was originally appointed by the federal government as an independent mediator to resolve the issue. Why does the Premier now insist that he can only be reinvented as an advocate for the Lubicon people? Is the Premier saying that Mr. E. Davie Fulton failed to act as an independent mediator when he was appointed originally?

MR. GETTY: Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is acting and asking questions without any facts. The problem with Mr. Fulton was that Mr. Fulton moved from an independent position into one of being an advocate for the Lubicon Band. Now, I have no problems with that. I mean, he is a respected jurist. He is a person of some stature in this country, and I'm pleased that he's gone to the side of the Lubicon Band and said, "I am pushing their case." But having said that, there isn't a person in this room who would then say that having become an advocate of one side, you would then be the independent arbitrator. The band recognizes that. That's why they've agreed with me to allow him to be their advocate on a tribunal. I don't know why the hon. member wouldn't understand that. It seems simple enough to the band. It seems simple enough to the government. That's why we're making progress in this regard.

#### Water Supply Assistance

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Yesterday I tried to help the government and the Minister of Career Development and Employment. Today I'm

going to again try and help the government.

It seems to be a pattern that this government announces a program, Mr. Speaker, and then it doesn't have the mechanics to carry out that program. Now, my question to the Minister of Agriculture. Is the minister in a position to indicate how long the waiting list is for people who are applying for pipelines and pumps to transfer water from, say, lakes into dugouts?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, maybe I can take this opportunity just to elaborate a bit as it relates to this program. As the hon. member is aware, we are going to purchase an additional 10 units in addition to the 50 units that we do have for pumping. There is presently a waiting list of two to three weeks. I should share with the hon. member also that we are giving a priority to livestock producers, recognizing that their concern is possibly a little greater than other producers. But we are working very quickly. But I should point out, because it's so, so important: we announced this program acknowledging that it was going to take us a little while to have the mechanisms in place.

The hon. Minister of the Environment tabled yesterday the pamphlet that outlines the specifics of the program, but we wanted to signal to the farming population some security. That's what we have done, because the weather conditions are as such that a good rainfall will offset and do a heck of a lot more good than any government program could.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. The problem was brought to the government's and everybody's attention in this province by the people in the St. Paul area last year. Now, I could pick the telephone up and have 10 truckloads of pipe in this province within 48 hours. Somebody's not doing their job.

My supplementary question, Mr. Speaker: can the minister indicate how many miles of new pipe have been brought into the province since the minister and the government announced the program?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I'm more than happy to dig up the specific details the hon. member requested. And I deeply appreciate, as I always have done in my relationship with the hon. member over the last 12 years -- as he did serve as my MLA when I was a federal Member of Parliament -- his advice and his counsel. I should point to the hon. member, too, that I answered him in the first question. We have purchased an additional 10 units, which is an additional 10 miles of pipe.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of the Environment. Can the minister indicate what inventory was done before the program was announced as to the capacity for well drillers to be able to carry out with a proposed program? What inventory was done with the drilling capacity?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, over the last number of years there has been a series of initiatives taken with the water well drillers in the province of Alberta to basically encourage their technical abilities and skills, and we have an ongoing consultation with the Water Well Drilling Association in the province of Alberta. We know exactly how many bona fide water well drillers there are, and the hon. member will know that in the pamphlet that we outlined yesterday, it indicated that it would only be licensed to Alberta drilling contractors. So we have that information.

I wouldn't want to give you the specific number today. I'd hate to be out by 10 or something like that. Then the hon. mem-

ber might get mad and say that we're providing some erroneous information. But we do know.

Under the provisions of the program we've also said that there would be eligibility for upwards of 6,000 farmers, ranchers, or acreage owners, and of course we can't drill 6,000 wells at the same time, the same week. But to this point in time I'm unaware of any backlog of any applications from anywhere in the province of Alberta. There have been a couple of water well drillers who have contacted my office and said that we should be careful that people who might not need a well would try and access the program to get an additional well. So of course there will be priorities and hardship cases allocated first.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary question is to the Premier. In light of the fact that so many of these programs are announced and the mechanism is not in place, can the minister assure the Legislature and the people of this province that when he announces a program, he will make sure that his ministers have the backup to be able to initiate the program shortly after it's announced?

MR. GETTY: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

DR. BUCK: Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, back to the original to the Minister of Agriculture. He figures that new pipe will be in in three months. I'm sure he'd like to know that the farmers are raising cattle, not camels, and they can't wait for three months. Has the minister looked into the question of using secondhand pipe from the many drilling and oil supply companies in Alberta? There's a lot of pipe stacked there, as the hon. Member for Clover Bar mentioned. I don't believe there's any need to wait for three weeks for new pipe.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member indicated three months at the opening part of his comments; he indicated three weeks in the closing part of his comments. He's obviously very confused, as he traditionally is in this Legislature. I indicated to him, not as it related to the pipes, that there is a backlog for the uptake of what we do have. As it relates to the purchase of 10 additional units, we're on track with that. I will report the specifics back to the hon. Member for Clover Bar, who raised a legitimate concern.

We want to leave the farming population the assurance, though, acknowledging that the situation varies from area to area within the province. There's a drastic difference in one corner of this province as compared to the other. The northeast corners have recently had snowfall. I can give him a detailed map if he would wish so that he can have a breakdown as to where some of the areas are a little more severe as to the other areas. But we wanted all farmers to know that we were going to be forthcoming in supporting them in the event that the climatic conditions were such that they needed the help.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Vegreville, finally supplementary.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Agriculture. I'm wondering if there's enough flexibility in the pumping program announced by his department to enable people to rent pumps that are smaller than the tractor-driven pumps supplied by his department, because there are cases where the

people can't have access to their source of water with those large pumps.

MR. ELZINGA: Well, I thank the hon. member for that representation, and I will take it up with our departmental people.

I should share with the hon. member, as is indicated in the brochure that was distributed yesterday, that we have reduced effectively by 50 percent the cost of that pumping equipment to our farming population, so it is a very modest cost to rent the equipment that we do have available. But I will take his specific recommendation up with our departmental people, and I thank him for it.

MR. HYLAND: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Agriculture. I wonder if the minister can inform this Assembly how many farmers in how many small villages or hamlets have taken the opportunity to move water through the pipe system already this year.

MR. KOWALSKI: Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I could respond. It's 12.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Calgary-North West, followed by Edmonton-Avonmore.

#### Employment Statistics and Initiatives

DR. CASSIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question is to the Minister of Career Development and Employment. Statistics Canada's figures were released today and show again that both Canada's and Alberta's unemployment rate has decreased. My question to the minister is: has Alberta's rate declined because of a shrinking labour force?

MR. ORMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the hon. member has brought up the issue of the labour force statistics, because they, as released today, are very, very positive in terms of Alberta. I should point out that on a seasonally adjusted basis the unemployment rate is now 7.6 percent, down from 10 percent this time last year. That's an additional 40,000 people employed in the province of Alberta during that period.

I should also point out to the member that one of the dangers that can happen in examining raw unemployment data is that in some cases unemployment rates will go down, and it's based on people leaving the labour force. I think that's been the dramatic experience of the province of Manitoba over the last half decade. Possibly a new government there may change things, Mr. Speaker.

But I should say that, in fact, Alberta's labour force has expanded during that same period. Our labour force has increased by 11,000. So to see the unemployment rate go down while the labour force is in fact increasing are signs of a very strong economy.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

DR. CASSIN: Yes; first supplementary. Last month the minister expressed some concern that Calgary's unemployment rate would increase as a result of more people who worked during the Olympics in February looking for jobs. Has that occurred?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, I did caution in my remarks last month about the labour force stats that in Calgary, as a matter of

fact, with the increased number of people who have left jobs during the Olympics, there was a potential for Calgary's unemployment rate to increase. I also said that a sign of the strength of the economy in southern Alberta will be the test of this month's labour stats, and I should say that the unemployment rate in Calgary is 7.5 percent. That's down from 9.6 percent. As a matter of fact, there are an additional 1,000 people working in the month of March compared to the month of the Olympics, February. So that, I believe, is a very significant test of the Calgary economy.

DR. CASSIN: Second supplementary. With regards to Edmonton, we have noticed that there has been a significant difference between the rates in Edmonton and Calgary. Can the minister bring us up to date on the situation in Edmonton?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, we have as a government been concerned about the difference in the unemployment rate between Edmonton and Calgary over the last year. As a matter of fact, the spread between Edmonton and Calgary this time last year was 3 percentage points, and I'm pleased to report that the spread now is only 2 percentage points. It's still a difference of 2 points. We're going to, obviously, address it.

Some of the initiatives that have been announced recently in northern Alberta, together with the Grant MacEwan College announcement, are going to have a very positive impact on employment in the province. Edmonton's unemployment rate is 9.6 percent, but I must say that although the unemployment rate is still unacceptably high, there are an additional 4,000 people working in this economy this month compared to last month and 8,000 this year compared to the same period last year. We will continue to not only bring down the unemployment rate in Edmonton but in the province as a whole.

I should say that these statistics are very pleasing to me, particularly with my responsibilities, and certainly my colleagues. We have all experienced a tough time with regard to employment over the last year.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

DR. CASSIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Final supplementary. University is out, and we have a number of young people who are of course looking for jobs. Earlier this week in the House a question was asked of the minister with regard to the high rate of youth unemployment in the province of Alberta. Can the minister advise the House as to the current state of youth unemployment in this province?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, youth unemployment is of particular interest to me and my colleagues. It's obviously an area where we must continue to work hard. Traditionally, across the provinces of Canada -- the difference between the unemployment rates of the general population and the unemployment rates of the youth in this province have been a disparity of about 3 percentage points higher. We were concerned last April with the youth unemployment rate, which was at 17 percent -- very, very high and for a number of reasons. Certainly one of those reasons is that people in that age category who drop out of school and do not further their education obviously are putting themselves at a disadvantage in terms of finding a job.

But having said that, Mr. Speaker, the unemployment rate for youth in Alberta has dropped from 17 percent in 1987 to 13.4 percent in April of this year -- still too high, but the trend is

very, very encouraging. We here in Alberta look to set another record for youth employment in the province of Alberta this summer.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past number of summers the government has always announced additional STEP positions in light of the increased high unemployment rate of youth. Even at 13 percent, as the minister acknowledges, there is still that very high unemployment rate for the youth of Alberta. I'm wondering if the minister is considering increasing the number of STEP positions this year as well.

MR. ORMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have undertaken on a regular basis, on behalf of my colleagues, to be sure that there are enough STEP -- summer temporary employment -- dollars available for youth working in the summers. I certainly undertake to monitor that on a regular basis. Obviously, this is the time of year that we pay a great deal of attention to STEP.

I should say, though, that last year we did not put as many dollars into STEP as the previous year; however, we did have more youth employed during that period. My belief is that the strength of the economy is actually overriding the demand for wage subsidies through the STEP program. It does not mean to say that we won't follow it, but I believe that the job creation is happening naturally, and the necessity or the demand for a subsidy, for programs like STEP, are not as significant or dramatic as they have been in the past. We will watch it. It's a very important point, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton-Avonmore, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar if there is time.

### Health Care Insurance Plan Coverage

MS LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Premier. By insuring vasectomies, tubal ligation, and insertion of IUDs last month, this government admitted it erred in its judgment in removing them from the fee code. I just received a letter from a woman who had a tubal ligation on March 24, just two weeks before this procedure was reinsured. She has a great sense of injustice, as have many other Albertans in similar circumstances. Will the Premier not, therefore, take steps to rectify this gross error in judgment by reimbursing those who are the victims of his government's poor judgment and have had to pay out of their pocket for these procedures?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I imagine the hon. member would want to raise those questions with the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care, and I will take them as notice and advise him.

I might also say that when the government is struggling with a \$3.5 billion deficit, I think initiatives to try and help the taxpayers of Alberta in some way are certainly ones that the hon. member would support rather than be so negative about. Nevertheless, when the government did take some initiatives, consulted with the people, and then found that there was probably a reason why we should change, I don't find that as particularly a terrible thing; I think that's a government responding to the people that it represents.

MS LAING: Mr. Speaker, I hold the Premier responsible for the actions of his ministers. Even though the government's ex-

periment has failed and it has reversed its policy, does the Premier think it is all right to balance the budget by reducing access to reproductive health care?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I think even the hon. member will agree that there has been over the years in Canada -- it's not just in Alberta -- tremendous growth in the cost of health care in every province throughout this nation and that most people who are looking forward to the future and trying to plan in the best interests of the constituents they represent are trying to figure a way of keeping this magnificent health care system that we have here in Alberta the best there is on into the future. Yet if it continues to grow at a certain level beyond the capacity of the taxpayers to support it, it would obviously do nothing except bankrupt a government or the people we're trying to serve.

So there have to be initiatives taken. Now, some initiatives will not be perfect. Some will really help; others will have to be changed as you get more and more information. That's what is happening in this case. I think it's the kind of thing that every government in Canada should be doing.

MS LAING: Mr. Speaker, by reinsuring these services, the government has recognized that they are medically required. Does the Premier not, therefore, feel compelled to reimburse those who have paid for those services, because he may have violated the Canada Health Act and because it's the only fair thing to do?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, there is a certain set of regulations in place for a period of time, and that's what people respond to. I would ask the hon. member to take the matter up with the minister of health and see if there are any problems as to dates and so on, but frankly my previous answer still stands. The government's taking initiatives, trying to work out a way to help the people of Alberta in the high cost of this system and yet maintaining the quality of the system. That's one of the things that the royal commission, the Hyndman commission on future health care for Albertans, is looking into right now. There may well be some recommendations come from that commission which will help the hon. member in her future thinking about the health care system, and the government's as well.

MS LAING: Mr. Speaker, is the Premier not willing to lead the way with the minister and his cabinet and the Treasury to ensure that Albertans are treated fairly and that these people who have been victims of their policy be reimbursed for the money that they put out in an eight-month period?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is talking about the government leading the way, I should point out to her that in Alberta the government leads the way with the best health care system in Canada. The government leads the way in Canada with the greatest amount of funds advanced on behalf of the people of Alberta. The government is not just taking the current situation as what is best for the people of Alberta; we also have put in place, as I just said, a long-term planning commission to make sure that the health care system isn't just the best now in Canada, but it will continue to be that way well into the future. That is leadership from the government, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Time for question period has expired. [interjections] Order please.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

Are there any additional supplementaries? That's fine.

The Chair earlier in the day did not leap to its feet -- if the Chair can leap to its feet; that's the trouble trying to speak in the third person. But earlier, in the exchange between the Leader of the Opposition and the Premier, there were two statements made that really were unparliamentary and were picked up by *Hansard*. As made by the Leader of the Opposition: "Mr. Speaker, that is totally misleading the House." That is unparliamentary. A bit later in the exchange, there's a comment that was made: "That's a lie." That is also unparliamentary.

The Chair would also bring to the attention of the House that from time to time there is this exchange going back and forth across the floor, with somewhat similar statements. Perhaps all members over the weekend might take three minutes to look at *Beauchesne* 320 to see what is indeed parliamentary language and what is not.

head: **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

MR. SPEAKER: Might we revert briefly to the Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Any opposed?

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

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Lacombe.

MR. R. MOORE: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Legislature, 113 grade 6 students from the Nelson school in Lacombe. They're accompanied by teachers Grant Smith, Marg McLaughlin, Ted Jardine, and Jim Maloney and parents Mrs. Bell, Mrs. Ogilvie, and Mrs. Bone. I understand they're seated in both galleries, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Legislature.

head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

[Mr. Gogo in the Chair]

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

The Chair would remind hon. members that today is the 25th day of the estimates, and under Standing Order 58 we'll be dealing with that matter in about 90 minutes.

The department called before the committee today is the Department of Transportation and Utilities, Hon. Boomer Adair, minister. The estimates are contained on page 339 of the government estimates book, consisting of five votes, and on page 143 of the government estimates book, supplementary information.

Hon. members . . .

MR. WRIGHT: Point of order, if it is a point of order. My understanding, Mr. Chairman, was that the Solicitor General was going first. Is it clear that Transportation and Utilities is going



first?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair has been informed, but perhaps we'll call on the hon. Government House Leader, Edmonton-Strathcona. Government House Leader, could you advise the committee which estimates are being called?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Chairman, I had not given any particular preference to one or the other. I had had a discussion with the acting House leader of the Opposition and had not gotten any response. Because I had indicated earlier that Transportation and Utilities would be called on Friday, that's what I am doing, with Solicitor General in backup position. If it is the will of the committee after the minister of transportation makes his comments to adjourn that particular debate and call Solicitor General, that's fine with me, and I would encourage the minister of transportation in that case to keep his comments certainly within the time frame and as concise as possible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair is in the hands of the committee. It's customary for the government to present its estimates in the way it sees fit. Now, perhaps could we have a definitive calling of the estimates from the hon. Government House Leader so we may proceed?

Point of order, Edmonton-Strathcona?

MR. WRIGHT: As it were, yes, Mr. Chairman. Simply that it was also undertaken that Solicitor General would be called on Tuesday night and a spillover on Friday, and I made my arrangements on that basis.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Chairman, I regret to again have to enter into this. There was no undertaking other than that if the committee was prepared to proceed and the other estimate was either definitively addressed or had been adjourned, then we would have proceeded with the Solicitor General. The Solicitor General has been in that position for three days now, this being the third day. So again, I had called transportation today, with the Solicitor General here and prepared to go, so I would suggest that we start briefly with the minister of transportation. Then if it's the will of the committee -- that will, I gather, will be discussed very shortly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those members who have comments, questions, or proposed amendments to these votes, would they indicate to the Chair?

Perhaps, hon. members, just prior to starting, with your indulgence, the Chair could take a moment. We have many visitors to the gallery. The students may be interested in the process.

The Legislature deals with many items, one of which is the spending of money. Today we are in Committee of Supply, when ministers of the Crown put their estimates to all members of the Assembly for approval. Only a minister of the Crown may put those motions forward, and today the Minister of Transportation and Utilities, Mr. Adair, is submitting his estimates of \$800 million to the committee.

Hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities, do you have any opening comments to the committee?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Chairman, I do. I'm somewhat disappointed they were not ready to hear that on the other side, but I'm prepared to go ahead now.

With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to revert to introduction of guests in the gallery.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we have the approval of the committee to revert to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister of transportation.

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

MR. ADAIR: The special guests I have to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, Mr. Chairman, are the Deputy Minister of the Department of Transportation and Utilities, Mr. Harvey Alton, along with my executive assistant, Ted Hole. I'd ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

#### head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

#### **Department of Transportation and Utilities**

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Chairman, when I presented my last budget to the Legislative Assembly a year ago, the Department of Transportation and Utilities had just experienced a fairly significant reduction, \$147.5 million or 14.5 percent, over the previous year. This reduction in expenditures contributed significantly to the efforts of our government to bring the deficit under control. I'm pleased that we've been able to contribute toward this initiative with minimal impact on the citizens of the province of Alberta.

This year we're presenting a budget that is \$38.9 million less, and that's 4.5 percent less than the 1987-88 budget. But even so, significant new initiatives to department programs will be undertaken. For instance, we've been granted funds that will provide for a \$10 million addition to the secondary road program, \$3.5 million for the remote area heating grants, \$3 million for farm water grants -- that's in the budget, and it does not include any of the dollars that were provided in addition to that for the water program we announced just recently -- and also half a million dollars for work on the national safety code program. Now, in concert with the Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, we've also received an additional \$30 million for the construction and upgrading of roads to forestry resources. We're pleased to have this additional amount of money, Mr. Chairman, and that we're able to participate in these programs, which are very important to all Albertans and to this government.

Our first priority continues to be safety. We always recognize safety as a priority of this government. We will continue to maintain the appropriate levels of funding for our safety programs such as pavement markings, signing, guardrail installation, lighting at intersection improvement, and the various transportation safety awareness programs. For example, Mr. Chairman, we declared the month of May as Motorcycle and Bicycle Safety Awareness Month.

Then a year ago, Bill 9, the Highway Traffic Amendment

Act, 1987, dealing with seat belt legislation, was passed, marking a significant milestone in our attempt to enhance safety on our roads. Since our initial advertising campaign that was carried out when the seat belt legislation was passed, we have had a selective traffic enforcement program in co-operation with the RCMP in 10 rural areas and a Buckle Up advertising campaign in the cities. We will continue to support the seat belt legislation in this way in the future. Seat belt usage in the province is currently running at about 80 percent plus, which is most encouraging for us to see. [interjection]

MR. ADAIR: You won that tie at a bingo? [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order in the committee, please.

MR. ADAIR: We have observed that there's been a 13.5 percent reduction in both major and moderate injuries. It's a little early at this point to draw the total conclusion that that may have been a direct result in total of seat belts, but I'm personally of the opinion, Mr. Chairman, that seat belts have been a major contributor to the reduction in injuries because the number of actual accidents has only decreased by 2 percent.

Our second priority, Mr. Chairman, is protecting our present investment. Now, we play a very significant role in the establishment of uniform weights and dimensions in vehicle configuration standards for large trucks that will be implemented across all Canadian jurisdictions in this coming year. The establishment of uniform vehicle weights will allow greater local carrying capacity while providing increased stability for large trucks. We also have a reciprocal agreement with all provinces and with 33 states in the United States for the control of operating authorities for public bus and truck operators. We appreciate and participate with several national and international associations in transportation-related research and are also assisting in the development and implementation of the national safety code, under which 17 uniform commercial vehicle operation safety standards will be implemented across all of Canada.

Now, when it gets right down to our main program, Mr. Chairman, the twinning of highways 1 and 16 -- that's Trans-Canada 1 and Trans-Canada north -- is scheduled for completion on target, 1991. I guess to break that down a little further: to the west of the city of Edmonton on Highway 16 by 1990 and to the east by 1991. With the addition of the federal government's decision to assist us by providing \$11 million in funding, that helps us keep on target and on time.

The pavement rehabilitation program is essentially the same as last year. It's anticipated that funding will have to be increased in future years as our pavement begins to age, like all of us.

There will be a continuation of major safety programs on Highway 63 and Highway 2. A program to grade widen Highway 63 was started in 1986, and it's anticipated that by the completion of the 1988 construction season 54 kilometres will have been widened, leaving approximately 120 kilometres for future years. The program to widen Highway 2 between Airdrie and Red Deer was also started back in 1986, and 36 kilometres will have been completed by the end of this construction season, leaving 65 kilometres remaining to be upgraded.

Major other work in upgrading will occur on highways 22, 36, 64, and 88 to a paved standard, and it will continue, as I said a moment ago, in this year, 1988. There are many other major ongoing programs, and good progress is being achieved. In addition, the final project to complete the surfacing of Highway 59

has been awarded for this year.

This year will also see an increased emphasis on improving resource roads. A major part of this increase is required to support the activity in the forest industry area. Funding to develop the infrastructure to support the recently announced Daishowa project at Peace River and the Whitecourt plant is included in this program. In addition, the energy industry, which has experienced a downturn in recent years, has rebounded, which will bring increased pressure on all of us to upgrade the road system serving that industry.

We have doubled our tourism resource road budget this year, and although it's relatively small, it's still a significant increase, indicating the government's priority in providing improved access to tourism facilities.

Funding for the improvement of the secondary road system has been increased by 17 percent in 1988 and will be used to accelerate the paving of the secondary road system. The primary highway road system is comprised of 14,600 kilometres of roadway, 90 percent of which is already paved. The 1988 construction program will include grade reconstruction of 45 kilometres and surfacing an additional 175 kilometres. Also, there are 122 kilometres of older, narrow paved highways which will be widened to modern standards, and 210 kilometres of base course will be final paved.

The secondary road system consists of 13,475 kilometres of road, of which 5,960 kilometres are paved, and that's approximately 41 percent of the entire system. The '88 construction program will include 370 kilometres of reconstruction and surfacing of 493 kilometres. In addition, 260 kilometres will be final paved, and 10 kilometres of narrow paved roadway will be widened to modern standards.

In the area of grants within the department, we have participated with the departments of the Solicitor General and Municipal Affairs to form the Alberta partnership transfer program. Funding previously provided under law enforcement grants, municipal operating grants, and the public transit operating grants is now provided in the form of an unconditional grant to municipalities, thereby achieving the goal set earlier by our Premier.

In the area of financial assistance to rural local highways, we have maintained the amount of engineering support we give to eligible communities and retained the same level of support to the Special Areas. Regular road grants to counties, municipal districts, and towns and villages have been maintained at last year's level, and the basic capital grant to cities has been reduced to \$60 per capita from \$67.90 just a year ago. And in that area, Mr. Chairman, I should point out that what has occurred, really, in the fact that we reduced the urban transportation grant to \$60 per capita was to give us some time to work with the various municipalities in putting together another longer term program.

I might also point out, Mr. Chairman, that with the contributions made to date to particularly the two major cities and more specifically the city of Edmonton, including special grants that have been applied in the years 1986 and 1987, including the \$60 per capita grant for the year 1988, it averages out to \$73 per capita or \$3 more than the commitment made in the five-year program from 1979 to 1984. But it also allows us time to have some cleanup, because there are a number of the municipalities that were not in a position to fund their portion of it as a result of the downturn that did occur in our economy and some of the things that didn't need to be pushed as quickly as they had suggested. So really what is occurring: it's allowing us the time to

sit with the municipal authorities to work out a new program that will be ongoing. I might point out there has always been a program. The only difference has been how much or what kind of program. So we're working with the municipalities.

It's also important to note that about a year ago in the urban transportation grant area, there were a number of the cities that had a fair amount of money sitting in bank accounts. They weren't using them. Now, I might say that the city of Edmonton particularly did an excellent job last year of cleaning up all that excess money before they would have been required by law to return it to the province of Alberta, so there was a tremendous amount of work going on in the city of Edmonton, I believe an expenditure in the \$80 million range, a year ago.

When you talk about the other programs in that particular area, the city of Red Deer this year will be receiving about \$40 million. [some applause] We've got them both. Forty million dollars in support for the 1988 year is a result of a long-term negotiation between the city of Red Deer, the CPR, and the Department of Transportation and Utilities to assist the city with their railway relocation in the major continuous corridor. It's the last of these particular projects in this particular time frame. I'm pleased to see that within this budget as well there will be a sum of money for ongoing support to the city of Red Deer to complete that project over time.

In the area of utilities, funding for the development and support of utilities has been decreased by 7.5 percent. Much of this decrease has been caused by reduced demand on some of our grant programs. The gas distribution system capital grants have been reduced as the distribution system is now maturing. The Rural Electrification Association reserve grants program has been canceled with the introduction of the broader interest-free loan program for Rural Electrification Association rebuild. The senior citizens home heating grant program has been extended to 1990, and the estimate has been increased annually to reflect the increasing number of seniors in our population. The Natural Gas Rebates Amendment Act of 1988, which was passed earlier in this sitting, allows us to extend for a period of three years the benefits under this program and to provide a direct rebate of natural gas cost to consumers engaged in primary agricultural production. It confirms our commitment to the reduction of agricultural costs. Also, as mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Chairman, the remote area heating allowance, the primary agriculture producers rebate program, and the farm water grant program have all been extended for an additional three years.

In the year 1987 the government provided \$100,000 to the Small Power Producers Association of Alberta to assist that association in participating in and making representations to the Energy Resources Conservation Board and the Public Utilities Board inquiry on small power. As a result of that inquiry, Mr. Chairman, the government is reviewing various options which might enhance the viability of small power generation in this province.

It's timely, as I stand here in this Legislature today, that I indicate that tomorrow, Saturday, May 7, the 1988 highway cleanup campaign will take place across the province of Alberta and that the alternate day in case of inclement weather is May 14. That's May 7 for the program, tomorrow, and May 14 if the weather is bad in any of the areas. This program provides benefits to all of our highways as a result of the many local 4-H clubs, junior forest warden organizations, and other school groups participating in that cleanup. Last year, for example, over 10,000 children participated through 577 clubs and cleaned

up 63,760 bags of litter from 5,365 miles of highway. Those organizations earned approximately \$187,000, and we thank them very much. I think one of the most important aspects of that program is the fact that those young people and their adult supervisors, who assist them as well, I'm sure will not litter any highway after some of the product they pick up over the year, tossed out by some citizens who, at this point in time, do not have the respect we wish they had for the cleanliness of our highway system.

Recently the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, the Hon. Larry Shaben, mentioned how Transportation and Utilities had co-operated with other departments to develop policies to improve the transportation capability of Alberta in terms of the cost-effectiveness of moving our products to market. We will continue to work co-operatively to support the initiatives of the government whether they be in areas of safety, affecting changes to national transportation policy through the national safety code program, or in developing a transportation infrastructure for the resource industry and tourism or providing better utility services to the people of Alberta.

Those basically are my remarks to this particular point in time, and I look forward to any questions that may be provided.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. PIQUETTE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to start off today with some compliments to the minister of transportation. I'm very pleased to hear that highways 63, 36, and 55 are all roads which the government has been committed to, as well as the Yellowhead Highway, as well as the resource road of Wabasca, which is very important to linking Calling Lake to the Wabasca-Desmarais area. So I'd like to extend my appreciation for that Highway 63: some of the repaving programs, the widening programs to Fort McMurray are very much needed. It's a road I traveled on for quite a few years in the time I worked there. I traveled there in terms of exchange of visits from friends and relatives. It is very much a road that needs to be widened, and hopefully that target date will be realized by the government.

The question relating to Highway 55 this year. The last section of the reconstruction of that road has been licked. I would like to ask the minister if in next year's budget the resumption of the paving program will be taking place, because that road is being called by many of the mayors of the municipalities of Bonnyville, the St. Paul area, Grand Centre, and Lac La Biche a very important linkage in terms of the transportation in that area, especially with the development of the heavy oil traffic, which is anticipated to be increasing. Of course, the people of Lac La Biche and the St. Paul area and Smoky Lake are all anticipating that in next year's budget the last portion of the paving program will be in your budget, because it's been an ongoing project since about 1971, or perhaps for a lot of people in the Lac La Biche area it appears to be in the B.C. category.

In terms of the total budget for 1988-89, \$830.771 million, which is a decrease of \$36 million from the '87-88 estimates and approximately a \$200 million decrease since '86-87, is quite a dramatic drop in the overall budget in the past two years. For a lot of people in Alberta, transportation is a very high priority in terms of moving goods to market, et cetera. And in terms of urban transportation, roads are very important for the small business community, the agricultural community, and there's no doubt that there have been concerns expressed in the last couple of years about making sure our primary and secondary highway

needs are addressed.

In terms of the primary highways, the 3.4 cutback of the total budget, I wonder if that can perhaps be equalized or perhaps if that portion can be increased, in view of the fact that I believe the minister is seeking more federal government help in terms of the Yellowhead Highway. Has he been successful in increasing that grant program this year? Because I do believe now that it has been named as a second Trans-Canada Highway through Alberta, there should be a lot more federal funding available and a lot higher commitment from the federal government. In the debates last year I indicated to him that we are not, according to the statistics, getting our fair share of federal transportation grants. Many eastern provinces, for example, are grabbing a larger share based on the population comparison, et cetera. So has the minister addressed that issue with the federal minister of transportation to try and equalize that type of funding and hopefully as well address the issue he raised last year that he felt there were too many strings attached to many of the federal transportation grants available?

I'm very pleased to see an increase in the secondary roads of 17 percent. It's very welcome, because after a dramatic, drastic cutback last year of about 25 percent, it's coming back somewhat to what the support program was before. Now, will it mean that counties and municipalities are going to have their first and second secondary paving priorities addressed this year? In my conversation with the minister, he indicated that the first priority would be addressed last year, and with that 17 percent increase, will the second, or a portion of the second, priority established by local municipalities and counties be addressed? And will it be equally fair across all constituencies in the province? Because I do believe fairness is an issue. For example, in the constituency of Vegreville they're still awaiting his announcement relating to any secondary road paving program in 1988. The county of Thorhild has requested secondary road 661 as their second priority. Will that be fulfilled? How about the county of Athabasca, also first and second priorities?

Improvement District Road Reconstruction is slashed by 23.3 percent in 1988-89. This is very negative for northern Alberta, because with the improvement districts in that part of northern Alberta. . . I would like some explanation from the minister on why such a dramatic reduction this year. I wonder if he can explain how these priorities will be rearranged or postponed in terms of some of the listed priorities of the improvement districts. Has he met with the improvement districts to indicate to them that this is a temporary cutback and next year we'll be looking at a greater funding arrangement?

Grants to Towns and Villages for financial assistance for rural areas and local highways are again slashed by 22.2 percent -- again, a very negative impact for towns and villages, since their tax rate will have to be raised to pick up additional costs or they will be forced to suspend repairs, et cetera. When will the minister introduce a joint fifty-fifty road rehabilitation paving program for towns and villages in Alberta? This type of program is absolutely necessary, especially in the smaller towns. I would say in towns of a population of 3,000 and less they really don't have the tax base to do a lot of the local road and paving improvement that is required in their municipalities. I would urge the minister to at least partially next year, or perhaps this year, introduce a kind of program which would be addressing the needs of the villages and small towns of Alberta.

Roads to Other Resources has been slashed by 35 percent, although he has indicated there's been some support from the forestry and wildlife department. What resource road construc-

tion will be suspended or canceled because of these cutbacks? How will the proposed Conklin road, an important resource road, be affected by this? Again, I'd like to indicate that I wish to thank him for the funding of the surveying this year in the 1988 budget. From what I've been told, all the surveying up to the pretending part of the project will be done this year. Does that mean there's a commitment from his department that in the '89-90 budget year we're going to be starting the construction or the letting of some of the contracts . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order in the committee, please.

MR. PIQUETTE: . . . on this very, very important road connection to the north and Fort McMurray, a very important resource and tourism link road asked by the people of the region for many years now? If there's any one thing the people of Lac La Biche have been really lobbying for for a number of years, it is both Highway 36, of course, and Conklin road. I would urge the government to at least next year start a slashing program to get the local unemployed -- people on welfare -- to get the slashing of that road as a priority and to then work into the area of the construction of that very important linkage.

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

Financial Assistance for Urban Transportation: a grant for basic capital assistance slashed by \$13 million this year; as well, a grant for major continuous corridors and primary highway connectors slashed by \$16.7 percent -- a very negative impact on the urban centre. We've heard from the cities of Calgary and Edmonton that they had to suspend a road project this year, that they were not anticipating a cutback of that magnitude. The city of Edmonton, for example: approximately a \$4.5 million cutback in their budget. However, I'm glad to hear from the minister that he's working on a three- or four-year funding program which hopefully will restore that level of funding that both urban centres or other urban centres are requiring.

Urban centres are in a very desperate situation. In terms of the city of Edmonton, for example, they're falling further behind in the upkeep and development of their urban streets and connector highways. Their figures indicate that massive injections of provincial and municipal funding will be required just to maintain an existing road network in the city of Edmonton. I believe this should be a very important consideration in the discussion of the minister with the urban municipality, because before we get caught up in a situation where we have an emergency developing in our major centres, the rehabilitation and share funding program is something which will need to be addressed very forcefully by this minister.

An issue which I raised with him just recently relates to what I feel is his responsibility as the Minister of Transportation, to ensure that the urban municipalities take on a greater responsibility for enforcing of existing trucking regulations, speed limits, and load restrictions on municipal roads within urban centres. I find that truckers and, I think, the general public are quite shocked to know that on the primary highways outside the urban centres we have load restrictions, the enforcement of these in terms of weigh scales and highway patrols, et cetera, which maintains the public safety issue, but within our major cities, and our annexed large cities of Edmonton and Calgary, for example, very little enforcement is carried out by the city government. We're hearing complaints coming in from many, many truckers who call in -- not wanting to have their names men-

tioned because of the fact that they fear retribution by transportation companies they're working for -- that they're being forced to carry loads which exceed load restrictions on the urban road network. The portable scales the city of Edmonton has, for example, are rarely used by various companies.

Of course, with the fact that the per-load price that the truckers are paid by contractors and subcontractors is very often below their rate of being able to make any kind of profit, they're forced to speed on these roads, and I'm glad he sent a letter to the city of Edmonton here raising that public safety issue as a priority. But I think there has to be very serious discussion with both the cities of Calgary and Edmonton, where I've received the most number of the complaints, to address this very important concern.

As well, I would like to pass on again very forcefully to the minister that the Alberta Gravel Truckers Association is still very upset about the 5-cent fuel tax increase put on by the Treasurer. The average trucker is indicating that means an extra \$6,000 of taxes imposed by this government since 1987 on an annual basis. The average trucker's fuel bill is around \$30,000, and a 25 percent increase means up to \$6,000 extra is being paid by truckers without any increase in the profitability of the truckers in the last two years, as well as the institution of a \$50 permit. Up to 18 permits are now required by diversified trucking firms in order to do business in Alberta, again doubling that fee increase to the small operator. It seems to be a concerted effort, by many small truckers that have talked to me, that the government appears to want to eliminate them completely from the industry and to allow the big trucking firms to dominate the scene, because they're the only ones, from what they say, that will be able to survive with this kind of high fuel tax rate and high licence/permit fee increases.

Program Support decreases 6.4 percent. What impact will these cuts have on regional service delivery? Are we moving away from decentralization? How many regional jobs would be cut during the year, especially when adding inflation? It is equated to a 12 percent cutback, from estimates I've been given, so I'd like to have . . . Also, there's been a new arrangement with the local municipalities to turn the consultancies over to the municipalities and counties. How is that program working out? Does that mean a diminishing role for the department of transportation in the secondary roads budget?

Alberta Resources Railway -- again we're subsidizing it to the amount of \$7 million this year. When is the government going to be taking a look at making a connecting rail link to the Pacific coast to make that rail line perhaps more profitable in the long-term future? Any studies made by the department relating to that issue, opening up perhaps another link to the Pacific coast, which I think will help develop the Peace River country that he's so proud of, in the future?

It's good to see an increase for Senior Citizens Home Heating Grants.

The Farm Water Grants are slashed by 47.3 percent. However, the minister indicated that funds will be available on demand because of the drought situation. A question that was asked of me by a farmer yesterday: why isn't funding available to provide connections to a second water hole from the first water hole connection, especially in view of the drought? They are indicating that in some cases bringing the water closer to their pasture is cheaper than digging a new dugout. Could there be some minor changes made there for this year's drought situation?

Electric energy price shielding is slashed by [83.4] percent

I'd like to have his comments on that.

Small Power Producers. I'm glad to hear that there is going to be some decision made very quickly. I hope this cabinet has made a decision on the pricing issue of the small power companies of Alberta so that we can get onto some of our small projects.

Metis settlements -- a demand by the Metis settlements I've talked to. There is a \$250,000 transportation allowance for each Metis settlement. They are asking for more accountability -- where they have more say in the use of that money -- maybe more self-government in the use of that funding so that they can generate some of their own local jobs as opposed to being completely administered by the department of transportation.

Just quickly here. A tourism road network: not enough money available through there, because I think -- and the comments I made to Tourism and Recreation and Parks -- that unless there's some road linkage to provincial parks, for example like Cross Lake Provincial Park, underuse of those facilities and a very important loss to the tourism industry, the small business sector, by not more aggressively pursuing the linkage of road connectors, for example like Conklin road to Cross Lake Provincial Park, making sure we have those very important tourism loop roads completed as a priority by this government.

Thank you very much.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Wainwright.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, I'd like to begin by saying to the minister and his department that they have been doing an exceptionally good job in our constituency with the funding that is available to our roads system. I've enjoyed working with them. We have certainly appreciated and been thankful for things like our overpass down there, our pavement rehabilitation on both highways 13 and 14.

I have only one thing that I would like you to discuss a little bit or answer some questions on, and I guess it's because of the huge influx of transportation in the oil industry that we are having a lot of problems with our roads down there now. I'd like to give you an example in our Chauvin area, and certainly it's going to increase again with the announcement of our upgrader at Lloydminster. The well development is going to get picked up again in that area and put a further strain on our roads. We do have south of Chauvin a British Petroleum terminal there. This terminal is a mixing and distribution centre for roughly 25,000 barrels of oil per day. It's not a secondary road that goes out to it; it is a municipal road. We have from 120 to 150 huge trucks hauling oil in every day, and part of that has to be hauled out again as well. About 80 percent of it goes through pipeline. But it just seems that it is terribly unfair to have the municipal governments and taxpayers, local people there, have to pay for the upkeep of those roads. They cannot keep up with what's happening there. The roads are just pounded to pieces, and we would like to see, maybe through the resource road improvement program, some funding come in there and put some paving down, because I don't see there's any way that we can upgrade those roads so that they can hold up.

Certainly last year in our priorities and in our discussions with the councils and so on, we've had some good response from our government, and we do have some nice paved roads in that particular area. But there's 10 miles in there that I feel very, very strongly we have to help out those people with, and I'd certainly appreciate your comment on that.

One of our other roads that has been a very sore spot in the community is 603 that goes from Glendon east, and that is also a trucking route that the oil trucks take into the Interprovincial Pipe Line station at Hardisty. They do have a tremendous amount of trucks on that particular road, which is a secondary road, and it needs desperately to have some upgrading and, hopefully in future, paving.

With that, I think I would just like your comments on it. Certainly I don't mean to be critical of how things are going in that area; we're just quite desperate for a little bit of help there.

I thank you very much.

MR. TAYLOR: May I take just a few minutes, being the only member of the Liberal caucus to talk to the minister today. I'd like to add a little bit more to the Member for Wainwright's talk about it being rather unfair in some areas where there's a tremendous amount of heavy truck traffic that goes through the constituency to leave it being classified as a municipal road. And that applies to highway 794, up around which, logically, would go into part of Highway 44, which is a bypass to the west side of the city. I just received from the minister's office only yesterday, as a matter of fact, the traffic patterns for last year for the percentage of truck. Although the total volume going up Highway 2, the province's north-south highway, is greater than that going on 794, if you multiplied in the truck traffic, then there's more truck traffic coming up a two-lane municipal road than there is a four-lane main highway, so . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: It's a secondary highway.

MR. TAYLOR: It's a secondary highway, but it should be upgraded to Highway 44 because it has become, without the knowledge and maybe the intentions of the department of transport, the main west bypass to Edmonton. And since there is so much traffic to the Peace River country now coming from Edmonton and south, it has become a major truck bypass, going through Devon. I think we should recognize it and call it Highway 44 -- and become a principal highway.

Secondly, I wanted to touch a bit on Small Power. Although being lobbied quite extensively by the private power companies as to their virtue, I think we have coming into our society a change in the whole power transmission aspect and power generation, and that probably we may be seeing the end -- like we did of the dinosaurs -- of the huge, big megaprojects that generate electricity. I think we may very well see in the future that we'll get our guaranteed supply from a multitude of small companies, because always in the past they've been able to say, "Well, if the small power generator went under, we would be in problems"; but not if you had dozens of small power, I think.

Admittedly, I believe they may be asking for a little more than necessary at the 6 cents, but I think the government would be well advised, as much in experimental as it is on practical, to come up with a payment on the first 10 to 15 years that would average in somewhere around the 5-cent range and maybe freeze it to the number of companies that come in under that thing in the first couple of months. I believe it's worth while to do some experimenting here just to see what could be done, because if we continue on this idea of huge, big power things that we come across only every few years, we will never get to try out small power companies. Also, to argue that the avoidance price is all that you should give them begs the question that it could be used as a bit of an experimental factor. I believe that could be one of the things looked at.

Next I'd like to touch on and ask the minister whether he has any statistics on accidents now that he has extended the old 23-metre limit on trucks to 25 metres on two-lane roads. That's 23 metres to . . .

MR. ADAIR: Twenty-three to 25 metres.

MR. TAYLOR: . . . 25 metres; yeah. I just wondered whether he could listen to two people at the same time, that was all.

Also, if there are any 29-metre special permits out -- are any of those on two-lane highways? Just what restrictions did he put on the special permits for 29-metre trucks? How many are out, and where are they traveling?

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Chairman, I'll just try and respond in as short a time as possible to the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche. Highway 55, as he well knows . . . Where is he?

AN HON. MEMBER: He'll read it in *Hansard*.

MR. ADAIR: He went to read *Hansard*.

There were some small problems resolving the route around Rich Lake, and I think we've got that resolved now, obviously, and the work is going on there. There were some concerns over the dollars, and our priorities continue to be safety and protecting our existing system.

In relation to the federal government and the \$50 million that was announced by the federal government a year ago for Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and B.C., we felt at the particular time that that was a major accomplishment but that the designation was worth more than the dollars. And I've said that both to my federal counterpart and to the other ministers along the way. Certainly from our standpoint, in order to get additional dollars, we in Alberta are not prepared to give up any jurisdiction but will continue to work toward seeing what can be done in that area.

Secondary roads, the increase in dollars. The question was: will they be fair and equitable? My answer is yes. There is a major expenditure on Highway 16 in the Vegreville area, so that accounts for a tremendous amount of the work that's being done in that particular region.

He asked about the Conklin road and the surveying and the preliminary work that's going on. Yes, it is. That's no guarantee that there will be a start in the contract. It's just to try and find the proper route so that when and if industry begins to move in the area, we can move with them, a commitment I gave the people of Lac La Biche when I was there a year ago.

In the area of urban transportation, the program actually was to have ended on March 31 of this year. We extended it for one year, and we extended it at a sum slightly less than what it was before. But as I said earlier in my remarks, the average of all the dollars provided to the city of Edmonton averaged \$3 more than the program itself over the last five years because of the fact that we've provided some additional special grants in there to assist them. We're working with the city of Edmonton as well as the other municipal authorities of the other cities to start the process in putting in a new program. One of our concerns was that if we ended the program on March 31 and did nothing, then they would really be hanging out to dry, and we wanted to ensure that they made the decision -- and it's their decision to make -- as to what projects would continue. It's important to recognize that the city does set the priorities. It's not a bottom-

less pit for dollars. One city may decide to use their funds for LRT; the next one may decide to use it for maintenance and upgrading of their roads system.

The comment he made relative to load restrictions and speed limits: load restrictions and speed limits within the cities are the responsibility of that city; in this case the city of Edmonton -- in the remarks that he was making relative to the gravel truckers.

Talking about the gravel truckers, there was a comment made by the hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche that we -- I assume that meant government -- were trying to eliminate the industry. Hogwash. I re-emphasize that hogwash. Because presently their association is the only one that is privileged to have a rate structure in place. Everybody else goes the tender process: you sharpen your pencil, you get the bid; you don't sharpen your pencil, you don't get the bid. Now, it comes down to a number of things in that area. We've been working with the association. We've established a working committee with the Gravel Truckers Association to try and define some of the concerns they have over subjects like contractor supply, which is less than 10 percent of the total number of contracts we issue; where we use those or where gravel pits are owned by the private sector around an area, and in this case the city of Edmonton.

The farm water grant program is not slashed, as mentioned by the hon. member. The program ended on March 31. We extended it; that is, increased the funding. Increased: i-n-c . . . , just so that you have that right. And to use the term "slashed" is totally ridiculous. That's really all I can say.

To the hon. Member for Wainwright: your comments about the overpass and the likes of that particular project. It was a team effort between the federal government, the military base, the department of transportation, and the community itself, plus the MLA and the others that were working with us. His concerns about the BP terminal south of Chauvin and the 25,000 barrels a day that are being loaded and mixed in that particular area: we've had some discussions on it. It is a local road, and I had indicated that I was prepared to look at the possibility -- and I re-emphasize that: the possibility -- of a cost-sharing arrangement between the MD or county, whatever the case may be, industry, and government. There is a project on 603; that's Glen-don east. There is a grading project for this year.

Then the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon was talking about 794, one of his favourite subjects and certainly one of mine, and the request to have it changed to a primary highway from a secondary road. We've discussed that. I, at this particular point, indicate that there are a number of other secondary roads that are higher up on the priority list for conversion because of the the number of units that are traveling on them; not for any other reason, but because of the number of units that are traveling on them at this point.

Small Power. We've had a great deal to do with Small Power. I actually can get fairly excited about it in a number of ways. We were the government that put in place the joint public hearing with the ERCB and PUB to establish a number of things: what was a small power unit, what was in fact the number of megawatts that might in fact be considered small power, what were the limits that may not interfere with this system, and the likes of that. We provided \$100,000 to the association to assist them in making their presentation and their case to the ERCB, PUB. We assisted also by support to the federal government, who again assisted them to another \$100,000 to assist them with that particular sector. [interjection]

I believe we're presently working very well with a group of

our officials and officials from the Small Power Producers to try and arrive at something that's fair and equitable in the sense of trying to give them the opportunity to in fact do just that. And that is what the hon. member said: to look at whether through research and the likes of that that capability to produce firm power is there. If it isn't there, then obviously it should be junked. If it is there, then it would provide an opportunity in a different direction for the future, and may defer the possibility of a future large plant and the increases that would occur with that.

I think the last question by the hon. member was relative to 23- and 25-metre units and the accident rate ratios on that. I've got to look up with my deputy to make s u r e . . . The Rocky Mountain doubles -- I believe that's what we're talking about, in essence. The success rate as far as accidents is extremely high. Of course, there are some conditions that are attached to the permits for them to, in fact, drive; that's senior or longer term drivers, more experienced drivers. They have not had to any degree any major accidents in the history of using them on the two-lane highways or any other place that they travel -- on the four-lanes in the city or in the province of Alberta.

So, Mr. Chairman, that brings me up to those questions that were asked at this point in time.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Rocky Mountain House.

MR. CAMPBELL: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I move that we adjourn the debate.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It's been moved by the member that the committee adjourn debate on the transportation estimates. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

Mr. Minister.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Chairman, it's my pleasure to give the . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We need a motion to go into your estimates. I was looking for the Government House Leader.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Chairman, I move we go into the estimates of the Solicitor General.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It's been moved by the Government House Leader we now consider the estimates of the Solicitor General's department. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed?

#### Department of the Solicitor General

MR. ROSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my intention today to make some brief statements outlining the department responsibilities in each of the major areas covered by the estimates and to highlight some of the initiatives planned for this

fiscal year.

Vote 1, the Departmental Support Services, includes funds required for personnel, financial, computer services to the department. They reflect an overall reduction of 3.5 percent from the previous year.

The total request under vote 2 is \$105.8 million, or 2.8 percent less than the previous year. Irrespective of this reduction, I am confident that the conscientious management of the funds provided in this vote -- public safety, prison security and offenders' programs -- will not be jeopardized.

I'm pleased to announce that on March 22 of 1988 a new secure custody Young Offender Centre for Calgary and southern Alberta was officially opened. The establishment of this modern facility is a significant step in the government's overall plan to develop a modern young offender system. This initiative also recognizes that the youth of the province who come in conflict with the law cannot become productive or law-abiding citizens following their release from the system unless opportunities and meaningful programs are made available to them while they're in custody. I'm also pleased to announce at this time that a similar facility will be opened in Edmonton this fall. These two new young offender centres, together with other open and secure custody facilities and community-based programs already established across the province, provide Alberta with a network of services, programs, and facilities that will meet the needs of young offenders in the province for many years to come.

[Mr. Gogo in the Chair]

Steps have also been taken to address deficiencies within the adult offender system. A new medium security prison to replace the antiquated Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Centre will be operational in the late summer or early fall of this year. This new prison will provide for a range of programs for both male and female prisoners, and will allow Alberta to expand its existing exchange of services agreement with the Correctional Service of Canada, which during the past fiscal year provided revenue to the province of approximately \$10 million.

Mr. Chairman, I also want to report that priority is being given to the native offender. Initiatives planned during the '88-89 fiscal year will continue to emphasize the importance of involving native organizations in the planning and delivery of correctional programs to this offender group. Effective April 1 of this year, the correctional services of both Canada and Alberta and the Native Counselling Services of Alberta entered into an agreement to establish a new community-based day release program for adult native offenders at Grierson Centre in Edmonton. This program will provide native offenders with greater access to support systems necessary to allow for a more graduated transition upon release from prisons in the Edmonton region.

Initiatives will also be taken that will benefit the native young offenders from remote native communities. During the past fiscal year a pilot project was undertaken on the Assumption Reserve to establish a community-based correctional and crime prevention program. This program will be expanded to Wabasca-Desmarais during the current fiscal year, and other communities across the province are being evaluated.

Making these comments, I do not want the members of the Assembly to misinterpret the department's policy respecting those who break the law in Alberta. Public safety, security of property, and the general well-being of law-abiding Albertans will continue to be one of the most important objectives of the

Alberta correctional system. However, in order to achieve any degree of success with people who break the law, efforts must be directed at providing offenders with marketable skills to assist them in becoming more productive upon release from our prisons. While prisons and prison programs are costly to operate, it is even more costly if offenders leave the prison system no better equipped to change their life-style than when they entered.

Vote 3, Law Enforcement, primarily includes the funding for municipal police: assistance grants in the amount of \$28.8 million, and [\$61.085 million] required to finance the provincial portion of the RCMP policing agreement. The level of funding for RCMP contracted services will increase approximately 6 percent to allow the RCMP to maintain the same level of service as was provided last year. This increase is necessary to meet the financial obligations of the RCMP agreement that provides the province to increase its share of the total cost by 2 percent each year and to pay for other costs related to inflation and salary increases. During this fiscal year Alberta's share of the total cost of providing RCMP services under this agreement will be 66 percent.

I want to emphasize the importance of crime prevention and the role that the citizens of Alberta can play in assisting both the RCMP and municipal police to reduce crime in their communities. In this regard I am pleased to report that the Rural Crime Watch, Neighbourhood Watch, Crime Stoppers, Block Parent, and Block Watch programs were expanded during the past fiscal year. These programs will continue to be given priority and co-operation with all police forces during this fiscal year. In addition, new crime prevention initiatives will be undertaken to establish programs in various native communities such as at Assumption, Wabasca-Desmarais, Peerless Lake, Trout Lake, and Loon Lake.

A new court and prisoner security service came into effect April 5. Over the course of the next 12 months this new program will replace both RCMP and municipal police officers who are presently responsible for court security in Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Red Deer, and Medicine Hat. The main purpose of this initiative is to ensure the safety of judges, court personnel, witnesses, the general public, and accused persons, and to permit the RCMP and municipal police forces to reassign 60 police officers to more pressing law enforcement matters.

Mr. Chairman, it is again my intention to advance legislation during this session that will give Albertans a new Police Act. This new legislation is necessary to resolve existing ambiguities and/or lack of clarity caused by the present Act regarding the respective roles, responsibilities, and relationships of municipal councils, police commissions, chiefs of police, police associations, and the Law Enforcement Appeal Board. It is also desirable to provide municipalities with more flexibility and more options respecting the delivery of policing services. Additionally, the population threshold at which a municipality becomes responsible for policing needs to be adjusted consistent with the ability of smaller towns to raise taxes and to financially support a police service. I am hopeful that with the support of the Assembly this long overdue legislation will be passed during this session.

Vote 4, Motor Vehicle Registration and Driver Licensing, primarily includes expenditures relating to the registration of more than 2 million vehicles, the licensing of more than 1.8 million drivers, the administration of the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund, the Driver Control Board, the management of programs that target problem drivers, and programs relating to the



driving school industry. The budget request for this year is 4.1 percent less than funds provided for last fiscal year.

One of the most important mandates of the motor vehicle division is the safety of the motoring public, and I wish to advise this committee that the resources of the division will be directed towards more effectively identifying and apprehending problem drivers during this fiscal year. This initiative is necessary in an attempt to reduce an annual highway fatality rate which over the past six years has averaged more than 500 deaths per year. This statistic alone does not, however, paint a complete picture of the true cost of the tragic and needless loss of life. It is only after taking into account all of the human, social, and economic costs resulting from these fatalities -- injuries, property damage, and related health care costs -- that we can begin to appreciate the real cost of the problem to the province and Albertans generally.

Mr. Chairman, an area that has been the subject of review by the department over the past year is that of the driving school industry. Last May in this Assembly I stressed the importance of improving driving school standards. I am pleased to report at this time that I have recently received a report and recommendations of a joint committee on the driving school industry in Alberta. I also wish to further report that these recommendations will be implemented during the course of this fiscal year to raise the standards of driving schools and to restore any lost public confidence in the industry.

More specifically, new regulations will be implemented to ensure that owners and operators of driving schools are required to implement and maintain procedures consistent with generally accepted principles of good business practice. Driver instructors employed by the driving schools will be required to meet minimum standards before being licensed or employed by driving schools. The curriculum used by the driving schools will be modified to ensure that all persons who take driver training receive an adequate mix of in-classroom and in-car instruction. A more effective system of sanctions will be established for driver school operators who fail to comply with the regulations.

The practice of driving schools being authorized to both train and test their students has been carefully examined. As a result of this assessment, I am satisfied that driving schools should only be responsible for the training of new drivers, while the motor vehicles division of this department should be responsible for the testing of all new drivers, consistent with its long-standing legislative mandate. However, driver testing is an area that could, in my view, be privatized under the right conditions, providing the proper controls, audit mechanisms, and standards acceptable to the department were in place prior to such privatization taking place.

I also want to announce that the new probationary driver's licence that came into force April 11 will ensure that the driving records of all new drivers in Alberta are closely monitored during the first two years of their driving career. This change in driver licensing policy will require drivers who develop poor driving habits early in their career to take corrective action. This program will not apply to established drivers who move or return to Alberta and have had a satisfactory driving record over the previous two years.

On Tuesday I tabled proposed amendments to the Motor Vehicle Administration Act to, among other things, increase the maximum penalty for driving without insurance to \$2,500. This initiative is necessary because the current maximum penalty of \$500 is insufficient to deter problem drivers in the high risk category who continue to drive without insurance because the

maximum penalty if caught is actually less than the insurance premiums they would normally have to pay. An automated fines collection program will be introduced towards the latter part of the fiscal year in co-operation with the Department of the Attorney General. This program will provide a deterrent to persons who deliberately avoid paying outstanding fines for motor vehicle related violations. This new system, apart from ensuring that outstanding fines are collected, will also provide new revenue for municipalities and the province.

Mr. Chairman, I now want to turn to a very important area of public policy that this government previously referred to in the throne speech and in the Budget Address that overlaps votes 2, 3, and 4 of the department. I'm referring to the area of impaired driving. During this fiscal year a number of impaired driving initiatives will be taken by the department as part of the commitment of this government to give priority to the problems of impaired driving. These initiatives include the following. Proposed amendments to the Motor Vehicle Administration Act, which I tabled on Tuesday, will increase the suspension periods of impaired drivers from the current six-month minimum, three-year maximum to a one-year minimum, five-year maximum. This initiative permits the province to extend the suspension periods for both first and repeat impaired driving offenders beyond the periods presently provided under the Criminal Code of Canada.

The proposed amendments will permit judges to immobilize vehicles registered to a person who has been convicted of impaired driving. The proposed amendments make provision whereby the person who owns or has control of a motor vehicle and knowingly and willingly permits someone who has their driving privileges suspended as a result of an impaired driving conviction to drive that vehicle to be subject to a fine of up to \$2,000. The purpose of this initiative is to ensure that persons who are aware that an employee, a friend, or a member of the family is under suspension for impaired driving conviction accept responsibility for vehicles under their control and do not permit persons who are under suspension to drive their vehicle.

The proposed amendments will permit the Driver Control Board of the department to require persons who have had their driving privileges reinstated following a suspension period for an impaired driving conviction to attach an alcohol sensing device to the vehicle for a specified period as a condition of reinstatement. This technology will be used on a selective basis and will initially apply to the most serious impaired driving cases; for example, those who have had two or more convictions over a five-year period.

The proposed amendments will permit a police officer to immobilize and/or impound for a 24-hour period any vehicle driven by a person who exceeds the legal blood alcohol content of .08 or who fails to provide a breath sample, as required to do so by a police officer. Police officers across Alberta will also be encouraged, consistent with the existing legislation, to suspend the driver's licence of any driver with less than .08 alcohol content if the police officer believes the driver's mental or physical ability to drive is questionable.

Funding will be increased for the Check Stop program from \$150,000 per year to \$500,000 per year in order to establish a 12 months a year, provincewide program. The Check Stop program will also be enhanced by the addition of several new high-profile vehicles to be provided to police forces. These vehicles will be of two types. One will be of a van type and will be used primarily to assist in establishing Check Stop venues. Additionally, special purpose mobile breath alcohol test units

will also be made available to police forces to expedite the testing of person's believed to be impaired and to provide a greater degree of versatility to the program than is presently available. I want to take this opportunity, while on the subject of Alberta's Check Stop program, to draw attention to the recent 7 to 0 decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in support of roadside check stops. This decision is a major crossroads decision in support of the current practice in Alberta and will also provide additional support and new impetus to a greater use of breath testing devices as part of the expanded Check Stop initiative.

Funding will be provided to police forces to assist the forces in establishing dedicated impaired driving specialists, in their departments. Grants will be made available to establish groups, agencies, organizations, and associations to assist in the development of community-based impaired driving initiatives. The department, in consultation with AADAC, will develop an information program aimed at the 1.8 million Albertans who hold a driver's licence. This program will be promoted through the province's more than 160 licence-issuing outlets and through the province's mail-out licence renewal system.

The department, in consultation with AADAC and the Department of Education, will develop course material that will become a mandatory part of the curriculum of more than 100 driving schools that are presently operating across the province. This course material will depict the social, human, health, and economic consequences of impaired driving. This initiative will attempt to impress upon young people prior to receiving a driver's licence that driving is a privilege and that they have a responsibility and an important role to play in practising safe driving and in avoiding the practice of drinking and driving.

The department will expand its restricted driver's licence program to persons who have had their driver's licence reinstated following a suspension period for impaired driving. This type of licence will apply to all persons who have been suspended for impaired driving more than once during any five-year period. This initiative is intended to provide a more intense monitoring of these cases. In addition, these persons will be required to undergo a retest of their driving skills to ensure that their driving ability is satisfactory prior to their licence being reinstated.

The department will intensify its existing suspended driver program, which over the past one and a half years has detected upwards of 3,000 people who were driving while suspended. This new program will target the most serious cases to determine if they are continuing to drive while under a suspension resulting from an impaired driving conviction. This program is designed to provide more direct surveillance of these offenders through their home and employment addresses and other sources. Information gathered by the motor vehicle division personnel assigned to this program will be forwarded to the police to permit them to lay charges. As a final statement, I sincerely solicit the support of all members of the Assembly for these impaired-driving initiatives.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. WRIGHT: I'm obliged, Mr. Chairman. Hon. members will be sorry to hear that I have to leave quite soon, so I will not be able to speak at my usual length. The minister will not count it as rudeness on my part if I don't stay for all the estimates. The press have caught me allegedly saying this minister is a good minister. I don't know whether that embarrasses him more

than it embarrasses me, but in fact I was misquoted. I said that he was one of the better ministers of the government, and that I do believe.

In vote 1, Mr. Chairman, the only vote that isn't down is that for the minister's office itself and also some payment for fixtures, purchase of fixed assets -- a small item. It looks to be a case of do as I say, not as I do, because apart from correctional services the whole budget is significantly down for the department. Now, I accept the minister's statement that nothing will suffer in the way of services delivered for the maintenance of the services of the department, and we'll see how that goes.

In vote 1.0.5, Systems and Information Services, the major item, I take it, is the quite elaborate computer services in the department. A year or two ago there was considerable interest in the interface with CPIC, the criminal information program which is across Canada. Perhaps a word from the minister on how that is working now and the extent to which there can be information passing back and forth from the system. The stumbling block used to be that while CPIC could get all the information that they needed out of us, we couldn't get the information we needed out of CPIC because they said it was impossible to separate the confidential material from the nonconfidential. Well, that's obviously not so. Let's hope there's been some progress in that. I note that the Auditor General said in his last report that the problems of an accounting nature in the program had been fixed up, and I take it that's still the case.

Mr. Chairman, talking of reports, why is it that the reports of this department, as so many others, take more than a year to come out? They should take less than a year, surely, and indeed they did take less than a year in the case of this department before the '85-86 report, which came out in February of last year. The minister will correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't think that the report in this department has come out yet for '86-87, ending March 31, '87, as has not the Alberta Liquor Control Board.

As to the Liquor Control Board, do the estimates of that board, as it were, fit into this department, and if so, why aren't they specified in some way? Is it because that board makes money and therefore no estimates are necessary in the ordinary sense? It may be that that's fine. Maybe we should be making more money or perhaps should not be making as much because we should be charging less or something like that. We can't really get into the details of it from these estimates.

I had some notes about the Beverage Container Act to ask the minister about; it's more in the Department of the Environment, I take it. In any case, time is short, but if he has some word for us on that aspect of the Liquor Control Board's operations, it would be appreciated, if not verbally then by letter.

The initiatives over the last few years concerning the cottage breweries, I think they're called, and brew pubs is commendable. The Liquor Control Board, however, I have the impression, is an empire unto itself and rather jealously guards its privileges. Sometimes they need a bit of a boost to get up to date, as it were. A small example with brew pubs: they can't sell their brew except on their own premises. But that's interpreted so literally that if they have a demonstration in a food fair, for example, they aren't allowed to serve their brew there. They can serve their food but not their brew. I mean, matters like this do smack of red tape, and I hope there's someone up there that is a little less impressed with the form of privileges of the Alberta Liquor Control Board and a bit more with modern times.

I was intrigued by a note in the Auditor General's report, page 72 of the report for the year ended March 31, 1987, that

said that if senior officials of the department had been aware of certain pending litigation, subsequent court costs could have been avoided, thus saving the province almost \$157,000 in legal cost. That's an awful lot of legal cost, Mr. Chairman. The report goes on to state the type of case it was, and it concerned compulsory care orders. I won't go into the details of that, but we have the assurance of the Auditor General that the department has since revised its policies to prevent legal costs being incurred on compulsory care orders. But speaking as a lawyer, as is the minister, it would be interesting to know the ins and outs of that particular case as a cautionary tale for other cases perhaps.

Dealing with vote 2, my question was: what's happening with the Grierson Centre? But in his opening remarks, the Solicitor General has explained, and it sounds good. Perhaps the Solicitor General would explain the current state of favour or disfavour of the John Bosco home in Sherwood Park. It is doubtless a contentious issue. I don't take sides on that; I would just appreciate hearing from the minister on how it looks from his viewpoint.

Despite the rising crime rates in certain sectors of the calendar in Alberta, we still have an excess of prison space, I understand. Looking at the public accounts, I was impressed by the large increase in the amount received from the federal government for, it seems, the sale of prison beds, as it were. The federal inmate account increased from \$1.3 million in '86 to \$7 million in '87. How is the prison business doing as a going concern for the province? It sounds interesting. Perhaps the minister could speak of that.

In 1987 there was an account in federal revenue -- this is reading from the public accounts. It dropped in '86 from \$11.6 million, the federal revenue under the heading "Other". In '87 it dropped to \$1.5 million, page 22.6 of the public accounts. I was mystified by that. Perhaps in due course the minister can enlighten us.

Moving to vote 3, I had a number of questions about the native programs for native courtworkers, band police, native special counseling, and so on. The minister has answered some of them in his opening remarks. It all goes back, at least it largely goes back, to the Kirby commission report 10 years ago, Mr. Chairman, as we probably all know. Is there, in fact, a native policy co-ordinator, as recommended by the Kirby commission, and is that program working satisfactorily in the view of the minister? On page 20 of the Kirby report it specifies that any allegations of discrimination against native persons in the police system are to be brought immediately to the attention of the chiefs of police where it occurred -- in the cities of Edmonton or Calgary, which were the complaint spots, it seems, then. Is that system in place?

Turning further to vote 3.2.2 in elements, I guess, is Innovative Policing Subsidy. This sounds interesting. It's increased 53.3 percent. Perhaps that's to do with the initiatives that the minister has just spoken about, to do with impaired driving. It's under Law Enforcement. Perhaps that could be detailed.

Vote 3.2.5 is a major item, of course: \$61 million for provincial policing by the Mounted Police. The minister can perhaps give us an update on the way that the smaller municipal police forces, where they exist co-operate with the Mounted Police. Obviously, a large number of the forensic services that such police need to have in place can be supplied by the Mounted Police, as can detailed work such as detective work. Is the minister satisfied that there is not duplication here and that there is proper co-operation between those smaller town and city

police forces, where they exist, and the Mounted Police?

Dealing with vote 4, Off-highway Vehicle Act what is the extent of the co-operation between the licensing of these vehicles and the impact they make on wilderness areas, which is the interest of the Department of the Environment?

I'm afraid time is running short. I'll quickly deal with vote 5. Here, Mr. Chairman, is one of the more curious parts of the whole budget, I always think: it's the grant to the Alberta Racing Commission. That grant this year is \$6.7 million, down a couple of hundred thousand from last year. It's fully covered by the revenue that comes in from the pari-mutuel, so the argument is: well, it's not really a burden on the public purse. But of course, the pari-mutuel share is no different from taxation on cigarettes or on liquor or on other services or goods and is all part of the public income. The extraordinary thing here is that this vote has increased from \$3.8 million, which is what it was before we had a racehorse-owning Premier, to the present level of \$6.7 million, almost double. That grant to the Racing Commission is not justified, in my respectful submission, Mr. Chairman, at that level, and I accordingly move that it be reduced to the level that it was before we had a racehorse-owning Premier \$3,822,600. I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before proceeding, hon. member, could the Chair have a copy of the amendment? The Chair will determine whether the amendment is in order.

The amendment is in order. Could we take just a moment to see that the Government House Leader has a copy and all members have copies? [interjections] Order please.

Speaking to the amendment, hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm indeed pleased to see this amendment. I knew it was coming, and as you know, I made some fuss about this a year or so ago; actually, the first thing in 1986, after being elected and the new budget coming in. The figure actually doubled, and the Solicitor General, I'm sure, was just carrying out orders.

The argument is often made that all we're doing is returning to horse racing some of the taxes already collected from horse racing, which makes a nice argument if you do it fast. But if you operate under that theory, all the drunks in Alberta should be getting a subsidy because they pay more liquor tax than anybody else. Likewise, anybody that drives a car should be getting a grant of some sort because they're paying more gasoline tax than those that don't buy a car. If we use that philosophy that money should be spent on those who are paying the taxes, that means there are going to be segments of our society without any services. Think of poor old Peter Pocklington; probably never pays taxes. He'd never get a chance to have any services at all if the only way -- he'd have to have a house without a sewer, no roads to drive on, because he doesn't pay taxes. Now we come up with the fancy theory that people who bet on horse races are supposed to get some of their money back because, after all, it was the bettors' money. That is one of the most ridiculous ideas I've ever heard.

I think we telegraph a message, Mr. Chairman, to our public that is almost reprehensible, that we could sit there as we went over the budget estimates of the minister of social welfare last night cutting this, cutting that. There's no money for more gruel, as *Oliver Twist* would say. There was no money in our Education budget. We have to have extra billing or extra charges going to schools for our students. Yet somehow or

another, for the sport of kings, we can double the amount of money going into horse racing.

As one who has raised horses in the past, I feel that horse racing should be able to exist on its own. To say that the taxes that come from pari-mutuels, taxes from bettors should be returned to those that are racing the horses, because that in turn is going to give better quality horses and then we can export them, makes no sense at all. Many areas of this world have a very, very good class of racehorses, and they don't have to have huge tax subsidies to keep the racehorse industry going. I think it's an insult to the horse racing industry; I think it's an insult to the public in general. The excuse that they're giving back some of their taxes has to be one of the most unique things since democracy was invented, to try to give back taxes to that segment of society that is producing the taxes.

Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question on the amendment?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Motion on amendment lost]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking.

DR. WEST: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure today to rise to speak to the estimates of the Solicitor General. I believe he is doing an excellent job in that he wears several hats, has a great deal of responsibility in some of the other estimates that were brought up earlier.

My questions today are directed to some specific areas of concern that I have had in the constituency over the last year. One is vote 1 on the liquor licensing area of the Alberta Liquor Control Board. In the constituency I have an extended care which is a nursing home of the private sector, and they have asked me what the problem is in getting a liquor licence for establishing a bar in the nursing home. It was brought out that there was an inequity in the fact that recently they've changed their incorporation to be Extendicare Canada and, therefore, did not meet the regulations that said that there had to be a certain amount of Alberta content on the board of directors. I would just ask that the minister look at bringing forth amendments to facilitate this change so that these private nursing homes could indeed set up a bar so they could have a happy hour at certain times of the day.

The other issue with the Alberta Liquor Control Board has to do with the opening of rural liquor stores on Mondays and certain times during the night. In my constituency, in Vermilion, I was happy to have the liquor board acknowledge that Vermilion should be open on Mondays again and open certain hours on Thursday night. However, there are a lot of other stores in rural Alberta that are closed Mondays now, and I was wondering if the minister would consider talking to the Alberta Liquor Control Board to see if we could perhaps establish an opening day in the tourist time of the year in the smaller communities throughout Alberta. I know it's frustrating for people who are traveling, tourists from out of the country or from other areas of the province, to access communities in the evenings that have tourist facilities and yet the liquor store is closed on Mondays. I think we're doing a disservice to some of the areas in rural Alberta, especially when we're trying to establish tourism as one of the major industries in this province.

I will just throw in another personal thought. I think it would be advantageous to see beer and wine sold in grocery stores or other outlets in the province of Alberta, and I encourage you to look at that. It certainly would facilitate some areas of rural Alberta again. In saying that, I trust that legislation coming forward that would allow the off-sale of wine and spirits through hotels and that will be successful and will be forthcoming shortly.

The other area I'd like to talk to shortly is vote 4, Licence Issuing and Driver Testing. I'll just use Vermilion as an example again. The people who issue the licences are open five days a week, but the motor vehicle office in Vermilion is only open one day a week. Now, that isn't a great problem except that there are medicals that have to be issued for certain classes of licences and for certain disorders that individuals have. If the government office isn't open on the day they come to town, they can't get their medical stamped so that they can go over to the licence-issuing office and get their licence.

I would ask that you look at the possibility of having the person who's running the licence issuing, the private-sector issuing office, having the capability also of stamping those medicals. If there's a fear that they're not highly enough qualified, perhaps we could get the medical profession to flag the severe disorders on the medicals so that those individual cases that came before the issuing office then could be held over to a specific date when the other office was open. But for the 95 percent of the licences that don't require any more than stamping because they're fairly routine on certain classes of licence, I think it should be through one office. I would encourage the minister to look at that so that perhaps we could again cut down the frustrations in rural Alberta.

I'm totally encouraged by some of the direction that the minister has been taking on the driving offences under drinking and driving problems that we have in the province. I do not think that they are going to be met with a great deal of opposition, and I encourage you to continue in that direction.

Thank you.

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

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll keep my remarks rather brief today. I want to . . . [some applause] Only due to the lack of time, I can assure you, hon. members.

I do want to rise and commend the minister for placing a few more -- perhaps restrictions isn't the right word -- requirements for those who operate driving school instruction. I think it's important that we do all we can to ensure that people who take those courses get the best possible knowledge from their instructor so that they are safe on the road.

The other point that I want to make is on probationary licences. I would imagine it's probably under vote 4.1, the motor vehicle driver management. I think it's important that we have some kind of system that can closely monitor the driving records of people with new licences so that perhaps we can go back and require certain retesting or other considerations for their licences. However, I had a constituent call around to a number of insurance companies in the city of Edmonton and check out motor vehicle insurance rates for those people with a probationary licence. This was shortly after the minister announced the probationary licence program. What he found was that with a probationary licence, whether it's his son or a new person coming into Alberta with a long-standing licence from another province and having a probationary licence for that

two-year period, the insurance rates were going up substantially because the individual has a probationary licence.

The insurance industry doesn't seem to regard this probationary licence as a probationary licence. They seem to be of the opinion, or at least they were when the first check around was done, that the probationary licence is given to somebody not fully qualified to drive. Now, we know that single males under 25 pay some rather discriminatory rates for automobile insurance, and if they have to be further penalized at the age of 16 to 18 because they have a probationary licence, one must ask the question, it begs the question: where's the fairness? How many people coming into Alberta from outside the province, who are now required to have a probationary licence, are going to be penalized because they have that probationary licence? I'm wondering if the minister or the department called around to insurance companies to see what kind of accommodations they would make on this probationary licence period. I would hope that the minister in the remaining minutes might take the opportunity to respond.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

MR. NELSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the Member for Edmonton-Belmont being rather brief. I didn't expect that I'd be able to get in here very briefly.

I'd like to just make two comments, so it's on the record. First of all, the minister is certainly to be congratulated for the efforts taken for the increased penalties regarding drunk driving and what have you. Of course, we certainly would like to see this go one step further, and that relates to the area of a probationary licence for those people who have a new licence and are convicted of an offence of alcohol related driving, so that they would automatically lose their licence with a zero-based alcohol content in their blood. Secondly, those people who have had an unpaired charge and retrieve their licences would also have the same consideration: that if they did have any alcohol in their blood whatsoever, if stopped they would also lose their licence automatically. Therefore, the .08 would be thrown out the window in those two instances.

The second thing I would like to comment on, Mr. Chairman, is relevant to the comments of the Member for Vermilion-Viking. The concern I have is -- it's reported and certainly there are some suggestions that many of our seniors are given a considerable amount of assistance by doctors prescribing drugs and various other things for their well-being. To enhance those people with alcohol, especially related to happy hours, as was indicated by the member, I would have some difficulty with, based

on the fact that when you're mixing a considerable amount of drugs with alcohol, you may create adverse problems for these senior citizens. I would certainly discourage that most vehemently.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, hon. member. The Chair is now required by Standing Orders to put a single question at this time proposing the approval of all matters not yet voted upon. I now put the question to you that the committee approve each one of the resolutions not yet voted upon relating to the main estimates of the government and the Legislative Assembly for 1988-89, including the supplementary estimates of expenditure and disbursements covered by special warrants for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1988.

[Motion carried]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The committee will now rise and report.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions and reports as follows: each one of the resolutions not yet voted upon relating to the main estimates of the government and the Legislative Assembly for 1988-89, including the supplementary estimates of expenditures and disbursements covered by the special warrants for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1988. Mr. Speaker, I wish to file a list of those resolutions voted upon by the Committee of Supply pursuant to Standing Order 58.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree with the report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, by way of information to the Assembly, it is proposed next week on Monday to deal with Government Bills on the Order Paper for second reading. We will not intend to call Bills 21 and 22, but others will proceed in their order on the Order Paper to the degree that sponsors are available at the particular time they may be called.

We intend, Mr. Speaker, for the Assembly to sit on Monday evening, Tuesday evening, and Thursday evening.

[At 12:48 p.m. the House adjourned to Monday at 2:30 p.m.]

