

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTATitle: **Monday, July 17, 1989 8:00 p.m.**

Date: 89/07/17

[The Committee of Supply met at 8 p.m.]

head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: If members of the committee would take their places, it's now 8 o'clock.

head: **Main Estimates 1989-90****Solicitor General**

MR. CHAIRMAN: We are gathered to consider the estimates of the hon. Solicitor General. Those estimates commence at page 299 of the main estimates book, and the supplementary information by way of element details commences at page 129 of the elements book.

Would the hon. Solicitor General care to make some introductory remarks?

MR. FOWLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Prior to the remarks that I will be making in respect to my estimates, I ask the indulgence of the House to allow me to acknowledge in the members' gallery my mother, who will be celebrating her 85th birthday this week.

AN HON. MEMBER: She's better looking than you, Dick.

MR. FOWLER: Almost anybody is.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to comment on the operating budget of the Department of the Solicitor General for the 1988-89 fiscal year and to highlight some of the activities of the department that I will give at this time.

Before making any specific comments on the estimates, I want to briefly reflect, if I might, on my impressions to date as the Solicitor General. As the House is aware, I am a newly elected member from St. Albert constituency, and approximately one month after my election, I'd been appointed to this post by our Premier, and one month after that we were in a session: a triple learning curve that I have tried not to fall off of any more than necessary since that day. It's an exciting experience. I feel it a very great honour to serve with all members on both sides of the Assembly. I want to express my appreciation to all members on this side and on the side opposite for the co-operation that I've received since the House opened and prior to that.

Firstly, Mr. Chairman, I believe that the role of the department in monitoring the maintenance of law and order across Alberta must be given a priority. Shortly after becoming Solicitor General, I met with all the chiefs of police and the commanding officer of RCM Police K Division to review various police matters. As a result of discussions with these senior law enforcement officers I am satisfied that Alberta's law enforcement needs are indeed in capable hands. I've also visited most of the province's correctional facilities for adult and young offenders and have met with both management and line personnel. As a result of these visits I'm satisfied that staff working in the prov-

ince's corrections systems are sensitive to both the needs of offenders and the importance of ensuring that the safety of the public is given a high priority.

I've also visited several motor vehicles offices, and I must say that I was impressed with the professionalism of the staff employed at these offices and their commitment to provide quality services throughout the province and to the public. My visit to the head office of the department likewise has left me with the same general impression of staff being highly dedicated, knowledgeable, and professional.

Additionally, I've had discussions with external stakeholders who have an interest in one aspect or other of the department. While it is apparent that budgetary restraint within the department over the past two or three years has been felt by agencies providing services to my department, it is equally apparent that with some belt-tightening these agencies have indeed become more efficient and more prudent in how they expand their resources.

Mr. Chairman, those are only some of my initial impressions. Others will become apparent as I comment of each of the votes in the department. Vote 1, Departmental Support Services, which provides funds for the various ministerial and head office operations of the department, includes an increase of 7.3 percent over the previous year. This increase is due primarily to salary adjustments, contract settlements, and the transfer of three positions into support services. The funding requested for vote 2, Correctional Services, is \$112,430,700, which represents an increase of 6.4 percent, again due primarily to contract settlements.

It should be noted, Mr. Chairman, that part of this total operating expenditure for this vote is offset by revenue totaling approximately \$25 million. This revenue is received through various agreements between the department and the government of Canada, whereby Alberta correctional service systems provide a range of services to federal offenders. A portion of this revenue is also from funding provided by the government of Canada in respect to the young offender programs.

While on the topic of young offenders, the recent opening of the new Edmonton Young Offender Centre represents the last phase of the province's plan to ensure that Alberta is in a position to fully comply with the spirit and intent of the federal Young Offenders Act. The young offender system in place in Alberta was modeled after the most progressive programs across Canada and the United States and compares with any of the most advanced systems on this continent and probably anywhere else in the world.

Planning has commenced for the upgrading of the existing Calgary Remand Centre and Calgary Correctional Centre in order to more effectively meet the needs of adult offenders in the Calgary area. Planning has also commenced on the construction of a new remand centre for the Calgary region. Once this new remand facility is constructed, the existing Remand Centre will be used primarily for short-term detention purposes.

I now want to address an aspect of corrections that continues to trouble many of us familiar with the criminal justice system. I refer to the historical overrepresentation of our native people in the system, particularly in the correctional system, and that in consideration that native adult offenders account for 29 percent of the prison population and 35 percent of the young offender population, it is most apparent that a well-planned and concerted effort is required to effectively address this long-standing problem. Some progress, Mr. Chairman, has been achieved

over the past year with the development of the Grierson Community Correctional Centre for both federal and provincial native offenders. This facility is the first of its kind in Canada and is to be operated by a native agency. Under the administration of the Native Counselling Services of Alberta this inner-city facility provides programs in the areas of native life values, employment skills, and alcohol and drug counseling. Consultations are presently taking place with the federal Department of the Solicitor General to expand this program to provide community outreach programs, drop-in programs, and an attendance centre for the young offenders.

The department is finalizing a major project on the Blood Reserve in southern Alberta in an effort to reduce the numbers of native offenders incarcerated in the Lethbridge Correctional Centre. Under this plan the Blood tribe will assume responsibility on a contractual basis for the administration of various community corrections programs, crime prevention programs, and native court worker programs based on the reserve to assist members of the Blood tribe who come in conflict with the law. The transfer of these responsibilities to the Blood tribal administration will allow the Blood tribe to become directly involved in the delivery of services to members of the tribe who are presently supervised by off-reserve and quite likely normative agencies. Planning is also under way to establish a 20-bed minimum-security community correctional centre on the Blood tribe reserve itself. Similar reserve-based programs are being presently explored with the Yellowhead Tribal Council, which includes the Alexander, Alexis, Enoch, Sunchild, and O'Chiese reserves.

This department recognizes that spirituality is an important component of the native culture and important to native offenders incarcerated in the provincial prison system. This recognition encourages offenders to practise and to rediscover their traditional native values while in custody, and all policies of the Alberta correctional system have been revised to ensure that native offenders are provided these opportunities. The department is presently in the process of hiring native program coordinators for both adult and young offender centres in the province and is developing plans to substantially increase the number of native employees at all levels within the correctional system. Additionally, Mr. Chairman, the department has recently hired a special adviser on native issues to assist in this important initiative. This department is committed to the need for more effective programming for native offenders, and I have provided the above examples to give the members of this Assembly an idea of the direction we are going.

Vote 3, Law Enforcement. In addition to departmental operations, this vote provides financial assistance for policing to upwards of 70 municipalities and funding for the RCM Police Provincial Policing Agreement. Municipal police assistance grants have been increased for this fiscal year by 5 percent to \$30.6 million. The RCM Police provincial policing budget has been increased by 8 percent to \$64.8 million. These additional resources are required to cover RCMP salary increases, inflationary factors, and other expenditures, including the Blood Band inquiry and modernizing of the province's RCM Police communication system. Additionally, a portion of these new funds will also be used to increase policing services at some rural detachments where work load reviews by the RCM Police indicate a need for increased resources.

Mr. Chairman, I am particularly pleased to announce that Alberta's second native police force successfully completed a

16-week basic training program at the department staff college on May 25 of this year and is presently receiving field training by the Cardston and Fort Macleod detachments of the RCM Police. Upon completion of this job training, responsibility for all policing on the Blood Reserve will be assumed by the Blood tribe police force. Staff from the department are also presently working with the Blood tribe on the design and construction of a new police building, which will be located on the Blood reserve at Stand Off. This facility will be jointly funded by the government of Alberta, the government of Canada, the Blood tribe, and Nova Corporation.

Planning is now under way for the implementation of a victim services program in accordance with the provisions of the recent federal amendments to the Criminal Code. Under the fine surcharge provisions of the Criminal Code, a source of funding to victims' groups will be provided once the program is fully operational in early 1990.

As in previous years crime prevention activities play an important part in the overall law enforcement strategy of the province. The citizens of Alberta who take part in this program continue to be instrumental to the overall success of this initiative and making Alberta a better and safer place to live. At present there is an astounding 100,000 Albertans who have volunteered their time to various local crime prevention initiatives. This contribution of time and energy on the part of our citizens is worthy of praise, and I encourage all members of this Assembly to support these initiatives during any public speaking engagements they may have in the province.

Vote 4, Motor Vehicle Registration and Driver Licensing, includes the funding required to provide driver licensing services to Alberta's 1.8 million drivers and 2.2 million motor vehicles. Also included in this vote is funding for the Driver Control Board, which monitors and manages problem drivers, and funding for the administration of the motor vehicles accident claims program.

I am pleased to advise, Mr. Chairman, that the motor vehicles computer system in Alberta is now linked with six other provinces and scheduled to be on stream with all provinces by September of this year. This computer link is being utilized to validate driver licence and vehicle registration information for Out-of-province drivers and vehicles being newly licensed or registered in the province. Further development of this network will allow for the electronic transfer of driving records and other enforcement data. It is noteworthy that this concept of inter-jurisdictional sharing of electronic motor vehicle data was developed initially as a pilot project between Alberta and British Columbia and is now being adopted by all provinces.

Effective on October 1 of this year the motor vehicles computer system will also be utilized to administer the fines collection program. This program, which was developed in cooperation with the Department of the Attorney General, is designed to collect unpaid traffic-related fines from defaulters at the time that they renew their vehicle registration or driver licences, and defaulters who have refused to pay outstanding fines will be refused further licensing. This new approach to the collection of delinquent fines will replace the current process of issuing warrants for nonpayment and will essentially result in the decriminalization of the collection of unpaid fines. This program is also expected to substantially increase revenue by upwards of \$5 million per year, which is shared by the municipalities in the province.

During this past year a computerized appointment system for

driver road tests has been successfully introduced across the province, and it has resulted in a more uniform and efficient utilization of motor vehicle resources and personnel. Planning is presently under way to introduce a voluntary two-year service registration renewal system. When implemented, the public will have the option of reducing the frequency that they are now required to renew their vehicle registration and is a convenience that should be especially attractive to owners of passenger vehicles. Additionally, Mr. Chairman, the mail-in vehicle registration renewal program will be more actively promoted. Presently, only 20 percent of motor vehicle clients take advantage of renewing their vehicle registration by mail, and advising Albertans of this program will be given a higher priority.

Priority will also be given to targeting the problem driver in an effort to maximize the safety of Alberta streets and highways. In addition to promoting the department's get-tough approach with impaired drivers, there will be an increased focus on improving the driving habits of poor drivers. Programs and strategies will continue to be upgraded to ensure that problem drivers accept responsibility for their actions. Licence suspension, along with the remedial education, will continue to be the cornerstone of problem-driver management. This strategy appears to be achieving results, as total demerit suspensions have decreased by 14.5 percent in the past year.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I want to conclude my remarks on a problem that concerns all responsible Albertans; namely, the problem of impaired driving. Funding has been increased for this initiative by 7.7 percent. Enforcement will remain a high priority in our efforts to reduce the incidence of impaired driving with the continuation of year-round Check Stops and increased visibility of this program. Grants to municipalities will continue to provide for the purchase of additional Check Stop vans and advanced alcohol detection technology and equipment.

A pilot program is now being undertaken with the Edmonton city police department to increase the use of breath-alcohol testing of persons suspected of drinking and driving. Using the latest technology available in portable equipment, the police will be able to dramatically increase the number of breath tests conducted at roadside Check Stops or by individual police officers on patrol. This program will be similar to the random breath testing in operation in parts of Europe and Australia, and results from these other countries indicate a substantial reduction in the rate of fatality and injury collisions.

The grant funding program for community groups and non-profit organizations engaged in initiatives to prevent impaired driving has been expanded. This program has been instrumental in raising awareness of the impaired driving problem and mobilizing communities to become partners in this important initiative.

A made-in-Alberta video on impaired driving has been produced and distributed to all high schools, police detachments, and driving schools in the province. This video is now mandatory viewing for all new drivers in Alberta as a condition of obtaining a driver licence, and plans are under way to have the video integrated into the curriculum of the more than 100 privately operated driving schools across the province. I wish to point out, Mr. Chairman, that this video was produced with the financial assistance of the private sector, and I would like to recognize in particular the contributions of the Alberta Law Foundation, Labatt's, Texaco Canada, General Motors of Canada, the Alberta Motor Association, and the Alberta Teachers' Association in making this project such a success.

A comprehensive provincewide designated driver program will be initiated during this fiscal year to target organizers of large social functions where alcohol beverages are sold or served. This program is being developed with the assistance and co-operation of the private sector and the Alberta Liquor Control Board and represents an excellent example of groups working together to achieve a common goal.

As a final point, Mr. Chairman, I am optimistic that the cumulative effect of our impaired driving initiatives will begin to achieve results. This government has taken the critical and important first step by providing the overall leadership. However, impaired driving is a problem that cannot be effectively attacked unless all responsible Albertans support these initiatives by getting involved and making a personal commitment. I can assure all members of this Assembly, Mr. Chairman, that this area will receive my utmost attention this year and throughout my tenure as Solicitor General.

Thank you.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I think everyone agrees that the Solicitor General has made a good start at his post, and we wish him well. Having said that, we'll carry on with the estimates and just some humdrum numbers stuff first.

I think perhaps the Solicitor General has explained the reasons for some of these increases, but I suppose one has to notice them nonetheless. In the minister's and deputy minister's offices and in Finance and Administration there are increases respectively of 14.6 percent, 19 percent, and 12.2 percent. These are not small numbers that we're talking about, so perhaps the Solicitor General in explaining further can just give us an idea of why those increases are there so much above the rate of inflation. I suspect that he has perhaps explained already indirectly why a 31 percent increase in Corporate Services, but he didn't do it explicitly.

Purchased Community Services, vote 2: up 15.2 percent. That's on an \$11 million base, so that's up to \$13 million. Perhaps we could understand a little more how that comes about.

In vote 3, Program Support has a whopping increase from \$1.2 million to \$2.9 million, which is a 144 percent increase. I dare say he has again indirectly explained that, but I'd like to know whether it's to do with funding for what we are contracting out to the penitentiary service so that there's offsetting revenue, or what it is. The same goes for Court Security and Prisoner Escorts. Overall there is in the summary a 30.2 percent increase in Salaries, Wages and Employee Benefits. Perhaps we can be assured that that has something to do with increasing commitments, which themselves bring in revenue from the federal level and perhaps elsewhere.

Licence Issuing and Driver Testing is down 3.6 percent. Since I thought last year we took back the job of testing for licenses from private agencies or private training schools, I was a little surprised at that, although if it can be done with the service maintained, that's more power to the Solicitor General's elbow.

Now, the rate of imprisonment for crime in Canada, Mr. Chairman, as you know is one of the highest in the western world. Within Canada we understand, although I suspect the statistics a little, that Alberta has the highest rate. Certainly it does not have a negligible rate, and our native population, I'm afraid, has a very disproportionate share in that, for reasons which are very hard to pin down. But at any rate, the point is that the highest priority . . . I don't know about the highest priority, but a high priority has to be given to reform of the

criminal, to use old-fashioned language. "Rehabilitation" I think is probably what we say nowadays. In the public perception, which cries out for blood and retribution for serious crime or even not so serious crime -- and there has to be some retribution; there has to be some deterrence. That's a little understandable, I suppose. But the fact is that, in the end, responsible law enforcement authorities aim at returning the prisoner to society as a reformed person. The path to this objective is so depressing because of disappointments that there is a tendency to give up. But in looking through the prospectus, as it were, of what is on offer from the Solicitor General in certain publications and in its programs, I don't see perhaps the emphasis on this area. I don't see the emphasis on the matter of rehabilitation that there should be.

Mr. Chairman, there are some very interesting figures on the prison population as to the intelligence of the average prisoner. We tend to think of those doing time as having got there, in part at any rate, because they aren't smart enough to stay out. In fact, the figures seem to show -- these are taken from the penitentiaries; there may be a difference between penitentiaries and the prisons we administer, but I don't see why there should be in this respect. The mean intelligence of prisoners there is 106 with a standard deviation of 9, compared to the general population, which of course has a mean intelligence of 100 -- that's what it means -- and a deviation of 15. So on the whole the actual intelligence of prisoners, on average, is higher than that of the population as a whole.

Therefore, it must be wrong to suppose that there is not a great opportunity for re-education. I do believe that it's not as simple as all that because there really are bad people; I mean, people who perhaps in some genetic way are morally handicapped. It's a harsh opinion to have. Fortunately, it doesn't really make a lot of difference to one's approach, because you never know in a particular case whether it's nature or nurture that has brought the prisoner to his or her plight. But the implication, anyway, of this fact of the intelligence of prisoners is that we can quite easily look, in many cases, for an explanation and find it; that is, low reading and speaking and writing skills. When you think about it, we think in words. So if a man or woman is poorly educated, it's hard for them to think effectively. I'm not talking about a university education versus a nonuniversity education. I'm speaking about practical illiteracy versus literacy.

There have been some very dramatic illustrations of the difference that incentive can make in education. Indeed, what I don't see in this setup here, Mr. Chairman, is much, if any, emphasis on correctional education. Now, I must say it was only a couple of years ago that I began to understand there was really a whole field out there of correctional education, that the sort of education that prisoners need is different from what you have in school. To give a simple example, in school to teach children to read, you have Dick and Jane books. Okay. In prison that was what was tried, with ill success. Instead, and I'm quoting from an actual example here, a particular prisoner I was hearing about was on his fifth sentence, and he'd flunked reading and writing in four prisons. But he went from grade zero -- i.e., illiteracy -- to grade 8 in a few weeks under this new regime for one reason and one reason only: on his last time out he'd got a job in a body shop and had damn near killed himself because he couldn't read the warning labels on the spray that he was using. So that was a great incentive to him to read. The sort of thing -- and this is quoting from another example -- that got that man and

other prisoners in a like case interested is not Dick and Jane stuff but: "Place piston in vise. Do not overtighten. Engage ring mounting mechanism at top," et cetera. This is what they want to know, and that they will go for.

So that is a simple illustration of why it is that correctional education is different from ordinary education. Now, it's possible that the Solicitor General doesn't know about this. I don't say it with any disparagement at all, because it's not within the department. I believe it's contracted out, all these services. I'm not absolutely sure about that, but I believe so. I don't want to overemphasize this, Mr. Chairman, because it can easily be exaggerated, but the successes when they do occur are dramatic, and they occur unexpectedly. So it's not simply do-goodism or pie in the sky or bleeding hearts that recommend these measures; they do, too, I guess. It makes good, hard economic sense if with the expenditure of a certain amount of money, and not a negligible amount of money, you can prevent a prisoner coming back into the system. I forget how much it costs a year, but something horrendous: \$30,000 or something per prisoner. So one-tenth of that per annum on his or her education is probably a good investment.

And, too, correctional education I understand is innovative in other ways. It deals with problems that are within the life-style of the prisoner. I'm not talking about assembling and disassembling safes; I mean in their legal life-style, but of a practical nature. And not only just tradesmen, because there is teaching for trades in prisons at the present time, but teaching craftsmen. We do have a fair number of tradesmen in Canada. We tend to lack craftsmen, and a number of prisoners have all the time in the world to learn beyond being a tradesman to being a craftsman. Again, this is much more likely to motivate him or her when that prisoner is an ex-prisoner than if they just learnt panel beating in the prison workshop. So I just repeat that.

It seems to me, looking at the various papers I've been able to look at, that rehabilitation and reform, those old-fashioned notions, are not very high up on the list. There fell into my hands recently a paper called Alberta Solicitor General Strategic Direction 1988-1992, draft 3 September 1988. It attempts to set out the way ahead for the department, I guess, over the next four years. It's a commendably no-nonsense sort of document with a minimum of jargon and, it seems to me, a lot of good ideas. It makes a rather cunning amalgam of the rather disparate areas of jurisdiction you have by saying that the mission of the department is "appropriately and efficiently" to promote, except that it splits the infinitive, which I find myself incapable of doing, and enhance the safety of the public by facilitating and providing the delivery of effective programs and services in the areas of law enforcement, motor vehicles administration and corrections, within the economic and social policy framework of the Government of Alberta.

I would have liked to have seen, "with a commitment to reform of the offender," added in there somewhere. Then in the various sections it states what the purpose within the law enforcement division is, the various aims there.

Again, under Correctional Services there is no statement about reform or rehabilitation or education. That's not because it's just a short summary of the services in that division; it isn't. So these to me are some kind of hint, Mr. Chairman, that perhaps this very vital area to reduce recidivism is not receiving the attention it deserves. Indeed, I would like to see and I would like to suggest to the Solicitor General that in the list of branches which it has in this paper -- under (e) it has Support

Divisions/Branches, and there's a corporate services division, a communications division, finance services branch, personnel services, computer services, internal audit, and so on -- there be there a correctional educational branch. It's something to think about, Mr. Chairman. Actually, I suppose that could be in the correctional services division. I don't care where it is, obviously; it's just that it should be there.

Mr. Chairman, one of the abiding problems for volunteer organizations, which once were entirely volunteer and now have been co-opted as contractors for the correctional services, like the John Howard Society and the Elizabeth Fry Society, is the extent to which volunteers play a role. There's the fear that volunteers are used by this government to replace trained, salaried employees. I have no evidence to show that is so; it's just something that's stated. But I was glad to see that in the statement of purposes in another paper that I got hold of, that was specifically denied, that indeed . . . This is a whole paper on volunteers within the system, and under "philosophy and objectives" it states that it is:

To promote community involvement and increase public understanding of the criminal justice system; [and]

To use volunteers in a support role to staff to enhance program and service delivery to offenders.

I would like the assurance of the Solicitor General that his department is resisting the temptation to try and make that substitution. It hardly works anyway, I understand, because it takes too much time organizing and controlling the volunteers, because you can't sack 'em if they aren't doing the job or withhold pay -- they don't have any -- than to deliver the service oneself. At any rate, there really is a place for volunteers in visiting prisons and helping keep people on the straight and narrow on the outside, but on the other hand, they cannot take the place of trained social workers in dealing with problems. I hope we have the Solicitor General's assurance that that is not tried.

Mr. Chairman, I've been asked by one of my colleagues in this caucus to draw to the attention of the Solicitor General a possible difficulty. The city of Edmonton community foot patrol officers located in the high crime areas of downtown Edmonton, Norwood and Edmonton-Highlands, actually, and some in Belmont -- fortunately, the highest crime area is within a 500-yard radius of the police station; it does help a little bit. At any rate, the foot patrol officers constitute a real deterrent to street crime, including violent crimes and petty property crimes and including vandalism. It's part funded by the Mott Foundation, Mr. Chairman, which funds a similar program in Michigan. Foundation grants are used to help pay rents in these areas. The Solicitor General department's vote 3.2.2 shows an 11 percent decrease regarding innovative policing funding. This makes us a little afraid that this valuable program, which also is a great success in my area of Edmonton, Edmonton-Strathcona, which has its own neighbourhood policing office, is in danger of being restricted and shut down in part by this decrease in funding. So I would like that to be reported on, probably not tonight but at some other time in the near future.

Secondly, at the last session of the House, before the Solicitor General was with us, there was an extended tennis game between the department, who wanted an inquiry into brutality that had been alleged -- in fact, found -- against some Chilean gentlemen who had been arrested following a domestic fracas in Edmonton, and the Edmonton Police Commission, who did say that they couldn't afford to fund the inquiry which was called for. That inquiry was called for and recommended,

indeed, by the previous Solicitor General simply because the prosecutor found that these two men had been brutalized by police officers. But because none of the police officers could say how it happened, there was insufficient evidence to mount a prosecution. That was the story anyway.

My submission at the time, Mr. Chairman, was that the whole cost was projected much too expensively by the Edmonton Police Commission, that the thing could have been done on the cheap, that an inquiry officer could have been found, a retired judge somewhere who could have done the job on a lump sum basis, and some prosecutors likewise. So the excuse that it was going to cost too much was just wrong. I do throw that back to the Solicitor General for a report, since all fair-minded people would consider that that incident, which was not completely isolated -- I suppose it never is in any police force; it came at the time of a rash of similar sorts of incidents affecting the Edmonton police force. This was one that was documented and in fact passed upon, not only by a judge but also by the Crown prosecutor, and begged for a resolution, which it has never had.

Mr. Chairman, that will be all for now. If I need to get back in later, I'll do so.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by Rocky Mountain House.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to echo the sentiments and congratulations of the previous speaker to the hon. minister. He has in the inception of his tenure in office hit very important issues, particularly with respect to impaired driving and native Indian concerns. He's heading in the right direction, and I hope that he will continue going that way.

Some of the comments that I intended to make, Mr. Chairman, are now redundant due to the usual thorough treatment of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, a.k.a. Rumpole. However, I do have still a number of items to deal with.

Under vote 2, Correctional Services, an item that concerns me is the manner in which the province deals with federal prisoners, for which the province is paid by the federal government. I've been hearing complaints from those involved in differing areas of penology, from the John Howard Society to the Elizabeth Fry Society to parole officers to, in fact, a few prisoners, some female prisoners that I met during a tour of the Calgary Remand Centre last year. The complaints are that the quality of educational programs, the health programs, and other programs in the provincial system are not up to scratch and, particularly, that they are not up to the standards of the federal prison system. In fact, it's considered amongst many of the prisoners within the system -- and some may applaud this particular factor -- that it's enhanced punishment to be transferred to the provincial system from the federal system.

There has also been some concern expressed by those involved in the penal system that this problem is a reflection of the fact, it is alleged, that the provincial government is not putting back into the system what they're receiving from the federal government. I'm wondering whether the minister, again perhaps not this evening but perhaps in written response or another form, might undertake to look into that matter and to assure himself that the funding being provided by the federal government is being used to provide adequate programming which has the greatest likelihood of resulting in appropriate rehabilitation

of those in our prisons.

Now, insofar as our prisons are concerned, there has already been some comment made with respect to the high percentage of Albertans who are incarcerated in our prisons and the particularly high percentage of native Albertans. One of the issues that I have been attempting to get some information on within the last month, and not very successfully, relates to the issue of whether or not some of those who are in our prisons are there in respect of unpaid fines. That is particularly a concern, because those who are in prison for nonpayment of fines are in effect being imprisoned for being poor. I believe perhaps the minister is aware of a maritimes court decision under the Charter of Rights in which it was held that that infringes section 15 of the Charter of Rights by virtue of treating those who are poor unequally with respect to that issue.

Now, I note from page 13 of the annual report ended March 31 of 1988 that the report indicates that there is an average of 48 prisoners, 1.5 percent of the prison population, in jail for nonpayment of fines at any particular time. But I would be very obliged to the minister if he would look into that matter and perhaps apprise me or give me the benefit of any statistics that his department does have in that regard. If the statistics are not available, perhaps he might address the issue as to whether they perhaps should be and whether this is a significant feature in our prison population. I must say that one of my researchers has phoned the minister's department to get some data in this regard and has been unable to find the direct path, if the path to this information does exist.

Now still under vote 2, Mr. Chairman, the Calgary Remand Centre funding is being cut 4.1 percent this year. I am aware, of course, that the female populace has been moved from that facility, and that would account for some of the cut. On the other hand, from my rather extensive tour I had in the facility last year, it was quite clear that the facility was in need of upgrading, both in terms of the plant and in terms of the staff allocation. As the minister is aware, the facility is extremely poor; it's poorly designed for the needs. It occupies a number of floors in a building, and as a result there is a need for a very high staff ratio. For example, if a visitor arrives in the building, it's necessary for a guard to escort a prisoner down an elevator down six or seven floors. Or, if recreation is required, it's necessary to move prisoners from one floor up to I believe the eighth floor, where the recreation facilities are. This takes the time of staff, and accordingly it robs the prison populace of the attention that they would get from the staff in terms of additional recreation time or whatever.

It's an expensive building to deal with, but nevertheless it seemed very obvious -- and I sensed that this was the conclusion of the minister's departmental staff who visited with me -- that there definitely was a need for additional staffing. There was a sentiment that perhaps the cuts of the previous few years, and they cut about 19 people from the facility, had been somewhat too deep. Now, I don't have the balance. It's now eight or nine months, and the budget's been adjusted somewhat with women prisoners leaving and other things, but I would appreciate if perhaps the minister might be able to comment with respect to his sense of what is going on there. To what extent is that particular problem that I've referred to being addressed, if at all?

Now, moving on to the item under vote 2, designated Purchased Community Services, I too would like to hear some indication from the minister as to why the item of Community Service Contracts has increased to the extent of 113.3 percent to the

amount of \$4,174,700 and, commensurately, why the community residential services has been decreased by 9.1 percent. What is the problem in that particular area?

Now, moving on to vote 3, I also share the question and concern of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona with respect to why the Innovative Policing Subsidy is down. I'd be very interested in the thinking of the minister in that regard.

I'm also very concerned with respect to the problems that were experienced last year in Edmonton with respect to the inquiry into the complaints of the members of the Chilean community. It was certainly not the finest hour for the administration of policing in this province to see the Police Commission and the Department of the Solicitor General at loggerheads over who was going to pay for an inquiry that was deemed by the Police Commission to be necessary. There was obviously a hiatus there at that particular time. It's certainly not acceptable that these types of inquiries fail to proceed when they're deemed to be necessary by the Police Commission. Indeed, in over 10 years of following policing in Calgary in particular and to some extent in Edmonton, I can't recall a Police Commission calling for an inquiry of that nature. There may have been others, but I think it was the first one. And here we find that the inquiry does not proceed for either jurisdictional reasons or reasons of who is going to pay for it.

Now, I don't expect it makes any sense for the Solicitor General's department to give a Police Commission a blank cheque with respect to holding any inquiries with whatever parameters and whatever staffing it wants at the expense of the government. Having one person pay for inquiries called by another group is a formula for potential bankruptcy. But certainly we can find a better system, and I would hope that perhaps better use could be made of the Law Enforcement Appeal Board in cases where this situation arises again.

So what we need, I would suggest, Mr. Minister, is more inquiries generally. I think we're a society that does not inquire enough. We don't ask enough questions; we don't review things adequately. My sense is, in relation to many other provinces -- not all, but many other provinces -- that we don't have that intellectual curiosity and the desire and zeal to attempt to do things somewhat better, and I would think that attention to facilitating the inquiry process would be useful.

My final comment on the issue of policing relates to the minister's view and perspective relating to what the policy of our provincial police services should be re the wearing of turbans by Sikh police officers when they're on duty. Indeed, I recall when I raised that issue in the Legislature not so long ago -- near the end of the week, as I recall -- the minister indicated he would be meeting with his federal counterpart in order to discuss the matter on the following Monday. I've not, in fact, heard of or seen any report of the results of that meeting, and I'd be very interested if perhaps the minister might advise as to what his conclusions were from that meeting with respect to the propriety of Sikh police officers being able to wear turbans while on duty.

I'd like to move on now to vote 3 and would like, Mr. Chairman, to focus on the impaired driving program. I must say this has been a bit of a hobbyhorse of mine, having served in late '85, early '86 on a committee of the Canadian Bar Association which reviewed a number of impaired driving issues. I have, from that point on, been pressing the government for some action on impaired driving, generally with very little success. We've now seen a flurry of activity from the minister. I'm heartened to some extent, although I must say in my observation that

while some substantive work has been done, there has been a great deal of smoke and mirrors and some trial balloons have been floated which have not come to fruition. When one seeks out solid, meaningful initiatives, I can't help but note that the funding for the impaired driving program, which has received such a trumpeting, is up a modest 7.7 percent. Now, money isn't everything. A healthy reallocation can sometimes do wonders when approached from a fresh perspective. But I note, for example, under Impaired Driving Initiatives, one item is up substantially from \$145,000 to \$645,000, whereas the Check Stop program is down 43.5 percent from \$955,000 to \$540,000. I would very much appreciate hearing from the minister, either today or later, with respect to what is happening with the Check Stop program.

The conclusion of our Bar committee in early 1986 was that the greatest deterrent one had in stopping impaired drivers was the fear of apprehension. We concluded that Check Stop programs and the apprehension, or the perception that there were Check Stop programs out there, were very important, and from that time on I've been pressing the government to provide more assistance to that end. It's always been my perception that when the government talked about Check Stop programs in the past, they seemed to be talking about no more than an advertising program which was conducted jointly with police forces. Now, I could be wrong. In this instance there has been some talk of some direct initiative with police forces and the provision of certain mobile vans. On the other hand, we're down significantly in terms of the funding which has been provided. So I'm a bit confused as to where we're moving in respect of the Check Stop program, and I would appreciate the clarification of the minister as to what we're getting for the \$540,000 and what's been cut out with respect to the reduction of 43.5 percent.

Now, one of the things that struck our committee in 1985-86 when we heard from experts in this particular area, and we interviewed members from the Solicitor General's department and the Attorney General's department, those who are on your counter -- the term escapes me at the moment, but the inner governmental, departmental committee on that issue -- and was echoed time and again by each of the members who appeared before us, was the paucity, the relative shortage of statistics with respect to what's going on relating to impaired drivers: what happens; what's the disposition; what are the penalties. I've not had occasion to be able to determine whether or not that shortage of meaningful statistics which gives us the basis for making judgments re programming has been improved. If it hasn't, I pass on to the minister the benefits of the conclusion we reached at that point of time: that statistical information is desperately short. I'd be interested in hearing whether or not the minister is aware of whether or not in the three years since our committee sat that has been rectified, and whether or not he is hearing the same things.

There was also some reference to a designated driver program in the minister's comments. There's an irony here, because after the deliberations of our committee ended, I went to a Canadian Bar Association meeting at which they were planning a convention, and I discovered after presenting this report that there was no plan at that time to have a designated driver program at the particular dinner that was being sponsored. I raised the issue with the Canadian Bar Association, and it was decided that that programming would be supported. This led me to inquire of the government and, lo and behold, I was astonished to

find that the government itself, which has been pushing business and the rest of the community into designated driver programs -- there was not a department in the government that itself had a designated driver program. I raised that. I tried to embarrass the government, but the government turned out to be embarrassment proof in that regard, and it seemed like so many other health issues. I might get onto my little smoking tricycle again, where I keep emphasizing it's very important that if the government wants to push these things, these health initiatives, you can't say one thing and do another. You've got to present that kind of leadership there. This is the centre of where good, sound policy starts, and perhaps the minister might take that to heart. It could be that my information was in error back in 1986. We called around, I think, virtually every government department and asked whether or not they had designated driver programs in respect to Christmas parties or whatever. They didn't; none of them. We couldn't find one. There may be some good reason why that was so, but it escapes me. So I kind of mention that as a symbolic matter.

Now, in terms of the impaired driving issue, there are a couple of initiatives that struck our committee back in 1986 that I've been pushing for some time to no avail. I've talked about them a number of times in the House, and obviously they are not falling on very fertile ground. I've never had a very good explanation of why this is so.

The two features relate, first of all, to drivers who get behind the wheel when their licence has been suspended for impaired driving. In my view, the suspension of the licence is the primary deterrent to impaired driving. I think that's what really hurts drivers: if the perception is there that you are not going to be able to drive. This is diluted substantially, and it's common knowledge amongst lawyers and those that are involved in this area that drivers who are suspended often just get behind the wheel and take their chances, and the potential for apprehension is really very, very remote. But when they do get apprehended, the real problem is that the penalty is relatively light. Under provincial legislation, it's been a fine in the \$200 to \$300 range. Federal legislation changes in the Criminal Code in late 1985, I understand, have made it possible to throw the book at those drivers, but I understand that happens only rarely and would come in in the event that there were a serious accident. So we have this situation in which these drivers who have their licences suspended are on the roads.

Now, I've been suggesting that we look at the British Columbia initiative, which is to provide for a seven-day jail sentence for those drivers, recognizing that they are repeat offenders, in effect. This means no more than a weekend in jail, normally, but I think it's a reflection of the attitude which society takes, and should take, to this particular problem. So I raise the issue again, and I note that the department has, since 1986-87, had a suspended driver apprehension program. Perhaps at some stage, with written comments or whatever, the minister might give his department's assessment of the merits and success of that program and what else can be done in this regard.

Now, the other thing that has concerned me, the second item, relates to dealing with repeat offenders for impaired driving. For a second offence, there is a mandatory jail term of, I believe, 14 days. I discovered that up until late 1985, the Attorney General's department instructed the prosecutors to set in motion the mechanics for seeking that penalty for repeat offenders only if the second offence took place within one year of the first of-

fence. So if you happened to be one year and one day, they didn't bother going through the proof of the second offence. In late 1985 that was changed to two years. In our research we discovered that many if not most other provinces had three years or five years, and some no time limit.

I've not been able to understand why we should give repeat offenders, who have a slim chance of being apprehended, the benefits of that time limit. I think it's well known that only a small percentage of impaired drivers get caught no matter how many Check Stops you have. You can't have dragnets on every city street. So I've been pressing for tougher measures and a change in that policy, which perhaps requires the initiative of the Attorney General, and perhaps now that the former Solicitor General is now ensconced and with many other initiatives under his belt, he might give some attention to this thing . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: You're still talking?

MR. CHUMIR: . . . I'm chattering on about, as these guys are saying.

Well, I have a number of other topics I wanted to chatter on about, but I think I'll probably wind that up at this particular moment and cede the floor to the next speaker and perhaps regroup later on.

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

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the minister on his appointment. I had the opportunity to work some with him prior to his election and prior to my election to this House and know that he will do a very fine job in his portfolio, being a no-nonsense type person and an energetic type person with many good ideas. So we wish you all the best in your portfolio.

I heard the minister say a number of things that I certainly agree with. One of the first things he mentioned was the initiatives he was going to take as far as the native population is concerned. In my constituency I have two reserves. They seem to be a major problem. I'm not sure if it's because of the differences in our cultures or just exactly what's happened there, but there are certainly a number of repeats. It really is very heartbreaking to see the number of young people, particularly, that don't seem to have any direction and end up in trouble with the law and, subsequently, into jail.

I guess I was rather shocked when I looked at the numbers of what our institutions are costing us. Knowing the numbers of repeats we're getting, I've come to the conclusion that whatever it is that we're doing isn't really working that well. I know that one of the issues that continually comes up in my constituency is the idea that our prisons are somewhat luxurious, that going to prison is somewhat of a holiday and really not accomplishing a whole bunch. I personally am from the old school and certainly believe that work never hurt anyone, and some discipline always helped. So I guess I get a little concerned when I hear comments about how we should improve the life-style in the institution. I certainly agree with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona that probably we should be paying more attention to education, but I think some discipline and work would certainly help as well.

In talking about this work ethic and the possibility to work, one concern I have currently is the situation at Nordegg. There

was a minimum security prison there. The people did a lot of work for Alberta Forest Service, very valuable work. But it helped in more ways than one. It gave them an education, taught them discipline, taught them to work, and at the same time helped a great deal with Alberta forests. They were cutting wood for the campgrounds that are operated by Alberta Forest Service: a winner in both directions.

Another issue that is rather bothersome in a lot of the rural areas is the distance from the police stations, and particularly in the area that I'm really familiar with. We have a number of campgrounds, a number of resorts, and of course in the summer-time these are very popular areas. A lot of people are out there camping, and of course along with that brings some problems. But the police forces are so far away that we're talking of two, two and a half hour drives between the detachment office and the campground. So that's creating a problem. Basically, in a lot of the rural area our police forces are -- the numbers and the distances create problems. I really am glad to hear that the minister is promoting community-based things like the Rural Crime Watch. I was very heavily involved in setting that up in our local area, and it works very well. I think we need probably a little more initiative and a little more push there, but people helping themselves can certainly be very valuable.

I was happy to hear your comments about the fines collection. I think that's certainly the way to go. I'm wondering if in fact you're looking at the municipalities getting into that field at all, for the collection.

I look in vote 3, and I'm quite well aware of this inquiry that's going on at the Blood Indian Reserve. I'm somewhat familiar with what's happening there and very disappointed to see that \$1.6 million is being spent there. From as near as I can determine, there are some real problems with that inquiry, and I really question its value. I also would like to know if the federal government is contributing anything towards that inquiry, or is that strictly provincial.

Since time's going on and there are a number of people who want to speak, I'm only going to mention the impaired driving initiative. I want to commend the minister on that one. There's no question that this is one of our major problems nowadays: the number of people that drink and then get in and drive. When we look at the statistics, the number of accidents that are directly related to this problem, I really am pleased to see this major initiative. One area about the driving, though, that seems to be coming through more clearly all the time -- the number of very poor drivers that we've got out there on the road. I'm wondering if there's some way that we can possibly pull some of those off and give them a little bit of education in proper driving.

I think, Mr. Chairman, that'll be all my comments for now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Bow Valley, followed by the hon. Member for Vegreville.

MR. MUSGROVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to echo my congratulations to the minister.

I have a few comments I want to make. One of them that I think is a real benefit to Alberta is the computerized motor vehicle branch. Now when you buy a vehicle, you can have it brought up on a computer and not only can you see whatever liens are against it or if in fact it was a stolen vehicle but also the licensing portion of it. I find this a great benefit to a lot of employers. Now, around our place we've got fleet insurance on

a number of vehicles. Recently our insurance company asked us to give them the number of every person with a driver's licence who would be driving any of the vehicles insured under this fleet insurance. I find that to be terrific, because luckily my family that are drivers have got a pretty good driving record, but also any employees we have. Just to give you an example, a few years ago we had an employee who worked for us and drove vehicles for about two and a half years, and lo and behold, we found out at some point after he'd left our employment that he didn't have a driver's licence. He had lost his driver's licence through a charge some years before and had never bothered to get it back. So we were at quite a risk having this fellow driving, say, a three ton truck to a town nearby to get a load of feed or something and we didn't even know he didn't have a driver's licence. So that's one benefit to the average person on that. But it's also a good thing to be able to check drivers' licences periodically.

I wanted to make a couple of comments about off-highway vehicles. Some years ago I made a pitch to get a type of licence, an agricultural licence, for off-highway vehicles, and there has been some movement made in this respect. But in my constituency, particularly during irrigation season, there are a lot of people who use types of vehicles but particularly motorbikes to get around their farm for irrigating and changing sprinkler pipes and whatever. At one time you had to have that vehicle licensed, you had to have proper insurance -- which is more expensive than car insurance -- you had to wear a helmet, and you had to have a proper driver's licence. Now, there was a problem there because a lot of these people didn't feel they should have a different driver's licence than to drive a car, so quite a few of them were operating these vehicles illegally. They were asking that there be a particular licence for an off-highway farm vehicle that would allow them to drive at a very reduced speed limit on a public road for a short distance so they could move to a different quarter section or whatever to irrigate. They didn't want to wear helmets, because when you're out working in the heat and there are a lot of mosquitoes around, what you don't want on is a helmet just to drive across the road.

Now, there have been some changes made in that; I realize that. But there are still some questions by a lot of people whether or not they are operating legally or whether they in fact are breaking some rules on this. I would ask the minister if maybe he could bring us up to date on where we're at as far as the operation of off-highway vehicles for farm use. Some of them suggested that if they put one of the those "slow moving" signs on them that you put on the back of a bailer or a cultivator when you're moving up the road and then they don't go beyond a certain speed, that should be reason enough that they wouldn't be illegal driving a motorbike, say, at 25 kilometres down a public road.

Another point I wanted to bring up was petty offenders, shall we call them, or petty thefts. I've talked to the minister about this before. There seems to be an ever-increasing amount of petty thefts, and I don't believe my constituency is unique in that. In a small town of less than 10,000 people, when you have 13 break-ins in one weekend, I find that a little higher than what we're used to. The RCMP do a tremendous job in trying to apprehend these people, and in a lot of cases they are apprehended. But we do have a bit of a problem with the court system in that I know several of these people who were on probation for petty theft were caught again and again and there was an increase in their probation. Now, I don't know what we should suggest in

this area, because most of them don't have any money to pay a fine. I would have to say it's my opinion that our penal institutions are a little too luxurious; therefore, going to jail really doesn't mean anything to them.

I'm reminded of a press article just recently where these two fellows broke out of jail, went and spent the afternoon on the beach. That evening they didn't have any money to buy food with, so they phoned back and said to the people at the jail to come and get them because they were hungry and wanted to go home. That should tell us something.

One other point I was going to make would probably sound like a conflict of interest. It certainly will disagree with what our Member for Calgary-Buffalo was saying. In a lot of these break-ins, what they're stealing is cigarettes. Now, we started out and put taxes and taxes and taxes on cigarettes. So nowadays if they break into a store, if there's gold in there, they'll probably pass it up and take the cigarettes because they're not identifiable after they have gotten them out of the store. They seem to be easy to sell somewhere. I would say that in most of the break-ins, in about 80 percent of those, mostly all they take is cigarettes. I believe our tax on cigarettes was not meant to raise money for the province but to discourage people from smoking. I believe it has backfired, because people that are breaking into stores have got a commodity they can steal that is worth a lot of money.

With those few comments, Mr. Chairman, I thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Vegreville, followed by Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a few brief comments I'd like to make; first, to ask a question of the Solicitor General on behalf of my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. You'll have to bear with me, because he writes in Gothic script and it's a little difficult for me to understand. I'll try to read it here.

He's wondering if the Solicitor General would entertain any questions about the legal underpinnings of random breath testing. I guess there are some court decisions that have thrown out cases brought as a result of people who were picked up randomly when there was nothing prior to stopping the car to indicate abnormality. There's no reason, no law being broken, nothing wrong with the car, and yet the car is stopped. It's random breath testing, and I gather there have been some court challenges there. I'm wondering if the Solicitor General would comment on what the legal basis for random breath testing is in the absence of any specific legislation permitting it.

On to my own comments. I would like to join other members in congratulating the Solicitor General for his appointment. I'm confident in his ability to measure up to the task at hand. He seems to have approached his new job with vigour, and I think that's to be commended. I wish him every success in that regard.

I wanted to make a few comments tonight about the plans the government may or may not have to move toward privatization of the Alberta Liquor Control Board and attempts I see within the Solicitor General's caucus to move to make alcohol generally more available to people, which in some ways runs counter to the initiatives he seems to be taking, initiatives aimed at tightening up the regulations, making sure that people who abuse alcohol are strongly discouraged by legal reprimand from

doing so, and dealing quite sternly with people who drink and drive. I note that there is the perennial motion on the Order Paper from someone on the government back bench to move toward privatization of the Alberta Liquor Control Board and expand the hours, and to make alcohol generally more available. Sunday openings. At a time when people are talking about Family Day, raising concerns about maybe respecting the Sabbath in the way we used to, here's the government through one of their backbenchers moving toward or advocating Sunday openings for taverns and liquor stores, et cetera, through this motion. It's my colleague from Redwater-Andrew that's doing it this time. It used to be the current chairman of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. He used to be a big backer of this sort of motion too, but I haven't heard him say much on it lately.

I want the Solicitor General to know -- and I have in private shared the results of this survey with him, but I would like to make it public for the benefit of other members -- that the MLA for Redwater-Andrew may not have asked his constituents how they feel about him proposing a motion like this. I would submit my riding is demographically very similar to Redwater-Andrew's. When questioned, they were quite dramatically against anything that led toward privatization of the Alberta Liquor Control Board and things that generally opened it up. The feeling, I think, could be summarized by saying that liquor is generally available enough as it is and we should be concerning ourselves more with treating people who are victims of alcohol abuse than trying to make it more available.

At any rate, in January I sent a questionnaire out to my constituents and tallied the results. Please remember, hon. members, this isn't a scientific survey or poll. It only represents the opinion of those people who responded to the questionnaire, and it doesn't purport to do anything more than that. I tried to be as unbiased as I could in the presentation of the questions, and I know I must have succeeded in some measure because I had some people chastising me for being in favour of relaxing the laws and other people chastising me for not being in favour of relaxing the laws. So I did try and craft the questions in a fairly neutral way. I began the questionnaire with this statement:

Alberta's liquor laws are the topic of much discussion lately. Some people favour relaxing the laws to help encourage the tourism, restaurant and hotel industries. Others feel that our laws should be made more restrictive to reduce the abuse of alcohol.

Question 1:

Are you in favour of allowing the sale of beer and wine in grocery stores?

This was a motion the former Member for Calgary-Buffalo, Mr. Brian Lee -- his claim to fame was urging that booze be sold in grocery stores.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's why I'm here.

MR. FOX: Well, that's one of many reasons. Anyway, that was his big deal. The opinion was a clear no from people in the Vegreville constituency. Fifty-two people said yes, but 134 said no.

Question two asked:

Are you in favour of Sunday opening for Hotel Beverage Rooms and Taverns?

This question, of all the questions asked, produced the strongest response, with only 23 people saying yes and 165 people saying no. A very dramatic no response to Sunday openings for liquor

outlets, beverage rooms, and taverns in hotels.

Question three asked:

Are you in favour of 'off sales' of wine and spirits from hotel beverage rooms and taverns?

A little background there for hon. members who've never been into a beverage room. You know, for a long time taverns only sold beer. They also had permitted off-sales of beer. They now sell spirits and wine, and the operators of these establishments feel they should be given the opportunity to sell wine and spirits off-sales as well. But again on this question, the constituents I represent produced a clear no, with only 36 saying yes to the question and 131 saying no.

I did follow that up with a question that asked about the off-sales of wine and spirits from beverage rooms and taverns in towns with no liquor stores. I guess the rationale from those who promote this is that if there isn't a liquor store available in a community, if people are able to buy beer, wine, and spirits off-sales, then that would save them the trip to the neighbouring community to buy their refreshments and the overall hazard to the public might be reduced as a result. Now, this question brought a slightly more favourable response, but still a majority were opposed to the suggestion. We had 69 people saying yes and 109 saying no.

Question 4 asked:

Are you in favour of privatizing the Alberta Liquor Control Board (ALCB)?

I'd like the Solicitor General and his colleagues, many of whom salivate at the mention of the word "privatization". . . I don't imply that the minister has that attitude. I'm saying his colleagues do. I know the minister has an open mind in that regard. There seems to be strong support for keeping the ALCB in the public sector, with 42 people saying yes and 100 people saying no to this idea.

Question 5 was a more difficult question and quite an involved one that I'm sure all of us look forward to debating at some time in the near future.

Are you in favour of raising the drinking age from 18?

The opinion on this was a definite yes, with 150 people agreeing to raising the drinking age and only 28 people disagreeing. Now, I have no idea what the age breakdown of the respondents to the questionnaire was, and I rather suspect the age breakdown would show that the people responding were, say, in the upper half of the population in the community agewise, but that's just a hunch. When asked what the age should be raised to -- now, this is a misprint here -- 10 people said 19 years, 55 people said 20 years, and 86 said 21 years of age, so there seemed to be some strong support for returning the drinking age to 21, where it was before. It stayed at 21, I guess, until I turned 21; then it became 18. I don't know. I think there are a few other members about the same age as me. Perhaps the Member for Banff-Cochrane experienced that same frustration. . . [interjections] Well, you're in about the same ballpark there, hon. Minister of Education -- agewise anyway.

Question 6 asked for any recommendations people might have about "laws that deal with the use and abuse of alcohol." There were some good suggestions here, and I'd like to pass them on to the hon. Solicitor General. Several people mentioned that they thought it would be prudent of us to bring in laws that restrict the advertising of alcohol. That's been done with tobacco products, I believe, to some degree, and the feeling was that if the consumption of alcohol wasn't glamorized as much as it seems to be in the media, that might have a positive

impact on the amount of abuse that occurs. Certainly, we've all seen in the ads time and time again a bunch of jocks out exercising for a minute and a half, and that justifies having five or six cool ones. I mean, you can't do anything that works up a sweat these days without feeling you deserve a six-pack of beer. So the suggestion these people had was that some ban or restrictions on the advertising of alcohol ought to be considered. I think that's an idea with some merit.

The last question I asked was just a general question members often put in questionnaires about general recommendations, but the above questions were the ones that related specifically to alcohol.

Another issue I would like to raise is again one that I've discussed with the Solicitor General in conversations we've had, and I would like to do that in a public way tonight. That is asking about the status of the new liquor project in the town of Vegreville. The existing liquor store is, I submit, old and outdated and not in particularly good repair, and certainly not of a size or calibre for a community like Vegreville, a community of over 5,000 people which is a major trading centre. ALCB no doubt had the liquor store on their list of projects to be considered. It was full speed ahead, and then I gather, with the downturn in the economy, there was some reduction in the number of capital projects undertaken by ALCB and the Vegreville liquor store was put on hold. Now, it's difficult to convince people, especially strong supporters of the Conservative Party, that that decision was made with common sense as the basis, because shortly after my election, they wanted to do everything they could to convince people that the reason the liquor store wasn't being built is because they didn't have a PC MLA. I find that whole notion to be most offensive as someone who strongly supports the concept and process of democracy. Nevertheless, the rumour persists, and the liquor store that was to be built wasn't built in 1986. The liquor store that was . . . [interjections]

Well, with respect, there's jurisdictional authority here, hon. Minister of Family and Social Services. There was a time when the responsibility for the ALCB was in limbo. It was during the September cabinet shuffle. It was taken away from the Solicitor General's department, and cabinet as a whole, Executive Council, was responsible for ALCB. It's now the Solicitor General that's responsible for ALCB, and I'm just having this discussion with him.

Anyway, the liquor store wasn't built, but there was some activity. The ALCB did acquire the land; there's property purchased. As I understand it, the drawings and plans have been completed, and it's just waiting for someone to push the button to build this store. I think it is needed not only for the calibre of the outlet -- the citizens deserve at least the same kind of service that's available to people in other communities -- but important for the employees. That store in Vegreville is one of the only ones of its size that doesn't have palletized product-handling facilities, and I think that's needed for the sake of the employees there. Certainly we look forward to a construction project, albeit a modest one, in the town of Vegreville. Then the resultant vacant space created by the move leaves us with a building that certainly would be well suited for something else. So I'm making representation here tonight to the Solicitor General to determine what the status of the new liquor store in Vegreville is and urge him to move along with it.

I suspect there has been some delay in making those sorts of decisions in cabinet in the past because of the desire of government to move, perhaps without much consideration, towards

privatization and the ALCB being a potential victim of that. But I would hope that wouldn't prevent the rational operation of ALCB in the interim. Certainly if privatization is something the government is moving toward, if they take the advice of the Member for Redwater-Andrew, I'll certainly stand in my place and speak in opposition to that. Anyway, I would appreciate a status report on that from the Solicitor General.

I do need a little help in defending cabinet out in my constituency. It's a responsibility I enjoy, but I do find it a little wearing to constantly be defending ministers of the Crown against the allegations of people in the constituency, most of whom are loyal Conservatives who want to do everything they can to convince the people in my constituency that they won't be fairly treated by this government because I'm on the wrong side of the fence, so to speak. It's a most distasteful concept but one that's advanced regularly. Even the former MLA writes letters to the editor -- believe it or not, Member for Rocky Mountain House -- telling people that projects like the liquor store, like the courthouse, are all on hold and will never be built because Vegreville has an opposition MLA. I don't believe and I've not seen evidence to suggest that the government behaves that way, and I won't stand idly by when people try and propagate those rumours. But I would appreciate a little bit of ammunition, if you will. So I make that representation to you, hon. minister, with respect to the Vegreville liquor store project.

I'm just looking to my left here to see if there's any more Gothic print I have to read. I leave you with those comments, sir. Thank you.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have any comments to make other than a few questions I would like to have the Solicitor General respond to. First, I would take the opportunity to congratulate him. I watch his portfolio with a great deal of interest. I watch some of those trial balloons being floated, and I'd like to see exactly where they do land.

First of all, I look at vote 1 and share some of those questions that have been asked as to why there are some unproportional increases in certain breakdowns of that particular budget. The explanation was given: there was some transfer of three personnel. I'd like to know specifically, were they transferred within that breakdown of that vote or were they transferred from other votes? Because even with a transfer of three personnel, it still doesn't seem to proportion.

Under vote 2, recently, Mr. Minister, there was a situation where a deaf girl in the Remand Centre ran into some extreme problems communicating. I'd like to know if that matter was resolved so that type of situation won't occur again. There was another incident at the Remand Centre where a paraplegic who had been charged for impaired driving had a number of complaints that he wasn't given the type of assistance that would have been required. I'd like to know if that particular area has been addressed. And thirdly, we had the situation where we had people that were charged and arrested protesting in front of the Legislature. When I checked into it, Mr. Minister, they were not given visiting rights over the weekend because they were arrested Friday. So their spouses could not visit them, nobody could visit them over the weekend. At that particular time that question was raised, and there hasn't been any response given. I'd like to know if that is still being addressed.

Under vote 3, I look at some of these trial balloons I referred to. What ever did come of the situation where references were made to special suspensions for young adults from 16 to 18 that had consumed any amount of alcohol no matter how minimal? If I recall correctly, references were made that that type of enforcement would apply to any first-time licence holders, at least first-time Alberta licence holders, leaving me the impression that if somebody came from Ontario they would face that same type of double standard. I'd like to know if the constitutional questions have been addressed. As well, I'd like to know if the minister has looked at the Manitoba legislation, which was very recently passed, that addresses the same area. They've implemented a system where there are some assurances that a hearing will be given within 45 days so a person isn't unnecessarily penalized for a lengthy period of time, because one still has to maintain innocence until proven guilty.

My last question under vote 3. There have been a number of concerns expressed to me by constituents in Whitemud, in fact a substantial number of communications by telephone and letter, addressing what has happened in the Alberta Liquor Control Board outlets, the question of the instant cash and the credit card trial systems. I'd like to know exactly how long the trial periods are going to continue in these two areas, and is the minister going to report back to this House as to what the outcome is? Because constituents are concerned that on the one hand there seems to be encouragement to make liquor more available while on the other hand we're saying we've got to clamp down on people who drink over the legal limit, in some cases even under the legal limit.

On vote 5, when we talk in terms of the Control and Development of Horse Racing, Mr. Minister, I have two areas of questions here which fall under your jurisdiction. The amount of expenditure that is shown here -- is this directly proportional to the amount of taxes received as a result of the 5 percent provincial tax that is imposed on all dollars going through the pari-mutuel system, or is it only a portion that is returned to the Alberta Racing Commission? In other words, is this a break-even proposition? Secondly, under this particular area, Mr. Minister, what is the current situation with a balloon that had been floated either by the government or by Northlands or the Stampede board about the possibility of off-track betting that would be allowed in lounges, not necessarily in Edmonton or Calgary but in some of the other municipalities like Red Deer, Grande Prairie, whatever the situation may be? Has the minister looked at that? Has that been initiated by his department, or has that been initiated by the Alberta Racing Commission?

On that note, Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, I'll conclude my questions and look forward to a response. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to begin my comments by congratulating the minister on his appointment. I think the types of comments we've heard tonight, both from my colleagues on this side of the floor and on the other, bear well the kind of sentiments of this House with respect to this minister. He has already in his term of office initiated a number of very progressive, good, commonsense initiatives, and I'm confident that he will continue in that light.

The comments that have been made tonight have been very positive, and I won't try to readdress or reword any of those

comments, but I do have a couple of questions for the hon. minister.

The first one I'd like to speak about is the Young Offenders Act, Mr. Chairman. The Young Offenders Act has always given me some problems in terms of enforcement, and I'm confident that it gives the authorities throughout Canada just as many problems, and that's with the matter of serious offences and the fact that if these offences are proceeded with in young offenders court, the maximum sentence for an offender is three years. This seems very much at odds with the severity of some of the offences that are before the youth courts. As we all know, there is the opportunity to make application to have a youth court matter brought forward to adult court. However, both the federal Act and the provincial Act are very unclear as to the criteria that should be used in making that determination of whether the issue should stay in youth court or be moved to the higher adult court. The matter has been dealt with through case law. However, that's a transitional matter, and it does create many difficulties for all of our constituents who are apprised of serious crimes where individuals are left to the youth court process and, as I mentioned, the three-year maximum sentence. So I'd appreciate some comments from the minister on this issue of the maximum three-year sentence for whatever offence is proceeded with under the Young Offenders Act.

I commend the minister for the initiatives regarding impaired driving, especially with respect to youth, and his concern that perhaps any amount of alcohol in the systems of young people under the age of 18 should result in suspension of licences. I think we have to recognize that young people are inexperienced both with the effects of alcohol and with the motor vehicles they are driving. You put the two together and it's a very dangerous possibility, so I commend that type of review.

I'd also like to make some comments about native court workers. I think this is an important initiative of the Solicitor General's department. We do have a number of serious problems with natives, and from personal experience I've seen the great benefit that the native court workers are able to work in our provincial courts in the province of Alberta. Natives, of course, are not as familiar with the "white man's" system, and it's quite obvious to anyone who's been present in provincial court that they feel much more comfortable when they are able to access a native court worker. This even applies when duty counsel is available. You'll often see the accused discussing their matters firstly with the native court workers before they'll deal with the duty counsel.

One question I have about native matters, and it's applicable in my constituency of Banff-Cochrane because we do have two reserves, is the issue of available cash to pay fines when some of these young people are found guilty of charges. I'm not sure this is an appropriate question for this minister. It may be a question that should have been asked of the Attorney General, or indeed our federal colleagues; however, I wasn't here the evening the budget estimates were presented by the Attorney General. This is the problem of car dealerships which sell automobiles to mainly young natives using their oil royalties as the method of payment. They generally take a very low down payment, and virtually all of the disposable funds that these young people have through their oil royalties go to car payments. So we see these same young people in front of the courts, and they are unable to make any kind of a reasonable payment toward their fine because they just don't have any disposable income. The only alternative at that point in time is either to do commu-

nity service work to pay off the fine or to do time. I'd appreciate some comments on that from the minister.

My final question is the issue of radar detectors in the province of Alberta. There are, of course, arguments on both sides, one being that radar detectors actually make people more aware of what is happening on the road. I myself don't share that opinion. I think radar detectors are purchased for one and one only purpose, and that's to avoid the RCMP and get away with driving at a higher rate of speed. We see these radar detectors every time we get on the highway. Every time I come up here on either a Sunday afternoon or a Monday morning, people go barreling past me, and I, of course, am going the speed limit, Mr. Chairman. But as they go barreling by me at 130, 140, or 150 kilometres an hour, the fact that they have radar detectors is very much in evidence. Perhaps it's helping our oil and gas industry, but it's certainly not making our roads a safer place to be. So I'd appreciate comments from the minister on that issue as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Chairman, if I could comment on a number of the questions that have been raised, for which I thank the hon. members on both sides of the Assembly -- I do want to thank them. They've raised a number of issues, more than I will be able to respond to in the time that is available. However, I want to assure all members of the Assembly that I will carefully review *Hansard* from this evening's sitting, and where those important issues have been raised which I have not responded to today, I will give serious consideration to a response to the member that has raised it, which can be shared with his or her caucus.

The matter of the apparent disproportionate number of prisoners in Alberta. I am also aware of the statistics which give a strong indication of that being so. I would advise the House, Mr. Chairman, that those figures in all probability are taken from conviction rates and sentences at the time. I'm not certain of that, but that is my belief. If that in fact is the case, then they're dramatically offset by the realization that 70 percent of the sentenced population in Alberta is under supervision in the community, and this is the highest percentage in Canada.

Education of our prisoners was brought up. I would advise that in Alberta at this time we're spending over \$2 million for adults and \$2 million for young offenders. Now, all these programs are monitored by the departments of Education and Advanced Education, and they're delivered by the boards of education and accredited educational institutes. I would also advise the members of the House, Mr. Chairman, that in the provincial system the maximum length of time that we can hold an incarcerated person is two years, and with the time off and the early release program that we have we may not in fact have that prisoner for more than four to six months. It's awfully difficult to perform much of an education function in that time. However, we certainly do our very best with the highly professional people that we involve in the educational process of those incarcerated.

In respect to the concern that volunteers may be replacing professional people in the prisoner network, Mr. Chairman, I would advise that rarely am I aware, if at all, of any volunteers replacing people where professionalism is required. Here I speak of probationary workers, social workers, and this type of thing. Certainly we make a great deal of use in prisons of volunteers to involve the community in such things as recreation

programming, culture programming, and this type of thing. We use volunteers to the greatest extent possible and to a smaller degree, a very much smaller degree, in the overall rehabilitation when people are out on parole or where we have volunteers in extremely difficult places to get at.

The 15 percent increase in the Purchased Community Services was due to a 5 percent overall increase in all contracts, the transfer of young offenders probationary services in Calgary to the city of Calgary. And the Grierson Centre program native counseling services has increased in the estimates approximately \$1 million or over. But I bring to the attention of the House, Mr. Chairman, that some of that is offset, in fact, by \$700,000 from the federal government, which brings up another matter raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. He raised the issue of the possibility that the funds being received from the federal government are in fact not being employed for the use for which it is intended. I would be seriously concerned if I felt this to be the case, and I will be looking into it because it is an allegation that, I think, cannot be permitted to hang there.

In respect to the impaired driving programs, I wish to assure the members and the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo that there has been no smoke and mirrors in this program, Mr. Chairman. It's a solid program of 42 new initiatives, many of which have been implemented already, and there are still some, in fact, to be implemented.

In respect to the allegation of trial balloons, that arose because I responded to a question from the media in respect to the Manitoba program, which was in fact introduced into the Manitoba Legislature this summer. That response was that it may be worth looking at and I would in fact be looking at the Manitoba legislation. That quickly developed into what may be possibly fairly called a trial balloon, but it wasn't the intention of this minister that that be the case.

There was a dramatic decrease in one part of the estimates, in vote 3. That was in respect to what was thought to be a drop in the Check Stop program. Mr. Chairman, that is not the case, because in the previous year we in fact purchased two mobile test units, which were very, very expensive. The fact of the matter is that the Check Stop program will be greatly increased this year. Further on that matter, in reply to a question from the opposition, I believe, in respect to the constitutionality of the increased breath tests, we will be watching that very carefully. It's already been established in this province by the Supreme Court that the check stop itself is, in fact, a legal manoeuvre and we are permitted to do that. We understand and accept that we cannot in every instance, of course, demand a breath test, nor is that our intention. But what we are providing to the police forces of the province is a hand-held unit. If they are under the slightest suspicion on which they can make the demand, then the hand-held unit will be presented for a test, and if in fact it indicates a warning, then in all probability the mobile unit will be handy and the alleged offending driver will be invited to take the full test on the Borkenstein machine or whatever machine happens to be in use at that particular time.

The question was raised as to whether or not the federal government is involved in sharing the cost of the Blood tribe inquiry. Unfortunately, the answer to that is in the negative, and the cost to Albertans in order to complete that is about \$1.6 million, if we in fact keep on budget.

We are considering an overall safe driving program which is not alcohol related, Mr. Chairman. However, that has not got beyond the initial planning stage in the department at this par-

ticular time. We are aware of an increased number of complaints in respect to highway traffic not involving impaired drivers, and I'm in correspondence with the commissioner of the RCM Police on this matter. As all members of the House will be aware, this is mostly a problem on our main highways in the province of Alberta, which are in fact patrolled by the RCM Police.

I will respond out of courtesy to the ALCB questions, although it's not part of the budget that we have today, and would advise the hon. Member for Vegreville that there are no intentions at this time to go toward the privatization of the Alberta Liquor Control Board. This is not under study in my department, Mr. Chairman. We are looking at the possibility of increasing the number of private wine boutiques, but there is no study in my department at this time in respect to increasing outlets by corner stores or grocerias of any description.

I have spoken to the hon. Member for Vegreville about the matter of the liquor store at the town of Vegreville.

Further answer of a topical issue on the liquor matter is in respect to the credit cards. The first two weeks of purchases at those eight stores that are now using credit cards indicate that 2 percent of the sales are in fact being done by credit card.

On the matter of the horse racing commission, there will be set up off-track betting this year by the commission. However, it will be done in accordance with the amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada, and that will involve betting theatres, which in fact must be operated by a qualified track in the first matter.

From the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane there is an indication that he has a concern about youth offenders moving up into adult court. This was a subject, Mr. Chairman, of the Prince Edward Island conference of ministers of justice, attorneys general, and solicitors general last month, and we expect that the possibility exists of new legislation in respect to changing this matter in order that if and when a young offender does go up to adult court, he may serve a three-year sentence and then be on probation for up to five years for very serious crimes.

The native court worker program, I would advise, is continuing unabated and is being increased through native counseling

service. We, in fact, as indicated, are attempting to work more natives into our overall corrections system.

In respect to the radar detectors, it is not my intention at this time to introduce any changes in that particular legislation.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to respond to these matters. For those matters that have not been responded to, I reiterate that I will review *Hansard* carefully, and those important questions that have been brought up I will respond to not only for the benefit of the people that brought them up but for my own educational purposes as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?
[interjections]

Hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

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

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

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

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[At 10:18 p.m. the House adjourned to Tuesday at 2:30 p.m.]