

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Thursday, August 3, 1989 8:00 p.m.**

Date: 89/08/03

[The House resumed at 8 p.m.]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS**
(Third Reading)

[It was moved by the members indicated that the following Bills be read a third time, and the motions were carried]

No.	Title	Moved by
9	Parks Towns Act	Evans
223	Emblems of Alberta Amendment Act, 1989	Moore

head: **GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS**
(Second Reading)**Bill 8****Department of Social Services Amendment Act, 1989**

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the hon. Minister of Family and Social Services I move second reading of Bill 8, the Department of Social Services Amendment Act, 1989.

Mr. Speaker, the gist of the Bill is simply to change the name from the Department of Social Services to the Department of Family and Social Services. I therefore move second reading.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Calder.

MS MJOLSNES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to make a couple of comments with regards to Bill 8 in second reading. First of all, I would like to comment on the wording of the change in the Bill, which is putting the word "Family" in front of the title of "Social Services" so it would be the Minister of Family and Social Services. I think when we use the word "family" in its singular form, it implies that there's only one type of family, "the" family. I know we've had the Premier allude to a specific type of family over and over again; that is, one family with a husband, wife, two children, or whatever, the traditional family, which the Member for Vermilion-Viking also sees as being probably the only type of family in Alberta. But in reality there are many types of families, many constellations. So I think the more appropriate word would be "families," in the plural form. So I'd like to make that point.

The second point that I have to make is that I am a bit concerned that the government can put the word "Family" in front of "Social Services" and expect Albertans to believe that they are now concerned about the family and that this is all they have to do to prove that they are concerned about the family. I know that we on this side of the House have concerns that a lot more needs to be done to support the family, like pay equity for single-parent families, which are mostly headed by women, a fair taxation system in the province. Today this was discussed. Specifically we're talking about the child tax credit going to families, which government members spoke against; high-quality, affordable day care, which we're still waiting for in the

province; school lunch programs to feed our hungry children. So these are the kinds of initiatives that we hope the government will undertake to really show their support for families and not simply just put the word in front of the words "Social Services."

So, Mr. Speaker, those are the couple of points that I wanted to make on this particular Bill. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, want to make some comments on this Bill, which on the surface appears to be simply a change in the nomenclature. Unquestionably we have a new ministry here responsible for the family. As the Member for Edmonton-Calder has commented, there are many kinds of families now, and I believe the Premier and the minister have recognized on a number of occasions that this ministry is intended to deal with a variety of types of families and that they acknowledge that we're not simply talking about a mother, father, 2.4.

However, Mr. Speaker, I am perplexed by the advance of this piece of legislation when we have no mandate, when we have not heard from the minister as to what is intended to be encompassed by this Bill. We don't know. We've been told in the throne speech that there will be an advisory council on families. We don't know what that encompasses. There appears to have been one in existence for some time that is either moribund or from which council we have not heard. There is also a drug abuse endowment and a council on drug abuse that seem to be attached to this particular department, and yet we have no mandate for that.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Perhaps the private conversations could be held in the members' lounge. Thank you.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

We have no knowledge of precisely how and when the drug abuse endowment will come into play. We've been told that the Lieutenant Governor will convene a major conference on the family. There was a conference on the family in Regina last month, and I believe the minister of this particular department attended it. It didn't receive good reports; it received, on the contrary, quite negative reports. We've had nothing as a result of that conference.

Mr. Speaker, we have no idea at this point in time what this particular department is designed to do, what the intent of the Premier and cabinet is in creating this department except this lovely, superficial statement about families: "We want to strengthen families." Nobody takes exception to that, but the man on the street wants to know how. What is this department intended for? We don't have any idea about its relationship and its influence on other departments, other programs, or legislation that is presently in existence in the government or what it intends to create apart from the work of the drug abuse endowment.

Mr. Speaker, all of us know that there are thousands of families in Alberta that are okay, that are managing reasonably well and are maintaining themselves reasonably well. There are other families that are temporarily in stress, and most of us in our life experience that in our own family life. Then there are families in our province that are in dire emergencies, families where there is violence and breakup. So we have a variety of levels of family life as well as a variety of components. The

family matrix is very complex.

Mr. Speaker, I am also aware -- and I hope that the minister will want to comment to the House and answer some of the concerns that have been raised in the public and that I want to raise with the minister about the relationship to current programs. I would like to know and I've been asked over and over: what does this have to do with poverty? Because a Family and Social Services ministry -- surely one of their major efforts should be intended towards reducing poverty, which is a major problem in families. This is the cause of family breakup. I have no knowledge of whether or not this ministry will deal with women's shelters and with child abuse. We don't have any particular terms of reference that relate to it, whether or not they will be in a position to influence change in labour legislation and employment standards, which in a very major way could influence family life in our province in a benign way. We do not have any information about whether this particular mandate would include, for instance, changing pensions for homemakers and providing pensions for homemakers. We do know from the minister that there will be improvements and changes in regulations regarding day care, child care standards, and I commend the ministry for that.

We do not know that there will be any improvements in social assistance. Again, we address poverty, which is a major problem for families. My caucus has pleaded over and over for a review of these allocations, which have not been looked at or changed since 1982, except downward. We do not know whether this ministry, Mr. Speaker, will attend to such details as some comprehension of why a foster child gets far greater, almost double the allowance that a child belonging to a family on social assistance gets. We don't understand those disparities, and we don't know if this ministry will in fact try to reduce those disparities.

We have no understanding in our caucus or in the public as to why family and community support services, which is a marvelous thrust that a former government took and that I support wholeheartedly, a wonderful program, whether that will be lodged within this ministry or whether it will remain in Health. That's a continuing puzzle not only to me, Mr. Speaker, but to thousands in our municipalities across the province. We don't understand the rationale for that. Will it be transferred into the family ministry, where it appears to fit? But once again we don't comprehend that mandate.

Will the ministry be promoting and supporting the Bill that the Member for Banff-Cochrane has put forward on spouse access for noncustodial parents? Is that a problem that they see as part of their responsibility? We don't have any report from the ministry as to the state of the art about the children's advocate, something this government promoted last year and that I certainly supported, a major requirement, yet 18 months I guess have passed and we've heard nothing. I'd also like to ask of the ministry: what is their mandate relative to new Canadian families, who operate often in a very different cultural milieu and whose needs are quite different from the average Canadian family? I would like to know if they have any influence on housing problems in our province, particularly inner-city housing and the hungry children who live in much of that inner-city housing. Is that to be part of their responsibility?

Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether or not this ministry will in fact have anything to do with providing respite care for families. This is a problem that exists in our province that is to many families invisible. Yet to those in need of respite care for

a disabled child or an elderly parent, it's a major problem. We hear from day to day the anxiety of families who are dependent upon Rosecrest and other facilities in our province, who are terrified that they cannot continue as a family unless that support will be made available to them. We have no knowledge of whether or not this ministry will extend its concerns and its mandate to native families and the immigrant families that I spoke of before.

Mr. Speaker, the long and short of it is that we don't know what this ministry is intended for. We know the superficial and warm terms in which it has been referred and have been used to describe it: that we all care and that families are the bulwark of the Alberta psyche and our citizenship in this country and our caring concern and all of that. But, Mr. Speaker, you and I don't know what this ministry is intended to do. We have no idea at this point in time. Yet we're asked to endorse and vote for a Bill that gives it some validity, some credibility.

Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of difficulty with this. I would hope that the minister at the first opportunity will enlighten us, will tell us not only what particular programs his ministry will become involved with in a direct way but will also tell us, and perhaps more importantly, the relationship that his ministry will have with all of those other departments -- Education and Health and Labour and economic development and Recreation and Parks, all of the other departments of government -- what influence they will have, what the interaction will be between those departments that will in fact do the kinds of things that we've been talking about in those superficial terms. Mr. Speaker, I need to know those facts, and the families of Alberta need to know those facts. To date we have seen only a very superficial Bill, and we've had Bill 1 on Family Day, which again I think leaves much to be desired.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that these questions will be answered, that we'll have far more detail, so that with confidence I can support the government's initiatives in this regard on past second reading and into committee and third reading.

MR. SPEAKER: Call for the question.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, if I could simply close debate on Bill 8, I believe there have been some very meaningful comments made by both the Member for Edmonton-Calder and the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

I would simply point out, Mr. Speaker, that the principle we are dealing with is simply to change the name of the department, on the one hand, and then make amendments to section 9, which presently reads, and I would simply quote:

The Minister may

- (a) take any action, [direct or indirect, on] matters for the promotion of social development that he considers appropriate, [such as]
- (c) carry out research or inquire into and collect information and statistics relating to all matters of social development;
- (d) disseminate information.

The amendment simply says:

take or direct any action that the Minister considers appropriate or necessary to enhance and strengthen the role of the family in Alberta.

I don't say for one moment the hon. members' points are not valid, and should be debated. I would simply put the point, Mr.

Speaker, that they are not part of the principle within the Bill. There will be ample opportunity when the hon. minister returns, at committee stage I think, to delve into any and all of those and demand those responses from the hon. minister.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge members to pass second reading of Bill 8.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a second time]

Bill 13
Department of Culture and Multiculturalism
Amendment Act, 1989

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, I move now that Bill 13, the Department of Culture and Multiculturalism Amendment Act, 1989, appearing on the Order Paper in my name, be read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: Call for the question.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a second time]

Bill 5
Department of Health Act

[Adjourned debate July 27: Rev. Roberts]

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you very much. Colleagues, Mr. Speaker, members of the Assembly, I'd like to direct a number of comments to second reading of Bill 5, Department of Health Act. I'm pleased to speak in second reading to a number of the principles contained therein. It does seem in fact, though, that there are several principles at work that are underlying this Bill. I must say at the outset I think it is a rather -- I'm disappointed. It's a poorly drafted piece of legislation. I really was hoping for something a bit more bold and creative in terms of setting the Department of Health off in a whole new direction with some new legislative language and so on. But that's not there, so we're going to have to try to bring it up to snuff with some amendments at committee stage.

With respect to the principles, it's hard I think to decipher any principal principle. There seem to be a number at work underlying what the Bill is about. If there was one overriding one, it is obviously the fact that the two previous departments, the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care and the Department of Community and Occupational Health, are being integrated and amalgamated into one bureaucracy, one Department of Health. I do submit that this was, in fact, a suggestion of mine over two years ago at an annual meeting, I remember, of the VON, when I said I was getting a number of calls from Albertans who had health concerns and they didn't quite know which department fit their concerns, whether it was Community and Occupational Health or Hospitals and Medical Care. So it made sense that there should be one entrée, one access, to government policy and that it should go to a Department of Health. Or in terms of planning it often seemed that the right hand didn't know what the left hand was doing. Or in terms of funding priorities: I know there were some real battles between the heavy hand and the power and weight of the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care and that often programs on the com-

munity side were the weaker sister and being left unattended in terms of the continuum of care, which the minister's already referred to and which I think needs to be brought up more strongly. I think this Bill will help to do that.

So, as I say, I was on record some time ago suggesting this kind of amalgamation. I think I've referred to it in estimates several times, that it would make much better sense to have one Department of Health, as they do in other provinces. In that sense I'm very glad that this Act is before us. I think it brings to about 15 now the number of very positive suggestions which I as the health critic have made which the government has finally come around to seeing the light of day and adopted. I'll submit that litany of positive suggestions of mine which they've adopted later on.

Mind you, the fact that we have this one department shouldn't allow the minister or any member of government to try to talk out of both sides of their mouth. As the minister said in presenting it at second reading, this means that it's going to show how important the institutional sector is as well as the community sector. I mean, they are important, yet often we see that the rhetoric is that yes, we want to give lip service to both ends of the spectrum, but when it comes down to some of the really hard funding questions, it seems that the funding continues to go to the heart and lung transplant programs, not to the Meals on Wheels programs. If we're to take the minister seriously or this department seriously to say that both are important, that both ends of the continuum are of great concern, then let's see that with some more creative policy and with some requisite funding following the talk that both ends are important. But health care, as we know, is becoming more and more complex, with some very difficult trade-offs that need to be made. I'd like to see this minister and this department through this Bill see that the trade-offs have a bias toward the community and home care and the community, noninstitutional sector rather than just continually loading up the high-cost institutional sector.

So, all in all, I think, Mr. Speaker, based on the principle of one department, given of course the amendments which the minister brought forth last week, which are going to clean up section 11; and based on the principle that the department is going to continue to operate under the New Democrat sense from Tommy Douglas on forward that health care in this country and this province is a matter of public ownership and public administration -- that's the second basic principle; and based on the third principle, that they're going to continue to adopt more and more of my proposals with respect to health care, we in our caucus will be supporting this Bill right through to Royal Assent. We're pleased that it will finally enable the minister to legitimately get to work in the morning and to discharge her duties under the Act faithfully, now that we'll soon have it passed.

Some of the other principles that are in the Bill, however, Mr. Speaker, which I'd like to point out as us having some difficulty with -- there are three others. One has to do with the exercise of authority. Now, we agree very much that, as the Bill states out, there are certain exercise of authorities, certain powers, which the minister has. That clearly needs to be in such legislation clearly understood. We still haven't gotten any organizational chart in terms of the department and where, in fact, the deputy and the assistant deputies and all the divisions and how they flow and who's what and where the powers flow within the department in terms of, as I say, an organizational chart.

I did note with some interest that -- this might be another

positive suggestion that might be picked up eventually -- the Bill does provide that there be, I believe, two deputy ministers. I'm not aware that there are many departments in government that are provided with two deputies. I think Treasury and maybe some others might have two deputies, but it's interesting that despite the fact that two deputies are provided for, there is currently, as I understand it, only one deputy appointed. What I would like to see in terms of the delineation of authority, and as I've said before -- I mean, I'm not going to take away two deputies. But I'd like to see the provision for an associate minister rather than two deputies. I think one deputy could probably handle it under an associate minister. Now, I don't know, again, the rationale in government, why we have an associate minister in the previous department, in Family and Social Services, or an associate in Agriculture, because I would argue very strenuously that this Department of Health, spending as it does nearly \$3 billion and having to deal with such complex issues daily, would, I believe -- not that I want to build up the bureaucracy or give any more backbenchers more ministerial duties. But I think it would make a lot of good sense to have an associate minister of Health.

I would probably designate such an associate minister to be responsible for, for instance, long-term care. As we know, the elderly in our province, who comprise about 13, 14 percent of the population, actually consume about 40 percent of the health care dollar. The whole area of long-term care, whether it's in acute care or in assessment and geriatric acute care hospitals or in long-term care or auxiliary care beds or in the community, not only for the elderly but those with chronic diseases and disabilities, I would like to see at the cabinet table be given a voice by an associate minister who could really speak very clearly and very persuasively because of their day-to-day experience in that very necessary and very complex field of health care. So we'll see again at amendment time how that's dealt with, because I think that's something that we would like to see in terms of the authority to be in fact more of a shared authority for a variety of reasons, as I've argued.

Now, there's another interesting change, Mr. Speaker. As members might know, this Bill is really a wedding together of the two previous departmental Acts, Community and Occupational Health and Hospitals and Medical Care. I noticed in the previous Hospitals and Medical Care Act -- I don't know what section it was formerly, but in this section, section 9, it really talks about the most political powers of the minister, the powers to spend money and to make grants. I feel very strongly that one of the real powers that I think the minister should be able to exercise in the making of grants is not just the writing of the cheque but being able also to have the powers to say down the line a bit, "Okay, you've been given this supply; you've been authorized with this grant; what in fact have you done with it?" and be able to have some accountability, some evaluation. I've argued this before, that it's not just a matter of being at the purse strings. I'd like to see the minister have the powers to be at the judgment seat as well and be able to say to a hospital board or others: "How have you spent this money? What needs has it met? What unmet needs has it met? How efficient have you been in spending this money? Are there more efficient ways of spending this money? Will we in fact be able to reward you with other money if you've spent this efficiently and wisely?"

But I do notice, Mr. Speaker, that the minister's powers in this regard have been somewhat limited by this new Bill. Section (j), for instance, used to say that the minister could require

of any person or organization . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Broaden it; broaden it.

REV. ROBERTS: I'm sorry. I won't get into the specifics, but the principle of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that the authority here is somewhat more restricted from the previous Act, where the minister would be able to have the power to require persons and organizations and be able to much more, in the wider realm of all who receive health care dollars, be able to call into account those who have spent money on behalf of the people of Alberta.

Another power that the minister has which we have some difficulty with, though I think it's probably taken care of by the federal Charter of Rights and Freedoms, is the power that's given the minister in section 8. Now, again I won't get into the details of the section, Mr. Speaker, but part of the power here and the authority given to the minister is to "take or direct any measures that he [or she] considers appropriate to prevent and suppress disease." We would have to understand these powers as complying with the Charter. Obviously, if the minister were to take unto herself any powers to suppress disease which were counter to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms for Canadians and Albertans, then I think we'd have some very great difficulties. I'm wondering whether in fact this section is even necessary, given the Public Health Act that we have in the province. And again we're going to be arguing at committee stage that the powers in the Public Health Act already give the minister, the director of communicable diseases, and the various medical officers of health the powers already to do these kinds of things, and to state it out here again I think is troublesome and perhaps even a bit dangerous. I would rather have the minister have the power to take any measures she deems appropriate to promote health and improve health status. I mean, we hope that that's in here somewhere, though it's not referred to specifically. This section does give us some problem. We're going to refer to it again, as I say, at committee stage.

Another principle, Mr. Speaker, that I think is important but I see as missing in the Act here is a basic principle that I guess is just understood. The purpose of the Department of Health should be to be improving the health and the health status of Albertans. I was appreciative of the minister's comments with respect to a definition of health or understanding of health. I guess I still have something to learn about how one drafts these pieces of legislation, but it does seem to me that there are some creative ways to incorporate in legislation and enshrine with legislative language not just a definition but some purpose, some goal, some stating of the *raison d'être* of the department. There is no mention of that anywhere in the Bill, Mr. Speaker. It just seems to be a bureaucratic thing that we're going to set up and hope that it spends the money for whatever reasons are deemed necessary by minister and by government.

But I think it would be helpful to Albertans, whether it's the World Health Organization definition or the minister's own definition or something else that I think would make more operative this word "health." And again we're going to try to debate this at committee stage with some definitions of the goals of the department with respect to services that are directed to the promotive, the rehabilitative, the preventative, and other aspects of health. I think Albertans want that. I think Canadians want that. I think that would be something we could be really proud of, to say not just that we have a department but that we have a

Department of Health, and not just a department to look at a health care system but a department to improve the actual health and health status of Albertans. There's no mention of it in the Bill, Mr. Speaker, and I think it needs to be there.

Another principle that is in the Bill that I think also leaves some begging to be done here is the principle of local control. Now, I know this is an ongoing debate: how much the minister in her office here in Edmonton makes decisions, how much local boards make decisions, what decisions they make at the local level, what decisions the minister has authority here in government to decide on. There is a section 7 which refers to the minister being able to set up advisory boards, committees, councils, and so on. Again, Mr. Speaker, I think it's an important principle that we in the New Democrat caucus support very much, that the people who are at the grass roots, people who are at the front lines, people who rub shoulders day to day with their neighbours are the ones who in many respects can make the wisest decisions in terms of how health care resources should be allocated, what needs can be met with what particular resources, or what needs are not being met that need to be studied and attention given to.

To this end, Mr. Speaker, I think that again we could improve the Bill and approve this principle of local control if we were to give some additional powers or additional ability for the local control to be not just in particular, unique communities but in fact in certain regional areas. This is something that obviously has happened in the province of Ontario, and I know the Rochon commission in Quebec recommended there be regional councils. Similarly, I would like to see under this Department of Health Act the establishment not just of advisory committees or boards and councils but a specific reference to regional health councils. These, I think, are already -- the skeletons of them are already existing in the Alberta Hospital Association, where they have divided the province into various distinct regions.

The health units with their boundaries also looked at some regional aspect to the delivery of health care services. I think that if we were going to take seriously this matter of local control and being able to help rationalize the system, we would go a long way to be able to bring together resources in a particular region and say: "Okay, in northeast Alberta, here are the hospital beds you have; here are the home care services and health units that we have; here's where the CAT scan is or the lithotrite is; here's where the geriatric assessment service is; here's where the palliative care program is. How can you best work in that region to access those available resources to meet the needs as you best know them of the people in that region of the province?" Again, Mr. Speaker, I know the Alberta Hospital Association uses the regional system to develop already some policy in terms of spending and so on. I think we can go a long way by amending this Bill to have such regional health councils operate in the province to help both the minister here in Edmonton and the local boards in particular unique communities. It's not provided for, and I think that principle could be strengthened by amending it in such a way.

The final principle, Mr. Speaker, which I think underlines this Bill 5 and which the minister has already alluded to in introduction at second reading, is the principle that we in Canada and Alberta take pride in the fact that our health care system is a public-sector system, that public administration as defined by the Canada Health Act is something that we know not just delivers quality service but economically delivers that service; much more, for instance, than in the United States. Now, we're

glad to hear the minister talk in this way, as I've not heard any other minister speak, that the public nature of our health care system is one that we need to bolster and to reinforce and to help to mature, not to chip away at in a variety of different ways that entrepreneurial medicine and often Conservative governments have up their sleeves in terms of chipping away at our public health care system.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about some other comments the minister's made in support of the Premier, who has said, "Well, okay; we can understand the health care system to be public in terms of health care insurance." That's the administration of medical services under the health care plan. That's nice, but there's still the door left wide open to the private system doing all kinds of nonmedical health services, whether they happen to be nursing, as in private for-profit nursing homes, or, as we've discussed today, private for-profit lab and pathology services, or in private home care services, or in private clinics of a variety of natures, or in private management services such as Extendicare and others who can come in and do things, or privatize the laundry service in hospitals. All of these things, again, I feel very strongly about and we will debate much more vociferously as time goes by.

But I wonder about the consistency of a position which says that we want to have a public system but only applied to the medical aspect of health care. I feel if it's good enough for the medical aspect of health care, why is it not good enough for the administrative aspect of health care or for the outpatient aspect of health care or for the community aspect of health care? All of these parts and parcels of the whole health care system are ones which, if entrepreneurial or capitalists work their way into it, I think are fraught with danger.

I would like to think that the principle of the public health care system is not just applied to medical but to the whole health care system as we know it. For that reason, we did see the Bill, as originally moved and presented, to open the door to the disposition of certain health care facilities, whether geriatric, handicapped hospitals, or whatever, to be able to be sold to any person or organization as one other step along that road. So we're grateful that that door now has been closed with respect to that section. But, as I say, there are a whole host of other private for-profit ways in which people want to get into what they seem to feel is a very lucrative industry. Whether they can make gold off the old or profits off the sick, and whether they do that through a clinic or through a laundry service or through a lab service or through nursing or whatever else, I think it's just not acceptable, and we're going to continue to fight step-for-step along that way.

So, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset, we do agree with, as I perceive it to be, the principal principle of Bill 5, which is to integrate the two previous departments into one. We will support Bill 5 based not only on that principle but on the amendment which the minister has brought in to satisfy our concerns with respect to privatization. But we do have severe reservations, as I've outlined, about several other principles. We would wish that the principle of the exercise of authority being understood and being enshrined in the legislation to be directed into more of a shared sense of power and authority. It needs to be more carefully looked at. The whole principle of setting out what our goals are, what our intentions are, what our definitions are: this is a principle which may be difficult to set in legislative language, but I'd like to give it a try and see if we can't work some way along developing in Bill 5 what we really

mean by health and how we want this department to be directed in terms of its goals. The principle of local control and planning and delivery of service I think could be much better achieved by developing regional health councils, and that's not in here. And the principle that the health care system be of a public nature, not just the medical aspect of it but the whole system of a public nature: this is a principle that we think should be reinforced, and we're going to ensure that that principle is one that's brought more to maturity rather than being eroded.

Despite the fine comments of the minister earlier, I still believe there's a danger before all of us, Mr. Speaker, that we look at health care as a health care system and that this Bill 5 before us is setting up a governmental bureaucracy to deal with a system. I know we have to have that, and I'm not arguing that. What I'd like to see, however, both in the understanding of the minister as well as in other colleagues in the House, is that we need not just to have a health care system, but we need to have a health care status for individual Albertans. Because, as some have said, a lot of the health care status for individuals is improved by things which actually happen outside of the health care system. Seat belt use, for instance, has done a dramatic amount to improve the health care status of Albertans, but it was an initiative taken completely outside of the health care system per se. And there are a number of other examples. I know we have to have the system, even though there is one commentator, who actually is a member of the Hyndman commission, and I'll let you guess which one, who said that with respect to the health care system -- this person thought that there was very little health, there was very little care, and there was hardly any system that could be recognized; that we need to struggle away at making it more healthy, more caring, and more of a better system. But certainly we can do that, with the bottom line being how we can improve the overall health and well-being of individual Albertans.

So we've come a long way. We've come far with this Bill. But, Mr. Speaker, I submit on behalf of the New Democratic caucus that we have a long way yet to go, and we'll do that at committee stage with certain amendments.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have a few comments tonight about Bill 5, second reading, as well. I most certainly do support the sense of the Bill, which combines the two departments. I felt in years past that that was an unnatural separation of services and programs to individuals and that it worked some considerable hardships and probably economically was not sound either. So I support the entire operation of our health care system being combined into one department.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that this government is not fond of preambles in legislation . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, in the House. Conversation in the members' lounge. Thank you.

MRS. HEWES: . . . but I would have liked to see one in this particular Bill. I think it begs for one. The minister when introducing the Bill a week or so ago in fact stated a description of health. I believe this might well have been used in a preamble and would have served the Bill well to explain what we are in Alberta attempting to do here. The minister said that health is a

complex state of being, probably one of the most complex issues we are going to have to define. But this is the statement, Mr. Speaker, that struck me as a useful one for a preamble. The minister stated:

It encompasses the physical, the mental, the spiritual, and social well-being. It involves our relationships with our environments: the physical environment in which we live, work, and play; our social environment; our relationships with our families, our friends, our colleagues, and the community. Health is feeling good about our bodies, our minds, and the relationships we have with others. In truth health is the essence of life because without our health we have little else that matters.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that we might well have included that kind of statement from the minister as a preamble to this Bill, because it explains very well what the Bill is intended to convey and to control. I also believe that the principles of the Canada Health Act might well have been embodied in a preamble to the Bill. So I regret that that's not there, and perhaps it could be considered as an amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the minister for consideration of Bill 5 after it was first presented and for the amendments which are now before us at second reading. Like most MLAs I had many, many letters and calls of concern about the Bill in its original form from people who were very puzzled as to the significance and meaning of it and the potential that it would give to the government to deal with properties that in fact belong to the Alberta people. I think the amendment goes a long way, Mr. Speaker, to clarify what institutions can be sold or leased or changed in any way, because they are under direct government control rather than under board control. But I do want to submit that I think the Alberta Hospital Association's expressed concerns are still valid in light of the amendments. I believe they still need to be considered and dealt with.

My problem, Mr. Speaker, is with the definition of "government health care facility." It appears to me, Mr. Speaker, to be incredibly vague, and in fact in law I think it could include hospitals on Crown land that are operated by government-appointed boards of directors. These hospitals could be considered provincially owned. If section 11 is simply to address the three or four institutions that have been spoken of, the anomalies of Raymond, Claresholm, Camrose, and Worsley, then I think we need to know why the amendment doesn't state exactly that. Mr. Speaker, it's my intention to propose another amendment at committee stage that would add more clarification.

Mr. Speaker, I also regret that this particular Bill doesn't show any move on the part of the department to begin to operate in more creative methods of care and treatment, in the sense of perhaps the hospital-in-the-home model that is currently being tested in New Brunswick. This Bill doesn't appear to me to give any credibility or validity to that type of activity. Perhaps it is open enough so that it doesn't rule it out, but I think it might well have mentioned that this potential was there for the minister.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Centre has already spoken about section 8 of the Bill. The principle here that I believe is being intruded upon is one of confidentiality and privacy. I'm concerned about this section and its relationship to the Public Health Act -- I have plenty of time left, Mr. Minister -- and whether or not it is necessary in relationship to the amendments that were made last year to the Public Health Act in section 49. I'm not sure why, in fact, we need it in this Bill.

I think it is an invasive kind of permission that is given to the minister, and I simply don't understand why we need it there. The notion of preventing and suppressing disease surely belongs in health, but the control for contagious diseases and so on is clearly stated in the Public Health Act. It seemed to me, Mr. Speaker, that these powers were already available within that Act and could more properly be managed through public health boards than through the direct control of the ministry.

Mr. Speaker, I have not been able to establish whether or not this Bill is intended to be the governing legislation for the Provincial Laboratory of Public Health. I haven't been able to find that, and there is no reference to it in this Bill. I believe it needs to be lodged someplace and given its own particular legitimacy as a public institution.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other pressing issues that are not in any way addressed or commented on in this Bill. These are issues that are facing the department and that are of immense significance. Some of them are: the consistency of treatment and care throughout our province; the problems of the professionals in our province; the relationship of the health Act to the various professional groups in our province, for instance RNAs, psychiatric nurses; the rural hospital, urban hospital difficulties; the closed beds in our present system and what is intended to be done about them. Most specifically, Mr. Speaker, the Bill does not refer in any way to the needs of special categories of Albertans and our relationship to native Canadians and their health care or to new Canadians who have particular health needs because of cultural differences.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill also omits any commentary about hospital funding and the discrepancies that exist between urban and rural hospitals.

MR. SPEAKER: That's not relevant to the Bill.

MRS. HEWES: Not relevant? Okay.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that the utilization report will come in soon. The Bill does not refer either to capital management or capital development of the hospital or health care system, nor does it refer to the health care insurance system, which I believe is a public system and needs to be commented on in an all-encompassing Bill such as this one is intended to be.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, the Bill does not provide in its substance for any clear methodology of integration. I have spoken about my support for the integration of public health and of our hospital system and of the community health department that was separate before. The Bill gives no clear idea of how this integration will take place. I believe the AHA and the health units are somewhat incompatible in their ideas of how integration can occur in terms of the jurisdiction of this Bill. Nor does it give any indication, Mr. Speaker, of how integration will occur with mental health institutions, with extended care, and with all of those systems of support for prevention and home care. The Bill does not speak to the influence or the relationship between the Department of Health and other departments of the government, most notably Environment and Education. These are both missing, and I believe that's an omission in the Bill.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we are seeing a move by the government towards a rationalization of health care that I can and will support. I do not see as yet a concurrent move within this Bill or otherwise towards the regionalization of health care, which I believe is a very important subject, and I hope that debate will be joined shortly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The minister, in summation. Minister of Health.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a few remarks before moving second reading on Bill 5. First of all, I very much appreciate the comments by both the Member for Edmonton-Centre and the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I know they are very dedicated participants in the delivery of health services in our province, and I thank them for their very thoughtful remarks.

As I said at the outset of second reading, this is a Bill which is enabling legislation. And I will repeat: it is a means to an end as opposed to an end in itself. In that sense, it sets in place a system which combines the two former departments and is not in the sense of a program-facilitating kind of Bill in the way a school Act would have been. The two are very different. The Department of Health Act has a certain consistency with all other Acts creating departments and ministries of government. I must tell both hon. members who have spoken, as well as all members in the House, that I did look at the possibility of putting in a preamble or a prelude to the legislation, and in the interests of some consistency with not only other departmental Acts but also former health Acts to which this Act would be referring, I was persuaded by the very effective arguments that were made by the Legislative Counsel that this would, in fact, confuse as opposed to assist in the setting forth of the establishment of this new Department of Health. Nonetheless, I agree with the hon. members that we are on a threshold of some new and creative things that can be done by way of this Bill, and I believe that on balance we are better served by the simplicity and the conciseness of language as opposed to the inconsistency, and perhaps confusing in terms of the overall, that a prelude might bring about.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre -- I think I have to point out to him an inconsistency that I see in his argument towards outcome orientation, which I certainly support, and his very strong words against any type of privatization within the health care system, because it seems to me that we may well effect more efficient outcomes by way of privatization of the nonmedical side of the health care field. I don't think we can rule the possibility out. I will argue with him for many days and years presumably in this House over the issue, and I look forward to the matter. I will repeat, however, that the whole issue of privatization is one that cannot be done within the medical side of health because of the reality of the Canada Health Act. Nonetheless, in areas such as waste management, laundry, food services, and other important parts of the health system, I believe we need to be able to be assured that we are getting the best value for our dollar, and therefore I won't rule out the possibility of privatization in those areas.

I'm going to leave the comments with respect to each particular section, which both members have made, to Committee of the Whole. I hear them loud and clear, that both parties will have amendments that they want to propose with respect to the Bill in Committee of the Whole, and I'll look forward to that.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to close by making a certain statement with respect perhaps to generalities, but nonetheless an important statement that I believe needs to be made. Although running hospitals and providing vaccine for infants is a very important part of the health system, the issues in health

and health management, I believe, are far bigger. The issues are about respecting the privacy and the vulnerability of those who seek our care and our comforting, the issues are about being sensitive and trusting the professional competence of individuals, the issues are about personal responsibility for choosing a healthy life-style, and the issues are about not waiting until heart bypass surgery is necessary before we take responsibility for eating properly and exercising regularly. The issues are about, I believe, understanding the very important link between our environment and our health. Finally, the issues are about recognizing that it takes a healthy economy to support and protect the integrity of our health system.

The single health mandate which our Premier envisaged is about the integration of all of these issues. Our health system is a broad spectrum of services ranging from education and prevention to community-based and institutionally based services, each equally important and each with the same goal, and that is to provide services to encourage Albertans to achieve and maintain their potential for health. The formation of a single Department of Health assists in the integration process of our health services. It avoids a fragmentation of services and provides a far better opportunity for a co-ordinated response to health needs of Albertans. I'm proud of the reorganization thus far and of the highly qualified professionals we've been able to attract to serve Albertans within the Department of Health. The department will play a leadership role, and it will require the support and the participation not only of health professionals but of all of us in this Assembly and, in fact, of all Albertans if we are to successfully meet the challenges that lie ahead and develop a health system which will carry us into the future.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to move second reading of Bill 5, the Department of Health Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a second time]

Bill 14 Regional Airports Authorities Act

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, in speaking briefly to Bill 14 at second reading, I want to share with you that the Bill simply provides a framework for the establishment of local airport authorities which we believe will be more responsive to the needs and priorities of the local regions. As I indicated in the Legislative Assembly in response to a question from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, they do generate substantial economic benefits to the local areas. We feel that if they are under a local airport authority, there will be an enhancement of those economic benefits flowing through to the regions, because those individuals from the localities will have a keener sense as to how to have greater development of their airport facilities.

With those few comments, I look forward to debating in general the principles of the legislation and getting into it in a more in-depth way when we go through committee study.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would that the minister had perhaps elaborated a little bit more, although I guess most of us following the issue know a lot of the pros and cons about setting up an authority, and certainly there are some positive aspects to the idea.

Bill 14 allows the setting up of airport authorities throughout

the province, I gather, and some of those might vary considerably. The one that I've had the most to do with and have discussed the most, of course, is the area around Edmonton. It leads me to have some concerns about the Bill and about the principles behind this Bill. I might add that, you know, Calgary might decide to do it quite differently than Edmonton. Montreal is already on the way to doing it, so this is something that's going right across the country as the federal government moves to get out of the business of running airports.

I might add that they've also stipulated that they do not intend to give over the running of those airports to either local or provincial governments nor to private entrepreneurs. So it would seem that the local airport authority is the only model, at this stage anyway, that the federal government is willing to look at. One might argue that the whole move is to give over the running of the airport to local people but not directly to local governments, although they would be the ones to appoint the directors, as I understand the model that is currently being discussed in Edmonton.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

Now, as a New Democrat I don't have a basic philosophical distrust of this idea. I think the idea has, for instance, been used in England fairly successfully, with the idea that if there is a need for some local concerns to be met that a local authority is set up as a sort of semi-independent body from the local government but controlled and appointments to that body being made by the local government. It seems to have worked quite well in England for a number of years. However, I've got to say also -- and it raises a danger point from our point of view -- that now that Ma Thatcher has been in power for so long in England, she has in fact privatized a lot of those local authorities, and it has raised the spectre, then, with ourselves and with the unions that presently work for some of the airports presently in existence in this province.

Now the Mulroney government have said that they do not intend to hand over the airports to local governments or municipal governments or private individuals. But if you draft your legislation and set up the agreements in such a way that somebody later on can just change the agreement slightly and then find that everything is nicely and conveniently organized so that it could be privatized later, then you at least have to be aware that that possibility exists. I don't know that anybody in this province, after the last federal election, would really trust the Mulroney government to not change its mind pretty easily, quite frankly, down the road. So certainly it's causing some concern I think, at least for some of our union workers in the airport business.

The local government here seems to be prepared to go along with this idea of setting up an authority, and the idea behind the authority, the purposes, are quite good. I would direct people's attention to section 21, on page 10. I think embodied in here is the main principle of the Bill.

The purposes of an authority are

- (a) to manage and operate the airports for which it is responsible in a safe, secure and efficient manner.

And they may very well be able to do that better than the federal authorities or local governments or private entrepreneurs or the provincial government, for that matter -- certainly the provincial government, for that matter, I should say.

The second point:

- (b) to advance economic and community development by means that include promoting and encouraging improved airline and transportation service and an expanded aviation industry

for the general benefit of the public in its region.

That, Mr. Speaker, is of course the positive side and the good side of the aims of the people involved in this process. I know that the people in the Regional Airports Task Force Association worked very hard and have been involved in the last two or three years in some important discussions with all kinds of officials at the provincial level, local level, business groups and unions, to discuss the merits of setting up this local authority. They have certainly done their homework and done it well, and I am pleased with what contact I've had with them and their explanations as to where they're going with this and why they're doing it.

It of course raises the question, in the Edmonton area anyway, of: how do we organize the running of four airports -- the two smaller ones not being particularly important -- but the International Airport and the Municipal Airport? There's been a big controversy, and I don't think one can look at this Bill and the direction it takes us without at least raising this question. I don't pretend to have an answer to it myself. Do you continue to operate a municipal airport in the city of Edmonton at the same time that you try to get an important international airport, really, off the ground outside Edmonton?

There are some built-in difficulties and contradictions, which I would just take a moment on. The passenger service out of Edmonton to Calgary, the daily shuttle, is very convenient. Everybody that needs to use it likes to use it. But, at the same time, many businessmen in this city and people involved in the tourist industry, for example, and businesspeople who want good air contacts with the rest of the world, international flights, would argue that Calgary not Edmonton has become the international airport of Alberta, mainly because of that shuttle. There may be some merit to their arguments; I think the jury is probably still out, although it's not for some people, I know. So there is still that very important problem.

Going back to the very beginnings of this debate, at least when it first took its sort of public meeting form and MLAs in the area were invited to meet with local officials and businesspeople talking about the pros and cons of this, I remember there was some feeling that the decision whether to move the Municipal Airport services to the International Airport had to be made by responsible people -- namely the city of Edmonton, I guess you would say, because they're the ones in charge of the Municipal Airport -- before setting up the authority. In other words, they were a little afraid at that time of setting up the authority and then having this authority torn asunder, so to speak, by that argument. I see now that as time has gone by the proposal has come forward to set up the authority and the question has not been dealt with. So I guess people have been chicken, I suppose is perhaps the right word, to make that decision about whether we should or shouldn't move the Municipal Airport and have said: "Okay. Well, we'll turn the whole thing over to this authority and leave them to decide down the road." I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, that that's a fair question -- and it's a very important one in the Edmonton area -- to land on a new authority that will be struggling to find its feet. But I guess maybe it is one way to deal with it, and who knows what direction they may take if in fact they are set up and begin to operate?

Some of the other aspects of that particular thing: I guess you know Edmonton sort of considers itself the gateway to the north, and the Municipal Airport is certainly convenient for the northern part of Alberta and even up into the Yukon and the Territories and northern B.C., for contacts in that direction. So it's a very important question. Since it's also been a money-maker for the city of Edmonton, it's an important question for the people on the city council. We are in the middle of an election now, and I'm not sure how much it will become an election issue nor the stance that will be taken by the new council when it's convened after the election.

So my concern, Mr. Speaker, with the basic principle is that in spite of the . . . I did raise this question the other day in the House, and the minister said, "No, that was not the intent." In fact, we got a letter from the Regional Airports Task Force Association people, and they said, "No, no, no, that's not the intent, to privatize the airports afterwards." And while I agree that that's not the intent certainly of those people and of the federal government at this stage -- I accept their words; they're here in black and white, and I've read them very carefully. It says that

the federal government has clearly stated that it is not prepared to transfer Transport Canada airports to private interests or to other levels of government,

that the transfer agreement would mean that if the airport authority no longer wanted to operate the airport, then

the transfer agreement will require that it revert back to the federal government.

The local people are saying also that they have made it clear that the airport transfer agreement will place restrictions on an airport authority's ability to sell or transfer assets,

and that they will have

a similar restriction [to be] included in any transfer agreement for the . . . Municipal Airport.

That is similar to the federal one saying that the airport would revert back to the municipal government. So I accept those assurances.

But I guess my problem with the Bill is that the Bill doesn't conform to those assurances. And while I may accept the provincial and local and federal governments' sincerity in this, I would think that the provincial government, in passing the enabling legislation -- and they are responsible for the enabling legislation for municipal actions for the legislative framework within which municipalities act -- would build into its Act those very safeguards, so that there is no question, then, that . . . In other words, for a later municipal or federal government to change their mind and do like Mrs. Thatcher did in Britain; that it would require a change of legislation at the provincial level. If you built in, for instance, something different than section 23, which does allow the authority to "sell, lease or exchange all or substantially all of the assets" -- I know there's a formula for it, and they say it's quite restrictive, but it's not so restrictive that it couldn't happen. If you consider a quorum is just slightly more than half the members -- in the Edmonton case I think they're thinking of 13 members; so let's say that's seven, to be more than half. So they got a quorum, and then you need three-quarters of that to sell all the assets of the authority. So it would not take that many people and would not be that hard to do, granted that they might have to break some other agreements, other than what's in this legislation.

I just think the minister should take the time to build into the legislation the same kinds of restrictions that both the local and federal governments are saying they want in their parts of the agreement.

There's one other aspect of the Bill that bothers me, and I flagged these. I realize we're getting into a bit of detail, more than one would normally do in principle, but it's a good way to flag it before the Committee of the Whole discussion so the minister can consider whether he might want to make the changes or not.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

It seems to be a penchant of this government to give its ministers blank cheques. And I quote the example of Bill 5, for example, on the sale of hospital assets to any private or corporate individual.

MR. SPEAKER: You can't cite the quote. This is Bill 14.

MR. McEACHERN: No. I just mention it as a parallel, Mr. Speaker. They've since backed away from that, and that's fine.

I would ask the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to consider also section 4, on page 3, where it says:

4(1) One or more bodies corporate that in the Minister's opinion represent the interests of the public or public interests in the region in which a proposed authority's airports would be located may petition the Lieutenant Governor in Council, through the Minister, for the formation under this Act of a regional airports authority.

Now, I wonder why we have to say "one or more bodies corporate," which, in effect, then gives the minister a blank cheque. He could, instead of going to the local governments, which I know is the intention in this case and I have no doubt whatsoever that that is the direction and intent in this case -- but there are other airports around the province, and they may decide to set up an authority. And by wording it this way you are, in effect, saying that if the minister thought that some chamber of commerce in some particular town represented the local people adequately, he could in fact let them set up a local regional airport authority. Or for that matter, if it's the society for the preservation of the Gaelic language who wanted to set up a regional airport authority and the minister decided they were representative enough, he could allow them to. I realize, of course, in the latter example that it's a ridiculous example, but I cite it because the legislation would allow it. Of course, the chamber of commerce would not be such a ridiculous possibility.

But in my view and in the view of this caucus, we think the minister should say exactly what he means to say. So instead of "one or more bodies corporate," he should be talking about local or municipal governments. They are the ones that should petition for a regional airport authority. We should not give the minister a blank cheque to decide that any group that he thinks is representative enough can do it but should specify that only locally elected officials would qualify for setting up a regional airport authority.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are some of the main concerns with the Bill that I would like to flag for the minister, and with those words I'd just like to once more compliment the group of people who have worked on this project. It's a difficult question. A lot of people have put a lot of time and effort into it, and the Bill comes to us with a lot of good intentions. It sets up a situation that leaves a little bit of ambiguity about where it might take us, the way it is presently worded.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to say that there

is a great potential in this Bill. The way it's been presented to many of us, it could be a good thing for the Edmonton area anyway.

One thing, though, that I am worried about is that there seems to be no necessary connection between the incorporators, who are intended to be local authorities -- but the wording is a bit ambiguous there -- and the appointers of the board of directors, which is section 13. Now, it's essential to the scheme of the Act, Mr. Speaker, I believe from the stated intentions of all those who have been dealing with it, that in the case of Edmonton anyway it will be the five municipalities around Edmonton who will make the proposal and will either entirely or largely be sending their appointments forward to comprise the board. Now, it doesn't say that in the Act, Mr. Speaker, and that's a big hole in the Act, because you could have the local authorities, as incorporators, proposing the scheme, and then the minister accepting appointees as the board or the authority, and there being no connection whatever in the nature of things. That's unlikely, but we should get the legislation unambiguous and straight from the start.

It's particularly important from our point of view because our natural inclination is not in favour of private operations of public matters like this, and the safeguard against the management of this going in what we conceive to be an undesirable direction is in the personnel on the board of directors. Now, if a majority of the appointees of the public authorities think it should be run privately, well, at least that is a sort of nonpartisan group, I suppose, that could make such a decision. I believe this is perhaps just an oversight in the drafting, Mr. Speaker, but it goes to the principle of the thing, I submit.

The other point I wish to make is a general point that I make on all such Bills, and in this I echo the Conservative government's own task force on regulations which reported in 1974. It is that whenever regulations are to form an important part of a Bill, they should be tabled at the same time the Bill is considered, because it's often an essential part of the mechanism of the Bill, and so it is here, because in this important respect in section 13, where we are dealing with the appointment of the directors, they are to be appointed "in accordance with the regulations and the authority's articles." Now, it's premature, perhaps, to demand to see the authority's articles too, but at least we should be able to see the regulations.

I should remind the minister of that principle that the government tried to establish, a very credible principle, in 1974. By and large, it's been lived up to since, I think, because Mr. Lougheed, when in opposition, pointed out that the Social Credit government did an awful lot of stuff by regulation and it wasn't right because it wasn't under the control of the Legislature in any direct way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Beverly.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, want to make some comments to Bill 14. Initially I want to say that I think it's a significant Bill. I think it's a Bill that is a major departure from the historic practice of airport operations. Of course, what that says is that we're breaking new ice in a new direction, and when that happens I always hope that the process has been properly thought through, and it's always to have some caution that perhaps there may be some quirks that will need to be worked out; there may be some problems.

However, my comments are that I believe that operating the four airports by an authority makes sense to me, particularly when the operations are going to be done by a local authority, by people selected also by the local municipalities in this case. I think it's significant to say that this authority, in my opinion, presumably is going to have the interests of northern Alberta, and Edmonton particularly, concerned about their growth, their development, and their economy. Airports do contribute significantly over the years to the growth and development of communities and regions, and I think in this case the International Airport particularly has been somewhat neglected, I feel, by the federal people. Efforts to increase flights, to bring international flights to the Edmonton airport have not taken place as I thought they should have, so I think the authority will undertake those tasks to improve the viability of this particular airport and the airports in the region.

Certainly, as I say, growth and development of the airport has not been fulfilled. In fact, there has been no effort, in my opinion, by the federal government to enhance the operations out of the Edmonton International. As already has been stated, it seems like they've concentrated most of their efforts into one airport in the province, that being the city of Calgary. Again, it has been mentioned, no doubt the Municipal Airport here in Edmonton had some influence or has had some impact on the development of the International. Nevertheless, I believe the authority should be able to cope and resolve those kinds of problems.

Mention has been made of privatization. That's always a concern, I think, particularly to the employees who might be affected if in fact something like this occurred. These people have built a reputation as good employees and are established employees concerned about what may be in for them in the event that in fact some privatization occurred at this particular airport, particularly the International. However, as also has been stated, I think the task force has been advised by both the federal government and the city of Edmonton that in the event the authority decided not to continue to operate these airports, in all respects the airports would then revert back to the federal and/or the city of Edmonton, whichever the case might be.

So I think a few amendments to the Bill might be appropriate, primarily to clarify some misconceptions that are in it or, at least, we think are in it. By and large, I think the move is perhaps in the right direction. Certainly the business community, the civic politicians, have gone to great lengths locally to strive for this occurrence, and I believe the task force has done a lot of work to get us to this point. I think the Bill deserves support, but it also does need some amendments to ensure that the intent of the Bill is clearly understood.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Centre, then perhaps the minister.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to add a bit more to what my colleagues have already said with respect to a number of concerns around this very significant piece of legislation. I would like to echo as well their comments that we're hopeful that as an economic development project, this Bill and the authority locally operating for airports are going to help that industry and help diversify and develop the economy through better planning and better routing of air traffic. But we must bear in mind, and I don't think the whole discussion can go too far without also noting, that it's an issue of public safety as well. We again are concerned by some of the developments in

the United States where deregulation has taken off to what statistics are already saying is not only bad news for travelers but also near misses between planes and a very heightened sense of anxiety among air traffic controllers and people at airports who are having a very difficult time in a deregulated air travel industry. So I would just like to caution that although we're hopeful and supportive of this as an economic development tool, whether it's through federal Transport or whoever has responsibility for public safety, every measure is taken to ensure that the best of public safety measures are also brought to bear on the local authority in terms of planning and delivering of air services.

Also, I just would like to expand a bit more about what other colleagues have mentioned not just in terms of the concern around privatization and sale to private interests, as is maybe the British or sometimes the American situation, but also the business of local authorities really wanting to develop some non-union shops. We are concerned, as we've heard from some interests in this area, that they would just as soon have airports where they didn't have to deal with any unions. In fact, as we know both at the International and the Edmonton Municipal Airport and at airports throughout the country, there are a number of unions that have been working in good faith and with a good record in terms of their collective agreements. I would hate to see this development move toward trying to break those unions or get them to be non-union shops.

It might be a radical step, but it's been suggested to me that perhaps this minister with this legislation should do as the hospitals minister did recently, which was to issue a directive that nurses must be on hospital boards. I know it isn't entirely popular with a lot of people over there, but they've made that move on behalf of the Premier and the Minister of Health. With that as an example, could it be that this minister might address the issue of having some of the unionized workers from airports on the Local Authorities Board as well? We were encouraged that in good faith -- for instance, even the task force here had Neil Reimer as one of the task force members and really brought a very experienced voice of labour to their deliberations. I think that can only satisfy a number of different interests, and it makes good sense. Perhaps it could be more carefully enshrined in this to give us and the workers who, as I say, have had the experience, whether they're air traffic controllers or transportation union or Public Service Alliance or whatever, the assurance that they have a voice and a seat right at the top. That would go a long way to dispel a number of concerns, as well as to give them a voice in the ongoing decision-making process which is going to affect them, the public safety of passengers, as well as economically developing industry.

Then I'd like to make a couple of comments. It's probably out of my own ignorance. We in Edmonton see this to be a good move insofar as I agree that there is some fragmentation in terms of air traffic and travel and routes. It doesn't make sense to me that Lufthansa, for instance, would fly into Calgary and not into Edmonton when in fact more German-speaking people are in the northern part of province. Yet Lufthansa flies into Calgary. I'm sure Lufthansa could have a route here. This whole business with the link to Japan as well: I know there's a lot of controversy whether a direct link is going to come out of Calgary or out of Edmonton, but I know that we in Edmonton could really develop under the authority of a much more rational bid for some of these routes by some of the major carriers, which is going to help develop the tourism industry as well.

I'm just wondering what the minister sees as the benefits this local authorities airports Act is achieving for the Calgary airport. It's my understanding that Calgary is functioning very well. It's been well planned. They've recruited major routes. It's a major hub of air travel. It's making money. Everyone seems to be happy with it, and I'm just wondering what the minister sees this authority doing to further achieve for the International Airport in Calgary. Maybe there are some things there that I'm just missing. I know we think it's good for us here in Edmonton, but I'd like to have some comments with respect to that issue.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister.

MR. ELZINGA: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In moving second reading of Bill 14, let me be very quick and respond to the very legitimate concerns that have been raised by colleagues.

I thank the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway deeply for following the legislation so closely. I want to leave him and other colleagues with the assurance, as I've done earlier, that it is not our intent to allow the privatization but to have local airport authorities.

The concern has been raised by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona as it relates to the board of directors, whereby there should be limited flexibility. It's simply for the reasons that the hon. member's colleague from Edmonton-Centre raised. We want to have that flexibility because we're petitioned by the local authorities themselves. A group comes forward and petitions the Lieutenant Governor in Council and indicates in that petition the establishment of the board of directors. In the event that we deem it advisable, as you have suggested -- and it's a good suggestion -- whereby you do have certain groups represented on that board of directors, I can indicate to them in turn that it is the direction of this body that we would like to see greater flexibility in that board of directors. I should share with you one of the reasons, being, as I'm sure hon. members are aware, St. Albert did not participate in the overall task force because they did have some concerns with the Edmonton Municipal Airport. The hon. Member for St. Albert has raised that with me too. We want to make sure, even though they did not participate, that they have the right to nominate somebody to serve on the board of directors in the event that it is going to be a regional body. That is one of the reasons why I would ask for that flexibility to be maintained, so we could make sure those various groups and various municipalities are represented.

I agree with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly that we are going out into new ground. It is new direction and we wish to exercise proper caution as we go through that, and I thank you for your advice and counsel.

I close off by sharing with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre that his concern as it relates to public safety is legitimate. We're going to be regulated by the federal government regulations. That will be consistent, and there will be no change in that whatsoever. Again, as the hon. member indicated too, these local authorities will be more active in encouraging international routes. There will be greater competition between Edmonton and Calgary rather than the decisions coming from central Canada as to what routes will be coming into our various international airports. It does have the support of the Calgary task force that did work and the support of the Calgary city council.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would move second reading of Bill

14.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a second time]

head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Members of the committee, we are now dealing with the 1989 estimates of proposed investments by the Capital Projects Division of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Estimates 1989-90

Agriculture

MR. CHAIRMAN: Votes 1, 2, and 3 for the Department of Agriculture are to be found on pages 10, 11, and 12 of the book. I would invite the minister to introduce the three votes. The hon. Associate Minister of Agriculture.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm very pleased to appear tonight to report on the estimates of the heritage fund projects which fall within Agriculture. My comments will refer to the three agricultural projects directly funded by the heritage fund: Farming for the Future, irrigation rehabilitation and expansion program, and the private irrigation program. After my comments and yours, I'll be very pleased to respond to any questions.

I'd like to begin with the irrigation rehabilitation and expansion program. As you are aware, the long-term shared objective of Alberta Agriculture's irrigation rehabilitation and expansion program and of Alberta Environment's irrigation headworks program is to provide a system capable of supporting 1.3 million acres of irrigated farmland within the existing irrigation districts. In view of the progress we've made thus far, I can assure the committee that this is a feasible and realistic goal and one that will benefit not just our farming sector but the provincial economy as a whole.

A 1987 evaluation of the irrigation rehabilitation and expansion program gives us a good picture of just how successful the program has been thus far. The evaluation, a comprehensive review of the program and of its administration, was conducted by the Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group and CH2M Hill Engineering Ltd. for Alberta Agriculture. The study states that the economic impact of the irrigation rehabilitation and expansion program has been significant. It further indicates that the program's effect on our economy includes both direct and indirect impact: economic activity directly associated with the irrigation project such as construction employment; indirect impacts, economic activity spread and created through expenditures made in the industry sectors that supply inputs to the projects, and through the respending of income by workers employed on the projects. The study not only reflects the impact of actual expenditures under the program but also examines the economic impacts of expenditures made by farmers on irrigation systems and extensions as a result of the program, as well as several other economic impacts associated with the program. These include crop production and yields, on-farm operation expenditures, government expenditures on the administration

and operation of the program, and the substantial tax revenues generated by the program. I'd be more than happy to provide copies of this study should they be required by any of the members.

Mr. Chairman, this program is making significant differences to the ability of the districts to deliver water efficiently to the very dry regions of our province and therefore improve the stability of our provincial economy. Salinization in the irrigated areas has largely been arrested, and the opportunity for reclamation of salinized land is being provided. This program assists the districts in complying with the very expensive requirement of the Irrigation Act to control seepage. Further, the program encourages the development and export of new technology for the delivery of irrigation water. Just as one example, I would cite the "overshot" gates developed and manufactured in Lethbridge and now being sold in California and the Alberta engineering consultants currently working in California. Our irrigation industry is a showcase for many countries of this world.

I'd like to turn now to the Alberta private irrigation development assistance program. This program was conceived and developed to provide financial support assistance to agricultural producers developing private irrigation schemes to enhance their operations. Just as the existing irrigation rehabilitation and expansion program supports the development of refurbished and expanded water conveyance systems for Alberta's 13 organized irrigation districts, this program is intended to assist producers in defraying the costs associated with constructing the capital works necessary to divert water from a variety of water sources across the province and convey it to their irrigated fields. The program has been structured to provide up to \$10 million in grants to eligible applicants over a five-year period from April '89 to March 1994.

In addition to this, program funding announced previously in December of 1988, an additional \$1 million, has been allocated to defray the costs of required associated technical work carried out by the private-sector engineering community. The intent is not only to provide incentive for increasing Alberta's irrigated land base across the whole of the province but to ensure that these private developments are carried out in a quality fashion.

My final remarks will be on the Farming for the Future vote. Mr. Chairman, in Farming for the Future Alberta has the most innovative and effective agricultural research program of any province. The program represents a unique co-operative effort among producers, the private sector, academic institutions, and the federal and Alberta governments. The means of co-operation are the research projects supported by Farming for the Future. The outcome are the project's results, which in turn lead to tangible benefits for Alberta's agricultural industry. Agriculture is one of the foundations of Alberta's economy. The province's welfare is tied in part to this industry's continued growth and progress. Most of the time increased growth and progress require increased efficiency and productivity. That's where Farming for the Future comes in. The program has yielded concrete, positive results for our agricultural community through each of its two major components, the research program and the on-farm demonstration program. The research program has achieved a record of scientific accomplishments of which all Albertans can be proud. Through it we've funded studies on grains, oilseeds, livestock production, special crops, food processing, and other agricultural sectors. These studies have resulted in a pretty fair record of achievement: new wheat,

canola, and barley varieties especially suited for Alberta conditions, new livestock vaccines, improved methods for the detection of and protection from livestock diseases, better feed evaluation techniques, and new ways to control and reduce soil salinity.

Mr. Chairman, I believe most members are aware of the impact the on-farm demonstration program has had on reducing the time it takes to transfer research results from the scientist to the farmer. In on-farm demonstrations we combine the practical experience of producers, the scientific knowledge of researchers and specialists, and the extension skills of district agriculturists in testing new agricultural techniques and technology under real-life conditions. Through the demonstration program, farmers have been introduced to the latest in technological innovations, innovations that they have helped prove to be effective on their own farms. At the same time, researchers and scientists have become better aware through direct contact of the needs and problems of the agricultural industry.

To update members, Farming for the Future is currently in the third year of its current five-year mandate. This mandate guarantees the program will continue until the end of fiscal 1991-92, subject to annual approval by this Legislature. In the years since its inception, this unique research and extension program has provided our agricultural sector with a number of valuable advances. I'm confident that in the future we will witness even greater achievements under Farming for the Future.

With those very brief comments, I would welcome comments from the members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It would be my suggestion to the committee, with your permission, that we consider the three votes separately, perhaps discuss vote 1 and vote when the time seems appropriate, proceed that way, and then vote 2 and vote 3.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that agreeable to the committee?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. FOX: It doesn't seem too complicated.

1 -- Farming for the Future

MR. FOX: In terms of the Farming for the Future program, as the minister states, most members who represent rural constituencies would be well aware of the extent of Farming for the Future, especially the on-farm demonstration programs, and I'm pleased to see that the projects are advertised when they're undertaken so people are aware that, you know, this money is being spent to try and develop some more practical approaches to cultural methods and marketing, et cetera. I'm wondering if the minister, in terms of the value of the projects . . . I mean, we all know they're there, the benefits, but sometimes they're not tangible or measurable. I'm wondering if the department has made any attempt to do any sort of value-for-money audit on the Farming for the Future program to determine, for example, in exchange for the \$43.807 million spent to date, what has been the economic impact on the agricultural sector as a result of that expenditure. For example, under the research programs, the research components in respect to the different varieties the

minister refers to, have there been any measurable benefits of yield improvement and the resultant impact on the farm economy in terms of increased yield, disease resistance, a shorter growing season, or whatever particular aims the researchers may have had in mind? I'd be interested in hearing the minister's comments in terms of any sort of assessment of the tangible benefits, perhaps even put in monetary terms, of the program. It's been running for quite some time now, and I think we ought to be able to look at it in that regard.

In terms of on-farm demonstrations, I note that there is a report put out annually that documents or at least outlines the programs funded, where they are and who they're done by. I think that's helpful. I would like to ask the minister, in terms of her particular interest in soil conservation, if she could tell us how many projects and how many dollars have been allocated to specific on-farm demonstrations with respect to soil conservation initiatives. It's an area that's becoming much more important not only to farmers but to the citizens at large in our society. I think it's going along with an increased awareness of the need to treat the environment with respect in the interests of preserving it and making sure it's available for generations to come.

Soil, being a very precious resource, I think has benefited from that growing awareness of people. There was a major symposium in Edmonton here in the past week where concerns were addressed and, I believe, stated by one eminent authority in the field -- if you'll pardon the pun -- predicting that if we didn't make some dramatic changes in the way we approach soil management agriculture would be all but wiped out in this country within 50 years, that the degradation and loss of topsoil is still going along at a fairly alarming rate and we need to make some dramatic changes.

So I would be interested in the minister's comments, if she could tell us what sorts of projects are being proposed with respect to soil conservation along the lines of minimum tillage projects, experiments with windbreaks, shelter belts, et cetera; in terms of crop rotations, continuous cropping as compared to summer fallow, those sorts of things. I am sure there are a lot of people who are expressing an interest in and applying for Farming for the Future grants with respect to those types of projects, and I'd like to know what she sees on the horizon.

There is a group of farmers out in the Vegreville constituency. They call themselves the Stanislaw Sandblasters. I'll have to spell that for *Hansard*, I guess. There is a community hall north of Vegreville called the Stanislaw hall, and a group of farmers in the area took a keen interest in soil conservation, especially highlighted during the winter of 1987-88 when it was so terribly dry with virtually no snow cover and high winds during the winter. This was the prelude to the serious drought last summer that all members will remember so well. Anyway, the experience during the months of January and February was that we were having incredible dust storms in a part of the province where they weren't common. I know some of the southern members are used to seeing dust storms in winter, and farmers there have tried to develop methods to cope with soil drifting, but it was something we hadn't seen in our area for some time. These farmers, being alarmed at the dust storms, seeing the bottom two wires of their barbed wire fences being covered with drifted soil, the roadside ditches filling in, in some cases having to get the county grader out not to move snow off the roads but to move dirt off the roads, decided that we've gone too far. They were determined to try and create a concern among their fellow farmers and the professional agronomists in the area and

work together to try and develop some practical methods to tackle this serious problem of soil erosion.

There is, as the current Minister of Economic Development and Trade will know, a soil research station operated by the federal government doing projects jointly funded by Alberta and Canada in respect to soil conservation and soil management. Some of the researchers from there and the district agriculturists joined with these farmers and provided technical advice and organizational advice to the Stanislaw Sandblasters. They organized a meeting last winter which was attended by perhaps close to 100 farmers, in the middle of a blizzard. It showed an incredible amount of interest. They had a field day here about two weeks ago that I wish I could have attended, but my responsibilities in the House required me to be here. Anyway, they've gone a long way to developing the kind of awareness about the long-term impact of soil erosion and degradation, and they are trying to come up with some ways of coping with it and looking at minimum tillage operations in our area, et cetera, et cetera.

Some of the people in the group expressed a concern, and I think quite rightly so, that while it's easy to look at herbicides as a major ally in terms of protecting soil and preventing erosion, we ought not to stop there. We need to be working in the long term towards reducing our dependence on and the use of agricultural chemicals, and if we can find cropping rotations and different cultural methods that will address the problem, then not only will we be doing the environment more good in the long term but we will be reducing, I suspect, in the long term the cost of inputs that farmers have to face.

I'm pleased to be able to tell the Associate Minister of Agriculture, who I know has taken a great interest in soil conservation and who, in fact, sponsored the new Soil Conservation Act in the Assembly last year, about the activities of the Stanislaw Sandblasters and would ask that she provide me with some information about the extent to which the Farming for the Future program is being used to address the problems of soil conservation and soil erosion and degradation.

I note that in the research part of the program the research projects sometimes fund research in apiculture and entomology. I suspect that some of those projects are funded up at Beaverlodge, perhaps, where a number of very good researchers have worked for the federal and provincial governments over the years. But I wonder what efforts are being made by the government to help find ways for the industry to cope with mites, the various mites that are posing great problems for the beekeepers of Alberta. Members will want to know that honey production is a very important part of the agricultural industry in this province. Alberta has a reputation for not only producing the largest volume of honey in Canada but certainly the best honey in Canada.

The industry is experiencing some very difficult times due to the presence in other areas of the continent of parasitic mites that breed on bees, one of them being the acarid mite, and one of them being the varroa mite. The feeling is that we have managed to avoid the mite in Alberta by going along with a federal government decision to close the border to the import of bees from the United States, but there have been some discoveries of mites within our province's borders. There's a lot of question in the industry as to whether or not the border closure decision was an effective one and whether or not we will be able to in the short or long term keep Alberta beekeeping mite free. So there needs to be some research into methods of controlling and coping with the mites, because there may be a time in the not

too distant future where if we're going to have a beekeeping industry, it's going to be a beekeeping industry that has to cope with mites. I'm wondering if the minister could give us any advice about programs last year or this year that relate specifically to the impact of mites on the beekeeping industry.

Awaiting her comments, I'll take a break, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would the hon. minister like to reply to that or wait until . . . Would the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon like to speak on vote 1 before the minister replies?

MR. TAYLOR: No. Mr. Chairman, under the guise that you never try to feed a cow a whole bale of hay at one time, I thought I'd rather wait and see if the first nibble or two is digested, that our friend from Vegreville has put forward, and then I will throw a bale in later.

MR. FOX: Call him a steer.

MRS. McCLELLAN: I'm not flattered. I'll consider the source.

I would just make some brief comments, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the hon. Member for Vegreville's interest in this -- and has always been very positive in this area.

The question on the value-for-money audit is an interesting one, and I must tell you that I don't have the absolute answer for that. I will get it for you, as to what we may have done. I know that the hon. member is as aware as I am how difficult it is to put a monetary value specifically on programs like this because of the complexity of trying to gauge just where all that monetary value sits. There are many spin-offs -- direct, indirect, and so on -- but I think it's a question I'd like to pursue, and I will be happy to provide you with that.

I appreciate your interest in the soil conservation projects because you, I know, are as interested in that as I am. I could give you just a few examples of some of the projects. As you would be aware by seeing the annual reports, the projects are extensive in Farming for the Future, and certainly I would be happy to share with you the programs approved for this year, but I'll mention just a few. The annual legume plowdown to replace cultivated fallow would be one that would fall in there. Dryland farming system research for south and south-central Alberta would be another one. Deep tillage tools for soil and water conservation projects would be another one. The Pulse Bander project, which is a conservation tool for forage production, would be another, to just mention a few of the ones that are in place.

I would applaud a group such as the Stanislaw Sandblasters. It's interesting to see how many groups there are in our province that have a very keen interest in these things and are doing really great work. I, like you, have had the invitation to visit a number of these, and I regret that I, too, have at times had to defer, but I intend to do that. I think they are doing great work. I am encouraging them. I know this is a bit away from our vote, but with the soil conservation initiative there will be an opportunity for groups such as this to apply for assistance to continue their work. I think it's very important.

Skimming quickly through the projects this year, and there's such a long list. On the mites: I don't see a specific on mites in Farming for the Future, but I know there is work being done through the department in that area.

Again I thank the member for his very positive comments,

and I'd be willing to share any of that information that he might like.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Did the hon. Member for Stony Plain wish to participate in this vote?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I'd like to again commend the minister for the Farming for the Future program. I think the objectives of keeping farming viable in Alberta and also hoping to improve the net farm income are very commendable. All I really have are two or three questions I would like answered if possible.

One is to do with the dissemination of information, and I believe you do it through publications, and you've also had an electronic bulletin board in Olds. I would like to know if the associate minister does have any kind of information as to how well used and how effective the dissemination of the information really is to the interested farmers.

Also, I found it very interesting that in 1987, I believe, the comment was that 10 percent of the research in this program went out of province because of the lack of expertise and facilities within Alberta. I would have two questions relative to that particular statement. Have we made any efforts to bring the lacking expertise into Alberta since 1987? How much of our program was sublet outside of the province for 1988? What is the expectation for sending our research out of province for this current year?

Along with that, in the same category was the reference to the development of a world-class food processing industry and increasing diversification away from the glutted commodity markets, which were implied to be vital for this province. I would like to know if there is any hard data on the progress made in diversifying our food processing industry and if any kind of progress has been made to enhance that industry in the last couple of years, the reason being that crop diversification and indeed any new products would in fact help improve the agricultural economy of this province.

I would like a bit of information on two other areas. One is special crops. I believe that in 1987 they were up around the 350,000-acre category, up significantly over the 10-year period. I would like to know what these crops might be. That perhaps would require a written answer down the line, which is quite acceptable. What kind of benefits appear to be coming out of them, especially into the net farm income? Also, if the associate minister would have what the expected acreage for the 1989 crop year would be in the special crop area, that one is of a particular interest to me because I feel that when you tie it in with irrigation, the potential for this might be perhaps quite great within the province.

The last question I would have-- and perhaps the most difficult one for the minister to answer, if in fact there is an answer -- is in the area of the research which is being done in helping producers reduce their production costs, which would have a positive effect on the net income. The area of very strong interest to me is what is being done with respect to fertilizers and herbicides and if in fact research is being conducted with the goal of significantly minimizing the use of chemical fertilizers and how that could be achieved along with the herbicides.

If the minister could get back to me either verbally or, at some point, in writing, I'd certainly appreciate it. Thank you for your time.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Chairman, that's a challenging set of few questions. I thank the member for them.

I would say to you first, hon. member, that a number of your questions would be better answered in written form, and I would be happy to do that.

I can give you the data on research out of province. It's minimizing; I can tell you that. Sometimes it does make all kinds of economic sense if it's a research project that can be better done in another area, and we do have specialty stations across Canada. You have to balance the economics of transferring a project out or bringing a whole bunch of things in to do it, and that balance is there. But I would be happy to give you that information. I think you know -- or if you don't -- my commitment to research and to having a strong research component in Alberta and that we're working very hard through our Alberta Agricultural Research Institute to do that, and Farming for the Future is definitely a part of it.

Your question on the Food Processing Development Centre, which I thought was maybe more of a comment than a question -- sorry if I missed the direct question. It was opened in 1984, if you're referring to that. It was funded through this capital projects division initially and is now out of the capital projects, which I think is ultimately what we want to see, and is funded on an annual basis -- much reduced, I might say -- through our budget in Alberta Agriculture. We're pretty proud of that centre and think that they've done some very, very good work in the processing of Alberta products. I'd certainly be happy to give you a fuller description of that. I have it down.

Progress in crop diversification. Again, I think it's evident in our province and certainly the irrigation opportunities have given us so much opportunity to diversify and to bring in specialty crops. Our farmers, I think, will tell you their benefits are in many ways the ability to get into cash crops, to do crop rotations that are beneficial to the soil, as well as to their economics of their unit.

Research to reduce input costs and the fertilizers and herbicides question. I can say yes, we are doing projects. One of the projects that I have seen working very successfully -- and we've done them through Farming for the Future and through forage associations and others -- are the legume plowdowns and putting a lot of nutrients and fibre into the soil and then rotating it back with cereal.

I really think your questions deserve more than a cursory answer. I hope I've given you some of a brief overview, and I'd be very pleased to respond to you in a written form.

Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: On vote 1, Mr. Chairman, if I may ask the hon. minister a number of questions. In going through the different projects' research reports on Farming for the Future, I was impressed by the number of areas covered but maybe even more impressed by the areas that are not covered. I don't know whether it's on purpose or not. For instance, no research seems to be done on game farms or fur farms. I would be very interested in why in Farming for the Future something that's controversial right now and has much interest seems to have no attention paid to it at all. So I was just wondering what . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Are the Liberals in favour of game farming now?

MR. TAYLOR: Actually, we'd be all for game farms if it was

the New Dems that we could hunt Saturday nights. At least, their pelt isn't worth anything yet. As a matter of fact, the hon. Member for Vegreville has lost most of his pelt. Nevertheless, the . . .

MR. FOX: You might be able to hunt but you can't . . .

MR. TAYLOR: I see. The other member in the front bench over there has just moved his pelt around underneath. He's having the same problem the capitalist societies have: nothing wrong with the production; it's the distribution that's gone haywire.

Nevertheless, we were talking about game farms and fur farms. One of the questions would be why something as important as this has not been touched on or why aren't we doing some work.

Also, of course, to beat an old horse a bit, weather modification is very much, I feel, a part that the government has overlooked, starting way back a few years ago when they took rather the witch doctor attitude that if God had intended it to rain, we shouldn't fool around with it, that God makes the weather, and it'd be wrong to play with it. I feel that weather modification has quite a future. In fact, I think one of the most progressive groups we had in research in Agriculture was in weather modification. I'd run into weather modification people from Alberta when I worked in the eastern end of the Mediterranean, and they were highly respected and well thought of. I was always puzzled why we would pull a Diefenbaker type of thing: what Diefenbaker did to the Avro Arrow, the predecessor Agriculture ministers did to weather modification. I thought that maybe the new ministers, not being as firmly rooted back in the Old Testament, would be more interested in maybe starting up the weather modification idea again.

While we're on that, drip irrigation is something -- and that doesn't mean watering the New Democrats' garden -- that's caught on very much around the world. As a matter of fact, there again, in the east end of the Mediterranean, the only type of irrigation I saw going ahead was drip irrigation. Yet I notice in your irrigation lists here there's nothing mentioned on that at all. It's all in headworks and so on, which is important, of course.

I noticed forage research. Well, as you know -- the minister being very closely connected with agriculture and forage -- if you'll look through your forage research, the forage research is most of all done in the Edmonton area, except one up at Beaverlodge. The forage research seems to be centered in the Lacombe and Edmonton areas. I would like to respectfully suggest that people of Westlock have made a submission to the Department of Agriculture that we start a forage research centre in that area. We did some calculations and feel that that is the centre of the feed area for the Edmonton-north area. It's in a lot of lumber; it's on the edge of the number 1 and 2 soils but starting at number 6 it has both geological and climate conditions that are unique for the area, and I would like to put in my two bits for a forage research centre to start up in the Westlock area and suggest and maybe ask the ministers -- I know they've been asked a couple of times -- as to whether or not it could ahead. There's been quite a little research done on the area. As a matter of fact, by members of the government party there's been a lot of research done to show that forage research in the Westlock area would be of a wider use to feeders around Alberta than any other area in Alberta would be.

While we're on that again, on Farming for the Future -- I might as well move on to the second bale, if the hon. minister doesn't mind -- I noticed some research on hormones and drugs, on how to get the beef to grow bigger, wider, longer, faster; pork likewise. Yet if I detect anything out there today in the field of agriculture, it's in the marketing side where there's becoming an increasing concern by the consumers that they're being fed chicken, beef, or pork that have been accelerated in their growth by chemicals that may not do the same for people. Even if they did, I don't know how many people want to grow to be nine feet tall and two feet wide with a half-ounce brain. It would qualify you to be over in the back row with those hecklers right now. Nevertheless, one of the things I think we should look for is that a lot of this research is going in the wrong direction.

I see the cowbell is at it again, Madam Minister, the longest tongue and the emptiest head over there.

While we're on that, how about the economic research, then, of trying to produce . . .

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister of Advanced Education is rising on a point of order.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, under Standing Order 23. There's certainly no need for that kind of language to an hon. member in the House. That's unacceptable, and you know, the peer of the Liberal Party certainly knows better than to refer to anybody in that language. I would ask that he'd apologize.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I referred to the hecklers as being cowbells with long tongues and empty heads. If it applies, I don't see why he should get insulted about it. But heckling is heckling, and if he wants to sit out there and start throwing insults around, I would expect he's going to get a certain amount back. Matter of fact, I was being a model of decorum, if you'll pardon the expression, minding my own business, before the Vesuviuses over there started to erupt, and I just tried to put a cork on it, that's all.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, hon. member, I really do believe that you've gone a little bit . . . You could have chosen better terms to respond than the ones you did. I think maybe you should consider withdrawing those actual words.

MR. TAYLOR: Cowbell isn't in the book. Mr. Chairman, if it'll help, I'll say short tongues and full heads then. That'll get the opposite effect and even it out. But nevertheless, I must confess that I didn't intend to insult that particular gentleman. It was the one behind.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to go on a bit further with another question. I mentioned that the consumer is looking for hormone-free, chemical-free products. I'd like to see whether there's any place there's any research being done as to the cost of not using herbicides, pesticides, and hormones. In other words, what will be the decreased income, if any, to farmers? Now, this may be expecting a lot from research scientists to do who are paid to try to [inaudible] all of the exotic goods that can keep going, but I just wonder if when one takes the extra use made of the land or the way land gets mined, you might say, or used up faster than it should, whether or not if we do a cost/

benefit analysis, it may well turn out that leaving Mother Nature alone makes you more money over a 10-year period than the other. Because I saw some research recently in Iowa where they found farmers that had not used chemicals or pesticides over the last 20 years, and now their land was outproducing the land that was using chemicals, because letting nature take its course, they've been able to hold up the productivity level, whereas the extra use of chemicals and hormones and that had got an initial high yield, but then it had dropped off.

Lastly, I've heard some awful horror stories about how the money is spent on these different projects. Far be it from me to repeat gossip unless it's political, Mr. Chairman, and this one isn't political. But I'm just wondering: is there a good audit on these grants going out to research? Is the cheque made out, and then they forget about it, or are there internal audits to make sure that not too many relatives are hired, nepotism doesn't run rampant, and that the money is actually spent where it is supposed to be? I'm not referring just to the one or two court cases, but I'm just wondering how good our audit process is to make sure the money is spent.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a few more comments, if I might, to follow up with the minister on some of the things we were talking about. My colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona was wondering at the name Stanislaw Sandblasters. I wanted to explain to him and to other members who might not realize that it's generally the sandy particles of soil that tend to drift; the clay-based particles are heavier and don't.

I can remember the first year that we moved to the farm. It was a very dry, windy year, and the farmer who lived next to us didn't seem to understand that he had to farm carefully in order to preserve his sandy soil. Perhaps if there'd been Farming for the Future programs to help him, he would have understood. Anyway, he double-disked this sandy field, making summer fallow out of it about eight times during the season, planted a crop the following year, combined it, burned the straw, and then double-disked it a couple of times before the snow fell. Then the following year I was working the field next to it, and there was so much sand blowing that my tractor was sandblasted. I told the fellow that he owed me for a paint job on my tractor because of the erosion coming off his field. Anyway, that's where the name sandblasters came from. It is a serious problem in the country, and I'm glad to see that the minister is going to take a closer look at that.

I'd like to ask the minister where the initiative for the projects comes from. Do people make application to a local district agriculturist? Do they make contact with her department? Do they make contact through their MLA in respect to on-farm demonstration projects? Likewise, how do research programs get under way? Do the people who work for the department in a research capacity make suggestions to the minister? Is it in fact the minister who approves these, or is there a board within the department or some sort of assessment process? I'd be interested in her describing to all hon. members here the process of application and project approval.

To follow up our discussion earlier about trying to measure the benefits, I realize it's difficult to put a dollar value on the impact of projects. That shouldn't stop us from trying, and I hope she'll follow that up. I've seen the report that lists the pro-

jects in terms of what's funded and who does the projects. Is there any report issued by the Farming for the Future program that indicates the relative success of the project: whether or not the stated objectives were achieved, what was learned, and what was done with the information? Because I think it would be important, you know, for all of us to know that the data was being accumulated and that the experience was being recorded and made use of.

Again, I could refer back to this farmer who kept double-disking his sandy field and watching it blow away. I felt unable as a greenhorn to go and tell him how he ought to farm, because he'd tell me that he's had 20 years' experience and he knows better. I think because he never kept track of his experience and learned from it, what he'd had in fact was one year's experience 20 times repeated and hadn't learned from his experience. I'm confident that there is a recording and accumulating and learning process through the Farming for the Future program, but I'm wondering if the minister would agree to tell us a little bit about how that's all kept track of.

If I may be so presumptuous as to make a suggestion to the minister about a project that might be worth while pursuing, my hon. colleague from Stony Plain was referring to plowdown crops and that alternate method of soil enrichment. It occurs to me that there are some projects that could be pursued through Farming for the Future that would have sort of multiple benefits. I'm thinking of people who grow sweet clover. It was my experience as a beekeeper looking for people who grew sweet clover, so I could put the hives near there and get the nectar off the field so the bees could produce honey, that these people would grow the sweet clover and wait until it grew to a certain height and then plow it down and summer-fallow the field for the balance of the year, believing that that had the maximum impact on the soil. What I did on our farm was grow the clover, cut it for hay, and allow it to grow as late as possible in the season. It would come to bloom again in the month of August and provide late season forage for the bees. So that was my original intent: get double impact for the honey production. But it was my contention or belief, although I had no way of substantiating it, that it was also better for the soil. Although you didn't have as much top growth to plow under at the end of August or early part of September as you would have at the end of June, what you had was a plant that had developed a lot more, especially in terms of the root system. The root system in a legume like clover, as the minister knows, becomes very extensive. The taproot goes deeper, a lot of . . . [interjection] I beg your pardon?

AN HON. MEMBER: Bad hay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. The hon. member can carry on.

MR. FOX: I'm sorry. We'll get the veterinarian's assessment a little later here.

It seems the root growth becomes extensive, and one of the benefits of clover as a plowdown crop is that the roots reach much deeper into the soil than do the roots of an annual crop growing, grain or canola. When you plow that crop down and it decays and rots, what you are doing is bringing up minerals and nutrients from a much lower profile in the soil and incorporating them into the top four to six inches where annual crops receive most of their nourishment.

So it was my contention that if you left that crop as long as

possible before working it down, you probably got as much or perhaps even more overall impact than you would by plowing it down and leaving it fallow for the rest of the year. If we are trying to move away from summer fallow and encourage people not to summer fallow, then perhaps plowing down the clover at the end of June and working it throughout July, August, September, and perhaps even October is defeating the purpose to some degree. Now, maybe that sort of cultural approach wouldn't work in different soil zones, but it was certainly easy in our area. We had no trouble working up a good seedbed and plowing the stuff down. The roots are much easier to incorporate than the top growth anyway.

So I'm wondering, if the minister has the ability to make suggestions about programs that ought to be looked into and if she ever does get a chance to talk to someone who's working to convince farmers of the merits of legume plowdown crops for soil enrichment, if she might keep my suggestion in mind.

MRS. McCLELLAN: I think I'll deal with the Member for Vegreville's comments first, and that will answer some of the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon's, as much as I followed them.

I would like to outline the process. I guess perhaps I make the mistake of assuming that people are more aware of this than they are, and I thank you for bringing that to my attention. First, I think I should just go briefly into the administration of the program. It is administered by the Farming for the Future council. It has 15 members, chaired by the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Ben McEwen. The majority of the council members are active producers. I think that's important. I would also have been remiss in not mentioning that Mr. Ty Lund, the Member for Rocky Mountain House, is the Legislative Assembly's present representative on the council. I think that's important for you to know, too, for information. The hon. member may wish to make some comments briefly when I'm finished. The other members on it are members from agencies that do perform agricultural research such as Agriculture Canada, University of Alberta, and the Alberta Research Council. I think that's important -- that we have a type of co-ordination and tie-in so that we don't duplicate.

The approach of projects I think should be understood. We've stated that there are two types of projects. There are the research program and the on-farm demonstration program. The projects undertaken in that are quite different, and the methods for approving them are quite different. Research projects generally begin in April, but their approval process usually begins in the fall, and generally does begin in the fall. At that time, the Farming for the Future council does place advertisements and notices inviting project proposals from anyone who wishes to submit a research project. The deadline for receiving those is November 1st. They're sorted by category and are distributed to nine subcommittees of the Farming for the Future council. Each subcommittee, which is chaired by a producer, rates the project that it reviews. It submits its recommendations to the Farming for the Future council as a whole. In February the full council meets to determine which projects it will fund. So that is the process. I should say that the manager of each project must officially accept the grant offer, including any changes or conditions dictated by the council. From there the issuing of grant cheques follows the standard procedure. Once projects are approved, their progress is monitored, and further funding is provided only if adequate progress is made.

On-farm demonstrations are handled quite differently. On-farm demonstration proposals are received all year long. The process starts with an interested producer working with the district agriculturalist, generally, to develop a project proposal. Depending on the project's complexity, they might also include and involve a specialist or a scientist in that particular field to be involved in the project. From there, proposals are reviewed by committees composed of local farmers and regional staff established under our six regional offices. Local farmers have a significant involvement in that program. I think that's important both in judging the benefits of the proposal to the agricultural community and as co-operators in implementing the projects. I should mention under that subject that I think a very valuable part of this project is the signing of those projects, because it alerts farmers in the area to a project that's ongoing, and they can monitor as it proceeds.

I made the commitment to continue the investigation of how we can best establish a dollar value, recognizing that some things are more tangible than others. The sweet clover project I have seen done in my area. That's quite different than the hon. member's area, and it works quite well. Producers there do it in both ways; seeding it, harvesting it early because that's when its best food value is, and then letting it grow again, and plowing it down; or seeding it, harvesting it one year, letting it come up the next year, and plowing it down. I think that another interesting plowdown is in beans and lentils. Their contribution to the soil is significant, but unfortunately so is the seeding cost.

AN HON. MEMBER: They make lousy honey.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Yeah. That's probably true. But the cost of seeding them is high, and that seems to be a deterrent to farmers. But there's some very interesting work being done in that area. As with most things that are good, the most expensive varieties to seed are the ones that seem to have the most value. So that's unfortunate.

I hope that answers a whole gamut of the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon's questions on why we do what we do. Projects are initiated by somebody; I don't do that. If we have a particular interest, there are ways. I would also be remiss if I didn't mention the very valuable work our forage associations are doing. They do a large amount and very good work regionally to work on development of forages. I would want to say that.

The beef hormone and drug things; I guess the criticism that we test that when we're talking about safe foods. Well, I can't think of a better way to find out whether a food is safe than to test it. I rather think it's good to do research in that area and come up with the results. Unquestionably the public, as all of us, are becoming more aware and more conscious of safety in food and environmental safety, and I think we all have to be very conscious of that. I think if you look over the lists of projects we're doing simply in agriculture through Farming for the Future research, you'll see that we're addressing some of those areas.

I've probably missed some, but I would like the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House to have an opportunity to just quickly respond on how the council works and some things.

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

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I must say that it gives me a great deal of pleasure to be the member from the Legislature on the Farming for the Future committee. I've always been very interested in research. As a matter of fact, our farm has participated in projects dating back to the late '60s with the University of Alberta, the Department of Agriculture, the local service board, the forage association and, as a matter of fact, even with Farming for the Future. Of course, I can't do that anymore, but anyway it has happened.

The hon. associate minister covered pretty well all the points, but I would just like to add a couple. One was to do with the varieties, and I believe the hon. Member for Vegreville asked those questions. In the barley, two varieties were developed through Farming for the Future, Oatal and Jackson. I don't know if you're familiar with them. Both are fairly high yielders, particularly Jackson, and earlier varieties than we've had before, so they're very valuable in the shorter growing season areas. In the canola areas, there are two that haven't been named; they're just by number yet. One is an Argentine variety, one a Polish variety, and both are higher yielding, shorter growing season, and higher oil content. A new soft white wheat variety is coming on. So there are many good things coming out of there.

To do with the soil conservation, 20 out of the 170 projects in the on-farm demonstrations have to do with soil conservation, and 14 out of 100 in the actual research. So there are some real movements there.

On the question of dissemination of information, you might be interested to know -- and this one was from the hon. Member for Stony Plain -- that currently all the information . . . I'll just show you. This is the hard cover and the short version of some of the results, but it's being put on a computer now. So if farmers, or whoever is interested, have a compatible machine hooked into their telephone, they can dial up and get all the information; it'll come up on their screen at home: a very valuable method of disseminating information. I think there are about five categories that you can call up this information and get it. So I think that's a very valuable way of moving.

I guess I kind of got a kick out of the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon's comments, because in one case he's commenting about value for money and making sure we're getting all this good stuff and then he talks about checking to see if fertilizer and weed sprays are in fact costing us now instead of helping us. Well, I can assure you, from a farmer that's been in the business for a number of years, continuous cropping and using fertilizer and weed sprays from way back in the '50s, I would consider that a real waste of money if we started pouring money into answering that question. All you've got to do is come out and observe it, and you certainly know the answer.

Mr. Chairman, in view of the hour, that will be all my comments for now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the question on vote 1?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Not quite, Mr. Chairman. I'm sorry that I can't answer any questions.

Further questions to the minister on this particular area of Farming for the Future. Now that the associate minister and the

hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House have explained how this is sort of set up once or twice removed away from the minister, I was just wondering how we in the Legislature can maybe have some input into that committee so when they advertise for ideas, they are aware -- maybe all you have to do is send them *Hansard*, but if they read *Hansard* as much as most farmers, it may never get read -- to look at proposals which they may have had and turned down. Like the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House they believe everything's chemicals, chemicals, chemicals, and consequently they may not be aware that there is in the Legislature a fair body of opinion that would like to see some research done on what these chemicals will do to the consumer and the long cost/benefit analysis. In spite of what the Member for Rocky Mountain House says, there is quite a body of literature now out of Iowa and Illinois. They were around when Rocky Mountain House was still a fur trading post. They were growing food down there, and in fact the De Kalb organization came up with hybrids back in the 1920s. They have some pretty interesting research, and I think the committee should know that's around. I don't say that I suddenly want the ministers interfering. Maybe it's just as well.

Let's move on to something more specific on page 10. I'm a little puzzled why Salaries, Wages, and Employee Benefits dropped 44 percent, whereas Supplies and Services went up 64 percent. It seems to me that if you're cutting wages and salaries, your supplies and services should go down, unless you're ordering stuff for the next 20 years. Is it possible that in supplies and services in that vote, by going up 64 percent when salaries and wages went down 44, we are just putting out for contract a lot of the jobs that heretofore had been done by the salaries and wages people? In other words, our salaries dropped from roughly \$1.5 million a year to \$800,000, whereas supplies and services jumped from \$600,000 up to a little over a million. It's unusual to see salaries and wages go down, yet the services that go to serve them go up. So I'm just wondering if the hon. associate minister could tell us what the reason for that is and also whether she could sort of assure us whether she's going to communicate the results of the learned debate -- except for maybe the above cowbells -- to the committee.

MRS. McCLELLAN: I'll just take a quick run at the question that I really think I answered before, and I would give the opportunity to the member of the committee to answer the question on wages and supplies and services, because there's a very interesting answer and I think you should hear it.

I think I identified that through Farming for the Future, in some of the projects they are doing, they are looking at alternate ways of putting nutrients in the soil, and I thought we covered that fairly broadly. Maybe we got too carried away with our conversation on plowdowns and sweet clover and legumes. I would also remind you that Farming for the Future is not the only place that does research, and Ag Canada were doing a lot of research on food safety. I thought I had made that fairly clear. And there are many places that do do research. We have our Alberta Agricultural Research Institute that does projects. This is one segment and one section.

I want to also say that I'm very disappointed to hear allusions to horror stories of how this money is spent. I think that's a serious charge, and I think it should be substantiated, because I'm very proud of the Farming for the Future program. I think that it has done excellent work, and I really don't want it just

rumoured that there are horrendous things. So I would appreciate the actual facts on that. I think it should be addressed, because this is a program that all Alberta can be proud of and is proud of, and I wouldn't want it addressed that way.

I would ask the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House to just give me a final answer on wages.

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

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have some very good news for you. I can't explain why the difference, but here are the facts. Instead of \$3.115 million being spent on the actual programs, it turns out to be \$4.598 million. That's after the committee got through with the work. They ended up changing that number to \$4,598,500. That's what? Ninety-two percent went into the programs. As far as the materials, supplies and services, \$19,500 as opposed to the number you were looking at and asking about.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the question on vote 1?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. TAYLOR: Not quite, Mr. Chairman. That's something pretty drastic. Are we reading the same thing? Page 10?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're dealing with vote 1 on page 10. Does the hon. member have some comments to make?

MR. TAYLOR: Yes. Well, it's not comments. It's just a plain question. I still don't understand. He said that they have changed things. I thought that what we had here is what we're voting on. Supplies and Services, I was going to say, is up 64 percent; salaries and wages are down 44 percent. That's all I wanted answered. As well as the fact that game farms, fur farms, were not covered, by the way. But you said that's other projects, I think.

MR. LUND: Mr. Chairman, as I explained, I was reading off exactly what happened when the committee allocated the \$5 million, and this is the actual budget.

MR. TAYLOR: I see \$5 million here. But then within the \$5 million . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Does the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House have something to say? I'll keep the hon. Member for Westlock . . .

MR. LUND: The total dollars spent is \$4,598,500 on project funds; on information, \$133,000; on program management, \$268,500.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

Agreed to:

Total Vote 1 -- Farming for the Future

\$5,000,000

2 -- Irrigation Rehabilitation and Expansion

MR. FOX: I'd like to ask the Associate Minister of Agriculture -- and I'm surprised that the members who live in irrigated areas don't take more of an interest in this -- about the future of this program. She did refer, I believe, in vote 1 and vote 3 to the expiry date or the year beyond which the program wouldn't be renewed without further consideration. I'd like to ask her, given that the amount to be voted seems fairly consistent year after year in respect to irrigation rehabilitation and expansion, whether or not this is going to be viewed as an ongoing sort of amortized or depreciated expenditure that we need to make on an ongoing basis in the long term to keep the irrigation canal systems up to snuff. Like presumably the rehabilitation project started at one point, and by the time it gets through to having had some impact on all the ditches and canals, is it then time to go back to the beginning and start again? This may be a sort of ongoing, fairly consistent upgrade maintenance kind of program. With that question asked, I won't speak at length on this. We did have a chance to discuss the relative merits of rehabilitation of irrigation systems under, I believe it was, the Department of the Environment, the irrigation headworks project, and our comments remain the same. We're certainly supportive of money spent to make existing systems more efficient and better for all concerned, but I'm just interested in knowing what the minister's assessment of the future needs of this program are.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Associate Minister of Agriculture.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The hon. member is quite correct that the current mandate for funding of this program is in its final year. We are looking at the program, and I think in principle have agreed it's important. How we continue it is under very serious consideration now. I think it's fair to say I have a commitment to seeing this program continue. But I think it's also fair to say that I see some planning that needs to be done, forward planning. We have a very good Irrigation Council that we work with in discussing this issue. And how do we plan for the future? Because irrigation rehabilitation is an ongoing process, and the government commitment was to get it up to a level. It's our hope that working with the Irrigation Council and with the irrigation districts, we can find a way to manage to build a maintenance or rehabilitation system into their present program. So we are looking at it very seriously, and I would certainly encourage any suggestions and comments. The hon. member knows he's quite welcome to drop into my office or drop me a note on how he would see that. But it is under serious consideration right now.

Thank you.

MR. FOX: Just to follow up quickly on that, I guess what I'm asking for is an assessment of whether or not the \$25 million is an adequate annual expenditure with respect to the need to keep the system in good repair.

MR. McCLELLAN: I'm sorry. I misunderstood your question. Here I gave you a whole bunch of information you might not have wanted. We have been assessing that on a yearly basis. It appears that through the management of the council and the irrigation districts, the work is proceeding in quite an orderly way. I think my answer would be, in discussion with them, yes,

they're working within that amount of dollars. I think the really important part of this program is planning and making sure you're assessing the work district by district as it's needed most critically and continued. I think that process has been very good, and we're progressing very well.

MR. FOX: Another quick question then, Mr. Chairman. I know there are projects with respect to drainage in some parts of the province where there is a drainage ditch rehabilitation expenditure. I believe it's through the normal budgeted amounts for the Department of the Environment. I'm wondering what consideration has been given to amalgamating or putting the two programs under the same kind of guidance or approval process. Because what I think we have is in the southern part of the province irrigation ditches and canals being rehabilitated through an expenditure of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund capital projects division under the guidance of the Minister of Agriculture while, when it comes to drainage ditch projects in the central and northern part of the province, it's through the Department of the Environment and a sort of normal budgeted amount. I'm wondering if the minister might comment briefly on that.

MRS. McCLELLAN: I don't have a very direct answer for the hon. member, but I would say that the Department of the Environment and the Department of Agriculture work very closely on all of these projects. I think that's important. I haven't given a lot of thought as to whether our department should take on more or they should take more. But I am satisfied from the experience I've had with the two departments, on the workings of Alberta Environment on the headworks projects and the rehabilitation projects, that there is a good liaison and working relationship between the departments. I'll give it some thought.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the question? The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Just vote 2, Mr. Chairman. This is a very short one. What is the amortization on the headworks, or is there any sort of an idea how long you think it lasts? Or do you use the amortization principle at all? If you don't use the amortization principle, how long do you think each headworks lasts before it has to be changed or upgraded again?

MRS. McCLELLAN: I just mentioned to the hon. member that I believe the headworks projects are in Environment, and I'm sure that we would take that and get you the answer for that.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I'll keep my comments quite brief, and I don't know if I'll get the answer from the associate minister on this. But the irrigation -- I think we are making a grievous error by separating the irrigation works, because they're both capital projects, between Environment and Agriculture. Which department should be doing it I won't speculate on. But if you add up the money spent to date, there is close to \$600 million having been spent under the joint programs. There is an additional I believe \$65 million committed between the two programs this year. If you look at the total acreage under irrigation -- the goal is going to be \$1.3 million -- I wonder how many acres are under irrigation at the moment. Because if the goal were achieved, that would be at a cost to this point of in excess of \$500 per acre. The questions that I would like answered are: what is the acreage to date? How much of that acreage was previously un-

der irrigation? How much of the acreage has been reclaimed due to salinization? How much of the acreage is new acreage? I'll give you those in writing too. I've been looking at the clock.

The last portion that I would like to know is: although the immense amounts of money that are being spent on an annual basis appear to be doing economic benefit to southern Alberta, which I won't question, when is this going to end? What is the projected time for the recovery of these projects, or is this a non-ending process?

Thank you.

MRS. McCLELLAN: I'd like to tackle this before I lose it. I've lost some of it, and I apologize, hon. member. You are going a little fast, and on some of those very specifics I will give you a written answer on the number of acres and so on, because I couldn't write them down.

I felt that I answered the one question on Environment and Agriculture and where should it be. I would remind hon. members that Alberta Environment is responsible for an area and headworks and storm canals and a number of things that can be involved in irrigation. Agriculture becomes involved in irrigation when it comes to the farm. And I guess as a farmer, not an irrigation farmer but as a person in agriculture, I rather respect that. But I have said that, you know, it isn't something that has not been mentioned before. But I think there is some sound reasoning for the reason that it is the way it is, and I'd be happy to discuss that with you.

I would just want to say that I can give you also, written, our best guess . . . Or our best estimates -- it's not a guess -- are the information figures on the economic benefit. But I would want to tell members that although it only represents 4 percent of the province's cultivated acres under irrigation, irrigated acreage produces 20 percent of Alberta's total primary agricultural income. I think that's a very important point. And certainly I'd be very happy to share with the hon. member the figures on the cost benefits, but it is very extensive. I can give it to you in writing. I'm sure you'd be happy with that. But I think that's very significant: 4 percent of our acreage -- cultivated, that is -- under irrigation does produce 20 percent of this province's agricultural income, and I think that answers part of your question.

Thank you.

MR. McEACHERN: The last two speakers prompted me to just perhaps make a point or two. The question was raised as to whether or not the irrigation project should be under Environment or Agriculture. It would seem to me fairly clear that the Environment department does have a bit of a conflict of interest in terms of trying to protect the environment at the same time in which its very people are out there building the dams and the canals and that sort of thing. So it would . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member . . . Hon. member, order please. We are discussing the estimates of rehabilitating and expanding the irrigation system in the Department of Agriculture. This is not a forum to discuss whether Environment or Agriculture should have jurisdiction over it.

MR. McEACHERN: It was discussed under the Environment estimates the other day, and people today have been talking about it, so I don't see why I shouldn't take a minute and make the point I wanted to make. It's a very simple one, and it will only take a minute.

It would seem to me that if the Agriculture department doesn't want to get into the headworks of canals construction business, then the government should give that to public works, but not to Environment. The Agriculture department could, in fact, do it all. It wouldn't really bother us on this side of the House.

Agreed to:

2.1 -- Support Services	\$200,000
2.2 -- Assistance to Irrigation Districts	\$24,800,000
Total Vote 2 -- Irrigation Rehabilitation and Expansion	\$25,000,000

3 -- Private Irrigation and Water Supply

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: I know the members on the government side are antsy and anxious to get out of here, but there are some questions that need to be asked. Mr. Chairman, under Standing Orders we're allocated 12 days for consideration of the estimates of this department. We'll finish them in far less than 12 hours. So I think that members ought to be a little more patient and allow the minister to answer the questions that we ask.

AN HON. MEMBER: Agreed, agreed. Hurry up there.

MR. FOX: This isn't question period, hon. minister.

I'd like to ask the minister, in terms of this new program, Private Irrigation Water Supply, what process is used, or what mechanism, to decide which projects are worth while and which ones aren't, and what limits are there to the department's willingness to help fund projects. Is it on a cost-shared basis with farmers that the department would be willing to put up a certain amount of money in respect to given projects with a limit per farm or a limit per acre or a limit per individual? Does the minister have anything that she could tell us in respect to the geographical limitations of the program? Are they going to be as willing to fund projects in the north as the south?

I'd also like to know what the requirements of the program are in respect to the eventual use of the irrigated water. Is the department willing to participate in funding private irrigation water supply projects irrespective of the intended use of the water, or are there limits placed on funding for programs, dependent on what the person's going to do with the water, if they're going to have a sod farm or a vegetable market garden or irrigate their hay or whatever? I'm not suggesting there should be limits. I'm asking what limits there are. I'd be interested in knowing just what the mechanics of the program are, and the approval process. Maybe this is something that the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House is in charge of too, and he can tell us, but I place those questions before the minister.

MRS. McCLELLAN: There is a set of guidelines for the program, and we do have brochures and they're available on it. I would say you asked a number of questions, and I hope I get them all. If I didn't, I'll review *Hansard* and make sure that you get a complete answer.

The applications are received for projects in which interim licences for water usage have been issued. They're provided to projects which have received preconstruction approval by the

irrigation branch, so they work very closely with the irrigation branch on their project to assure it of its viability and so on. Applicants must be bona fide farmers, and they can apply as individuals or in association as long as it's legally constituted. Partnerships, incorporated farms, farming colonies, et cetera, are . . . The minimum project size is five acres, so I think that tells you -- five acres; dial's the minimum.

Now, I think you asked how we allocated the . . . It's 50 per cent of the applicant's costs to a maximum of \$100 an acre -- it must be getting late; I'm having trouble with my tongue -- or a maximum of \$30,000 per licensed project.

MR. FOX: Thirty thousand?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Yes, whichever is less. The payment is made over a three-year basis, so your application process . . . I think that's, you know, a logical way to do it.

I don't know whether I missed some questions, but I'd sure be happy to review *Hansard* and give you the full . . .

MR. FOX: If I might, Mr. Chairman, then quickly follow up on that, I was wondering about the geographic limitations of the program. If it's approved through the irrigation branch, is that irrigation branch centred in Edmonton? Maybe the minister can tell us where the irrigation branch is centred. I'm wondering if it's going to be just as easy for farmers in northern Alberta to apply for and receive this funding assistance if they can come up with a good program description.

MRS. McCLELLAN: I'm sorry I missed that. There isn't a geographic -- it's available across the province.

MR. FOX: Where's the irrigation branch?

MRS. McCLELLAN: The irrigation branch of Alberta Agriculture . . . I should say that the program brochures and guidelines will be in all our district agriculturalist's offices, and all of the information will be available to them. There are some projects that we've had information on, fruit and vegetable projects, saskatoons. I think that was in the Peace River area, and I think there's some very interesting . . . [some applause] I'm right. A lot of these projects really do depend on a small irrigation system, and this was the purpose of this program, as I said in my opening remarks: to give people an opportunity where there aren't irrigation districts set up. So it's very much geared to give private irrigators' opportunities across Alberta. I'm sorry I missed that in your first comments.

Thank you.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, just a few brief words on the private irrigators. I think it should be interesting to note that this program was developed as a response from people in the field, from farmers. The subject has come up for a number of years, initially through one Max Bradshaw of the Bird's Eye Ranch asking various members of this Legislature about private irrigators, and should there be private irrigators. I think Max is something like 85-plus years old, and he's still interested in things like this. It also came about through questions and comments and petitions and proposals during the cabinet tour some three years ago, I believe, in southwestern Alberta . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Lethbridge-West and Cardston.

MR. HYLAND: . . . in Lethbridge-West and Cardston, the hon. members tell me. So this shows that a program that was asked for by those involved in it -- that the government acted on their request, put a proposal forward. I think the good part about this program is that we will see small irrigation schemes throughout this province. In many areas it might be just to supply feed for cattle or other things, but it will be throughout the province, and I think that is the good thing and the selling item related to this program.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: This particular vote gives me quite a bit of concern in the way it appears to be written up. Now, I'm sure when I get some more written answers, it may be perhaps explained a little better. But my understanding from this is that the private people can divert water from a creek, a spring, a river, an undefined lake. At the moment even the department of highways puts in miles of extra culverts because they keep having the same body of water crisscross the roadway since Environment's standards are so stringent in what they call diverting waterways. So I would be very suspect of the program overall. If you end up looking at what a creek really is, you could end up in fact substantially lowering the flow. I see the hon. minister disagreeing, but that's okay. Perhaps we'll get answers on it. The same with respect to a spring or what a particular lake is.

I might point the hon. minister's attention to Red Deer Lake, south of Calgary, which has during the drought years dried up from natural causes. Given the guidelines you have outlined here, I think I would be correct in saying that people in that area could in fact have drawn water from the lake for irrigation had the program been in place some time ago. So I would hope at least that these kinds of bodies of water are looked at very carefully before any assistance is given to put them in jeopardy.

It appears that there is a \$1.8 million commitment this year, and I would ask if that money is already committed or that's an estimate of whatever it might be. Why would one want to extend it into five years and \$10 million? I have a lot of difficulty at this particular time to see the amount of money that is being expended into irrigation, as I indicated a little earlier, and now we appear to be embarking on a whole new set of irrigation projects. The other part -- and I would appreciate a written answer on it, and I think it would be quite appropriate to ask at some point -- is who is receiving the grants in terms of individuals? Also, the purpose for it; in other words, the kinds of crops that are going to be irrigated because the choice would be as broad as the area of the province happens to be.

The other part. I found your answer to the hon. Member for Vegreville slightly hard for me to fathom. If I understand you correctly, the minimum is five acres, \$100 per acre, which would give you \$500. The maximum is also \$100 per acre. How does one arrive at \$30,000 for one project at that rate? That would mean that in some place there would be 300 acres that would be eligible for irrigation, and I would find that to be sort of hard to fathom at this juncture. Perhaps I haven't understood the figures given out. On that basis, if you could again provide those answers either in writing or verbally I'd be most appreciative.

Thank you.

MRS. McCLELLAN: I think perhaps, Mr. Chairman, the member missed one of my earlier comments. The applications are received for projects for which interim licences have been

issued. You must have an interim licence for the water, so the fear of it being misused, I think, in that respect . . . That may offer you the information on that one.

The project applications. I guess maybe I'm tired and I'm not answering my questions very well. I explained the five-year part of it because of the process that you have to go through. This is not something that happens in one year. You have to go through the licensing; you have to go through the application process; you work with the technical people on the project, get it approved, put it in place. It will take some time to develop and to complete and finish. I guess it's a bit of a check and balance as well. So that is the reason for that. Although handing is paid out in three years, the project length is five years, because you may have a project that begins at the end of the three years and you need those extra years to complete it. So I'm sorry if I confused you on that.

The grant moneys go to the applicant, if I understood you right, but I do tell you I've been in very intensive meetings in Prince Albert the last three days, and I may be suffering a little. I'll be happy to review *Hansard* and clear up anything else I may have confused you on.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the question on vote 3?

Agreed to:

Total Vote 3 -- Private Irrigation Water Supply \$1,800,000

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Chairman, I would move that the vote be reported.

[Motion carried]

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee rise and

report progress and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please in the whole House. Proper attire, please. At least two members . . . Thank you.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund sums not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1990, for the purpose of making investments in the following projects to be administered by Agriculture: \$5,000,000, Farming for the Future; \$25,000,000, Irrigation Rehabilitation and Expansion; \$1,800,000, Private Irrigation Water Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur on the report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, it's the intent of the government tomorrow to call the Committee of the Whole to deal with the Senatorial Selection Bill, Bill 11, as well as Bill 1, the Family Day Act. If there is time tomorrow, the government would again go into Committee of Supply to deal with the 1989-90 Capital Fund estimates.

[At 11:30 p.m. the House adjourned to Friday at 10 a.m.]