

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Friday, April 27, 1990 10:00 a.m.**

Date: 90/04/27

[The House met at 10 a.m.]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Our divine Father, as we conclude for this week our work in this Assembly, we renew our thanks and ask that we may continue our work under Your guidance.

Amen.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, it's my great pleasure today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly His Excellency Samuel Kajese, the high commissioner of Zimbabwe, who is here in Edmonton and Alberta visiting with members of our government, with Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, and with leaders of industry as Zimbabwe is here expanding its relationship and its friendship. I would urge all members of the House to give His Excellency a warm welcome this morning.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give oral notice that after question period today and before Orders of the Day, I would like to, subject to Standing Order 40, make this motion.

Be it resolved that in recognition of April 28 being the national day of mourning for workers injured or killed on the job and in light of the many hazardous worksites across Alberta, the Legislative Assembly establish a special task force to conduct public hearings with all interested parties to identify solutions to the health and safety problems faced by Alberta workers.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to advise the Assembly that we have an important visiting group from the Gilbert Paterson community school in the public gallery today. Teachers Paul Stevenson and Debbie Morgan annually take an excursion to Edmonton. It's a great circle tour to visit the Tyrrell museum, the Legislative Assembly of course, and other attractions including West Edmonton Mall. Manfred Schuchardt has made several trips as well. They're here in advance of Education Week. I'm sure the Minister of Education understands that the students in the south are always a few percentage points ahead, so in anticipation, they're here today to take advantage of the opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, education is the waking of the natural curiosity of young minds. I've warned them that the question period may not be quite as enlightening, but nonetheless they're interested in hearing . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Provincial Treasurer, did you happen to warn them about how lengthy the Provincial Treasurer sometimes is?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'd ask the students to rise in the public gallery and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members, it's my pleasure to introduce to you 86 students from Fairview junior high school located in the constituency of Calgary-Egmont, which seldom gets a chance to be mentioned in this House. I would also mention that the students come not only from Calgary-Egmont but from Calgary-Millican and Calgary-Fish Creek. So I would ask that those students stand, together with teachers Jacques Blanchard, Valorie Sharreau, Don Owad, Richard Nadon, and Pam Conrad, together with Maxine Bruce, Mrs. Simonson, and Mr. and Mrs. Braun, and be acknowledged by the Assembly.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two very close friends of mine, nursing colleagues who are here to celebrate their 25th year reunion from the Royal Alex nurses' hospital. From Long Island, New York, and Laguna Beach, California: Mrs. Elaine Akina and Mrs. Renee Voloshin. They're sitting in the members' gallery. If you'd please rise and receive the warm welcome from the Assembly.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

Education

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, Monday marks the beginning of Education Week in 1990. Education in Alberta is worthy of celebration every day of the year, but once a year, through Education Week, we recognize the excellent work being done in education throughout the province and the fact that excellence in education is fundamental to Alberta's future.

"Education is Everybody's Business" is the theme for Education Week in 1990. It's appropriate because education in Alberta is a big business, a \$2.3 billion business, one that is the business of educators, of parents, and students – indeed, the business of all Albertans, Mr. Speaker. Every day it becomes clearer that our province's future, its future strength and its prosperity, depends on having responsible and competitive Canadian citizens graduating from our schools. This is our challenge now and in the 21st century. I am confident that together we will meet the challenge because Albertans have a tradition of success based on resourcefulness and independence, and our children will be successful if we continue to focus on results, deal creatively with change, and look carefully at what we can reasonably expect from our schools and from our teachers.

This year Education Week focuses on the increased educational involvement of businesses, community organizations, and service clubs. Building partnerships with these successful individuals and organizations gives our students the chance to learn about the world of work and the world of volunteerism, to build new skills, to develop healthy and responsible attitudes and habits.

Mr. Speaker, we've had the good fortune to introduce a number of students in the province here this morning. It's a pleasure for me because they are here representing some 440,000 young Albertans, young students from across our province. I say to them, and I ask them to take back the message, that for our part, Premier Getty and this government have made and will continue to make education its number one priority. We will continue to work in partnership with parents, with students, administrators, and trustees, as well as the general and business community to pursue excellence in education.

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. In replying to the ministerial statement for Education Week, hardly anybody could disagree with the statement. We're all for education. We're all for the family farm. We're all for everything. I notice now that education is again the number one priority. It's just like the farmers: they were glad when they weren't the number one priority after a while.

I would say to the minister that nobody would disagree with the sentiments, but talk is not enough. In real terms over the last decade, taking institutional inflation into account, the amount of money spent by the provincial government has actually gone down, and if you look at what's happening . . . [interjections] Well, look at it. I can't believe that they'd even disagree with that, Mr. Speaker. But the point I would want to make is that especially in some rural areas we are in danger of moving towards a two tiered system, because more and more and more it's being thrown on the property tax payer. I would remind the government that before this minister was there, they had a document, the Kratzmann report, that said that this trend should be stopped and more and more should come out of the provincial government. So instead of clapping themselves on the back and saying that this is their number one priority, we want to see some money put there.

I would remind this government that it is not spend, spend, spend; that this is in fact an investment, an investment that almost all modern economies in the global competitive market know they have to spend money on; and also if you spend money there, you can begin to get rid of some of the social problems, not all of them. So while I certainly agree with the statement, I hope that in the next budget this statement will be reflected in reality, Mr. Speaker.

head: Oral Question Period

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition.

Smoky Lake Poultry Plant

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier. The Premier has basically spent this entire week insisting that there is insufficient evidence to carry out a proper investigation of the apparent conflict of interest involving the MLA for Redwater-Andrew. Never mind the Premier's steadfast refusal to speak to the parties involved, with the exception, of course, of the Member for Redwater-Andrew himself; never mind the fact that the Premier won't even give the town councillors an opportunity to tell their side of the story. The Premier had made up his mind before he had any of the facts, and now he won't admit that he's made a mistake. I want to ask: is the Premier not aware that he personally is now damaging the credibility and integrity of his government by stubbornly refusing to have an impartial hearing into this matter?

MR. GETTY: No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: Yeah, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly the answer I expected. You know, he's stubborn, then cover up.

We talked about a tape yesterday, and I mentioned it to the Premier: about the Member for Redwater-Andrew at a public meeting identifying himself as the developer of the land in question, saying he's trying to sell it. Then the same member

stood here on April 10 and said he hadn't owned that land since March 2. Surely the Premier's not suggesting that both these statements can be accurate. I have a tape of that meeting, and I'd like to send it over, through the page, to the Premier and ask him a very simple question. Now that we're handing it to him on a silver platter, Mr. Speaker, will he at least listen to the tape now?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is only doing it now. I asked him if he wanted to provide the tape. I'd be happy to listen to it. Of course, he hasn't wanted to do that. I'm happy that he has now acceded to my wish.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, it's not my government that's suffering an integrity loss here. This government likes to talk about initiative. Maybe the initiative – he could have looked for himself when he said that he'd carried out an investigation.

Mr. Speaker, two of the councillors who attended that meeting on March 13 with the Member for Redwater-Andrew have even more information about this matter. They say it will provide even stronger evidence of lobbying, and they're willing to offer this evidence to a judicial inquiry. Also, despite the member's claim that the town would be unable to get funding for services for a competing subdivision, we know that there is no less than \$10.4 million available for such projects in the last budget. These facts and contradictions are not going to go away. I ask the Premier this again: in view of the old evidence and this new evidence, will the Premier finally do the reasonable and just thing and call a judicial inquiry into this whole matter?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that I have the tape, I'm going to be listening to it, and I thank the hon. member for sending it to me. As I've said before, up to now he's provided nothing new, so there is no reason to change. Now, if he wants to provide something new, we'll consider it, but he has provided nothing new.

MR. SPEAKER: Second main series of questions, the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Am I in fantasyland here or the Legislature, Mr. Speaker?

MS BARRETT: I can't believe it. A bunch of Walt Disney creatures over there.

MR. JOHNSTON: This is the Mindbender here.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order.

Alberta-Pacific Project

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I will come back to the Premier. Again this government seems to be going in different directions at the same time. You have the Minister of the Environment giving lip service to environmental hearings and talking about environmental impact assessments. You have the Premier wasting \$400,000 of taxpayers' money trying to plug holes into the Al-Pac panel, hiring a company to look at the panel's recommendations, the same company that recommended an Al-Pac type of proposal to the government in 1983. You now have the would-be Premier, the MLA for Athabasca-Lac La Biche,

saying that the final Al-Pac decision will be made by May 15 and that he hopes a final decision will be made without public hearings. I guess he wants to go full steam ahead with the plant. The environment be damned, so to speak, Mr. Speaker.

Now, recognizing that the MLA for Athabasca-Lac La Biche had a closed door meeting with the Premier and may have more knowledge than the Minister of the Environment, I will ask the Premier: will the Premier confirm or deny the MLA's statements that the final Al-Pac decision will be made in the month of May?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. MLA for Athabasca-Lac La Biche is one who represents his constituents very well and with great vigour and energy.

MR. FOX: He's a fine MLA. He is. They're all fine, fine MLAs.

MR. GETTY: He's a fine MLA; you bet. A person, Mr. Speaker, who works at building, not trying to stop and tear things down, as the Leader of the Opposition appears to.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment has said several times now that he is assessing within his department a project. I don't think we should speculate on it hypothetically at all. Let's wait. We'll take notice of any questions the hon. members may have for the Minister of the Environment. He'll be in the House in future days, and they can bring those questions to his attention. We'll take notice of them.

MR. MARTIN: That could be a long time by his record, Mr. Speaker.

I take it the Premier is still supposed to be in charge over there, Mr. Speaker. He conveniently avoided the question. I want him to come back and tell us. As the Premier of this province, will he clarify – because the MLA for Athabasca-Lac La Biche has been clear about this: that there would a decision by May 15 – whether that statement by the member is true or not?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the member speaks for himself. I've never heard such nonsense from the Leader of the Opposition, absolute nonsense.

MR. MARTIN: This is a government in total disarray: one says one thing; the other says the other, Mr. Speaker.

We'll forget about the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche because apparently he doesn't speak for anybody. So I want to ask the Premier this question then. We have the hearings going on. Could the Premier . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, thank you. [interjections] Thank you.

AN HON. MEMBER: Today's Friday.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members, yes, it is indeed Friday, but it's a pretty poor example for Education Week.

MR. MARTIN: Where's the decorum, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, then I want to ask the Premier very simply this: before any new proposal comes forward from Al-Pac, will he absolutely guarantee, as another one of their number one

priorities is the environment, that there will be proper environmental assessments before any other announcement is made?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the Al-Pac proposal that is within the Department of the Environment is being assessed.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, leader of the Liberal Party.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the Al-Pac development really has shown Albertans an incredible spectacle of ineptitude in government leadership. We've had a government forced to have a review of Al-Pac. The government never intended to have this review. We've had now the situation of a Premier calling the review panel unbalanced. We have a minister who refuses to give Albertans the detail of some new proposal, and we all know the proposal is in his ministry. We have the spectacle of \$400,000 of Alberta taxpayers' moneys going into a review of a review. The developer doesn't even pay these costs; the Alberta taxpayers must pay them.

Mr. Speaker, we now have the situation where the member of the Legislature for Athabasca-Lac La Biche is playing political strategist. My questions are to the Premier. Members of this Assembly will accept, I'm sure, the fact that the hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche will forsake his native community and Albertans and build anything anywhere. But my question to the Premier is this: isn't the hon. member wrong when he implies and says that there should be no review, that this matter should be handled behind closed doors, and we should be told that this is the way it's going to be. Isn't that the wrong strategy, Mr. Premier?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, we've actually just dealt with the matter. I guess the researchers of the two parties must meet in the cafeteria or something and pass one another what they find. As I've already said, the proposal is being assessed.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I wish the hon. Premier would get together with his colleague the Minister of the Environment and give us details on the biggest pulp mill development in the world so as to allay the fears Albertans have that their environment is going to be scoured and polluted. It will be under the process that the government is now using. My question to the Premier is this: will the Premier give us the time line – forget about the stalking-horse from Athabasca-Lac La Biche. Mr. Premier, you're the gentleman that's running the show here. What's the time line to get this Al-Pac proposal finished and done with?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, the proposal is being assessed, and it's being done in a rational, competent way. When a decision is made, the members will hear about it.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, without duplication of the previous . . .

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask the hon. Premier if it isn't now correct, true, visible to all Albertans that Jaakko Pöyry was hired to do these studies in the backroom secretly and then to foist the decision via the cabinet on Albertans. We're going to have this Al-Pac proposal whether Albertans want it or not, whether the environment is going to scoured or not. Isn't that correct?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is a pile of rubbish, and it's getting to be what you expect from this hon. member. I think maybe we should have the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon fill in more often.

I want to say this: the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche works very hard to represent his constituents, and he doesn't need somebody who doesn't do half as much for his constituents as this member does running around taking cheap shots at him.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Wainwright, followed by Stony Plain.

MR. DECORE: Don't talk about serving your constituents. You didn't do a very good job in Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. TAYLOR: It's Friday.

MR. SPEAKER: That's no excuse.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, would this . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I'll still stand here until hell freezes over. [interjection] Just park it, hon. member.

MR. TAYLOR: That's where all the socialists are, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon, you can nail it.

The Member for Wainwright, followed by Stony Plain, if there is time.

Impaired Driving

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Solicitor General. Over the next few weeks the province of Alberta will see thousands of young people graduate from high schools across the province. Family and friends will be rightly proud of the accomplishments of these young people, but tragically a few will not return to continue to their promising future. Their lives will be snuffed out by the senseless and totally avoidable peril of drinking and driving. To the Solicitor General: given that in the reports he released yesterday on drinking and driving the Solicitor confirmed that it is the 18- to 24-year-olds who are most likely to be charged with impaired driving, what additional steps has he taken to reduce this sorrow that is the result of this menace?

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, it is true that yesterday I released two reports prepared by the department at my request on impaired driving, the one being a five-year perspective from '84 to '88, the other being a survey of the opinions of the province's drivers. Now, contained in these reports are certain facts that should be noted, I believe, and that are important. The number of impaired drivers sent to Alberta jails has in fact increased over five years by 20 percent. Nearly half a million vehicles are stopped yearly at our Check Stops. I wish to advise the Assembly that Check Stops were an innovation brought about by the province of Alberta first, commencing here to right across Canada. Over those five years the number of impaired drivers charged has dropped by 24 percent notwithstanding the stepped up enforcement.

But, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding those short figures — and there's a great deal more in the documents which I recommend for reading to anyone interested in this subject — it is my intent to not stop on the government's drive in respect to stopping this social hazard, this social disease, and this social disaster that continues to occur on our highways. I am now looking at new initiatives for 1991. However, I'm not in a position to unveil those to the Assembly today.

MR. SPEAKER: Wainwright, supplementary.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you. I know that all Albertans strongly support the minister in his continued fight. However, given that Alberta has the infamous record of leading the nation in charges of impaired driving, has the minister determined whether or not raising the drinking age would assist in reducing that number?

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, I'm keenly aware of the member's interest and desire to see the drinking age raised from 18 to 21. However, I'm most reluctant to recommend to this Assembly and government the tinkering with the rights of adults in that particular age group. Until I am in a better position to fully assess the effects of those initiatives, I will not be doing so, but I want all Albertans to know that Dick Fowler, this government, and the department are not done with this issue by any means.

Smoky Lake Poultry Plant (continued)

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, it has been almost three weeks since the matter of land dealings involving the Member for Redwater-Andrew came to the attention of this Legislature. Since then the Official Opposition has filed land titles documents that brought into question the ownership of the land. We have offered videotapes of the Smoky Lake councillors who say they were lobbied by the member. We have presented an audio transcript of a public meeting at which the member presented himself as a developer of the project. We have heard contradictory statements about the dates the land titles documents were signed and filed. The evidence is mounting, and my question to the Premier is this: is the onus not now on him to present the evidence that persuades him that an investigation is not necessary?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, we've dealt with the issue twice already this morning.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, I think most Albertans would agree that this matter has not been laid to rest, that there are still many unanswered questions. This is not as complicated an affair as the Principal matter. This won't cost millions of dollars. Won't the Premier now put this matter to rest in this Assembly by calling a judicial inquiry that will clear the air once and for all? Mr. Speaker, enough is enough.

MR. GETTY: I agree with that, Mr. Speaker. I agree with that.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Social Services Caseloads

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've often asked the Minister of Family and Social Services about working conditions and caseloads and income security and child welfare. Discussions currently with social workers in the public service appear to have reached a crisis stage. The problems stem from working conditions that place professional people in a position where they not only are contravening their own professional code of ethics but also are forced into not fulfilling their mandate within the Social Development Act. We're jeopardizing their capacity to serve with quality disabled people, children, families, the poor in our province. Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Family and Social Services: aside from the personnel generalists who will be there, how many managers from the Department of Family and Social Services with social worker experience, with front-line experience, professionals, are part of the discussions that are taking place now?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, the member is quite correct that there are some negotiations going on in this province at this time. I'm not sure that this is the proper forum to be discussing those negotiations, but I will say this: as minister, it's a concern I have had; it's a concern we've had as a government. Last year, as the member knows, we added 59 new positions in child welfare alone. This past year I've taken it upon myself to get out and talk to some of those managers that the member is asking about. I've met with front-line caseworkers on both the child welfare side and the income securities side from right across this province. We've put forward concrete proposals on the negotiating table regarding workloads. We're doing everything we can to address this problem on a co-operative and meaningful basis, and we'll continue to do that.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, there's no question that these caseloads are way too high to provide any kind of quality service and allow professionals to do their job. My question, then, to the minister is: will the minister now commit to this House that we will develop standards for caseloads as to type and number and will publish those and make them known to all professionals in the province?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, we are working. As I've said on previous occasions in this Assembly, we have been working toward meaningful caseload standards, and we are piloting some of those in some of our offices at this time. But I would want to point out one of the things I've said all along: one of the solutions might be to see a reduced caseload. I'm happy to point out at this time in our province that I've received some recent statistics, and they would indicate that in the city of Edmonton on social allowance our caseload is down 3.4 percent from a year ago. In the city of Calgary it is down 10.2 percent from a year ago, and provincially it is down 4.5 percent from a year ago. I would want to point out on the child welfare side that our active cases on a provincially basis are down 4.8 percent.

Mr. Speaker, this is a positive way of resolving that problem. This is the way I'd like to see it resolved ideally. I recognize that's not necessarily going to be the only solution, but again we're going to continue to work in a spirit of co-operation to address this problem with our social workers. We've done that for the past year, and we'll continue to do that in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Three Hills, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

Mortgage and Housing Corporation

MRS. OSTERMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The corporation has had a very long and mostly trying history in the community of Airdrie, with a lot of vacant units that in the last several years have been filled up as market rental accommodation as opposed to the accommodation that is subsidized by the corporation. Yesterday I had notification that many, many people had received a letter indicating that they were going to be receiving a three-month notice to vacate in order that most of the properties be put on the market. My question to the minister: would the minister be very specific about the policy that is being used by the corporation in handling the divestiture of the market rental accommodation?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. Mr. Speaker. The Chair is indeed hoisted by *Beauchesne* 409(12): anticipation because of Committee of Supply in Municipal Affairs later this morning.

We must move on to Edmonton-Calder.

Social Services Caseloads (continued)

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. There is a crisis developing in this province. We have seen social workers out demonstrating because they are so angry, and they are talking about the possibility of going on strike. Social workers in Alberta have been forced to carry unreasonably heavy caseloads during the past several years. The strain has led to clients being treated like nothing more than numbers, not receiving the help they need, and it is leading to a breakdown in negotiations. The minister has just given us meaningless statistics. Obviously, the social workers would not be satisfied with those statistics. I would ask: why is this minister not prepared to lower caseloads meaningfully so that social workers in this province can do their jobs properly and people can receive the help they deserve?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, I'm appalled that that member would talk about meaningless statistics. If she doesn't think that taking 4.5 percent of our caseloads off social allowance is meaningful, then I'd be interested in hearing what her long-term solution really is. I think it's tragic that in Alberta we have the caseload as high as it is, but to say that reducing it by 4.5 percent is meaningless . . . I'm shocked.

But again, I do want to say that we're anxious to see meaningful discussions and meaningful negotiations continue, and we are anxious to see a settlement with our social workers. We recognize the significance and the importance of the work they're doing. We certainly don't want to see services to seniors and children jeopardized, and we're going to continue to do everything we can to see these things resolved to a successful conclusion.

MS MJOLSNESS: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister would like long-term solutions. The long-term solution is to change this government.

We are seeing in this province that we're very close to a breakdown in negotiations. Child welfare and income security

caseloads have been too high for far too long. For many years they've been too high. What will it take to convince this minister that he has to take some action now to address the serious concerns social workers have over high caseloads?

MR. OLDRING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member again talks about long-term solutions. Although we like to look well into the future, we're not prepared to wait that many years for her particular solution. But I do want to say . . . [interjections] Mr. Speaker, the flakes aren't only outside this morning.

Again I want to say that we are committed to meaningful negotiations, that we are committed and anxious to find a solution to the challenges that lie ahead. We recognize that establishing a caseload model is important. We've made some big strides in that direction this past year, and we're going to make some bigger strides in the future. But it does take co-operation; it takes effort on the part of all of us involved. We're certainly willing to play our role and be a part of a meaningful solution, and we're hoping again, Mr. Speaker, that through that process we can establish the appropriate roles.

I would want to just conclude by pointing out, Mr. Speaker – and I was remiss in not mentioning it earlier – that we have done some formal child welfare caseload size comparisons across this nation. It was interesting to note that in our province we had the fourth lowest ratio in Canada.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Centre.

Hospital Working Conditions

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Working conditions for staff in Alberta's hospitals and nursing homes are, I'm told, about the fourth most dangerous in the province, particularly when staff levels become unacceptably low. Yesterday the support staff at the Calgary General hospital's Bow Valley and Lougheed centres spoke out publicly about them being refused even time off to get simple things like band-aids or aspirins or seeing a medical specialist they might need to access. To quote the head nurse, "We have a very unsafe environment and it's time somebody in the hierarchy got to know about it." So I want to ask the Minister of Health: in the light of these statements and in the light of tomorrow being the international day for injured workers, when will she commit to meet with these hospital workers to get to the bottom of the situation and prevent their health from being further jeopardized?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I have met with certainly the board and staff and been through the Calgary General hospital and would be happy to do so again. But I have done so.

REV. ROBERTS: I appreciate that. The workers have gone on, in their statement of yesterday, to say that they are demanding that the Minister of Health conduct an independent inquiry into the working conditions at the general hospital – and with other documentation about their working conditions I'd like to send to the minister. Will she now commit to not just visiting them and talking with them but, in fact, having an independent inquiry into working conditions and improving it for their good health and the future health for all Albertans?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to have an opportunity to tell the hon. member the kinds of agencies that

exist within government to do exactly the kind of thing he appears to be suggesting. First of all, I met with the board of the Calgary General hospital, in fact, last week. The issue was not raised with me then, and I would hope any workers in that hospital who feel their work environment is not safe would be raising it with their own board.

Secondly, there is a group called the Health Facilities Review Committee in this province, and if anybody wishes to lay a complaint about the safety of a facility or patient care, they have every opportunity to do so and I would encourage them to do so.

Kuma Power Corporation

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Energy. There's a company in the city of Calgary called the Kuma Power Corporation, and they have a proposal to generate power using the natural gas which is flared at many of our oil well sites around the province. The initiative is a very interesting one, because it could diversify the economy or help to do so, it could reduce the total CO₂ produced into the atmosphere, it could reduce the need for future coal generation plants, and it would help create new jobs. However, the corporation simply needs a break on the royalty paid for natural gas prices. So my question is: could the minister explain why he's not prepared to waive the royalty charge on the natural gas flared, for which the province doesn't receive any benefit anyway? If it's going to be flared, why not allow these people to utilize it so we can perhaps do all these positive things I've mentioned?

MR. ORMAN: I never said that, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. BRUSEKER: I didn't hear your response.

MR. ORMAN: Is that the second question, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, it is.

MR. ORMAN: I said that I've never made that statement, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Calgary-Fish Creek.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, a number of . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: I wonder if the Member for Calgary Fish Creek would allow the other member, who seems to be hard of hearing, to continue with his supplementary. Are you gracious enough to allow the floor?

MR. PAYNE: More than pleased, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BRUSEKER: I'll be sure to send the minister a videotape where he did make such a statement.

MR. SPEAKER: Please ask the question.

MR. BRUSEKER: Certainly.

If the minister would not be willing to agree to a complete waiving, would he consider a five-year royalty holiday, as has been granted to other companies, on a trial basis to allow these people to get their company started, say on the first 20 wells, trying to implement this technology?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, we have a number of initiatives in the government, and in my department estimates we had some discussion about alternative energy. We have the small power producers who have a program in place. As a matter of fact, an amendment to that BUI is before this Legislature, wherein alternative energy sources or other ways of harnessing energy can be facilitated through a program we have that is initiated by this government. So the hon. member may wish to bring forward some of his suggestions when the Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest is piloting this legislation through the Assembly.

The second initiative, of course, that we have for these types of alternative energy is the southwest renewable energy initiative, and the hon. member might want to review that initiative. It is a recent initiative, granted, but certainly it would give full consideration to the point of view. I can advise the hon. member that I have had a discussion with the proponents of this initiative, and I'll give this member the same assurance I gave the proponent: the department will look at it, is looking at it, and once we have done an assessment, I'll be providing full details to him and to the proponents.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Surface Rights

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A number of my constituents who are operators of seismic companies have told me that their operating costs are climbing at an alarming rate, as much as 300 percent in the current operating year, and most of these new and additional costs are the results of changing government policy. I wonder if the minister would be prepared to use this public forum this morning to respond to these fears that have been raised by the seismic industry.

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, in a province that is rich and endowed with an abundance of resources, there is always a potential for conflict. I think a perfect example we have in this province is the potential for conflict that existed between the agricultural industry and the oil and gas industry in terms of surface rights access to develop our minerals. Now, over the last 40 or 50 years in this province we have set an example, I think, as to how two vastly different resources can be developed in concert for the welfare and benefit of the economic development of our province. There is always this potential for conflict.

With the advent of the forestry industry being another pillar of our economy and the initiatives we have in that direction, again a conflict may develop with regard to the oil and gas industry and the forestry industry in terms of access to the mineral rights and the surface requirements that the forest management agreements have with regard to the forestry industry. I'm hopeful that the forestry industry can evolve the same type of relationship that has evolved with the agricultural industry vis-à-vis energy development. I have been in discussion with the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife in this connection, and he and I have both agreed that it is in every-

body's best interests to come to some kind of resolution on surface access for forest management agreements to everyone's satisfaction.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, one of the irritants, one of the difficulties that does require resolution is the conflict the minister refers to when seismic operators are running their seismic lines across lands covered by forestry management agreements. With that backdrop and in light of the Minister of Energy's comments, I'm wondering: would the Minister of Energy and perhaps the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife be prepared in the near term to meet with representatives of the seismic industry to understand firsthand the economic implications of these apparently new escalating charges?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, the minister of forestry, I'm sure, in whose area of responsibility this lies, will like to respond to some extent. I can point out to the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek that I have met with the geophysical group in Calgary, and we have an ongoing discussion. I understand there are meetings with the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife's department and other departments and the geophysicists, and maybe he could bring you up to date in that connection.

MR. FJORDBOTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to respond as well. I'd like to confirm the Minister of Energy's comments with respect to the so-called conflict going on between the two parties now. We're working toward a resolution of that conflict. We need new timber damage assessment tables, and that's something that's being worked on in consultation with my department and the industry and with the Energy department. It has become a more significant problem as of late, because we have an expanding forest industry in this province. To give you some idea, in 1988 the energy industry cut more trees in Alberta than the forest industry. Some 114,000 acres were cut by the energy industry and some 97,000 acres by the forest industry, so it is a fairly large problem. Also, there wasn't use historically for aspen. That is something that damages weren't really paid on. Now, with a newfound use for aspen, of course there have to be charges levied for that. Also, we want to make absolutely sure that in the salvage operations that are used on seismic lines, that wood is used, it isn't wasted. All of those discussions are part of what's taking place in our negotiations now. One of the key elements, as I stated earlier, is the damage assessment table, and we're working on that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Cultural Heritage Council

MR. GIBEAULT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For many years the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council has provided a very valuable service giving advice to this government. It was a broadly-based agency with representatives from across the province. To show its appreciation to the council members, these volunteers who gave this advice over the years, this government has destroyed the council by terminating all memberships on the body effective March 31, 1990. I'm not trying to deform-a-Tory here, but can the chairman of the Multicultural Commission tell us why, when in eastern Europe they're trying to open up new democratic structures, he's trying to do his best to shut them down and destroy them?

MR. ZARUSKY: Mr. Speaker, I guess the hon. member hasn't been reading the report Focus for the 90's that was put out by Albertans, put together by the Multiculturalism Commission. Some of the recommendations in this report were to streamline the needs for multiculturalism in this province, and I suggest that the hon. member . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. If I hear that clucking noise once more, someone's going to get bounced from this Chamber. Got it? It's inappropriate behaviour in a parliament.

Please continue.

MR. ZARUSKY: I suggest that . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order in the House.

MR. ZARUSKY: . . . the hon. member get back to the report Focus for the 90's and read some of the recommendations in there on the streamlining of multiculturalism for the next decade in this province.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, I know the chairman of the commission has trouble admitting when he's made a mistake, but will he now publicly apologize in light of that, apologize for destroying the council, since a betrayal exists now in the multicultural community?

MR. ZARUSKY: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the hon. member is aware of it or not, but there is legislation, amendments to the multicultural Act, coming in this session. When this Act is introduced, I think the hon. member will have the opportunity to debate it right here in this House.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Calgary-McKnight.

Northland Open University

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In order to advertise itself in Alberta, a postsecondary institution must have the approval of the Minister of Advanced Education. Northland Open University has received such approval even though it is not allowed to operate in Quebec. To the Minister of Advanced Education: what criteria must Out-of-province universities satisfy before they receive ministerial approval to advertise themselves in this province?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, the criterion we go by is the assurance that any Albertan who is pursuing those studies has a quality education. I can't respond in any greater detail, because frankly I just don't know beyond that. I'll take the question as notice.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the minister to assure us that this is not part of a strategy to shove students away from publicly funded postsecondary institutions and into independent institutions.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I could give the hon. member that assurance, and I would certainly hope it's not the intent of the hon. member to cast any type of aspersion at all against Camrose Lutheran College or King's College or Concordia

College in this province, which by law are authorized to grant degrees.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
The Member for Vegreville.

Pork Industry

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Minister of Agriculture attended a meeting of the Alberta Pork Producers' Development Corporation, and he made several statements that had pork producers so angered and offended by this government's record in terms of dealing with the red meat industry that there were people at that meeting calling for his resignation. Now, the minister obviously hasn't complied with their wishes, but I would like to ask him what specific things he's done to address the concerns producers expressed to him at that meeting.

MR. SPEAKER: First, hon. minister, may I request unanimous consent of the House to complete this series of questions?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you, minister.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I should point out for the benefit of the hon. member that there were also people at that meeting that totally agreed with some of the positions the minister took. As I recollect the meeting, there was one request for a follow-up. That meeting is being arranged. I did receive a request to meet with the ownership committee of the Pork Producers' Development Corporation to address the issue of separating the ownership of Fletcher's, the processing plant, from the Pork Producers' Development Corporation, which is the only body that has the authority to sell hogs in this province. That meeting will be proceeding.

MR. FOX: Well, Mr. Speaker, he's right. There were a few people that agreed with him at the meeting; his executive assistant accompanied him. But one of the most offensive statements he made related to the price of hogs in Alberta. Now, for the first time in several months the price has approached the break-even point, and the price for a change has at times been higher than the price paid hog producers in the Ontario market. Finally the west is getting a decent break. The minister had the gall to stand up and tell producers at that meeting that he thinks producers in Alberta are being paid too much for their hogs. He ought to be ashamed of himself. I want to ask him: in view of the fact that the government has reviewed the pricing policies of the Pork Producers' Development Corporation on more than one occasion and they've been vindicated in every instance, when will he cease and desist his attempts to defame the reputation of the Pork Producers' Marketing Board and be an assistance, a help to the industry in Alberta for a change?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Vegreville's information is totally and utterly wrong. The Minister of Agriculture at no point in time stood up and said what I'm alleged to have been saying. I would suggest to the Member for Vegreville that if he wishes to know what goes on at meetings, that was an open meeting. Why wasn't he there?

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired. Might we have unanimous consent to revert to the Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.
Red Deer-North first.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**
(*reversion*)

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege for me to introduce to you a teacher from Red Deer, Mr. Darren Lund. Mr. Lund has received provincial and national recognition in his work with students and with teachers, with a group which opposes prejudice and discrimination and promotes tolerance and understanding. He's received a prestigious human rights award for his work. He's with us today, and I'd ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, earlier this morning you introduced a group of students from the Fairview junior high school. I understand we've now been joined by a second contingent of students from Fairview, and I should point out that these students reside in the constituencies of Calgary-Egmont, Calgary-Fish Creek, and Calgary-Millican. I'd like to request these students, along with their teachers and parents, to stand in the gallery and be warmly welcomed by the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Rocky Mountain House.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly on behalf of my colleague and hon. Member for Clover Bar some 46 individuals – students, teachers, and parents – from the Rudolph Hennig school. The group is accompanied by teachers Luciano Ingriselli and Olga Alexandruk. I believe they're seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair would like to apologize to the House. There have been difficulties throughout this week with regard to the sound system. During the break the experts were called in to readjust the system, and it's obvious that they didn't succeed in terms of the balancing. That's cause for a number of lost answers and questions, I'm sure, in terms of the whole week as well as this morning. We will have the technicians in again over the weekend and hopefully be able to have the system working in an appropriate way.

The Chair also needs to point out, however, though: members at the far end of the House, when you're addressing the Chair, I know it's appropriate to turn towards the Chair. But for the sake of the console operator here in the House, please make sure that you haven't blocked your microphone with books or papers, and do try to talk just a bit louder as you turn away from your directional microphone, because sometimes we have to try to put on two mikes at the same time. Thank you.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**

MR. SPEAKER: Now, before we get to Orders of the Day, we do have a request under Standing Order 40 by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Gibeault:

Be it resolved that in recognition of April 28 being the national day of mourning for workers injured or killed on the job and in light of the many hazardous worksites across Alberta, the Legislative Assembly establish a special task force to conduct public hearings with all interested parties to identify solutions to the health and safety problems faced by Alberta workers.

MR. GIBEAULT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In speaking to the urgency of this motion, which I had circulated for members, the urgency, of course, is that tomorrow is April 28, the national day of mourning set aside to reflect upon and see what we can do to reduce the tragedy of workers who are injured and killed on the job in this country. In light of the incidences we've seen in the past year – the gassings at Weldwood, lead poisonings at Medicine Hat, numerous deaths on the job – the Assembly must not allow this day to pass without taking some concrete and meaningful action. I therefore urge all members of the House to give their unanimous consent to debate this important resolution.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Under Standing Order 40, those in favour of giving unanimous consent, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The request fails.

Orders of the Day

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. It being already a few minutes after 11, if the Committee of Supply could come to order as quickly as possible.

head: **Main Estimates 1990-91**

Municipal Affairs

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to also thank my colleagues for their encouragement and support during this last fiscal year, and want to say that I look forward to the fiscal year of 1990-91 with some great energy and some new accomplishments and with dedication not only of my staff but also myself to serve the people of Alberta.

I want to, though, Mr. Chairman, make a comment or two with regards to the 1990 Budget Address that was presented to us by the hon. Provincial Treasurer. The theme running through that address was: working toward a balanced budget in the province of Alberta. I want to put it on record that one of the reasons I came to join the Progressive Conservative government was to be part of that objective. I feel that we are going to achieve it. I feel that we are on a trend of fiscal responsibility and certainly a trend that's well accepted and encouraged by the people of Alberta. I want to say that I'm quite proud of the fact that I am part of it, and certainly want to give my congratulations and thank you to the Provincial Treasurer for setting a very committed and dedicated course in that direction.

The areas of responsibility I have in terms of this 1990-91 budget lie in the two general areas of Municipal Affairs and the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation. I want to direct my comments with regards to those responsibilities. I do want to acknowledge, Mr. Chairman, the leadership that's given within those two areas by the deputy minister, Mr. Archie Grover, a very dedicated person that's been in public service for over 30 years who brings a breadth of experience from one end of the province to the other, brings a friendship with many, many people that contribute at the local level in municipal government. I find that when I attend meetings with this deputy, the initial entrance into a meeting is one of smiles and encouragement and confidence. I think we as elected persons often take that for granted. I think it's something: it's a true quality of leadership that is displayed by Mr. Grover across this province.

I also want to extend a thank you to the leadership of the new president of the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Mary Cameron. Mary was asked to come into a difficult situation with many challenges and a situation where many decisions were necessary and had to be made, and I want to talk further about that today. But again the leadership in AMHC is one of people first, extensive consideration to the staff who are working with that leader, and at the present time I find as I travel across this province that people feel that our housing programs and our housing portfolio are in very able hands. To me, Mr. Chairman, that is certainly a tribute to the leadership Mary Cameron has given in her responsibilities as now the president of the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation. I wanted to note that in the record of this Assembly here today.

In making comments with regards to the Department of Municipal Affairs, I want to highlight a number of areas that are in this budget and that indicate our commitment to local government in the province of Alberta. There is no question that there is harmony between the provincial government and the local governments of this province that involve the cities – the urban governments – the rural governments, the IDs, the special areas. I find that we're in harmony, that we're working together to achieve for the people we represent. We are not adversaries; we are in a partnership, a true partnership. I give a compliment to the ministers that have preceded me for bringing that about. Secondly, I want to say that it has been my aim as the minister of this department to continue that effective and very intensive relationship that does exist.

In this budget that we have before us, there are a number of assistance programs for our municipalities. One of the items that I thought was most important and that the municipalities felt very strongly about was that any increases which went to the Department of Education or the Department of Health should

3 percent in the unconditional grants to municipalities under the Alberta Partnership Transfer Program in the sum of \$107.6 million. As well, we've been able to continue the Alberta Municipal Partnership in Local Employment Program at a level of \$61.4 million. That program will continue until it meets its first commitment. Its commitment to the municipality was, first of all, to be an unconditional grant, and it is; secondly, it will meet its commitment of \$500 million allocated in that program. What we have done, in discussion with the municipalities, is set out a fixed formula by which that grant will be distributed. In the final year, 1996-97, the remainder will be provided to the municipalities.

The third area I want to talk about, Mr. Chairman, is with regards to the new program established by the local governments – the Alberta School Trustees' Association, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, and the Alberta MDs and counties – whereby they're establishing a program to self-insure themselves. They have worked together in the past year or two to bring this about, and I must say they have done an excellent job. In this budget we're providing \$75,000 as a start-up premium for that program, and secondly, we have already approved in the year 1989-90 a \$5 million reserve fund to give the program backup in its early stages of development and responsibility.

We will continue the work of the Municipal Statutes Review Committee, and in this budget there is \$300,000 budgeted for that responsibility. I want to thank my colleague from Spirit River-Fairview for his very aggressive and intelligent leadership that he is giving to reviewing this, some 141 different statutes that relate to municipal government in the province of Alberta. I have found councils across the province providing information, providing ideas, providing questions to that committee, and in their deliberations they have challenged those questions and are making recommendations. It is our hope that from those recommendations we will bring in a series of Acts in the spring Legislature of 1992 to bring about some major changes in municipal legislation in the province of Alberta. So to that hon. member I extend my thanks.

One of the other items whereby we are making provisions for funding is for the town of Banff in the sum of \$2.5 million in this current budget, 1990-91. From our 1989-90 budget we provided \$3 million for the new town of Banff, and it's our intent to provide a further \$2 million in the year 1991-92. The establishment of the town of Banff is unique in that it is the first town established in a national park, whereby the citizens are able to have local government, self-determination, and decide the best for the people they are to serve. This only came about by extensive co-operation and leadership by Tom Forgrave in our Department of Municipal Affairs and leadership by the federal government: co-operation, understanding, negotiation that brought about a very successful event.

I want to say publicly at this time, Mr. Chairman, that I wish the town of Banff the best in their future endeavours and in their responsibilities.

As well in this budget we have some assistance for our seniors. We all are very committed to making sure that living conditions, economic conditions, and affordability of good shelter are available for our seniors, and I believe we are continuing to accomplish that by adequate funding in this budget. The seniors' medical alert program will receive \$3 million in funding. That program, as we recognize, started on January 1, 1990. Applications are coming in, and I know from some of the letters I've

communicate when they are in need. I think some of the advertisements on television tell that story very, very well. We're going to continue the Seniors' Independent Living Program in the sum of \$30 million to assist seniors to live on their own in their own residence. We're going to continue the funding for the senior citizen renters assistance program. Some 51,700 Alberta senior citizens are now supported by that program or assisted, and that is budgeted to the amount of 51.4 millions of dollars in vote 3 that's before us.

We're going to continue the funding for the property tax reduction program, which has been a very popular program in this province. Many seniors have benefited and have been protected from high taxation on their primary residence. That program will cost us some 72.7 millions of dollars, and we are delivering it to 110,000 senior households. When we raise the question of what we are doing for senior citizens – are we keeping them in their own homes? – I think just this program, plus some of the others I have mentioned, goes a long ways and much further in opportunity than in other provinces of Canada at the present time.

This budget will allow us to continue the garden suite pilot project program that we started in Lethbridge and Parkland, and we're looking forward to the results that will be brought to us after the three-year period which ends in 1991. The information I have up to the present time is that the program has been well accepted, and those that have been accommodated are certainly complimentary of what is happening.

The last two programs I'd like to mention that should be highlighted in this budget are the Alberta mortgage interest shielding program and the Alberta family first-home program that we announced during the 1989 election, programs that are now implemented and are now being used by thousands of people across this province. First of all, the Alberta family first-home program: some 18,000 young people – and I would think the majority of them are that – have been helped and assisted to move into their first home and enjoy that opportunity of home ownership. Eighteen thousand, Mr. Chairman: I think that's a fantastic number of people that we have assisted in this province. Our budget this year is some \$10 million.

Under the Alberta mortgage interest shielding program we are again helping many people against the high interest rates that Ottawa is inflicting upon us at the present time. Sixty-four thousand applications have been approved, and we have allocated in that program some 13 millions of dollars as of March 31, 1990. We are allocating another \$20 million in the current budget. There was some criticism in the early stages of this program. I heard the opposition say it isn't necessary, it's not a good program, it's too hard to fill out the application. Well, I tested the application. I brought the press in – I felt the best people that could assess an application – and said: "Sit down and fill it out for me. Is there anything difficult about it?" They sat down and filled it out within a few minutes. They couldn't determine anything. I said, "Is there an improvement that should be made?" "No, it looks good to me." Now, I don't think anybody can deny that that is the best test of a document. So, Mr. Chairman, I felt that it did pass the test, and we are continuing to use that application form. That was one of the criticisms.

But it's interesting that at the present time, as the interest rates are reaching exorbitant rates – unfair rates to many of our homeowners in the province of Alberta that have mortgages – I hear the cry starting at the present time that we should be shielding the mortgages on a continuous basis, on a long-term

basis, that we should commit more funds on a long-term basis. The program is a good one. The builders are now starting to phone me and say: "People have quit building. We've got to quit building, because no one wants to buy. They don't want to take a mortgage at a high interest rate. Will you continue the 12 percent shielding?" And I'm considering that, Mr. Chairman. I'm considering that at the present time, because we want growth to continue in this province. We know that the economy of Alberta is going to continue to grow. We have viability here, and it's unfortunate that we often have to, in many cases, use the taxpayers' money of this province to ward off some of those negative effects that come from the federal programs that are imposed upon us. So, Mr. Chairman, it is a good program, and it was a good election announcement. Sometimes you have to wait until the proof is in the pudding. Well, the proof is now that it is good as well.

Mr. Chairman, I want to leave some time for my colleague the Attorney General so that he can make some comments with regard to the votes dealing with the Metis settlements and the Metis transitional programs, and I'd like to turn now to the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation. I've had two documents distributed in the Legislature to all of the members, and I would like to follow through with those to make the explanation much easier. I believe those are distributed at the present time.

The Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation in its original intent had two focuses, as you'll note from the circles on the one document: a social housing function and a market housing function. On November 1, when we decided to do the review, our intent was to take the market housing function – as you'll note, as we move from one set of circles to the other – out of the purview or the responsibility of the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation and leave the remaining focus as the social housing focus, so those people that are in need in the province of Alberta, the seniors, the people with special needs, low income, were able to receive shelter accommodation. I recommend to the hon. members to look at that set of transitional graphs that I have placed before them.

What, then, were the areas we looked at in terms of the market functions that were the responsibility of AMHC? First of all, the residential mortgage portfolio. We are considering the selling of that portfolio, specifically the single-family portion of it of some 691 millions of dollars. We have about 15,000 mortgages in that area, and about 1,000 of them remain subsidized. That program, if we left it as it is, would most likely deplete itself in five to 10 years, but we feel it is appropriate to sell it so we can use the money through the Heritage Savings Trust Fund and, as well, for other purposes.

Some of our surplus land that we have in the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation we intend to sell, and we are selling it. We're going to return the foreclosed properties to home ownership. There was a question raised earlier in the House, and I'll respond to that later today in my concluding remarks. We offered 1,193. Some 288 of those were accepted. The remainder we're looking at on the basis of two things. First of all, we're looking at the income of those people that are in those homes as to whether they can afford to buy them. If not, then we will have to look at either alternate accommodation or, in some situations, possibly rent-supplement those units. But our intent is still, over a period of time, to sell those market rental units, because if they're market rental, then they're not income-tested units. We want to return the land banks and the subdivision projects to the municipalities. I announced a few

weeks ago that we would be prepared to sell the property at market value to the 68 municipalities and that we would cost share in any equity growth that would occur in that property on a 75-25 basis. We're looking into landholdings in Fort McMurray. We're examining the role of the mobile-home loan insurance program, which is very popular and very supported by the construction industry and also the homeowner. We want to improve client responsiveness and efficiency, and I want to say that that certainly has occurred already. The last point, and one very important, is to improve the fiscal responsibility and the management of that some \$3.1 billion portfolio.

The corporation's future, as I have said, is going to be in providing social housing to meet the needs of low-income seniors and families, people with disabilities or special needs. The second part of the review will look at all the programs in terms of relevance and compatibility for their new mandate.

Mr. Chairman, if I could know how much time I have left so that I do leave some for my colleague. I have 10 minutes left? Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, sorry, hon. minister. I guess it's seven minutes.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I'd like to highlight some of the programs in this current budget for low-income Albertans as follows. Under a community housing program there are 45 units, and the cost, on average, for those units is \$75,000. The operating costs and the repayment of the debenture for capital in that program is financed and shared with the federal government on a 70-30 percent basis.

The seniors' lodges program. We have 120 beds allocated in this budget. That has been a very successful program since way back in the late 1950s and well accepted by our seniors in this province. There are seniors' self-contained units in the budget, some 100 units, for the current 1990-91 year, and those are units that are made available to our seniors based on a rent geared to income.

The rent supplement program has an allocation of 275 units, and that's to help some of our low-income people and people in special circumstances so that they can live in a situation where their rent is geared, again, to their income.

In the review that we're carrying out, there were some very important principles that we started with. One of those principles was to be open about the review. The some 400 staff that are in that corporation are all aware of what is going on. All of the decisions are made in the open. As we move through the review to the end of 1990, the staff will be aware at all times, so that when any changes take place, it is not brought to the staff by surprise or even to the public by surprise, if they wish to follow the review. We've involved the managers. All of the minutes of our meetings have been available to the employees. There are regular staff meetings with the president regionally and also at our central office. We have an internal publication that updates the employees on the status of the review. I have personally made a promise to the employees that may be affected by the review – when we sell our mortgage portfolio, when we deplete our real estate portfolio or our land portfolio or we change other functions that we have – that I will do everything in my power to see that they have other job opportunities. When those persons on staff accepted the job, they did it with a commitment to do a good job. I believe that they have done that. What we are doing here in this review is changing

function. We are not out to pick and choose or punish people, and we're not doing that in any way in this review.

So, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to quickly sum up as follows with regards to what we're doing with the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation. We want to build a strong mandate, one that's for social housing, so that government is out of the private business. It's going to be an efficient corporation. It's going to be facilitating, humane, and outwardly focused. It's going to involve the public of Alberta. Our people will serve them well. I believe that we've already accomplished some of that, and we're going to continue to work for those goals so that that institution, that organization serves the needs of Albertans, not only in shelter but certainly in that broader social concern that we should have as elected people and certainly people that serve in the public arena.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. the Attorney General.

MR. ROSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll take a few moments to welcome also some of my former colleagues from the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation and some of the people I've worked with in my past responsibilities. I congratulate the Minister of Municipal Affairs on his activities and actions that he's outlined to us. But I'd like to refer to the small part of this department that comes under my responsibility, and that's the native services.

There's been, as outlined in vote 5, a significant decrease in the amount of money allocated to this portion of the department, but that's for a very good reason. We've made major advances in the culmination of an agreement, an accord with the Metis settlement federation whereby we will be bringing forward a number of pieces of legislation which will give them a form of self-determination, self-sufficiency, and a financial mechanism whereby they can be economically self-sufficient. That budget will come under Executive Council rather than under this particular element.

In this element we continue to work with the Metis Association of Alberta and other native organizations to fulfill the commitment that our Premier made in 1987 at the first ministers' conference on aboriginal rights, wherein he made a commitment to the Metis that they are under provincial jurisdiction and we take responsibility for working with them.

I wish to acknowledge the significant contribution of the president of the Metis Association of Alberta, Mr. Larry Desmeules, and the number of people that work with him; the significant contribution of Mr. Roy Louis, the president of the Indian Association of Alberta, and the many people that work with him; and the contribution of Mr. Randall Hardy, the president of the Alberta Federation of Metis Settlement Associations, and the very, very significant contribution he's made to working with our government to enhance the viability and the self-sufficiency of our native population in Alberta. I now look forward to any questions the hon. members may have as it relates to this element.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again it's a pleasure for me to rise and to speak to the estimates of Municipal Affairs and housing. Before I make my comments, I want to extend my appreciation to the minister for the kind of co-

operation he has extended to myself and to this House and I'd say to all opposition members in his attempts to keep us informed of activities in his department, initiatives that he was taking, particularly relative to Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation. I appreciate it, and I'm sure all members do as well. I wondered why that was happening; I suppose when one spends some time on the opposition benches, one does learn to perhaps be more appreciative of the requirements of the opposition to be informed about what is happening in government. So again, Mr. Minister, we want to express our appreciation for that.

I want to start by – and I'll be going, by the way, through the estimates book, the element book, and also briefly through the throne speech in my address. As the minister has stated, I think by and large the municipalities in the province are indeed working in good harmony. Or maybe it's the other way around: the government is working in good harmony with the municipalities. By and large, I don't see that there are a great deal of problems. There are the usual things that do crop up, but by and large, I think the job is being done in regards to attending to the needs of municipalities in the province. So I think most of my comments this morning are going to be relative to the housing component of the minister's portfolio.

I'd like to start, then, with vote 2.4, the Senior Citizen Accommodation Municipal Tax Grant. Now, as I understand it, this grant is directed at places like seniors' apartments, where the government picks up the municipal portion of the tax that's allocated to that particular facility. I notice there hasn't been any increase in this program since 1988. In fact, it was cut some \$500,000 in '87-88, and again in '88-89 the budget was underspent. In lieu of the fact that municipal taxes have been going up and so on, I was wondering why this was happening and whether we are expecting the municipalities to absorb some of the tax costs on these facilities. Perhaps the minister may want to respond to that.

In 3.2, Senior Citizen Renters Assistance, I'm glad to see that this program is continuing. It was committed back in 1973, and I might tell the minister that I have many seniors who call me and are concerned about the possibility of this program being cut. I must say that there is a desperate need. I think this program is needed, and we certainly don't feel it should be cut. But I do want to ask the minister why there haven't been any increases in the assistance for quite some time, given that in recent years they have been underspending in this program as well by some \$2.4 million. As I say, it is a good program. I think seniors on fixed and moderate incomes do require the assistance. However, I do have a question as well. What is so magic about age 60 or 65, and why do some Albertans get assistance based on age while other Albertans do not get assistance also based on age? I'm referring to such folks as widows, divorced women, or women who have never married. They have needs, and they also need assistance. I think that's one deficiency in that particular program.

Under vote 4 I want to talk about the grant to the Alberta Planning Board. Now, I know the board has an important function, and it allocates the funding to places like the regional planning commissions. I want to today be recorded as saying that I think our regional commissions do a good job. I think they take their responsibilities seriously, and I think they have done and continue to do a good job. I do, however, want to make a comment relative to the application by the city of Calgary on its annexation. I realize that the minister was not in government at that time, and he wasn't part of the decision-

making process that occurred during that period. It was September '88 when Calgary made their application for some 95 acres to annex, based on their long-term growth management strategy. They did this after two years of extensive dialogue with the adjacent municipalities, the MD of Rocky View and the MD of Foothills. They also had extensive communications with the residents and landowners on the lands proposed to be annexed. It was therefore rather surprising that a small group of individuals – and the way I understand it, in forums like this there will always be those that will not concur or agree with an annexation proposal. However, a small group of individuals seem to have had more influence than the elected officials and were able to modify the annexation to such an extent that I think on a long-term basis it has left Calgary in a bit of a dilemma in terms of its planning for growth and development.

Mr. Chairman, it seems that the Executive Council and Local Authorities Board recommendations have in fact penalized the city of Calgary and the two adjacent municipalities for working co-operatively, and also the Calgary Regional Planning Commission. All four of them had unanimously agreed to the proposed annexation. I daresay that on a long-term basis I would think it may have an impact on future proposals for annexation and the kind of co-operation that was demonstrated in this particular case. What I would suggest to the minister, Mr. Chairman, is that I think it would be prudent for him to make a review of the whole annexation procedure that occurred for the city of Calgary. I'm not sure whether there's an opportunity to make any adjustments or reversals to what has already occurred, but I know that the city is not happy with the results. So I think it needs to be addressed and looked at, and I would hope the minister would take it under consideration.

One other area I wanted to talk on in vote 4 is the Alberta Planning Board. As I say, I know they have a responsibility and a function to carry out, but I wonder . . . I've had some questions raised with me as to: how does one get appointed to the Alberta Planning Board? In fact, they seem to think it's our version of the Ottawa Senate. It seems that it's very exclusive, and once you're on, you're on, and there's no opportunity for new blood and new people to be appointed to that board.

On vote 5, and the Attorney General did speak to it briefly, I also was going to raise the question about the difference in the funding, but he's cleared that up for me, that it has been transferred to the Executive Council budget, I believe, in vote 14. However, I do want to point out that not all Metis people live in the Metis settlements. Although I commend the government for what you've done in terms of providing services for the Metis settlements, there are those that do not live in the settlements. I want to ask the question: what about those individuals? How are they being accommodated in terms of services that they would require as well?

On vote 6 I want to raise one point, something that we discussed here in the session last year when we were talking about the Municipal Affairs estimates. That was the proposition by the government in their budget speech that they were going to require municipalities to have an equalized assessment process in place. I agree with that demand. I think it is fair that that should be done. The minister indicated in his response last year that it'll take several years to get the program in place, but that they were looking to implementing this annual or more frequent assessment to ensure that when the mill rates are established, they are established on a proper assessment. I would perhaps request if the minister would be prepared to give us a progress

report, if I can call it that, on how that's progressing and how the municipalities are accommodating this requirement.

I then would like to move right on through to vote 7. Probably at this point I would be going to the elements book of the estimates and to 7.2.1, Housing Registries. Of course, this program does provide valuable service to seniors, to people with disabilities and others who have a difficult time finding affordable housing. The question I suppose I have is: why didn't the minister provide more funding for this vital service, given the state of the tight housing market that exists at the present time? It's particularly for these groups; these are the most vulnerable groups, I would think, and I think they certainly need assistance. I understand that some of the registries are in fact on the leading edge of innovative housing solutions and I think do deserve funding so they can continue to carry out the kinds of programs that they have in mind.

In 7.2.3 this program provides incentives to investors and developers, and this goes back to 1980-81 under the MURB program. I understand this program is scheduled to end in July of this year, and I wonder: will the minister tell us whether in fact that is the case or whether there might well be an extension in this program? Perhaps the minister could also tell us how many corporations and/or individuals over the years have benefited from this program, the locations of some of the projects, how much money the province has spent, how many units are still solvent since they were built, and whether they are providing social housing and that in fact this really hasn't been just another tax holiday for the developers and the rich and the powerful. The intent was good; I hope that we have benefited from the intent. This is another area where the budget has been underspent. In 1988-89 only about 78 claims were processed for some \$339,000, while we had a budget at that time for some \$2.1 million. So \$1.7 million was underbudgeted. In '87-88 this program assisted some 126 developers for some \$402,000 when it had been budgeted for \$2.6 million, so that really wasn't spent. Perhaps there will be some clarification of what is transpiring and whether we're going to continue with this program for this particular need when rental accommodations are in shortage.

Seniors' Home Improvement Grants. This was a surprise to me as well, because here there's a cut of some \$5 million this year. I understand this is partly because the money has been transferred to the independent living program that has now come on stream. But the two combined programs do not equal the home improvement program during its high period of '84-85, which was \$37 million, and this in light of the fact that there are more seniors now. I think the housing stock is getting older, and the price of repairs and materials is also on the increase. I think it is time to in fact look at this program and ensure that there's sufficient funding for these home improvement programs rather than cutting, as it appears may have happened in this case.

Handicapped Housing Grants. This is where the home adaptation program is funded, and I want to congratulate the minister on this excellent initiative. I'm glad to see there is \$3.7 million committed to provide decent, affordable, accessible housing. But the question I have to ask: is it enough to meet the needs? I asked the question here not so long ago. There are some 300 people with disabilities waiting for proper housing in Edmonton alone, and I was wondering whether the minister has done any studies to ascertain what the true needs for the housing are and whether you've had dialogue with your colleagues to ensure that people with disabilities would be able to access the necessary support services in order to enable them

to live independently. Certainly the people that require this housing want more independence. I think they should have it, and I just wanted to question whether in fact there is enough of a commitment here in that direction in this particular program.

The rural housing branch. In 7.2.9 the Isolated Community Housing Program was cut by some 23 percent after having been frozen, actually, since 1987. Now, I believe this cut is unfair, given the poor quality of housing that exists for many rural families. It's a health hazard in many places, and the government has an obligation to assist families in communities where costs are high because of the isolation situation they're in.

In 7.2.10 I'm assuming here that this money for Metis housing has been transferred to the Metis Settlements Transition Committee. However, the question I want to pose is: what guarantees are there that the Metis settlements will continue to be guaranteed access to housing dollars? I hope this is not a one-time shot but that there is a commitment to ensure that there will be continued financing to the Metis settlements.

In 7.2.12, the Water and Sewer Improvement Program, again this program has been increased by 14.5 percent, but it's still below the 1986 levels. I wonder whether the minister has any plans to consider people living in isolated communities so that they, too, should benefit from some basic services like water and sewer as do most of us in the urban centres.

The new housing programs for seniors. I want to talk about 7.2.13, and that's the Seniors' Emergency Medic Alert Program. I know the minister in his opening remarks alluded to this program and spoke highly of its success. One can't disagree that the need exists, and I think it is a good program. The difficulty I have is that that \$3 million is almost an example of another giveaway to the wealthy, because medical alert units have been available from nonprofit groups for much less than our new for-profit firms are selling them. Seniors used to be able to get these units for a \$23 installation fee and then were charged \$25 a month rental. Now they have to purchase these for some \$700, and the hookup and maintenance are not covered. So I'm asking who is really benefiting from this money. I'm just thinking that it certainly may well be not the seniors.

The minister also alluded to the television commercials we see on a daily basis and the kind of support he's receiving. I'm glad he does receive calls of support, and I'm sure they're worthy, but the Lifecall distress messages when a senior calls for a medical alert – the response centre is located, as I understand it, in Philadelphia, some 3,000 kilometres and two time zones from the city of Edmonton. I'm not sure whether that's a proper and an efficient method of utilization of this particular system.

The other area that I wanted to allude to relative to this is the sales techniques. Now, again we see the commercials, and I really even question – there's almost a scare tactic being employed in these commercials. Also, we have been made aware that there are high-pressure tactics by the salespeople who are employed by Lifecall, and I would perhaps ask the minister, or maybe consumer affairs, that someone look into the methods these people use in pushing their product. I would particularly make mention that there are a number of groups that have supplied and continue to supply the medical alerts. They're nonprofit groups in the city here, and I would hope that we give them the opportunity to provide this service rather than the one that seems to be available to them now.

In 7.2.14 the Seniors' Independent Living Program is welcome, although it would be better if benefits were higher, as I pointed out earlier. In addition, this is another major program that is discriminatory. It applies strictly to the widows' pension

recipients, and I wonder whether the minister would consider extending this to those I mentioned earlier: widows under the age of 55, divorcées, or those people that may have never married. As I say, their requirements are as great as those that are receiving the benefits now.

The minister also spoke about the first-home program and the interest shielding program, and certainly one can't argue that they are good programs. I think the concerns that were expressed were on the amount of administrative costs attached to these programs, but certainly I don't think the programs themselves were being criticized. But I do still have a problem with it, because, you know, we spent some \$40 million last year and another \$30 million this year, and only certain Albertans are benefiting from this money. Many people who are now renting will never, ever be able to afford a home, even a modest type of a home, and therefore will never be able to benefit from this particular program. My understanding is that in major centres 50 percent of the population is in fact renting, so what we in fact are doing is providing a benefit to only 50 percent of the population. I think the minister has made no moves to assist renters, and I note that with interest going up, in fact this shielding program was cut by 41 percent. With the mortgage rates climbing again, I think as a result of the Conservative government in Ottawa, I do hope the minister will indeed consider extending this program, because it's certainly becoming more difficult, as he said, for particularly the younger first-time home buyers to qualify. I think this benefit will be of value to them.

The modest apartments – and I'm looking at the Budget Address. There's indication on page 62 of the Budget Address in table D3 – there's only a projection of some 400 units to be built. Could the minister tell us just where they are and how many subsidized units are being provided? It seems like an awfully small number, again, when you consider the kind of tight market we have at the moment for renters.

I'm also disappointed to see that only 50 new units of special purpose housing will come on stream this year. That number is inadequate for even one of the special needs groups. It has been cut in half from last year, and I'd like to ask the minister how many applications he did receive under this program.

Under land and housing, I'm glad that the minister will continue to fund seniors' facilities, and I'm concerned about whether there will be adequate construction to meet the needs. I'm sure the minister is aware that in the major centres there is a long waiting list of people wanting to access these facilities. I'd like to ask the minister what studies his department is taking to see that the housing that is provided is the kind of housing that the seniors actually would like to have, not the kind of bachelor apartments that were previously provided and are actually vacant now. I'd also like to ask the minister to report on whether any of these units have been made available to single young people, as he promised during last fall's heritage trust hearings that he was going to look at doing that.

Community housing – and again the minister spoke about this – has been cut in half from last year, down to a mere 45 units. How can a minister justify this low number, these 45 units, in view of the tight housing market? Now, I think the goal of providing affordable housing for Albertans is a laudable one, but the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation continues to be in a mess. I know many things are being done to try to clean up the situation there, but even the Auditor General's report suggests that the programs, the control, hasn't existed in that corporation for some time, in spite of his recommendations over

the years. I think perhaps the changes that the minister has taken will clear that up, but in the meantime I think we have to state that it is a mess.

The other difficulty that we have is trying to figure out just how much the corporation is spending and the type of housing that it's spending it on. The Budget Address, the element details, and the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation report all have different numbers and categories. It's extremely difficult for us to be able to determine just really what's happening and what the numbers are. I would like to ask the minister a general question. Will he undertake to provide to this Assembly a document which correlates the numbers given in the charts on pages 62 and 63 of the Budget Address with those on page 114 in the element details?

Now, in Mortgage Lending under the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation, vote 8 . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I regret to advise the hon. member that the 30 minutes have expired.

In that connection, members of the committee, before recognizing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, if the committee would agree, as we have before, to allow the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud to divide his time with his cocritic on native affairs, the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll put my timer on here.

Mr. Chairman, first of all, I want to say some complimentary things about the minister responsible for Municipal Affairs and housing. He's one of those ministers that is perceived in the community as being fair-minded and reasonable and willing to communicate, although a number of people continuously ask me, "Which party is he a member of?" I don't understand why they would ask me that question.

Mr. Chairman, I have a number of questions, and I don't think it would be reasonable to expect the minister to respond to them all today because some of them may be a bit in-depth. But if he could provide me with the information farther down the road, I would appreciate it.

I want to start by dealing with the housing aspect of the portfolio. The first item is the item of granny suites. Now, the concept of granny suites has been bounced around for a period of time. The concept of granny suites located in the proper localities, in the proper municipalities, taking into consideration the drain or the additional drain on existing infrastructure and services, and accounting for that, I think it's a worthwhile concept to pursue, and it should be pursued. But it has to be pursued on a very co-operative basis with the municipalities that are involved to ensure that it isn't posing a problem. I'd like a report somewhere down the road on how the demonstration project is working out.

I want to touch a bit, Mr. Chairman, on the renter situation. The province, of course, had the renters' assistance program a number of years ago, and it was a program that was needed. When the program was lifted, there wasn't a great deal of opposition. Probably the reason why there wasn't a great deal of opposition was twofold, one being that people didn't really

realize until they filled out their income tax that the program had been discontinued and, secondly, because the economy was in a whole different type of situation than it is today.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

Today renters are being faced with spiraling increases; there is no question about it. We are getting reports of increases of 40, 50 percent. I believe, Mr. Chairman, to the minister, that there has to be a form of renters' rebate. We can't just treat renters as second-class citizens, which we're doing. On the one hand, we're providing shielding for the homeowners; on the other hand, we're discounting the financial hardships being imposed on renters. Now, we've repeatedly heard in the House that it's being monitored. It's being looked at. I don't think that's good enough. I think we're in a situation now that we have to have some action. If the government isn't going to go ahead, fine. Let it be known that the government's not going to go ahead. But to continue to monitor it hoping that the crisis will be over and people will psychologically accept the additional hardship being imposed on them I don't think is treating those people fairly. Renters should not be treated any differently than homeowners.

Another point, Mr. Chairman. When we talk in terms of the whole question of the shortage of accommodation that leads to higher rent, it's all a question of the law of supply and demand, and that's why we in the Liberal caucus don't feel that rent controls or a rent review board is going to be the answer, that that's going to resolve the problem. The basic problem, the root of the problem, is the fact that there is a shortage of rental units, and on that accord the minister has to work, the government has to work hand in hand with the private sector to initiate, to encourage, to stimulate additional rental units.

Mr. Chairman, the interest shielding program. The concept of the interest shielding program is good. In the Liberal caucus we've never been critical of the concept of the interest shielding program. We have been critical of the way it's been administered and, I believe, with good reason. But, first, look at the interest shielding program in itself. If the housing industry doesn't get some type of indication, some type of firmer commitment that interest rates will start to fall, if they're going to continue to escalate – which I think they will, another point and a half before the end of this year, and possibly they'll peak at that time, and we'll see a slow decline next year – the housing industry has to have some assurance that the government will continue the interest shielding program, otherwise you're going to see a stopping of the market. As it is right now, it's slowing down. Unless people, potential homeowners, know that they're going to be shielded, they're going to hesitate to go out and buy housing. The housing industry is very, very important to the economy of Alberta, and we have to bear that in mind. There I think the government has to come out and make a commitment that they're prepared to continue the program.

I believe, Mr. Chairman, that another aspect the minister should look at, another potential program, whether it's done by a grant form or let's say even a loan form where the interest is shielded, is home renovations or home improvements for not just the seniors or disabled persons, whatever, but I'm just talking about the person who is living in their home. It's run-down a bit, they don't want to buy a new home, and they don't want to take on that \$50,000, \$60,000, \$100,000 mortgage. At the same time, for them to go out and borrow the money through the banks, whatever, without any shielding, without any

capping to do the renovations becomes very, very difficult, and they're going to hesitate to do it. That, of course, has a great impact on the spin-off market within the housing industry: the smaller businesses that rely on home renovations: siding, eaves troughing, bricklaying, whatever.

Within the administration of the interest shielding program the minister will recall that some time back I talked to him after I was met by a delegation of people that worked within the department, and it was a nightmare. The policy they gave me, the changes they were getting on the forms, the day-to-day basis – it was unbelievable. It was a nightmare. There's no other way to describe it. I anticipated something would happen two weeks later. I checked within the department and, no, there were no changes. So it was at that particular point that the issue became a public issue, and I believe now there have been some changes, but I'm still not convinced that it's operating from an administrative point of view as smoothly as it possibly could. I'm still not convinced that we have the administrative costs and the total expenditures in a low enough ratio. I understand the start-up costs and all that type of thing, but I still don't think it's in the proper ratio. It's ironic that as the interest rates get higher and more dollars are going to be filtered out, it's going to put that ratio artificially in a better light, and it's going to look better.

Now, when we look at the interest shielding program and we look at the budget, there are some questions that have to be asked. When we see a decrease in the estimations for the shielding program with the interest rate what it is, anticipated to climb, is it realistic? Secondly, Mr. Chairman, I think the House is entitled to know what average percentage interest rate the minister took into consideration when doing the budget so we can get an idea as to whether that budget may be somewhat out of whack.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Speaker undertook some time ago to meet with representatives of the Handicapped Housing Society. I'm not sure that anything firm has come out of that yet. I would hope so. I would hope the minister has recognized that there is a shortage of housing for persons with disabilities. There's a severe shortage, people waiting for two years to get into the Sir Douglas Bader Towers.

Now, on page 113. I don't want to start repeating these things, because the critic for the New Democrats covered a number of them. The Seniors' Home Improvement Grants: I think it's fairly self-explanatory what happened there. The Handicapped Housing Grants I think is one area the minister has to be commended on for initiating the steps to increase it from \$1,000 to \$5,000 to do the renovations. I have to assume that the dollars that are decreased in the one area, 7.2.6, have been shifted to 7.2.14.

Now, when we talk in terms of housing for the seniors and we talk in terms of renovations and such for the seniors, it reminded me of this ad that was in the paper on February 28, 1988. Most of us were out there busy working, trying to get ourselves elected or re-elected, and that's when that announcement was made. That's when we see the picture of the Premier at the bottom and such. At that particular time that was nice for the seniors. However, the feedback that comes from the community is: "Don't give us a government that governs for 90 days and addresses our concerns just before an election or during an election. If there's a crisis, deal with that crisis; deal with it when the crisis is occurring, like the rental situation and the interest rate situation."

The other area on page 113 that I want to touch on is the medic alert program. The concept of the program, Mr. Chairman, is good. I think there may be some questions of oversell there by zealous salesmen or entrepreneurs, and I think there may be other ways of getting that same benefit, the same objectives achieved without necessarily going out to buy an expensive unit. The case of the disabled person that froze to death, the disabled adult transportation system situation: I'm convinced that had that person had the medic alert program or system hooked up to that trailer because she was in that area, she would be alive today. She didn't have it; she was intending to apply for it. But there are some limitations, and limitations, of course, are the income level. The limitations may be that what they want they can't get for \$700. When it comes to this type of alert program, I think the government has to be very, very careful about what type of restrictions they put on, because I think it's so important for disabled persons and senior citizens to have that protection to allow them to stay in the community. Anything that discourages them from staying in the community I think is a real problem.

There was reference made to the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the restructuring that took place. I think the restructuring that took place was probably overdue. It never hurts to shake up an organization or a corporation, but there are some problems that have occurred as a result of the major change, the thrust. The idea of emphasizing development of housing for disadvantaged groups, trying to redirect that role, I think is good. That was the basic purpose the corporation was set up for in the first place, and I think it should continue that way. However, there are problems. The problem that the Member for Three Hills raised during question period is not only happening in Airdrie or the area that she referred to; it's happening in other parts. The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon has run into it. I've run into it to a very limited degree in Edmonton-Whitemud. But it shouldn't happen that people are forced out of these units on a 90-day notice. There's something wrong there. It shouldn't happen that the properties aren't being marketed properly, in the sense that four people put in a bid that at least matches the advertised price but three of them are refused because somebody goes \$10,000 or \$8,000 over the advertised price. If you're advertising a property for \$79,000 and somebody puts an offer in for \$79,000, the first offer, they would expect that they're going to get it, but they don't because the first offer isn't considered until after 24 hours. Those people feel they've been led down a path, and in fact a couple of them have told me that they got beat out because some Tory with connections managed to do it. I know that's not the case, but that's just the perception that's left there.

The land banking situation with the municipalities: I'm fairly familiar with that. The minister will probably be aware – and I'll send this article over to him – that some of the municipalities, of course, are stuck with a real burden now. There's land there. They can't afford to buy that land. They want to see that land developed, and that's a problem the minister has to resolve. He's got to work with the municipalities in resolving it, getting that property into the hands of the municipalities to allow the municipalities to dispose of it or allow the municipalities to develop it as social housing, housing for seniors, or whatever the case may be.

Also, Mr. Chairman, when we look at this particular area, it was raised during question period by a member of the opposition about the possibility of Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation's mortgage portfolio being sold to a private interest,

and I believe Montreal Trust was mentioned at that time. I think the minister should clear that up, exactly what's happening there.

In my few remaining minutes before I turn it over to the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, I want to talk about the municipalities. I have always looked at the provincial government, the federal government, civic governments, and school boards as all being equal in the sense that we're all elected to try and represent people, and we're all representing the same people. I don't regard the provincial government as being a senior level of government to the municipalities. I think that's the concept we have to operate on; that's the principle the minister has to operate on. Many of us in this House have sat as municipal elected representatives, some as school trustees. We know what it's like to have that Big Brother stick being held over our head when we had the provincial government ignore the fact that we should be operating on the basis of a partnership, when the provincial government ignores the recommendations of the city of Edmonton, for example, to have Whitemud Drive as the number one priority. The province says, "No, we're going to set our own priorities." That's wrong.

I think the minister will probably remember the situation we had a number of years ago at the AUMA conference, where the province was going to give the hospitals the right to charge local levies and have the municipalities collect it. Everything broke loose at that particular convention, and the provincial government had no choice but to back down because they didn't treat the person as the equal partner.

A couple more things. I notice by my time here that I have a couple more minutes – is that right, Mr. Chairman? – if I'm talking in terms of 20 minutes.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, hon. member. If you want it clarified, it's up to you how you divide it. You have 30 all together; that's all.

MR. WICKMAN: I have about 12 left.

Mr. Chairman, the municipal partnership transfer program: we've got to make sure that that's fair, that municipalities are being treated fairly. We've got to ensure that as many of the grants, if not all of the grants, are done on the basis of no strings attached, allow the municipalities to make the decisions. They're closer to the people. They're on the front lines. Give them a five-year fiscal plan, some idea as to what they can expect in year 1, year 2, and year 3 so they're not kept guessing to the last minute. That happens at the present time, and we have introduced a Bill to that effect.

I'd like the minister to take a look at the tax rebate for senior citizens. It's been frozen at \$1,000 for years and years. I'd like him to take a look at the program in B.C. where they have the same type of program apply to persons with disabilities that want to live in the community instead of living in institutions.

I'd like the minister to give us some idea what's going to happen with the cultural tax Act to allow cultural centres to be taxed at a more reasonable level. I'd like the minister to respond as to his feelings about the concept of regional economic districts where municipalities can get together and develop concepts to prevent further decay of the smaller towns and rural areas in Alberta.

I'd like the minister to point out to us or bring us back a report somewhere down the line addressing specifically the resolutions passed at the major conventions or conferences by the various districts and municipalities. I'd also like to know if

the minister is prepared to give us the results of a survey he did after the election asking for the input of municipal elected representatives. I would encourage the minister, Mr. Chairman, to work closely with the other ministers to address the concerns in areas like the community facility enhancement program, the family community and support services program under the appropriate minister, and the CRC program, where different ministers are responsible for them, but they do impact very, very much on the municipalities. There has to be that type of co-operation.

On that note, Mr. Chairman, I'll conclude to allow the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon some time. I'll look forward to the response from the minister on what he can respond to today and to getting more detailed responses farther down the road on the other questions.

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

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. May I extend my thanks for allowing me to get in on this, as well as the other members of the House who allowed the rules to be bent a bit to split our 30 minutes between us.

I'm going to take a couple of minutes, pretty well, to the hon. Attorney General's responsibility on vote 5 in the estimates with respect to Improvement Districts and Native Services. I think, as the minister has already mentioned, that the big drop in expenditures is due to transferring the costs over to the Executive Council. However, the Premier's office is administering the settlement with the Metis settlements, so that gives rise to a couple of questions I'd like to ask the hon. cabinet minister in charge, and this is with respect to the Metis settlement. My understanding is that the Metis settlements within a group, some of the larger ones like Paddle Prairie, for instance, are not that happy with it. But will the settlement be able to go ahead if there is only one, two, or three settlements involved? Will it then be left open for other settlements to join later on? In other words, is this sort of an open agreement or is there going to be a deadline of one, two, or three years for the settlements to come on board?

Secondly, I'm very concerned – and I think this is probably what the budget is more appropriate to, and that is administration of benefits and help to Metis people that are not on their reserves, that are living in our cities and towns in this province. My understanding or my impression has been that the ability of these Metis people to access funds to continue education, to finish up their high school, and also do some postsecondary is very difficult indeed and that they are actually lumped in with the general population. That may not be fair, because their problems are a little different than the actual general population's, and particularly I think you would find a high number of Metis people amongst our urban poor, a higher percentage than what their population for the province would otherwise indicate it should be. Part of that, I believe, is a lack of access to moneys to educate themselves.

Also, is the minister working on any kind of a Metis small business development fund? I feel, again, that lumping the off-settlement Metis in with the rest of the people looking for money from Alberta Opportunity and so on is unfair and that we should have a certain amount set aside for Metis small business development. That, I think, would do much more than the hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche's idea of a grand, big pulp plant that's going to employ a bunch of people and yet will never

use a power saw. I think the modern method of lumbering and timbering has swept past our hon. member. I don't think he realizes that the number of jobs that will be made for natives will be almost negligible under the modern type of pulp operation, and rather we should be preparing the natives for the fallouts of business, not only in that area but all around Alberta, and a little better loan development funds available to them.

Next, I'd like to touch on just a bit in closing – I don't know whether this comes in, but the native justice commission or the commission that is now going around the province, joint federal/provincial, investigating the administration of justice of natives I think touches on the Metis affair. I would like to personally request now that the minister consider sending a letter out to all Crown prosecutors and administrative people under his jurisdiction, very firmly denying the original letter that went out from a member of his department, asking them not to testify. Would he consider sending out a letter now saying that in fact not only are they allowed to testify but he encourages them to testify? After all, it's the Crown prosecutors and their associates that know more about administration of native justice in this province than anyone else.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Three Hills.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a few remarks. I'm looking at the time and sensing, I'm sure, that the ministers have a lot of questions they would like to respond to. Now that the Chairman is back with us in order to call the member . . . I rather enjoyed that, I guess, members of the House, because the Chairman does an excellent job of bringing us back to order on occasion, and it's kind of nice to see that reversed just once.

I wanted to say to the minister, with all the complimentary comments that have already been made this morning, that I certainly like his style. It has been well received in our constituency in terms of the responses we have had in a number of areas. And to all of those people who work for Municipal Affairs, I do not have one area, either in terms of the small urban municipalities or the rural ones, that isn't very pleased with the kind of relationship and the response they receive from the department. That certainly is most helpful. When the rural members particularly have so many urban governments to deal with, we just can't possibly respond to every question, and when there is that kind of working relationship, it is much appreciated.

I wanted briefly this morning to touch on something. I got cut off at the pass in question period because I was raising a question when in fact the hon. minister's estimates were going to be up. I had thought I might be able to sneak a question in, but I will go on with it now, Mr. Chairman. To once again refer to what I had started this morning, a situation arose in Airdrie that was brought to my attention yesterday. It, I think, really harkens back to something that started many years ago. The corporation has been operating in Airdrie since the '70s, had a long and tortuous history I might add, so this hon. member, at least, welcomes the great change that I see in the operation of the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation and my ability to communicate directly with the president of the corporation. Now I'll be able to put a face to the voice that I have heard on the end of the telephone and say that it is very much appreciated when concerns are raised to be able to directly refer those

concerns to the president and have an almost immediate response. That is a great change from the way things used to occur in the past. Probably it's important now to focus on the future and not on the past.

I think in looking at something that we could be a little bit critical about that just happened in Airdrie, Mr. Chairman, we do that, though, really to focus on how improvements must continue to be made. Because while I am greatly pleased with the immediate response, I think it does raise the aspect that when something like that happens, why did it happen? When I know that the president of the corporation and the minister, as I understand it, have certain policies in place, we still have in other parts of the corporation things happen that may not necessarily really be in line with the policy. I wanted the minister this morning, if he had a moment, to really reinforce what it is that he and the corporation are attempting to do with the properties that are now being rented – I gather you call it market rentals – because the corporation is in the business of seeing that there are some rental accommodations in place for lower-income families, but certainly hadn't been in the business of wanting to rent the number of properties that unfortunately the corporation had to take back as a result of the slump we had earlier in the '80s.

So I really wanted the minister to reiterate the policy with respect to that and also make some comments as to how individual members who come face to face with what looks like an action occurring that flies in the face of those policies – how it is that we respond. Because I can assure the minister and the senior members of the corporation that residents of Airdrie very much want to believe it when the minister has said: "There won't be anybody out on the street. We're not going to, as well, have more properties marketed than the market can stand. We'll keep a balanced and functioning marketplace." So, Mr. Chairman, just briefly in that area I would like the minister to respond on behalf of the corporation and himself, to reiterate the policies and also make clear his statements that we shouldn't have families out there nervous about a communication they've had that makes them believe that within three months or so they're going to be on the street chasing a rental accommodation that literally doesn't exist in Airdrie.

I look forward to the minister's responses.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to stand before the Legislature, as before coming here, of course, I served on municipal council for many years, and I have to compliment the minister on the great work and changes he's done within his department, and on behalf of the councils of all of Alberta. They're very pleased with his appointment and his work thus far as the Minister of Municipal Affairs; also, those longtime serving assistants of the minister. I think they're up there in the henhouse: Mr. Grover and Tom Forgrave.

Banff, Mr. Chairman, must be very proud to now have their own autonomy and their own council looking after the affairs locally, with help from the provincial government. I'm quite sure that before our tenure's out in this Legislature, perhaps one more town within the national parks system will be brought into the same boundaries as the town of Banff. I have difficulty, though, understanding why a town like Banff has been given a council that can collect taxes and respond to the taxpayers and make those decisions, yet the improvement districts in this

province are only an advisory board and can only make decisions and recommend those recommendations to the minister or the deputy minister, and then at their whim those resolutions can be passed. I would hope the minister is working towards more autonomy for the improvement districts.

Also, Mr. Chairman, the Alberta taxpayers are aware that their tax notices generally arrive from the municipalities around July 1. In order to determine accurate budget requirements, commitments made by other government jurisdictions or requisitions due other government jurisdictions need to be received and honoured as presented prior to budget settings. Significant mill rate fluctuations continue to occur at the municipal level, primarily as a result of varying requisitions from the school foundation or supplementary school programs. These fluctuations result from a variety of changes; for example, fluctuating capital and operating budgets, fluctuating equalized assessment, and other calculations. However, of primary concern to municipalities is the lateness of requisitions, which results in surpluses or deficits being carried forward to often compound in the following taxation year. I believe the government of Alberta must bring in appropriate legislation changes that will require that the requisitions being made against municipalities be received no later than March 31 of the taxation year, and where concurring requisitions are not received by that date, the municipality will be required to levy and pay the requisitions at the same level as the preceding year. The real varmint in this, of course, is the Department of Education, which appears to not have any legislation to assist the municipalities to have an accurate levy set each year.

Also, Mr. Chairman, we had a case in the town of Hinton where a piece of property that was owned by a developer was turned back to the Treasury Branch. Local off-site levies were set on that property for water, sewer, and road. In a term of some years the town was lacking in collecting these levies, and they went after the Treasury Branch to pay their back taxes. At that point the Treasury Branch let the land go back under a tax sale for some \$12 million to \$14 million. The adjoining taxpayer is now held at bay or ransom or whatever you might say for in excess of \$150,000, I believe was the last figure, because they're asking for his share of those off-site levies. This particular individual was a longtime entrepreneur in the town of Hinton. It's left his family and himself in very dire straits and a very poor living style and worry over this particular issue. The minister has assisted somewhat in this, but I hope it will be resolved and these taxes will be taken off the shoulders of this particular family. If the Treasury Branch can get away with it, surely the taxpayers of Alberta can.

Mr. Chairman, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands has asked me to remind the minister of a video she viewed in regards to the state of inner-city housing and the tenants. Eighty-five percent of the inner-city rooming houses are predicted to have less than four years' structural life left. There seem to be no government plans at all to deal with this crisis. She wonders where the commitment for inner-city housing is. It was promised in the February 17, '89, throne speech, and she wonders if it was a one-day wonder to match a one-day session before calling a snap election. Developers don't seem to want to help because they prefer to build more luxurious homes, but low-income earners and the poor can only afford small types of housing.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to compliment the minister on the great changes he's made and the great way that the people elected in the municipalities accept the minister for the respon-

sibilities that have been put upon him, and I thank the minister on behalf of those municipalities.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure also to participate in the budget estimates of the Department of Municipal Affairs and the native services section of the Attorney General's department. I commend both ministers and their staff and the Premier in their commitment specifically in the area of native programs and people with lower incomes, programs that are handled through both their departments. But as a former municipal councillor for a long period of time and also as we are celebrating Volunteer Week, I'd like to just take a moment to personally thank on behalf of this Assembly the thousands of municipal councillors that volunteer on behalf of Albertans to carry out the responsibility of municipal administration and various other areas.

When I say the sincerity and the commitment of this government and the Premier in relation to the native services area, I'd just like to mention that an example of that would be the Metis settlement transitional agreements that are being brought forward to this Assembly in the near future. These agreements, of course, are designed at the request of the Metis people from the settlements to see a way where the Metis people can work towards complete self-sufficiency somewhere down the road. I believe that with this government's support and the sincere initiative by the Metis people, timing could probably never be readier in the history of Alberta for us to proceed with that. Again, it's a process this province should be proud of because it's the only province in Canada that recognizes Metis people and has land specifically allocated for Metis people. I commend the ministers for their part in that.

The other area, of course, is through the Metis Association of Alberta, these governments that handle the framework agreement, which is again an agreement that will address the issues of the Metis people of Alberta who are not presently residing on the Metis settlements. Again, the framework agreement is designed to assist the Metis people to work towards complete self-sufficiency and less dependency on the government.

The other area, of course, that hasn't been talked about too much here today, to show how sincere this government is in seeing the native people of Alberta move forward positively and take part in our mainstream society, is the recent formation of the native caucus, which I serve on and also the other native member from Lesser Slave Lake, Pearl Calahasen, along with three or four other government members. Again, of course, this caucus committee is set up to specifically deal with native issues in Alberta. We've commenced our meetings and will continue meeting and designing a process along with native organizations as to how they like to see this government work in addressing native issues in the future, and I commend this government for that, regardless of what some of the opposition members may say. You can hear the Leader of the Official Opposition today and the Liberals and also the member who mentioned earlier the education of native people.

I know education is important. I know the programs provided through this government. The education standards in rural Alberta specifically in dealing with native people are very good right now. But one of the things we're lacking is employment opportunities for natives. We have native people out there, in fact, with masters' degrees, degrees in education, degrees in

various areas, journeymen – certified native people – but we still have to have the jobs to be able to allow native people to move into mainstream society.

Some of the other programs that are very worth while and worth mentioning include the rural native housing program, which is a joint program, again, with the province and the federal government. This program is specifically designed to deal not only with native people but lower-income families in rural Alberta, and I know they've provided thousands of homes across the province in the last 10 years or so, and they're doing a heck of a job in that. The rural home assistance program is a program specifically designed for rural isolated and semi-isolated native communities in Alberta. Again, this program has been really beneficial and provided a wide range of opportunities and increased the standard of living for native people and nonnative people living in these small communities. Again, part of that particular program includes a training program jointly with Career Development and Employment where local people are trained in carpentry, plumbing, landscaping, et cetera, to develop these housing units themselves. It's really a beneficial program.

In the area of ID operations under Municipal Affairs, again ID operations play a key role in the advancement of native people in the small rural hamlets across northern Alberta. The involvement the department encourages is very much appreciated. I think this government is moving in the right direction, because 15 years ago a lot of our northern communities didn't even have advisory councils. It was unheard of to have a native person sit on an advisory council. Today we have some advisory councils, like in the Wabasca-Calling Lake area, completely filled by native people. In fact, they also have native ID assistant managers and community managers. They've assisted communities in the development of community infrastructure plans which are used in both short- and long-term development of northern native communities, and it's a real valuable tool because it not only identifies the infrastructure in a community; it identifies the economic opportunities on a long-term basis for those communities. It's in line with our overall economic diversification plan in this province. Road networks, water and sewer programs, and local government reform are other areas that are worth mentioning because I believe this government is on the right track in moving towards this with these small communities.

I have a couple of recommendations I'd like to make to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Although I know the rural native housing program is a joint program with the federal government, I would suggest that we look at the income guidelines that are presently used for our program. I feel there's still a target group of Albertans that can't access housing because their income is maybe a bit higher than what we class as lower income. There's a group in there that we're missing yet, and I think we need to address that in the future.

It was mentioned by one of the opposition members earlier: the financing of water and sewer projects. I think that's something we need to look at somewhere down the road – because some of the communities are so sparsely populated that an individual water and sewer system is required – and the possibility of providing some form of financing for individuals that want to develop their own water and sewer systems, because that's not there anymore, and it's very tough for individuals to do that.

The other area I have mentioned a number of times is people on AISH; that's assured income. People that are on AISH

under social services are on a fixed income, and the ones that own homes and properties have to pay property taxes. I would suggest that because they're on a fixed income, they would also be eligible for the thousand dollar rebate that's provided for seniors now. I think that would be a worthwhile move because some of those people are having a tough time meeting their tax payment.

The other area, although it's not completely under Municipal Affairs but it can be done jointly with Municipal Affairs and Recreation and Parks possibly, is the need for us to develop a detailed land use plan of land bordering all lakes in northern Alberta, specifically Crown land. I think that would be a valuable tool for managing our environment, our resources, and the economy in the future for rural Alberta.

With that, I'd like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, in light of the hour we're at, I'd just like to make a couple of comments. The Attorney General and I will answer all of these by letter as quickly as we can. We've itemized the questions for you, so we're certainly prepared to do that.

If I can comment maybe going in reverse order rather than in the order in which items were raised with me. Re the income guidelines, the financing of water and sewer projects, and the people on AISH, I have had a look at that, and it's just basically a dollar number that I've been looking at in terms of budgeting this time, and the member has made a good case with regards to that. We should look at it further. The land use plan is certainly a new idea raised. We'll follow up on that matter.

The Member for West Yellowhead raised congratulations – I appreciate that – on work thus far. That kind of closed the door there a little. The IDs. Yes, we are going to give them local government and responsibility, and the rural district concept is just for that. Within the next two or three years I hope that a major responsibility is transferred to them. The tax notices that you've raised I'll look at and consider. We tried to work around that problem by making the joint announcement of Education, Health, and Municipal Affairs on January 3 this year so that municipalities would know about the grants available. The property owned by the Treasury Branch. I'll certainly follow that through further. In response to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands, yes, we have some programs for the inner city of Edmonton, and I'll outline those in a letter.

The hon. Member for Three Hills raised a question with regards to rental units. Everybody here raised that question as well. When we announced the sale of 1,193 units, we offered them first to the people that were renting that accommodation. Those people were paying market rents. We rented them out for whatever we could get in difficult times, and it just happened that these people are renting them at a time now when rents are a little tighter. Our intent is to sell them but not at the neglect of that individual that is renting at the present time. If there is insufficient accommodation in the community, then we'll put it on hold and delay it. In the case of Airdrie, it is not difficult to do that. We have some 25 units to sell there, which is adequate for our sale portfolio at the present time. The second thing we are doing: the net number, around 600 to 700 units that are still available for sale that we intend to sell at a point in time – we are asking those people to meet with us so that we can talk about their income and their capability, whether they can purchase the property or not. We also want to look at alternate accommodation. We find that even in the districts here in

Edmonton there is alternate accommodation, and there is accommodation that can be rent-supplemented for low-income people. So we are looking at their special needs, and there's no 90-day notice to put them in a difficult situation.

To the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud I'll just make this comment. I appreciate the attitude towards the municipalities, much appreciate it. The municipalities appreciate that as well. The fairness with regards to renters we should debate further and discuss it. I will follow up in written form, though. The mortgage interest shielding program. I appreciate the representation you have made with regards to that. The broad community is also making representation in that area. Medical alert. We'll look at the way it is administered and review that. The land banking with municipalities. We recognize that out of the 68 municipalities approximately 20 of them were close to their maximum borrowing with the Municipal Financing Corporation. The item that is in the paper here, the Fox Creek one, I was aware of before implementing this latest policy, and I know they have some difficulties. We hope to work that through with them. We're going to discuss it and bring that to a resolution by the year-end 1990.

So, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to move my estimates at this time and ask the Assembly for their approval.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Having heard the motion – and I hope everybody is clear on it – all those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Those opposed? Carried.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I move the estimates be reported as such.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: My apologies. We just have to get our sheets in order here. Just to clarify for hon. members that when we're in the process of a vote, we can exceed the adjournment time.

Agreed to:

1.0.1 – Minister's Office	\$267,198
1.0.2 – Deputy Minister's Office	\$493,904
1.0.3 – Finance and Administrative Services	\$8,817,460
Total Vote 1 – Departmental Support Services	\$9,578,562

2.1 – Alberta Partnership Transfer Program	\$107,622,471
2.2 – Municipal Debenture Interest Rebate Program	\$48,300,000
2.3 – Alberta Municipal Partnership in Local Employment Program	\$61,143,634
2.4 – Senior Citizen Accommodation Municipal Tax Grant	\$1,000,000
2.5 – Transitional Financial Assistance	\$2,500,000
Total Vote 2 – Financial Support for Municipal Programs	\$220,566,105

3.1 – Program Support	\$655,977
3.2 – Senior Citizen Renters Assistance	\$51,460,000
3.3 – Property Owner Tax Rebate	\$73,793,202

Total Vote 3 – Alberta Property Tax Reduction Plan - Rebates to Individuals	\$125,909,179	Department Total	\$665,251,433
4.1 – Grant to Alberta Planning Fund	\$5,988,480	MR. R. SPEAKER: I move the votes be reported.	
4.2 – Co-ordination and Administration of Community Planning	\$3,491,364	[Motion carried]	
Total Vote 4 – Support to Community Planning Services	\$9,479,844	MR. STEWART: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee now rise, report progress, and request leave to sit again.	
5.1 – Program Support	\$427,839	[Motion carried]	
5.2 – Administrative Assistance to Local Authorities	\$3,076,288	[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]	
5.3 – Improvement Districts and Native Services	\$7,881,995	MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.	
5.4 – Administration of Special Areas	\$541,202	Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the Fiscal year ending March 31, 1991, for the department and purposes indicated.	
5.5 – Assessment Services	\$12,090,201	Municipal Affairs: \$9,578,562 for Departmental Support Services; for Financial Support for Municipal Programs, \$220,566,105; for the Alberta Property Tax Reduction Plan - Rebates to Individuals, \$125,909,179; for Support to Community Planning Services, \$9,479,844; for Administrative and Technical Support to Municipalities, \$24,017,525; for Regulatory Boards, \$1,934,584; for Research and Financial Assistance for Housing, \$103,765,634; and for Housing and Mortgage Assistance for Albertans, \$170,000,000.	
Total Vote 5 – Administrative and Technical Support to Municipalities	\$24,017,525		
Total Vote 6 – Regulatory Boards	\$1,934,584		
7.1 – Program Support	[\$22,159,557]		
7.2 – Financial Assistance for Housing	\$51,186,077		
7.3 – Alberta Mortgage Interest Shielding Program	\$20,420,000		
7.4 – Alberta Family First-Home Program	\$10,000,000		
Total Vote 7 – Research and Financial Assistance for Housing	\$103,765,634		
8.1 – Program Support	\$9,006,000	MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur with the report?	
8.2 – Subsidized Housing for Low-Income Albertans	\$101,423,000	HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.	
8.3 – Land Programs	(\$144,000)		
8.4 – Mortgage Lending	\$22,979,000	MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.	
8.5 – Real Estate Program	\$13,336,000		
8.6 – Disposition of Assets	\$23,400,000		
Total Vote 8 – Housing and Mortgage Assistance for Albertans	\$170,000,000	[At 1:11 p.m. the House adjourned to Monday at 2:30 p.m.]	