

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, May 16, 1990 2:30 p.m.**

Date: 90/05/16

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Prayers

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

As Canadians and as Albertans we give thanks for the precious gifts of freedom and peace which we enjoy.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly we rededicate ourselves to the valued traditions of parliamentary democracy as a means of serving our province and our country.

Amen.

head: Introduction of Visitors

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly four members of a delegation from the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. They are here as a follow-up to the visit made by the Deputy Premier, the Hon. Jim Horsman, to Ukraine in October of 1989. They are in our city to meet with government officials as well as representatives of the Edmonton public school board, the Edmonton Roman Catholic board, the University of Alberta. They will have the opportunity to visit a number of Alberta schools and to observe Ukrainian language programs in operation throughout our city. I might add that we're very proud of those programs because Alberta Education and the government of Alberta have had a considerable involvement with the members of the Ukrainian community in the development of those programs.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that they are here to begin an important and lasting relationship with our friends from Ukraine. I will now introduce them and ask them to stand and remain standing. They are Mr. Vladimir Lugovoi, the deputy minister of public education; Mr. Bogdan Zarbrowarny, the rector of the Lutsk Pedagogical Institute, and Mr. Eugueni Polischuk, chief of the international relations department. They're joined by Mrs. Amelia Joy Turnbull from the Department of Education. I'd ask all members of the Assembly to give them a warm Alberta welcome.

head: Introduction of Bills

MR. SPEAKER: The Provincial Treasurer.

Bill 21

Financial Administration Amendment Act, 1990

MR. JOHNSTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 21, the Financial Administration Amendment Act, 1990. This is a money Bill. Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of the Bill, recommends this to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the Financial Administration Amendment Act is an important piece of legislation to the government. It sets in place the framework for the way in which the financial transactions of the government take place. This legislation deals with some changes which reflect the current dynamics of the financial

capital markets of the world and allows Alberta to be as dynamic in this business as any. At the same time, it reflects some recommendations from the Auditor General and increases the debt limits of the province for the Alberta Capital Fund and for the General Revenue Fund.

Mr. Speaker, I would move first reading of this Bill.

[Leave granted; Bill 21 read a first time]

Bill 26

Utility Companies Income Tax Rebates Amendment Act, 1990

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 26, Utility Companies Income Tax Rebates Amendment Act, 1990.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation flows from the fiscal plan of the province. The purpose of the Act, of course, is to terminate the rebate of provincial income taxes paid by utility companies for the 1990 and subsequent taxation years and to ensure that moneys earned after April 1, 1990, on the fund are remitted to the General Revenue Fund.

I move first reading of this Bill, Mr. Speaker.

[Leave granted; Bill 26 read a first time]

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure today to table responses to written questions 146 and 148.

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to table the annual report, 1988-89, for the Alberta Department of Energy. I'd also like to point out that it's printed on recycled paper.

head: Introduction of Special Guests

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: We seem to have a certain panic waving at us here. Forgive us, hon. members.

Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, is this a tabling or something?

MR. MITCHELL: Yes, thanks.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, just a moment, please.

Might we have unanimous consent to revert to that part of our business, hon. members?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.
Edmonton-Meadowlark.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports (reversion)

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I was standing when that was first called, and there's no panic about it. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. The member was not recognized. We've now gone through the proper procedure to get it going. Let's just simply have the tabling.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a report issued recently by the United States Environmental Protection Agency in which they outlined their serious concern about and their efforts to assess the cancer- and noncancer-related health risks to humans consuming water and fish contaminated by dioxins and furans in water downstream from pulp mills in the United States.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon as well?

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I dare to rise to present four copies of a Court of Appeal judgment that went against the Farm Credit Corporation, saying that farmers cannot be pursued under the right of attornment clause. There's tremendous interest, Mr. Speaker, because the ADC does try to chase farmers a little farther than they should.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Let's not get confused as to the purpose of tablings.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair had already recognized Calgary-Glenmore, followed by Calgary-Millican.

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly a group of grade 6 students from the Chinook Park bilingual school in Calgary-Glenmore. Bonjour à tous les élèves de Chinook Park. They're accompanied by their teachers Diane Fortin, David Quon, Dallas Wheeler, and by Sarah Plews. I'd like you to rise – they're in the members' gallery – and receive this warm welcome from our Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Millican.

MR. SHRAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm really delighted, very delighted, to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislature 34 great students from one of Alberta's finest community schools, Colonel Walker community school. They're accompanied by their teacher Valerie Kendall, one of the parent volunteers Mrs. MacAulay, and by a very fine bus driver who also is the principal of the school, Mr. Patrick Sproule. They're seated in the public gallery, and I'd like them to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Legislature.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-McKnight.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a constituent from Calgary-McKnight. Elke Babiuk is also a member of the Calgary Safe Water Association. I ask the members to give her the usual warm welcome.

MR. ZARUSKY: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me today to introduce to you and the Assembly 22 bright, energetic students

from the Willingdon school. They are accompanied by teachers Mrs. Cindy Leliuk, Mrs. Marilyn Lofthaug, and parents Mrs. Lynn Holinski, Mrs. Bev Homeniuk, and Mr. Doug Motz. They're seated in the public gallery, and I ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition.

Public Service Strikes

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to direct my first question to the Minister of Labour. The minister might want to take a lesson from the pages of history. Today is the 71st anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike: 30,000 workers walked off the job to support their demands for better wages, working conditions, and the right to collective bargaining. Unfortunately, in Alberta we haven't learned much in the last 71 years. Today in Alberta we see public service employees out on a strike to support their demands for lower caseloads and better pensions, forced onto the streets to try to get action on legitimate concerns because unfair labour laws deny them justice. The only thing prolonging this misery is the minister's steadfast refusal to do anything until the strike is over. In the meantime clients are suffering. My question: when will this minister swallow her foolish pride in this matter and get back to the table with some concrete proposals for local 3 and local 6 of AUPE?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, it isn't a question of pride; it's a question of upholding the laws which this Legislature passed. Regrettable as it may be and eager as we are to go back to the negotiating table, we simply cannot do that in the face of flouting the law on the one hand and, in fact, the judge's order on the other. We have said, and I will say it again: we are eager to get back to the negotiating table with both local 6, the social workers, and with local 3, the prison guards. Just as soon as they are back at work, we will be at that table.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I think we're going back 71 years ago. That's precisely the same sort of logic we got back in the Winnipeg strike.

Two years ago the labour dispute involving nurses ended as a result of negotiations that went on during a so-called – and I stress so-called – illegal strike. They reached an agreement, the pickets came down, a ratification vote was held, and the nurses went back to work. My question: why is the minister refusing to negotiate when she knows it could end this dispute just as it did with the nurses previously?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's analogy is an imperfect one. In the case of the nurses, the union being the United Nurses of Alberta, the other party at the negotiating table was the Alberta Hospital Association: two parties that are not the government. In the case of the collective bargaining process with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, the party at the other side of that bargaining table is indeed management in the government. But the government doesn't just play one role here. We have more than one hat to wear. One of them is as management, eager and willing to meet at the negotiating table, and, in fact, demonstrating that that process does work having signed off the master agreement, which applies to everybody, having signed off a memorandum of

agreement for local 8, and indeed being at the table this very moment negotiating with local 1, which is almost half of the whole civil service.

Nevertheless, I digress for just a moment. Let me get back to my point, which is that as a government we also have the other role and that is to uphold the laws of the province and to see that they are followed. That is a role that the Alberta Hospital Association did not have.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, they could have taken the same stubborn attitude and not negotiated, because they could have said it was an illegal strike, but they showed good sense and kept negotiating because they wanted it to end.

Now, social workers have been fighting for years for lower caseloads, people in the correctional institutes have been fighting for pensions for years, and they're frustrated. I'm asking this minister again: why doesn't she show the same good common sense that the Alberta Hospital Association did at that time and get back and negotiate and forget about this so-called illegal strike? Get it over with.

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, I find it shocking and distressing to find the leader of a political party, which is the New Democrat Party, actually counseling the government of this province to ignore its own laws, laws that we passed in this House. To me that is a very distressing stand to take, and I am sure that many Albertans will be watching with great interest to see that person taking that stand.

MR. MARTIN: What's distressing is these laws. That's the whole point. The Alberta Hospital Association ignored them. So should you.

Natural Resources Conservation Board

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, my second question is to the Deputy Premier. It has to do with the Minister of the Environment, who had this to say yesterday, and I quote out of *Hansard*: "I feel sort of left out. I must be doing something wrong." I can understand why he feels that way, because it's about time the Environment minister realized that this government draws the line to window dressing when it comes to protecting our environment. The admission that the Energy minister, of all people, is to act as the neutral chairman for bringing in the natural resources conservation board Act would be funny if it wasn't so frightening. I wonder how someone can be neutral when you're dealing with the environment. But my question is for the Deputy Premier: how on earth does this government expect Albertans to have faith in a piece of environmental legislation when it doesn't trust its own Minister of the Environment to bring it in?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is straining at a point beyond belief. The legislation will be passed by all members of the Legislative Assembly. It's government legislation, and the fact that it is introduced by one member of the Assembly or another hardly makes any difference if it becomes the law of the province. It is really a pointless question.

MR. MARTIN: The only thing pointless is this government dealing with the environment, Mr. Speaker.

This legislation, I remind the Deputy Premier, is supposed to create a body that will have far-reaching power to shape the environmental future of our province. It seems to me logical, following from that, that the Minister of the Environment should bring it in. My question is: why do we even have an Environment minister if he isn't trusted to bring in legislation on environmental reviews?

MR. HORSMAN: The lack of logic of the hon. Leader of the Opposition is well known to members of this Assembly, but it's seldom been demonstrated more aptly than it has in this line of questioning. Any legislation which is brought forward by this Legislative Assembly, by the government, and subsequently passed will represent the law of the province of Alberta, and who brings it in is not a matter that should concern the hon. Leader of the Opposition as long as it is good law designed to protect the environment and to make sure that the natural resources of this province are properly and carefully shepherded and stewarded by this government. That, Mr. Speaker, is what we propose to do.

MR. MARTIN: Contrary to what the Deputy Premier says, it is very important who brings it in because that puts a spin on that particular legislation. The Minister of Energy is the one that wants to go full speed ahead with every industrial development in the province, if you look at what we're talking about. The Minister of the Environment is the one that's supposed to stand up and speak for the environment. My question to the Deputy Premier, then, is following from that. Will the Deputy Premier do this: will he assure us that the new natural resources conservation board will at least report to the poor devil over there so he has something to do?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, it's a pathetic line of questioning. That's all I can say.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that we will be bringing forward legislation within the very near future to this Assembly for consideration of all members, and it will be a natural resources conservation board Act. That was announced in the Speech from the Throne. It will be good legislation. It will have the input of all members of Executive Council, and it will have the input of all members of the government caucus before it is introduced into this Assembly. When it is introduced into this Assembly, members of the opposition and the Liberal Party will have the opportunity of assessing its adequacy or otherwise. That's how laws are made in this Assembly. The only spin, it seems to me, that is going on is the one in the hon. Leader of the Opposition's head.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to pursue the spin control a little bit more. The government in its Speech from the Throne bragged about its commitment to the environment, but since that Speech from the Throne the Premier has undercut the Minister of the Environment by not involving him in secret meetings with Al-Pac officials, the Premier has undercut the environmental process of review in Al-Pac, and now the government has relegated the minister to his continued phantomlike status by not allowing him to take this flagship legislation through this Assembly, allowing instead for a neutral minister to take it through. My first question to the Deputy Premier is this: I'd like to know how a government can continue to say that it gives priority to the environment when it doesn't

even allow the Minister of the Environment the trust to deal with an issue of substance like the legislation that's coming.

MR. HORSMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader of the Liberal Party is a pale imitation of the Leader of the Opposition in respect to the question. Instead of being totally red, he's only pink.

I would suggest that I've already answered the question. The Minister of the Environment is a member of Executive Council and, therefore, has an opportunity of having the proper input to the development of legislation. In due course even the member of the Liberal Party will have an opportunity of assessing whether the legislation is appropriate for protecting the natural resources of this province and their appropriate development. But I can assure the hon. members of the Assembly that it will be well-thought-through legislation that has gone through careful consideration by Executive Council, by committees of Executive Council, by our caucus. That's the way legislation is prepared and presented. It may not be the way the hon. leader of the Liberal Party would do things, but that's the way our government does things, and it's the right way.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Deputy Premier for noticing the rosiness in my cheeks after my recent illness. I am in the pink. I feel in the pink. I feel great. I'm not in the dark like the Deputy Premier is, not in the dark like he is.

Mr. Speaker, my next question to the Deputy Premier is this. We're told by the neutral minister, who is now chirping over there on the other side, that the new board will be reporting to the Premier's office rather than to the Minister of the Environment, allegedly to show stronger and greater significance. Isn't it a fact, Mr. Deputy Premier, that the real reason is because you don't trust the Minister of the Environment to handle matters of substance and significance?

MR. HORSMAN: May I say at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that I'm delighted indeed that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenarry is indeed in the pink of health. I only regret that his politics are as pink as they are.

The fact of the matter is that the hon. Minister of the Environment is a valued and trusted colleague in our government. He is a member of the front benches of the government of this province. I know it grieves the heart of the former mayor of Edmonton that the mayor of Calgary has risen as high as he has, but nonetheless . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you, hon. member.
Final supplementary.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, it'll grieve me more to see him sitting in opposition next time.

Mr. Speaker, my last question is to the phantom minister, the Minister of the Environment. It is given that Albertans are told month after month, Speech from the Throne through Speech from the Throne, that environment is a high priority of this government. If it is such a high priority, why is it not a given that the Minister of the Environment is a member of the priorities and planning committee of cabinet? I'd like to ask the minister why he's been a failure, unsuccessful, in not getting the Ministry of the Environment at the most powerful table of all in cabinet, the priorities and planning committee. Why?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I feel good. I don't feel bad at all. I'm having a great time – a great time – on this side of the House. It's marvelous to be over here. It's marvelous to be part of a team. They don't understand what it's like to be part of a team; they don't understand what it's like to be government. They will never know what it's like to be government. Mr. Speaker, today the Liberal leader's colleague, the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, called me a eunuch. Last week he was saying I had too many balls in the air.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Drumheller.

Meech Lake Accord

MR. SCHUMACHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the hon. Deputy Premier. Now that there are only 38 days left before June 23, can the Deputy Premier say if a meeting of first ministers will be held soon in an effort to break the impasse on the Meech Lake accord?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is certainly the hope of our government, as the Premier expressed yesterday, that a meeting of first ministers would be called to help resolve the issues that are now crystallized, really, I think, and will be further crystallized by a report which will be presented to the House of Commons, I believe tomorrow, although parts if not all of it have now become well known to most Canadians through appropriate leaks. From wherever they came I'm not certain. But I think that will help all governments make a decision as to whether or not there is sufficient ground in order to bring forward proposals which could indeed break the impasse we are now in. Certainly it is the desire of our government that that will happen. We have not yet had confirmation from the Prime Minister's Office that that will be done, but quite frankly we do remain hopeful that we will be able to sit down very soon with the first ministers and my counterparts and appropriate officials to try and resolve this issue. It is, of course, very important for the future of our country, and we will approach the discussions in the most serious and thoughtful way on behalf of Albertans.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Can the hon. Deputy Premier say what role the subject of Senate reform will play in harmonizing our present constitutional problems?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, as hon. members know, because of the leadership of Alberta on the subject of Senate reform within Canada, and in particular our proposal for a Triple E Senate, which was approved unanimously in this Assembly on two occasions – I just repeat that for emphasis – I believe that Senate reform is probably the key which will unlock the current constitutional impasse. We are hopeful that there will be a commitment on the part of the federal government. I repeat what was said earlier about that matter: one has to have the federal government before any constitutional change can take place. You must have the federal government. Therefore, there must be a clear indication from the federal government on the issue of Senate reform, and the provinces of Ontario and Quebec are going to have to give us a clear indication that they are prepared to move further in Senate reform, keeping in mind that there are provisions in the Meech Lake accord to deal with that. But the clear indication, I think, to the other provinces that are now dissenting on this issue that

Senate reform will indeed be accomplished I think will prove to be the key which will unlock this dilemma.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Centre.

Royal Alexandra Hospital

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Saturday night an 87-year-old woman, a blind woman, here in the city of Edmonton was taken to the Royal Alexandra emergency unit with pneumonia. Yet instead of being admitted, this woman was put on a cot in a hallway and waited all Saturday night, all day Sunday, all Sunday night, and then on Monday was put in a holding room with eight other patients and then finally only yesterday was admitted to a bed at the Royal Alexandra hospital. Now, in the absence of the Minister of Health and the Premier, will the Deputy Premier not agree that for an 87-year-old woman in Alberta in 1990 to go through such an ordeal is absolutely unacceptable and shows the mismanagement and uncaring of this government in this province?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Health, I will take the question as notice, and the full particulars can be passed onto her. I'm sure that she will take appropriate action in dealing with the board of the hospital in question and the medical practitioners who are responsible for dealing with matters of that kind. But to try and bring every case into this Assembly where there has been a situation develop like that and place the blame at the feet of the government is irresponsible.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, what is irresponsible is promise after promise by this government to the Royal Alexandra hospital that they will in fact redevelop their critical care and emergency wings. They were told that in '84, they were told in '86, they were told in '87, and they still don't have that money.

The family has already contacted the Minister of Health and has got nowhere. So will the Deputy Premier, on behalf of the government, agree to contact Mrs. Luckenchuk and apologize to her for this ordeal and ensure that the redevelopment of the Royal Alexandra hospital proceeds as the Premier promised four years ago?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to accept the allegation contained in the preamble to the question that the Minister of Health has done nothing about this unfortunate incident. Therefore, I will take the matter as notice, and it will be dealt with by the Minister of Health, who, I think all hon. members will agree, is a compassionate, caring, and understanding minister and Albertan.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

Lottery Funds

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate that I must pursue the matter of lottery funds in this House, but because of the present lack of accountability, I have no choice. There is a deal in place which involves the Western Canada Lottery Corporation and the Alberta lottery division which provides, according to the information I've received, millions of dollars in lottery funds over a period of time to the Calgary Stampeder and the Edmonton Eskimos. Furthermore, I

understand that there is some benefit to the Alberta western lottery division in the form of name rights, season tickets, and tables in the gold room in both Edmonton and Calgary. Now, Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister responsible for lotteries: was the minister himself or anyone from his office or is he aware of anyone from the Premier's office being involved in the initiation or negotiations of the original agreement or the extended agreement?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, on September 7, 1989, I attended a news conference in Edmonton at Commonwealth Stadium, a news conference that had quite a number of people in attendance, and there were also representatives from the Calgary Stampeder Football Club and Edmonton Eskimo Football Club. On September 8 there were a fair number of news articles within the province of Alberta, including this one that was published in the *Calgary Sun* Friday, September 8:

Point After Yesterday Ken Kowalski, provincial minister in charge of lotteries, officially announced a new three-year corporate sponsorship agreement with both the Esks and the Stamps. It's similar to the one in place for the past two years, except the yearly funding to each club has gone up from \$850,000 to \$950,000.

What we've got in place, Mr. Speaker, is a marketing agreement between the Western Canada Lottery Corporation and both the Edmonton Eskimo Football Club and the Calgary Stampeder Football Club in exchange for such things as in-stadium advertising, a product provided by the Western Canada Lottery Corporation . . .

MR. DECORE: Answer the question.

MR. KOWALSKI: . . . signage that we've seen in Commonwealth Stadium and Stampeder stadium in Calgary, in addition to public address announcements that will be allowed to be made available in terms of advertising a product by the Western Canada Lottery Corporation . . .

MR. DECORE: Answer the question.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, the minister is answering the question.

MR. KOWALSKI: . . . in addition to utilization of the opportunity for the Western Canada Lottery Corporation to sell tickets at both stadiums throughout the whole year — the 20 games, including home games and play-off games. In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have the right to utilize management, players, coaches in advertising the Western Canada Lottery Corporation product.

All members will recall that in 1989 a new game called First and Goal was announced. In addition, Mr. Speaker, both football clubs provided to the Western Canada Lottery Corporation an opportunity to present a dollar to winners under the Western Canada Lottery Corporation at football games. We're provided with game film that we can use to commemorate milestones. As part of the promotion the Western Canada Lottery Corporation wanted to put through a new product that would provide a prize that would allow people who are winners to attend Grey Cup games and the like. Those facts . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. A bit for the supplementary.

Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, it was a great deal of rambling.

AN HON. MEMBER: Aren't you sorry you asked?

MR. WICKMAN: I'm not sorry I asked, but my question was never answered. It was not answered; it was tiptoed around.

Mr. Speaker, we've had the instance of briefcases brought to our attention, the trip to Japan, and who knows what else. So I don't have to continue on these fishing expeditions and rely on tips, will the minister make a commitment that he will table with this House a full accounting of expenditures, revenues, and surpluses of lottery funds?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, if an article in the *Edmonton Sun* on September 8, 1989, and an article in the *Edmonton Journal* of the same day or an article in the *Calgary Herald* is a tip, that's an interesting scenario and announcement.

Mr. Speaker, the agreement with respect to the Edmonton Eskimo Football Club and the Calgary Stampeder Football Club is some 15 pages in length. It has literally dozens and dozens of articles and scenarios with respect to it.

The hon. member did not attend the Public Accounts Committee of this Legislative Assembly this morning, when I appeared before the Public Accounts Committee, which was scheduled weeks ago. There is a member of the opposition who's the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. I sat where the NDP sit. I answered questions for an hour and a half. Colleagues of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud were there. They asked questions with respect to the lottery situation not only in Alberta but in western Canada. Mr. Speaker, I'd be very, very happy to do that. I also told the chairman of the committee I'd be very happy to come back on another occasion.

In addition to that, the hon. member knows full well that the Western Canada Lottery Corporation issues an annual report. It's been issued for the last fiscal year. All of the information is contained therein.

MR. WICKMAN: There is nothing in there. Nothing.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, thank you.
Redwater-Andrew.

Agricultural Assistance

MR. ZARUSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Agriculture. It's been some two months since the federal Minister of Agriculture announced a financial package for western farmers. Since then spring work has come upon us, and farmers are still waiting and wondering, needing the cash for spring seeding. I understand that in a meeting in Winnipeg on Monday the federal Minister of Agriculture stated that an agreement in principle was reached for the provinces to share in the program. Could the minister share the details of this agreement with the Assembly?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, it is correct that there was a meeting in Winnipeg Monday attended by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture for Canada and the ministers of ag for the three prairie provinces. I would not summarize the meeting as saying that an agreement in principle had been reached. I would rather summarize the meeting by saying that some progress was made, and we'll be meeting again in Toronto on Friday.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. ZARUSKY: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister. This waiting and wondering and meetings aren't helping Alberta farmers any with putting in the crop. Could the minister indicate what immediate steps he could take to get this financial package to Alberta?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I think programs that demonstrate this government's commitment to agriculture as the number one industry have been well outlined in the House by both myself and the Premier. I did make the commitment to the members of the Assembly that I would do my best to ensure that under any federal payout program Alberta producers would receive fair and equitable treatment. That is what I'm still striving to achieve, and hopefully we'll make some more progress on Friday.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

Corrections Employees' Strike

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had the opportunity to look at a draft statement of the Solicitor General's strategic direction that was prepared a number of months ago. It states in this strategic direction, and I'm quoting, that probation officers are now community corrections workers, often responsible for parole, young offenders, fine option, community service volunteers, etc., in addition to all of their traditional duties.

It also states, Mr. Speaker, that "a higher level of academic and technical training is demanded" of these workers. Now, given this department's report, I'm wondering how the Solicitor General can justify the government's final offer to those correctional officers that expands their work week, would see them have the same pay in two years as they do today, and doesn't even address the matter of caseloads.

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, I hope this is not an attempt to get caseloads involved in the officers that work for the Solicitor General's department, because I haven't heard that brought up at all in respect to any of the discussions that have gone on. Secondly, we have made no final offer to anybody within the corrections division of my particular department. Thirdly, the pay that these people would receive, even with the offer that is on the table, is not the same in two years as what it is from today. I'm talking about the total money received from the department. So I think the information is wrong and difficult to respond to.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With most corrections workers, who are responsible for supervising prisoners who are on temporary absence or on parole, now off the job, there's growing concern that these individuals may not be getting the supervision that's necessary to ensure the public safety. The situation may be particularly bad in rural areas. I'm hoping that the Solicitor General could advise who is now supervising these individuals that need the supervision. Can the Solicitor General guarantee that the level of public safety is as good today as it would normally be?

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, the department has put very high priority on the probation officer side, and those offices where we

do not have people crossing the picket lines or where people are not showing up for work are being manned most satisfactorily, in my view, by management staff, who are doing an outstanding job in covering off during this strike period. I cannot of course hold out any guarantees about anything; it's not within my power to guarantee these things. However, I am assured by my department officials that these offices are being well staffed and that those people that are on probation or on temporary absences are on the same reporting system as has been in the past.

Criminal Records Retention

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Mr. Speaker, in response to my questions the day before yesterday the Solicitor General referred to court records. With respect, Mr. Speaker, the Solicitor General is comparing apples and oranges. Unlike the files possessed by the Solicitor General's department, court records typically do not contain fingerprints, do not contain photographs or detailed body markings and the like. Would the Solicitor General tell us exactly why the province wants to maintain prints, pictures, body markings, and more on individuals who have never been convicted of any offence?

MR. FOWLER: Unfortunately, I guess, Mr. Speaker, never having been convicted does not equate never having had difficulty with the whole law enforcement and judicial system. Fingerprints and pictures, under the Criminal Code of Canada and the identifications Act, must be held by the federal people. I can still see no possible difficulty from the Solicitor General's department holding similar information.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Mr. Speaker, in a decision delivered a year and a half ago, the Supreme Court of Canada suggested in strong terms that the practice of retaining information on individuals subsequently acquitted is unconstitutional. Would the Solicitor General agree to stop this unwarranted practice of retaining information, an invasion of privacy, in light of the fact that the province is likely breaching Albertans' rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, I don't understand the Supreme Court of Canada decision, and I read many of them both during the study of law and the practice of law that suggest something and don't come out and state something. Now, is it constitutional or is it not constitutional? And who could we look to but to the Supreme Court of Canada for such a decision? Unfortunately, a suggestion does not make it the law. They had the power to make it the law if they had wanted to at that court. I suspect that when the Supreme Court of Canada does hold it unconstitutional, vis-à-vis the federal government and authorities, then that same law will apply to the provincial authorities, and until I'm advised that that's the case by the Attorney General's department, my previous answers stand.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon.

Milk Container Size

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Deputy Premier. For a government that prides themselves on the free enterprise ethic and the minimum of interference between the consumer and the producer, he's shown rather a

pink trend lately. The Minister of Agriculture would probably remember that on July 12, '89, when we asked whether or not four-litre, plastic milk jugs could be used to sell milk, he said that he's "tempted at this point in time to put forward a recommendation that we proceed with the four-litre jugs." Then, showing the same speed of foot that the Minister of the Environment has, comes August 4, 1989: still nothing done. He assured me that "we're still moving down the same path." Now, the question is: would the Deputy Premier order free enterprise to take over and tell the Minister of Agriculture to get off whatever he's sitting on and authorize four-litre milk jugs so the housewives of this country can buy the milk whatever way they wish?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I don't order the Minister of Agriculture around. I'll let him respond.

MR. ISLEY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I believe that if the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon were to continue doing his research, he would find that the last time he raised the question in the House I shared with him that there had been a meeting of the total processing industry and agricultural caucus, following which a number of studies were requested re the impact on the industry and on the environment of the four-litre jugs. Some of those studies are now complete; others are still under way. Once the studies are all completed, there will be a reassessment by ag caucus and probably another meeting with the total industry.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, that's a load of what the Minister of Agriculture is very familiar with, and he knows it. It's got nothing at all to do with the environment, because this government authorizes half-litre, one-litre, three-litre jugs, but not four-litre jugs. So it's got nothing to do with the environment.

So my question, then, back to the Deputy Premier: what kind of a government does he stand as Deputy Premier of that will interfere so blatantly with the market process?

MR. HORSMAN: I'm happy to be part of a private enterprise government.

The Minister of Agriculture has responded, and I shall let him continue to respond to a question which is within the area of his responsibility.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I take it that the hon. member either does not understand the supply managed nature of the dairy industry in this province or that he is totally opposed to it. I would suggest to the hon. member that the next time one of the dairy organizations has a meeting, he attend that with me and express his view on doing away with supply management.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Cardston, followed by Edmonton-Highlands.

Wild Rose Foundation Japan Trip

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for lotteries, and my question is regarding the recent trip of a five-person team to Japan, a part of which was the chairman of the Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families. Alberta already has an ongoing trade and commerce relationship with their sister province of Hokkaido. Was this

trip really necessary to the ongoing relationship we already have with that province? [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, or is this a representation of members of the House who would like to go on the next trip? Minister.

MR. KOWALSKI: Yes, Mr. Speaker, in direct response to the question from the Member for Cardston, and it may very well be that the Member for Red Deer-North would like to supplement the answer. He's just returned. This was an official exchange between the government of the state of Hokkaido in Japan and the government of Alberta, who are sister provinces. Perhaps the Member for Red Deer-North would like to supplement. He's just returned.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair needs to check, but I don't believe that in the capacity the member went on the trip, he has the right to be answering the question here in question period. We have a violation of asking a question of the member in his primary capacity as a member.

Supplementary, Cardston.

MR. ADY: Supplementary, then, again back to the minister responsible for lotteries. Perhaps the minister could give us some direct benefits that would accrue to the province from that trip. Would the minister do that, please?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the question, I think, is a very valid one, because Alberta, in order for it to find its rightful place in the world, must in fact foster and ensure that it has intergovernmental relationships with various states around the world. Our province of Alberta has twinned itself with a sister province in Japan, a sister province in Korea, a sister province in China, and, most recently, a state in the Soviet Union.

This is the 10th anniversary in 1990 of the importance of the signing of an agreement, and I want to repeat and amplify once again that in terms of the discussions that were held between the government of Alberta and the government of the state of Hokkaido, it was identified to us by the government of Hokkaido that one area it wanted to learn more about was Alberta's involvement with the volunteer sector and Alberta's commitment to the family. An invitation was extended by the governor of the state of Hokkaido, and he asked me to lead a mission. I thought it would be most appropriate for the chairman of the Premier's advisory council on the family, because it was identified that the people of Japan wanted to learn more about our initiatives with respect to the family, and the MLA for Red Deer-North headed that visitation. He was accompanied by outstanding volunteers in the province of Alberta: a detective from the city of Edmonton police department who is well known for volunteer work within the city of Edmonton and executive directors of various volunteer associations throughout the province. Part of the condition was to be a reciprocal visit by the state of Hokkaido to Alberta, and I believe that visit will be scheduled for September of 1990.

Mr. Speaker, it may be very negative that members in the opposition parties who ridicule volunteerism want to continue doing that, who ridicule our commitment to the family may wish to continue doing that, who ridicule the importance that others see in us assisting and working towards the solving of family violence. They may laugh at those things, but there are people in other parts of the world who are impressed with what this government is doing, who are impressed with what the volun-

teers are doing, and we have to help them when they ask us to help them. We can't turn our backs.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands.

Advanced Education Institutions

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think this Conservative government has proven time and again that it's a prideful government. It won't admit when it's made mistakes, and if there's any case in point that I need to refer to, how about the strikes that are currently going on within the public service? They won't admit their mistakes. But I'd like to help the Minister of Advanced Education out now that he's had 24 hours to read the Bill to which I referred in question period yesterday and ask him if he's now prepared to admit that he is wrong in stating that he hasn't expanded or attempted to expand his powers under Bill 27 to give him unlimited control over programs offered at postsecondary institutions.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, one could sound somewhat technical and refer to *Beauchesne* 410 or 428. The hon. member, frankly, is trying to raise a matter that's now before the House.

MS BARRETT: It's not on the Order Paper for today, dear.

MR. GOGO: I don't wish to argue with the hon. member, but the answer is simply no.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I wonder how it is that the minister can explain the exclusion of certain references that had controlled the minister's power before over postsecondary education institutions without acknowledging the truth of what I've said. The prohibitions were before. [interjection] No. That's right, but it's not called for second reading today.

He used to be able to control the expansion of programs only if he wanted to avoid unnecessary or undesirable duplication. That provision will no longer be there. Mr. Speaker, will the minister now admit that this is nothing more than a power grab, and will he agree to drop this Bill and bring it back to the drafting board?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I wonder perhaps if the hon. member would have a different view if the hon. member were aware that each of the institutions was consulted prior to the preparation of Bill 27.

Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Might we have unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.
The Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

head: Introduction of Special Guests (reversion)

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce today the Alberta Community Health Nurses Society and the Society of Community Health Nursing Supervisors, who over the

last couple of days have held a health fair in the pedway between the two buildings. I would like to encourage any members who haven't been there to go and visit. They'll tell you if you have too high a stress level or if you're living the right kind of life-style or whatever. Those of us that are married to the nurses will have to go home and check to see if we get the same answer from both nurses.

I'd like to introduce Vel Thompson and about 14 or 15 members of the association from throughout the province, from Edmonton to Medicine Hat to Grande Prairie to Lacombe, et cetera. Would they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to the Members of the Legislative Assembly a group of very healthy individuals, following on this great introduction here. There are 53 grades 5 and 6 students visiting here from the Killam public school. They are accompanied today by their teachers Mr. Gary Zettel and Mr. Denis Boutin; also parents Marcia Freadrich, Geri Clark, Marilyn Munro, Marge Kueber, and Jody Matthews, and other parents Barb Young, Leola Taralson, Joyce Oberg, Judy Gunderson, and Donna Grant. Bus drivers today taking them safely down our highways are Karmen Fossen and Tom Brinker. They're seated in the members' gallery. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

head: Committee of Supply

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon. I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Estimates 1990-91

Technology, Research and Telecommunications 1 – Individual Line Service

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I would call on the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications.

MR. STEWART: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to bring the members up to date with respect to the progress of this very important program, the individual line service, and to also request their support in respect of vote 1 to carry on the work of this particular program.

Mr. Chairman, the status of the program at this time is that right now we're on schedule; 65,470 rural Alberta households are now enjoying the privacy and convenience of an individual line service, and that's now two-thirds of the total conversions. In working to provide private line telephone service to every Albertan, the individual line program will be converting the lines of another 29,000 party line subscribers during this current fiscal year. To meet this goal, the individual line service requires \$66,725,000 in this fiscal period 1990-91. This is the government's 75 percent share of the conversion costs.

The largest portion of this money, Mr. Chairman, is for grants, and the grants basically include two types of rebate programs for subscribers. The first of these rebate programs is that of \$110 to each subscriber. You'll recall, Mr. Chairman, that the government guaranteed the subscriber's share of the conversion

costs to be \$450, and when the Public Utilities Board increased the subscriber cost to \$560, the rebate program was introduced to maintain this promise.

The other rebate program, Mr. Chairman, is one that compensates the rural Albertans who paid for private line service before the individual line service program was actually established. AGT also receives grant money to help pay for the capital costs of the improvements to the telephone system: the new lines and the switching equipment and the modernization program required to make the private line service actually possible.

Mr. Chairman, you will notice a 44.6 percent increase in Grants for this year. The increase is required because AGT has been working quite a bit ahead of the funding in upgrading the system. The increased cost also reflects increased need. The individual line service was first installed in those areas which did not require extensive upgrading. As the ILS program started converting to the more remote lines, the capital cost of upgrading has increased. Under Supplies and Services you will notice a 10.6 percent reduction in costs, and this actually represents a reduced need as the individual line service program enters its final stretch.

Mr. Chairman, approving these estimates will allow the individual line service program to give the final third of rural Albertans the benefits of individual line service. It will also keep the program on schedule so that by 1991 all 106,000 rural Alberta households can enjoy this basic service. Mr. Chairman, I think it's interesting to note that once completed, Alberta will be probably the only jurisdiction in all North America with a totally digital electronic network system complete throughout its area.

I would be appreciative of any comments or questions from any of the members. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to say that I think this is a good program. In fact, it's been in place for some four or five years, so we've had a number of discussions about it. Particularly, the Member for Vegreville, who has a rural constituency, has spoken in this House on behalf of the program and praised the efforts of AGT and the government in doing this. I would go further and say that our party suggested a similar program in the 1986 election, as did the government, and so you are doing something we think is fundamental and important, and that is: delivering a service to rural Albertans that attempts to bring them up to a level comparable with the kind of services that urban Albertans have enjoyed for many years. So on that side of it, there really is no complaint on the program.

I will have a question on some of the details in a minute, but I do think you also need to look at not only the idea of whether it is a good program, but we are being asked to approve some money out of the heritage trust fund for this program. I would like to say and put it on record that if we had done this program, the chances are – certainly if I had been in control of the decision-making on the particular instance – that the money would have come out of general revenues rather than out of the heritage trust fund. That's not to say that the heritage trust fund money can't be used for important projects for Albertans, but I guess the thing that bothers me about taking it out of the capital projects division of the heritage trust fund as we do in these cases, like the other expenditures that come out of there,

is that we keep track of the amount of those expenditures year by year and add them all up and then turn around and claim that we still have them. The government calls them deemed assets and retains them on the books as if somehow we still had that money when, in fact, these are expenditures and have been spent and are not retrievable again. So that side of it bothers me. But that, of course, is something that's out of this minister's hands. It's really in the hands of the Treasurer, and it's a general way of dealing with the capital projects division that we do not agree with. So I'll just make that point on that particular thing.

There is another aspect of spending this money that is in the hands of the minister that bothers me, or at least certainly he will have a say in it in a major sort of way, and that is that it would appear that the government is in the process of deciding that they should sell off AGT. If we do that, then I wonder about the validity of spending the taxpayers' dollars – because the heritage trust fund is, in effect, the taxpayers' dollars – to put in individual line services in the province of Alberta for rural Albertans and then turning it over to some private company to, in a sense, reap the benefits of the taxpayers' largess. Now, I've no problem with giving the – well, in fact, I could use the minister's own words to explain what Alberta has been able to do with AGT. If one looks at the speech the minister made to the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce on March 28, 1990, you would find a whole series of statements, most of which in the first part I agree with, about how effective AGT has been in delivering service to Albertans. I'll just quote a few examples on page 4.

In the early part of this century, the private sector couldn't justify the cost of extending telephone service to all areas of Alberta . . . to every small community . . . to every farm home. So the Alberta government created Alberta Government Telephones to do the job.

And He goes on in a number of instances here describing how that was done. Another quote, for example:

In short, our government has used AGT and its legislative powers as instruments of public policy, ensuring equal and affordable access for all Albertans.

And of course the individual line service he then mentions is in fact the ultimate step in doing that. So that's all very commendable, and we agree, then, that AGT has done its job: you know, the individual line service is

on schedule and on budget towards [making Alberta] the only major economy in North America with 100 per cent individual line service.

I think that's wonderful. I guess what disturbs me as we go on is that in spite of bragging about AGT and what it's done for Alberta, the minister then says: but we'd better look ahead; there's trouble on the horizon, and we may have to change things from the way we're doing them now.

I realize and understand that the federal government is forcing the minister into a bit of a corner in terms of who regulates the telephone industry, but I don't think that pushes him into a corner on who owns AGT. Through ownership you have quite a lot of say and quite a lot of control over AGT and how it operates. It would seem to me that the continued ownership of AGT in the hands of the Alberta government is important, and I don't believe that the idea of selling off shares in AGT to Albertans at large on some kind of an equity share offering makes a lot of sense. Once you start to erode the ownership of AGT by the Alberta government to being owned by a number of individuals, be they Albertans or not at the start, it's hard to continue to control how that spreads. All you need to do is look

at what the government decided to do with Alberta Energy Company, for example, where Alberta Energy Company shareholders in Alberta were limited to 1 percent. Now all of a sudden it's 5 percent, and so a group of Albertans could get together and end up taking the control of Alberta Energy Company away from the government. I know the government likes to say they don't control it, but in fact they do, because they own the biggest block of shares by a considerable amount. With AGT we own it now, and we should keep the ownership.

I think the minister is wrong if he uses the federal regulatory ideas of allowing competition into the long-distance industry as a reason why he needs to loosen up the control and ownership of AGT. For one thing, he must continue to fight the federal government, as he claims he has been doing, against this idea of long-distance competition, and I don't know that . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, hon. member. Order please. The Chair has been listening carefully, and while I appreciate the point you have been making relative to individual line service, you've now completely strayed from the topic and those things that might bear upon individual line service. Could you please return to the subject at hand?

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. But if we're to approve these expenditures – we are approving some \$67 million of heritage trust fund money to go into a service for Albertans that is, I believe, put at risk by the idea that we might privatize AGT. So I think the pros and cons of that are an important thing to put on the record and let the minister respond to, because it's a lot of money, and it is our money. If we provide an important service to rural Albertans with taxpayers' money and then at the same time run a parallel policy that ends up putting that expenditure at risk in the sense that we turn it over to somebody else who can then milk that, so to speak, which a private company could do, then I think that's very relevant. It won't take me all day, but I would like to just at least finish the line of points I was making about how the long-distance competition will affect the kind of service that rural Albertans get. That is exactly where I was heading, to tie that back in.

I'll explain it this way. If the rates for long-distance services go down because of so-called competition – and they are already doing that; Rogers company, of course, is trying to get into the long-distance business in Canada – then that means that the rural line service users and the residential flat rate users in our cities will have to pay more. I know that it's common to consider – and in fact the minister says it in his own document when he was speaking to the chamber of commerce – that the long-distance rates subsidize the residential users. I would like to just caution him on that "fact." It is true that the long-distance rates are at a certain level, but I'm not sure it's fair to consider that the charging of that rate is a subsidy to the flat rate users, the residential users, the rural users, because you could not afford to have a long-distance line if you didn't have a large number of residential users. If you didn't have 600,000 Edmontonians wanting to phone Toronto and people in Toronto wanting to phone back to Edmonton, stringing a line across the country would be very, very prohibitive in its costs.

I don't see why an outsider should be able to come into this country and buy into all those telephone hookups that are there in Edmonton and Toronto without having to build the infrastructure himself. In other words, AGT has built it – well, Edmonton Telephones built the Edmonton one, but AGT built

it in Calgary and throughout the province of Alberta. If you didn't have that infrastructure, if you didn't have those residential phones already in this province, they couldn't afford to hook up that line. I mean, the only reason they could afford to put that line in is because they're going to be allowed to hook on – those residents can use that line instead of the Telecom line, which has already been worked out by AGT and the other telephone companies of Canada – and have quite a good system and quite good access not only across this country but to telephone services right around the world.

So we don't need Rogers. What he needs is our infrastructure that has been built by a number of different companies, including Alberta Government Telephones, in order to have one. We're letting him hook on, and then, because he's got a big base in the States, he can for a while do it cheaper and force Telecom to lower their rates. And everybody says: "Oh, great. Here's competition lowering the long-distance rates." But I ask you: who will be the beneficiaries? The beneficiaries will be big businesses that make a lot of long-distance calls. The average person will end up paying for it; the flat rate users will end up paying for it in their homes by a higher monthly charge. The service to the individual line users, the rural people of Alberta, is particularly where the rates will go up the most. If we turn AGT over to a private company that then starts charging on a bottom-line basis, on a fee-for-service basis, they will not maintain as good a service in the rural areas. Here we are, building this wonderful service, and then we're going to hand it over to somebody else who can then milk it, in effect, if we privatize AGT. So that's my concern with putting these expenditures forward.

In fact, I think every rural MLA in Alberta should go around their riding telling all their rural people, "Oh, yeah; selling AGT's a great idea; it will just mean you get poorer service and higher rates," and then see if they get elected next election. Okay? Because if they don't go around telling their people . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, hon. member.

MR. McEACHERN: . . . the truth of the deal, I'll go around the province and . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order please, hon. member. Order please. The Chair is listening carefully to the arguments advanced, and in the opinion of the Chair, although they may be relevant to the hypothetical item of selling or not selling AGT, they do not bear upon individual line service. Please speak to that particular vote before us.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, I am speaking exactly to whether or not it is worth giving \$67 million to the rural line service. That is the bottom line of what I'm talking about. I've almost finished the analysis and remarks I wanted to make on it anyway, so I guess it's not worth getting into a big fight about whether I'm in or out of order on it.

Just the final point on that then, I guess, and I do have one other thing that's sort of a local point that I want to ask about. As well as claiming that the long-distance rates subsidize the local rates – which is a myth, I think – the idea is that the flat rates would go up. I mentioned that a minute ago. The flat monthly fees then would go up for residential users and rural residential users if we allow this long-distance competition that we were talking about or privatize AGT. Now, it could be that we've got quite a bargain – and I think we have – with our

monthly rates in this province. But we built it from taxpayers' dollars and from AGT monthly charges. We've done it ourselves, and the company has made a profit every year. So I don't see anything wrong with that. We've been able to also deliver and are just completing the delivery of excellent service to the rural areas, so I think that's a wonderful way to go and I don't think we should tamper with it. If the monthly rate goes up, and even Rogers himself admitted that might happen, and all the literature you read on it talks about that, they then say . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: A point of order, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: A point of order, Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: I hate to interrupt. But, you know, relevancy here. The point of order – 459, *Beauchesne*: stick to the topic. I think we're dealing with something that's concrete here, and I couldn't begin to tell you how many times I've heard the word "if" mentioned in this debate. If the roof falls in, I think we'll look at it then. But it hasn't happened, so please, can we stick to the topic at hand?

MR. McEACHERN: If the member were serious and understood what was going on, then he might be allowed to speak.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order. We have a point of order that has been raised. Does any member of the House wish to speak on the point of order?

Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Yes. I think it's nonsense. All of my remarks have been geared to whether or not it is sensible to give \$67 million to this minister to spend out of the heritage trust fund on individual line service. Everything has been geared exactly to that.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Anything further? It is the view of the Chair that it is, indeed, a relevant point of order. As the Chair has admonished on two previous occasions, the debate advanced by the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway certainly does relate to Alberta Government Telephones and to, as I indicated, a possibly hypothetical situation, but in the view of the Chair it does not relate to the merits or demerits associated with vote 1. So I'd ask the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway to please deal with the vote before us.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Chairman, you really wouldn't want me to vote against the voting of \$67 million to the government without a full analysis of why I might do that, would you? I mean, it would seem to me a perfectly relevant discussion that I've been involved in, and besides which, if I hadn't been interrupted so many times, I'd be more than done by now. So I don't really understand what all this nonsense is about. All you guys want to do is just be disruptive . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order please, hon. member. [interjections] Order please.

The Chair would ask the hon. member to proceed with debate on vote 1. It is not of any consequence – the Chair does not have any view on the merits of the member voting one way or another, so please proceed.

MR. McEACHERN: Okay.

So the suggestion, then, that the rates might very well go up for flat rate users and particularly for rural users *is* a really important concern. It's not good enough to say, like some people who propose this direction, "Well, if the rates get too high for seniors and for people on social assistance, we'll give them a lower rate," because that would mean that we would have to have a means test to see whether or not they qualified, which doesn't make any sense. It would mean they'd become second-rate users. Experience has shown in other parts of the world that if that happens, then often the people that are given the lower rate because they can't afford the normal and somewhat higher rate than we have now – the saw-off is that each member that asks for that lower rate has to start keeping track of every call they make. That's sort of like the next step. Instead of getting a flat rate for the month and making as many calls as you want, you end up having to pay for each individual call. Now, if you live in rural Alberta and have to start paying for each individual call and some of your calls cross some of the boundaries between the various zones of Alberta, it could cost you quite a lot of money. Therefore, people who are disadvantaged and couldn't afford the "higher rate" would end up having second-rate service and certainly extraordinary costs added to them if they wanted to use the telephones the way the rest of us do. So that concludes that part of it and that part of that analysis.

There's just one other thing I wanted to raise, which is much more mundane. I guess I'd like to say that having said that, I of course fully intend that we should go ahead with this program and finish it. It's the other half of the program that I don't like. The individual line service is great; AGT is doing a good job with it. We commend the government for going ahead and doing this program, wish them well in finishing it, and just suggest that the government make sure they keep control of AGT in the hands of the Alberta government: not in the hands of Albertans through some kind of a share offering but in the hands of the Alberta government on behalf of the people of Alberta.

The final thing I just wanted to raise – and I don't have a solution or anything to this problem. I got a letter awhile back, and I don't have it with me so I could get all the details, but basically it was from a person who found herself being charged the country rate, so to speak: the \$450 to get hooked up. They live in a little summer village and they don't use the phone in the wintertime. Because their village happens to be less than 50 people, they couldn't get an urban rate. I don't know what the cutoff line should be – 20 homes, 50 homes, 100 homes? I think it's 50 now, according to the literature that I read. She had some replies from AGT and some from the minister himself, and I guess I'm just wondering if the minister could update us on that particular thing. I just raise this to ask for information on it. I did not feel that the person was particularly hard done by, given that the government is paying 75 percent of this program for all rural users, and if you happen to live far enough from an urban centre where you can't really qualify for urban, at some point you've got to have a cutoff. I guess I'm not sure what it should be, and the minister probably has some thoughts on that particular question.

So with those comments, Mr. Chairman, our party will be supporting these votes, and I know the rural members particularly appreciate this program.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to make a few brief comments and have a couple of questions to the minister regarding the individual line service program. My observations in the rural areas: when I talk to farmers about the individual line service program, they're very pleased with the program and very excited with the concept of having the opportunity to pick up a phone without having to worry about whether a neighbour down the road one way or another might be on the phone prior to them. So I do agree that it's certainly a worthwhile program.

The minister in his opening comments raised some questions. He said this was the final third of the total program, and I'm wondering, with specific reference to that then, is there a particular target date for the completion of this program? The minister didn't make any particular reference to an actual date, and I'm wondering if there is one on the agenda.

The other question I have. Last year on this topic I did raise some questions, and the minister did get back to me on a number of them, regarding fibre-optic lines. I have a few more questions along that line that I'd like to pose at this juncture regarding the individual line service, and that is: of the total lines that are put in, how many of those are fibre-optic lines, and can the minister give some indication generally where they're located? Now, my understanding is that fibre-optic lines don't necessarily go to individual farm homesteads; those are copper wires that go into there. But in terms of trunk lines, I'm wondering if the minister could make some comments about the location of fibre-optic lines.

The grants process with respect to the \$45 million worth of grants and the rebate program, the subsidies – and I have written a letter to the minister regarding this. The subsidy program does not seem necessarily to be uniformly applied, and I'm talking to the concept. The letter I wrote was regarding the development of Sun Haven community around the Sylvan Lake area. There are some regional areas that apparently are not getting the rebate. Some are getting the rebate, and I wonder if the minister could sort of outline that policy a little bit as it's affected here by the individual line service. I'm not quite sure how it is that some areas that are designated rural areas are getting the \$110 rebate per subscriber and yet other areas that are geographically quite close, in fact, are not getting that \$110 rebate. It doesn't seem to be a uniform application of that rebate structure with respect to the individual line service program.

Finally, just a question, I guess, that springs to my mind is that as a result of the Western Premiers' Conference there was one of the communiqués – and I forget the number. It was, I think, number 11; the number is irrelevant. At any rate, one of the communiqués that came forward from that Western Premiers' Conference dealt with the need for a good telecommunications infrastructure, in particular in the rural areas to support the economic viability of the rural areas. Certainly the individual line service will help in that factor with respect to development of easier access for farmers to get on the phone and get hold of health services or legal services or machinery repairs and so on. So clearly the individual line service will help in the economic development of the rural areas, but I have a question as a result of this. The process has been speeded up. When it was initially

proposed, I understand it was a five-year program. It's now been fast-tracked a little bit to a three-year program, which in and of itself is fine. Is that fast tracking, as it were, a prelude to a possible privatization plan? Privatization of AGT has been considered for quite some time. Is this fast tracking a means of making it more attractive to a potential buyer? Are we speeding up the individual line service for that reason? Or, if that's not the reason, could the minister then address why it has been fast-tracked a little bit in that regard?

So I will close my comments at that and look forward to some responses from the minister.

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

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you. Mine's going to just tag on a bit. I won't join the other two speakers in praising the department, because I don't think you should really get too much praise in this day and age for being dragged into the last half of the 20th century. Saskatchewan somewhere around 28 years ago put in private lines to farmers. The south of France did it in the late '40s, early '50s. So I just say, "Welcome to the last half of the 20th," and I guess we're thankful for small mercies. We could still be using barbed wire phones, and so to that extent I suppose you could praise them.

I am disappointed that this government refused to turn over a map of fibre-optic lines. I can't understand that, and I would ask the minister to explain why the public of Alberta is not able to get a map of where the fibre-optic lines run. I would then also underline my colleague from Calgary-North West's request to let him know whether or not any of the individual line services are operating on fibre-optic lines. In some of these rural communities and some of these rural areas, if we are going to expand the rural industrial capacity or, better still, the rural business capacity, it's going to be quite necessary to have the telecommunication connections into our small towns and into the areas around our small towns, because they are as important for the industries of the future as the highways and the railroads were for the industries of the past. Could you imagine a government, Mr. Chairman, in 1915 or 1920 refusing to table a map of where the railroads are? Yet this government refused to table a map of where their fibre-optic lines are, a rather peculiar attitude; maybe a more defensive one. He probably wouldn't tell me his age or how many people are in the department or whether the sun is coming up tomorrow because they're afraid of getting into trouble. An insecure government, an insecure minister maybe have reasons for not putting out information, but this minister has always given me the impression that he's halfway secure, anyhow, and consequently may be able to come up with just why maps for where fibre-optic lines are are not available.

The second question – and I'm going to cut out my sarcasm a little bit now and try a little sugar. Sometimes, though, you have to put a lump of sugar out just to know which end of the dog to kick. This particular case I'd like the minister to tell me . . . He says he's provided grants to Edmonton Telephones under Individual Line Service. Does that just mean some of the few people around the edge? Or does Edmonton Telephones run out farther than I thought? It's a question of curiosity on my part just what that grant would be to Edmonton Telephones, because I thought ILS was available in all the Edmonton Telephones area. But I'd be very curious.

Thank you.

MR. STEWART: Perhaps I could just respond briefly to a number of points that were raised. Dealing with the comments of the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, I thank him for his positive comments with respect to the program. He's indicated his support for the program before. He raised the point as to whether or not these moneys should in fact be coming from the General Revenue Fund. Obviously, one of the main objectives of the heritage fund has been to establish economic and social opportunities throughout our province. And telecommunications – there are many programs, I should say, under the Heritage Savings Trust Fund that achieve that sort of an objective, and certainly the individual line service is one. Telecommunication is really a very important factor and essential to this particular objective.

He raised some speculation about the possibility of what he refers to as privatization of AGT. It's no deep, dark secret that we have been examining various alternatives to determine how best to position AGT as we look ahead and see the types of changes that are occurring and will occur on a very dynamic scale in telecommunications not just in this province but in Canada and throughout the world. But I just want to say that regardless of what ultimately may be a decision one way or the other relative to these various alternatives, I can assure him that rural residential programs will indeed be safeguarded. Indeed, rates and services will continue to be regulated in the public interest. Obviously, with jurisdiction being in the federal area, the matter of competition is a regulated matter and comes under the jurisdiction of the federal government. But if it comes, any competitor that would be involved in that will indeed be subject to such regulation relative to the rates and services that it provides in both urban and rural.

The small summer village. I'd like to get some more details about that specific one, because it does sound a little bit abnormal. It's a universal program, and therefore anybody in an area, in an exchange, that's going to be involved in that program all must be in it. But I'll get some more details from the hon. member, and we'll follow up on that particular point.

Moving to Calgary-North West, again positive comments about the program. The target date, we hope, will be the summer of 1991: June, July, in that area, I would suggest.

Both he and the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon referred to the fibre-optic situation. I might just make a comment about that. Fibre optics are ideally suited, of course, for transporting large volumes of telecommunication traffic between two points, and wherever possible, AGT is making use of fibre optics in its toll network. Nearly 100 percent of the new high-capacity toll routes are in fact constructed using fibre optics. In 1989, for example, the last year, approximately 1,200 kilometres of fibre-optic line were placed. In all cases, of course, AGT has to look to the cost-effectiveness of the situation and uses whatever is the most up-to-date technology possible in order to provide that sort of service. As to their location – and I recognize the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon asking me for this particular route. I think today, as a matter of fact, if I read the newspapers correctly, a company – Rogers, CNCP, Unitel – will be announcing that they will be making application to be a competitor to Telecom Canada. So competition, given the statements from the federal government as well, is definitely coming. And if it does come, I would suggest that the particular routes that are fibre optics might be of considerable interest to competitors that wish to come into this province. I've indicated to the hon. member that we don't feel that it's in the best interest to disclose the exact location of those lines, but I've

given him an indication of the type of network that has been set up in fibre optics in that regard.

The other point raised by the hon. Member for Calgary-North West was the matter of fast-tracking. Actually, the program is being completed on time. It wasn't a three-year program as such; I believe it was announced in 1986, and it took a period of time. Now, it's true that we are finalizing the last one-third of the hookups, the conversions, but there's exchange modification and modernization that has been conducted; there's a planning stage and so on. So it is a five-year program that is being, actually, completed on time.

On the matter of the \$110 rebate program, the \$110 is provided to the subscriber at the time of the conversion, and then the person having receiving that is obligated either to make a lump sum payment of \$450 or to pay \$5 a month over a period of 20 years. That's a universal type of application to each subscriber that is the subscriber at the time of the conversion.

So those are my comments, and if I've missed any of them there – oh, pardon me; there was one other one raised by the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon in relation to Edmonton Telephones. Edmonton Telephones actually does have some rural customers, and the grant that was provided in the 1988-89 fiscal year to Edmonton Telephones was a little over \$1 million to reimburse Edmonton Telephones for it providing individual line service to its rural customers.

So those are my comments, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. TAYLOR: Yes. On one point, I'm sorry, but I wasn't listening closely enough. I tried to catch his attention. I wonder if the hon. minister would refer to his notes again and tell me how many total miles of fibre-optic lines have been put in.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Chairman, I think I gave that to . . . Did I give that to you directly by letter? I have the last year's figure here – I don't think I have the total figure to date – but I'd be glad to give that to the hon. member if I haven't already. I thought I'd given you that particular figure, but I will do so.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to just express my thanks as a rural MLA to the minister and his department and to the hardworking employees of AGT for their, I think, very efficient implementation of the individual line service program. The program's been going well out in the Vegreville constituency, with almost all of the exchanges converted to individual line service to this point, some of them ahead of schedule, which I think is worthy of note. The Vegreville, Lavoy, Two Hills, Hairy Hill, Holden, and Mundare exchanges have all been converted. We're looking forward to the Ryley exchange conversion I think within the next few weeks, Mr. Chairman, leaving one exchange centred in the Vegreville constituency – there are others that come across our borders – left to be converted, and that is the Tofield exchange.

I would just like to urge the minister at this opportunity to proceed with haste on that Tofield exchange. I understand why it was left towards the end of the program: because there were a number of technical problems that AGT was seeking to rectify in terms of the original equipment that was in place there, the lines that were plowed. The service was adequate at one point,

but as the acreages out in that area developed and more and more people moved in, the demands on the system became great. The ability of the carriers to handle all the transmissions was limited, and service became intermittent and poor as a result. AGT has done a number of things to rectify that in the short term and looks forward to being able to guarantee everybody in that area surrounding Tofield, and particularly north and west of Tofield, good telephone service in the future.

I would like to ask the minister, in terms of one component of the ILS program, the investment that was made by AGT into PLC-1 converters, party line converters . . . These were devices that were made available to people whose telephones were on exchanges that weren't due for conversion till the latter stages of the ILS program, the idea being that it would provide them with some of the benefits of private line service while they were still technically on a party line. It would enable them to hear only their own ring and to use some of the devices that are available to people who have individual line or private line service. It would make it possible for people, for example, to enjoy relative privacy on their calls, because other people couldn't cut in right away. Anyway, there were some areas of the province where these PLC-1 converters were put in place. I'd like the minister to let us know what kind of success rate we enjoyed with those, how many homes of the 100,000 to be converted to IL service made use of the PLC-1 converters, and what is the plan for this equipment? Is there any market for these PLC converters? Once a telephone is properly converted to individual line service, the PLC-1 converter becomes redundant. I'm wondering what the minister's plans are for all of these little devices. Can they be recycled? Is it possible to sell them to other jurisdictions that might be a little behind us in terms of individual line service?

I would like to point out to the minister, to raise a concern that I have raised with him on a number of occasions, that some people have contacted my office and expressed a lot of concern about the fact that they have to pay a fair amount of money to get their individual line. Mr. Chairman, \$560 is what the one-time cost of buying the individual line service is. You get a \$110 rebate from the government, making your actual out-of-pocket cost \$450 towards this individual line service. Now, almost without exception people appreciate the benefits of private line service so much that in retrospect they don't mind the portion they had to pay of this party line conversion and consider the investment worth while. Many people are doing it on a monthly basis, Mr. Chairman, where they pay \$5 a month, I believe for a 20-year period, and still are eligible for the \$110 rebate. So in terms of the service they get, they generally appreciate it. However, there are areas of the province that have a very limited range with their telephones. They live in areas where they don't have access to other exchanges. They feel that their options are limited in the beginning, and then they're being charged \$450 to get phone service that doesn't offer them very much more in terms of access to their neighbours or business centres. I'm talking about exchanges in the province that lack any extended flat rate calling options.

The one that the minister and I have had extensive discussion about is the Andrew telephone exchange, one of the only telephone exchanges in the province, I think, that is in fact surrounded by other telephone exchanges and has toll-free access to none of them. The people in Andrew still cannot phone any neighbouring business centres or any of their neighbours with the benefits of the extended flat rate calling system. I wanted to bring this to the attention of the minister

in the context of his individual line service program, because some people are saying: "Look; our phone service isn't what we wanted it to be. You're coming along and making us pay 450 bucks, and it's still not what we want it to be." The people of the Andrew area, I submit, deserve the same kinds of opportunities and options that other people have, and that means the benefits of calling to neighbouring exchanges. I've suggested to the minister that if surveys show that not a clear majority of people on that telephone exchange want to call a particular other exchange, perhaps the minister would be prepared to look at offering them more than one option, offering them two or three exchanges that they could have EFRC routes to at once. Then maybe we could demonstrate that there's sufficient support for extension of that service in the exchange overall to make it worth while.

The other way that the minister might approach this, in an effort to improve the quality of phone service to Albertans everywhere, is making individual exchanges larger. Now, I'd certainly be interested in hearing the Member for Redwater-Andrew's comments on this, but one thought I had was that . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, while I appreciate the point that you made previously, this is not the venue to list all the routes and so on, as we do with roads, that you might like. That's much more appropriate and should have been dealt with under the estimates. I would ask you to return to vote 1, Individual Line Service.

MR. FOX: Well, that's exactly what I'm talking about, Mr. Chairman: the individual line service available in exchanges. It's exchanges in the province that are converted to individual line service. They're done one by one on the basis of the exchange boundaries – artificial exchange boundaries, I submit – established years ago when the old mutual phone system was adapted and taken over by Alberta Government Telephones. It's precisely those boundaries, Mr. Chairman, which are followed when they implement the individual line service programs, that cause the problems.

I'm suggesting to the minister that while he's undergoing all of this work, plowing in lines providing individual line service to people, some consideration be given to making exchanges larger. The example I'd like to use – it's entirely appropriate under the expenditures here – is that the Willingdon exchange, which is relatively small in geographic terms and in terms of the number of subscribers, and the Andrew exchange perhaps could become one telephone exchange. Join the exchanges together, and then we might find that there are extra options that become available in terms of extending flat rate calling to adjacent exchanges. That suggestion has been made to the minister before in terms of grouping together phone exchanges relative to county boundaries; the county of Beaver, for example.

The other reason, Mr. Chairman, that this is relevant to the expenditure of this money is because one of the important components of this expenditure is the purchase of digital switching equipment for the individual exchanges. Prior to enjoying the benefits of individual line service, you have to have a digital switch in place that facilitates the individual line service program. Correct, Mr. Minister? And I submit that when an investment is being made in that equipment, we have to explore the wide range of options that that gives us in terms of providing better telephone service to the people in the province of Alberta. It's my contention or my hope, if you will, that the advent of the digital switching equipment, the installation of the

digital switching equipment purchased with this money, Mr. Chairman, would make it possible for us to broaden the calling options of people who live in rural areas.

When I get calls from people, for example, who live in the Ryley telephone exchange, they don't have extended flat rate calling to Holden; they don't have extended flat rate calling to Vegreville. Some of them are wanting telephone service to Vegreville. They want that extended flat rate calling route. There have been cases where the minister's department has granted switchovers for people. They're allowed to change their telephone from the Ryley exchange to the Vegreville exchange, making it much better for them and their families – in terms of this particular person I'm thinking of – because of where they deal, where they shop, where their other family members are located. But other people are frustrated that some people get it and others don't. It seems to me that it ought to be possible, with the advent of the new digital switching equipment purchased through this program, for us to provide that kind of broadened service to people, where we needn't think so rigidly in terms of telephone boundaries that were established years and years ago. As we move into the 1990s and the next century beyond, I think we really have to do a lot to improve the calling options of Albertans.

I'm not saying anything new to the minister, because I know he thinks a lot about this. They do have some options that they've made available – community calling and, you know, those sorts of options – but they still do not in a practical sense, or in the perception of the people who live in these exchanges, provide the same kinds of benefits that extended flat rate calling does. Can you imagine living in the Andrew exchange a mile away from someone who's in the St. Michael exchange and a mile away from someone who's in the Chipman exchange, both of whom have toll-free calling into Edmonton, into that major metropolitan area? It's frustrating for them. They say that their expenses are much higher than their neighbours', and they'd like to have some of these benefits come their way. So I'm just again imploring the minister to take a look at what kinds of options the digital switching equipment opens up to us, what kind of flexibility we can have in terms of exchange boundaries: perhaps grouping exchanges together and extending some new flat rate calling routes to new exchanges.

I can well remember that one of the suggestions I made to the minister's predecessor in this Assembly was that in the context of this new switching technology available to us, we might offer Albertans a onetime only opportunity – I mean, people who live near the boundaries of telephone exchanges – to switch their telephone from one exchange to the other. The minister was reluctant to do so, but he had to admit that it was a good idea and one that he might look at four or five years hence. Well, it's four or five years hence, and I'm just making that representation to this minister.

I'm wondering if the minister can tell us as well, in terms of the number of people that AGT has had to involve in plowing the lines, doing the technical kinds of splicing that are involved, installing the digital switches, the marketing of the ILS program – in terms of all of those employees that have worked so hard on the program, can the minister tell us what the completion of the program means for them? As well, maybe he can give us an indication of how many contract employees were brought in, how many outside contractors were brought in? I know it was perceived that there was a real shortage of qualified cable splicers in the province, and there were a lot of people who came into Alberta, even from the United States, to work on this

program, Mr. Chairman. I'm interested to know from the minister what his assessment is of the impact of the completion of the program on the people working for AGT, who, I submit, have done a yeoman's service trying to implement this very thoughtful and progressive program on behalf of Albertans and do it in a hurry.

Thank you.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Chairman, just briefly to the hon. Member for Vegreville. He raised the Tofield exchange, and I believe it's due to be converted in early 1991. He pointed out, quite correctly, that this whole business of the conversion programs is dictated to a large extent by technical reasons and doing it in the most cost-effective manner. As a result, there's a certain pattern in which these exchanges have to be undertaken from the standpoint of conversion.

The PLC-1. I can tell him that the government actually provided 14,000 subscribers with the PLC. It was something, obviously, that allowed many of the features of the individual line service, where a person could hear their own ring and had a certain amount of privacy and ability to use the optional telephone equipment. The device was, in fact, provided free of charge to those subscribers. It was developed by a company by the name of Trison Instruments, actually an Alberta-based company. As to the ultimate disposition of those, I believe they will have value. I haven't pursued exactly what the situation is, but I would think they would have value to any telephone company who seeks to enhance the current situation with respect to their telephone service and does not have an individual line service.

He referred to the high cost. Well, some of these lines cost in the neighbourhood of \$4,000, but obviously 75 percent of that cost is absorbed through the moneys that are being voted upon today and 25 percent by the subscriber. I think that's proven to be, from comments we've had back, feedback from individual subscribers, a very acceptable type of arrangement.

He then went off on somewhat of a tangent in talking under these estimates with respect to the extended flat rate calling. But it is an important program. I would refer the hon. member to the AGT news release of April 11 of this year where AGT indicated that further developments are expected regarding enhancements to the extended flat rate calling services. I know AGT is working hard on that, and we would hope we would have something to bring forward for the consideration of a number of subscribers throughout Alberta in order to further improve what is already a pretty good service for the rural people of Alberta.

As to the workers, the hon. member is quite correct. A number of those workers are engaged in individual contracts. I don't have the particular numbers he has requested as to numbers of employees, but I will get that information and get back to the hon. member.

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

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to respond to a couple of things the minister said in his comments about my opening comments. He reiterated – and I'm glad to hear it, although I've got to say I'm not sure I have much faith in it – that Alberta will retain control of AGT and the telephone service in this province. In fact, the speech he made

to the chamber of commerce back on March 28, 1990 – if you read the whole thing, in spite of the fact that on . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, order please. The Chair has admonished you and made a ruling with respect to, going beyond the vote before us. Please stay on the topic, or I will go to the next speaker.

MR. McEACHERN: If the minister replied to my comments, then surely those comments are something I should be able to reply to. I do not understand why these votes seem to be considered different than the votes in the estimates of the general budget. One of the questions I raised was why are we taking this money . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, I'm not debating with you at this point. The Chair has made a ruling. Come to the topic or I go to the next speaker.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, the topic is simply the AGT individual line services and whether or not we should vote the \$67 million to this government to spend on that project.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Agreed.

MR. McEACHERN: There's a lot of consideration for [inaudible] that \$67 million, and one of them is whether or not we will retain control of the line service built by those dollars. There is now \$220 million in this project. More money is going to be spent this year and next year and in 1992. It's of concern to me, if it's not of concern to you, about whether or not the province of Alberta will retain control of those individual lines . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order please. The Chair is not debating with you. The Chair has made a request. If you do not wish to comply with it according to debate, I recognize the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I hate to get the floor at the expense of my friend from Edmonton-Kingsway, but I guess if it's up for grabs . . .

To the minister. I wonder if the minister could commit to answer me. I don't know whether it's an ILS, Mr. Chairman, or a fibre-optic construction problem my constituents have out at Calahoo, where the subcontractors for AGT broke through, the water table and a number of my constituents have been flooded out. I get a continual runaround from the contractor and from AGT. The minister doesn't give me the runaround. He gives me that vacant "How are you doing, Nick?" sort of thing and keeps going by. So would he sit down and answer my letter and look into the ILS or the fibre-optic construction line done by subcontractors in the Calahoo area – Calahoo like in yahoo; C-a-l-a-h-o-o. I am having an awful time trying to chase down the problem.

As a water table engineer and a man that's been around water wells for many, many years, I know it's entirely the problem of you or your contractor. Telling the people they have to sue is very small consolation. So I'd appreciate it – although I know he's a lawyer and he makes his money from suing, now he isn't on that side of the question any more – if he would look into why my constituents can't get a bit of . . . And the same way with the MD's concern too: why the MD and the constituents

can't get some satisfaction out of AGT after they've up and flooded everything.

The second part is . . . Remember that again: C-a-l-a-h-o-o.

MR. FOX: Y-a-h-o-o.

MR. TAYLOR: Double O.

The second part. With ILS in, and the minister quite rightfully says it's going to help farmers and business in the rural areas, is the minister prepared now – and this is something he can answer later also – to tell me what his studies are showing on border-to-border extended flat rate dialing in Alberta. It's something some of the farm organizations talked about. What we have now is an inborn bias against rural telephone business users in that they can call the big city of Edmonton or Calgary or Red Deer or whatever without tolls, yet if they want to talk to each other in the neighbouring town, there is a long-distance toll. Now, I know you'll get this technical business: "Mr. Taylor, the signal goes into Edmonton, then comes out." Well, too damn bad. It could go in halfway and go either way. In other words, that is not an answer, to say how far your signal bounces around. As a matter of fact, some of them go up to a satellite and come back down. They can go all over the place. That's not the way you charge.

The point is that many of our neighbouring rural towns are getting frustrated. ILS doesn't get use made out of it if the only place the farmer can call to is a big town down the line rather than the town that might even be closest to him. Out in my constituency farmers using their ILS line can call Edmonton toll free but cannot call their neighbouring town. Now, I think that's an outright discrimination and a way of frustrating the ILS.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

MR. STEWART: I would like to respond briefly to the hon. member with respect to the construction problem he raised and get back to him on that. The other matter he raised, extended flat rate calling, again is a matter that is currently under review. We hope to have some enhancements with respect to that program that we think will alleviate a number of the problems within Alberta that he has referred to.

What else was I going to say? That's it.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Does the hon. minister want to be reminded?

Having heard the call for the question and seeing no further . . . Oh, sorry. The Member for Clover Bar.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a brief comment that I wanted to make about the individual line service. I wanted to explore maybe some of the opportunity that would exist for us once the individual line service is completed. In Clover Bar I think the majority of the exchanges have been converted, except for a portion of Tofield, and that has been addressed by the Member for Vegreville. But I see an opportunity here. With the completion of the individual line service and the technology that would then be in place with the displays on the individual telephone systems that would have the capability of actually showing which number has called you, it should also be possible, then, to have a central directory system once the individual line service is in place. I'm being a little bit

futuristic here, Mr. Chairman. It should be possible, then, to have a central directory system that could be accessed through your telephone sets. It has a dual benefit, I believe, that should perhaps be considered: One of them would be an economic one; it would perhaps eliminate the white pages. I'm only talking about the white page directory now, not the yellow pages which provide some advertising at the same time. It would eliminate the production and the cost of the multitude of those white pages for all the residents. By providing that access through the actual telephone set to a central indexing system, it would also provide some environmental benefit, because in fact a large number of those directories printed and distributed end up in our landfill.

Those are the only comments I wanted to make. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

Agreed to:

Total Vote 1 – Individual Line Service \$66,725,000

MR. STEWART: Mr. Chairman, I move that the vote be reported.

[Motion carried]

Environment

1 – Irrigation Headworks and Main Irrigation Systems Improvement

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of the Environment.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to briefly outline to the Assembly Alberta Environment activity under the Heritage Savings Trust Fund and our proposed activities for 1990-91.

Mr. Chairman, the Department of the Environment is responsible for two important programs under the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, namely the Irrigation Headworks and Main Irrigation Systems Improvement program, which is vote 1, and the Land Reclamation program, which is vote 2. Vote 1 is for \$40,400,000, and vote 2 is for \$2,500,000.

Mr. Chairman, last year I found it useful to distribute maps, and I'm going to do the same this year. If I could have these maps distributed to members.

MR. TAYLOR: Are they coloured?

MR. KLEIN: Yeah, they're coloured so you can understand them, Nick.

I think these maps will give the members some idea of the significance and the progress of the irrigation system in southern Alberta. Mr. Chairman, the primary objective of this program is to ensure adequately sized, efficient, and reliable water supply delivery systems to all 13 irrigation districts and to the Berry Creek region in the special area. This is, of course, to meet existing and expanded demands for irrigation and other water uses. Major emphasis is placed on modernizing the existing systems to improve their operational capability and delivery efficiency and on controlling seepage from the canals to

minimize damage to adjacent farmland and, of course, to conserve water. This program not only provides for irrigation but also provides for a wide range of multipurpose uses such as a domestic water supply for area residents, municipal and industrial water needs, water-based recreational facilities, and fish and wildlife enhancement.

The program to rehabilitate and upgrade the existing headworks systems was initiated in 1975 and significantly expanded in scope following a government decision in 1980 to proceed with an integrated water management plan for southern Alberta. This 15-year program is scheduled for completion in 1995. Work has been initiated on all the components of the improvement program, and by January 31, 1990, approximately 74 percent of the program was complete. The total expenditures to January 31, 1990, amounted to approximately \$423 million. As I mentioned earlier, our commitment for this year is \$40.4 million.

Mr. Chairman, turning now to the Land Reclamation Program, I'd like to make a few comments regarding . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister, please, if you would like, we have been following the procedure to deal with each vote separately.

MR. KLEIN: Oh, fine, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I believe there was some discussion at the beginning of the debate on these estimates that directed that.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Chairman, I have a problem.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, hon. minister.

MR. KLEIN: I have a problem relating to these two programs. In that I won't be in the House tomorrow or the next day, I would like to introduce these two programs at least so that another member can perhaps carry the questions if we run out of time this evening.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Is the Assembly agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

AN HON. MEMBER: Not agreed.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you.

So, Mr. Chairman . . .

MR. McINNIS: Point of order. Are we on vote 1 or vote 2? What vote are we on here?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, yes. Is there a point of order?

MR. McINNIS: Are we on vote 1 or vote 2?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We are on vote 1, but on the hon. minister's behalf I asked the permission of the Assembly for him to make some additional comments on vote 2. If not, we'll hold to vote 1.

MR. McINNIS: Let's do vote 1, and then we'll do vote 2.

MR. KLEIN: What's the big deal?

MR. TAYLOR: We've established a system of going vote by vote. Now, if we keep jumping around . . . I know the minister might not be around for a couple of days, but that's nothing unusual, and the world doesn't end if he has to come back for vote 2. I don't see how trying to shoehorn in the last few minutes – let's stick to the pattern we follow: vote 1, vote 2, vote 3. Otherwise, I think they all get mixed up; it makes it hard to debate. From the point of view of the opposition, what we then get if we put all the votes together is the minister looking at the clock, running off mumbling a bunch of stuff, and taking off out the door. So I'd rather do it vote by vote and do it properly.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The two members have spoken. Is there any other comment with respect to a point, I guess, of order?

MR. McINNIS: I've not spoken on the point of order, but I will if you're seeking some advice. Why is it all right for him to talk on whatever vote he wants to when he gets up and I get called to order if in the Chair's view I'm not speaking on the precise terms of a particular vote? I mean, why do the rules apply to the rest of us but not to a minister who doesn't like to come here very often?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member and all members, I would just like to remind you of the sequence of events. The Chair did bring the minister to order in terms of the procedure that had been established. The minister made a request for a special consideration. I put the question to the House. It was my judgment that that unanimous consent had been granted.

MR. McEACHERN: It was not unanimous.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I recognize that the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place says that I was in error there. If he is recording his objection to this unanimous consent, then we'll go vote by vote.

Vote 1, Irrigation Headworks and Main Irrigation Systems Improvement. Does the minister have any further remarks on that vote?

MR. KLEIN: No, Mr. Chairman. I'll leave it to the people who can't keep 1 and 2 in order.

MR. McINNIS: Well, it's a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to speak on vote 1, Irrigation Headworks and Main Irrigation Systems Improvement. I'm sorry that these proceedings are inconvenient to the hon. Minister of the Environment, but every now and then he should drop in and answer some questions about the way he spends money. We're talking about \$40.4 million, which is part of a program for which some \$423 million has already been committed. I don't think there's anything wrong with the Assembly wanting to debate that particular matter in the presence of the minister responsible.

I do, as a matter of fact, have a question about this program that I would like to ask the minister. It seems to me that building hydro projects and diversion and storage and control of water resources is still the primary thrust of the Department of the Environment. Last time I checked, there were more Environment department staff working on dam projects,

diversion projects, and irrigation projects than on any other single function within the department. This department is still primarily a department of water resources. It is my understanding that in Alberta the operating philosophy is one of water engineering, where the department sees its role as parceling out the river's water to a bunch of competing users on a basis that they might consider to be equitable and then deciding what amount of pollution and effluent can be dumped into the flow that remains in the river from these water management projects. I believe this philosophy is what drives the department, and I have some concerns about it.

I tend to support the view of people like Andy Russell, who argued in his book *Life of a River* that

...rivers are too valuable, and their cultural and ecological importance too great, to entrust their care primarily to water management engineers.

I think this question of the philosophy that drives the Irrigation Headworks and Main Irrigation Systems Improvement is something we as members of the Assembly should be able to debate.

I do thank the minister for the map he handed out. I have before me the map he handed out last year, and darned if the two maps aren't exactly the same thing. I'm sorry; there is one difference: one of them is dated March 1990 and the other is dated March 1989. And the projects don't change much either.

But does the philosophy? I mean, let's look at the Water Resource Management Principles for Alberta. This is allegedly the policy of the Department of the Environment on water management, published in April of 1988. It states that

...the Alberta government recognizes the importance of water for human consumption, for food production, for industrial use, and for other uses in that order.

In that order, Mr. Chairman. Now, where do we find the environment? We've got human consumption, food production, industrial use, and other uses in that order. Well, are the fish in that "other uses"? Are they in the fourth priority down the list? I mean, a river system in addition to being a water resource is also an ecological system. It does contain fish. It does contain micro-organisms. Some of our rivers even contain oxygen, Mr. Minister, which is a miracle given some of the things we and this department allow to be dumped into them. But where does the environment fit into the policy priority of the Department of the Environment and this minister?

[Mr. Moore in the Chair]

There is a specific matter that I would like to raise with regard to interbasin transfer. Does the Department of the Environment have a long-term plan and process for deciding issues of interbasin transfer? We have only minor amounts of it now in the province, but there are problems with it, as the minister well knows. For example, in the policy statement

...fish resources in Provincial waters are protected as one of the recognized in-stream uses of water.

Well, at least we've got fish recognized as being in-stream uses of water. But in the Highwood River we've had very significant fish kill over the last five years as a result of too much water being taken from the river by somebody, because the flows get down to the point where the temperature rises. The fish are not only dead prey for their predators when they're sort of stuck in shallow pools, but some of the trout in fact cook or asphyxiate. Now, every trout that lives in the Bow River pretty well is spawned and has its life and origin in the Highwood River, so we do have to look on these rivers as being a part of our

ecosystem as well as being a hydrology resource that can be engineered, parceled out, and polluted courtesy of government permits.

So when we're voting on \$40 million for Irrigation Headworks and Main Irrigation Systems Improvement, I think it would be appropriate for the minister to outline his philosophy of how he looks on a river system and whether he has any plans to make changes in this order of priority of users, where human consumption, food production, and industrial use rank there ahead of other users, which presumably include the fish and the birds and all the things that make up natural ecosystems. So I wonder, before the minister rushes off, if he might address that matter.

MR. KLEIN: I'm not about to rush off, Mr. Chairman. As a matter of fact, I'm prepared to stay here until 5:30. I'm prepared to answer all the questions. I simply asked for a courtesy. I can understand the hon. member's desire not to grant a courtesy. It hasn't been his style in the past, so I don't expect it in the future.

Nonetheless, Mr. Chairman, I guess the hon. member, by his remarks, would rather have salination. He would rather have seepage. He would rather have a system in southern Alberta that has no control over a very, very precious resource. He would rather have erosion. Water is the environment. When we talk about the environment, we talk about the protection and enhancement of our land and our air and our water. Particularly in southern Alberta, where water is such a valuable commodity, where there is so little of it, we have to manage it in the best possible manner.

The hon. member alluded to the Highwood-Little Bow diversion, but obviously he doesn't understand the program. He doesn't understand the program at all. He understands only what he wants to pick out from various meetings and what people tell him. He's never been at any of the meetings I've attended. We have two very, very capable Members of the Legislative Assembly working with the department to sort out this situation: the Member for Highwood and the Member for Little Bow. I've met with these people, people on both sides of the issue, on many, many occasions, and what we're trying to do in that particular case, Mr. Chairman, is come to a reasonable position of sustainable development – sustainable development is the phrase the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place likes to use from time to time – and that is to make sure there is an adequate flow in the Highwood River to protect the fish, to protect the micro-organisms, to provide for the ranchers downstream on the Highwood River and at the same time make sure that those farmers on the Little Bow have an adequate amount of water not only to feed their livestock and water their crops but to make sure that they as human beings have a supply of water as well. That's what it's all about. But the hon. member would deny those people in the Little Bow that.

So what we're trying to do in the case of the Little Bow is to examine a process whereby the diversion can be widened to capture the flush of water and divert it to the storage reservoir on the Little Bow rather than having a constant draw of water from the Highwood into the Little Bow. It's something that will be assessed very, very thoroughly, Mr. Chairman. First of all, there's a citizens' group involved right now in determining inflow requirements. Following that there will be environmental impact assessment documents prepared. Those documents will be taken out for public consultation. And yes, that process will be taken to the new natural resources conservation board for adjudication.

So, Mr. Chairman, I think we're being very responsible relative to the management of water as it relates to the environment in southern Alberta.

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

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A point to the hon. minister, too, the one that's in a hurry. I would like to deflect some of his venom against the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, because I was the one that yelled "No," and it didn't help. Hon. minister, it's just that you are so fast on your skates, a veritable Messier, when you move across the House that I wanted to try to keep you at one end of the rink at the time.

First of all, I have a very general term. I don't see, Mr. Minister, with the growing importance of your department and the way things are unfolding in society today, why you are a builder or why your department's a builder. I think of your department as a policeman and being much more effective. I think the building of these headworks and this budget should actually have been presented by public works or Agriculture. I found, going to a hearing the other day – and I'm not going to give you hell because you weren't there, because I don't expect you to go to every meeting I go to and me to every one you have – there were some clean air people, which digresses from your department, and they had not bought the concept yet that they could be policemen. They actually thought that whatever the Minister of Energy or the Minister of Agriculture said went, and all their job was to go out and convince everybody that a little bit of sour air wouldn't kill everyone. The point I'm getting at is that the Minister of the Environment should be policing water and shouldn't be constructing these projects.

But now, after I've gone on with the philosophical point and the fact that you do have \$40.4 million that you want to spend here, I have a number of questions. One is, first of all, what is the definition of southern Alberta? It says for "other multi-purpose uses in southern Alberta." Would Edmonton qualify for that? Better still, would my own constituency, up as far as Westlock? Now, I know geographically and geologically we're in southern Alberta, but we may not be in the minister's estimation of what southern Alberta is, so I would appreciate that definition. It may well be just this map, too, in which case it stops at Drumheller. But what is southern Alberta? It makes it easier to ask questions.

Also I'd like to ask the minister: does he have or is the minister working on a long-term plan for water pipelines? Now, you divert water for irrigation, but you also use weirs and divert water – as you know, many of our towns are going onto our water system. Do we have a long-term plan as to what towns will be tied up to our water system? That leads to a second thought. Is there any plan or any use in this particular budget – and I know it says irrigation main canals, water storage facilities, and new water delivery systems. Would that by any chance encompass waters from aquifers? As you know, there are waters now transported by oil companies for their purposes from wells through pipelines to other wells where they need the water. Does your department contemplate in any of this budget tapping into any of the famous aquifers of southern Alberta?

Next specific question. You have grants of \$21.3 million. I'd be interested in knowing – and I know the minister wouldn't have it at his fingertips, but he could send it to me – the split between private and municipal. How many municipal governments get the grants here and how many private? Then I

suppose the others would be irrigation systems and so on, but do the municipal governments and private organizations tap into those grants?

I'd like to also touch on interbasin transfers, touching on it a bit with Sheep Creek versus the Little Bow. In Ontario, as you know – and I presented a Bill here modeled on the Ontario Art, where interbasin transfers outside Canada are absolutely verboten but within Canada cannot take place until there have been public hearings. So does the minister intend to make it a practice that there will be public hearings before any interbasin transfers take place? I don't know what you've done on the Little Bow; I can't remember. That's been around for so long. I guess there have been public hearings. But if there are any other transfers in the future, would you have public hearings?

Lastly, something very specific, I have a problem in my constituency in Westlock, which I hope may be defined as southern Alberta for the purpose of accessing your grant. The town is a fairly substantial size and the Minister of the Environment allows it to dump its effluent from sewage settling ponds a couple of times a year. It goes into a little creek called Wabash Creek, that cattle are watered out of and is used by the farmers, and in effect ruins the creek. They did decide a year or so ago to pipeline it over to the Pembina River, which is out of my constituency, and into the hon. Member for Barrhead's constituency, which pleased me no end to be able to dump the sewage over in his river. But then the council ran out of money the other day and voted and decided that no, they wouldn't build a pipeline to the hon. Member for Barrhead's constituency to get rid of sewage. They would go back to putting it into Wabash Creek.

Now, I think money such as this which is devoted, as you've mentioned, to keeping our streams and water supplies clear may be accessed by some of these towns – in other words, the Department of the Environment is licensing some of these towns to pollute the very creeks that you claim you want \$44 million here to keep the water flow pristine and clear so that the fish will eat and everyone will be happy. In other words, your left hand does not know what your right hand is doing or – let's put it the other way – your right hand is ignoring the left hand and dumping sewage into some of these drainages when you supposedly are getting money to try to keep the water flow going through them at a good clip and clean. So is there co-ordination going on in your department that should be going on to make sure that these rivers are not being used as sewers rather than places to improve our ecology and our environment?

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

MR. KLEIN: If I may, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to respond to some of the questions raised by the hon. member. First of all, I think there needs to be some clarification relative to this suspicion that there is some insidious scheme in the works to put in place in this province a huge program of interbasin transfers. There is no such scheme. There is no such scheme at this particular time. With respect to the Highwood-Little Bow diversion, that's a diversion that has been in place, as I understand it, since 1913. It's a situation where the people on the Little Bow expect the water that has been provided to them since 1913. What we're trying to do in that case is to provide that water and at the same time provide protection for the Highwood River. That's what we're trying to come to grips with in the real spirit of sustainable development.

To the hon. member. He raised the question of what is southern Alberta. I think that for the purposes of this debate and in that we're talking about the upgrading of main canals and irrigation headworks, the definition of southern Alberta relates to this particular map. Now, I know that doesn't answer his question relative to the sewage treatment problem in, I believe it was, Westlock. Is that correct?

MR. TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. KLEIN: That's something we can look into, because there are programs under Transportation and Utilities and Environment to address sewage treatment problems. I only wish we could use that program to address the sewage treatment problem that exists in Edmonton, hon. member, because if you think you have a problem in Westlock, I would suggest that because of the negligence and the unthoughtful engineering that took place back in this particular city, whereby storm sewage and sanitary sewage are allowed to combine in the same pipes, we have a much more serious situation in the city of Edmonton that could perhaps cost billions of dollars to restore, and we're going to have to come to grips with that problem very soon. But we will have someone look at the problem in Westlock if you would care to write me a note.

Pipelines. Certainly that's a form of diversion, and there is nothing to say that pipelines can't be used. A good example again would be the Highwood-Little Bow system, where in fact the department, instead of diverting from the Highwood to the Little Bow, is now looking at the request of the lower Highwood water users, at a pipeline from Travers dam to the Little Bow reservoir, which might make some sense. We'll do that examination and see if that in fact is workable and what the cost benefit is going to be.

The hon. member mentioned aquifers and if indeed aquifers can be used for irrigation. There is nothing stopping a farmer from tapping into an aquifer to irrigate, but I'm advised that the groundwater is in very short supply in southern Alberta and this is very seldom done. It's simply not feasible in that particular area, and I'm talking about the irrigation areas.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of very brief comments that I would put to the minister specifically with respect to . . . The minister made some very appropriate comments with respect that water is really a major part of the environment and is important in a variety of ways other than the obvious ones we've talked about before.

I want to talk a little bit about the promotion of tourism through these. I'm looking specifically, Mr. Minister, at the Forty Mile Coulee reservoir project. The Forty Mile Coulee reservoir project has fairly recently been completed, and I think the potential for tourism development in that area is really quite remarkable now. I don't know if you've traveled through that area, but it's very, very dry, and I'm sure the residents of that area are going to be very pleased with that. When you look at this map, Forty Mile Coulee is almost equidistant between the town of Bow Island and the town of Foremost. I want to put forth a proposal or a question here. I'm not sure if the minister is as avid a golfer as his leader is, but Bow Island sports a very fine golf course. The town of Foremost needs work with respect to their golf course. One of the questions I heard raised by the

town council from the town of Foremost is that one of the problems they have: the golf course there – they would like to have grass greens – currently only has sand greens. The problem they have, aside from the obvious problem of money, of course, is a lack of available water to keep it growing. So I'm wondering if the minister is going to have any suggestions to pipe some of the extra water down to the town of Foremost, because if you can develop a good, solid tourism base therewith a golf course to the north, a golf course to the south, it might be a very fine potential development.

My final question with respect to the minister regarding this very colourful and very glossy map that we have is simply this: is this printed on recycled paper?

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple more points and then perhaps the minister can give the second speech that he wants to give. The only point I want to make in relation to that is that when I get called to order trying to ask questions of public works about his handling of the Oldman dam in estimates, I think other people should follow the rules too.

A couple more questions, but I think we first have to deal with this Highwood situation. This is a two-story minister. You know, he's got one story for the media and he's got one story for people in the local area. They told media in Calgary that the minimum flow condition this year would be 140 cubic feet per second. Then meetings were held down in the constituency of Highwood, and there was a document handed out that said that when you get below 140 cubic feet per second, the minimum guarantee is only 70.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

When I asked the question in the Assembly on May 11, last Friday, the minister hummed and hawed a little, but he came back to saying, "We said that we would use the 1989 guidelines . . ." Well, the 1989 guidelines are what was in place last year, and they were 70 cubic feet per second. Under those guidelines, which were really the 1984 guidelines, we've had fish killed in virtually every year since 1984. That's when the problem seemed to have arisen. So you know, I think we're having a little bit of difficulty, perhaps, focusing in on the point. The point is: how are you going to administer that river this year?

Now, not to stray too far from the irrigation headworks program, but I think a couple of questions need to be followed up. One is the whole question of water quality standards in the province of Alberta. As I understand it, we have water quality objectives for certain things, but not standards. We don't necessarily have the baseline research work done on each and every one of our river systems to determine the existing water conditions but, more importantly, to try to set provincial standards for each river system on how clean that water is going to be, how much oxygen has to be in it.

I mean, it's one thing for the minister to stand up day after day, as he likes to do, and take shots at the former mayor of Edmonton over the conditions of the sewers in the city of Edmonton. I think he has a valid concern about that, but somehow this has to progress beyond two former political colleagues who are now having a lovers' quarrel where they try to complain about each other's past behaviour and present

behaviour. We have to get to the point of how do we improve the situation? How clean do we want these rivers to be? I think it's the provincial government that has to take the leadership to do that, to do the baseline work, and to set not objectives – an objective to me is something you can strive towards and fail to achieve – but standards, something that's going to have some force and effect in terms of cleaning up the rivers. That's what people want, not just in the North Saskatchewan but in the South Saskatchewan system and all the areas where these irrigation projects are taking place at the present time.

So what about completing that baseline work? What about having provincial standards? What about an action plan to achieve those water quality standards, the standard of the quality of water and the quantity of water which is available to support life within these river systems? They're simply not water resources.

The second question I'd like to ask, which I think is related here, is: why does Alberta refuse to participate in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System? That's a program that seeks to preserve and protect wild rivers, and Alberta is one of two Canadian provinces that refuse to take part in that. I would like to know, under the irrigation headworks program, why Alberta does not take part in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System.

MR. KLEIN: Just to reply briefly. It only goes to show, Mr. Chairman, how little this member knows or how little he is actually willing to pass on. He has this remarkable ability of picking out little bits and pieces of information that he wants to pass on, but it's always not complete and certainly is always not accurate.

Mr. Chairman, as a matter of fact, there is a Bow River quality task force now set up to do precisely what the hon. member has suggested. There is a similar task force of stakeholders along the North Saskatchewan River to do a water quality study. There is a similar kind of program going on on the Athabasca and the Peace rivers, which has recently been enhanced through the recommendations of the Alberta-Pacific task force. But he fails to mention this. It's perhaps because he doesn't know. If he doesn't know, then I'll excuse him for his ignorance. But if he does know and doesn't pass this on, then I think he is trying to mislead this House.

Mr. Chairman, to answer the question from the hon. Member for Calgary-North West, I believe, I am given to understand that indeed there was a pipeline constructed from Forty Mile Coulee to a dam to provide water for recreational use. I hope that provides you with the answer. And no, I'm not a golfer.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

Agreed to:

1.1 – Program Support	\$1,281,000
1.2 – Irrigation Headworks Rehabilitation	\$15,218,000
1.3 – Water Management Planning	–
1.4 – Water Resource Development	
Projects	\$22,501,000
1.5 – Improved Operational Capabilities	\$1,400,000
Total Vote 1 – Irrigation Headworks and Main Irrigation Systems Improvement	\$40,400,000

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Would you move that the vote be reported, please?

MR. KLEIN: I move that the vote be reported.

[Motion carried]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Vote 2. Hon. minister.

2 – Land Reclamation

MR. KLEIN: Thank you. Vote 2, Mr. Chairman, involves a very, very popular program, and that is the land reclamation program. The Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund land reclamation program has been in existence since 1976. The current program has been extended to March 31, 1994, at almost \$2.5 million per year. As members might know, the objectives of the program are basically to return lands as closely as possible to their original capability, to carry out reclamation research on industrial disturbances of land, to determine methods of minimizing such disturbances, to provide for early certification of reclaimed lands, and to some extent to create local employment for many Albertans.

Mr. Chairman, within the past few years the most common projects are municipally directed and consist of abandoned landfill sites, sewage lagoons, water reservoirs, sand and gravel pits, and so on. To date we have completely reclaimed over 1,200 individual projects. They are mainly small projects that previously scarred our landscape. There are about 750, give or take, projects to do, and more than half of these are garbage dumps. This is a very positive program throughout Alberta and particularly with municipalities. It's expected that the \$2.5 million for this year will complete an additional 70 projects.

Mr. Chairman, with that I would be pleased to listen to comments and to entertain questions. Thank you.

MR. McINNIS: This is a very important area, and I do appreciate the comments of the minister in beginning the debate on it. There are all kinds of sites in the province of Alberta and I daresay elsewhere which have been contaminated by industrial pollution and which have achieved a rather poor state because of neglect or because of mistreatment over the years. I can readily see where \$35 million could be spent quite easily on that, and the \$2.5 million that's forecast for this year will undoubtedly be used up as well.

I wonder if the minister, if there's time, could indicate where the department is heading in relation to the problem of contamination of private land primarily, because it's a complex area of law. You have, obviously, that people who create a mess are in some sense responsible to clean it up. But what of a property owner whose property is contaminated by somebody else's mess? Let's say underground storage tanks would be a case in point. I know the department has an inventory of contaminated sites. I don't believe it's been made public at this point in time; at least I haven't seen whether the inventory of chemically contaminated sites is a public document. If not, I don't see any reason why it shouldn't be.

But then we have also the underground storage situation. I think there was a program from the government to identify those as well. But what of a property owner whose property is contaminated by somebody else's underground storage tank?

Let's say a service station leaks diesel over a fairly large area. The diesel fuel is not necessarily going to respect the property line. It's not going to sort of stop at the end of the polluter's property. It's going to go elsewhere. What recourse does an individual have in that case? I suppose there's the possibility of civil action, but what if the property in question has changed hands several times? Who is responsible, and how do you pin that? I think that's an area of law that is probably within the Minister of the Environment's mandate, and it certainly relates to the question of land reclamation and who's responsible and who finances it.

As I understand this program, it primarily operates on public land. It's not intended to rehabilitate privately owned land, although we did learn last year in committee that a certain amount of money had been spent from this fund to prepare a site for Peter Pocklington at the time that he was promising to build a meat processing facility in the town of Picture Butte, one of several announced, promised, and expected economic development benefits from the \$65 million financial package that was put in place by the Provincial Treasurer and the minister of economic development. Well, we know the bottom line to that story: the plant in Picture Butte was never built. But the government did pay to have that site rehabilitated under Heritage Savings Trust Fund dollars.

I wonder if the minister hasn't attempted to recover some of those funds, if he would identify what the amount involved was in the Pocklington site at Picture Butte, and whether he's attempting to recover some of those costs from the Pocklington organization, because it was an expense incurred under the Heritage Savings Trust Fund expenditure, funds voted by this Assembly so that a meat processing facility might be built with taxpayers' dollars in Picture Butte, and that never happened. I just wonder: was it a couple of hundred thousand dollars? Whatever it was, what steps are being taken to recover that?

So the questions really are the inventory of contaminated sites, underground tanks, policy in respect of who's responsible for damages, and the fate of the funds in the Peter Pocklington project.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister . . .

MR. KLEIN: Go ahead. [interjections]

MR. TAYLOR: He's got a couple of seconds here.

First of all, I wanted to know how much money is set aside for reclaiming soils that have been salinized. Second, in Reclamation Research, of half a million dollars are any funds going into looking at restoring land that's lost a great deal of its productivity, particularly around our cities and particularly around Edmonton, where we have so much 1 and 2 land that may have lost a great deal of productivity to the fallout of sulphur, trace elements, nitrogen, and other types. So what research is going on on soils that have been not ruined but cut back because of air pollution fallout, and how much are we doing in reclaiming land with irrigating salinization?

MR. KLEIN: If you like, I can get back to you on those very specific questions, and I will. I have a detailed breakdown of the answers here, and I'll be glad to provide that breakdown to you. It provides very specifically the answers to your questions.

With respect to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, I believe that the Picture Butte situation was a legitimate municipal land reclamation program, notwithstanding the hon. member's opinion on this particular matter. But he's as entitled

to his opinion as those who have some knowledge about the situation.

With respect to the two other programs, I think the hon. member has a very good point. These are situations that are now being looked at through the program called HELP, Help End Landfill Pollution, and the management of underground storage tanks. I'll be very happy to get back to him on it.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Vote 2, Land Reclamation . . .

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Chairman, the minister has not addressed the question of how much money was spent under the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, vote 2, on the Peter Pocklington site at Picture Butte, and I did direct that to him personally.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Chairman, I don't have that figure at my fingertips. Perhaps if you could put it in the form of a question, or I will undertake to get you that answer.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Chairman, in light of the hour, I move adjournment of this debate.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Having heard the motion to adjourn debate, are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed? It's carried.
Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. STEWART: I move that the committee now rise, report progress, and request leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions and reports as follows.

Resolved that sums from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1991, for the purpose of making investments in the following projects to be administered by:

Technology, Research and Telecommunications: \$66,725,000 for Individual Line Service.

Environment: \$40,400,000, Irrigation Headworks and Main Irrigation Systems Improvement.

The Committee of Supply has under consideration certain resolutions of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund capital projects division for the Department of the Environment, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the report by the Member for Lacombe, are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

[At 5:31 p.m. the House adjourned to Thursday at 2:30 p.m.]

