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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Alberta | 18e  | 1re  | Remarques préliminaires à l'étude des crédits | 6 juin 1975 | M. Gordon T. Miniely | Ministre des Hôpitaux et de l'Assurance maladie | PC |

**Mr. Miniely:** During the course of the presentation of the bill creating the ministry of Hospitals and Medical Care, I outlined to the hon. members just a few of the major questions and challenges I felt we would have to be looking at, and making some decisions on, over the next three and a half to four years.

I also indicated at that time, Mr. Chairman, that I was in danger of going from a position of being the watchdog of the public purse to the biggest spender in government. I note to hon. members that on page 3 my suspicion at that time is confirmed. Not only is the hospitals and medical care field the largest area of public expenditure, $474,373,000, but other than Social Services and Community Health, it is also the most rapidly rising. Mr. Chairman, I think this indicates that it represent a major challenge to all of us, in terms of trying to come up with more cost effectiveness in the system yet still maintaining the quality of our hospital, auxiliary hospital, and nursing home care delivery system. It will be a challenge to look at the different organizational aspects of this and, certainly, to attempt to de-escalate, if you like, the rate of escalation in this particularly large area of expenditure.

Mr. Chairman, I’d just like to review briefly for the hon. members the major budgetary increases in the current Estimates so they are aware of them. Of the total increase in the hospitals, auxiliary hospitals, and nursing home budget, $73,961,000 or 39.8 per cent increase over last year is in the area of salaries for hospital workers, the various categories of workers in the hospital system; 19.5 per cent, a total of $15,100,000 in real increase terms, is in the area of replacement of equipment and supplies within the hospital system; and an increase of $628,000 is in debt charges, which is the liquidation and actual debt interest charges on the construction of hospitals, additions, and these types of things.

Mr. Chairman, within the budget, only $4,899,300 is for new programming within hospitals. I would like to outline to members the major new programs we are funding in the hospital system. I can’t outline all of them, but they might be interested in the major ones that are being funded.

At the University of Alberta Hospital we are spending $1,107,000 in the cardiovascular surgery area, which will enable the hospital to perform 9 to 10 open heart operations per week. They are presently at a level of 5 to 6 open heart surgery operations at the University Hospital. This will include diagnostic equipment and renovation of operating rooms, and will provide for additional manpower to handle this very, very highly specialized service, Mr. Chairman.

In the area of cancer, at the Dr. W.W. Cross Cancer Institute we are improving and expanding three programs at a total of $247,700 to try to improve our cancer diagnostic services as well as treatment services.

At Holy Cross Hospital in Calgary we are funding $666,500 for a cardiac radiological room, which will tie in with the cardiovascular surgery they now perform, and upgrade the diagnostic radiology equipment to the support level of the amount of work they’re presently doing. At the Holy Cross they are performing 3 to 4 open heart operations per week.

To all southern members, I’m sure you’ll be pleased that in the new program area we have an amount of $2 million to provide for the upgrading and air-conditioning – air-conditioning in particular – in southern Alberta hospitals. I’m sure all southern members will be pleased we have that amount in the current budget.

Mr. Chairman, I’ve outlined the major reasons for the increase in the budget. I’ve indicated that certainly it results in a dramatic rise in what is already a very heavy expenditure, and that we will all be challenged to try to maintain our quality of care and to de-escalate the very rapid rise in expenditures in this area. I’ve outlined the major new programs we are funding. The total new programming in hospitals, as I indicated, is only $4 million.

I’d like to give the hon. members one last bit of information in the area of staff in the hospital system. In 1974 the total staff in the hospital system, general and auxiliary hospitals, was 23,320. The estimated staff required as a result of the new programs and the expansion of existing programs in the general hospital and auxiliary area will total 410, which is a 1.8 per cent increase in actual staff. That will mean we estimate the total staff in the general and auxiliary hospital system in 1975 will be 23,730.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, all hon. members can see that the current budget has been a budget of tremendous adjustment in the salary levels of our hospital workers, with a minimum amount of new programming.