

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Friday, May 15, 1992**

10:00 a.m.

Date: 92/05/15

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: Prayers

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

O Lord, grant us a daily awareness of the precious gift of life which You have given us.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly we dedicate our lives anew to the service of our province and our country.

Amen.

head: Introduction of Special Guests

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure, sir, to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly two groups. Let me begin with the group from the Strathcona Christian Academy. We have some 55 visitors. They're joined by Mr. D. Zook, Miss D. Eisner, and Mrs. J. Adam, along with the bus driver, T. McFarlane. I believe that they are in the public gallery, and I would ask that they rise so they could receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly. I guess they're not here.

Mr. Speaker, we also have another group from the Father Kenneth Kearns school in Sherwood Park, some 46 visitors. They are joined by Mrs. Melody Kostiuik and Mr. Bruce Plante. They also have with them Mrs. Vaughn Gramatovich, Mr. and Mrs. Kuchmak, Mrs. Yvette Bortnick, and Mrs. Leona Kletzel. I believe that they are in the members' gallery, and I would ask if they would rise and receive a warm welcome. I gather they're not there either, sir.

MR. EWASIUK: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me this morning to introduce a group who are visiting the Legislature today from the Horse Hill school in the rural portion of my constituency. I welcome you to the Legislature. There are 19 students here. They're accompanied by their teacher Miss Ruth Sherwin. I'd ask them to rise and receive the welcome of the Legislature.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and the members of the Assembly this morning a dynamic group of young students from Ellerslie elementary/junior high school in the constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods. They're in the public gallery accompanied by their teacher Mrs. Phyllis Olson and bus driver Mrs. Melrose Cockburn. I'd ask them to rise now and receive our very warm welcome.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to introduce to you today a group from St. Pat school in Red Deer, approximately 55 students accompanied by teachers Mr. Gerald Doré and Mr. Leo Chauvet and parents Mr. Dave Fercho and Mr. Don Strangward. As they stand to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly, you'll see half of Red Deer's sentiments being represented by an Edmonton Oilers shirt up there.

head: Oral Question Period

George Spady Centre

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, in the core of the inner city of Edmonton the George Spady Centre operates a detox program and

an overnight shelter primarily for inner city but also for all Edmonton residents who care to use the facility. They're looking now at closing their detox program for two months this summer because they're out of money. I'd like to tell you that last year the Spady Centre had over 39,000 admissions. The shelter is already running at 98 percent occupancy, and I should tell you also that while they're only funded for 50 beds, they actually operate 65 with only three staff. My question is to the chairman of AADAC, and that is this: considering the emergency that the Spady Centre is now facing, is he prepared to channel more money from AADAC into the Spady Centre so that it doesn't have to close its operation for two months of the summer.

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Spady facility, which is basically a detox centre in Edmonton, takes care of about 4,000 people a year; I think it was 4,300 last year.* They have 70 spaces that they use within the facility, and the facility itself, due to some funding activities there, has determined that they will close for two months this summer, July and August. It was deemed that they would close at that time because of the weather situation, rather than at the end of the year, in the wintertime, keeping people off the street. It should also be recognized that for any person that wishes to go to the centre in the evening, which most people do, it will remain open for those two months for detoxification, but it will not be opened during the day period. So to suggest that the facility will completely close is erroneous; it will remain open.

I should also add, Mr. Speaker, that all the funded agencies that AADAC participates with received an increase of funding this year. I feel that with the other activities that the centre and all of these funded agencies pursue in raising their own moneys, AADAC in general terms has funded them quite adequately.

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Speaker, I challenge that. If they're only being given funding for 50 beds and they're operating 65 at full capacity, obviously there's something the matter with this picture.

The member's response was basically: it's summertime; they can sleep in the streets. That's no way to treat inner-city residents. It's a despicable response from a government that doesn't care about inner-city residents. Is the member not prepared to find additional funding so that they can keep their detox program and their emergency shelter program going?

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the member not try to put words into my mouth. There's no suggestion whatsoever that we're going to have people sleeping on streets. I did indicate that the facility will remain open in the evening for people to be detoxed and to go into that facility overnight. Now, if that's putting people on the street, I'm sorry, but that is not correct.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I did indicate that the facility has been given an increase in funding for this fiscal year. There has been some carryover of a deficit, and the board of directors at the facility have made a decision on how to deal with their deficit. I cannot at this point in time offer any additional funding through AADAC to fund that program.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, last year the Premier created this thing – what's it called? – the Family Life and Substance Abuse Foundation. It's getting \$5 million for the purposes of research. Research is very important, no doubt about that. On the other hand, if people are going to be turned away from a detox program

*see page 945, right col., para. 5, line 5

that they really need, that's frontline help. Will the chairman of AADAC now plead with the Premier to have funding diverted from the Family Life and Substance Abuse Foundation to AADAC for the purpose of keeping the Spady Centre detox program open this summer?

MR. NELSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, the foundation doesn't come under the perusal of AADAC of course. The makeup of that foundation was done in such a manner that it would not duplicate the services of AADAC. Certainly the minister responsible for the foundation would be better able to address that, and I would refer it to him on his return.

10:10

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Second main question.

MS BARRETT: I designate the second question to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, please.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Sexual Assault Prosecutions

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the hon. Attorney General. The recent trial in the case of the sexual assault of a 13-year-old girl highlights the lack of understanding, sensitivity, and proper procedures that characterize all too many sexual assault cases, such as a failure to access the child witness preparation program to prepare the juvenile complainant before the trial and the failure to call several key witnesses. To the Attorney General: given that the mother, Dawn Pearson, who is present in the galleries this morning, has brought her concerns to the attention of the Attorney General, is the Attorney General satisfied with the manner in which this prosecution was conducted? [interjection]

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, that's fine. We'll take it in the character that it was offered.

I have received correspondence from Mrs. Pearson. I have asked my officials to investigate the allegation that the prosecution did not, in fact, conduct the case properly. I have not had the response at this time. I do have, frankly, very great esteem for how our Crown prosecutors conduct a case, but we will look at this one and find out.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As far as I'm concerned, the failure – and this is beyond controversy – to utilize the child witness court preparation program is the most disturbing aspect of the case. Given that that program sets forth clear guidelines for the briefing of witnesses and that it is general procedure to have prosecutors conduct at least one pretrial meeting in sexual assault cases where there is a witness, will the Attorney General explain what purpose the program serves if the procedures and guidelines are not followed?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I'm amazed that the hon. member, being a member of the Law Society who is not involved in this case at all other than a representation by one of the parents in this, can come up and make that type of allegation. I think it detracts from his professionalism as a lawyer and also as a member of this Assembly. The first answer I gave said that we are looking into this and into the allegations that have been made, and it will be reported once that's complete.

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Speaker, the situation in other jurisdictions is that they utilize a procedure where there is a specific assignment of female prosecutors to handle cases such as this. I'm wondering if the Attorney General will set up a system similar to the model in other jurisdictions so that victims of sexual assault are assured of a sensitive and sensible approach to the prosecution of such matters.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I'm again amazed that the hon. member would imply that only females are parents. There are males that are parents; there are males that are as sensitive to anything that goes on in this society. I disregard that representation.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-McKnight, on behalf of the Liberal Party.

Constitutional Reform

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the government of Alberta released its own version of the Allaire report at the Western Premiers' Conference entitled Rebalancing Federal-Provincial Spending Responsibilities. The report promotes a wholesale transfer of tax and spending powers to the provinces at the expense of the federal government. I remind members that during hearings of the select committee, 60 percent of Albertans told us that they like the current division of powers. My question to the Deputy Premier is this: would the Deputy Premier explain why his government supports or proposes a radically decentralized federal state? This is clearly opposite to what Albertans told us.

MR. HORSMAN: I don't know what report the hon. member has been reading. The fact of the matter is that what the report asks for is that the current responsibilities provided for in the Constitution of Canada that the provinces are asked to carry out be given proper funding and that the provinces be given the room that is necessary in the taxation field to carry out the current set of responsibilities. The report does not ask for the transfer of additional responsibilities from the federal government, just the opportunity now for us as a government, given the current set of responsibilities, to carry out those responsibilities. It's a strange reaction on the part of the Member for Calgary-McKnight.

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Speaker, my caucus believes that this disentanglement or realignment of taxing powers will in fact change the jurisdictional and shared jurisdiction which we now have in favour of stronger, exclusive provincial jurisdiction. I'd like to ask the Deputy Premier: how does this differ from Quebec's position?

MR. HORSMAN: The Member for Calgary-McKnight and her caucus are confused on the issue. What the Allaire report asked for was a transfer entirely to the province from the federal government of the responsibilities it has in the Constitution. That's quite different. If the hon. member can point to one example in the document that was tabled yesterday that recommends the transfer of one responsibility from the list of those now dealt with by the federal government, I'd like to hear it.

The fact of the matter is, however, that the federal government has, through its taxing and spending powers, intruded itself into areas of provincial responsibility, many times to the detriment of the ability of the provinces to carry out that responsibility, by having made funding available and then having withdrawn it. As the report points out, in the case of Alberta almost a billion dollars less in this current fiscal year has been paid by the federal

government than they had originally committed to doing. That's the concern that we have, and it's that type of off-loading or withdrawing of its financial support having entered into areas of provincial responsibility that's creating the fiscal problem that our government is facing today.

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Speaker, we believe that the federal government needs the power to establish national standards. That is the very fabric of this country; it is what Albertans support. So I would ask the Deputy Premier: can the minister indicate whether this disentanglement report represents a component of the negotiations of Alberta's agenda at the discussions and is a means to gain Quebec's support for a triple E Senate?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, I know what the Liberal Party's position has always been. They supported the national energy program because they believed that the federal government had to have all the power, the power to strip from this province billions of dollars of our natural resource revenues. We know what the Liberal Party of Alberta's position has been relative to the subject of transferring to the federal government the responsibilities that this government is entitled to carry out. We've heard about that from them for a long time. Albertans should be reminded of it, and I'm delighted that the hon. Member for Calgary-McKnight has expressed that again in this Assembly today.

The question which she has posed relative to the issue of a trade-off with respect to the triple E Senate is absolute nonsense. The fact of the matter is that the triple E Senate is proposed by Alberta as an instrument to promote national unity, to make the federal Parliament function properly in the federal state, and we will stick to that responsibility.

MR. SPEAKER: Cypress-Redcliff, followed by Edmonton-Avonmore.

Drought

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question this morning is to the Minister of the Environment. For the first time in quite a number of years we have farmers in my constituency irrigating already, probably two weeks to a month earlier than normal. We have river flows, from some information I've read, at 50, 60 percent less than normal. The wind is blowing; it's not raining. My question is to . . . [interjections] It may not be important to the Liberals that there's drought in southern Alberta, but it's damn important to my constituents. My question to the minister is: I wonder if he can inform this Assembly of the average snowpack that exists in the mountains and how long that snowpack is projected to last this year.

10:20

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I concur with the hon. member's statement that it might not be important to the Liberals. I recall the environmental critic, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, being down in the constituencies of Little Bow and Highwood telling the people in Highwood one story and telling the people in Little Bow exactly the opposite.

With respect to the snowpack, we have 50 to 70 percent of average snowpack in the Waterton/St. Mary headwaters. Upstream of the Oldman dam is 50 to 60 percent of an average snowpack. The water supply for the summer for the St. Mary River is 75 percent of average; the Belly, 70 percent; the Waterton River, 65 percent; the Oldman dam inflow, 45 percent of average. Because

of the Oldman River dam the river at Lethbridge will be at about 60 percent of average, which would be far better than normal.

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

MR. SPEAKER: I know the Member for Cypress-Redcliff in his first line of questions was very concerned about the issue in southern Alberta. I know he really meant to refer to dams that hold water but will still be happy enough to withdraw the use of the phrase "damn."

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, I would withdraw that comment.

Drought (continued)

MR. HYLAND: I would say, Mr. Speaker, that I know members of this Assembly on all sides have relations in southern Alberta, and I'm surprised that it isn't important to them as well.

Mr. Speaker, the supplementary question is related to a letter and comments that the mayor of Medicine Hat has forwarded to the minister with the concerns of that city and those receiving water. Because of the use of electrical power generation and water in that city, can the minister assure this Assembly that that prosperous and progressive city in southern Alberta will receive enough water so that their system of generation can carry on and their water system can carry on?

MR. KLEIN: Well, as you know, the Oldman River and the Bow River feed into the South Saskatchewan, which is of major concern to the mayor of Medicine Hat. Basically, the irrigating districts off both the Oldman and the Bow drew off earlier than usual, which decreased the flows in those rivers. Their reservoirs are now full. There's now a return to those rivers, so the problem shouldn't be as serious as the mayor originally thought it was going to be. I think that the situation will further improve when the Oldman dam reservoir is full and we can release even more water, which should strengthen the position of the South Saskatchewan River basin.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Avonmore.

Family Violence

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Solicitor General. Without conviction and jail time wife batterers often do not develop the will to end their abusive behaviour. Without treatment they often lack the attitudes and skills necessary to end abusive behaviour. In light of the tough sentencing guidelines announced yesterday by the Alberta Court of Appeal for men who assault their wives, will the Solicitor General give specific information as to how he will ensure that treatment resources are available to men who have been found guilty of battering their wives?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, we were encouraged by those guidelines that were brought out yesterday, and I will stand before this Assembly and assure you that we will be bringing forth programs in the Solicitor General's department as well as in other departments such as social services and the Department of Health that will address this. In corrections we will be looking at programs that look at the rehabilitation of the batterers and, of course, upgrading our correctional staff and officers and counsellors in working with them while they're within our facilities.

MS M. LAING: Well, Mr. Speaker, I had hoped for some very specific answers, because we have had generalities for a number of months, including in the Budget Address. In the meantime, treatment programs such as Changing Ways face closure due to the lack of funding. Once again, will the minister outline what specific programs will be receiving funding so that agencies and batterers and their families are not left in limbo while the government consults?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, the specific program that the member referred to, Changing Ways, I believe will be getting funding through the Wild Rose Foundation and some other departments in government. I stand to be corrected on that. I would ask the hon. member to bring that forward to me if she has other information that isn't clarified by that statement I just made.

As we go through the difficulties of challenging this very important area of our society, we will call on some 500 agencies throughout the province of Alberta and the professionals that they have that receive funding in one form or another through social services or the Department of Health that will address the needs of this very serious situation in our society. If the Minister of Health would like, she may want to supplement this. I just know that we have a tremendous amount of agencies, people, consultants, and professionals, and we're asking them to come forth with their recommendations. We will help them to the best of our abilities.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister.
Westlock-Sturgeon.

Grain Transportation

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to either of the two half ministers of Agriculture. They have been roaming around Alberta saying that the winter meetings of farmers have come out about 70 percent in favour of pay-the-producer. I know that I've attended a number and so has the Member for Vegreville, and the amounts weren't anywhere close to that. In addition to that, the Wheat Pool has now come out and said that it's more like 50 percent rather than 70 percent. Could either of the ministers enlighten this House as to how they arrived at their percentage? Did they have any of their staff tracking the meetings and reporting or checking the work sheets?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, first of all, we had no staff tracking the meetings. We have never viewed the individual producer work sheets, and I don't recall us ever indicating a percentage of approval or disapproval. All I've repeated publicly in this House and outside are the results of the third-party facilitators, who say very clearly in their final report that a majority of farmers in Alberta support pay-the-producer, a majority of farmers in Saskatchewan, a strong majority, support the status quo, and Manitoba farmers are split almost 50-50 on the issue. The other comment in the report is that the Peace River block in Alberta tends to favour the status quo. The other conclusion the independent facilitators came to is that a vast majority of those who supported pay-the-producer supported a bond concept similar to our Freedom to Choose proposal. If the hon. member hasn't had an opportunity to review the independent appraisers' assessment, all he has to do is ask and we will provide him with a copy of the report.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The point I'm trying to drive home is that there are as many opinions as there are reports.

Would the minister be willing to conduct a plebiscite of all farmers in this province holding permit books as to whether or not they prefer the status quo or pay-the-producer, a simple plebiscite?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge there has only ever been one report done across western Canada to try to assess opinion, and that was a third-party facilitator that conducted 138 meetings on behalf of the federal government, supported by all provincial governments, as the result of a decision made at the ag ministers meeting in Kananaskis Country a year ago.

At our recent meeting in Nisku an interesting proposal came from the province of Manitoba and . . .

10:30

MR. TAYLOR: He's not answering the question.

MR. ISLEY: Yes, I'm getting to your question, sir.

That was to see whether or not we could develop a method under which the individual farmer would have the freedom to choose. We're working now very aggressively with the Manitoba staff – Saskatchewan refuses to be part of it – to see if we can develop that model. I can't think of a more meaningful plebiscite than if you could say to the farmers of western Canada: "Look, you have a choice. You can go in and take your share of the Crow benefit out in a bond form. If you don't want to, you can leave it to flow to the railways." That would be a very meaningful plebiscite, and I think the hon. member would be amazed at the results of it.

MR. SPEAKER: Drayton Valley, followed by Stony Plain.

Impact of Saskatchewan Agricultural Policies

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The media coverage of the recent Saskatchewan budget indicates a very low priority for agriculture programs in spite of the fact that Premier Romanow led a farm group to Ottawa last fall. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Do you have a feel for the impact on Alberta feedlots that may happen due to the removal of the \$13 feed grain offset program in Saskatchewan?

MR. ISLEY: The removal of FEEDGAP, as it's called in Saskatchewan, the feed grain assistance program, which was \$3 a tonne higher than ours, I would say, by the time it works through the system will result in a fairly significant reduction of animals being finished in Saskatchewan and a corresponding increase of animals being finished in Alberta, which is unfortunate for the Saskatchewan livestock industry.

MR. THURBER: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I understand that effective on budget day in Saskatchewan they've also taken another program away from agriculture and farmers are now paying the full tax of 13 cents a litre on purple gasoline. Does this government have any intention of following this lead in that regard?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, last October the meeting that the Premier organized, attended by many of the government members and leaders of 50 groups of farm organizations in the province, resulted in an announcement made in mid-November that until the end of the 1992-93 budget term there would be no reduction in

our fuel support program. Looking beyond that, I would say that unless it's as a result of a GATT decision, I would not see this government withdrawing its support from the agricultural community, which is obviously what the NDP governments in Saskatchewan and other places are doing.

MR. SPEAKER: Stony Plain.

High School Dropouts

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Conference Board of Canada report released last Monday provides the government with ample reason to support our education system. However, the high high school dropout rate, now pegged at about 30 percent, costs Canadian society billions of dollars. The federal government finally recognized the seriousness of the issue and created the five-year, \$296 million stay-in-school program aimed at helping students at risk of dropping out of school. My question to the Minister of Education is simply this: other than introducing his vindictive two-count system and paying lip service to school boards, what specific programs have been introduced and how much money has been accessed by Alberta from the federal government stay-in-school initiative?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted that the hon. member has asked that question because it gives me an opportunity to talk about Alberta's \$2.8 billion stay-in-school initiative, because that's exactly how much Alberta taxpayers invest in the education system in the province of Alberta.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we have a variety of programs, not only working with the federal government. I think of our newly developed and in the process of being developed career and technology studies program that replaces the old vocational industrial education programs with a revised curriculum to keep kids in school. I think of this year's piloting of the registered apprenticeship program that's going on in some eight schools and gives kids in grades 10, 11, and 12 the beginning of their apprenticeship training so that when they're finished grade 12, they're well on their way to being ready for the labour force immediately. I think of our integrated occupational program, which has been going on for a number of years and provides additional funding for school boards to deliver programs for kids so that again they will be ready for the work force. I think of programs like W.P. Wagner in this city. They're moving to a science and technology school in September of 1992. I think of Ernest Morrow junior high school in Calgary, where they've taken the . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. I think we'll save some for a supplementary.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate your intervention there. I could have given him the same dissertation of what we have done. What he is doing now is nothing, and he hasn't accessed 5 cents from the federal program.

However, I'll give him one that perhaps he can answer. Dropout symptoms occur long before high school. Community schools are effective schools and can be a very efficient way of keeping students in school right through high school by setting the proper foundation for them. Given that community schools are effective, if community schools should reapply – the ones I'm referring to are the almost 40 schools that were arbitrarily cut off in 1987 without cause, arbitrarily cut off after they had qualified

for the charter – would he reinstate the funding to the schools who qualify once again in order to prevent dropouts?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, if you and the hon. member had allowed me to get to that point on my list – it is an incredibly long list.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair looks forward with keen anticipation to your answer instead of your complaint.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, it's just that the list of stay-in-school initiatives that are being sponsored and funded by provincial taxpayers and local taxpayers and sponsored by local school boards is an incredibly long list. Our entire purpose is making sure that not just some but all of our children get the best possible education. In addition to the high-needs program that was next on my list – that's a pilot project in Calgary and Edmonton focusing on high-needs communities – is a community school program. This government gives additional funding of some five and a quarter million dollars that go to about 67 funded community schools to assist those schools, to ensure that they can put on programs and run programs to keep kids in school.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be brief on the rest of the list, but I could go on. I talk about a movement towards a single diploma in this province. I think of our partnership effort. I think of our changes in the science curriculum to give kids hands-on science so that they're not turned off by science and turned off school. I think of our native education program. I think of the profile of some 21 dropout-prevention programs that are out there and available to school boards across the province.

Mr. Speaker, in summary, there are an incredible number of stay-in-school initiatives that are being sponsored by this government and put on by school boards across this province.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Jasper Place, followed by Calgary-North West.

Oldman River Dam

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The long awaited federal environmental review of the Oldman River dam project is now complete, and I understand that the Minister of the Environment has had a briefing. I would like to ask him if he will undertake today that the government of Alberta will accept and implement the report's recommendations regarding fisheries mitigation, regarding water issues with the Peigan Nation, and regarding the archaeological sites before the project proceeds any further?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there hasn't been an opportunity to examine in any detail whatsoever the recommendations the hon. member alludes to.

MR. McINNIS: Well, maybe I can ask him something he can answer. Despite the drought conditions in southern Alberta it doesn't change the fact that the government has bungled this project from the very start. I recently got a four-page communication from Alberta Environment outlining a four-day festival celebrating the opening of the Oldman River dam, featuring VIP luncheons, minister's receptions, boat tours, big-name concerts not little names, and something called a Parade of Power. I wonder if the minister would explain how many tax dollars he's going to spend on this so-called festival.

10:40

MR. KLEIN: I'll refer that to the hon. Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, communities in southern Alberta have banded together to form an organization called the Southern Alberta Festival Steering Committee. A variety of communities, most municipalities, cities, counties, and MDs within the southern part of the province of Alberta have undertaken to plan and organize a Festival of Life and Celebration of Water between July 16 and 19, 1992. The sponsorship for most of these activities will be done by local municipalities. I note with interest that the city of Lethbridge just a few days ago passed a resolution to allocate dollars for this. We've got service clubs, the Cowley Lions, the town of Pincher Creek, and on and on the list goes. It's a massive festival to promote tourism and recreation and a protection and enhancement of the environment in southern Alberta. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

Calgary-North West. [interjections] Order in the whole House, please.

Calgary-North West.

Hockey Arena Proposal

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister for Economic Development and Trade. The province of Alberta has already taken a bath on the Pocklington Picture Butte pork plant, and now we learn that he's planning on building the Peter Pocklington puck palace. My question to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade is simply this: has the minister or the government been approached by either Peter Pocklington or any of his agents for loans, loan guarantees, any kind of financial backing at all for this new hockey arena?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge, no.

MR. BRUSEKER: Terrific.

My supplementary question, then, to the minister is: if the government is approached, will the minister play goalie and keep . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. You asked a hypothetical and walked into your own set-up play, I guess.

Next member, Lesser Slave Lake, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

Grouard Interpretive Centre

MS CALAHASEN: Mr. Speaker, the Grouard band has recently received their land claim settlement. With that comes the idea that there will begin economic initiatives which will allow for self-sufficiency for their band members. One of these initiatives is the Cree interpretive centre which has been on the planning board for a number of years. Would the Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism provide an update of where in the planning stages this project is?

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, the Grouard band indeed has done a fair amount of work and planning and has a vision for an interpretive centre detailing native life in that area and has done a considerable amount of work on that over a period of a number of years. Our department's been involved on a consultative, support,

and advisory basis with the Grouard band during most of that period of time. There have been some feasibility studies that the band has undertaken on their own through private-sector consultants, and we're waiting to see a formal plan that we can react to in some fashion.

MS CALAHASEN: I realize that the department has really been ready and willing to help with this project, and I think that there's been a lot of work that has gone into it. However, Mr. Speaker, it seems that this has not been considered a priority. I would like to ask the minister if he would assign an individual from his department to work with the Grouard band to help advance the project as quickly as possible.

MR. MAIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm more than glad to make that undertaking, but I think it's important to understand that the responsibility of the province of Alberta as a government and as our department in telling the stories of Alberta are limited by our resources. We do spend a great deal of money and resources in interpreting native culture in our museum here in Edmonton, the Provincial Museum, in our support of the Glenbow Museum in Calgary and at the Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump near Fort Macleod. It would not be our intention to build a government-sponsored interpretive centre for the Grouard band, but we would be able to react to their initiatives in some fashion, certainly through advisory support, which I'm more than pleased to provide to the project through support through our own department or the Department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation and others, but it is not contemplated at this time that the government would build such an interpretive centre.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Professions Legislation

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Chair of the Committee on Professions and Occupations. My understanding is that over the past few months numerous meetings have been held with ophthalmologists, optometrists, and opticians. As well, I gather representatives of consumer groups and representatives of both the Department of Health and the Professions and Occupations Bureau have been meeting to discuss issues related to legislation in the eye care field. My information is that all outstanding issues with respect to this legislation have been agreed to by all the parties concerned, and I wondered if the member would please advise the Assembly if this is the case.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question. Yes, you have relayed the issue. All parties have agreed, and we should be tabling that legislation in this House very shortly.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we've just heard that there's been a consensus and that the legislation will be tabled – last year the legislation was tabled and then withdrawn – will the minister assure the House that a Bill governing this legislation giving consumers the right to choose will be passed by this Assembly in this session?

DR. WEST: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Grande Alberta Paper Ltd.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Peace River has stated publicly that a proposed pulp mill near Grande Prairie should not be allowed to go ahead until river studies are complete. To the Minister of the Environment: will the minister confirm that he will not allow the Grande Alberta Paper or any other pulp mill project to proceed at least until the Canada/Alberta northern rivers studies are completed?

MR. KLEIN: First of all, Mr. Speaker, there's been no formal application from the Grande Alberta pulp and paper company to construct anything. There has been an indication that they might want to build a pulp and paper mill either on the Smoky River or in conjunction with the existing pulp mill at Grande Prairie, but there has been no formal application. We have put this question, however, to the Northern Rivers Study Board as to what impact an additional pulp mill would have on their considerations, and we're waiting for a response from that particular study board at this time.

MR. MITCHELL: Will the minister please tell us, now that he's asked the NRCB, now that he's asked the Northern Rivers Study people to confirm whether or not he should proceed, how he could possibly allow the NRCB to review that project before the northern Alberta rivers study is complete?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what the hon. member is talking about. I have absolutely no idea, but that's not unusual.

MR. SPEAKER: Smoky River.

Soil Conservation

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Associate Minister of Agriculture. In the past spring there's been identified a real need for soil conservation, with wind erosion in the south and water erosion in the north. Certainly we've never had a more demonstrated need for a soil conservation program within the province of Alberta. In the past the federal/provincial CASCI program has been most effective in dealing with the issues that we are presently dealing with. Would the minister please advise my constituents as well as the members of this House on the status of the present agreement?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the status of the present conservation agreement is that we have extended that agreement for one year over this budget year to complete the three-year program that was put in place. The federal government announced in, I believe, January some dollars in the green plan that would be available to Alberta for a new soil conservation agreement. We have had a complete review of the past agreement, a lot of input from participants in the program, and we are looking now at ways of initiating a new conservation initiative for an extended period of time.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Smoky River.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to hear that indeed the initiative is still carrying on.

Would this extension of this program be an all-encompassing program? Will it be an expansion of the past program? Could

you give us some insight as to just what the process is that you are developing?

10:50

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, in answer to that, the Canada/Alberta soil conservation initiative, or CASCI, was a program that mainly dealt with soil conservation, and that is the program that does technically end in July of this year. The other program that is in place is the soil and water research program; it is known in the industry as CARTT. That program ends in 1993. The intent at this time is that a new program would be encompassing a number of broader issues than just soil conservation, such as water quality, water resources, and extended programs. So those are some of the things that we're looking at in the negotiations and the discussions with the stakeholder groups at this time.

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order, Calgary-McCall. Is it indeed a point of order, Calgary-McCall?

George Spady Centre

(continued)

MR. NELSON: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I was reading here.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to correct some information I gave during the response to a question from the hon. member with regards to the Spady Centre. I indicated that there were approximately 4,300 people that went through that facility last year. I was in error. It was about 4,700-plus.*

Thank you.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

In this order: Minister of Economic Development and Trade, Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, Minister of Education, Westlock-Sturgeon.

head: Introduction of Special Guests (reversion)

MR. ELZINGA: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. May I take this opportunity, sir, to introduce to you a group of visitors that we have from the Father Kenneth Kearns school. They're with their teachers Mrs. Melody Kostiuik and Mr. Bruce Plante, and they're joined by Mrs. Vaughn Gramatovich, Mr. and Mrs. Kuchmak, Mrs. Yvette Bortnick, and Mrs. Leona Kletzel. They're in the members' gallery. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly. I look forward to meeting with them later, and I hope I didn't do an injustice to their names.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we have another group of visitors: from the Strathcona Christian Academy. They are with their teachers Mr. Zook, Miss Eisner, and Mrs. J. Adam and also with the bus driver, T. McFarlane. They're in the public gallery, and I would ask if they would rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, in the galleries today are 22 young people from Grasmere school. They're accompanied by their teacher Mr. Jim Muir and by parents Mrs. A. Hickie, Mrs. V.

*see page 939, right col., para. 2, line 3

Hursley, and Mrs. L. Taylor. I'd ask our visitors to stand and receive the warm welcome of the colleagues in the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the public gallery is probably Stettler's most famous resident and somebody who in her own way does more to restore or keep the dignity of women in Alberta than anyone else. I would like the House to join me in greeting Audrey Jensen.

MR. SPEAKER: Additional? Thank you.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Committee of Supply

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will the committee come to order, please.

head: Main Estimates 1992-93

Labour

MR. CHAIRMAN: The main estimates commence at page 233 of the main book, with the elements on page 93 of the elements book.

Would the Minister of Labour like to introduce these estimates?

MS McCOY: Thank you very much. It's my pleasure today to introduce the estimates for the Department of Labour, and before going any further I'd like to congratulate all of those people who are employed by the Department of Labour for their efforts in the past year and for their commitment to service to Albertans. Thank you.

In a word the Department of Labour is reinventing itself with a particular focus on customer service. They've taken as their essential guide the rubric that we must become a customer-driven department. Now, that presents some certain challenges given that our customers, of course, in this changing economy have in themselves undergone a great deal of transformation and restructuring. So the world of work, to put it in a word, has changed so substantially; the department of course has to respond to those changes.

Somebody was saying to me the other day, "You know, for years we Albertans, when we think of Alberta, have had as a symbol a picture of Alberta which would include, first of all, I think, miles and miles and miles and miles of fields, golden wheat waving in the wind with mountains in the background and perhaps in the foreground one of those oil pumps, donkeys, as we called them, pumping oil from the ground." Then somebody said to me, "Now, look at that picture and ask yourself what's missing." The answer, of course, is people. People are missing from that picture.

In a sense that's a metaphor for the changes that we are undergoing in our economy. For years, of course, our economy was based on resources and then with the application to that of tools. Now what we have moved into is a world of work in which knowledge is what makes the difference. Resources and tools are simply the price of admission, and knowledge is what makes the difference between success and failure. The only way you can get knowledge, of course, is through people, so what we are moving to is a world of work which is people centred. We talk a lot about a value-added economy, but because we have people who are making the difference, we are now also concerned about having

a value-based economy, and a value-based economy includes values such as fairness and equity, diversity and interdependence.

I thought what I might do to illustrate some of the changes is describe how Albertans are beginning to reinvent themselves and the activities that they are engaged in to describe what our customers are doing, which may give a better sense as to what the Department of Labour is responding to. As many of you know, we had a project called the Alberta *Future of Work* project, which started a couple of years ago, and some of the comments that people have made about the process are, I think, illuminating, because they talk about how they are reinventing themselves. As an example, this statement: "The first thing that sticks in my mind with respect to the Alberta *Future of Work* process is meeting people from other backgrounds, other work experiences, and listening to their opinions and perspectives. I don't normally meet people from varying backgrounds in discussions about work. I normally discuss work with people from my own sector. You may meet people in social settings in your community but never get to find out what they really think about certain issues."

11:00

Another comment: I always believed that if you found truth and made ways to make the truth happen, you could effect change. I don't believe that anymore. I believe that change has to be grass-roots. This may be a political term, but still it's the only way that I can see change effectively happening, incident by incident, hour by hour, one person to one person.

Another comment by one of the participants who has translated the activity into his own company: in a traditional organization the leader gives the directions, sets the tone, makes the rules. In a learning organization leadership is fundamentally participative. This form of leadership gets everyone in the company engaged in thinking strategically, learning how to learn. This puts me as the leader in a more participative and consultative role.

Another comment: if you look logically at what we are seeing around us in the various business and government work environments, you realize we are not generating enough revenue to support our cost structures, nationally or internationally. We have management systems that discourage people from behaving independently, that discourage innovation and creative thinking. However, now in my business I have the confidence that what we are doing here in this workplace is right. I can remember in other workplace experiences always feeling like a square peg in a round hole, trying to fit into management structures and systems that I knew were inherently unstable. I brought a lot of what I've learned about change into my workplace, and my workplace is unique. It is not hierarchical. We are a group of people doing what we love. We are fully committed and having a great time.

Another comment: to put people on one side or the other, labour or management, is not good enough anymore. But there has to be that recognition of doing things fairly, and I don't think that's happening now. I've come to realize that drawing a line in the sand is no longer an effective way to work. I have realized there are people on both sides who have passion and sympathy and want to work for the good of all people. Those are the people that can possibly try to find the ways to make a better future. Rhetoric is one thing, but we have to try to find solutions.

Mr. Chairman, those are experiences that Albertans are having in the new world of work, and I think they illustrate what everyone in Alberta is undergoing. It is those changes to which the Department of Labour is responding.

We have put a video together illustrating the future of work. We have asked several role models from around the province to participate in the *Future of Work* video to illustrate the changes

that are happening in the world of work today. The video is going to be aired on June 6 at 7 o'clock on ITV in Edmonton and RDTV in Red Deer and on June 7 at 10:30 on channels 2 and 7 in Calgary and CISA in Lethbridge. I would encourage all of the members to watch those programs.

As for examples that I can mention very briefly to show how people are changing, it now takes a major refinery plant only eight people to run the plant, and they do it as a team. It's not a hierarchical group at all. Or there's a grain farmer who's moved now to selling peas and lentils to India and Pakistan. Or there are the people who put out fires in the Gulf and indicate that, yes, they are in a value-added business, but the beauty of it is that every time they go about their business, they learn more and therefore add more value to their business. Or there's the woman who is now doing financial counseling and she learned her skills from the volunteer sector, and the beauty of her job is that she says that she has become now a self-directed employee who is directing that employment package herself.

So those are simple illustrations of changes in the world of work, and it is those changes to which we are responding in the Department of Labour. We are not trying to reinvent ourselves or Albertans by ourselves. We are relying on shared decision-making with stakeholders around the province. Consequently, we did a minimum wage symposium. We did employment standards symposiums. We've done processes like that in the safety area as well. We will now move to a stakeholder review process of the bargaining process in the school system. Again we will be asking stakeholders to join together around discussion tables to help understand one another's points of view and to discover a nonadversarial problem-solving process that generates solutions.

I'll say one or two words about the budget itself for 1993, just briefly running through the highlights for you. Votes 1 through 5 cover the Department of Labour, and our budget this year is down 2.5 percent. We are, therefore, not only responding to the new world of work, but given that we have fewer resources, we are also reinventing ourselves in that light. We are, of course, making every effort to maintain and to improve service as well so that we can become more effective looking at how to respond to the needs of our customers and also looking at our internal processes.

In vote 1 members are being asked to approve \$5.3 million in spending for Departmental Support Services. This part of the budget is almost equivalent to last year's. Vote 2 calls for expenditures of about \$4 million, a decrease of 10.2 percent. The decrease has been achieved through the abolition of five positions, of which four were vacant. Also, we reduced funds for travel, advertising, contracts, and hosting.

In vote 3 we are looking at expenditures of about \$17 million for Work and Safety Client Services, down only slightly from last year. That area has become the focal point for the department because it is the frontline workers. Those are the people who are dealing directly with our customers. I should point out that service demands in the safety area are rising by about 20 percent a year. My department is handling the increase by greater reliance on safety audits, quality control programs, and particularly by the creation of councils who will act as regulators and standard-setting bodies, which again rely on the participatory model so that people can respond to their needs in the most effective way.

Funding in votes 4 and 5, the Labour Relations Board and the Human Rights Commission, is maintained at 1991-92 levels with one exception, and that is the one-time funding of \$30,000 to allow the commission to cohost with Saskatchewan this year's gathering of human rights commissions and agencies from across Canada. That conference is being held in Lloydminster at the

beginning of June to honour the 20th anniversary of the passage of human rights legislation in both provinces.

Vote 6 covers the personnel administration office, and here members are being asked to approve a budget of \$9.64 million. The amount is down from last year. PAO achieved the reduction partly by delegating to other departments the responsibility for funding premiums for accidental death and dismemberment insurance. The office has also reduced contract funding and abolished vacant positions. PAO is also committed to improving service and over the past year has launched or continued several initiatives, including efforts to help government employees balance work and family responsibilities. There's a lot of work to be done here. Again we're having to reinvent our workplaces so that we can accommodate in the most beneficial way what our workers need on a day-to-day basis. Once again we worked with our workers themselves and also their representative, AUPE, and also management in finding out what it is that they need. We did a survey of all employees and have listened to what they tell us they need. PAO is also of course spearheading what is often known as total quality management, although perhaps better called continuous improvement initiatives. We are acting in an advisory role for departments so that they, too, can improve their customer service and become customer-driven entities.

11:10

In general, my budget for this fiscal year reflects a sincere effort by the department to focus resources on service to our customers. We've made every effort to increase the efficiency, effectiveness, and relevance of our service. We recognize also, however, that this is a continuous improvement program. We don't foresee an end to our efforts. It is an ongoing effort. We also recognize that we are operating in an environment of changed fiscal realities, so we have begun to implement a long-term business plan that will particularly focus on where we target our services and how those services are funded.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the chance to make comments, and I look forward to hearing from other members of the Assembly.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Before recognizing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Belmont, would the committee agree that he be able to share his time with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore as has been done before?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, members of the committee, for allowing me to share my time with my colleague from Edmonton-Avonmore.

Mr. Chairman, if I could, I'd like to start my remarks by congratulating the Minister of Labour for her commitment to the collective bargaining process that finally worked with respect to the resolution that came out of the Battle River teachers' dispute. I know there was a lot of pressure that was placed on the office of the Minister of Labour by students, by teachers, by parents, probably by a number of her government colleagues. I know the Liberal Party stood up without offering any alternatives about what it might do and said: when are you going to do something? To me it seemed that there was only one alternative, and it was

one that called for the minister to intervene. I can tell you, quite frankly, that it's not one that I would have supported. I believe that any time the government of the province comes along and says, "Well, we're going to order you back to work," it then becomes a method or a way out for those who are involved in industrial disputes to later on just hold off negotiating, negotiating in good faith or bargaining collectively, so that they can say: "Well, we've got five weeks. We know the last time we had an industrial dispute, the minister waited five weeks, and then she ordered people back to work. We'll wait five weeks."

So with all of the pressures that were, I'm sure, placed on her and her office, I think quite frankly, Mr. Chairman, that the Minister of Labour deserves to be congratulated, and from me a pat on the back to you for holding up in defence of the collective bargaining process.

I also want to focus on a number of other issues. Some of them deal specifically with amounts that we're being asked to vote on. Some of them are more philosophical in nature. I would like to get some comments from the minister about proposals that I have had and I know full well that the minister has had from a variety of groups in the trade union movement, the Alberta Federation of Labour and the Building Trades Council, with respect to their legislation and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees with respect to the Public Service Employee Relations Act.

When the Minister of Labour speaks of responding to the needs of Albertans, I can appreciate that the minister believes that statement, yet I'm afraid that from my perspective I don't see any initiatives coming from the department that show change. We've had before us the labour code that was passed in 1988. From the day that piece of legislation was introduced in the Legislative Assembly, there were calls for amendments. Not a single amendment was passed. From the time the Bill was proclaimed, I know the minister has received delegations with respect to trying to usher amendments through the Legislature that would allow the trade union movement and workers in Alberta the right to organize. They've got the right to organize, but it seems that they're having a very difficult time trying to first secure collective agreements. There have been a number of instances where they've had sign-up for certification where they've had more than the majority sign up, yet when they file, they lose the vote. Now, surely it's time for the Minister of Labour to bring forward an amendment that says that when the majority of workers at a worksite deem that they want to be part of a bargaining unit, that majority shall rule. I would ask the minister: when are we going to see an amendment to the labour code that allows for the will of the majority to be the predominant will? We haven't yet got that.

Do we need to have a government-supervised vote for certification? I would argue that we don't, Mr. Chairman. What happens is that when you go out and organize people into a bargaining unit, they sign a card. They put their signature on a card, and I would tell you, sir, that that signature is worth more than a vote that's going to be supervised by the government. They have committed to the bargaining unit by virtue of the fact that they have signed their name to a card. So I would like to ask the minister: what rationale is there for having a government-supervised vote afterwards? Is it so that we can have a period of time go by where the employer could intervene? This process of communication doesn't seem to be in the best interests of those that are trying to organize into a bargaining unit. If anything, it seems to me to be an unfair labour practice.

Under the old Act we had provision for automatic certification if an employer intervened in the organizational drive of a union. We haven't got that anymore. There's no provision for automatic certification. What, then, do you hold out to the workers, to the

employer to say, "This is what you can do, and this is what you can't do"? You know, if there's no penalty, then what prevents one from saying: "Well, you know, I can intervene. I can interfere. There's no provision for penalty in the code. There's nothing to prevent me from intimidating"? In some instances some workers feel intimidated.

I was out meeting with some workers that had signed up at an engine rebuilding plant in Edmonton. They had a number of members that had signed up, but the intimidation that came from the employer once the organizational drive was under way was phenomenal. They lost the vote. The intimidation was so great. The employer said, "We're just going to shut down." They lost the vote.

I know again that the minister has received a number of submissions from the trade union movement about antireplacement workers. I still call it antiscab legislation; I know the term is purportedly unparliamentary. There's no provision in the Act for that. Here we've had the Zeidler workers that have been out for six years in Slave Lake. In Edmonton they've been out for four years.

I can tell you that if you were to try and have some kind of balanced playing field that was referred to so frequently in 1988 when these Bills were before the Legislature – if we had had that provision, if we had made sure that the economic scales were equal, obviously, or at least it's obvious to me, if you shut down production then there's a reason to get back to the negotiating table so that you can start talking in good faith about contracts and trying to come to some kind of resolution. But if the employer is allowed to continue to produce a product over the course of an industrial dispute and income is still going into the pockets of the employer and the shareholders of the corporation, then, Mr. Chairman, what we have is no reason at all for the employer or the negotiators on behalf of the employer to sit down at the bargaining table and negotiate in good faith to try and come to some kind of successful resolution to an industrial dispute.

11:20

Another area that the minister spoke of in her opening remarks was responding to the needs of Albertans. Mr. Chairman, a lot of years ago, before the minister was a member of this Assembly, before I was a member of this Assembly – we came in in 1986 – the International Labour Organisation condemned the government of Alberta for its refusal to grant provincial employees the right to withdraw their labour in the event of an industrial dispute. I would certainly like to ask the minister: if she is convinced that her department is responding to the needs of Albertans, when is she going to respond to the needs of those Albertans who are employed by the government for public service and give them the opportunity to withdraw their labour in the event that they don't like what's being offered? It's very clear inside the committee's recommendations from the International Labour Organisation that we are violating article 3 of convention 87, yet still we haven't got any indication from the minister, from the government if we're going to make those changes and provide those people that work for the province, that work for the public, the right to withdraw their labour. That to me, quite frankly, is unfair where we've got people that are not an essential service in many instances. The province wouldn't collapse if some of these people went out on strike. So what's the holdup there? Why is it that those people that are employed by the province of Alberta have not got the right to withdraw their labour?

Mr. Chairman, I do want to also look at, as I said, some of the specific amounts that we're being asked to vote on and put to the minister a number of questions that I'm hoping she will be able to

respond to. In vote 1, Departmental Support Services, we've got a decrease of .7 percent. That's an amount of only \$38,000. I'm wondering if the minister would try and explain to me why, then, we have a 27 percent increase in vote 1.1.5. If we're going down, admittedly by a small amount of money in terms of the overall budget of vote 1, why are Systems costs going up? I'm curious to know, quite frankly, in vote 1.2 just what Issues Management Group is. To me that sounds like public relations.

MR. DINNING: Surely you jest.

MR. SIGURDSON: The Minister of Education suggests that surely I jest. I don't. I don't at all. I want to know what that PR group is doing. I'd like a little more information about what we're getting there, even though they've got a decrease of \$180,000 in the budget. How come? What are we getting for that expenditure?

Mr. Chairman, I know the minister said that we're responding to the needs of Albertans. I'm sure that she would correct me if I'm wrong. She said that we're also responding to the needs of Albertans in light of the new fiscal realities. Well, in the area of Work Standards and Safety Standards, votes 2.0.3 and 2.0.4, when you combine those together, you've got a decrease of \$422,000. Now, I don't know that I've seen figures that indicate that safety's gone up. The levels of concern that are being expressed about employers' rights, employees' rights, education – I don't see where that information is at a sufficient level so that we can start decreasing the funding of that particular vote. In fact, if anything, Mr. Chairman, I would think that the government still has a great deal to do with respect to educating those people that are involved in the public service.

I have here, sir, a copy of a memorandum that was sent from the executive director of the Eric Cormack Centre to the staff. If we're talking about responding to the needs of Albertans, here's an area where the government, especially given the fact that the Human Rights Commission reports to the Minister of Labour – here's a memo from the executive director of the centre that says that there was a flexibility so that people that work at the centre would be able to talk with each other in their own native tongue, and that flexibility was permissive. Now, all of a sudden, because this flexibility has been taken to great degree, a memo comes out and says that you can only speak English at the centre.

I will send this over to the minister, because I think the government has to provide direction. I know full well that this is not government policy, but I think the government really ought to provide some direction to people so that we are indeed responding to the needs of Albertans. There are new Albertans that come into our province that can only communicate with each other using their native tongue, and then we have that kind of policy that's going out from the executive director. I think there's good reason to show that we need to reach out and provide more information to those people that work in our employ.

Mr. Chairman, with respect to vote 3, the services that go out to Albertans, the frontline service folk, I see again that we've got a decrease of \$380,000 in the area of salaries in that vote. That's an amazing amount of money to exit from the department. I would like to ask the minister: how many jobs have been lost given the decrease in that area? How many people are employed in frontline services at the employment standards branch? The minister knows full well a memorandum that was sent around the province last fall admitted that the employment standards branch couldn't satisfy the requests that were going into the offices, that people that were going in there with their complaints often were having to have their complaints go – I don't know where they go, but they

weren't being investigated. I'd like to also ask the minister: what's the caseload of the investigators at employment standard branches around the province?

Another question I'd like to have answered is: how much money is dedicated to the education component regarding the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees? I think that if we're going to try and ensure that people know what their rights are, we have to spend some dollars getting the information out there, and I don't see that being done. If we're going to reduce the level of service that's coming out of the employment standards branch, then we're going to have to make sure that the consumers of those services that may have been provided at one time are aware of what their rights are.

11:30

Mr. Chairman, I'm sure that many members of the Legislature have had complaints from constituents about the employment standards branch. I'd like to know: what does it take to get an investigation? If you have a complaint, it seems to me that there are occasions where the investigators, I think because they're overloaded, have to reject some claims or some complaints based on the amount of money that's being sought by the employee who has been grieved. Or is it distance away from the centre? Is it the time that each case is going to take? It doesn't seem to me that there's a consistent policy with respect to the employment standards branch investigations.

Mr. Chairman, I have a note from my colleague from Edmonton-Avonmore that I'm pushing into her time, so I think what I'll do is just close there and perhaps come in at another time today if I'm so permitted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Recognizing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore, the clock is stopped, but could there be agreement to revert to Introduction of Special Guests for a moment?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried. The hon. Minister of Education.

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

MR. DINNING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the indulgence of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

I have two introductions to make today, one on behalf of my colleague from Calgary-Foothills, Mrs. Pat Black, who has a visiting group of teachers here today from the Brentwood elementary school and area. They are here on a professional development day, I gather, to visit the goings-on in the Legislative Assembly and here in the Committee of Supply reviewing the estimates of the Minister of Labour. I'd ask them to rise and have all members receive them in a cordial fashion.

Mr. Chairman, we're also joined today by a Calgarian, a resident of the constituency of Calgary-Buffalo. She is also a colleague of mine on the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede board of directors. Mrs. Patsy Minnes is in the members' gallery. I'd ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of members of the Assembly.

head: **Main Estimates 1992-93** **Labour** (*continued*)

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

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would focus my remarks on the Human Rights Commission, which is vote 5 I believe, and would note it has a 2 percent increase. In opening my remarks I would say that this has been indeed an interesting year for the commission and the chief commissioner. I think the minister would probably agree to that.

I would like to follow up on what the Member for Edmonton-Belmont said in regard to the memo at the Eric Cormack Centre, which I cannot think is anything but a clearly racist policy that isolates people who come to this country from each other. I expect that this applies particularly to women, so I would ask that the minister look into this and find out if in fact this is an isolated case or if this is happening in other areas where immigrant people, new Canadians are working.

I would like to also raise concerns about the operation of the commission and delays in response time and what appears to be an unequalness of treatment. It seems that those people who have allegedly violated the human rights protection Act are given more time to give responses than the complainants are in that I've had a number of calls from complainants who have been given deadlines of five or 10 days to respond to something when the process earlier has been months of inactivity and lack of response by alleged offenders.

I have a question about the 1989 Price Waterhouse review of the functioning of the commission. It made a number of recommendations including a possible need for increased staff. I note that there have been no staff increases in this budget. In fact, my understanding is that staffing vacancies have not been filled so that the commission has been functioning without a full complement of staff, and that's hard to understand in the context of this study.

The Price Waterhouse review also stated that there needed to be a clearer definition of roles and responsibilities and performance expectations as well as opportunities for staff to receive training. I'm wondering if those recommendations have been reviewed and implemented.

Another question that has been raised that I would raise is the position of chief commissioner which has been raised to the equivalent of deputy minister in terms of pay. In view of the fact that the commissioner in the past year has engaged in many other activities, and I understand that this is the only province with a full-time chief commissioner, I'm wondering if a full-time position is justified given the cost. I would again ask the minister to look into that issue.

I would raise concerns about the need to have education on behalf of the commission done by trained staff who have an in-depth understanding of complex issues such as sexual harassment. We have been given to understand that the education component of the commission is sadly lacking, other than poster campaigns, which really are not enough, and that education has been done on a fee-for-service basis by members of the commission board who, I would submit, may well not have either the skill or the knowledge to deal with the complex issues that the commission must deal with.

I also have some questions about the spending priorities of the commission including spending on commission retreats, as they're called. One such retreat held in the fall of 1990 cost \$2,400. Again, in times of economic restraint one has to question why the money has been spent in these ways.

I have a series of questions in regard to the legislation and would ask the minister: will she be bringing forward legislation to include sexual orientation as a protected category, legislation which would allow the commission to initiate investigations on its own behalf or on behalf of third-party complaints? We have just seen the mandatory retirement case of Olive Dickason go to the

Supreme Court of Canada. The outcome may mean that we need a change in the legislation, and would the minister be looking to that? I think it's important to recognize that mandatory retirement requirements have a differential effect on women. It is really a women's issue.

I would also ask the minister if she's looking into social service policies that appear to violate human rights legislation. I would hold as an example the spouse-in-the-house rule and the widows' pension which discriminate on the basis of marital status.

Finally, I would ask the minister if she as minister responsible for human rights as well as Minister of Labour would be contemplating bringing in pay equity legislation, long needed if women are to take a place of equality in this society.

Those are my questions. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me. There are still four minutes left in the hon. member's time. Can the hon. member conclude in four minutes?

11:40

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, if that's acceptable.

Just very briefly, one of the areas that I just wanted to touch on was with respect to minimum wage. I know that the minister last year had the committee that toured the province, had a number of discussions, and ultimately everybody agreed that we had to increase the minimum wage. The question then was: how much and how fast? Now, on April 1 the minimum wage indeed went up, and through a motion for a return that the government has accepted I've asked for those studies that show that an individual can live on minimum wage. I'm being really generous when I use the word "live," Mr. Chairman. I think it might be more appropriate to say that that person might be able to exist on the minimum wage. So I want to again put to the minister - the question has been responded to already, but I'm hoping that the minister would be able to respond in quick order to my motion for a return that deals with the question on how a person can exist on the minimum wage. Now, I know that the government accepted the motion. We've still been waiting for those documents to be filed. What went around my office was a bit of joke. The response says that Motion 203 was accepted by the hon. minister. Then it says:

We have not undertaken any studies to assess whether a family can live in Alberta on the minimum wage as it is clear that they can not.

I would concur with this. I'm asking the minister to prove me wrong and show me how it is that this government supports a minimum wage policy that keeps people below the poverty line and still expects them to be able to maintain some form of dignity so that they can participate in society.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. MAIN: Nice neckwear.

MR. BRUSEKER: You like that, eh?

MR. MAIN: It's you.

MR. BRUSEKER: Great. It's in my constituency. Come on down.

The Member for Edmonton-Belmont began by commenting about the disputes resolution process needing improvement, and I

certainly agree with that concept. He offered congratulations to the Minister of Labour on allowing the bargaining process to continue. I do not offer similar congratulations. I do not subscribe to the education philosophy as espoused by the Member for Edmonton-Belmont. I don't think that education is an industry. I don't think we can stamp out children as you might stamp out tires. Unfortunately, the New Democrats seem to feel that the children are irrelevant in this kind of a dispute. Unfortunately, that's a very dogmatic position I would expect of the New Democrats, but I find it very shortsighted. I think the unfortunate emphasis on bargaining as opposed to the needs of children is a very shortsighted viewpoint.

The concern that I want to relay to the minister, having been through a process like that myself: the minister at that time, in 1980, Les Young, did step in and did order the teachers back to work and order them back to the bargaining table. I think all members who were involved in that dispute finally appreciated it. I believe the Member for Calgary-Bow might also have been involved and recalls how acrimonious that strike was in the Calgary public board at that time and that it was a very difficult time. So I'm disappointed that it took as long as it did for the Department of Labour to get involved, and I'm disappointed with the New Democrats' view on education.

Having said that, I'm going to move on to the estimates, and I have quite a number of questions which will probably prove to be too lengthy for the minister to reply, but I hope the minister will commit to sending a written reply at some point in the future from her department.

I want to start right in with vote 1. Vote 1.1.5, Systems, has increased by 27.1 percent. The Member for Edmonton-Belmont referred to that. Last year it dropped 16 percent. I wonder if the minister could explain why we're seeing such a yo-yo effect in the budget applied to that particular item.

My question with respect to vote 1.2, Issues Management. I guess there's a decrease. I'm assuming that means that something has concluded, and I wonder if the minister might comment what studies have been concluded by this issues management group justifying a decrease of almost \$200,000. Further, will those reports that have been produced by this issues management group, I presume, be provided to all members of the House so we can look at that information?

Moving along to vote 2, Work and Safety Standards, the total vote has decreased by 10.2 percent. I want to express a concern about that. With respect to legislation that went through the House last year, we had the Safety Codes Act, and I think there's some concern with that Safety Codes Act. I've got a couple of questions specifically dealing with the Safety Codes Act that I would like to put to the hon. minister, and hopefully a reply will be forthcoming soon. Safety codes officers are going to have to be certified. My first question is: who's going to pay for the training? Is the Department of Labour going to assist the municipalities? The municipalities ultimately are going to be responsible in terms of costs of the training and delivery of the training, and you can't suddenly wash your hands and say that the municipalities are going to look after it without giving them some direction.

In rural Alberta there are some concerns - I know some concerns came up in the Little Bow by-election - that safety officers who are going to be expected to conduct inspections are having difficulty finding the time to take off work and go and get the training so they can in fact go back and do the inspections required of them. I'm wondering how it's going to work that those people who have been given those inspection responsibilities are going to find time, first of all, to attend the course and, second, find someone to come in and look after their business. It's all

well and good to say, "Go take the training," but that means time off work, and someone's got to look after their business. Many of these are one- and two-person operations. We have to ensure that people get the training so that they can in fact do the inspections of restaurants and houses and businesses and so forth. I haven't seen any initiatives coming out of the department, and I'm wondering what's going to be done to help those people get the training to ensure the inspections actually occur.

The minister of career development talked before about a partnership between industry and government. Well, the Safety Codes Act also requires that partnership to occur, and I don't see that partnership actually happening.

Employment standards symposiums have been going on. I'd like the minister to make some comment as to where we're going with employment standards symposia. What was the purpose? I know they were reviewing everything. Was there any result that actually came out of there?

There have been some concerns recently in the media about workers not being protected in the event of bankruptcies. In fact, I guess the federal legislation now has removed wage earners as a creditor, making it difficult. Of course these are the men and women who have worked for an employer, expect to get a cheque at the end of the month, but unfortunately the company goes bust and there's no cheque forthcoming. All of a sudden these workers find themselves in severe financial difficulty. We know many people work on a paycheque-to-paycheque basis, and when they miss that paycheque, they find themselves in dire difficulty. I'm wondering what the provincial Minister of Labour is doing to work with the federal government to ensure that the workers are in fact protected.

The Member for Edmonton-Belmont raised some questions about the minimum wage. We in the Liberal caucus have recommended an annual review. The minister has said that that may not be a feasible process. I'm wondering if the minister might talk about reviews of the minimum wage, because \$5 an hour quite honestly is not a terrific wage to have to work for. I'm wondering if there might be some more regular reviews or tying minimum wage to cost of living allowances or to the consumer price index or something, or is it just going to be an ad hoc review whenever you feel like kind of process?

I talked about inspectors. It seems there's still a problem with accidents occurring partly because of lack of frequency and lack of accuracy in terms of inspections. I'm wondering if there's going to be any move towards, first of all, hiring more inspectors so that you can get the safety inspections done and ensuring that as inspections are required on a repeat basis, an annual basis or whatever, that in fact those inspections do occur.

There is a concern with safety standards, of course. Unfortunately, far too many people in this province get injured on the job. A good number of those deal with drug- and alcohol-related injuries, where the worker is under the influence of something or other and can't perform his or her task with the acuity required. I'm wondering if the Department of Labour has done any kind of program or is going to implement any kind of program. The losses are about half a billion dollars a year. What I'm trying to get at is: is there a move to work with people to reduce that half billion dollar cost?

Labour standards. It seems there's a problem with a lack of resources for labour standards violations, a lack again of inspectors, or labour standards officers I guess is their title. Is there a move to resolve that concern and ensure that there are enough officers to handle the cases that are before the department?

11:50

Still moving on with Work and Safety Standards, vote 2: the issue of holiday pay or loss of pay. People get fired – and again there have been articles in the newspaper, Mr. Chairman – and are not able to access their holiday pay, and in some cases that amounts to thousands of dollars. Again this falls under employment standards, and I'm wondering if there's a move to improve the resolution of those kinds of issues.

Vote 3, Work and Safety Client Services. Again we see a small decline in the budget here of approximately \$300,000. A few cuts in terms of positions, 4.3 positions being cut, but what we're looking at here is providing employees with a safe workplace to prevent injuries. We've got a number of offices that are listed – Southern, Central, North-Central, North-West regions, and so on – and we see the budget estimates sort of bouncing around. Some are down; some are up. I wonder if the minister could explain or provide a rationalization for why we see that bouncing around. Only one of them is moving up; I note the central region is up 13.2 percent. The rest of them are down, with the exception of Fire Commissioner, which gets a bit of an increase.

The southern Alberta school strike fortunately was resolved before the Department of Labour really had to get involved. But a problem I've heard is that there was no mediator headquartered in the Lethbridge area. He had to come from Calgary to go down there, which again delayed the process. I'm wondering if there's any move to speed up that . . . [interjection] Well, it still takes time to get down there. It could have speeded things up, could have resolved the issue and got the kids back into school a day sooner.

With respect to northern Alberta, which I'm sure the Member for Smoky River is really concerned about, it seems the northern part is particularly affected. North-West Region, cut 8.1 percent. North-Central Region, cut 3.9 percent. So I'm wondering if the move to resolve these disputes is not a concern. It seems there's a bit of a bias in that regard.

The cut in staff I have to question a little bit. We see a small cut in staff. Again, Work and Safety Client Services should be a concern, yet we see a cut in staff. I'm wondering if that reflects a lack of commitment by the department for safety or why it is that we're seeing a reduction in this particular area.

I'll move on to vote 4, Labour Relations Adjudication and Regulation. There's been a cut in manpower and no cut in the budget. I wonder if the minister might explain that. The budget is virtually identical, yet we see a small cut in staff. I'm wondering how it is you can cut staff and not see a concomitant cut in the total size of the budget.

I'm wondering how the selection process is made for this particular body. It seems that again we've got a closed shop, no advertisements going out for anyone to apply. I think we'd be far better off in the province as a whole if the Tory select patronage appointment process were a little more open-ended than we've seen in the past, because we've seen, unfortunately, far too many that haven't worked out appropriately.

The Member for Edmonton-Avonmore made some very timely comments on vote 5, the Individual's Rights Protection Act. There are some concerns. I think the phrase she said was, "It's been an interesting year for the commission and the chief commissioner." I'm wondering if the hon. minister might make some comment about where she foresees it going down the road in terms of the commissioner, in terms of the number of complaints that are made to the commission. Do all complaints receive the same treatment, are some of them brushed off, or how quickly are they dealt with?

With respect to the chief commissioner, I'm wondering if there's an improvement in the way the service can be delivered, or perhaps not the service but in terms of the selection process.

We've got a standing committee of the Legislature called the Legislative Offices Committee, and I'm wondering, whenever the minister chooses to replace the chief commissioner for the Human Rights Commission, if it might not be more appropriate to select that new commissioner through the Legislative Offices. It's an all-party committee of this Legislature. They worked very well in hiring the Ombudsman, for example. They worked very well in hiring the new Ethics Commissioner. Whenever we reach the point that a new Human Rights Commissioner is needed, will the minister perhaps make that recommendation to her cabinet colleagues?

I have a question regarding the equity promotion teams. On May 5 the minister made an announcement about them, that they're being organized to do some outreach work on human rights. I was wondering if the minister might make some breakdown of the cost of this education campaign: who is the target audience, where are they located within the province, how much is it going to cost, and those kinds of things.

The Human Rights Commission. Every month in our ACN news releases that come from the government we see a short précis of what concerns have been laid before the Human Rights Commission. I'm wondering if there is any way the commission can be made more effective; for example, to look at perhaps increasing, if needed – I don't know if it's needed or not – the number of caseworkers dealing with those kinds of issues. Does the minister stay on top of those kinds of things to ensure that people are being dealt with judiciously?

Probably the hottest single issue we've had under this particular vote recently, Mr. Chairman, is the inquiry that occurred over the Aryan Nations. This was a very long-drawn-out, quite expensive inquiry. I'm wondering if the minister could make some comment about that, because it seems that a recommendation came forth. The Human Rights Commission really has no authority to do anything with that recommendation. We've spent a lot of money on that report, and I'm not sure it was the best expenditure. So I'm wondering if the minister might make some comments on how those kinds of expenditures I guess can be improved or eliminated in the future.

Moving on to vote 6, Personnel Administration. I see my time is winding down here, so I'll try to wrap it up. We have seen the government make some commitments to freezing the total size of the civil service; in fact, a small reduction was mentioned in the budget. I'm wondering if the cuts that are being made in terms of employee relations, staff development, and occupational health are in fact going to result in improved services. Is there an ongoing – again I'm going to use the term value-for-money – kind of audit that's being done to ensure that the people we're having remain in our civil service are the best people for the job?

The Employee Relations section, I note, is down substantially, 7.7 percent. We're seeing a change there, and I'm wondering why that is. I'm sure there are a number of people who have expressed concerns. It's almost \$200,000. I'm sure that with the restructuring going on in the economy, with restructuring going on within the civil service, there are a number of people concerned about what their future is. It seems to me that in a time where we do see some uncertainty, cutting back on employee relations perhaps is not the best or most prudent or most humane kind of thing to be doing. I'm wondering a little bit in terms of the overall cuts in the department that are occurring. A small cut overall: 2.8 percent. A small reduction overall in manpower that we see in the department; it looks like about a dozen positions overall. But it seems that there is still some concern, at least as I perceive it, with respect to Employee Relations being cut down and the department

being cut down. So I wonder if the minister might make some comment about that.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

12:00

Just finally, with respect to labour legislation. Here in Edmonton we had the situation where the labour laws in fact were preventing people from going to work. I refer to Kroehler Furniture, where the original owners went into receivership and the new owners wanted to get into business again and get rolling. It seems that the legislation prevented the plant from getting open again. I'm wondering if the minister has had a chance to review that. It's under the Alberta Employment Standards Code.

On one hand, we have to protect the workers, but on the other hand, we're better off ensuring that people get the opportunity to go back to work and try once again, as opposed to simply saying, "Well, sorry; we're not going to provide any jobs for you." I recognize that it's a difficult balance for the minister. On one hand, her responsibility is to ensure that people have the opportunity to work, and on the other hand, it's ensuring that when they do work, they don't lose their benefits. I acknowledge that it's a difficult balance, but in the long run we're better off with people getting back to work as soon as they can in the event of a bankruptcy or a foreclosure or whatever and making some money again, as opposed to not having the opportunity to get back into the work force and, instead, sitting around and not being productive.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I'll close my comments and look forward to the responses from the minister.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Minister of Labour.

MS McCOY: Thank you. I appreciate the comments regarding the collective bargaining process, and I think all of us recognize that that is an ideal and a goal we must work to, although we may not have it right in every particular at the moment. Certainly it's much preferable to have people finding ways to agreement on their own. I was struck by the Member for Calgary-North West's comment about how much more effective it is to legislate people back to work, and he cited the Calgary public board's strike in 1980. I might remind him that that took 16 weeks before people were back to work, whereas in Battle River it was only five weeks.

I want to say at this time that I really do commend all the parents and all the students, as well as the teachers and the board members and also members of this Assembly who represent those areas. I think everyone worked very hard to find a way to come to an agreement, and I'm very proud of how they did. There were definitely positions on both sides that were sincerely and deeply held, but as I said on Wednesday, there is no shame to being a person of conviction, and that is what the people had, sincerely and deeply held convictions. I'm very pleased, and praise goes to them for finding a common ground.

Just one other comment on the general process. There have been some suggestions as to amendments to the Labour Relations Code, and I want to focus on the process as to how those code changes might come about. It seems to me that there are stakeholders who have a direct interest in this matter, and the suggestion that I simply impose a solution is not one I am taken with. I believe we have to move to a process that allows the stakeholders themselves to meet with one another, to discuss what they need, to articulate and come to in fact a common position on the values they share and the principles that emerge from that, and

then to find and to discover among themselves ways that will honour those principles. That is what I would intend to proceed with later this year, starting in early fall, to have that kind of process begin. I've had some informal discussions with individuals in the labour relations community, and we will be pursuing that. Still, let me say that I think this whole process of changing – and there's recognition that the code isn't working in all particulars. I think the solutions need to be designed by the stakeholders themselves, and I am more than pleased to convene such discussions and also to facilitate ongoing discussions. They will, however, be shared decision-making processes.

Then there were several specifics, and maybe I could just take a few minutes to go through the questions on the votes themselves.

I will start with vote 1. The particular question was directed to vote 1.1.5, and the increase in Systems, which is what we are talking about there, is very simple. We are spending more money on data processing services funding, and this is in particular to design and then develop systems that support the information requirements of our regional offices. One of the issues that the staff identified in particular when we started looking at employment services, but it's also true in the safety inspections and audits areas, was that the staff didn't have the tools they needed in order to be most effective in their service to customers. They are now working to put together the computer backup that they need in order to be able to more effectively do their jobs. We've put the money, therefore, into Systems. What we're doing is just improving the tools that our staff have to perform their jobs.

There was a question on Issues Management and what is it. We all in this day and age are aware of how busy you can be. Sometimes you get running so hard that you haven't time to look at the larger issue or in fact how issues interconnect or what consequences they're going to have. We felt that we needed in the Department of Labour a group who would indeed take that as their primary focus: to understand the issues. First of all, what are they? That's a question that is often forgotten to be asked. Secondly, what are the implications of any given issue? We have a very small number of people there, and our format is quite simply to borrow people from other areas and indeed from outside the department to deal with issues, to identify what they are and what the implications are. Sometimes you're doing it in response, because an issue just comes up and you need to reply to it, but we also want to get into a position where we can anticipate, so that there is some body of information and knowledge when in fact action is needed to be taken.

As an example of that, I can talk about the bargaining process in the education system. Some six months or so ago my issues management team had said: "Look; you know, there are some stresses and strains here, but there aren't a whole lot of issues, and they're very interrelated. We ought to be starting to get a better understanding. Let's put the text here; let's get the in-depth understanding of what's happening." That has been very helpful in the last few weeks. Certainly as we spoke to parents and others all around the province, we've been familiar with the stresses and strains they as customers are feeling in the system. It has already given us a base to operate from in a stakeholder review of the bargaining process. That is what the issues management team is doing. And I stress they are not doing it all by themselves. The idea is to bring in people who have information and knowledge and experience in various areas on an as-needed basis so that we are again dealing directly with our stakeholders.

12:10

There were a lot of comments directed to vote 2, which is called Work and Safety Standards. I need to just make this point.

Vote 2 is standards and vote 3 is client services. The standards area is that group which actually establishes the standards. The delivery of services is through client services. So we do have a substantial reduction in votes 2.0.3 and 2.0.4, partly because the standards development work in the safety codes area or the re-inventing of the system in the safety standards area has largely been completed. Now we're into implementation, so there has been, therefore, a drop of funding in that area, partly also by elimination of positions which were vacant at the time.

In particular, reduction has been in travel, because of course those who were involved in re-inventing the safety standards system were required to be in the field a great deal as they were discussing and developing the new system with our stakeholders. They no longer need to be doing that. The emphasis is now shifting over to client services, direct service as opposed to setting standards.

There was a comment regarding who's going to pay for training of inspectors. That makes an assumption that we have nobody in the field right now who is a fully qualified inspector, and of course that's not true. We have those and they will continue to be inspectors, and as new people enter the field, they will also be required to meet the quality standards for inspectors. It's like any other field. The government does not pay for a lawyer to get his or her training other than through funding of the postsecondary system or the loan system. There are always going to be people coming in and getting their own training or accessing programs that assist for training.

There was a comment, and I just want to . . . It says municipalities are going to have to take over the system, and that is not true. That is a myth being perpetuated by some, and I want to say again that it is not true. It is an option. If they wish to take it on, they may. If they do not wish to take it on, they do not have to do so. Edmonton and Calgary, of course, want to, and they will continue to want to. Many other municipalities do not want to and have told us so, and that's also possible and is happening.

Moving, then, to employment standards. As you know, we did have the symposiums, and the results of those symposiums and the results of the employee review of employment standards have been put together. Later in this session I will be filing the paper to describe it all, and I think I will leave specific comments until then.

The reference to workers and the effect bankruptcies have on them. That is federal legislation because it's bankruptcies. In receiverships we have our own rules, but that wasn't the question.

Minimum wage. I have said over and over and over again that minimum wage is not designed to be a living wage; it is not designed to meet the poverty level. In fact, we know that a single parent with two children living in Edmonton or Calgary in order to meet the poverty level would need to be earning something in the order of \$10.50 an hour based on a 40-hour week and a 50-week year. There is no minimum wage across Canada that is that high. Minimum wage is only one of an array of services, and what we have done in Alberta in addressing questions of poverty is use other programs, mostly delivered by the department of social services.

There was a comment or a question on injuries on the job. I would just say that that falls within the responsibilities of the minister of occupational health and safety, so I invite the member to put his questions to that minister.

Throughout you will see that we have indeed cut positions. We had all those positions vacant and banked. There was only one individual in this department whom we then dealt with in terms of the various programs we have helping people to make transitions from one job to another. Given the fiscal realities, we have had

to downsize our government, and of course we now have a government in terms of employee size that is smaller than it was 15 years ago.

In vote 4, Labour Relations Board, how can you have a cut in personnel? If I may say so, that's a more modern term, notwithstanding Treasury documents still use the old-fashioned word. But with cuts in personnel, how do we still manage to have essentially a flat budget? Again, we are looking to improve the effectiveness, to give the employees more tools, and we're doing that through computer services which the staff will then be able to access, each of them becoming more effective but still delivering the same service.

Vote 5 is the Human Rights Commission. I have said and I'll repeat that I have no plans to bring any legislative amendments to the Individual's Rights Protection Act in this session. In terms of other specifics, there was a question as to pay equity. I can also say there is no current plan to bring in pay equity legislation.

In terms of the effectiveness and efficiency of staff at the Human Rights Commission in handling complaints, I can say there has been some effort put into, again, increasing the effectiveness of our services. One suggestion I have made to the commission is that they should convene a stakeholder group, particularly people who have accessed their services in the past, and again get directly from the customers what it is they need. I know the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore and I had discussions about perhaps having almost a road map for people, telling them how to get from A to B and what the process is so they have a working understanding of what steps will be taken. I think that would be a very valuable move for the commission to undertake.

12:20

I did not announce the equity promotion teams. They were announced by the commission last week, I guess it was. Those are essentially a reflection of the reorganization of the staff in the commission to move to a team-structured organization. It is in response to my request, which I have made every year now for three years, that there be more outreach programs undertaken by the commission, because it seems to me that until we have every Albertan as a matter of course in their everyday activities honouring human rights principles, our job will not be done.

The Aryan Nations inquiry was referred to, and the statement was made that the Human Rights Commission can't do anything about it. In fact, what that inquiry did was to set a new community standard and a very explicit community standard as to what we will tolerate in Alberta in terms of freedom of speech on the one hand and promoting feelings of hatred on the other.

I think this is an appropriate moment to address this memorandum, a copy of which I've been given, from the Eric Cormack Centre and the Rosecrest centre as well. Thank you very much for bringing this to my attention. I notice that it's dated March 23 of this year. On the face of it, it seems to me to be quite unconscionable. My immediate reaction is: how can you tell people, staff members, in what language to talk among themselves? To restrict them to only one language doesn't seem too reasonable. However, as in all these cases, we always learn more when we have an opportunity to speak to the people most directly involved. Certainly I will be asking in this case, I think, the public service commissioner to follow up and get a complete understanding, and then we will move on from there.

Now, talking about the public administration office, there was some question as to the occupational health area and the reasons for cuts there. That is because the costs of occupational health personnel have been taken out of the central organization, PAO, and given to the departments to bear the responsibility. The

reason for the reduction in Employee Relations is primarily the insurance funding that I mentioned. Again, the costs, instead of being borne in the central agency, have now been moved out to the departments so the direct cost will be borne by those it benefits.

Those are my responses, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for the opportunity to present my estimates.

I would now move that the vote be reported.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. minister.
I'll call upon the Deputy Government House Leader.

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

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Department of Labour, reports progress therein, and requests leave to sit yet again.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: All those in favour of the report, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Carried.

head: **Royal Assent**

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, his Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor will now attend upon the Assembly.

[The Minister of Economic Development and Trade and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

12:30

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Associate Sergeant-at-Arms opened the door, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise, please. Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor is without.

MR. SPEAKER: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order!

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Gordon Towers, and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade entered the Chamber. His Honour took his place upon the Throne]

HIS HONOUR: Please be seated.

MR. SPEAKER: May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has, at its present sittings, passed certain Bills to which, and in the name of the Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

CLERK: Your Honour, the following are the titles of the Bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed.

No.	Title
9	Nova Terms of Service Regulation Validation Act
20	Alberta Local Employment Transfer Act

[The Lieutenant Governor indicated his assent]

CLERK: In Her Majesty's name His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these Bills.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise, please.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Lieutenant Governor and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade left the Chamber]

[Mr. Speaker took his place in the Chair, and the Mace was uncovered]

MR. SPEAKER: Be seated, please.

Hon. members, I wonder if we could have the consent of the House to revert to tablings, please. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. SPEAKER: At 12:15 this afternoon the following was delivered to me as addressed by Clare Liden, Assistant Chief Judge, Provincial Court of Alberta, Chair of the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

I enclose herewith the Final Report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission 1991/92 together with an Individual Report by each member of the Commission.

This Final Report including the Individual Report by each member of the Commission is submitted pursuant to the provisions Section 8(1) of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, Statutes of Alberta, 1990, Chapter E-4.01, as amended.

Additional copies for distribution to Members of the Legislative Assembly are enclosed.

With that, I then file the four copies with the Clerk of the Assembly. Members will receive individual copies at their desk right now, prior to any further business of the House taking place.

12:40

Hon. members, you might come back to order.

The Chair's been apprised that the printer rushed through these copies so they could be in your possession this afternoon. Additional copies are not available until next Monday morning.

So copies have been delivered to members in the House. If some members are not present at the moment and they need to access the House later this afternoon, that can be arranged through

staff in the Speaker's office. Copies have not been delivered to your offices. They've been delivered to you here in the Chamber.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, with thanks for the reading material to keep us occupied for the weekend, I'm pleased to move that in accordance with Motion 17, passed by the Assembly on May 13, we now adjourn until Tuesday, May 19, at 2:30 p.m.,

when we will again discuss estimates for the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services. No; I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. If I could correct that, we will discuss that in the evening. Of course, Tuesday afternoon will be private members' business.

[At 12:42 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 2:30 p.m.]