

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, October 19, 1993**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 93/10/19

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd ask the committee to come to order. Tonight we're considering the estimates of the Department of Labour. [interjections]

As this is only the second time the Department of Labour has been before us, I wouldn't want anyone to labour under a delusion that there is not still some modicum of decorum. Those people who wish to talk, giggle, and otherwise make extraneous noises to the speeches – I know the Whip is signaling me all kinds of things – we would invite them to carry on those activities in chambers other than the committee Chamber.

On a point of order, Calgary-Varsity.

MR. SMITH: Actually, sir, I'm not familiar with the process in Committee of Supply, but I thought if we could revert to Introduction of Visitors, I would like to acknowledge the hon. Member for Fort McMurray as a visitor here this evening.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think you're out of order, and we won't entertain further points of order on this point. The absence or presence of certain members, unless it's the Chairman or the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker who are calling them to order, are not normally named in here, Calgary-Varsity.

MR. SMITH: Excuse me, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to withdraw that. I didn't understand the process. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The committee will ignore those instructions.

Other than the fact that the Toronto Blue Jays are three runs ahead, I'm not sure that we're ready.

head: **Main Estimates 1993-94**

Labour

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd ask now that the minister make some additional comments, perhaps answer some of the questions that were raised at the last consideration of his estimates, and then we can proceed. Again, those people who wish to do otherwise, please go outside to the antechambers, where there's a television set available.

Mr. Minister.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You made mention of acknowledging or answering questions that were previously asked. I'm happy to announce that tonight I'll be sparing my colleagues the pain of having to listen to me answer them, because indeed I have, I believe, answered each question that was raised, not just by members opposite but also by my own colleagues, and we've replied in writing to everyone. I invite any further questioning off those questions. If you feel there's more information you need, then by all means get in touch with me.

Just by way of a quick reminder, because I do want to hear the penetrating analysis from members opposite and of course my own colleagues, as I know they are caught right up in the intensity of these estimates, this portfolio went through a number of changes back in January. Occupational health and safety, which used to be a stand-alone department, was merged with Labour. There were

considerable changes that went on through that exercise. Those are reflected in the estimates. I have to acknowledge that there were positions deemed to be redundant, and most of those positions, in fact about 98 percent of them, were abolished but through the VSAs, so people did receive severance for it. It was recognized then that areas of administration, finance, and personnel could be amalgamated, but in the key areas, occupational health and safety officers being out in the field and also the labour officers being out where they need to be, those particular positions still receive the due attention they need so that the functions and the mandate of occupational health and safety can be preserved.

Also brought into Labour under the portfolio was the whole Professions and Occupations Bureau, which is a very exciting area. The Member for Calgary-Varsity, who is even now preparing his notes, is the chairman of the Professions and Occupations Bureau. I would certainly afford him any opportunity he wanted to make any comments further to the comments he made the last time we did estimates. I can say that his presence as chairman of that particular bureau, one formerly inhabited by yourself, Mr. Chairman, is very much appreciated. His ability to analyze a situation and get a sense of the big picture has brought depth to that particular area. We are looking for some exciting things which will probably be unfolding in the late fall – if not, in the new year – from that particular area.

Also, just as a way of reminder, the whole area of inspections and safety inspections is something that is being moved into what we call the Safety Codes Council. Right now, of course, there aren't enough inspectors within the department to cover all the areas that need inspection. So what is being made available to the entire province is the ability for municipalities, agencies, or individuals to become accredited, based on criteria that are being set up right now by the various disciplines, to be actually making themselves available throughout the province to be doing the inspections. We would see, then, our people in Labour and in occupational health and safety taking more of an audit role of the inspections that are taking place and a safety code network spreading throughout this province that is really going to enhance safety and, working with industry, working with business, working with labour, have in place those things which are necessary to make for what I think will be not just the safest but the most productive working environment anywhere in the country. I might add that that reflects the philosophy and view of our government and of myself and our department, that we want to move in all areas in a facilitative role in a deregulatory approach to the issues, not as an intervenor but rather as a facilitator in all the different areas which fall under the portfolio of Labour, occupational health and safety.

If I can use an example of how we do that and how the philosophy translates itself into day-to-day practice, we have an employment standards division. A lot of the work conducted by offices in that division comes from employees who feel they have not received due recompense either for regular pay or holiday pay, vacation pay, overtime. There are literally thousands of calls in a year that are registered to both the Edmonton and the Calgary offices alone, let alone the other regional offices. So that time-consuming factor of running down a lot of those particular concerns and complaints was addressed and is being addressed by the development of what we call self-help kits. When people call in, technology is there, first of all, to assist them, to get them to the right person so they're not wasting a lot of time hanging on the end of a phone. As a matter of fact, in a large majority of cases the direction in which they are referred is that they are sent one of these self-help kits, which shows them as an employee how to take the responsibility to follow up a request for what they feel

is just compensation in an area that they feel they have been done unjustly in. That is working very well in terms of not only helping the employees to take responsibility but also considerably lightening the load on the officers so they can concentrate on the more complex cases, and it's been very successful too. We're finding in the majority of cases, when they take the approach and steps that are laid out for them, the employers do respond and we're seeing the issues getting settled.

The Workers' Compensation Board, which falls under the responsibility of the minister, has been a very challenging but exciting area. Something a lot of people don't realize is that the WCB is not in fact a division of the Department of Labour. It is an arm's-length organization with its own legislation. It's the responsibility of the minister to make sure that the WCB is complying with legislation and with policy, not to get involved in the day-to-day operations or the day-to-day decision-making process but in fact to make sure there's compliance with legislation and policy.

That might be an interesting mouthful. How does that work in reality? Back in late December of last year, in sitting down with the CEO, who was then a new CEO hired by my predecessor who had the good wisdom and the good eye to spot this particular individual, there was agreement that some things had to be attended to. One of the things was the administration costs. Another area was the unfunded liability, then injury rights themselves, of course, and the length of time it was taking for injured workers to be dealt with.

8:10

I've given reports on a quarterly basis and sometimes a monthly basis of the progress being made by WCB on these particular areas, the most recent report showing that as of the end of September, firstly, and not necessarily in order of importance, administration costs had been reduced by approximately 20 percent. This year's budget will show actually a surplus in the area of operations. The unfunded liability, which previously had been over \$600 million at the start of the year, was optimistically being forecast at being reduced by about \$120 million. In fact, the numbers are now in sufficiently that we can safely say that by December 31 you will see a reduction in the unfunded liability of at least \$160 million. Just to put that in perspective, this government has been saying that this year we would reduce overall in terms of government expenditures the consolidated deficit, which is \$700 million. Of that \$700 million at least \$160 million is going to be the WCB and what they've been able to do in terms of addressing the unfunded liability.

Also, there's been a real focus on managing the claims: having more consistent management of claims, having adjudicators staying with a claim through the process, and having more assistance to people as they approach the Claims Services Review Committee and moving on to appeals. It might be of interest to members to know that this year there will be approximately 33,000 claims registered before the WCB, and approximately 2 percent of those will actually go on to the appeals committee. So it's by no means a perfect record, but 2 percent of those going on to the appeals committee is really not that bad a record.

There will always be workers, unfortunately, who are not feeling they got total satisfaction through the process. That part is always unfortunate, but I want to commend the people involved both at the CEO level and also right at the front lines in WCB for being so significantly a part of this reduction in administration costs, in the unfunded liability, and for consistency in the claims area.

I'll just close my remarks on this and take questions and suggestions. I think one of the most significant factors of the

Department of Labour is the actual mandate we have to work with labour and to do what we can to make sure that the message that goes out of this province is that we have a very productive and a very exciting and co-operative work, labour, and management environment in which to work. We believe that here in Alberta as applied to labour – and this isn't just to do with Labour but in all the reachings of government – we can say we offer that environment which is probably the safest, most productive, creative, and co-operative environment in which to work. We have seen some tremendous gains and inroads in terms of discussions between labour and management in the province. In the construction bargaining sector alone, seeing each of over 20 sections come to agreement in terms of satisfying their collective agreements has been a very satisfying process, to watch the people at work there. That's just one area where we've seen some real gains. We're really trying to get this message out that bargaining and collective bargaining does not have to be lose/lose, does not have to be win/lose, but in fact can be a win/win situation. We talk about mutual gains bargaining: that's what we advocate, that's what we promote, and in fact that's what we do see in many cases.

Right now it's no secret that we have many challenges facing us, especially in the area of deficit reduction that we're into now. We have asked health care unions to voluntarily consider a 5 percent reduction. The government has asked that, and Labour has been there and will be there to facilitate those discussions and facilitate that process.

Again, we sincerely believe the co-operative, consultative approach is the best one, and that's the direction to which we are committed.

With those very few brief remarks, Mr. Chairman, I would give way to members who will have questions or suggestions for me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS LEBOVICI: Thank you. I would like to thank the Minister responsible for Labour for his responses to my questions when the Labour estimates were up first. It's unfortunate that we only got them late yesterday afternoon, so there may be some areas that I'm not quite sure about, and I'm sure that the minister will allow for that if I have any other issues that I would like to address at a later period of time. Because I can't see, I'm not aware whether the deputy ministers are up in the gallery behind me, and if they are . . . [interjection] They're not? Then I would still like to thank them for the responses that they have put forward through their department.

Before I get into the specifics, because I do have some questions as to the answers that they put forward, I would like to address some of the generalities with regards to the role of Labour in this government and especially in these, as you yourself have put it, challenging times. I would like to perhaps use some of the questions and the principles that I've outlined in terms of a method for which the minister can use as checks and balances in decisions that this current government is making.

It's interesting that in your closing remarks, Mr. Minister, you indicated that the role of Labour was to be productive, exciting, co-operative work in terms of labour management in Alberta and that mutual gains bargaining was one method by which this was to be approached. I would beg to differ with that statement in terms of your role as facilitator, because it would appear to me that the Department of Labour right now, in conjunction with some of the other areas of responsibility within the government, is looking at activities much more akin to union busting and much more akin to activities that look at how to get around loopholes in legislation with regards to successor rights.

I speak specifically of the case with regards to the Alberta Liquor Control Board employees as well as with regards to the health care unions, where you yourself mentioned you were in the process of looking at voluntary rollbacks. Again, it's hard to reconcile the issue of voluntary with the fixed date of November 23, and the question always remains in one's mind: what happens if these voluntary rollbacks are not achieved? It's also strange for a Minister of Labour to talk about facilitation when what in actual fact is occurring is negotiations within the media. As you yourself know, that is something that is not in accordance with the labour laws within this province.

I looked in terms of some principles in trying to understand what the Minister of Labour and the minister of public works and the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health and all those ministers that are involved with the public-sector employees were trying to look at with regards to these rollbacks, so I went back to a draft document of *Toward 2000*, because I found the draft was a lot more specific than the actual document that was put forward in terms of the summary document.

I'd just like to pull out some of the items that to my mind made sense within this document and again do not seem to be followed by this government in terms of its process of decision-making with regards to the rollbacks and layoffs that are occurring. One that's on page 18 says that "the new process for decision-making must consider input from all groups of society before making a final decision." We keep hearing in the House about the roundtables on health, yet the decisions have been made. This afternoon at 4:30 there was another announcement of \$5 million being cut out of the health sector. Again I wonder how that principle that's enunciated in this draft report is being followed by this government.

Another area was in terms of the philosophy – it's on appendix page 4 – that

it is the people of Alberta who make things happen, entrepreneurs who launch companies, good managers who direct them, and productive, dedicated employees who perform the work that creates the wealth.

This government in terms of the way it's treating its employees is definitely not promoting dedication amongst those employees.

I'd like to address some other areas within the specific mandate perhaps, as I saw it, of Alberta Labour. It's fine to hear about the process that Alberta Labour has been conducting with the construction unions, but I'm wondering in terms of some other areas. I quote from page 23.

For example, businesses must seriously consider such options as flex-time and on-site day care facilities. Labour unions will play a key role in selling the partnership process to workers.

Again, what is Alberta Labour doing to promote those kinds of activities?

[Mr. Herard in the Chair]

I look at another area within the report that deals with eliminating the deficit and reducing the debt. It says that
committee members . . .

These are the committee members on *Toward 2000*.

. . . believe that the first step in dealing with the deficit is to cut expenses.

That's exactly what this government is doing, but that, and this I think is an important qualifier:

in doing so, the government must first eliminate real waste and redundancy, not just make cuts that are driven by controversy or are easy to do.

Again, when I asked the minister responsible for government reorganization as to what was happening, the minister replied: just wait and see. I wonder whether there is a plan that is in place or

if it's just let's wait and see and we'll do it as each day progresses. So that to me is an area again: what is Labour's role, and what is Labour doing to look at that?

8:20

There is another quote from page 42 that talks about "innovative ways for turning public sector services into wealth creators without competing with private sector companies." I wonder whether that's part of an overall plan, and if it is, can we see what that plan is?

There's another area in terms of page 44 that talks about developing a program of incentives for strong "management and collaboration by government departments." It goes on to say that "the public sector union will need to be actively involved in developing the program." Again, the Department of Labour, I would have thought, would have been the department that would have been pushing those kinds of initiatives, things like the famous employee suggestion box, which does provide for suggestions that are saving within the organization or within the government.

I know that the minister and deputy ministers do meet with other ministers and deputy ministers from across Canada, so I would like to know what kinds of things are being looked at in terms of national standards. On page 47 it says:

A final issue is the need for a combined education and training strategy in which provincial governments take the lead to develop national standards that use international benchmarks, with input from business, labour and other groups.

Again, as a facilitator I would have hoped that the Department of Labour would have that in its annual report in terms of putting moneys toward those kinds of things.

Occupational health. On page 50 it talks about a way to link training efforts to occupational health so that the cost of doing business would be reduced. I can continue in terms of what this discussion paper talks about.

There is one other area that I would like to approach, and that's in terms of a process to actively recognize the homemakers, care givers, and active volunteers as contributors to our society. I'm wondering whether the Department of Labour has looked at what kind of recognition for homemakers could be given.

I think this government appears to be currently stalled on deficit cutting. I would like to know if the Department of Labour has looked at any of the recommendations within this particular document, and if it has, when we will be getting the overall report as to what Labour will be doing to really move us toward the year 2000.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the economic impact of the layoffs. As the minister I'm sure is quite aware, more layoffs will result in more unemployment and that essential services such as health, education, and social services are taking massive cuts. What I'd like to know is whether the Minister of Labour has consulted with the ministers responsible for labour market research and economic development on the effect that these massive layoffs of public-sector employees will have on the Alberta economy. Furthermore, I would also like to know what the analysis is of those effects.

As part of that, I refer to a document that I believe was handed out to the labour groups the other day. In one of them it indicates that in October, November there is to be an implementation team established by the Minister of Health which includes representatives from Labour. I'm wondering if the Minister of Labour's role is to identify those representatives from Labour and how those individuals are chosen.

In terms of advice from the Department of Labour I look at some of the strategies that are being put forward. One that seems to be repeated over and over again is that service providers will be those who are best prepared, lowest cost, qualified service providers, and that the work force will be smaller and salaries will be in alignment with the ability to pay. Along with that seems to come a review of the exclusive scope of practice. I quote from the health roundtable that says: commitment to maintain quality health services provided by the lowest cost, qualified health professional. I think those health professionals deserve to be told what that means. I know that this department talks a lot about reskilling, retooling, et cetera, and I think that the health professionals who are involved in this process need to be consulted. I would like to know if the Department of Labour either through their issues management group or through the member who is responsible for occupations and professions has in fact looked at dealing with those individuals.

Family Day, as the Minister of Labour is well aware, is now part of the collective agreements. I would like to know whether the minister has that on the table and whether he is looking at the Family Day benefit being part of the voluntary rollback. Can the minister please clarify as to what his department's role is going to be in terms of the negotiations? Does the minister plan to do the negotiations all by himself, has he got negotiators who are going to be negotiating, or does he plan for the *Edmonton Journal* to do the negotiating on his behalf? We're looking at several scenarios. One is that Family Day may equal 5 percent. I'd like to know how that could well occur. We're looking at another scenario in two different documents. In one document it seems to say there's a one-year wage freeze. In another document it seems to say one year 5 percent and the next three years 5 percent, which makes 20 percent over a four-year period.

We've had different estimates in terms of how many jobs. As I indicated earlier, we still have no idea as to whether the government will legislate rollbacks. There seems to be some notion that on January 1 there will be cuts. The hospitals will be receiving less in their budgets. Therefore, it would seem to me that, yes, it will be legislated. I think the other is: how are these percentages determined? When we look at the education roundtables, we're looking at 1 percent. Why is education only 1 percent and the other areas 5 percent? I think that's something that needs to be looked at.

In terms of professions and occupations – and I'm glad to see that the member responsible is sitting beside the minister – I'd like to know: now that the Professions and Occupations Bureau has been integrated with the Department of Labour, why is it necessary to continue having an MLA chair this group? What is the role of the chair? Can we get a report that outlines work done to date and future work that would entail an additional remuneration of this chair of \$15,000?

I can move into the specifics. I'm sure that the bell will go, and when it does, I will probably get up later to continue in terms of the kind of outline that I have here. I'd like some specifics in terms of the three-year business plan. In your response you indicated that you did have a business plan. I'm led to understand that there will be a new business plan provided, and I would like to know when it will be completed and when it will be released.

I'd like to know whether you anticipate a 40 percent cutback throughout the civil service, because I think that would indeed affect the kinds of services that your department provides. If so, what are the results of that cutback within your department, especially in the area of employment standards? That's in relation to your response 1, I believe.

You've mentioned multiskilled in some areas, and to me that's become government-speak for jack-of-all-trades and master of none. That's within your answer in terms of your staff being multiskilled at this point in time, and I'd like to know what the implications of multiskilled within the Department of Labour are. I look at a letter that I received and I'm sure other members have received in terms of the Health Sciences Association. They talk about cross-training and the result of that cross-training, which means that they're individuals who are minimally capable of performing complex procedures, and again I would like to just reiterate that it seems that multiskilled just seems to be another word for jack-of-all-trades and master of none.

8:30

When I look at the area of the Fire Training School – and you'll have to in your answer provide some education to me as to exactly the purpose of this and whether the Fire Training School is a possible target for privatization; it seems to be – I don't quite understand why we are training municipalities when municipalities like the city of Edmonton have their own fire department. I'm sure you will provide me with that information. I also would like to know whether the concerns of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association have been addressed. They were in a letter that was presented on March 22, 1993, to Premier Klein. I'll just go to the recommendation, which was that a review of Alberta Public Safety Services and a possible reallocation of some areas of operation, that they work closely with Alberta Labour, but they don't see evidence of a similar approach to service by Alberta Public Safety Services and believe co-ordination of the services we require could best be done by having both the fire commissioner's office and Alberta Public Safety Services reporting through the Deputy Minister of Labour. Maybe if you can provide, as I said, some feedback and education on that issue, then I would appreciate that.

In terms of the FTEs, that was your second response. That dealt with individuals taking the early voluntary options program. My question there is: have any consultants been hired to perform functions that individuals who took the voluntary severance package once performed? If so, how many and at what cost?

In terms of response 3, you indicated that additional reductions are in the new estimates, and I'm just going to go to that. In terms of the downsizing that occurred, I'm wondering whether your department has now updated those reductions to take into effect any of the downsizing that will be occurring throughout the public service. That's basically it.

In terms of responses 4, 5, 6, 7, I may have questions on those at a later date.

In terms of response 8, which deals with the issues management group, I still have a question as to how this group can work effectively when the government continually interferes. Again, I cite the example of the collective bargaining that appears to be happening in the media. There was a document that was put forward in terms of the education bargaining consultation, and within that document there were several recommendations and commitments from Alberta Labour to act on recommendations directly involving Alberta Labour, including looking up the role of mediators and making their role in resolving disputes more proactive and effective. That was on page 12 of this document. Some of those recommendations are that there will be general collective bargaining training. It will be available in the 1994-95 school year, and it will deal with the legal framework for bargaining and what the bargaining process involves. I'm just wondering whether there are any moneys allocated within the Department of Labour for that and, in all seriousness, whether the issues

management group can continue its work given the prospective rollbacks within Education.

The other area is that there would be a project team involving the ATA, ASBA, and AHSCA – in frames of reference, that's on page 8 – with Alberta Education and Alberta Labour playing a supportive role.

I'll have to continue.

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, could I have unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed?

The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

MR. DOERKSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to introduce to you and the members of this Assembly my esteemed brother Mr. Alvin Doerksen, who is joining us in the members' gallery. Alvin is the president of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. As he stands, you can see that he and I share the same good looks and intelligence that have made the Doerksen name famous throughout the world. Would you please give him the traditional welcome of the House.

head: **Main Estimates 1993-94**

Labour (continued)

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

MR. BENIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. May I also first thank the minister for having responded in writing to the questions that I had asked in the first round of the estimates. I do thank him, and I look forward to additional information as we proceed.

I would like to commence by just raising the unfunded liability, which the minister also referred to. I would like the minister to do virtually the impossible: could he explain how the WCB actually plans to eliminate the unfunded liability while maintaining its assessment fee revenue at the present \$492.5 million? A 7 and a half percent levy is apparently built into the assessment rate. Is this 7 and a half percent levy in addition to the \$492.5 million revenue or is it included in it? If it is included, what is being reduced by the amount of \$36.9 million in expenditures at the present time?

Now, before continuing, I will also refer to an item that I did receive from the WCB people. Apparently, this year they will be reducing, by estimate, the unfunded liability by the figure mentioned by the minister: \$167 million. The following year they estimate \$36 million; and in 1995, \$115 million; the following year in '96, by \$143 million; and finally in '97, \$108 million. If they follow through, the unfunded liability will become zero. I have trouble following the logic of why there is such a variance from year to year in the figures that will be reducing the unfunded liability. Now, the WCB claims that half of the unfunded liability will be reduced by this special 7 and a half percent levy over a five-year period. The question that has to be asked is: how is this possible? If the present revenue is reconfirmed by their annual report, 1992, as it stands, at \$492.5 million, 7 and a half percent comes to \$36.9 million per year. Over five years, that's \$184.5 million. Using the WCB's own figures, in 1992 the unfunded

liability was \$569 million, half of which comes to \$284.5 million. There is a difference between the \$284.5 million and \$184.5 million of exactly \$100 million. So using the figures supplied by the WCB, there is a shortfall immediately of \$100 million. Now, in addition to this, the WCB claims that the other half of the \$569 million unfunded liability will be eliminated by reducing administration costs, improved investment revenue, and actuarial adjustments.

8:40

First, let us look at how the administration costs can be reduced. In 1992 the WCB annual report shows that in the previous year, 1991, expenses for administration stood at \$96 million. The following year, 1992, administration expenses increased to \$109,345,000. That's an increase of 13 and a third million dollars over the previous year. Obviously, as administration expenses are increasing, not decreasing, the unfunded liability will not be reduced through reductions in administration expenses.

So let's look at the second avenue. The WCB claims that its investment fund, which is controlled and administered by the Provincial Treasurer, will help reduce the unfunded liability. Now, in 1992 the WCB annual report records this investment fund as having a market value of \$1.962 billion, almost \$2 billion. I requested that the minister responsible for the WCB provide detailed information on all aspects of this WCB investment fund during the first round of reviewing Labour estimates but have failed to receive this information, apparently because the information is controlled by the Provincial Treasurer. Therefore, I would have to get the information from the Provincial Treasurer, which I will pursue. In any case, considering the government's record, as illustrated by consecutive high provincial deficits and a high provincial debt, it is obvious that the investment fund should not be counted on to help the WCB's unfunded liability. The Provincial Treasurer's track record is in having deficits, not surpluses.

Finally, there is the third avenue: actuarial adjustments. Now, by adjusting the all-important underlining assumptions for future payouts and for future expenses incurred due to present injury claims, phenomenal, absolutely phenomenal, on-paper savings can be shown. But to implement these savings, injured workers would have their legitimate claims rejected or the injured worker would be channeled into a course offered at an unlicensed private school and, upon completion of this dead-end course, stop receiving WCB compensation payments and rehabilitation therapy. As injured workers are removed from the WCB's injury claims list and payments to them stop, the WCB's unfunded liability decreases. The negative impact on injured workers, on society, on future government expenditures will become self-evident. Meanwhile, the WCB will on paper have its unfunded liability projected to show a zero liability. As the unfunded liability approaches zero, the hon. minister responsible for WCB will see his political star rise like a missile into outer space before it suddenly nose-dives back towards earth, towards reality, towards self-destruction. The laws of reality cannot be changed by a paper shuffle, by smoke-and-mirror illusions.

In rehabilitation, section 83 of the WCB Act requires the WCB to provide whatever rehabilitation assistance is required to assist an injured worker "to return to work and to lessen or eliminate any handicap resulting from that injury." The sooner injured workers recover and return to work or self-sufficiency the less likely the devastating psychosocial problems associated with extended periods of disability will develop and become chronic. High-quality and effective rehabilitation reduces the length of disability, which in turn decreases claim costs. Rehabilitation is

cost-effective, especially if the injured worker receives the right medication, the right rehabilitation services at an early stage. The objective of rehabilitation is to heal the injury, restore physical, psychosocial, and vocational functioning, and return the injured worker to work. When an injured worker is fully rehabilitated, returning to work, and succeeding in maintaining employment, the worker, the employer, and all society benefit. Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that as injured workers continue to phone my constituency office and other MLAs' constituency offices, the WCB claims its Edmonton Rehabilitation Centre is operating at below capacity by as much as 50 percent, enabling the WCB to offer for a fee its rehabilitation services in competition with private rehabilitation facilities.

Would the minister explain how it is that four private insurance companies approached the Edmonton Rehabilitation Centre after reading of its accreditation in the service it provides to injured workers? Who made the first approach, WCB or the insurance companies? Who are these insurance companies? Could the minister provide this House with the names of these insurance companies? What fee schedule has been agreed upon between the WCB and these insurance companies? Is the fee structure at WCB cost? Is it comparable to the fees being charged by private facilities, or is the fee structure below those charged by private facilities? Why would the minister allow the WCB to provide this service to private insurance companies when many of the injured workers that the WCB is responsible for are being discharged before they are fully rehabilitated? If the WCB is not prepared to utilize its Edmonton Rehabilitation Centre to fully rehabilitate all injured workers that it is legally responsible to assist, why is the WCB being allowed to use this facility to provide a fee-for-service to private insurance companies? What is the justification for the WCB owning and operating this facility when it is providing it to private insurance companies rather than to its own injured workers?

On the education front, education courses offered to injured workers should be oriented to assisting injured workers to re-enter the work force and not for ulterior motives or reasons. The minister has confirmed that the WCB has spent \$2,164,888 from March of '93 to March of '94 by having signed contracts for 223 job club projects. How much could have been saved if the WCB had co-operated with the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development, which offers courses in job search techniques and résumé writing? To assist individuals obtain employment, 20 career development centres throughout Alberta offer these courses at no cost to individuals. I believe Advanced Education and Career Development must be complimented for this practical, down-to-earth approach in reducing employment.

How much has WCB spent on educational programs paid to unlicensed private schools like the Jack Bredin Community Institute during the past year? The cost per student was \$3,700 plus \$200 for books. That is \$3,900 per injured worker per course. Injured workers claim that once they took this course, they were cut off from WCB compensation payments whether they had a job or not. The injured workers didn't benefit. Society didn't benefit. Government doesn't benefit. The private schools, licensed and unlicensed, benefited. The WCB reduced its payments to injured workers and in the process is reducing its unfunded liability amount. For \$3,900 the injured workers and their employers should expect and demand positive results. Therefore, could the minister report on how many injured workers attended private schools, licensed and unlicensed; at what total cost; how many injured workers obtained employment after completing the courses; and how many of them are still employed due to the courses that WCB paid for? Could the minister also

report how many millions of dollars the WCB has saved in compensation payments and rehabilitation costs by removing these injured individuals immediately after their courses were completed? Also, in the process by how many millions of dollars has the WCB reduced its unfunded liability by this action?

8:50

Regarding the issue of employees possibly paying premiums. The issue of employees paying WCB premiums along with their employers was raised in this House by a private member on the government side of the House. Considering that when the WCB was first established, it was understood that in exchange for receiving medical and rehabilitation benefits, partial income replacement during the period the injured worker could not work, and retraining, the injured workers surrendered their right to sue their employers, should the minister require employees to pay WCB premiums, would this action not terminate this agreement, this understanding? That is, would injured workers regain their right to sue their employers?

Now, in regard to the Horowitz recommendations, on September 27 in response to my question the minister stated that out of a total of 61 recommendations only four or five have not and will not be implemented. A review of the WCB's response to the Horowitz report shows that 23 percent of all recommendations are rejected outright, 20 percent are delayed for further study, another 34 percent are promised to be implemented in the distant future, while only 23 percent of all recommendations have actually been implemented. Could the minister explain this variance? In addition, as four recommendations are apparently barred by existing legislation, would the minister be introducing amendments to the WCB Act which will allow these recommendations to be discussed in this House and decided upon by members of the House?

I would like to thank the minister also for having sent over along with the Workers' Compensation Board report his response in writing. I do thank him for that. I look forward to the minister and through him the Provincial Treasurer providing the additional data that I have requested including the investment fund standing at close to \$2 billion, for as the minister will acknowledge, if there was a 5 percent return on that fund over a five-year period, it would eliminate the unfunded liability. The importance of that fund is very, very evident, and I do hope that the minister and the Provincial Treasurer will submit a detailed list of what companies the shares are in, what foreign assets are owned in which countries, and all the data that one should expect on such a vast amount of money which is so crucial to the well-being of the WCB. I do thank the minister because I know, based on previous experience, that he will respond and he will do a number of things.

On the physiotherapy side, is there going to be a cap put on rehabilitation provided to people that will be getting services from the WCB? I believe there was an announcement today indicating that there are cuts. I would like to know if this will also be brought into the WCB rehabilitation programs.

I do thank the minister.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am here today to speak to you and through you to remind the hon. members of this Assembly of a matter that is critical to the whole fabric of our society as we have known it in our lifetimes. I speak of the protection of employee rights. These rights include being able to work in a safe environment, protection from discrimination in all

forms, the right to an adequate wage, and the right to organize. Apart from the pious platitudes, I have seen no indication that the government has any serious concerns about these fundamentals. Furthermore, the brutal state of our economy tends to foster heightened disharmony between management and labour, disharmony at a time when good relations are even more critical than usual. The spending estimates of the hon. Minister of Labour and the comments of some hon. ministers across do not hold out great hope that the government has a master plan to alleviate this serious situation. Does the hon. minister not recognize the importance of developing a fairer process of addressing grievances? Does the government not understand that arbitration, conciliation, and perhaps other innovative means of co-operation will accomplish more than the confrontation and aggression? If so, where is the evidence of it?

Mr. Chairman, I would like to consider today some specific matters of great concern to workers of Alberta, to organized labour in Alberta, and indeed to all Albertans, but first it would be useful to consider very briefly part of the heritage of the labour movement, a movement that despite its stormy history helped give us many things, including the sense of equality that we hold strongly in our society today, a sense of equality that makes this Assembly one that represents Albertans, not just privileged Albertans.

Hon. members will recall learning that in the early part of the industrial revolution in England, labour organizations tended to be local and usually informal, with hours of work and seasonal time off to handle the agricultural matters that were still the mainstay of the community being of prime concern. However, as the industrial base of the economy became more complex, so did the attempts of the workers to protect themselves from some of the horrendous abuses we have all read about. Unfortunately, the combination laws, which for decades have been rarely enforced, became effective tools for stamping out unions in individual factories. The combination laws were repealed in 1824, and from then on the union movement grew steadily, albeit not without its difficulties in size, industry, power, legal status, and political clout. In this it was aided sometimes inadvertently by parliamentarians who were responsible for passing laws forcing employers to improve work conditions. Hon. members will remember learning that the most popularly known of these was Lord Shaftesbury, who was credited with establishing at least in basic form the principle that an elected government has the responsibility to extend basic economic protection to all the citizens, not just to the privileged citizens.

Albeit briefer and less dramatic the Canadian labour experience was similar, moving from local organizations before Confederation to, after the Second World War, the labour movement momentum we have all been familiar with.

9:00

Mr. Chairman, in ending my brief history lecture, I would like to point out one important sequence of events from the Canada of the past century that bears on my following remarks. The Toronto printers' strike of 1872 led the then Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, to introduce the Trade Union Act, which stated that unions were not to be regarded as illegal conspiracies. Sometime subsequent to this, there was established the Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor which reported in 1889 and documented the sweeping impact of the industrial revolution in Canada. The commissioners strongly defended unions as a suitable form of organization to the workers, and I quote them: the man who sells his labour should in selling it be on an equality with the man who buys it. In its relations with its own employees,

in its legislation and these estimates is there any indication the government understands this important principle?

Keeping in mind, Mr. Chairman, the lessons of the past, I would like to address some of the more current concerns of this Assembly, beginning with the question of union certification. Under present legislation workers in the workplace indicate their interest in being represented by a union when they agree to sign up and join a union. A secret ballot must then be held. If a majority vote is in favour, then the union is certified, the workers are represented by their union, and the employer is viewed as being organized. However, recent experience has shown that a large percentage of these secret ballot votes are defeated even though a majority of the workers have signed union cards. Labour believes management uses the time between signing up and the vote so that it can intimidate employees. Prior to the change in the labour code in 1988 automatic certification occurred so long as more than 50 percent of the employees signed up and other specific tests were met. There was also automatic certification if there were unfair labour practices. Management is not comfortable with automatic certification because it thinks the unions can encourage enough workers to sign up to achieve that. Management believes if a worker is given the chance to reflect and vote in a secret ballot, he or she may reject the idea of a union.

Mr. Chairman, here we see an obvious example of the confrontation/co-operation dilemma I referred to earlier. Both sides clearly feel that the other is trying to intimidate or dominate the other, yet both sides need each other. If both sides are happy and producing, it makes for a healthier Alberta and it also makes us all happier. Surely even this government can see that it must consult with all relevant parties with a view to developing a solution acceptable to all. Or can it?

When we come to the issue of confrontation, Mr. Chairman, we come to the issue of improving arbitration. One of the three options for dealing with labour grievances is a collective agreement. Arbitration is either by a single arbitrator or a three-member arbitration board. Labour prefers the single arbitrator because of cost and time constrictions and indicates that the other process is too costly and too lengthy. Employers prefer the three-arbitrator board because it ensures their position is known and presumably understood. Clearly, both parties have a valid case, and also clearly it would be valuable to organize an educational program to increase the number of skilled labour arbitrators who belong to the arbitrators association. Is the government prepared to do this? Does the government understand that this would speed up the process and reduce costs? Does the government realize that with this modest, short-term investment it could reduce labour/management conflict to a significant degree and thus help to increase productivity and give the economy of Alberta as a whole a big boost?

Furthermore, has the government considered there may be other than the traditional ways of handling labour disputes? I understand, Mr. Chairman, that in recent years the government of Alberta has initiated studies into labour practices in jurisdictions outside Canada. Surely some good ideas must have come out, but where? In the current government's program do we see any evidence of this?

Mr. Chairman, I would like to consider public-sector workers. After all, as all hon. members know, in this jurisdiction they are the ones who make the governance of the province of Alberta actually work. Some years ago the economist John Kenneth Galbraith noted that stinginess toward the public economy invariably led to significant loss of valuable opportunities. He wondered if society in the long run might get more satisfaction out

of better schools and more parks than out of bigger automobiles. I quote:

It is scarcely sensible that we should supply our private wants in reckless abundance, while in the case of public goods, on the evidence of the eye, we practise extreme self-denial.

Mr. Chairman, the right to strike is a fundamental aspect of labour negotiation, although one that must always be considered as a last resort alternative. Does the government understand that without the right to strike, labour negotiations will always be weighed in favour of the employer and nowhere more so than when the government is the employer? I hearken back to last century's royal commission and its comments about the equality of labour and the one who hires labour. With the way the system is fixed against public-sector employees, where is that equality? Will the government commit itself to amending the Public Service Employee Relations Act to improve the bargaining process and allow the vast majority of civil servants the right to strike? Does the government not understand that an effective bargaining process and the right to strike will prevent the frustration which led to the unfortunate episodes of the 1990 Alberta social workers' strike?

The health care field has also been the scene of much labour unrest. Will the government commit itself to amending the Labour Relations Code and the Public Service Employee Relations Act to allow hospital workers the right to strike as well? As health care moves from the hospitals to community-based services, the relationship between labour and management in the health care field will change. Will the government ensure that communication takes place between the groups to smooth this transition?

Mr. Chairman, I have been speaking of the plights of organized labour, but perhaps it is wise to somewhat widen the range of our vision, especially as we consider the rapidly changing nature of the work environment. I would like to begin my discussion of this by again reflecting on the observations of Dr. Galbraith. In his classic book *The Affluent Society* Dr. Galbraith noted that workers' desire for economic security was long considered the great enemy of increased production. He developed an elaborate carrot and stick analogy to explain the standard theory that the economic insecurity of the work force was necessary for economic health, but he then went on to refute that standard theory by observing that a historical analysis shows precisely the opposite. It shows that the highest periods of productivity occur when the workers feel most economically secure.

9:10

This is not a time of security. Indeed, from the position of most workers it is, at least in their working lifetimes, a period of unprecedented insecurity. In addition to the high rate of unemployment and overall volatility of the job market, we have a massive and massively changing nature of the type of work available to the work force. Consider for example the rapidly increasing numbers of part-time, contract, and home workers. While their economic situation may be in the short term somewhat satisfactory, what about their long-term needs for such things as medical and dental care and pension benefits? Can we not work out some prorated contributory system so that we will not a few years from now leave these newer style of workers out in the cold? Mr. Chairman, the Employment Standards Code may be adequate for the traditional work force, but is the government prepared to update it to cover new and ever changing work arrangements and social expectations?

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I hope I have provided some food for thought. In considering these matters, we must always remember the principles of fairness, equity, the needs of today, and the expectations of tomorrow. In that light, I ask if the

government will at least make a start on dealing with my concerns by committing itself to a comprehensive and compassionate review of the Labour Relations Code, the Public Service Employee Relations Act, and the Employment Standards Code.

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to focus my comments and questions this evening on the issue of health care workers and how they're being affected by among other things the proposed 5 percent pay rollbacks proposed by the government. Last week I'm sure the minister will remember that he and I had an exchange over exactly what figure the government might be contemplating for job losses amongst health care workers over the next three to four years. The exchange circulated around speculation, as the minister would call it, on the part of some union members and others about whether or not the job losses would be 12,000, whether there might be 15,000 health care workers as opposed to 12,000 full-time-equivalent job losses, whether these 12,000 full-time-equivalent job losses might affect 15,000 health care workers or as many as 20,000 health care workers. The minister said that he never said that. I'm willing to accept that from the minister, although there is some suggestion that other officials of his department may have said that or that he may have said things, been more precise in a meeting with Alberta Hospital Association officials.

In any event, assuming that he didn't specify a figure – and I accept that he didn't – I'm not certain that that represents a very adequate answer either. Either the government knows or has a projection of how many health care workers are actually going to lose their jobs over the next four years, in which case I think they should be telling the health care workers to whom they are presenting the 5 percent wage rollback proposal. I think they have a moral obligation in fact to do that. The fact that they would have that figure and not tell workers I think is not acceptable.

Or the minister doesn't have such a figure. That is to say, he has made no effort, along with the Minister of Health, to predict how many job losses will be involved in the government's proposed rollback, in which case it isn't simply unacceptable, it would seem to me to be – and I'm not accusing anybody of this – literally incompetent that a government would launch itself on cuts of this magnitude without having a specific plan based upon predictions of manpower, health care worker requirements, and the impacts of these cuts on health care workers over the next four years.

So either they have a figure, Mr. Chairman, which they're not telling us and not telling health care workers, which is unacceptable, or they don't have a figure, in which case that is unacceptable. It's literally startling that they would launch this level of cuts and not have some estimation of what impact that will have in terms of job losses. Of course, I believe it would be a moral obligation to allow those employees to see what those projections are. It is also simply good management. Clearly one would hope that a properly functioning government would have some idea of where it's taking the health care system. That idea would have to have somewhere a reflection of the number of health care workers that will be required to deliver health care. Clearly, a competent government would have those figures and would be able to provide those to health care workers and to the public of Alberta.

I think there's another feature of this job layoff issue, and that is the question of increasing revenues. The Treasurer has said that over the next four years he believes government revenues due

to economic growth, not due to any kind of tax increases but due to economic growth, will be as much as a billion. Much of the speculation that the government has initiated around the level of cuts, \$900 million or a billion dollars, is simply straight-line accounting. That is to say, they say that \$900 million or a billion dollars is the equivalent of the percentage of the health care budget's percentage of total government expenditure. So if it's 30 percent, then the health care budget will be responsible for reducing 30 percent of the deficit.

Well, there's another side to that, and that is this issue of revenue increases, which the Treasurer himself has specified. So if the government is saying that they are going to cut health care by an amount equal to its percentage of total expenditure, then it seems to me that they have to take that same formula and apply it through health care to the total increase in revenue. If health care accounts for about 30 percent of expenditure, then health care's share of the increase in revenue should be about 30 percent of that increase, which would be about \$300 million. It seems to me to make sense that that would therefore reduce the necessary expenditure cuts from \$900 million to about \$600 million. My question to the minister is: does he have some indication of whether a proportionate amount of revenue increases due to economic growth specified by the Treasurer will be applied against the health care contribution to deficit reduction, thereby reducing the number of the overall cuts and thereby reducing the number of job losses or job layoffs that will be incurred?

Summarizing this section, I would like to say: will the minister please be very specific? Does he have a figure – yes or no – of job losses projected over the next four years? If he doesn't, could he please tell us why not? If he doesn't, could he tell us how it could be conceivable that a government launching itself on this kind of health care cut wouldn't have projections of that nature? If he has them and he's not telling us, could he please tell us why he is not telling us or telling the unions? Finally, could he please indicate, according to the Treasurer's revenue increase estimates, whether a proportional amount of those revenue increases will be applied to health care – that would be about 30 percent – thereby reducing the overall amount of cuts that would be required on the revenue side?

9:20

My second issue requires the further portion of our exchange last week when I suggested that the minister hadn't addressed issues of specific concern to the unions. Amongst those issues, which the minister then went on to say he had addressed, was the question that has been asked by nurses about early retirement packages. There are nurses, for example, who would be prepared, I suppose, to take an early retirement package, not unlike perhaps the one that was offered to many other public servants earlier this year. Could the minister please tell us if he has answered, has addressed them? What are the specifics of his answer? Will he co-ordinate that kind of a program across all the institutions and for all the nurses in this health care system or won't he? Could he give us a specific answer? He said that he addressed that issue. Could he tell us how he addressed that issue, because the unions to whom he says that he has addressed the issue simply don't know how he has done that.

They have also raised the issue of job security. The minister says that he has addressed that. Could the minister please explain how he has addressed job security? How could he possibly address job security if he won't give the unions, if he won't give anybody an estimate of how many jobs are going to be lost? If he can't tell us how many jobs are going to be lost, then he can't tell us how many jobs are secure. So he can't, by definition, have

addressed job security, unless I'm missing something, and if I am, I would genuinely appreciate the minister's clarification. I have a funny feeling that if he's saying 15,000 isn't the number and we know he's saying zero job losses isn't the number, it's got to be somewhere in between there. So could he please simply specify?

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

A third issue which he says that he's addressed is the labour force redeployment plan that unions have asked be developed. He says that he's developing one. The Minister of Health says that the Minister of Labour is developing one as well. Could the Minister of Labour please tell us how much money he has budgeted for the development of that labour force redeployment plan for health care workers? Could the minister please indicate what projections he has, because this would be critical to a labour force redeployment plan, of how many nurses are going to be required in the next five years and 10 years? Could the minister please indicate how many licensed practical nurses and nurses aids are going to be required in five years and 10 years, critical for the labour force redeployment plan? Could the minister please specify how many doctors are going to be required in our health care system in five years and in 10 years, critical for a labour force redeployment plan?

Obviously, the government wants to argue that it is shifting somehow care from an institutional base to a home care sited base of health care. One of the serious concerns that nurses and other health care workers have is: who is going to end up providing home care services? Clearly, nurses are an obvious choice to do that. In fact, I believe we could not only reduce the costs of the health care system in many respects through adequate, properly structured, nurse-supported, nurse-driven home care, but we could in fact at lower cost enhance the services that many patients of our health care system are now being provided. So could the minister please confirm or deny that the redeployment of nurses from acute care facilities to a home care delivery health care system has been contemplated and is somehow accommodated or accounted for in his labour force redeployment plan?

A final point that I think is very critical to this plan would be the issue of nurses' jobs being eroded. It's called deskilling. That's the euphemism that's being used by this government. Deskilling: taking much of what nurses are doing and handing it to other health care workers; for example, LPNs, licensed practical nurses. Could the minister say whether or not that is being considered in this labour force redeployment plan? Could he indicate what the strategy is in that regard?

Could he answer this question: if the erosion of nurses' jobs is being contemplated, in fact permitted by this government on one side, why is it not the case that the government is considering how nurses' jobs could be enhanced to the benefit of patients and the health care system by taking away those procedures that are currently being done by doctors which don't have to be done by doctors? How do we know? Well, there are a number of indicators. There are isolated communities for which we cannot find a doctor in which nurses are allowed to do a number of procedures at least that they're not permitted to do in areas more heavily populated by doctors. Could the minister please explain this apparent contradiction and how it is being handled in his labour force redeployment plan?

The Premier managed to indicate the other day that, yes, he would consider scaling the rollback. That is to say, people earning less money would not suffer as great a rollback or any rollback at all at a sufficiently low level of income as somebody earning a higher level of income. The Premier was good enough, I suppose,

to say: yes, we're considering that or we will consider that. Could the Labour minister please indicate the stage at which that consideration has arrived? Have they got something specific?

A series of other questions that I would like to ask the minister. Could the minister please explain the meaning of the November 23 deadline on the decision process that unions must come up with for dealing with the 5 percent cut? What will happen after November 23 if no plan has been forwarded to the government by the health care unions accepting a voluntary 5 percent wage rollback? What specifically will the minister do on November 24, if that happens to be the case?

Another question. Has the Department of Labour or any other agency, department of government, or any other contracted-out organization, any of those entities, been asked to draft legislation which rolls back the wages of health care workers by 5 percent effective January 1, 1994? Could we have a clear-cut yes or no?

Another question, Mr. Chairman. The government has suggested deleting Family Day as a named statutory holiday. Could the minister please indicate whether the loss of a day off in this regard will count toward the 5 percent decrease expected from health care workers? How will the minister reconcile that particular initiative with collective agreements which have accorded health care workers the right to that extra statutory holiday day off?

Mr. Chairman, those are a number of specific questions for which I have been interested in getting answers from the minister.

I would like to make a statement in closing about an overall concern that I and my caucus have with the minister's commitment or lack of commitment to the collective bargaining process. I believe he has put union management in a very, very difficult position in asking for voluntary rollbacks. I believe it underlines a lack of commitment to the collective bargaining process. If the management of the health care system is to operate effectively, it has to be based upon respect, respect for workers' rights, respect for agreements. I think it is very unsettling to many people in Alberta and certainly to health care workers that the government can so readily and so easily begin to erode the integrity of the collective bargaining process. Fundamental to the rights of health care workers in this province and many other workers in this province is an unwavering commitment on the part of this government to the collective bargaining process. While this isn't a question, I would certainly appreciate listening to the minister's comments, both personal and on behalf of his government, about commitment to the collective bargaining process.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9:30

MR. DAY: I'll try and be brief and hit some of the main points from each person who has spoken to this point, Mr. Chairman. Points of their questions that I don't zero in on, as I've already shown, I will try and get back with specific answers.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark used some pretty strong terms, after first softening me up with many grateful words about getting back to her, talked about things like union busting and ignoring successor rights. I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, we've done nothing to abrogate successor rights. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Municipal Affairs notifies people as they send out final bid notification that there are successor rights possibly associated with the facilities that are being bid on. So I guess I would say there's no substance in fact at all for suggesting that we are somehow going around successor rights. We acknowledge their existence.

As we are in a time when everybody is under pressure, and we are looking at deficit reduction – we're absolutely committed to

it – I do think that the last thing we'd need is the type of rhetoric that would actually raise emotions, raise the temperature, and cause distrust and doubt in the large number of groups that are out there. So many people are facing the possibility of losing their jobs, and that is not a pleasant prospect. These members across will all face that about three and a half years from now, and they'll see how difficult a time that is as they look at the end of their career here in this Legislature. We do have to remember that there's a lot of people out there that are in a time of tension. We've absolutely shown that we're committed to working with these people. We need to work together – that's across the aisles of this room also – and forget the political posturing, realize that we want to send a message out that Albertans know what it is to work together, to link arms and send a message that this can be the most productive, innovative, creative, and healthy workplace anywhere in Canada, right here in Alberta. I think that can be accomplished.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark also asked if my deputy was up in the gallery behind. No, my deputy is not there. My officials will be reviewing with me all the remarks and questions. I don't think we have to revert to introductions; I'll just make a comment, however, to the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. Seated up in the gallery is a person whose grasp of provincial affairs and economics and management and labour is significant. I will as always on this and other issues be consulting with the person sitting in the gallery. That person happens to be a former MLA for Red Deer – as a matter of fact, an MLA who used to single-handedly be able to handle the constituency of Red Deer. Now it takes two of us. I would ask my colleagues here to acknowledge with me the presence of Mr. Jim McPherson from Red Deer.

Again, on the minute details I'll get back to you in a written way.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark also talked about negotiating in the media. I would challenge the member to look at any of the comments associated with myself that have been in the media since October 4, since the issue of salary reductions has come out. If you look at the actual quotes, not the headlines, not the editorials, you will see a very conciliatory, consultative tone in all of my remarks. That is my mandate as Minister of Labour: to work with the labour groups and labour representatives in this province to make sure I understand their concerns so that I'm bringing their concerns to the government discussion table and also to this Legislature. I would ask the member to consult with the labour groups that I've been meeting with consistently since October 4 on this very touchy issue and ask them for yourself if they feel I am being honest and open and frank with them and making sure I'm trying to understand their concerns. So don't ask me; I don't want to flag-wave. Go and ask them. I think then you'll be able to see your remarks were, unbeknown to yourself, caught up in the emotion of the moment, a little extreme.

I'm trying to look at the notes that I wrote down here on the different things that were raised by the member. Promoting flextime and promoting businesses to look at accommodating the schedules and the pressures that people face in the '90s. Again, I guess I could say look to my own office. The women in that office sat down, and I asked them to decide among themselves what kind of flexibility they would like to have to address the needs of their families and of their lives, and they do that. Depending on the age of their children or whether they have children at home or not, they have developed some flexible schedules that meet the demands that they have, which are first and foremost, and then the considerable demands of my office. I might add and say with some gratitude that when Labour took

on the merger of occupational health and safety and workers' compensation, all with Labour, we did not increase the minister's office staff even though we had that considerable increase. That's not without some pain on the part of my office staff, who you will see in the office many mornings at 7:30 and here till 5:30, quarter to 6, 6 o'clock many nights. So I just want to acknowledge that that flextime swings both ways. Their dedication in serving the people of Alberta is considerable.

A business plan. Yes, the business plans are out. As a matter of fact, it was several months ago that we gave our business plan at a public meeting. It was just before the June 15 election. The next day the member who was my critic at the time – and maybe members opposite could learn from this – took the business plan which I had submitted publicly and ran to the *Journal* and said they had a secret document. It was the business plan of the Department of Labour. So it was a wonderful revelation that burst onto the scene there. The business plan is available, and you'll see it here in the estimates, the most recent one. All the business plans are being redone right now and will be out November 30 at the latest, and you'll certainly have it then.

I'm going over a number of the points, Edmonton-Meadowlark. Not to say they're insignificant but I'm just trying to focus on the main ones here for you. The 5 percent figure again. You're asking me: each year, and is that going to be legislated, and what if they don't; what if it's not voluntary? Why do we ask the question: what if we don't? When I wake up in the morning, I don't say to myself: what if I don't go to work today? I don't say that. I say: what can I accomplish if I do go to work today? So why do they, Mr. Chairman, continue to focus on: what if it's not voluntary; what if they don't? How about focusing on: what if they do? This is what I'm trying to bring as the message out there: that groups and unions and employee groups and employee associations that have the flexibility in a voluntary way consider that combination of 5 percent compensation reductions that can best meet their needs. That's the best way to do it. So not "What if they don't?" but "What if they do?" There'll be some real gains. It's not without pain – we recognize that – but we're asking that that approach be taken.

Meeting with other ministers across Canada. As this year – we're into October now – draws to a close, I can say that as Minister of Labour I have yet to leave the province on ministerial travel. I'm trying to keep the budget down. When I have to talk or meet with other ministers across the country, I prefer to do that on a teleconference. As a matter of fact, we had significant negotiations when the NAFTA side deals were being negotiated back through the summer, especially on labour and the environment. We had discussions with the federal minister. We did those via telephone.

I might add that along with Alberta's position the next strongest position in putting forward the case for provincial jurisdiction of labour standards and labour laws and making it very clear we would not give our federal counterpart the leeway to be signing side deals without fully recognizing provincial jurisdiction – our most significant ally in that discussion was the province of Quebec. I much appreciated the input that minister had along with myself in driving that point home. We were successful in achieving that in the NAFTA side deals, fully recognizing the provincial jurisdiction.

9:40

Why is it necessary to have an MLA chair for the Council on Professions and Occupations? The Member for Calgary-Varsity – I don't want to cause his head to swell too much – has spent some time in Red Deer, so he knows what it is to really be a

hardworking type of individual. I can tell you that the amount of work that is involved in just consulting with all the groups looking for regulation, looking for designation and scope of practice, and all those issues – I don't know personally how he has the time to do that with all the other duties he has. It's a very significant task that also gives all of those designated professions and occupations a link right to the cabinet and caucus table, and I am very glad to have the Member for Calgary-Varsity there serving in that capacity.

The Member for Edmonton-Norwood, with respect – I'm not trying to make the member feel bad here, but if one of my colleagues had asked the questions about how we have been able to reduce the unfunded liability in WCB . . . As I've said earlier, we've done that this year. It's on track: \$160 million reduced, paid down on the unfunded liability. He asked: how can we possibly keep assessment rates the same? They did not go up this year; you're right. The total amount being exacted from the business community did not increase this year. How could we possibly do that? How could we possibly reduce administration costs 20 percent? That's what we've done this year, a 20 percent reduction in administration costs. If one of my colleagues had asked that question, these members across here would all be shouting "Puffball." I was delighted. My heart leapt within me when I heard this member asking: how could we possibly have done that? I've already run through the litany of methods that were put in place by WCB to achieve that. I don't want to bore my colleagues with that again. I've done it already tonight, so I'll underline those areas for you. In fact, it has been done, and it has not been done on the backs of workers. It's been done by tightening down the administration, by managing consistently those claims, and by the employers really getting serious about the work injury reduction programs, and safety associations bringing down the claim costs. Again, Mr. Chairman, we said in the election that we want to reduce the consolidated deficit \$700 million this year; \$160 million of it will come from WCB. That's been clearly explained there to the member.

The other questions on the actuarials. We're getting that information to the member. I might just add that the member asked in a motion for a return for some actuarial figures and how we got there. You know, if the member opposite had just picked up the phone or talked to me in the hallway, I could have – I will be getting the book to him. It's about that thick. Because he's asked for it in a motion for a return, I have to produce four copies. We've had to photocopy four copies of actuarial assumptions about that thick at some cost to this Assembly. So I might throw that out as a suggestion to the member: give me a call, drop in at the office, phone me at home. You know, I'm in my office till 1 or 2 most mornings. Drop by, and I'll try and get the information to you in a way that doesn't put an increased burden on the backs of the taxpayers of this province. I will get the specifics to you.

He asked about physiotherapy and the Health minister announcing a ceiling there in physiotherapy payments. No, WCB will not be affected by that. That works under a slightly different system there.

I appreciated – no, I have to be honest. I didn't really appreciate all the history that the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont brought out. I've read that, gone through that history, and you can get it in most left-leaning universities, if you like. But I will say just on the one, automatic certification, that he's asking that once you get 40 or 50 percent of members signed to certify, to be unionized in a company, that it should be automatic, as happens in B.C. and as happens in Ontario. He mentioned that so often they get 50 percent, and then it has to go to this awful secret ballot, this terrible thing called democracy. Then when they vote,

lo and behold, the majority of workers in fact don't want to be certified, and of course they blame it on the nasty employer. Well, you know, I'm here today, as are many of my colleagues, because we believe in the sacredness of democracy and also of the secret ballot. All of us – anybody who's run for nomination, anybody who's worked in a leadership campaign – know you can look someone in the eye and they say, "I will vote for you, and I will sign that membership card," and many times that may not be the case. When they get into the privacy, the sanctity of that booth with nobody else pressuring them, that's where their true feelings come forward, and that has to be maintained. I have to say to the member opposite that I will not back down on that. There is no negotiation on that. We will not move to automatic certification.

I can say that the Fire Training School is an incredible revenue-generating facility. If you ever get the chance to get out there in Vermilion – maybe I'll take a bus out there one day and let you see some revenue generation. The needs of fire fighting, especially the volunteer agencies around the province, are being taken care of. They are also generating tremendous revenue, with people coming from as far away as Australia, other countries, other provinces, other states to get their training at that fire school. We charge a premium rate there because it's premium training. It's a very successful process.

The Member for Edmonton-McClung. You know, I don't want to continue this running battle with the member in terms of the number of people that may be without jobs in the health care sector. He said the other day that at a meeting I had said there were going to be 12,000. I said twice that I had not said that and prove to me where that had been said by myself. Now he's acknowledging that, okay, I didn't say it; maybe it was one of the members of my staff that was there. It absolutely was not. I said it was one of the members, one of the union representatives who was doing some mental arithmetic and came out with a figure and then walked out of the room and said, "I think there are going to be 12,000 people laid off." Then the member suggested that we've maybe got a secret figure or in fact we don't know the figure and therefore we're irresponsible. We're going through the whole process of restructuring, asking groups to come to the table and give us our ideas on efficient delivery of health services. Maybe it's because we're being open and honest and the members across aren't used to that. I don't know. We are honestly saying: "Tell us how to restructure the system. Tell us ways of delivering health care. Let's talk together about it, and let's look at what numbers might be involved." We do not have a number, and that is neither ignorance nor being Machiavellian. It's saying: we're working together. That's what the roundtables are all about. That's why I sit down with the unions and we talk about those things. That's the path we're committed to.

Many, many more questions here. I understand there are some members opposite who said they're going to be very brief with a few more questions. We would like to get out of here before midnight or possibly 10 o'clock. Also, the last time I checked it was 7 to 1 for the Jays.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Calgary-Buffalo.

9:50

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll attempt to be brief enough to allow other members of the Assembly to get in as well. I'll try to be briefer than the minister was in his response.

Firstly, with respect to vote 2.0.3, dealing with employment standards, I had some experience in my previous job, Mr. Minister, with individuals seeking vacation pay that wasn't paid, trying to

get overtime pay that wasn't paid. They were often in a situation where they couldn't afford to retain a lawyer. They had no other recourse. You can go to small claims court, the Provincial Court, Civil Division and wait three months to get a trial date, so they go to employment standards. What typically happens with employment standards is that they're told: we have all this enforcement machinery, but the reality is we're too busy and we're not going to be able to deal with this for sometimes as long as two, three, four weeks. With respect, I think that's an unacceptable delay. If people are looking for relief and they want to get it in an expeditious fashion, we have to be able to do better.

In terms of enforcement powers, you have extensive powers in the Employment Standards Act, but I'd like a much better assessment in terms of which of those enforcement powers are utilized most frequently, thereby getting some sense of which powers are effective and useful to Albertans that require them. I'd like to know how many written complaints are received by the department pursuant to section 92. I would like to know how many written complaints are resolved by mediation pursuant to section 93. I'd like to know how many orders are issued pursuant to section 94. I'd like to know how many appeals there are to an umpire pursuant to section 103. I'd like to know the number of charges that are laid pursuant to sections 115 to 122 inclusive. I'd like to know the number of charges dismissed. I'd like to know the number of charges that actually result in convictions.

I refer the minister to a previous discussion we held outside this Chamber which had to do with the Workers' Compensation Board and the setting of rates, particularly for flying clubs in this province. I think the minister had undertaken to look into that. My understanding from representatives of his department is that within the next number of years there will be a reassessment of ratings for flying clubs in the province. The concern now of flying clubs is that they happen to be rated in the same category as large or major air carriers. They have a sense that this is a particular kind of unfairness to flying clubs. It puts into question the economic viability of clubs that I think play an important role in the aviation industry in this province. So I'm interested that the minister in fact look into that and see if there's some possibility of moving up what would be the next scheduled rating review in that particular category.

We heard questions in this House from the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat in question period on September 30, and then when the estimates for Community Development were being debated the Member for Red Deer-South also raised the question: why don't we do away with the Alberta Human Rights Commission because we have labour enforcement machinery already in existence in the province? Now, it strikes me – and I'd like the minister's comments – that the Supreme Court of Canada in the trilogy, the central Alberta case 1990, the Simpson Sears case 1986, and the Bhinder and CN Rail case in 1986, made it clear human rights commissions have certain powers both expressed and implicit that deal with systemic discrimination. I'd like the minister to tell me if there have been some studies done of the powers he has that would enable him and his department to deal in an aggressive fashion particularly with systemic discrimination.

In terms of freedom of information, I'm interested in what steps have been taken in his department for a freedom of information regime. Document management is entirely the responsibility of individual departments, subject only to destruction of documents by the Public Records Committee. I'd like to know what evaluation has been undertaken of the information management systems extant in this minister's department, what steps to catalogue information he already has.

Finally, with respect to the Employment Standards Act, again there are provisions for education in section 5(1) and (2), and I know the minister has already indicated they prepared some self-help kits. They had, I think, four symposia in centres in late 1991-92, but I'm interested in terms of what further education is done. I'd like some particulars. He's mentioned what I take to be the highlights, but if there's a more extensive, more comprehensive education plan, I'd like to hear it.

Section 6 provides for multisector advisory councils. When he talks about the safety council and councils like that, I don't know if that's pursuant to section 6. If in fact those exist, I'd simply ask him to advise what the process is for appointment to those councils and also how remuneration is fixed.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

DR. PERCY: Well, I'll try and make my comments brief. There are three or four areas I'd like to discuss in great detail. One point I want to make is in fact somewhat unfair to unload on the Minister of Labour, but on the other hand he has big shoulders and he could in fact educate Dr. Wagner as he goes about the province with the roundtables. Dr. Wagner is very fond of putting up a chart that starts off with productive activities and goes to income and goes to wealth from that expenditure. He then has a little arrow from wealth going down, which suggests a sucking or a siphoning off of society's collective wealth to health, education, social services. While it's clear from the perspective of labour, from the perspective of society that health and education are part of the productive core that generates that wealth, to view it as in a sense being nonproductive or nonessential I think really does a disservice to this government and does a disservice to society as a whole – to somehow suggest that these are not wealth-generating areas as opposed to wealth absorbing. I think that's a point that should be made.

The ability of this society to function, to be competitive depends very much on its educational system, its health care system, and the insurance it gives individuals that might fall between the cracks that there is some mechanism through which they will have access to the basic needs of life. So I appeal to the Minister of Labour to send a note to Dr. Wagner suggesting that perhaps health and education generate wealth and not only absorb some of it in a provision of that, because I think it does a disservice to everybody pitching that type of story.

The second point is that in a previous incarnation, I was on the editorial board of *Work-sight* magazine, which comes out of the Department of Labour. I think that's a worthwhile activity, but what was also very useful about being on that editorial board was that the Department of Labour circulated material related to the state of the Alberta labour market. It was a quarterly report on labour contracts settled.

AN HON. MEMBER: We sell it.

DR. PERCY: You sell it. Maybe that's why I haven't got it; it used to be free. It was very useful, because it suggested, for example, the spread between public-sector wages and those in private-sector contracts. It was very useful information, and it should have been widely disseminated. It should at least be out there so people are aware it's there. In the spirit the minister discussed of being open, at least advertise its existence. If people aren't aware it's there, they're not going to use it. There's very good information in there about collective agreements, those which are being signed and the profile of wage settlements through time. So I think in that light that information should be disseminated a little more broadly. At least the existence of that material should

be highlighted, because I was only aware of it by being on *Work-sight's* editorial board.

A third point, and I think this is more important – I made reference to this yesterday; this clearly falls under the Department of Labour in terms of policy development – is with regard to the economic consequences of government downsizing and labour market adjustment policies. I think there are a number of issues that have to be discussed here. The first is that clearly I think it's part of the role of the Department of Labour to outline labour market restructuring. So an issue that I think is important that has to be addressed is the role of the Department of Labour and its policy development aspects talking about labour market adjustments and restructuring. In particular, some of the positive aspects that have to be discussed are mechanisms such as work sharing, unpaid sabbaticals, job guarantees, and golden handshakes as mechanisms of adjustment. I think – and I made this point yesterday – that there are real gains that might accrue to society as a whole as we restructure government and change the way in which services are delivered. It is not fair that those who earn the least in our society bear all the costs of these types of adjustments. Just as in the oil patch, mechanisms were put into play by which some of the potential gains from downsizing were distributed to those who would bear the costs. I think if we're to effect economic change and do so quickly with a minimum of social distress, we should be looking at mechanisms such as this. If you look at the economy today, consumer confidence is dead flat and declining. Unemployment, although lower than the national average, is still higher than it ought to be, given the demographic structure of this province and the levels of educational attainment. Any mechanisms of labour market adjustment that the Department of Labour could propose that would generate more economic security and a sense that there was a plan in place would certainly have positive effects on the overall level of economic activity in our province and would certainly help consumer confidence rebound, retail sales expand, and employment generation speed up.

10:00

I think the Department of Labour has to be more proactive in ex ante setting out the rules of the game in terms of what the mechanisms of labour market adjustment are and be proactive in suggesting possible golden handshakes to try and expedite restructuring, so that the costs of readjustment do not fall on those who have the least in our society.

The Department of Labour also, in terms of policy development, should be looking at other policy initiatives such as labour-managed firms. To the extent that some sectors may be in decline and workers wish to take it over, there should be studies in place which look at the extent to which the legal environment and the institutional structure mitigate against the emergence of these types of labour-managed firms, which may be viable simply because of the greater commitment that such workers might have to a worker-owned enterprise. It would be interesting to see the extent to which the Department of Labour has in fact looked at these mechanisms and the extent to which the institutional environment in the province works to their emergence, because to the extent that you can shift ownership and responsibility to workers in a firm, there's always a positive effect on productivity and the incentives to be lean and trim and viable.

In the area of policy development, when you look through the estimates and you look through the descriptions, it appears that the Department of Labour is in some sense reactive to many of the things that are going on rather than trying to set out possible strategies that individuals could buy into in advance of having to

confront some of the costs and consequences of restructuring. In that regard I would like to know: in the minister's Departmental Support Services, to what extent, then, are studies undertaken? What are the research budgets? What is the nature of studies that have been undertaken which look at labour market adjustment, at alternate mechanisms to dealing with restructuring in the public sector? I would like to know whether or not there have been studies undertaken looking at the extent to which our institutional, our legal, our financial environment promotes the emergence of labour-managed firms, of worker co-operatives, and the extent to which changes are to be undertaken in our environment to promote the growth of such firms.

I'll stop there, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS LEBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I go into the rest of my questions with regards to the responses that the Minister of Labour provided, I would like to just comment on a couple of the remarks that the minister made, the first being that this member was providing inflammatory remarks in this Assembly with regards to the issue of labour. I would like to submit that it is not this member that is putting forward the idea of voluntary cutbacks of 5 percent. It is not this member that is looking at laying off X number of employees within the health care sector, and many have received their notices. It is not this member that has put forward the privatization of ALCB and the fact that 1,500 workers are now going to be out of work. It is not this member that has been doing social service cuts across the board, and it is not this member that is now looking at education cuts. So I do not see that I am providing the inflammatory remarks; rather, what is happening is that this government is providing a situation whereby people are marching in the streets. They have had one rally already, and there'll be another rally this Saturday with regards to that.

The hon. minister also said: ask the unions as to whether or not I am negotiating in the press. Perhaps I asked the unions the wrong question. I didn't ask the unions whether or not the hon. minister was conciliatory in his manner. I didn't ask whether he was honest and aboveboard in his approach. What I asked was whether they felt that he was negotiating within the media, and in fact they said that often there are times that they read what some of the proposals are before they meet with you. Again, perhaps I was asking the wrong question of the unions.

With regards to the issue of flextime, that was a recommendation that was put forward in Toward 2000. I am pleased that the minister has looked at that recommendation with regards to the internal workings in his own office. The question still remains as to whether or not those are things that the Department of Labour will be looking at providing to employers as an incentive or as a way to deal with some of the downsizing that is occurring within the employment sectors currently.

I look forward to the new business plan. That's what my question was, and I now have an answer, that on November 30 there will be a new business plan, so thank you for that.

I also keep asking and we keep harping, if you wish to use the word, on what will happen on November 23. The reason is quite simple: up to this point there doesn't seem to be a coherent plan as to who or what or when certain things will occur within the public sector. So my question very simply is: what are your contingencies? Do you have any? If you do, I think those should be made public, because that's only fair for those individuals whose lives will be affected.

I am pleased to hear that the member responsible for professions and occupations is working many hours, so it would be quite easy for him and I would like him to provide a detailed report on what his activities are.

What I'd like to now do is continue on in terms of some of the questions that I have, and I left off at Issues Management, specifically with the education bargaining consultation process. There were some recommendations that were put forward, and I am again wondering whether the Department of Labour will be able to go ahead with these recommendations now in light of, one, the cost constraints, and two, in light of the perhaps adversarial situation that is developing between the labour unions and the Department of Labour. That is that – and this is on page 9 – the ATA, ASBA, and Alberta Labour will develop the program for specific training courses for bargaining committee members and arrange for its delivery. When I was interrupted in my previous speaking – it was on page 8 – I was talking about

a project team involving the ATA, ASBA and AHSCA, with Alberta Education and Alberta Labour playing a supportive role, [that] will develop guidelines for a communication policy, and it will be distributed to all school boards and ATA locals by January 31, 1994.

I have some questions with regards to the results achieved by the issues management staff. This is a document that the Minister of Labour provided to the standing committee on natural resources. What it says is that in terms of results achieved, there was

increased partnership, cooperation and self-reliance with and among clients; for example, in the construction and health care industries.

Also that the issues management group provided assistance to parties in coping with change, for example in health care reform and labour force adjustment coordination.

Again I would ask: how are those results measured? When can we see what those results are? How is the current situation impacting on the issues management group being able to do its work?

When I hear about health care reforms and when I hear about things that the issues management group is doing and works with, I guess I wonder again in terms of health care. I'll talk a little bit later about work force adjustment strategies, but if the Department of Labour is doing such a wonderful job in terms of work force adjustment strategies, then why does the AARN have to have as the lead article: you have been laid off. What's next?

10:10

My other question in terms of work force adjustment strategies – maybe I will talk about that now – is in terms of the POWA. I've had occasion to speak to some of the miners, and in particular I spoke to one today by the name of Gerald Curtis, who is 59-and-a-half years old. He's been in the work force since he was 15 years old, and he has a grade 4 elementary education. Now, in terms of his abilities, he also has rheumatoid arthritis and he's partially deaf. He has been offered to be provided retraining in terms of carpentry. Interestingly enough, so has his daughter, who was also laid off from the mines. The daughter took the carpentry work and couldn't find a job in carpentry and is running a forklift now, whereas this individual basically indicated that given the fact that there were 36 carpenters, I think – I forget what the number is – right now in the area, it would be very unlikely for him to get a job. Basically, what he is potentially looking at is going on welfare because his UIC benefits are about to run out. Now, in terms again of the issues management group and their ability to facilitate in this area, I'm wondering what has occurred and what will occur. It's nice to put out documents like In Praise of Older Workers, but if there isn't actually anything in fact that these older workers can do, given the current job market, then I think it is

incumbent on this government to take some responsibility with regards to that.

In terms of minimum wage and employment standards I'd like to know how the ministry does monitor compliance with minimum wage standards. Does it just wait for complaints, or is it proactive in terms of that regard? With regards to the minimum wage symposiums, our suggestion is that the symposiums be held yearly. I think it would be more cost effective to have a system set up. I would like to know if the minister is looking at something along those lines, or is it just that whenever it seems like a good idea, we'll look at what the minimum wage age is within this province?

I'd also like to get a copy of the draft regulations that came out of the Employment Standards Symposium. That's something that you indicated was coming our way. Indeed, as the minister says, he is open and would like for us to ask him. Well, I'm asking for a copy of the draft regulations.

The self-help kits. The minister mentioned that in his opening speech. I'd like to know how the minister knows that they're working well and if we can get some statistics on that.

Now, safety code studies. That was response 10, I believe. I'd like to know what the status is with regards to the propane motor vehicle conversion programs and also in terms of the boiler and pressure vessel standards. There were five FTEs that were gone from this particular area. My information is that we are looking at probably privatizing this area and, as a result, that severance packages are coming. If this is true, then, I would like the minister to inform this Assembly as to when and how. How are we to ensure that the standards are being regulated appropriately?

In response number 12 there was talk about deferral of some initiatives with regards to the labour relations adjudication and regulation area, and I would like to know which initiatives have been deferred as a result of budget cuts. In terms of the Labour Relations Board would the minister be so kind as to let us know whether the decrease in cases that he's referred to which is due to the economic circumstances is because people are afraid that they'll lose their jobs if they complain about their rights? It would seem reasonable to think the number of cases would be increasing with the layoffs and current job stresses that people are undergoing at this point in time.

I would like to thank the minister for his indulgence.

There is one other issue I would like to address. That is in terms of the work force adjustment strategies and the pilot projects in Calgary. It would appear that these are after the fact, and I would wonder if the minister and his department will be more proactive. Notices have already been given out to nurses, and it appears that the work force adjustment strategies as defined through the ALCB layoffs as well as what we are seeing within the health care sector are lacking and that there needs to be a better ability to have a strategy that indeed does look at providing individuals with the retraining required to compete in this market.

I could go on, but due to the hour I will defer and keep my comments for another time.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I acknowledge there have been many valid concerns and questions asked here tonight from Edmonton-Norwood to Edmonton-Meadowlark to Edmonton-McClung to Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont, and the ones I didn't address, I will commit to get back to each one. At this point I would call for the question on the votes of the Department of Labour.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Norwood.

MR. BENIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we'll be here quite awhile yet. I have some questions to the minister which I hope he will be able to answer.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's too late.

MR. BENIUK: Why is it too late? [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order in the House. It is Edmonton-Norwood's right to speak.

MR. BENIUK: I thank you.

To the minister. The people that make most of the decisions on claims, which are in the neighbourhood of \$460 million each year, are the caseworkers. Would the minister provide information as to the education and training these people receive before they start handling the cases provided to them?

I would also like to know what the accident rate is of back injuries and other injuries that are filed by employees of the Workers' Compensation Board. I would like to know what they are for the caseworkers, for the supervisory personnel, and for other people working at the WCB. I would like to know what it costs per year, and I would like to know who makes the decisions as to the type of rehabilitation these people receive, the type of compensation they receive. Do coworkers analyze and make decisions on their fellow coworkers? Do the caseworkers make decisions for the supervisory personnel?

I would also like to ask the minister a question on scaffolding. Is the minister concerned about qualifications and others on scaffolding? [interjections] I could go on for two hours.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, you can't. The rules are against it.

MR. BENIUK: Okay; we'll go on for 20 minutes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Have you completed your questions?

MR. BENIUK: Actually, I could go on for quite awhile.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, then please do.

MR. BENIUK: But I will yield. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Did you have questions, Edmonton-Norwood?

MR. BENIUK: All right, then, I had questions. Considering the situation, I will yield. However, I would like to point out to the Chair that I was hoping to have the opportunity of responding to a comment once made by a member opposite, but somebody across the aisle had proceeded to yawn and do other things. I will one day have that opportunity, as we will be sitting late I'm sure. I will make sure I take that opportunity.

Thank you.

10:20

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I would call for the question on the estimates.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those opposed, please say no. Okay.

[Motion carried]

Agreed to:

Program 1 – Departmental Support Services

Total Operating Expenditure \$8,574,722

Total Capital Investment \$241,440

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee do now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

Program 2 – Work and Safety Standards

Total Operating Expenditure \$3,752,350

Total Capital Investment \$10,000

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

Program 3 – Work and Safety Client Services

Total Operating Expenditure \$21,080,127

Total Capital Investment \$149,790

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

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1994, for the department and purposes indicated.

Program 4 – Labour Relations Adjudication and Regulation

Total Operating Expenditure \$2,061,300

Total Capital Investment \$45,700

The Department of Labour: \$39,777,570 for Operating Expenditure; \$522,430 for Capital Investment. Total for the Department of Labour, \$40,300,000.

Program 5 – Occupational Health and Safety Services

Total Operating Expenditure \$3,315,481

Total Capital Investment \$65,000

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. All in favour of the report by the hon. Member for Highwood?

Program 6 – Development of Policy and Legislation for Professions and Occupations

Total Operating Expenditure \$993,590

Total Capital Investment \$10,500

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, if any? Carried.

Summary

Total Operating Expenditure \$39,777,570

Total Capital Investment \$522,430

[At 10:26 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Department Total \$40,300,000