

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, November 1, 1993**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 93/11/01

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: **Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**
head: **Estimates 1993-94**

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Minister of Health, would you like to make some comments on the applied cancer research portion of this, please?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm very pleased to stand tonight and encourage members of the Assembly to support this request for \$2.8 million for cancer research. To put it quite plainly, I think research is the only avenue to prevent and cure cancer in the future, and I think that through research methods we have an opportunity to develop new treatments and prevention measures. Targeted research like this is extremely beneficial to Alberta and to the health and quality of life of Albertans.

I should say, Mr. Chairman, that Alberta is a Canadian leader in cancer research and cancer treatment. Recent technological and procedural innovations in cancer treatment have enabled the board to move to more ambulatory and outpatient cancer treatment. For example, 15 years ago chemotherapy treatment required four or five days of hospitalization. Today the same treatment can be done on an outpatient basis. This means that patients can stay at home with their families while they're being treated. Our present-day treatment methods can now help cure more than 40 percent of patients with cancer. Long-term control of the disease is possible with another 35 percent of patients.

This request that we are making for \$2.8 million will add to the substantial investment this government has made in cancer research. Over the past 16 years we have provided \$52.3 million of support to this valuable work. This year 15 new projects were added, bringing the total number of projects funded by this important fund to 28. It is projected, given current trends, that by the year 2001 there will be a 50 percent increase in the frequency of cancer. So it makes it imperative that we continue to explore for answers, answers that will lessen the suffering behind such statistics. Mr. Chairman, I'm asking the members of the Assembly to approve this vote of \$2.8 million and allow this crucial cancer research to continue.

I would like to speak just briefly about cancer in general and give you some statistics. One in three Albertans alive today will get cancer. The probability of a Canadian man dying of cancer is 1 in 4, or about 25 percent. For women that is 22 percent.

The projects that we discuss tonight are funded through grants, and they are awarded on the basis of an annual competition.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, I wonder if you could contain the levels of sound so that we can hear the minister. Thank you.

MRS. McCLELLAN: As I was saying, Mr. Chairman, the projects are funded through grants which are awarded on the basis of an annual competition, and all applications are reviewed by a scientific peer group. An advisory committee on research made up of international and national cancer scientists then makes

recommendations to the board of management of the Alberta Cancer Board. The research work funded by the board is done in close association with our universities and the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research. I believe this maximizes the benefits and allows collaborative teams to be formed. Research projects being funded this year include a comparison of cancer prevention strategies, a major molecular oncology program, and three projects which explore the commercialization potential of technology resulting from cancer research.

With those brief comments, Mr. Chairman, I would invite questions or comments on this budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-McClung.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you. I would like to just make a few comments about this particular initiative. I understand that we're going to go minister, then critic, minister, critic, unlike the other evening.

MRS. McCLELLAN: I wasn't here then.

MR. MITCHELL: No. I know. That's fine. That's great.

I'd like to thank the minister for giving us some idea of exactly what this money is used for. I think that nobody would argue that money put into applied cancer research wouldn't be money well spent provided that it addresses properly driven research projects and so on, and I have no doubt but to expect that in this case the money would be allocated to properly driven research projects.

I guess the problem that I have – and it isn't a problem with this particular expenditure, but it is with the context within which we find ourselves having to do cancer research. I think that this cancer research cannot be taken in isolation, and to some extent I think it is. For example, we'll spend just \$2.8 million on cancer research, but we have what I would argue to be relatively lax antismoking regulations or nonsmoker rights protection legislation in this province. [some applause] Thank you.

Just last week I met with a constituent who is a construction worker who is currently and frequently working on construction projects around the province in isolated places. He points out that the lunch trailer that's provided most often is a smoking trailer and that there is no provision made for workers who simply want to have a nonsmoking environment. As he points out, at 30 below on some of these construction sites it's pretty difficult to go and eat your lunch outside. The emphasis is exactly wrong. Here it is that the smoker just takes it for granted that he or she can have that facility, and the nonsmoker has to fight for the right to have a nonsmoking facility. Well, it's absurd. Study after study demonstrates that downstream smoke can seriously affect people's health and of course can lead to cancer.

How much money would we save in health care if we did something as simple as saying that the obligation of the employer is to provide a nonsmoking, smoke-free environment? If the employer is put upon by employees who want a smoking facility, then the onus is on those employees to convince that employer and not the other way round. I would argue that we could have an absolute breakthrough in much of our cancer health problem by measures that really crack down on smokers. That's not to say that people don't have the right to smoke. They certainly have the right to smoke, but they don't have the right to offend my health or your health. In fact they can smoke somewhere where that simply doesn't occur.

Alberta has some of the most lax safeguards for nonsmokers literally in the country, an Alberta that is confronting what has been proposed to be a \$1 billion reduction in health care expense,

that is putting \$2.8 million more into cancer research and isn't doing the easy things, the obvious things that are at hand to reduce the ill health effects of downstream smoke on nonsmokers.

I could draw this issue one step further, Mr. Chairman, and point out that we also haven't begun to address the effect of air pollution and chemicals in the workplace on cancer and other health conditions. I think that we need to get extremely aggressive about doing that. If ever there was a time when that could be justified for all kinds of reasons – well, that can always be justified – in terms that many people will begin to accept, and that is in terms of their pocketbooks, it is now. Because we ourselves are generating health care problems that are preventable, our health care costs are significantly higher than they need to be. If a government simply stood up and said, "We are going to have regulations that are at least as rigorous as the most rigorous nonsmoker rights legislation in the country," that would be one step. If we got serious, much more serious, about the quality of our air and understood that it isn't an impediment to economic development or to competitiveness – in fact, even in the short run and the medium term, proper aggressive environmental regulations that protect our air and other regulations that would prevent other pollution that has health care impacts can certainly reduce costs to our society and, in doing so, become a tremendous economic stimulant.

So I'm not arguing against this \$2.8 million at all, Mr. Chairman, but I do think that this kind of expenditure becomes an easy way out. There are many other mechanisms, many other tools, many other options available to our society that should supplement this kind of research investment, many other options available in our society that would allow us to reduce health concerns thereby having a healthier, happier, more productive population, and certainly not as important as those things but extremely important, it would reduce our health costs.

Thanks.

8:10

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I have some questions not to do with the health portion of the heritage trust fund but rather dealing with the Alberta Family Life and Substance Abuse Foundation. Now, it's clear from what happened earlier this afternoon and the second reading on Bill 17 that the foundation that had been created in 1991 will presumably be rolled into AADAC. Page 16 reveals total expenditures at the end of March 1993 of almost \$2 million, and it appears that \$1.5 million was spent in the last fiscal year. What value did Albertans get for their \$2 million from that short-lived foundation? I'd like to know how many research proposals were considered, how many research projects were approved for funding, particulars of what has been paid, and what studies resulted. Have any of those studies been published?

In terms of the Premier's council on families, that's currently chaired by the Member for Bow Valley, I'd like the minister to confirm that no funds from the foundation have been applied to the work of that council.

The other part of the mandate of the Family Life and Substance Abuse Foundation was education. I'd like to know how many submissions were received for funding for education projects. I'd like to know how many education proposals were approved for funding. I'd like particulars of what has been paid out and what education programs materialized or have been produced as a result of those expenditures.

Now, I have a question in terms of what will become of the \$1 million. I guess my question would be: why have those funds been run through a dead foundation? I see on page 1110 in *Hansard* of October 27 that the hon. minister had indicated that there were grant obligations to the end of the year, and that's why that \$1 million was being set aside. Yet what makes little sense to me, Mr. Chairman, is that there was all kinds of speculation at the beginning of this current fiscal year that that foundation would be shut down and wouldn't survive. Certainly that was discussed openly during the course of the election campaign. So what I find curious is that the foundation would have entered into commitments which would require a million dollars in aggregate to take us through to the end of the fiscal year. I would have assumed that there would be some opportunity for the foundation to be able to terminate projects in an earlier stage or at least have that flexibility. So I'm curious as to why we still have that \$1 million commitment. It hasn't been particularized, and I'd like some information in terms of how that's apportioned.

I'm also curious as to what's to become of the trustees for that foundation. It seems to me that the term that was contemplated was a three-year term. My question would be: is there any financial compensation being paid to trustees of the foundation in the nature of a retirement allowance or some kind of severance pay? I don't know that, but I'd like that clarification from the minister.

I'd like advice from the minister in terms of how many employees are now with the foundation. What will become of the employees? I would like some advice in terms of whether the research component in the foundation is going to be transferred to AADAC in toto or whether it's going to be split up in some fashion. I guess the other question would be: will there have to be some change to AADAC's enabling legislation to be able to empower AADAC to carry on exactly the same kind of research programs and educational programs that the foundation had been set up for? I'd like that advice from the minister.

I'm sure, Mr. Chairman, the minister can read in *Hansard* if he doesn't have the answers tonight.

With respect to the urban parks program at page 11 of the detailed estimates book, Calgary has been identified as one of the 11 municipalities which stands to benefit from the development. I see that we are looking at \$15 million for the city of Calgary. I'd like some particulars from the hon. minister in terms of which projects have been earmarked for the expenditure of that \$15 million. Phase 1, I notice, encompassed a six-year period. What's the planned period for phase 2? I'd like some particulars from the Minister of Community Development, the minister responsible for the urban park development, in terms of the projects in the city of Calgary that are going to be the basis for expenditures out of that \$15 million fund.

Those are the questions I've got. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Norwood.

MR. BENIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm delighted to be able to rise here today to talk to you and ask questions of the minister about the Alberta heritage savings trust fund capital projects division, specifically Labour, Occupational Health and Safety Research and Education. I do hope the minister will be able to respond. I'm sure all members present would be most anxious to get involved in a debate on Labour. As it looks, the minister this year has dropped the grants from the heritage trust fund to \$750,000. That's a drop of 26 percent from last year, and if you go back over a two-year period, it's a 37 percent decrease. I would like to know what the rationalization is of this. Now, I

realize that there are some members opposite who'll be delighted at the massive drop in expenditures over a two-year period of over \$400,000, but before they grab the minister and carry him off on their shoulders, they should give serious consideration to the implications. Besides, if they were carrying him, he might fall, and the next thing you know, you have a WCB claim being filed.

I would like to start off by pointing out what the objectives are of the grant. Now, if you will allow me, I would read the objective of why these funds are being granted. The first part, the objective, states:

To provide funding for research and education with the objectives of developing solutions to workplace health and safety problems, and promoting the health and well-being of Alberta workers through improved working conditions, and the establishment of occupational health and safety associations.

Very noble objectives, Mr. Chairman, very noble objectives. Yet the funding is being cut from \$1,185,000 in '92-93, to \$1,008,579 last year, and this year to \$750,000.

Mr. Chairman, as I look at this, I find it says "No Subprojects." Obviously, that is not a project. There are projects. It's most unfortunate that the minister didn't provide where the money is going. It's most difficult to zero in, to target certain issues, but I'm sure that the minister will in due course, as he will with the answers to my other questions, provide the information one day, hopefully one day soon.

8:20

Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars is 30 cents for every man, woman, and child in this province. As stated in the '91-92 report of the occupational health and safety heritage grant program, the cost to Albertans is between \$1 billion and \$2 billion. That's between \$400 and \$800 per person. The cost is staggering. The funds being committed are dropping immensely. There is no logic for this drop.

Now, in the '91-92 annual report I just referred to, it claims that the grant program focused on providing "solutions to known, high priority occupational health and safety programs," and it lists them. I'll just refer to some of them because I would like the minister to be able to tell me if these have been cut, if they're part of it, or what, because we have no idea. I refer once again to this very famous booklet provided that simply says \$750,000, blank cheque.

The areas that were covered in '91-92:

- fatal and serious [injuries];
- hazards in the forestry industry;

This is very important, because since then forestry has even become more important.

- hazards in the oil and gas industry;
- chemical and biological hazards;
- occupational health and safety problems of small businesses;
- initiatives for new/young workers;
- initiatives related to literacy, [specifically] English as a second language.

Is this still the target for this \$750,000? If not, what has been eliminated? Specifically, which of these areas is no longer part of the granting process? What has been cut?

Now, as everybody in the room here I'm sure is aware, but I would just refer to it - I'll have to flip the page here, if you'll just give me a second. In this report there is a comment that of the funds that were awarded by grant from April of '81 to March of '92, 56 percent went into a category called education, conferences came to 5 percent, research to 39 percent. How much money is now going into conferences as compared to research and to education?

In addition to wanting to know what projects the minister is funding, I would like to know where these projects are. Are they

in Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary? Which projects have been completed this year? Which projects are going to be ongoing for many years? Also, what is the positive impact of these projects? What criteria are used to determine the priorities of projects to be funded and which are not to be funded? Who determines and why is a certain amount of money allocated to a particular project?

There is a strong reference in the '91-92 report - and I have to keep falling back on it because I don't have the breakdown for this year of where the money is going - that English as a Second Language received some funds. Is this in addition to the projects being carried out by the Alberta vocational colleges, or is the minister duplicating by funding projects that are already in place by either advanced education or Alberta vocational colleges?

In '91-92 there was a reference that the grant program covered studies on substance abuse, which includes liquor - interestingly enough we're going into an era of openness there - and illicit drugs. The report stated "as much as \$400 million per year" is lost in reduced productivity and absenteeism. Interesting also that the report stated that "one third of . . . workers [in this province] have access to assistance programs run by their employer or union." It made no reference to the programs run by this government. How much is the government providing in that area this year?

There was a reference covering a five-year period from 1990 to '95 in the report focusing on immigrants. The report stated the immigrants

will often accept more hazardous work or take risks in order to keep their job. They may not be aware of recommended work practices, safety regulations, personal protection, or their rights and responsibilities as workers.

Could the minister enlighten this House if this program is still being funded, considering it's a five-year program? Have there been funds cut from this program? If so, to what extent? Also, could he advise: as this program has been going on, assuming it's still going on, since 1990, what have been the positive and what have been the negative results? What have been the successes, in other words, and what have been the failures of this program?

When funds are expended on research or education, is there any follow-up? Does the minister have any examples to show that legislation, regulations, enforcement have been improved? One of the concrete examples contained in the report: in '91-92 there was a special study done on fire fighters in Edmonton and Calgary concerning mortality. After the study was completed, what happened? Was it buried? Was it filed? Or was it acted upon? Could the minister list all research and study projects completed this year and last year, and would he explain what he is doing with the information that the taxpayers of this province have paid for?

The '91-92 report also refers to a comprehensive, independent evaluation that emphasized the need for a strong, sustained commitment to this program, the program being the one referred to granting funds for occupational health and safety research and education.

At this stage I just want to fall back on this, what it says about implementation, before going on. Apparently funds, grants are implemented and carried out by the Department of Labour. It says in the report here:

Proposals are solicited from industry, labour, post-secondary educational institutions, municipalities, and the general public. Proposals are assessed through peer reviews and by a grant steering committee, which includes representatives of business, labour and the public, to ensure that only high-quality projects with demonstrable benefits to Albertans are approved. Grant funding is provided to approved projects.

It is interesting that also in that same report a steering committee is referred to. It has one member of the public and only one

woman on it. As the '93-94 estimates refer to peer reviews and a steering committee which includes representatives of business, labour, and the public, I would like to know what changes the minister has made on the steering committee.

I made a comment that there was an evaluation carried out which was referred to as comprehensive and independent in the report. The positives and the negatives of that – on the negative side, there is a low profile of this grant program. In fact, there is a reference, and I quote: it is “one of the better kept secrets in town.” Would the minister explain why this program is so low key that most people don't even know it exists? This, of course, means that a handful know about it and a handful of people will probably apply for the grants, but they may not be the ones that will benefit industry or the workers of this province the most. I'd like to remind the minister that in addition to being the Minister of Labour, he is also the minister responsible for the WCB.

8:30

The second item that was negative was the reference to the fact that there was a lack of sustained commitment to the grant program. What was required, the report said, was a clear statement of political purpose needed “to ensure the program assumes a long-term role in dealing with health and safety issues.” The grants that have dropped from almost \$1.2 million to \$750,000 over two years demonstrate a lack of commitment to the safety and health of the people of this province that are working.

The third negative item was the lack of industry involvement, industry involvement being both employers and workers. The strength of the program was referred to as flexibility, “funding pilot projects or feasibility studies,” which is great, but it would also be very nice to know what happens with these reports. I'm sure the minister might have quite a few on his desk, but that doesn't help industry or the workers of this province.

Alberta occupational health and safety has leverage, it was referred to in the report, because it

provides a vehicle for industry, researchers . . . to influence and coordinate efforts in solving occupational health and safety problems encountered in industry in this province. It also referred to there being a strong possibility that the results could be used in a practical fashion. Whether they are used is a different story.

I'd like to refer to the recommendations, Mr. Chairman, because I think they zero in on a number of things. If we're going to approve \$750,000 without knowing where it's going, I think we should know what the recommendations are. Number one, the program should be continued. It should be continued because it's a good program, and it also happens to be in unison with other jurisdictions that are using grant programs to support research and educational incentives in occupational health and safety. There should be a strong commitment and possibly increased funding, keeping in mind that 30 cents to a dollar is expended by this government, yet the problem is between \$1 billion to \$2 billion a year.

The second part is to increase the participation of employers and workers by

reviewing the composition of the Steering Committee . . . that I referred to a few minutes ago, and I would like to know if the minister has changed who's on the steering committee, the composition of it,

. . . to allow for enhanced participation of industry in project funding decisions and the establishment of funding priorities and criteria.

If others cannot sit on this steering committee and it is dominated by the government, then the government decides what is most important for industry. Let the industry, the workers have a strong say. I'd like to hear from the minister on that issue.

The third item that was a recommendation was

to enhance the profile of the Heritage Grant Program . . . with industry, potential grant applicants and other government departments,

for an obvious reason: the more people that know about it, the more they would want to participate, and better programs would be carried out. There will be a payback for better projects being funded and benefiting all industry.

If industry is not involved in the decision-making programs, policies, priorities, then industry may not become involved in implementing the recommendations. There is a need for practical applications, and industry should be involved.

Now, Mr. Chairman, as I indicated, it's sort of awkward talking about no subprojects, so I would simply point out that the report I was referring to stated that “55 percent of all projects have outcomes or results that can be applied in more than one industry.” Now, they're not saying it is being applied; they're saying it could be applied. So obviously the question is: are these reports being implemented, being applied by industry and by government in certain cases? Are all industries, all companies within any industrial field aware of the studies that were carried out, the report results and recommendations? I would like to know what percentage of all these companies actually are using this information.

The report states that all materials, reports, et cetera, are available from the Alberta occupational health and safety library. The question is: at what price, at what difficulty of obtaining? It would be interesting to know what percentage of Alberta companies have actually applied for this information.

It would be very nice, Mr. Chairman, if here and now the minister would just stand up and detail where the \$750,000 is going. Obviously it cannot be a secret. Obviously we're over the halfway point in funding; it ends March 31. Obviously the minister must have already agreed to some projects, and obviously some projects maybe are being carried over from last year. It would be nice to know what the priorities are. I mean, we are facing the situation that WCB, for example, is trying to cut back its unfunded liability, reduce its claims. It would be nice to reduce the accidents in the workplace. This here helps to do it. Research, education, practical solutions . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: That's it. Next.

MR. BENIUK: Actually, I was just pausing for a breather.

AN HON. MEMBER: You still have half an hour.

MR. BENIUK: I have half an hour yet?

The very important part, Mr. Chairman, is that it would have helped immensely if when we were provided with these little booklets – and they're very nicely done at taxpayers' expense; I mean, beautiful paper. But all I have here – and this is very frustrating for me – is a thing that says, “Total Operating Expenditure \$750,000.” One has to inquire of the minister how . . . [Mr. Beniuk's speaking time expired]

Mr. Chairman, can I point out there were interruptions in the afternoon? Can I just carry on to make up for it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon member, if you wish to speak again, speak to your House leader and I'm sure that could be arranged.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are three areas I'd like to address this evening. The first deals with the general role of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund capital projects division, its context. The second deals specifically with the

applied cancer research. The third deals with a topic in agriculture.

With regards to the Alberta heritage savings trust fund capital projects division, the mandate of this division is to invest in projects that will provide long-term economic or social benefits to the province of Alberta. Specifically, the projects do not yield a financial return to the fund in the form of investment income. Total investments in the capital projects division cannot exceed, by law, 25 percent of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund total assets, including deemed assets. These assets are part of the deemed assets.

There are three points I would like to address with regards to this particular division. The breakdown into having a portion of this in the Alberta heritage savings trust fund and then a significant range of our other capital expenditures out of the general revenue fund I think is a specious division, because it seems to suggest that these, to a much greater extent than other capital projects government undertakes, yield social returns that ought to be in this category here, whereas many of the capital projects that government does invest in – whether they're roads, railbeds, hospitals – yield very significant social returns well above what the private return would be. So I think the demarcation line as to why these are in the Alberta heritage savings trust fund capital fund as to being more directly assessed in our scrutiny of the general revenue fund certainly bears some examination, and I would hope the proposed review of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund will put this in a much greater context.

8:40

I for one would hope that the review of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund would look at the performance of the fund in terms of not only whether it was getting a reasonable return on those funds, whether the portfolio of assets we had was best in terms of diversification and spreading of risk, but also whether in this time of fiscal restraint the heritage savings trust fund has served its use and might be more appropriately applied against the debt. One would hope, then, that the process by which the heritage savings trust fund is assessed would be wide ranging and the opinions and views of Albertans on the issue of performance as well as existence would be assessed. As part of that review, why this particular category for the Alberta heritage savings trust fund capital projects division exists out of the regular capital budget: I hope he would address that point in some detail because it seems to endow these particular sets of projects with special status. They certainly are important, but it's not at all clear that they're more important than other types of projects in the capital allocation. I would think they should be subject to the same general scrutiny.

A second area I'd like to discuss would be the area of applied cancer research. I have a number of questions there, one of which, as one of my colleagues has alluded, is that there's not a massive amount of detail here about the specific nature of the research projects, though the minister was specific in her comments regarding the types of projects. Now, it is my understanding, though, that researchers seeking funds for various projects are first asked to approach other agencies such as the Medical Research Council, the National Cancer Institute of Canada, and the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research. So one really questions what the role of the applied cancer research is. Is it an orphan? What are the linkages between the applied cancer research and these other entities? Why has it been sort of hived out?

The first really specific question is: why has applied cancer research been singled out for special treatment in earmarked funds

when one would think it would fit under the umbrella of various types of funds that presently exist out there? To an extent I guess I'm often concerned about earmarking, because an agency receiving earmarked funds will always use the funds. I mean, that's just the nature of the beast, that you don't turn it back at the end of the fiscal year. While clearly cancer is an important issue of research, I would hope research that it undertakes is closely linked to the other projects that are funded by medical research, heritage trust fund, et cetera.

I'm also curious as to whether or not Alberta – and I suspect it would be through the applied cancer research vehicle – is part of that large international study on breast cancer which is currently under way or whether or not Alberta is participating through various types of funds, and is this the vehicle?

[Mr. Herard in the Chair]

Another concern I have is: to the extent that Alberta is generous and has made an investment in medical research that I think is second to none in the country, to what extent is there any evidence of displacement, that federal funds that would have come to Alberta to fund projects have in a sense been allocated to other jurisdictions where the provincial governments are far less generous or have far less dedication in pursuing these topics? In some instances what happens is that if a provincial government moves into an area, the federal government will back out and say, "Well, the level of research there is being funded adequately." To the extent that we deal with perhaps joint projects, that would be less of an issue. I would be curious in terms of the applied cancer research, but for that matter, with regards to the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, the gamut, whether or not there is any evidence of displacement – that the federal government says: "Well, there is a high level of research there, and we'll put our funds on a regional equity basis so there's an equivalent level of research across the country. We'll make the offset in those provinces that devote less to research." That has happened, I know, in other areas of research but not necessarily medical research. It's a question of interest and trying to target the federal government, should that occur in the future or has happened in the past.

I note that the information from the Alberta Cancer Board annual reports shows that the focus of this project changed in 1987 to one of theme-oriented multidisciplinary initiatives related directly to the problem of cancer. I'm curious, then, again in terms of this sort of more holistic approach to cancer research, why it has been hived out – this is a variant of my earlier question – from these other vehicles that we have for research in the province. So those are my questions with regards to applied cancer research.

My questions with regard to agriculture are the following. I note that on page 1111 of *Hansard* for October 27, 1993, the hon. provincial minister of agriculture notes – and I'll just quote, since he may not have *Hansard* directly available:

The benefits of this program to our agricultural and food economy are very positive. In 1992, 10 on-farm research projects were evaluated, and of those 10 that cost approximately \$7.24 million, there was a direct gross return of \$455.6 million over the next 10 to 15 years. We project that every dollar invested will return approximately \$60, and I think that's a very satisfactory type of investment.

Well, I have to question the nature of that type of investment. I recall when I was asking a question of the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism about Alberta Intermodal Services, I asked him about the rate of return, and I was using the definition that most economists use. He chose, then, to use this

particular approach which really focuses on linkages and multipliers. You know, multiply everything by two, and that's in a sense a measure of the indirect benefits of these types of projects.

The reason I bring this up, Mr. Minister, is that to an extent that tends to be misleading in evaluating projects, because much of that capital labour that is employed in one type of project could have been used elsewhere. There's a real opportunity cost or forgone alternative as you shift that capital and labour to a use here and away from some other use. It's often misleading, then, to include the expansion of economic activity in the area that you're subsidizing as a benefit without in fact including as a cost the contraction or the reduction in economic activity that occurs in other areas. It always is good, though, for getting a very positive benefit/cost ratio, as we saw from Buffalo Lake and other types of investments. It's significant in that respect, but it's sometimes misleading.

The reason I bring that up is to the extent that we are concerned about where we allocate each dollar. Trying to in a sense jazz up the benefit ratio to the extent that it's used as a political vehicle is perhaps acceptable, but to the extent that it's actually used to allocate those dollars may well lead us to undertake investments that you would not want to touch with a 10-foot pole, because it would not meet most reasonable benefit/cost criteria.

So my question to the hon. minister is: to the extent that the department of agriculture, when it assesses these various types of projects, uses benefit/cost analysis and uses impact analysis, to what extent does it do so in a way that is balanced in that when there are benefits included in the numerator of the benefits that the costs of those activities in terms of reduced employment or reduced use of capital in a lot of the sectors is included as a real cost? As I say, it is really important when we're trying to make investment decisions that we really do look at the true benefit/cost ratio; then having decided which are good projects, look at the indirect benefits but not necessarily include them as a very good measure of the return. If we were living in a world with 20 percent unemployment, capital that was easily mobile from one sector to another, it might not be too bad an approximation. Having read *Hansard* and seeing a 60 to 1 benefit ratio, you might put me down as a bit dubious, Mr. Minister. I would just be curious, then, as to what the criteria are that you use when you're looking at investments in irrigation and reclamation, because I think this broad-based approach may be somewhat misleading.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8:50

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you very much. I'm just going to cruise through this, too, from front to back, Mr. Chairman. On agriculture and rural development. Careful; if you touse his hair, he'll follow you any place. Just give me a minute so I can talk to him. [interjections] I just said that if she touses his hair, he'll follow her any place.

Point of Order Decorum

MR. DAY: A point of order, Mr. Chairman. In light of remarks that have been protested by members opposite for words or expressions far less sexist than that, I would ask for a profound apology from the member opposite for that very sexist statement.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, if he calls that sexist, okay. I mean, everything is in the eye of the beholder. I would appreciate the attention of the . . .

MR. DAY: A point of order, Mr. Chairman. His words were: if he calls that sexist, that's okay. I didn't hear a retraction or an apology for those remarks. I'm sure his House leader is very disturbed that one of his members would be making such allegations and sexist remarks. I didn't hear an apology.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I was going to get to the apology, but he's so quick at jumping up and down all the time there. If you can glue his seat to the chair for a minute, Mr. Minister, then I will go on, or cement the backseat of his underwear, whatever it is you have to do. I certainly would like to apologize if he thinks that's a sexual assault, but I would tell you that no matter who touses his hair, he'll follow, male or female or in between.

Debate Continued

MR. N. TAYLOR: What I'm really after right now is to find out from the minister why we still fund Farming for the Future \$5 million when we're talking about saving money. Now, I know you'll argue about how much you're going to be able to save and how much the farmers are going to learn, but I think it's about time, and I think farmers are modern businessmen today. We don't have oilmen for the future. We don't have plumbers for the future. We don't have salesmen for the future. Farmers for the future: I think that's \$5 million that would be better spent in the community.

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

I still ask the hon. deputy deputy House leader over there if he could lean over – you don't need to touse the minister's hair, but if you could tap his hand or if that's sexist use a paper book or something to rap him so he would listen a little bit. Will you? Because he's heavily involved in another conversation. Mr. Chairman, I'm trying to get his attention.

Now, Mr. Chairman, as a point of order, if you'll guarantee he has a gremlin up there taking down the questions, I don't mind because they are the ones that do all the answering and have all the brains anyhow. But if they don't have one up there, I'd prefer that he listened. Well, there is one up there. It's called *Hansard*. [interjections] Yeah, but you're still making a supposition that he can read. I prefer to know that a gremlin was doing it.

Now, if the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie will just let me have his ear for a minute, or if you'll stick your finger in his other ear so I can have . . .

Point of Order Decorum

MRS. BURGNER: Mr. Chairman, a point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A point of order, Calgary-Currie.

MRS. BURGNER: Mr. Chairman, I take exception to the comments that my sitting beside the minister of agriculture in any way makes it difficult for him to understand or comprehend the proceedings of this House. I have already been insulted by the hon. Member for Redwater. I would ask him please to retract those comments.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, what I'm trying to get across is that I want the minister's attention, and as long as the hon. member is talking to him – she can sit beside him, on either side.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: A point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister of agriculture, you cannot have a point of order on a point of order.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: I have my point of order, and my point of order is . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: We haven't ruled on the last one.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: My point of order is simply that I have been paying attention. We've been rambling for the last five minutes, and the question has still not been asked.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, whether there's a true point of order or not, the point may be taken that from time to time various ministers who are being addressed in the debate have sometimes out of courtesy a need to listen to someone who's sitting next to them, and that's distracting to some people. I'm sure, as the hon. member has suggested, that many ministers are able to listen to two conversations at once, however disconcerting that may appear to be to the questioner. You've assured us that you are able to hear, and we'll take that under advisement and ask that the hon. Member for Redwater continue his questions.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to make sure that if the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie thought I was being sexist, I wasn't. I was referring to anybody that happens to be sitting near him. I'm not referring to his sexual orientation at all or whoever sits beside him. I'm only interested in whether or not he is listening, and that's all. Actually, I don't mind if he shuts his eyes. I'll presume he is listening. But if he's turning his back to me and chatting to somebody else, I do get a bit annoyed. I think I've made my point. If he hasn't got it by now, he's going to.

Debate Continued

MR. N. TAYLOR: While we roll on there, Mr. Minister, I am also bothered by Grazing Reserves Enhancement, \$3.7 million. In the U.S. and through much – Mr. Chairman, to the minister again.

Uh oh, he's up to it again. He's up to it again, yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, I wonder if we could get to the . . .

Point of Order Repetition

MR. PASZKOWSKI: A point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, thank you. You're interrupting the Chair.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: These questions have already been asked.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You are interrupting the Chair.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: These questions over there that have been asked up until now were asked the other night, and they were answered the other night.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister . . .

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Had the hon. member been truly interested in the answers, they are answered in *Hansard* the other night. Every question that has been asked today has been answered.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I don't think he's been listening, because otherwise he would have known they were answered.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just a minute. Hon. Member for Redwater, perhaps you'll extend the courtesy . . . [interjections] To all members, when the Chair attempts to bring order, it would be appreciated if ministers or members on either side of the House would at least attempt to listen to the Chair's directions. That's what I was just trying to do with the last two interjections.

We are here tonight in Committee of Supply attempting to go through the various projects of the heritage savings trust fund, and I wonder if we could confine ourselves to those estimates. Whether or not people are listening may be disconcerting, but it isn't proper form to continuously refer to that, nor for same to be interjecting. So if we could bring this back to a reasonable level, let's continue with the questions, and when the ministers have their opportunities to answer the questions or make comments on the questions, we'll look forward to that in continuation.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's indeed what I've been trying to do, and I must admit that they don't have to listen. They don't have to pay attention, but then they've got to face the roasting they're going to get from me. That's their choice. I don't think they can have it both ways – fall asleep or go off somewhere else and expect me to say nothing.

Is there trouble hearing me? [interjection] Well, that should be working. I'll get right down and talk to it there. How's that?

AN HON. MEMBER: That's better.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Okay. I'll move over a little bit, because if I'm speaking that way I guess I'm going across the top of it.

Debate Continued

MR. N. TAYLOR: Grazing Reserves Enhancement. I'm bothered here, too, by \$3.7 million. Now, in the western U.S., Clinton – of course, he's getting a great deal of criticism for this – is cutting down a great deal on grazing reserve enhancement. In these days of high beef prices, at the price that we're getting for cattle, I'm not sure that this sort of depression type of psychology where we have to go out and prepare grazing land for the ranchers is necessary anymore. I kind of think that the beef raisers could probably pay a great deal more out of their pockets and free enterprise rather than the taxpayers having to subsidize grazing for cattle when beef prices are as high as they've probably ever been. Now, that'll fix me for the next cowboy stampede they have.

9:00

Community Development – in case the rural people think they're the only ones who are going to catch a little hell today – \$14 million for urban parks. Well, surely that can wait, Mr. Chairman. Urban parks at \$14 million: I'd like to have seen a little bit of a cut in that, maybe half of it. If we took \$7 million off that and put it into hospitals and schools, I think it would do more than continuing \$14 million for the urban parks.

Renewable energy – and this is going to be very good, Mr. Chairman, because there's no minister there at all, although you're not allowed to remark on their absence. At least I got the undivided attention of a gremlin that's been imported in because they knew that the minister wasn't there.

I have trouble again with renewable energy research. This is one of my pet beefs: three-quarters of a million dollars going to Renewable Energy Research. They mentioned that most of it will go to – what do you call it? – sun and wind, which is only proper. However, under Renewable Energy Research this government has consistently for the last half dozen years talked any kind of small power. A lot of it has been quite destructive of the environment, whether it's burning peat, which destroys not only

land cover but gives off a great deal of sulphur, or wood chips. They are viable methods of generating energy, but I don't think they should be considered in the same light that solar and wind energy are considered. [interjection] Well, you notice it's southern Alberta where the wind energy comes from.

The next one is Environmental Protection. The hon. member is missing there, too, and I hope he has something of a gremlin. They have Pine Ridge, \$350,000, which is considerably less than last year at \$700,000, to enhance the Pine Ridge reforestation nursery. Now, I don't think there's much question, Mr. Chairman, that this is money well spent, because we go on into financing the reforestation, not because it's in my constituency. However, one thing that bothers me, with the rapid rush to privatize – like the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs was sitting there overhauling liquor stores here a few months ago; now we're trying to give them away. Are we going to be out there redoing the Pine Ridge reforestation and then find it up for auction here in a short while? In other words, have we doubled-checked to make darn sure that we're not sitting there putting a new paint job on the old thing before we put it out to market? I think it could be a great waste of a third of a million dollars of the taxpayers' money if we're indeed going to turn around and offer it for sale, as has been rumoured. I would like the minister to drop me a line – not in secret; give it all to the public and even pass it to the minister of agriculture, because apparently he's quite interested in things like that – whether the Pine Ridge reforestation nursery is up for privatization in the next year.

Believe it or not, Mr. Chairman, I could have got through all of it if it wasn't for the minister of agriculture being so sensitive about who his seatmates were, but I'm already finished now.

Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Yes, very, very short, Mr. Chairman. I just want to make a couple of comments. It's ironic that the budget in front of us is the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, because when I think of heritage, when I think of a resource, when I think of providing for the future, I think of our young people. The first thing that comes to my mind when I think of our young people, our future leaders of tomorrow, is education. On the one hand, we talk in terms of the possibility of brutal cuts in education. There's no other way of putting it: brutal cuts. Then on the other hand, we're talking in terms of a document that makes no reference to education at all. There's no reference to education, but it funds \$1 million, for example, to the Alberta Family Life and Substance Abuse Foundation, strengthening Alberta families, which is fine. On the other hand, the government here is repealing that particular Act which set that up, but there's a million dollars there. I have no objection to that, but I can't find anything for education per se.

I look under Urban Park Development. I see \$14 million. In those municipalities that don't have plans, those dollars aren't turned back in to be used for priorities like education or health care. They're given to some other municipality that happens to have plans. In other words, there's \$14 million that we're going to shoot out there, and it's going to be spent one way or the other on parks. Parks are important, certainly. They're nice to have, but in terms of priorities, the whole document in front of us would be much more comfortable if I would see an educational foundation, something to do with education, some recognition that education is the number one priority, should be the number one priority of this province. I think it's time the government got their act together and started to realize what Albertans are demanding.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fort McMurray.

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm honoured that my colleagues would allow me to speak three times in the same day. I'm delighted. I will be brief though.

There are some of the categories that I want to list to make a point, if you don't mind, Mr. Chairman. The first is Farming for the Future. The second is Grazing Reserves Enhancement. The third is Urban Park Development. The fourth is Land Reclamation, and the fifth is Applied Cancer Research.

Now, those are diverse areas spread across the program, but what do they all have in common? They all have this theme in common: they did not go down one penny from their estimated budget last year, in the 1992-93 budgets. Indeed, there are three other matters – the private irrigation development assistance, the water management systems improvement, and again applied cancer research – that not only do not go down from the 1992-1993 estimates; they in fact go up from the actual expenditure last year. We are asking Albertans to take 5 percent voluntary cuts in pay, Mr. Chairman. We are asking Albertans to make sacrifices. We are asking them to look into their souls and see what they can do without in the area of education and in the area of health services. It seems to me that with respect to the ministers who brought forward each of these budgets and each of these programs, if they could not have been chopped that symbolic 5 percent, there is something wrong.

Now, I do not want to discredit any one of these worthwhile projects, but if you look at the title of this program, it is indeed the heritage savings trust fund. Quite the contrary: this is not savings, this is spending, and it is not capital projects. Twenty-five cents of each dollar spent here, Mr. Chairman, is relating to a true capital project for which there can be said to be some ray of future long-range benefit. It seems to me, with respect to those ministers who brought forward these budgets and these programs, that a symbolic 5 percent cut in each of these categories would have been a step in the right direction.

Dealing specifically with some of the items that I have curiosity about, Mr. Chairman – and they are only issues of curiosity – I want to pick up with cancer research. The point was made by my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud, inquiring with some degree of forcefulness as to whether or not the very terrible and debilitating disease of breast cancer is dealt with in that research. I was watching the body language of the minister as she dealt with that issue by nodding very aggressively in the affirmative. I would like her to indicate and to confirm that indeed those cancer research projects which relate to cancers that primarily strike at women of all ages in our society are getting their fair share of that \$2.8 million of cancer research. You might find it peculiar that a male member from the northern riding of Fort McMurray would rise on this issue, but it is a matter of concern. Women's groups have indicated to me that some cancers do not seem to get the same research treatment that others do. They have much more colourful language that they use, but I'll leave it to the imagination and ask the minister to comment on whether there was a fair division of that research money.

9:10

The other issue is that all across Canada many organizations are fighting for research dollars, and there are many organizations that are very able at raising voluntary cash donations. The Canadian Cancer Society is one of them. I would like the minister to tell me and satisfy my curiosity whether there is a hook to this money. In other words, does this cancer research in Alberta, first of all,

have to all be spent in Alberta? Secondly, is it tied to some matching program of charitable donation in some fashion?

That concludes the commentaries that I have today. I think before we vote on this particular budget, we should take a long, hard look at the 5 percent voluntary cutbacks we are asking all Albertans to make, Mr. Chairman, and see if in fact this type of budget is creditable to this Assembly at this time and in this day and age.

Remember, Mr. Chairman, that in the state of Alaska they started a heritage trust fund the same time that Albertans did, with a lot less money. At least once a year, I understand, each Alaskan opens his mailbox and receives therein a cash dividend representing the frugality of their management of their heritage trust fund. Here we have a so-called capital expenditure budget of which 75 percent is spent on disposable issues. For example, do we have a cost analysis of the \$25 million that is going to this year be spent on irrigation development? I would like to know on a per capita basis how many irrigation-supported farmers that really assists. What is the per capita capital investment that that constitutes?

I'll conclude my comments on this particular issue, Mr. Chairman, by asking all members to look into their hearts before they vote to approve this budget, particularly those areas in which there is no symbolic reduction whatsoever.

Thank you.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the hon. members for their interest in the cancer research part of this budget and to say that I will give the hon. members a more detailed letter, particularly the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud because he asked some questions on the breast cancer research program and as to whether this was part of the national program. There is a national program on breast cancer. I believe, if my memory serves me correctly, there were five sites selected in Canada for that, and I believe it's the University of Calgary or the Calgary site that was chosen. We were very proud to have the recognition of the work done in Alberta, shown by a selection in Alberta. As that is quite detailed and I detected quite a bit of interest in that, I would like to respond to him in that area, because there is a lot of co-operation between the universities, between the Heritage Foundation for Medical Research and the Cancer Board. The answer as to why is it hived out and singled out is because cancer is the leading, I guess, medical challenge that we have now. When we look at it increasing at the rate it is, we feel that there should be an emphasis on applied cancer research.

I should also say that while the budget is \$2.8 million this year and was last year, when this program started it was \$3 million, and it has been reduced to \$2.8 million. I think it's imperative that we continue to very aggressively try to address this problem. I am very confident that the funds are used in a good way because of the peer review that is done by international and national scientists to ensure that the areas we're focusing in are not being duplicated somewhere else. So I would write that detail to the hon. members. As I say, I detected a fair amount of interest and support for this program, and I thank them for that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the vote?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

Agreed to:

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

1 – Farming for the Future	\$5,000,000
2 – Irrigation Rehabilitation and Expansion	\$24,500,000
3 – Private Irrigation Development Assistance	\$500,000

4 – Grazing Reserves Enhancement	\$3,712,000
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Community Development

1 – Urban Park Development	\$14,060,000
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Energy

1 – Renewable Energy Research	\$750,000
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Environmental Protection

1 – Water Management Systems Improvement	\$26,400,000
2 – Land Reclamation	\$2,500,000
3 – Pine Ridge Reforestation Nursery Enhancement	\$350,000

Executive Council

1 – Alberta Family Life and Substance Abuse Foundation	\$1,000,000
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Health

1 – Applied Cancer Research	\$2,800,000
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Labour

1 – Occupational Health and Safety Research and Education	\$750,000
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Total	\$82,322,000
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MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I move that the vote be reported.

[Motion carried]

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

[Motion carried]

9:20

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund capital projects division, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1994, a sum from the Alberta heritage savings trust fund capital projects division not exceeding the following for the departments and purposes indicated. Perhaps with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I might read the whole thing.

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development: Farming for the Future, \$5,000,000; Irrigation Rehabilitation and Expansion, \$24,500,000; Private Irrigation Development Assistance, \$500,000; Grazing Reserves Enhancement, \$3,712,000; for a total of \$33,712,000.

Community Development: \$14,060,00, Urban Park Development.

Energy: \$750,000, Renewable Energy Research.

Environmental Protection: Water Management Systems Improvement, \$26,400,000; Land Reclamation, \$2,500,000; Pine Ridge Reforestation Nursery Enhancement, \$350,000; for a total of \$29,250,000.

Executive Council: Alberta Family Life and Substance Abuse Foundation, \$1,000,000.

Health: Applied Cancer Research, \$2,800,000.

Labour: Occupational Health and Safety Research and Education, \$750,000.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: All in favour of that long report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

[At 9:24 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]