

Title: Estimates of Human Resources and Employment, Monday, March 13, 2000

Date: 00/03/13

8:13 a.m.

[Mr. Friedel in the chair]

Designated Supply Subcommittee – Human Resources and Employment

Friedel, Gary, Chairman
Bonner, Bill
Ducharme, Denis
Gibbons, Ed

Klapstein, Albert
MacDonald, Hugh
Marz, Richard
McFarland, Barry

Paul, Pamela
Renner, Rob
Thurber, Tom
Yankowsky, Julius

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. We may as well call the meeting to order then. Welcome to the designated supply subcommittee for Human Resources and Employment. I spoke to all the members before the meeting and explained that there is an all-party agreement to allocate the time for this meeting if there is no other agreement. There was a suggestion earlier that the model that was used last Monday was preferable. In this case, the minister is allowed up to 20 minutes to make opening remarks and comments. The Official Opposition would then have a full two hours for questions and answers. I understand the format that they would like is almost like a debate with the minister, so it will tend to be a little bit more informal. Following that, if the independent member, Ms Paul, is here, she would be allowed 15 minutes, and the government members would have the remainder of the time. At any point when there are no further questions from the government members during that remaining time, the meeting would adjourn.

We would require a motion to this effect to make that the process for this meeting, and if I could be so bold as to ask someone to make that motion. Moved by Mr. Klapstein. All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any opposed? That's carried unanimously and that is what was required to make this motion stand.

Then we might as well get right into it. Minister Dunford, would you care to address this committee and tell us everything that we need to know about your ministry?

MR. DUNFORD: Okay. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'll be glad to open the discussion, and I do certainly approve of the format and look forward to questions. I should note for the record, though, that government members through the standing policy committee and through caucus have already grilled me at length, but certainly if they have further questions, I'd be glad to attempt to answer them.

The situation this morning is that I plan to go over in general terms some of the aspects of Human Resources and Employment. I have people here that I would like to introduce that are going to assist me as required, and certainly any question that's not dealt with here verbally this morning will of course be dealt with in written form at some time, and we make a commitment that we would do it in an expeditious manner.

We have Shelley Ewart-Johnson, who is our deputy minister. She's here in the audience. Jim Dixon is our public commissioner. Mark Asbell is chairman of the Labour Relations Board. Duncan Campbell and Dan Thompson help us with our finances. Shirley Howe and Debra Tiffen help Jim Dixon in the personnel administration office. Shelby MacLeod, I think you know, is my executive assistant. It looks like I've been able to introduce everyone. I want to of course thank them for putting together the 2000 and 2001 budgets, and the effort they extended is appreciated certainly by myself and I would hope by all members of this committee as we go through it.

A little bit about Human Resources and Employment. Our department supports the government goal of enhancing Alberta's new knowledge-based economy and, of course, our competitive edge. We also support another major priority of this government, and that's to build strong and caring communities.

Now, our department and the P AO, personnel administration office – I'll be referring to it continually this morning as PAO – are clearly focused on maximizing the potential of our citizens and the public sector. We also share another goal, and that's nurturing a workplace climate in the private sector and the public service that focuses on innovation, productivity, and excellence. We also want to enhance the health, safety, and wellness of private- and public-sector employees.

To talk about the Human Resources and Employment portion first, we consider ourselves to be the newly created people-and-workplace department, and it is our job to assist Albertans toward greater opportunities. We have 2,400 staff members that help Albertans try to navigate through the various programs that we can offer them as they move through the various transitions in their lives.

We assist Albertans who want to work by providing short-term financial assistance, support, or training, really with the goal for them to achieve greater financial independence. We provide Albertans with career planning information through our career development centres, and at those centres Albertans can expect counseling and services to help them make choices and hopefully land not only the right job for them but something that provides them with the esteem and the financial resources to then look after their families and themselves. By actively working with employers and employees, we believe we can create a fair and level playing field in our workplaces and ensure that our workers are safe and help nurture a positive labour relations climate. As a result, we have one of the highest productivity rates and one of the most impressive workplace health and safety records in Canada.

Finally, we want to make sure that no one is left behind. As we look to the future of Alberta – and by the way it is so bright that we need welder's goggles as we look off into the future. We just cannot afford to leave anyone behind. Everybody's potential has to be realized, because we see day after day the need and the opportunity for Albertans to create a place for themselves and their families in this economy, in this culture, and in this society.

Now, as far as the budget estimates, our budget information begins on page 235 of the 2000-01 Government and Lottery Fund Estimates. Our operating expense and capital investment are projected to be just over a billion dollars. This is a \$43 million increase over our forecast for this past year. This increase provides Albertans with the quality programs and services they need to help lead more productive and fulfilling lives.

Our training programs and initiatives are just some of the ways we help Albertans achieve their goals. By providing supports for independence and clients with basic foundation skills programs and other work experience programs, more Albertans are working. Alberta has the lowest proportion of citizens who receive income support in all of Canada. Overall 70 percent of people who complete our programs are not on welfare a year later. Our average monthly caseload is down from 33,000 clients to 31,275. That's to date, as we speak. For the 2000-2001 budget we're anticipating a caseload

of 31,400 clients, and this has remained relatively constant from last year.

The supports for independence budget, however, is increasing by \$20 million. This is because of a significant increase in costs related to generally increasing costs for dental, drugs, and other related medical services. Last fall's increase of \$58 per month to the assured support benefit rate has been annualized now in the 2000-2001 budget, and there's a slight increase in the number of people who face multiple barriers and need more intensive assistance to move them into the workforce. Overall our employment and training initiatives are showing a great return on dollars invested. That's why our training and employment support budget will receive an overall \$8 million increase this year.

8:23

Now some highlights. Our department's direct spending under the labour market development agreement with the federal government will spend an additional \$5 million over this year's forecast of \$93.9 million. This will cover an increased demand for training, and you can find that on page 240. This program reduces the dependence on employment insurance and other government programs by increasing the overall skill level of our workforce.

An additional \$1.2 million on top of the \$5 million spent this year will help us expand our Youth Connections program across the province. This worthwhile program connects young people to resources such as learning and career information and jobs.

Today there are greater opportunities for Albertans to find employment because of our growing and booming economy, yet there are still some people who are not fully participating in our economy. There are nearly 250,000 Albertans with disabilities, and slightly more than half are working. We know that we can do better. So, chaired by Richard Marz, the Employability Council brings people with disabilities and the groups that represent them and employers together. This initiative will explore ways we can increase their participation in the workforce.

Now, we've invested \$55,000 in the council's work. This is a small item in our budget but a great initiative that will help persons with disabilities to reach their potential. While we're encouraging greater participation in our economy, we're also committed to supporting others who may not be able to reach this goal. A good example of this is our assured income for the severely handicapped, or our AISH program. This program places greater emphasis on a person's ability rather than disability. We're encouraging recipients who have the skills and desire to work to train to the extent of their capacity, but we're also reassuring them that they're not jeopardizing their eligibility or chances of returning to the program if they don't succeed. We think this has been a tremendous reform to our AISH program in the sense that we now can provide them with the opportunity to go out and seek a challenge, seek work in the workplace without having to cross that bridge with no safety net beneath them. We think this will show tremendous increases in part-time employment amongst our AISH recipients.

Now, the budget for the program will increase to \$295.8 million, which is up \$27 million, or 10 percent, over this year's forecast. The additional funding provides for an increasing caseload of about 5 percent, so we're talking 24,000 cases up to about 26,000 cases and, of course, the anticipated increases in medical and dental costs.

Now, our caseloads have been increasing for various reasons. The primary reason is that more baby boomers are starting to reach that age, and we're experiencing new severely disabling conditions such as respiratory and cardiovascular problems. Other factors include an increasing number of mentally ill people, a continuing emphasis on community care as more clients live in the community rather than in institutions and require the benefits, and more people are surviving

brain injuries because of the advances made in medical care. The increase to this budget shows our continuing commitment to provide one of the most generous programs of its kind to Albertans.

Alberta's child health benefits program achieves two important goals: keeping our children strong and healthy and supporting low-income working families. Under this program children of low-income families have full coverage for dental, optical, drug prescription, emergency ambulance bills, and diabetic supplies. The program has a budget of \$14.7 million, which is a \$4.8 million increase over this year. This additional funding will accommodate the costs of families who need this program. We anticipate that next year approximately 83,400 children will be receiving health benefits under this program. Together with Learning we will be offering health benefits to 6,500 children of postsecondary students as well. For working families we also want to ensure they are healthy and safe and are being treated fairly in the workplace.

Now, as far as the workplace and its stability is concerned, the last couple of years have been pretty good to Albertans and to our province. Our approach to labour relations is working well. From 1995 to 1999 our rate of workplace stoppage has been consistently below Canada's overall average. By the way, Canada's average is 8.77 person-days lost per 10,000 person-days, and Alberta's is 3.94, so we're actually less than half. Based on this five-year average, Alberta ranks third lowest, and we're behind P.E.I. and Nova Scotia. In 1999 we ranked second, behind only Prince Edward Island. For the same year, just for comparison purposes, Ontario ranked fourth and British Columbia ranked fifth.

Our labour relations framework attempts to strike a balance between the interests of all parties and support the collective bargaining process. Through mediation and facilitation services we're continuing to encourage workplace practices and solutions that are designed by the stakeholders themselves. We believe that this results in more enduring settlements and that these are better settlements than those types of settlements that are imposed. Our facilitators play a key role working behind the scenes to help parties problem-solve and reduce the number of grievances and disputes and the need for third-party intervention. Ninety-three percent of those cases that are assigned the assistance of a mediator are resolved without a workplace disruption.

The increase to the workplace services budget by \$1.2 million over the forecast \$13.7 million will help us to continue to provide Albertans with quality workplace programs and services. Some of the increases will provide support for frontline staff and support for the newly formed Workers' Compensation Board Appeals Commission and a council on workplace safety. The Workers' Compensation Board Appeals Commission is examining the entire appeal system to review the services provided to employers and workers, and I look forward to the recommendations of the chair, Sam Friedman, my colleague Denis Herard, and other members that will present that report to me, hopefully later this summer or early fall.

Now, my colleague Julius Yankowsky is chair of the Council on Workplace Safety, that was formed last year. This council is overseeing the regulatory review process for seven of our regulations; for example, the chemical hazards regulation and of course the recently OCed first aid regulation. This will ensure that our regulatory framework is effective in reducing workplace injuries and issues.

Can I ask how much time I've taken?

THE CHAIRMAN: You have four minutes left.

MR. DUNFORD: Four minutes left; okay.

Workplace injuries and fatalities. There have been a number of them in the last month, and these tragic events have brought home

the absolute necessity of maintaining workplace health and safety. There are people that are looking for immediate answers and solutions that would prevent this from happening, and we are exploring different options, but we want to make sure that we find solutions that will have a real impact and will be enforceable. Now, having said all of this, I want to assure all of you on the committee and all Albertans that our workplaces really have never been safer. In 1998 Alberta's workplace injury rate was the lowest in the province's history. Our partnership program, regulatory enforcement, and regulatory review contribute to our success. In the partnership program over 3,000 companies have built health and safety programs that have been certified.

By way of comparison, construction companies that are certified have a lost-time claim rate of 3.1 in comparison to lost-time claim rates of 5.3 for construction companies that aren't certified. Our enforcement efforts continue to target companies with poor health and safety performance. In the past two years we have doubled the number of our inspections to 2,769 inspections and our compliance orders to 975.

In the area of homelessness, the shelters for homeless adults program budget will be increased by \$500,000 to \$10 million to ensure adequate spaces are available.

8:33

The Labour Relations Board has a budget of \$2 million. The budget provides renewed focus for the board finding and delivering simpler and clearer processes for their clients. Now, we're also in that area placing greater emphasis on disputes resolution training to enhance settlement efforts.

In the area of the personnel administration office, the PAO is the government's central human resource agency. Its budget is \$7.8 million, and the PAO ensures that a capable, skilled, and versatile workforce is available to meet the needs of the people of Alberta.

Our public service has been recognized for its innovative management practices in such areas as business planning, performance management, and compensation strategies. The PAO's goals focus on enabling departments to fulfill their business plans through strategic leadership, human resource strategies, and consulting services in the areas of compensation, a safe work environment, and attracting, selecting, and developing employees.

We again are dedicating \$750,000 to the cross-government projects under the corporate human resources plan, and our PAO continues to take a leadership role in the implementation of this cross-government priority, now in its third year. Under the strategy we will strengthen the performance management and accountability frameworks for human resources, promote integration for human resources processes and strategies, and continue to implement strategies that will build a strong public service of the future. The PAO is the certifying partner for government under the partnerships and safety program.

That concludes my remarks, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: And very good remarks they were.

Folks, I was just checking the rules with Diane, and I gather from the information that we looked up, this designated supply subcommittee has slightly different rules for staff than other committees. In this case if the minister wishes, his staff can join him at the table, and he can even ask them to supplement questions with technical information if he wishes. So if you want any of your staff to join you...

MR. DUNFORD: No. This will be fine.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Then we will just move right on. The

official clock here says 8:36 a.m. The members of the opposition now have two hours, and what I'm going to do is allow this part of the meeting to take place in a more informal debate setting. As long as it stays somewhat orderly, I think that'll work well. I won't recognize each member as you wish to speak but will reserve the right, if it tends to get out of hand, to revert to the other process. So with that, whoever of you gentlemen wishes to go first, feel free.

DR. MASSEY: I think Hugh's going to start. Last Monday worked well because it wasn't as much a debate as it was a conversation.

MR. DUNFORD: So we'll have a chat; will we?

DR. MASSEY: We will have a chat.

MR. DUNFORD: A fireside chat.

MR. MacDONALD: Good morning. I have actually quite a number of questions this morning, but we'll start with the detailed budget analysis in ministry support services. On line 1.0.5 why is there a 16.2 percent increase in the budget for strategic services? How many additional staff will be hired with the funds, and what's the purpose of the increase?

Farther down, at line 1.0.7, what is the purpose of the 17.1 percent increase in the operating expense for information technology management? Given that the Y2K problem is resolved, what would justify this increase while there's no increase for capital investment?

Farther down, on the next line, given that the increase in full-time equivalents has been less than a 1 percent net increase, why would the human resources budget require a 29 percent increase?

On the next line, what is the purpose for the 19 percent increase in the operating expense for the finance division?

Would you like to answer those?

MR. DUNFORD: Oh, sure.

MR. MacDONALD: Also, hon. minister, if there are any questions that you would like to respond to by writing, I have no problem waiting for a letter a week or two or three down the road.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't remember if I made it clear or not at the outset, but certainly for any question I don't answer directly here at the table or if I only partly answer it here at the table, certainly a full and complete answer would be provided in writing.

So for the sake of the committee, we're on page 238, program 1, ministry support services. The question has been regarding reference 1.0.5, strategic services, showing the increase there. Two reasons basically: first of all, of course salary cost increases; then also we provided for additional funds for contracts.

On item 1.0.7, information technology management, the increase there is because we're increasing our IBM desktop support. There still are some Y2K compliance issues for the major systems, and of course we're also upgrading workplace program systems. So that represents the cost in that area, Hugh.

Under human resources, 1.0.8, this are additional manpower costs, and then we also have an occupational health and safety project cost. Does anyone want to comment on that occupational health and safety project? [interjection] Okay. That's fine. We'll further explain the occupational health and safety project in our written answers.

Sorry, Mr. Chairman. I guess I was getting too informal, thinking that *Hansard* would be able to pick up sideline comments. So we'll deal with that, then, in writing later.

In the finance division, 1.0.9., again this is an increased cost to support additional regional services that we put into place under our new organization of Human Resources and Employment.

MR. MacDONALD: Okay. Thank you.

Now we'll go on to the next page. I have some questions on program 2, page 239, line 2.1.1. Why is there a forecasted increase of 17 percent in the operating expense for program support? Are there any new divisions or areas that have been or are being created to justify such an increase?

Would you prefer to go through the whole page with my questions and then answer?

MR. DUNFORD: Yeah, I think so.

MR. MacDONALD: Okay. In the next line, 2.2.3., why is there a forecasted decrease of 13.9 percent in supplement to earnings?

MR. DUNFORD: I'm sorry. For what?

MR. MacDONALD: In 2.2.3, supplement to earnings, why is there a forecasted decrease?

MR. DUNFORD: Okay.

MR. MacDONALD: How many clients are expected to be taken off the caseload to justify the decrease in funding, and how many staff will be moved or laid off with this decrease in caseload?

Line 2.2.4, temporary support. Why is there a forecasted decrease of 3.2 percent in the area of temporary support? How many clients are expected to be taken off the caseload to justify this decrease in funding? How many staff will be moved or laid off with this decrease in the caseload?

Shelters for homeless adults, line 2.2.7. Which agencies will be receiving funding for shelters for homeless adults? What method was used to determine the increase of \$3.5 million to this area?

Line 2.3.1, benefits for people not expected to work, program delivery. What accounts for the anticipated increase of 36 percent or more in the budget for program delivery for benefits for people not expected to work? I'm curious: are there additional staff that are to be hired here?

Line 2.3.2, widows' pensions. What is the reason for the 9.7 percent decrease in funding for the area of widows' pensions? Is there an anticipated decrease in this caseload? If there is, why? What are the forecasts for this caseload?

That's all the questions I have regarding page 239.

8:43

MR. DUNFORD: Okay. Taking them in order, 2.1.1, program support, showing an increase. The increased costs would be to support our personal computers and our systems. When we put together the different departments, we of course found, like many other departments did, that in the past maybe there hadn't been the co-ordination with hardware, as we might have hoped. I think you could see the necessity, in fact maybe even the urgency for our computers between the adult social services portion of our department and our career development to be able to talk to each other. This is one of the unsung benefits, I believe, of the new configuration of our department in the sense that we now have full responsibility for people involved in temporary support, and we don't have to cross any more departmental boundaries.

Previously, of course, career development was responsible for the training, and the department of family and social services was responsible for the temporary support. I believe there were barriers

then that might have been put into place because the objectives of the two departments would have been different. Social services would want to reduce caseloads; career development would want to bring people in who would be successful in completing training programs. Now that barrier, if it was there, has been removed. We are now fully responsible for that person. So it is important, then, that we have the technology to be able to deal with that.

Also, in that number we're anticipating an increased Imagis operating cost and new systems development, again in our technology area, and of course salary increases.

Supports for independence, 2.2. Actually, hon. member, we are budgeting for a caseload decrease, and the numbers we are using are a decrease from 33,000 to 31,400. We believe that this is a responsible view of the future given the economy that currently exists in Alberta. Of course, you're aware of the recent labour stats that were released last Friday. I think it's fair to say that anyone in Alberta these days who wants to work and can work is there, so we don't anticipate the temporary support being as fully utilized as it might have been in the past.

Also, you might remember from my remarks that we increased the assured support monthly payments by \$58. I believe we did that October 1. Now, what you have in this new budget, of course – you know, we only had a part year in '99-2000. We now have a full year at that increased cost, which we have to account for, so that partially offsets, then, the decrease in the caseload.

I guess the other area in there, too, is that we have a welfare payment savings from the national child benefit. I'm sure you know how it works, but just in case, for people here on the committee and also perhaps people that would be reading *Hansard*, to put it on the record, Alberta has an agreement with the federal government under the child health benefit program that when they increase income to needy families, what we do is lower initially the income support. So the family is getting the same amount of cash into the home, but we are under contract committed to immediately take the money that we theoretically have saved and move it into the purchase of benefit programs for the children of these families.

The federal government and Alberta are fully in favour of that approach, because we are, I think, then directing resources at working families and families that are probably just on the border line. We want to make sure we keep them and do whatever we can to support them in their place of employment rather than having them slide back into our welfare system.

Now, the next one was 2.2.4, and that's temporary support. If I remember your remarks correctly, you talked about a decrease, but that was when you looked at the comparable budget. When you look at the actual forecast now for what we've been experiencing, you'll actually see that that is in fact an increase in our temporary support. We talked about that earlier, again some increase in costs and a little bump up in caseload. We think we'll go from an actual 31,270 to 31,400, if I've got those numbers correct in my head.

Vote 2.2.7, shelters for homeless adults. We are experiencing – and you know this – an increased demand for emergency shelters in Calgary, Edmonton, and Lethbridge, and we're forecasting 600 spaces. Also, you're aware that through collective bargaining between PAO and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees we've had a salary increase of 4 percent. So we're forecasting and budgeting for a contracted agency wage increase of 4 percent as well – we think that's fair – and, of course, our own staff salary costs.

I don't mean to skirt over your comments about staff, but as you, I think, noted in your comments, in one of these areas we're actually not predicting a decrease in staff. I think we're adding one person. So what you're finding as we move forward with this new configured department is that people are remaining in employment. Most of them of course are remaining in their particular areas of expertise,

but there is some movement around. There are no layoffs that are being forecast in this budget.

Vote 2.3.1, program delivery. I don't recall off the top of my head just now why we are forecasting that decrease in numbers. I'll have to get that to you, or perhaps somebody can slide me a quick note.

8:53

Vote 2.3.2, widows' pension. We are anticipating a decrease in caseload from the current 2,800 to 2,530. As you know, there is a means test for the widows' pension. It started in 1982 or 1984, somewhere in that area. We're finding over time that the women coming into the program have now had perhaps better jobs than women of 20 and 25 years ago. It's a stereotype, I know but any of us that have wives know that generally they're better financial planners than the male side of the equation. Well, I'll speak for myself. If I could put aside my male pride and give all my money to my wife, I'd be a rich man. She is a much better planner than I am.

MR. MacDONALD: Well, are we going to have female treasurers?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, I wouldn't be opposed to that, by the way.

In any event, the point I'm trying to make is that the widows now, as they become 55, are in better financial shape than women in the past, so because of that means test that applies to it, we are anticipating a decrease in that caseload.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you. The next series of questions will come on program 3, training and employment support. Now, before I go any further – we talked earlier about the unemployment levels in the province. It is something that I've just noticed – many Albertans I think would agree with me that modesty is a wonderful virtue to have. Mr. Chairman, I would say that this hon. minister is displaying that. I can't say that about his predecessors. Certainly, after these labour statistics keep coming out relating to unemployment, he could call his ministry the human resources and full employment department, because the province is doing pretty good, and you should be congratulated. I hope this continues. There are problems centred around that that I hope can be resolved as well, but human resources and full employment would be at the present time a good title for your department.

Anyway, training and employment support on page 240, line 3.1.1, program delivery support. Given that the first two major budget areas are showing an increase in funding for program delivery, why is there an anticipated decrease of 31 percent for the program delivery area of training and employment support? Given the focus of this government on employment of persons receiving living assistance, why is there this anticipated decrease? Is this related to the subject we've just talked about? I'm curious.

Now, on line . . .

MR. DUNFORD: Just a second. I don't mean to – well, I do mean to interrupt you.

MR. MacDONALD: Okay. Sure. Go ahead.

MR. DUNFORD: You're talking about a decrease. Where?

MR. MacDONALD: At program delivery support in the area of training and employment support.

MR. DUNFORD: So what line are you on? Line 3.1.1?

MR. MacDONALD: Yes.

MR. DUNFORD: Under operating expense; right?

MR. MacDONALD: Yeah.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, my page 240 shows an increase. Where are you getting the decrease?

MR. MacDONALD: Oh, pardon me. Yeah, and that's about 31 percent of the program, too. Okay. I'm sorry.

Line 3.2.1, employment preparation programs. Given the focus of this government on employing those receiving supports for independence funding, why is there a decrease anticipated in employment preparation programs? Will the government be changing the focus on skills development training grants?

Line 3.2.7 now. Could you justify, please . . .

MR. DUNFORD: Just a minute. I don't have a 3.2.7.

MR. MacDONALD: No, nor do I. It should be 3.2.4. What is the justification for a 24 percent decrease in the funding for operating support for employment initiatives?

Under Youth Connections, 3.2.5, how many additional clients will be served to justify the 24 percent increase in funding for Youth Connections?

That's all the questions I have relating to program 3, training and employment support.

MR. DUNFORD: All right. Under 3.2.1, again, I would want to indicate to readers of *Hansard* that when you look at the '99-2000 budget, which has a number of \$26,600,000, and you look at our estimates for the upcoming year at \$25,434,000, yes, indeed it does look like a decrease, but our forecast, what we're actually going to spend this year, is \$23,695,000. So once again I would want to point out that in the area of employment preparation programs we are actually forecasting an increase in expenditure.

Employment initiatives, 3.2.4, is showing a decrease in operating expenses. Again, as I think you pointed out in your earlier remarks – and I do appreciate the compliment about full employment – we actually are in a position now to reduce the number of employment initiative projects that we have in place. We just simply don't have the clients that would be able to go into these employment initiatives.

The 4.9 percent. I don't know whether those are full employment levels, but certainly, as I'd said earlier, anybody that can work is just about at the point now where they probably are working in Alberta. What it's showing us, then, hon. member, is the fact that those who are still outside of the workforce in many, many cases have multiple barriers. It's simply not good enough just to try to provide them with a few employment skills that would be perhaps marketable out there in the economy. There are all kinds of lifestyle issues that are causing barriers, and of course then there's the whole issue of addiction providing a barrier as well.

With the demand for labour that we have in front of us, we would like nothing better than to be able to remove as many of these barriers as we possibly can, because while you're complimenting us for our full employment levels, I think you might want to withhold some of your compliments when we look at vacancy rates. I'm very very concerned about the level of participation in some industries. I've been told that this winter drilling programs were curtailed in some cases because of the lack of skilled people in the drilling industry. Now, can you imagine? Have you ever heard of it happening before in Alberta where you couldn't find enough people to put on drilling rigs? It's certainly new in my experience. We're ready with employment initiatives whenever we can find the people

to put into those particular areas, but we're here today to talk about estimates and what we think is going to happen next year, so we're in fact showing a reduction.

9:03

Youth Connections, 3.2.5. You may be aware from the press releases that Youth Connections is spreading rapidly throughout the province. Probably as we speak, Youth Connections programs are being unveiled in Strathmore, perhaps in Banff. I've attended many of the openings: Medicine Hat, Lethbridge. The Youth Connections program proved so successful in Calgary and Edmonton that we just felt an urgency to spread it throughout the province. In terms of the additional numbers to justify that increased experience, we'll have to provide that to you in writing because I don't have that in front of me.

Of the many things that we've done, most of which are good – perhaps all are good, but again I want to maintain my modest profile – the Youth Connections program is one that I think will be historical in value.

Those are my comments on that page.

DR. MASSEY: If I could, Mr. Minister. You talked about the high employment. Do you keep track of the shape of that in terms of the wage categories? I was reminded, you know, of our push to have a high knowledge-based economy. There was a clip on television the other night on Silicon Valley and homes selling there for – you couldn't buy a two-bedroom home for less than \$600,000. The clerks in the offices were riding the bus all night or they were going to shelters because they couldn't afford housing. I don't think we're anywhere close to that, even in places like Fort McMurray, where housing is very, very expensive. I was talking to a group of teachers up there and talking about how difficult it was, given the wage scales there, to enter that kind of housing market. I guess my question is: do you monitor the shape or the profile of that labour force and what happens? Are there efforts made to make sure there's a balance of well-paying jobs versus entry-level kinds of jobs?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, we don't have the labour statistics sophisticated to the point that you're asking about, but there's some general information that we do know. First of all, let me say that the reason we are involving ourselves in the shelter situation is that in some cases what you have is people who are employed but are simply unable to pay the rents that they're finding. This is a particular problem in Calgary, as I've come to understand it. Now, with current gas prices we have exacerbated the situation still further, in my view, because some people, to escape the high rents in Calgary, have not only moved to the outskirts but have gone to the so-called bedroom communities in and around Calgary and then of course are commuting. To do that, you generally have to do it by car. With pump prices now at 64.9 and that sort of thing, there's a real concern.

Of course, the concern that we have, then, is: are we topping up those wages enough so that these people can get by and remain in the workforce? One of the main focuses that we have in Human Resources and Employment is on the working poor. We know that if we can get them into the workforce, then careers start to develop and wages start to increase and they move up in those particular areas.

On the whole area of vacancy rates, whenever I have an opportunity and the context is appropriate when I'm speaking publicly, I've been challenging industry associations, I've been challenging unions, I've been challenging employers throughout this province to start to do better at human resource planning. We in government do have resources that our department has that we put into training

initiatives, and certainly the Department of Learning has huge resources that they use to try to meet the particular needs, but if we don't as government get the proper information from industry, then it would seem to me that it is only by accident that we're able to fill the demands.

Obviously I'm using this opportunity now to stand up on that little soapbox and say again to this committee and the influences that you have and to people, again, that are readers of *Hansard* that this is a serious, serious matter. If we're going to achieve that future that many of us see for Alberta, we just have to have better human resource planning. The government is trying to do it. We talked earlier under the personnel administration office about our human resource strategy, but every industry needs to be as involved as we are in forecasting skill-set needs.

DR. MASSEY: Thanks.

So right now, if I understood what you said, there's not a sort of monitoring or any kind of an attempt to look at that profile.

MR. DUNFORD: I wouldn't say that there are no attempts, hon. member, but there's no sophisticated report that I receive every month that tells me the vacancy rate for drilling people, that there were a thousand positions open, that there's a thousand openings for truck drivers, or that there's just a huge need for software industry people.

DR. MASSEY: I'd shift, then, in terms of the employment standards – and maybe this isn't the place – to the recent incident, the tragedy in Calgary in the sub shop. There was a suggestion that there should be a requirement that they work in pairs in those kinds of situations. Have you done anything? Is that where this would be addressed?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, we don't have anything in our budget particularly dealing with that matter, because the financial pressures of multistaffing would of course have to be borne by the employer. Would you like me to make a few comments on the situation?

DR. MASSEY: I would appreciate your thinking on what the solution might be.

MR. DUNFORD: Okay. Well, currently our staff has provided me with a document that lists a number of options that we have. Now, I'm not going to consider, though, that this is the exclusive list. We will be talking to police services. We will be talking to employer/employee union groups in order to get some of their thoughts, but thus far there seem to be at least two avenues to approach the situation that happened to Tara Anne McDonald.

9:13

The first one, that seems obvious, as you have mentioned – and I'm not listing them in priority – is under the Employment Standards Code. Right now we have legislation and a regulation that restricts the ability of anyone under 18 to work alone. They can't work alone, as a matter of fact. If I have the exact hours right, between 9 p.m. and midnight there has to be another person with them who is over the age of 18, and if they are going to work after midnight, they not only have to have another person over 18 with them, but they also have to have written consent from a parent or a guardian. So we have that situation.

The suggestion has been made that an option would be to simply remove the age restriction. People would not work alone, then, after 9 p.m. or pick another hour of the day or night. It has some attractiveness in the sense that people see it as a quick and easy solution, perhaps. I've learned over the years to be cautious about

quick and easy solutions, because one size generally doesn't fit all. So we're going to have to have a look at it, but the point would still be that under the Employment Standards Code there could be a change, then, to deal with that particular matter.

The other option that's open to us would be through workplace health and safety in terms of the designation of a hazardous site, thus forcing an employer to do a hazard assessment and then come up with some sort of risk management plan that would then be acceptable to our officials. That seems on the surface of it to provide a little more flexibility, but again I think it needs broader consultation than just within our own department.

I know it's difficult to deal with the emotional issue of it, and it would seem that if somebody had been with Tara, perhaps she would be alive today. What I wake up in the middle of the night and wonder, though, is if this punk might have had the power to overcome both of them and there would be two dead in that Subway. I worry about things like that.

Getting back to previous member's comments on full employment, I also wake up and worry about eliminating employment. If the margins are so tight on, say, a convenience store in a particular area and they're forced to go to multistaffing and feel they can't afford it and then simply shut down their operation at 9 at night or whatever it is, then I've just put somebody on the unemployment roll. So I do worry about limiting employment as we try to provide a safer work environment.

Now, there might be other options that are available, and certainly we are open to hear them. Our mind is not made up, but our mind is made up in the sense that we're not going to leave this alone. Something will be done.

DR. MASSEY: Thanks.

Could I move to the AISH program for just a minute? You talked about the increase – and I think that was really welcomed – and the flexibility of AISH recipients. I guess my first question is: how do you determine the level? There was \$58 added. Is there a basket of costs that is examined on an annual basis for AISH and those living on social assistance? How do you determine what is the right level of support?

MR. DUNFORD: I don't know that there is a formula. Can somebody nod? No, there's no particular formula. So what would be looked at, then, of course is: what is the relationship to other support programs? What is the relationship to, you know, if one were able to work and to create an income, what that would likely be, and then try to relate that to a support level. Then I suppose at the end of the day there's also the consideration of the fact that as the minister I am responsible for – and I take it with a huge amount of concern – and have to be steward of the taxpayers' money. So we have to be seen, then, to be fair to both parties in the sense of something that provides a livable wage and also is something that's acceptable. I don't need a taxpayers' group getting on me about the AISH program, and so far they haven't. I think they see it as a fair level.

We update it periodically, as you know, although there's nothing I can announce in this session this morning, but certainly as we see some of the costs escalating, we constantly monitor it.

DR. MASSEY: I appreciate that balance between making sure that they're well cared for and have the resources that they need yet not offending the taxpayers. There's not a lot of sympathy for people on social assistance, unfortunately. I deal with quite a few of them in my constituency office, and I should say that the department is just excellent in terms of working with clients when we run into difficulties, but it's still a huge problem.

We started an antipoverty roundtable in Mill Woods to try to bring together all the resources. We didn't know we had five food banks of one shape or another, churches that were working, and we've got a garden project going, trying to encourage gardening in public housing. So there are a number of things, but it's really a trap for some of them. Some of them don't have telephones, and even just communicating with people living in poverty is a problem just in a small area like that. I really am interested in how those support levels are determined and that they are regularly reviewed because of things like increased costs for fuel now and other costs.

MR. DUNFORD: Can I just ask a question? On that antipoverty committee that you formed in Mill Woods, have you invited a member of our staff to be part of that?

DR. MASSEY: We've had various members of community agencies, but I'm not sure that we've had anyone specifically from your department.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, we have great people.

DR. MASSEY: Good. It's a good suggestion.

MR. DUNFORD: I guess you want it on a volunteer basis. That's fine, but I'm sure that if you approached us, somebody would. I think it would be a good resource for your committee.

DR. MASSEY: I appreciate that.

On the AISH program, can I give you a bit of a case and then pose my problem? I have an AISH recipient who has a diploma from NAIT in business. He's written a number of business proposals. The last time he wrote a business proposal it was turned down, and he was not given any reasons why the proposal was turned down. It was a contract group that was handling the proposal. I wrote a letter asking if there was an appeal process, and if there wasn't an appeal, if the applicant could at least have a list of reasons why the business plan was turned down. I think he eventually got an oral report from them, but there was nothing that I ever saw in writing. I only get the one side of the story, you understand.

9:23

MR. DUNFORD: Did he submit it to us, though?

DR. MASSEY: No, it was to a contract group in the city.

I guess my question is: is there a troubleshooter or someone in your department that someone can go to? This has gone on over a couple of years. I forget how many hundred employment applications he's filled out. His disability is such that he can't rely on his health. He's up one day and down the next, and it makes it very difficult for him. I wondered: is there a troubleshooter? Someone that's been trying to work the system in the best way but just seems to end up in a dead end and terribly frustrated: is there someone he appeals to in your department?

MR. DUNFORD: I would suggest in this particular instance that the two of you work together to get something in writing that he can feel comfortable in signing basically stating the case, submit it to our office, and then we'll have a look at it. I would also then propose to send a copy to the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and his Employability Council. Although they're not there to look into specifics, at least it might give more information to the Employability Council as to some of the barriers our people are faced with.

DR. MASSEY: I don't think he's as much interested in complaining as he is in getting something in terms of a bit of a small business going, a home-based business, but I'll follow that up.

I've asked the question about the support levels.

I guess the last one I had was on the Alberta child health benefit. How do people find out about that? Again, we seem to have people come into the office who don't know what's available.

MR. DUNFORD: I liked your comment earlier about people that are living on the edge not having telephones. They probably sure as hell don't have computers. So while we congratulate ourselves on just tremendous web sites, for certain specific individuals, I mean, we might as well be talking into outer space because we're not going to reach those people. Our caseworkers are particularly cognizant of these particular programs and the difficulty we have in communicating them.

We are forecasting, of course, an increase in our child health benefit costs because we are dedicated to providing better information and better communication so that we find those children. We think we can really help some working families with this particular program. We think it's just an excellent, excellent program, because it gets a lot of the health and dental costs off the parents' backs. So however we have to do it, we will make sure that we try to get that program communicated, because it's just too helpful. How do I say this? You know, this is a program where we want the cost to increase.

DR. MASSEY: Thanks.

MR. MacDONALD: Mr. Chairman, I happen to have some more questions for the hon. minister of human resources and full employment, but before that, I have to remind him of a study that I read. It was presented, I believe, to Alberta Treasury officials. It was researched by an economics professor at the University of Calgary, Robert Mansell, and interestingly enough he and, I believe, some of his students compared Alberta with three American states that have basically the same sort of economy, agriculture, and industry. I think the states were Texas, Oklahoma, and Colorado. In the last decade there has been a significant increase in economic activity not only in Alberta but in those three states as well, and remarkably the disposable income of the workers in the three American states was significantly higher than here in Alberta. Here in Alberta, as I recall reading the report, the disposable income had stagnated. I believe it had gone down marginally for the Alberta workers, and I have some concern about this. I wonder if the hon. minister or any of his department officials have looked at this study and if they have any comment on it.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, first of all, I think you're on to an excellent point. The way that we do our income tax in this country has I think created the very situation that you're talking about. The ability of both the federal government and the provincial government to benefit from the so-called bracket creep I think has contributed a great extent to the leveling off of disposable income and in some cases maybe even the decrease. I personally, but I think we can speak on behalf of the government, am extremely pleased, then, with the recent move by the federal government to involve themselves with indexing a number of the funds, and of course it's now the responsibility of the Alberta government to respond in kind. We have in some cases, but we still have a little ways to go in my view.

The thing, though, that I want to point out to you is the employment tax credit as it relates to families with children. I have heard from the executive director of the Edmonton Social Planning Council that this has been something good that this government has done. Now, many of you will know that we don't often hear from that particular individual about anything positive, but in that case he made the comment to me verbally that it was having a clearly

positive impact on the ability of people of lower incomes to look after their families.

I know there's current discussion around the flat tax and what that might do to middle-income families. That'll be sorted out by accountants, not by me. Increasing the personal exemptions for both spouses I think is going to have a huge impact, and of course the Treasurer talked in the Budget Address about actually removing 132,000 Albertans from paying any provincial tax at all. Now, when we lay on top of that the recent announcements by the federal government, I don't know if it'll be 132,000 that won't pay any federal tax either, but I imagine the numbers are going to be actually pretty significant. What we need to find is reform in our tax system in Canada so that the incentive is still to go out there and go to work and work as hard as you want to but as hard as you can and then be properly rewarded for it so that, again, you can increase disposable income and thus increase your quality of life.

9:33

We know there's a direct relationship between education and income and health, and while I don't necessarily want to bring a health debate into this particular area, there has been too much attention, in my view, spent on what happens after a person is injured or ill and not enough attention on how we keep people from injuring themselves and how we keep people from getting sick. There needs to be a lot more concentration on the preventative side of it, because not only will it start showing dividends in terms of health budgets, but I believe it will carry on into the economic well-being in the workplace. I think people will then be more productive because they'll be at work. People will be happier because they're productive and because they're at work, and there's just a huge payoff to be made there. We want to see substantial increases in disposable income in Alberta.

MR. MacDONALD: Okay.

Mr. Chairman, I also have some questions for the hon. minister regarding occupational health and safety. Earlier I believe you said something to the effect that workplaces in Alberta have never been safer. I would object to that statement. Two Albertans per week are fatally injured on the job, and that is two too many. How many field inspectors doing workplace inspections to ensure that all OH and S regulations are being followed are employed in your department, and are they informing the sites that they are to inspect that they're coming, or are these inspections done on a random basis? How does the number of inspectors that you're employing now compare to, say, 1996, 1997, 1998?

Also, I have questions regarding the partnerships that you mentioned, particularly those in the construction industry. You were talking last time, I believe, about claim rates of 3.1 versus 5.3 for those who are not certified partners. What are you doing about this 5.3 statistic, and are those contractors reluctant to get involved with your program? How are you making them comply, or is it just a penalty with WCB? They just pay higher rates and that's it?

Also, the issue of light duty comes up in my constituency office frequently. Employees are told, after they're injured, to go on light duty. They follow this program for five or six weeks, and then they're laid off. I think these statistics are inaccurate because of the number of cases of light duty that are showing up at the constituency door. If this is the case – and I suspect it is – it's wrong. It's a bad practice, because once those people are out of work, physically they're incapable of finding another job. An employer maybe has a lower WCB rate, but these folks have no means of supporting themselves. It is a trend that I would like to see certainly stopped and hopefully reversed. Light duty in the workplace I don't think is the answer for our problems with workplace safety.

Now, I also have some more questions, if I could go on here for another minute, regarding fatality inquiries whenever someone unfortunately does lose their life in a workplace accident. I have a lot of problems with how OH and S investigates and reports on these fatalities. I have read many of the OH and S investigative reports. I have compared them to the OH and S regulations. Oddly enough some of the regulations are not even mentioned, and the violations of these regulations directly affected the outcome, the fatality. Who determines which violations are pursued in court in an OH and S investigation? What are the criteria for this?

The statute of limitations, I understand, is one year. Charges must be laid within a one-year period or it cannot be done. Now, I'm very concerned about this, because in the past I have had some OH and S reports that have come, oddly enough, the 50th week after the accident occurred, and there have been many violations of the regulations, some of which are outlined in that report, but no charges are laid.

One particular case would come to mind, and that would be in Calgary. The details I don't have before me, but there was one worker killed west of Calgary – I believe it was last summer – while he was installing the metal framework for a tent. He was unfortunately electrocuted. Now, charges were laid in that case, but two summers ago, I believe at the start of Stampede week, there were two workers killed at a site where they were erecting a metal building. No charges were ever laid, but there were violations of OH and S regulations. If you could share with us as to why this has occurred, I would be grateful.

Those are my questions at the moment. Thank you.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, some pretty serious allegations. They of course will be recorded in *Hansard*, and I'll have to get some information for you in response because I'm not familiar with the specifics.

My understanding of occupational health and safety – I'm kind of working backwards on your list – how it arises in court. I believe it would be a similar situation to where occupational health and safety would have to submit their documentation, their view to Justice, and then they would make the determination.

Fatality inquiries: you know, I take your point. I don't want anyone to think that when I talk about low hazards or a good safety record of 3.1 or 5.3 or whatever numbers that we're using, we are satisfied with that. I agree with you completely that any fatality is one too many. The reality, though, is that in many of the industries in Alberta there are hazards that exist, and it would be unrealistic for me to think that there wouldn't be a fatality during my watch in this particular ministry. So then what do you do about it?

I think that for the first time this morning we probably have revealed to ourselves the differences in ideology and philosophy between you as an hon. member and me as an hon. member. I fervently believe that education is more successful in the long term than enforcement, and our philosophy and our policy to go with that philosophy are based on that principle.

9:43

I don't know off the top of my head how many field inspectors we have. We'll certainly get that information to you. I know that I've been around occupational health and safety for many, many years. There are still people within our department who see themselves as enforcers, and that's fair enough. We need that aspect of it as well. But most of our people, I believe, see themselves as educators and as facilitators toward safer workplaces. I'm comfortable with that, and I will be viewed as being successful or not in this portfolio based on that particular philosophy.

When we use the numbers, I believe it's a truism that what gets

measured gets done. We have to have a way to measure the relative safety of our workplaces, and the way that that's done is to look at lost-time accidents as some sort of ratio over man-hours worked. I can remember in the late '60s filing with the employer that I had. The employer at that time wanted plant by plant by plant workplace health and safety statistics. The industry has evolved to the point where there now is a meaningful statistic that is used, and I think, then, it's legitimate for Alberta to compare itself against other jurisdictions. There's nothing particularly unique in the sense of a jurisdiction wanting to have safe workplaces. Alberta doesn't want a safer workplace any more than Ontario, B.C., Prince Edward Island, or any of the other jurisdictions, but how do we measure what the performance is, then, of these particular jurisdictions? You have the workplace statistics.

When I talk to this group about the relationship of Alberta to P.E.I. and to Nova Scotia and other jurisdictions, I'm doing it in that context. It does not mean that we're complacent. It does not mean that we don't care. In fact, I would use what has become a theme, I believe, for this government, and that is: just because we're doing good doesn't mean that we can't do better. We will strive to do that. On the national scene and in any street and community in this province there is not a member of this government that needs to hang their head because of the safety record within this province.

The partnerships program, which is a voluntary program, has proved itself. The numbers are there to show that. We are strong advocates of the partnership program. We are constantly recruiting new companies and, more importantly perhaps, new industry associations into that particular program. Three thousand companies today. I don't know what that number is in terms of employees. I wish I did, and we'll provide that to you in an answer. Until we have 100 percent coverage, then we are leaving ourselves open and we're leaving ourselves susceptible to an overly hazardous work site. We are working continually on that. I don't know how many partnership certificates I sign. I don't sign them daily perhaps not even weekly, but I certainly do monthly. More and more of the companies are coming into that particular program. I believe it's been recognized by the union movement in this province as a way to go.

I can tell the hon. member that I have personal experience because I sat at the table of the Occupational Health and Safety Council when the partnerships program was first conceptualized and then as it moved forward and became implemented. On the Occupational Health and Safety Council at that time there were representatives of the public, representatives of employees, and I was there as a representative of the employers. While it wasn't unanimous, we had a majority and we had support from some of the more progressive unions within this province as we brought forward that program. It is successful, it is proving itself successful, and it'll be even more successful in the future. If I haven't been clear, I think it's a great program.

MR. MacDONALD: Okay. I also have some questions, Mr. Chairman, for the hon. minister regarding labour relations in this province and the rate of work stoppages. It seems to me that we have a double standard. Sometimes the department is very anxious to get involved and, to their credit, successfully resolves situations. One that comes to mind certainly is the Calgary public school board. Whenever there was a mechanism within the Labour Relations Code, the disputes inquiry board specifically was used to resolve a dispute.

Now, in the same city we have the *Calgary Herald* workers. They've been on strike since November 8, and this is well past four months. We have a little bit of history that I think we have to go through now, Mr. Chairman, and that's that in 1935 the sister paper of the *Calgary Herald*, the *Edmonton Journal*, received a Pulitzer prize. They're very proud of this award. They have a recognition of

it in the lobby. In 1935 the government of this province, as I understand the history, passed a bill to limit freedom of the press.

MR. DUNFORD: It wasn't this government.

MR. MacDONALD: No, certainly not, but in 1935 the government of the day passed a bill, and I believe that the Lieutenant Governor at the time questioned this. However, you look at this situation and you look at the fact that one newspaper at one time stood up in defence of freedom. It was an internationally recognized award that they received.

Now we have, unfortunately, in Calgary a very divisive situation. I think it's evident that our labour laws are inadequate when this dispute cannot be resolved, and we have to change the way we're doing things. You can talk about having stable labour relations, but as I understand from the statistics that you quoted earlier in your opening remarks about time lost due to work stoppages in this province, the Safeway strike of three years ago would have been removed from those statistics, and I don't believe it is right if that has occurred. I know that in past years that was the situation.

Now, maybe under your direction it is different, but whenever you look at the percentage of the workforce in this province that's unionized, it is wrong to compare it to, say, Ontario or British Columbia, because they have higher rates of union participation in the workforce.

MR. DUNFORD: So what are you saying? That unions lead to labour disruption? Is that what you're saying?

MR. MacDONALD: No. What I'm saying is that whenever you have inadequate labour laws and labour laws that are not enforced, you do not have the stability in the workforce that you should have.

Specifically with the *Calgary Herald* strike, what initiatives has your department taken and what initiatives do they plan to take to resolve this dispute? It's a blight on the entire province, in my view. Thank you.

9:53

MR. DUNFORD: Well, I think you probably set the stage, anyway, for my answer in your last comment about it being your view. I respect that, and I respect that view. Committee members will know that you and I both come from different sides of the labour relations table, but both of us have been there. I think both of us understand that the incredible success that Alberta has had when you look at stable labour relations is from the fact that we have a system in place and we have a chairman and we have members and staff at the Labour Relations Board. We have a Ministry of Human Resources and Employment that tries to remain as unbiased as it possibly can in a situation. The law is there to assist both sides of a particular dispute to arrive at some sort of settlement.

People are free in this province to bargain collectively, and once they do, once they turn over that individual responsibility to the responsibility of another party, they then bear whatever fruits come with such a decision. I find it remarkable that a strike at the *Calgary Herald* garners as much interest as it does. Perhaps it's because it's a media outlet. There are other strikes in this province that of course have gone on longer that we don't hear quite so much about.

I personally have been misquoted about comments that I made at a public meeting. As a matter of fact, the hon. member in question period misquoted me in the sense of trying to relay to the public that this minister was unconcerned about the particular situation that is happening at the *Calgary Herald*. It certainly isn't the case. When we have a dispute, it is our intention and it's our mandate to do what we can to find the resolution to that particular dispute, and to that

end we have had mediation that has been involved. They're at the basic beck and call of either party or both parties. I don't know the actual experience, but I don't believe that you could cite one instance when both parties agreed to mediation where we have not been able to meet that request.

So you have a situation. I mean, the *Calgary Herald* continues to publish, but it is a dispute. It is impacting on our work-loss statistics. Once again I would refer to a comment that I made earlier and that is that in the area of labour relations when it comes to disruptions in the workplace, one has to have some measure. Again, the industry, which consists of both employers and organized groups such as unions, has developed over time a way in which to measure that. Based on that measurement, again, unless you are personally involved on one side of a particular situation, a reasonable and objective observer in looking at the labour scene in Alberta would say: ah, there is a stable labour relations jurisdiction.

The organized groups around the *Calgary Herald* situation are certainly welcome to continue to make their views known, but when I get a specific request that asks me to impose a first agreement, we will not do that. That would be in violation of the current act, and the current act is not now up for amendment in this session of the Legislature.

DR. MASSEY: If I could just change the subject from the *Herald*. I may need your help, Mr. Minister, with this. There was a concern about the wages between government workers and contract and community group workers. I believe the previous minister of family and social services was involved in a project or there was a group that was put together to look at those to make sure that when services were contracted out, those workers weren't working up to 45 percent less, I think was the figure I saw, than government workers. It was causing all kinds of difficulties with community groups and with service providers because there was a huge turnover, a 25 percent turnover, in their staff and competition for staff, and it was particularly acute in programs where they're working with aboriginal communities. I wondered what's happened since there's been the change in the responsibilities of the departments. Has that been picked up with your piece of those workers? What's the state of that project?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, it's a real concern. I agree with what you were saying in the sense that it caused a huge turnover amongst those community agencies, and they're not able to attract and retain adequate and skilled staff. We have to find ways in which to address that, and unless I'm missing something, we haven't addressed that specifically in this budget other than to provide the 4 percent increase. But as you have already indicated, all that does is exacerbate the spread, because the government classification schedule is higher and we're putting 4 percent against that, and the community agencies tend to be lower and we're putting 4 percent against that. So clearly what is happening is that we have a further increase in that spread. It would be our plan over the business plan cycle to try to deal with that situation, but we've not addressed it directly in the estimates that are in front of you. I do appreciate your bringing it forward because now we have it in *Hansard* as a concern and agreement, then, between you and I that it is and should be a concern. We have to find a way to address it.

DR. MASSEY: Thanks.

Can I jump back to persons unable to make personal care decisions and ask just for some information? How are their assets treated? The AISH individuals have a limit on assets. I'm not sure what the numbers are, but I wondered how the assets of those individuals are treated.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, you're talking about the public guardian here; are you not?

DR. MASSEY: Yes.

MR. DUNFORD: So it's the public guardian's responsibility then to administer support and service to that individual as programs would dictate. If the client has assets and if they are severely disabled and applying for AISH, then of course whatever assets they have would come into play, and if they're applying for some other type of program, then whatever the rules are that would govern that particular program. As I understand it, the public guardian itself doesn't provide them directly with a particular income as they look after them. It's their job to be responsible for that person and in a responsible way to go out and gain whatever is available to them through the various programs.

DR. MASSEY: Is there any obligation on the part of families, any financial obligation, as those people mature and become adults?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, we're into the technical details of that. We'll have to answer that in writing to you. I'm interpreting your question as being if the family has assets, what their responsibilities might be if they are not the guardian. We'll have to answer that in writing for you.

DR. MASSEY: Thanks.

MR. GIBBONS: Mr. Minister, I come from both sides, actually running, managing companies with unions as well as those that I've had on my own and didn't have to have unions because we treated them well. I have a few concerns in my end of town. I've got a pocket which has, supposedly, the seventh highest unemployment in Canada, and that pocket copes with mental patients that are discharged into the community from Alberta Hospital as well as families where the husbands are in the maximum penitentiary, coming mostly right now from Winnipeg, being relocated from Stony Mountain and whatever. I do have a major concern about the amount of work we have in our office on a lot of these cases, mostly mental patients, so you know how my questions go in the House on that.

Our apprenticeship system in the province really needs a revamping and a look at the trades industry, that includes sheet metal, welding, and machinists that have run companies over a number of years. This is a place where we're really running short, looking at the manpower we need up in Fort McMurray. If we had been coping with it for the last six or seven years, maybe we wouldn't be sending as many job finders to Europe. I'm not knocking European workers coming over, because a number of the companies I worked with for years were 90 percent German immigrants who came over in the '50s and really developed the steel industry. We do need to really look at that.

10:03

The other one. I have a number of people calling the office who would like to get into some programs around computers that are one-year programs. Is there a funding program to help them out? There was at one time.

Given that we have our little sheets faxed out to us, as well as if you read *The Armet* or whatever, it always seems to be around the unemployment in Alberta. It's nice to see on paper what we look like, but in actual fact we have a number of people in the larger urban areas like Calgary that are homeless. Thirty-three percent are actually working joes that are making \$7 an hour. They can't make

enough money to pay the rents that are down there. Is that being looked at, given that the government has resolved that the unemployment rate is an important issue? It doesn't matter where you go. I was in Grande Prairie and Fairview in the last couple of days, and that was a concern up there too. With the shutting down of the alfalfa plant just outside and the receivership of the fibreboard plant, these people are not working anymore. It's an area that really needs something looked at.

I might have two more afterwards, but I'll stop here.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, I think you touched on some excellent areas. I would refer back, of course, to my earlier comments when I talked about some of the vacancy rates that we have and where employers are unable to find the types of skills that they need.

We don't have direct responsibility for the apprenticeship program in Human Resources and Employment, but we certainly are supportive of the Department of Learning in the areas that they are trying to move forward in. I do have some experience in that particular area, and of course we had moved forward in a streamlining situation for apprenticeships in Alberta that, I believe, if it hasn't already, certainly will soon start to show some results. By way of interest for people looking at our budget estimates, we're actually sending over to Alberta Learning \$13.1 million for their budget to help them in that particular area.

I believe that our ministry and certainly in my responsibilities as the minister we've been very supportive of people moving into the skill trades. Here is another example of Alberta doing a good job but needing to do better: 9 percent of the population, yet we're indenturing, I believe, 19 percent of all of the apprentices in Canada. So we're certainly doing more than our share, but we're not altruistic about it. The fact is that we need those skills, so we're doing it for ourselves. I mean, we have a vested interest in a high-performance, streamlined apprenticeship program, so we're certainly going to be supportive in that particular area.

You raised a point about computer training. Again, while I don't have the specifics, we can answer that question for you in the written answers. Certainly we can see the change even in the so-called old economy, how they're developing computer technology. So I can't imagine that in any employment initiative these days we would not want to focus on some computer literacy. But we'll answer that question in more detail.

I want to make a comment though. I hadn't been involved in sort of constituency profiles of areas of concern, but a previous member did raise a point about how they had an antipoverty committee in their particular constituency, and my question was whether or not we could be of any assistance to that committee. It would seem from your comments that you have some unique situations in your constituency, as well, and I'd like to offer you the opportunity to perhaps come and talk to the deputy and myself about some specifics. Maybe there's some way in which we can help out.

MR. GIBBONS: One quick one just to get it on the record. With the lack of trades that we have in this province, I mean, it looks great to somebody from down east coming in and looking for a job. It's better than not having a job. The fact is that we need skilled people. The longer we wait – it's just no different than nursing or any other field. The average age is up there, whereas we should be building at the bottom. The average age for some of these programs, in sheet metal and in shop welding and that, should be 30 years old.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, for millwrights I understand that perhaps the average age there is something like 49, something like that. It really is a problem.

Again, you know, the success of the apprenticeship program over

the years has been in the involvement, then, at local levels. They've had local apprenticeship committees, they've got provincial apprenticeship committees, and then of course you have the full board.

As you know, as a government, as we've tried to move forward with some reform in other areas, you run into a fair amount of resistance. Frankly, in our attempt to streamline some of the apprenticeship programs, we're running into the same kinds of resistance at particular levels. I don't want to go too deeply into this because I'm getting anecdotal and I'm not the Minister of Learning, who is responsible. I would just ask people to recognize that when you have a problem in front of you and you know that reform has to happen, help us make some moves forward to see if we can address the situation. Don't simply stand in front of us as advocates and proponents of the status quo. Is it Einstein that said that true insanity is to keep doing the same things and expect different results?

MR. MacDONALD: Mr. Chairman, at this time I have some more questions for the hon. minister regarding the Alberta Labour Relations Board. Earlier the hon. minister said that the labour board is as unbiased as it can be. I find this unusual. Has your department considered – I understand there's a modest increase in the budget for the Labour Relations Board – having a completely independent body make all appointments to the Labour Relations Board? There are many people who have complained to me, not just unions or their organizers but also management, about what they feel is unfairness with the labour board. In order to address this problem, I'm very interested to know if at any time there has been a study done to have the appointments made completely independent of your ministry, and by that I mean having an independent body do it.

MR. DUNFORD: Who would appoint the independent body? Would I as minister appoint the independent body? I mean, who? Somebody has to have final authority and, more importantly, responsibility. It would seem that has to rest with the minister.

MR. MacDONALD: We could quickly set up a mechanism so that these appointments could be made. As I said earlier, I think this is important, because there is a view – and it's not just a view by unions but by management as well, by employers – that this is not working in a timely fashion. We have to look at the issue of what they call unfairness.

MR. DUNFORD: What?

MR. MacDONALD: Unfair bargaining. Both parties would refer to it just simply as unfair.

You have key performance measures here. You're talking about everything being done in a timely fashion regarding the certifications and whatnot, but unfair bargaining is not mentioned in there. There's a great deal of frustration in this. The previous minister of the day talked about this at length, but I don't see it mentioned in here. My question would be: why? Perhaps I'm not making myself clear.

MR. DUNFORD: No, I'm not clear.

MR. MacDONALD: The type of application. If, for instance, I were to go to the board with unfair bargaining, a complaint – okay? – you don't have in your key performance measures an indication as to how long you would like to see that before the board before it's resolved one way or the other. Why is that not in there?

10:13

MR. DUNFORD: I think that's an excellent question. We'll have to review your question, then, and respond in writing. I know that we work very hard in terms of trying to find a process that ensures the rights and obligations of both parties but also would deal with matters in a more expeditious way. The fact that you're pointing out that maybe we haven't put a performance measure to that I think is just an excellent comment.

MR. MacDONALD: Okay.

I also have another question, Mr. Chairman. This question is regarding the statistics that your department puts out on a monthly basis. In those statistics there's one category that I find particularly interesting now, and that is the category of health occupations. Is that full-time health occupations? The number of people who are working in the province in health occupations I believe at the end of January would have been 65,000 Albertans actively working. Are they working full-time? In that definition of health occupations, does that include physicians, registered nurses, LPNs, caregivers? If you could share that definition with us and how many of those individuals are working full-time or part-time, I would be very grateful.

MR. DUNFORD: We'll supply that. I would just think, off the top of my head, that it likely includes both full-time and part-time, because if it is only full-time, if we were to throw part-time in, then you can just imagine what a huge number that would be.

MR. MacDONALD: Okay. Would you have any idea, hon. minister, why there would be such a spike in this?

MR. DUNFORD: Such a which?

MR. MacDONALD: I guess I'm reading too many graphs. Why would there be such a spike in this? Two years ago there were 69,000 people employed in the health occupations, last year it went up to 71,000, and now – these are your statistics – it has gone down to 65,000, and that's a considerable spike. Do you have any idea why this would be occurring?

MR. DUNFORD: No, I don't. We'll answer in writing.

MR. MacDONALD: Okay. Thank you.

MR. GIBBONS: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman; maybe I'm going to duplicate a question that's already been asked, but what are the parameters for the review of the widows' pension program, what time lines and so on? Has that been asked so far?

MR. DUNFORD: It hasn't been asked, no. Are you aware that there's a human rights submission against the widows' pension? We are waiting to hear what that decision is, and until that time we are not reviewing the widows' pension.

MR. GIBBONS: You don't know the time lines and so on?

MR. DUNFORD: No. Human rights is under Community Development. I think it would be hazardous for me to try to influence one way or the other their particular programs, so I have not made any contact with human rights as to when they're going to hear that particular case.

MR. MacDONALD: Mr. Chairman, I have some questions now for

the hon. minister regarding employment standards and practices. Earlier the hon. minister said that education is better than enforcement. Well, I don't think that applies to the Employment Standards Code. We've had some horrible, horrible examples brought forward of how that system of voluntary compliance is not working, in particular in the service industry, the restaurant industry.

Many young Albertans are entering the workforce for the first time, and this is not a positive experience for them. They're not being paid their wages, their benefits, whether it's holiday pay or vacation pay, overtime if they're entitled to it. It is my view and it is a view that is held by many people across the province, particularly parents of these individuals, that in effect, by not enforcing the law, this is a subsidy to these businesses.

It is very difficult, for instance, if we have two restaurants on the same street, and one is abiding by the Employment Standards Code and one is not. If the one that is not knows that it can get around the law, how is the individual restaurateur that is abiding by the law to compete? It is very very difficult, because of course his or her costs are going to be so much greater. That's an issue from a small businessperson's point of view, but from the parent's point of view this is just a poor example for their children as they enter the workforce whenever they're getting ripped off by these unscrupulous employers, and it has to stop.

There is a case that's going through the courts I believe at the moment, but every month I uncover other examples, and this is because people are coming to the constituency office and openly complaining. This system of voluntary compliance is not working, and I want to know from the minister what the department is doing to ensure that this is cleaned up.

10:23

MR. DUNFORD: We are going to continue with voluntary compliance. We are educators, not enforcers. I think I talked about that in terms of occupational health and safety. Having said that, we're perhaps the most enforcement-related jurisdiction in western Canada in the sense that we take more cases to court than your socialist brethren in B.C. and Saskatchewan.

You mentioned particularly the restaurant industry. I believe you're aware – and if you're not, this is a great opportunity for me to make you aware. We currently have seconded one of the members of our staff with the Restaurant and Foodservices Association. They recognize that they have members in their industry that, just for the same reasons you talked about – and I agree with you one hundred percent. We should not have two restaurants on the same street, one that is abiding by the law and another one that is violating the law, and do nothing about it. I categorically reject your assertion that we do nothing about it.

I would invite you at some point to join me over in Sterling Place and have a look at our phone setup there and the number of calls – you know, we're a hell of a lot busier than you are at your constituency office, believe me. I don't know what the calls per day are, but we receive perhaps 300 or maybe more than that. We are providing information. Our law requires that information be posted at the work site, and young people can read. Also, their parents know when they're not being treated fairly, and they can come forward. We take anonymous calls in this particular area. Normally we don't like anonymous calls creating some response on our part, but in this case it is my understanding that we do. We will check into this area.

We have targeted specific businesses that have had problems in the past. We know who they are – perhaps you do too – and we are monitoring them. We've even gone so far as auditing them, and when they comply and show that they have changed, then we're willing to back off, because they obviously have been educated. When they don't, we take them to court. I don't know what more we

would do other than be more of a police state, and again I say that the philosophy of this minister and thus this ministry is one of education as far as possible but enforcement when necessary.

MR. MacDONALD: Okay. Mr. Chairman, if I could get the hon. minister to clarify one statement. Are you telling me that occupational health and safety rules and regulations are posted in work sites across this province?

MR. DUNFORD: I thought your question was dealing with employment standards.

MR. MacDONALD: Yes. Pardon me. Employment standards rules and regulations.

MR. DUNFORD: I believe that it's the responsibility of the employer to post them. There are selected groupings, but that's to be posted in a manner that can be seen and can be read by their employees. If I am misleading you and other members of this committee and readers of *Hansard* on that point, we will then make it clearer, and I'll make a public statement in the House. But it is my belief as I sit here that the employer is obligated under the Employment Standards Code to post specific regulations in the workplace.

MR. MacDONALD: Okay. And if that's incorrect, you will make a statement?

MR. DUNFORD: I will.

MR. MacDONALD: That's fair enough. Okay. Thank you.

Now, I also have a question regarding the Auditor General's report from last September. There were three recommendations in there regarding the department of family and social services. I'm pleased to see that two of the recommendations, specifically 31 and 33, have been accepted, but recommendation 32 in the report by the Auditor General . . .

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Chairman, I don't have that document in front of me.

MR. MacDONALD: I can provide you with the document if you would like.

MR. DUNFORD: That's fine. If he provides it, then I'll answer the question. Otherwise, I believed this to be estimates, and I didn't come with it.

MR. MacDONALD: Well, that's okay. That's in the business plan. I'll just read this into the record, Mr. Chairman. Recommendation 32:

It is recommended that the Department of Health and Wellness ensure that services to children with developmental disabilities continue to be provided in accordance with existing legislative authority and that such services should not be provided under the Persons With Developmental Disabilities Community Governance Act unless and until the Act is amended to extend its provisions to children.

Now, it was accepted in principle by the government, but could the minister elaborate – and we can do this by letter if he so chooses – on what discussions are going on between family and social services and other ministries in the government regarding this?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, the hon. member is bringing forward a recommendation that applies to the Department of Health and Wellness, and also to some extent, I suppose, there is a spillover into

our area in the sense that many of these people are likely to be on AISH. The responsibility for the so-called PDD boards, the persons with developmental disabilities boards, belongs in that jurisdiction. I suppose I could give a personal comment, if they wish, but I believe that it's more appropriate that that question be directed to the minister responsible.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm going to suggest that if you do wish to make a comment, feel free, but I don't believe that this is specifically addressed to the estimates that we're supposed to be dealing with at this committee anyway. If you want to comment, if there is any reflection from your department, go ahead since the question has been asked.

MR. DUNFORD: No. I think that would just chew up time that the members might need for questions on our ministry, so I'll ask for the next question.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I'm going to remind members that there are seven minutes left in the opposition's time period.

MR. MacDONALD: I had more questions on WCB, but I'd better get my Auditor General's book back, please.

DR. MASSEY: Could I ask about the tracking of social service recipients after they're off the program? Can you give us an update?

MR. DUNFORD: We read into the record earlier in my comments that 70 percent of the people who complete our programs are not on welfare a year later, so we would want people to understand that we consider our social services as temporary support and that this would indicate to us, then, that we have a 70 percent success rate. Now, on how they're monitored, we'll have to respond in writing, because I don't know all of the criteria that they would use in order to develop this number.

DR. MASSEY: It would be interesting to know where they are and what they're doing.

Related to that, a number of social service recipients were put into loans programs and into postsecondary or vocational programs. Has there been any tracking of the success of those recipients?

10:33

MR. DUNFORD: I don't know if that's in the Minister of Learning's business plan, but we can also respond, then, to that question.

DR. MASSEY: It's quite a heavily used program, I think, in terms of accessing student loans.

MR. DUNFORD: I think we both agree that that was a good thing to do.

DR. MASSEY: It was?

MR. DUNFORD: Yes.

DR. MASSEY: I guess any success is success in that.

We're down to the last few minutes, so go ahead, Hugh.

MR. MacDONALD: Mr. Chairman, I have some questions for the hon. minister regarding the Workers' Compensation Board. I cannot find it in here, but am I still to understand that the WCB submits \$6 million to occupational health and safety?

MR. DUNFORD: Yes. I think it's six; is it not? I'm getting the nod. It's \$6 million.

MR. MacDONALD: That's still occurring? Okay.

Another question. I'm curious as to whether the department is monitoring the payments that the WCB is making to private contractors who are being utilized to rehabilitate injured workers. The Auditor General has made some comments on this. I guess, from what I can understand, there are some billing practices that are not up to code, if I could use that word. What are the minister and the officials in the department doing to correct this?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, I'm aware that that is a matter of some concern with the board of directors of WCB and that they have been investigating that particular issue. They have not made a direct request for me as the minister to be involved. On whether or not we have taken an active role in that, I'll have to respond in writing, because I'm not aware of any direct involvement on our part.

MR. MacDONALD: Okay.

Now, I have another question related to the Workers' Compensation Board. That has to do, of course, with 85 percent of people being very satisfied, I'm told, with the compensation board and how their claim is adjudicated, but there are 15 percent who are not. I understand there are hon. members of the Assembly in the process of setting up a consultation process, and I wish them success, but why in the minister's view are these 15 percent of injured Albertans having such difficulty? If this system is as good as everyone tells me it is, why is this happening?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, I think you've hit on an excellent point, and we have to find out. To that end what I've been able to do – I'm going to use the word "I" here perhaps a little more than I have in other answers. I have taken this matter very, very seriously, and to that end I would like to talk about some of the things that have been done, because the committee members might not be aware of the enormity of the review that is currently under way of workers' compensation. If they are generally aware, they might be interested in some of the details.

First of all, the Workers' Compensation Board has had a consultation process that's been going on for a couple of years. They were looking at some specifics, and it came to my attention as I worked with injured workers, with some of their associations – and of course "worked" might not be the proper use of wordage either. In many cases they were clearly and quite overtly and, in some cases, raucously presenting their issues, so I determined that with this much smoke we better find out whether there's any fire. I've maintained a position, I believe, where I have been unbiased. I have not been an apologist for the WCB, and I've not been an advocate for an injured worker. They have their own advocacy groups, and many of them, as the hon. member probably knows, are quite capable of advocating their situation very articulately.

What I was able to do, then, really boils down to three main initiatives. The first one was to work with the board of directors of the WCB to actually add a service review to the consultation that they already had. The idea there is to make sure that the philosophy and the policy of WCB are actually being carried out in the procedures as cases are dealt with, then, within the Workers' Compensation Board. Now, also to that end, because I believe that MLAs are in an excellent position to have some understanding of the suffering that has taken place amongst individual Albertans, they are in an excellent position to provide input to that service committee.

Then I got to thinking: well, you know, there are 83 of us, and if 83 try to go individually – you know, maybe there is a better way. So to that end I put together a government input committee, that is being chaired by the hon. Member for Red Deer-South, and there are other members from the government side that are on that committee.

It's their job to receive information, to distill it as best they can, and then to make recommendations not only to me but to the Workers' Compensation Board on how the service to injured workers in Alberta might be improved.

Now, I believe that I've acted on your behalf and I believe that I've acted on behalf of all of the Alberta MLAs, because I was able to get agreement from the board of directors of the Workers' Compensation Board that MLAs are stakeholders. So as an individual member and as an opposition member you have two avenues now open to you that might not have been as open to you six months ago, and that is that you can go directly to the board with your thoughts and your observations and your recommendations, or you can also make a presentation to the input committee.

The third and last initiative, which is as important as the other two, is the Appeals Commission, that has been set up to look into how the appeal situation operates, into whether or not natural justice is being served – we believe it is, but it should be checked – and perhaps more importantly whether or not the Appeals Commission is acting as independently as it can, given the current structure, or whether there is a better reporting mechanism to some other minister. That is all up for review as we sit today. The committee is in place. Sam Friedman is a retired justice and has an impeccable reputation throughout this province. We've been able to convince Bob Blakely, who is a respected labour leader in this province, to be part of that committee. We have the president of the Alberta Construction Association. We have a public member from Calgary and we have an MLA liaison, and they will be reporting to me – I believe we have it in the terms of reference – sometime in September.

I believe that through the operation of these three reviews, for something that might not be broken but looks like it is broken, then the perception will be enhanced, or if something is broken, then it will be fixed. I'm very, very optimistic, as we move now into this next century, about the Workers' Compensation Board in Alberta.

10:43

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm reluctant to interrupt at this point. The two

hours that we had originally approved at the beginning of the meeting have now elapsed. As a matter of fact, we're a few minutes past that. Since the minister was actually speaking when the time flipped over the two-hour time frame, we won't name anyone else.

I would really like to commend the members who did the questioning up to this point and the minister for the way that this was handled. It was a little bit informal. Nevertheless, I think it was a good method of communicating, and it also made it very easy for the chair not to have to be a referee.

The remainder of the time we have now is available to the government members. As the minister said at the beginning of the meeting, government members do have opportunity to question or grill or by whatever form they wish to use on many of these issues either through the standing policy committee process or some of our discussions in our caucus. I expect that the number, if any, and the intensity of the questions for the remainder of the time necessary will be somewhat less than it was for the first half of this meeting.

With that, I will ask if there are any questions from government members. If not, then we require a motion to conclude the discussion and to rise and report.

DR. MASSEY: Could I just thank the minister and the committee for the format and the answers? It went very, very well, and we really do appreciate that kind of help.

THE CHAIRMAN: I appreciate you indicating that on the record.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you. I appreciate it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Could we have a motion to conclude discussions and to rise and report? Moved by Tom Thurber. All in favour? The motion is carried. We stand adjourned.

[The subcommittee adjourned at 10:45 a.m.]

