

10:01 a.m.

Tuesday, November 19, 1991

[Chairman: Mr. Ady]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the meeting to order. We apologize for being just a few minutes late. We had a little bit of technical difficulty, but that's overcome, and we're now on the record of *Hansard*.

We welcome the Hon. Peter Trynchy, minister responsible for Occupational Health and Safety and the Workers' Compensation Board, along with his department officials.

As a matter of business for the committee I'd like to make note that some of the recommendations have not been read into the record. However, arrangements have been made for them to be picked up by *Hansard*. Those that have not been read in are listed on the copy that you have received. Recommendations 24 through 45 were not previously read in; however, they are picked up by *Hansard*, so it's not necessary to take the time of the committee to read them in. Unless there's some problem with that on the part of some committee members, hopefully that will be acceptable.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

24. Mr. Gesell recommended that the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund capital projects division consider investment of research funds to determine the best possible environmental and technical parameters for individual sanitary sewage disposal systems.
25. Mr. Gesell recommended that the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund investments for the individual line service be recovered from future sales of fund-held Telus shares.
26. Mr. Gesell recommended that the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund capital projects division invest in a comprehensive resource recovery project for the Edmonton metropolitan area as part of a co-ordinated and complete waste management strategy.
27. Mr. Gesell recommended that the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund capital projects division establish a program to grant assistance for agricultural diversification by supporting the growing equine industry.
28. Mr. Gesell recommended that a new division be created under the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, the environmental investment division, and that investments from this division be considered for projects that will provide short- and long-term benefits to Albertans through the enhancement of our environment and through reduction of pollution.
29. Mr. Mitchell recommended that the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund implement a staged liquidation of its investments and that the proceeds be used to pay down the provincial government's debt.
30. Mr. Taylor recommended that the occupational health and safety heritage grant program co-ordinate with AADAC and the Alberta Family Life and Drug Abuse Foundation research into the use of alcohol and drugs in the workplace.
31. Mr. Mitchell recommended that deemed assets as distinguished in the 1990-91 Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund annual report be excluded from the balance sheet in the future and be described only in a note to the balance sheet.
32. Mr. Mitchell recommended that the mandate of the Auditor General be expanded to include the evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund investments and expenditures.
33. Mr. Taylor recommended that funds spent on research into improving the yield and variety of dryland crops be increased to the equivalent now spent on irrigation research for yields and varieties.
34. Mr. Taylor recommended that the Agricultural Development Corporation be liquidated and the government instead supplement private capital loans by way of sliding scale guarantees and interest subsidization, disposing of all commercial assets at competitive pricing as was done by Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation.
35. Mr. Taylor recommended that one-third of the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund be set aside as achievement awards payable to those students whose parents and/or responsible guardians have family incomes at or below the poverty level, such awards to consist of free tuition at any postsecondary institution in the province for two years after high school graduation.
36. Mr. Mitchell recommended that the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research consider a program of research into sudden infant death syndrome.
37. Mr. Mitchell recommended that all recommendations proposed by standing committee members whether passed or not be published in the annual report of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act.
38. Mr. Taylor recommended that moneys be made available from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund to pay every farmer in Alberta wishing to utilize it \$20 per acre for up to 10 percent of each quarter section that the farmer returns to its natural native state.
39. Mr. Taylor recommended that the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research set aside funds to pay tuition and a portion of living allowance to those students in the medical faculty who would be willing to serve in remote, rural, and native settings for five years after graduation.
40. Mr. Taylor recommended that the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund appropriate funds for the telecommunications department to file a report with the standing committee showing unused capacities in the telecommunications system throughout Alberta.
41. Mr. Mitchell recommended that the Provincial Treasurer release to members of the standing committee the following information about the subordinated debentures of up to \$275 million that the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund has issued to Crestbrook Forest Industries Ltd., MC Forest Investment Inc., and Kanzaki Paper Canada Inc., the joint venturers of the Alberta-Pacific pulp mill project:
 - (a) the order of creditors to which the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund claim against this debenture is subordinated,

- (b) a definition of the clause "subject to certain conditions" appearing in note (j) on page 52 of the 1990-91 annual report of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, and
 - (c) the manner in which the "extent of the available cash flow" referred to in note (j) on page 52 of the 1990-91 annual report of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund will be defined and determined.
42. Mr. Doyle recommended that in future annual reports the government state not only the original cost of Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund investments but also their current market value. In the case of non publicly traded investments, including debentures, the market value will be determined by the province's Auditor General.
43. Mr. Hawkesworth recommended that the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund be restructured as follows:
- (1) the current divisions of the fund be consolidated into two divisions, being
 - (a) the securities and investment division, which would hold the assets currently held in the commercial investment division, the Canada investment division, and cash and marketable securities, and would earn market rates of return for the purpose of revenue transfers to the General Revenue Fund, and
 - (b) the Alberta research and development division, which would hold the assets currently held in the Alberta investment division and in the various research funds of the capital projects division and would be directed to long-term research and development programs in human and natural resources as an investment to benefit future generations of Albertans;
 - (2) annually the Provincial Treasurer present to the Legislative Assembly for its approval the policy directions and objectives and the budget for the fund's two divisions;
 - (3) a legislative office be created called the trustee general, whose office would have trust and fiduciary responsibilities for the management of all financial assets of the fund to ensure all investments were managed in accordance with the policies provided by the Legislature, and this office would be responsible to the Legislature through the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act and would be responsible to table an annual report with the Legislature;
 - (4) the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act would hold annual hearings with the Provincial Treasurer, the trustee general, and the Auditor General to ensure the fund was benefiting the people of the province of Alberta, and the committee would be empowered to call all such witnesses as it wished to appear at these hearings;
 - (5) a broad series of meetings and public hearings be held to receive further input on this proposal to increase the effectiveness and accountability of the fund.
44. Mr. Ewasiuk recommended that the overall investment strategy be socially and environmentally responsible and meet ethical standards similar to those of ethical growth funds.
45. Mr. Ewasiuk recommended that no further expenditures be made through the capital projects division, that that division be phased out, no longer reported as deemed assets of the

Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, and that outstanding commitments for future budget years be made through the General Revenue Fund and the Capital Fund.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would remind you that members have until noon tomorrow to put in additional recommendations pertaining to the two ministers and departments that will appear before the committee today.

If there is no other business, let me say again that we welcome you, Mr. Minister, and your department people. We would welcome a brief overview from you, opening remarks, but prior to that we'd like you to introduce the people you have with you so that they're recorded in the *Hansard*, and then we'll move to the question portion of the meeting.

Mr. Minister.

MR. TAYLOR: Just a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. TAYLOR: In view of the juggling that's taken place of who's responsible for what, what items . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The minister could be appropriately asked questions on the Alberta occupational health and safety heritage grant program. His department has received a grant from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, and he has sent out information to each member on that program. That's all the funding that his department has received from the heritage fund. Consequently, questions outside of that would not be appropriate but would be better directed to the minister during estimates. Does that answer your question, hon. member?

Anything else?

Mr. Minister.

MR. TRYNCHY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning, Connie and gentlemen. We appreciate the opportunity to meet with you, and I'd like to introduce the people with me. On my right are Lynn Hewitt, the director of planning and research; Hilary Lynas, program administrator, heritage grant program. On my left are Dr. Hugh Walker, managing director; Tom Whiting, chairman, Occupational Health and Safety Council; and Don Cummings, Ernst & Young consultant, the person that did the review of the heritage fund.

You will have received from us three reports, Mr. Chairman, that you should have with you: a status report, the evaluation report, and a 10-year review of the heritage fund. Those documents were delivered to each member, and I'm sure that they will provide an opportunity to ask questions from there.

To open this morning, I'd like to again outline that the heritage program began in 1981. There was a commitment by the government to set aside \$10 million from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund for this program. We have funded to date some 208 projects. They're listed in your document.

Over the last 10 years the program addressed a number of high-priority problems in a broad range of industries, including oil and gas, forestry, manufacturing, construction. Just an example: the Alberta Logging Association, where we provided some funds, developed a safety procedure which we received the other day. It's a new, very well done document by the Alberta Logging Association. We've done research on fire resistant clothing. The Alberta Construction Safety Association now serves some 14,000 Alberta construction industry companies. The program has helped to train Alberta workers and employers in construction, oil and

gas, forestry, hospitals, and other industries to recognize, control, and eliminate health and safety hazards. It's opened up a number of career opportunities for Albertans in fields such as occupational medicine, nursing, hygiene, safety engineering. We have also provided support for high-profile health and safety events such as Canadian Occupational Health and Safety Week; safe communities; the Heroes program, which you're familiar with; and the Alberta Round Table on Occupational Health and Safety. I believe the last one we held was in Banff.

Over the past 10 years your standing committee has made several recommendations. In 1985 the committee recommended that the grant program put special emphasis on involving post-secondary education institutions. We've done this; some 55 percent of our grant funds have gone to colleges and universities. In 1989 the committee made two other recommendations. The first was to grant program work with AADAC on research into the use of alcohol and drugs in the workplace. This major study is now under way, and we expect that to be completed within the next three years. I believe the first report is due in February 1992. Last year your committee recommended that we evaluate and take a look at the impact and benefits of the grant program. I'm pleased to say that report has been done, and you now have the evaluation sheet. I will not get into the evaluation because we have Don Cummings with us and I will ask him to go into it in response to your questions. I might add that a number of project users, workers, and industries have been contacted in respect to the evaluation, and their findings are in the report.

The report has some four recommendations that I think are important: one was to continue the grant program; two, to increase participation of employers and workers in project funding decisions and in setting funding priorities; three, to develop a higher profile for the grant program; and four, to demonstrate industry support on proposals. I look forward to your recommendations as a committee in respect to where we go from here.

AADAC. We provided in last year's program some \$165,000. As I said at the outset, this project will be completed by February 1992. Project results are currently being analyzed. Some of the preliminary findings are that alcohol use is a more serious workplace problem than drug use: 80 percent of Albertans are current drinkers, while 16 percent use drugs, according to our survey. The main impact of drug and alcohol use in the workplace appears to be people being absent from work and work slowdowns. Almost half of the employers that we surveyed have formal substance abuse policies already in place, so that's a positive move.

Mr. Chairman, you suggested I be brief, and I want to stop now. I'm sure the members will raise a number of questions, and I've asked my people to take an active part in answering your questions. So I'll leave it at that, and hopefully we'll have a good exchange of questions and information for this committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The Member for West Yellowhead, followed by Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I welcome the minister and his staff this morning. I unfortunately didn't get my information till this morning, but it certainly wasn't the minister's fault. I just wasn't in here to pick it up, and it didn't get sent to me.

Looking through it, Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the minister could explain. In the coal mines, the moneys went in there for studies on such things as naphtha gas and the cave-ins and the dust in the coal silos. Are there many new, imaginative things taking

place in underground coal mining to stop the accidents that have happened in the past?

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, I'm going to have Dr. Walker respond. We are just going over the mining regulations, and we've had a number of communications with labour, industry, our department, and Dr. Walker. I believe we're meeting shortly.

Dr. Walker.

DR. WALKER: Yes. Good morning. The coal mining industry is our biggest success story in reducing lost-time claims and accidents. It was about five times worse 10 years ago than it is today. Some of that's because there's been a switch from underground to open pit mining. Ten years ago for every million tonnes of coal mined, there were 22 lost-time accidents, and now there are two lost-time accidents. So we have no bigger success story than the coal industry in Alberta. I think some of that's come from the work that we've been able to help the industry with, but a good deal of it's come from the commitment of the people who work there, and some of it's come from the switch from a somewhat more dangerous underground mining business to a less dangerous open pit business.

10:11

MR. DOYLE: Yes. Mr. Chairman, we had one recently in Grande Cache, but apparently the man just walked into the pit, unfortunately, or slipped and fell into the pit. It certainly wasn't the fault of Occupational Health and Safety or the miners.

Further, the minister mentioned that \$165,000 went to AADAC. Is AADAC being involved with the employers and the employees, or is it Occupational Health and Safety that's used this \$165,000 to study the problems with especially alcohol and drugs in the work force?

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, AADAC is doing it. The funding comes from this fund, but AADAC is doing that.

Do you want to take over now?

DR. HEWITT: Sure. AADAC is actually managing the project. We had worked with them in setting up the design of a project that we thought would provide useful findings both for us and for them in terms of improving our prevention strategies. They contracted the work to Price Waterhouse, and they are supervising them along with a steering committee that includes representatives of large and small business and several labour unions as well as other people with expertise in the area. So it's a very broad, multidisciplinary approach. We have preliminary findings now, and we expect to have the final report actually available early next year with pretty concrete recommendations for what we and AADAC can do to follow up.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, looking through the report of the occupational health and safety heritage grant program, many things, from mining to taxi drivers to almost every industry, have been looked at. I was wondering: has the minister taken a serious look at getting involved with such things as gas distribution to make sure that something doesn't happen again like happened in Hinton last year with the poisoning in the gas service station? Is there any way that Occupational Health and Safety could prevent those particular types of things from happening: transportation of dangerous goods that have been dumped in somebody's tank?

DR. WALKER: I guess in addition to the issue you mention, we also had a death at the Rimbeys gas plant about a year ago, and it's

caused us to wonder about what the situation is with aging gas plants. We've begun to talk to the major firms who are involved in that, particularly the firm that was managing the Rimbey gas plant, and we've said we want the Canadian Petroleum Association and the major gas firms involved to look in a systematic way at what the problems are with gas plants as they get older. So I would say that's our particular issue.

Now, maybe when you talk about gas at Hinton, we're talking about contaminated fuel. Is that so?

MR. DOYLE: That type of gas; I'm sorry.

DR. WALKER: So in any event, that's the Rimbey story for you.

In terms of the situation at the service station at Hinton, I think there have been a lot of departments involved in that situation now, looking to see how the information might have come to everybody's attention earlier. I think we feel that particularly through the Alberta public safety services alert network we have a better handle on that than might have been the case before. In terms of doing research into what happened at that service station, it's hard to think of it as a researchable topic. Somehow something got into those fuel tanks in a way that we've not been able to discover and the police haven't been able to discover. I think we're just left with a mystery. We're certainly concerned, as other departments are, that there be security in transportation of dangerous goods and security in facilities that store hazardous chemicals, but I think we don't really see that particular item as something that a researcher can dig into.

MR. TRYNCHY: I guess, just to add to it, what we're asking to be done, if we can, is have the people involved in the incident get to Environment and public health a lot quicker than they did so that we could have maybe salvaged the tanks and done some more testing and found out exactly what was there and where it came from. That's unfortunate, because I don't know how anyone could check every tank load of fuel that goes back and forth. We sort of have to rely on the people in that service station when they find something that's out of place to notify somebody very, very quickly, and that wasn't the case. We came on the scene some time after everything was gone, and it was very difficult to track it down. As you know, the report from the AG's department wasn't very successful. It's difficult. If there's some ideas and suggestions on how we can do better from any of the members in this Assembly, I'd sure welcome it, but it is difficult.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much. Good morning. I just have a short question: is the heritage grant program involved in any programs which directly benefit or deal with farmers?

MR. TRYNCHY: I made a commitment to these people that they would get a chance to answer questions, so I'll let them do it.

DR. HEWITT: We think that quite a few of the things we funded have benefits to farmers and their families. Certainly a number of members of farm families have jobs off the farm in order to remain on the farm. A number of them take up jobs in logging or the drilling and servicing industries, and many of our projects are directed to those high-hazard industries.

Specifically for farmers, we've had projects. We have one ongoing right now that has to do with removing pesticides from

clothing, which is quite a difficult problem, to convert the pesticides to something that's harmless yet doesn't destroy the fabric. We also have training materials on how to properly use pesticides, which are available to farmers, and the materials are distributed through the Department of Agriculture. We have a lot of materials on recycling and disposal of small amounts of hazardous chemicals, things that may be left stored around the farm but which could be easily converted to harmless products, so we have guide materials for that. Certainly we've done research on hearing protection, and farmers are at high risk of hearing loss through the machinery they operate. A lot of other materials, we think, are relevant to the jobs farmers do because they engage in so many risky activities - trenching, for instance, clearing of brush - and we have training materials which are available to every resident of Alberta in these areas.

MR. CARDINAL: I just have one supplement. It seems there are a lot of children that sometimes get hurt in farm accidents, younger children in particular. Are there any programs specifically designed on the preventive side to deal with issues of this nature?

MR. TRYNCHY: What we want to do and what we've been doing is to work directly with Alberta Agriculture. I've talked to the minister, and they've got some programs where the John Deere implement dealership has been involved in safety on the farm. I guess the thing that bothers us the most is that the shields are taken off some machinery, and when children and younger people get involved in these kinds of things, it's sad in some cases. I've seen some.

What I've done as a member, and maybe what all members could do, is developed playing cards that a lot of people use. I've been distributing them around my constituency. Each card has a special message of safety on the face of each card. I'm going to leave that with the chairman, and you might want to look at it. I've done this through my communications allowance. I think if you all would do that and get it out to your people - the farmers, the seniors . . .

MR. CARDINAL: Can I have 6,000 of those from the research fund?

MR. TRYNCHY: I don't know if we can do it from the research fund, but you could certainly develop some of these through your own communications allowance. What I'm trying to do is spread the word around so that when people entertain themselves with a game of cards, they can read the message on it. It's difficult, because a farmer's a pretty independent person. He doesn't take out compensation, and what do you do? I've seen this, and I've got a pretty good trademark here of what happens on the farm when you're not quite as diligent in what you're doing as you should be.

10:21

MS LYNAS: I should say that there have been a few projects we've funded that have allowed us to work in co-operation with the farm safety people. We have participated in Canadian Occupational Health & Safety Week in funding the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering, and that organization has chapters throughout the province that work with their community to promote occupational health and safety during a designated week during the year. As part of their activities they co-operate with other safety organizations in their community, and very often that involves a farm safety component which would include children.

The other instance is that the injury awareness and prevention centre at the University of Alberta has hosted injury prevention conferences throughout the years. One of their interests is occupational health and safety, but another is safety of children, and at those conferences information has been provided on farm safety for children.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, and greetings also to the minister and his staff. I hope he has checked out with the minister of lotteries whether he's allowed to put a competing card game out amongst the public, because he can always say it's a lot cheaper than the ones that are now going out in the bars.

The area I wanted to touch on was substance abuse. Going back two or three years in the reports, I notice there's always a sentence to the effect that the prevalence and effects of substance abuse in the workplace have been studied. It must be getting some sort of figures now. Does the minister have anything on, for instance, how much substance abuse is tied to absenteeism or fatalities? Fatalities might be stronger, but just something as simple as absenteeism – are we coming up with anything there?

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, the program started in January of '91, and we expect to have the report back February of '92. So it's just within a couple of months that we'll have it. We don't have any firm data except that the preliminary findings are that 80 percent of Albertans are currently drinkers while 6 percent use drugs. The people absent from the workplace: we don't have those figures as of yet, but I would expect that when we get the 1992 report, that should give us the information you're seeking. I will make sure that we provide that information to the Chair, Mr. Chairman, for distribution to all the members, but we don't have it yet.

MR. TAYLOR: It seems to be taking some time. I thought we'd started earlier than that, but maybe that's the last formal study.

Going on from that, if I can't get results, maybe I can ask what parameters are under survey. I'm sure that absenteeism, as you've already mentioned, is probably one of the first ones, but does it go as far as connecting time loss accidents or even fatalities to substance abuse?

MR. TRYNCHY: I would hope it would take in all aspects of injury plus the people absent from work.

DR. HEWITT: It's a very broad study. It takes a look at both workers and employers and trade unions and has quite extensive survey results from several thousand people with experience in different industry sectors. They were looking at the broad question of what the impact of alcohol and substance abuse in the workplace is, so they were specifically looking at things like absenteeism, other problems at work – time loss, injuries, damage to equipment – and they are finding out somewhat different things about alcohol and drugs. Certainly alcohol is the more serious and prevalent problem, although they're finding there are differences among industry groups in the extent and the nature of the alcohol use. They're finding, for instance, that in some industries there's a very high level of consumption but it's fairly even over time; in other industries there tends to be binge drinking on weekends and in the evenings. It's confirming some suspicions we had, but we didn't actually have numbers about it before. There are specific occupational groups, too, that seem to be at high risk of developing problems with alcohol.

On the drug side, although there's only 6 percent, it is showing up, specifically in some industries. It seems to me that oil and gas well drilling and servicing was one of the industries that had a problem with drugs. Construction and forestry and mining: that's where the highest levels of illicit drug use have been reported. So we do have preliminary numbers, and we actually have quite extensive numbers, but AADAC and its advisory group are trying to put it together now into a pattern that will make some sense for us.

MR. TAYLOR: That's very interesting, Mr. Chairman. Maybe I can go on and explore a bit further, seeing that most of us are driven by peer groups or maybe greed and money. Is the study trying to get any connection between the earning power of employees and substance abuse? Is there a tie-in that way? That sometimes is the most appealing of all. If they think they can make more money by staying away from the use of the thing – in other words, is there any tie-in with income and achievement as to the use of drugs? Mind you, it'd blow us all to hell if it showed up that all the drug users were the high-income makers.

MR. TRYNCHY: We're doing phone surveys to Albertans in the workplace; we're doing mail surveys and phoning Alberta employers and unions. Until we get the reports that have been completed and sent to us analyzed, we can't answer that question. I'd hate to say today that the high-income earners are the 6 percent that are using drugs when in fact the results could be different, but I suppose it would stand to reason that if you had the dollars, you'd be buying something, and if you didn't have the dollars, you would be buying less, whether it's a car or whatever you want to put those dollars to. In your case, you're mentioning that they might be using that drug because they had a higher income. We can't qualify that now; we couldn't do it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I was particularly interested in the various training initiatives undertaken under this funding, and I'd like to just ask a couple of questions in that particular section. On page 29 of the document that you provided to us listing the different projects, there's reference to the Heroes program. In the description it seems to imply that in addition to the specific funding provided through the heritage fund grant there were funds raised from other sources. What amount was this, and what proportion does it represent of the money spent on the Heroes program?

MR. TRYNCHY: As a matter of fact, the Heroes program is showing tonight in Ponoka, hon. member. We provided \$50,000 to kick-start the Heroes program, and we've asked other departments and schools and school boards to become involved. It's been viewed by over 122,000 persons in over 65 communities in the province of Alberta. The Heroes program at the present is heavily booked to be shown. The funding was \$50,000. Now it's been picked up by other industries and schools, and I believe the total figure of dollars into the Heroes program is exceeding \$400,000 from sources other than heritage fund.

MR. JONSON: A supplementary question, Mr. Chairman. I think this is certainly an indication of the success of at least one aspect of the grant program where a fairly modest amount of money has levered quite a bit of additional funding from other sources. Could the minister give us some kind of account, in a general way, as to what degree this is typical of the other projects under this funding?

Has the same sort of additional funding been attracted for any of these other projects?

10:31

DR. WALKER: I think Heroes is certainly our most successful example of that sort of leverage, but I think there are a number of other projects where we have put up some initial money and then things have been taken on by other sectors. We've certainly contributed to the hydrogen sulphide research that the universities have done, and the Medical Research Council of Canada, the National Research Council have carried some of that as well. I think in support of the Canadian Occupational Health & Safety Week we've put up money, and so have other organizations. So I think we seek leverage in many of the things that we do, but certainly Heroes is the highest leverage we've achieved.

MR. TRYNCHY: A good example, Mr. Chairman, is what we've just done with Alberta loggers association. We provided them \$50,000 to do a document, and now they've taken it on themselves to produce this document and distribute it to some 3,000 loggers across the province. What that total cost will be, we don't know, but it'll be far, far in excess of the \$50,000 we supplied to them.

In all the projects we've done, it seems that they now have taken it forward and run with it themselves in some way. Whether it's the unions, whether it's industry, they've taken the document and pushed it on their own. In some cases, they're selling the document. In most cases they're just adding to it.

MR. JONSON: I just have one other question on a different section that's still the education section of the report. Mr. Chairman, on page 32 there's reference to a credit program at Lethbridge Community College. I was just wondering why it was necessary to continue to fund. It would seem to me that if this was a course becoming an integral part of the college's program, they would be wanting to put it into their program and fund it internally. It looks as if perhaps the program through the Heritage Savings Trust Fund is going to be looked to continually for funding under this particular program.

MS LYNAS: That grant was provided, as you can see, to assist with some training programs. However, that was a onetime grant, and it was provided to provide assistance over one calendar year at the community college. There has not been any continuing funding from the grant program since that time, so they have absorbed those courses and are offering them as part of their regular programming.

MR. TRYNCHY: I might just add, Mr. Chairman, that since I've had the portfolio, the recommendations that come to us from the steering committee – and they review all the requests very thoroughly; they have members of labour, industry, Tom Whiting with Occupational Health and Safety – I have never turned one down. I do that because I feel the people involved from all sources have a pretty good idea of what's going on and why it's necessary. I guess if the committee that reviews it recommends it, it's incumbent upon ourselves to accept it.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, this is a continuation a bit on the Member for Ponoka, I think it is. Each year we always have a beef about the co-ordination of programs on alcohol or drug abuse and the different departments they seem to be under: there's your department and then the Premier's council and AADAC. Is there any co-ordinating body or system to make sure that you're not stepping on each other's toes in your research in alcohol and drug abuse?

DR. HEWITT: I know that AADAC is working quite closely with the people developing the new substance abuse foundation to come out of the heritage fund, and we're working quite closely with AADAC. So I think the mandates of the three organizations are going to be quite distinct. Our connection with AADAC right now is to obtain information that we need for the workplace and preventing alcohol and drug problems from having an impact on the safety of workers. Our mandate, of course, is much broader than alcohol and drugs, whereas their mandates are going to be focused on those problems. So I think we're pretty clear about what the distinction is and that we are aware of what we're doing as well; we co-ordinate our own activities.

MR. TAYLOR: It seems to me that working closely, though, is really not good enough, that there should be some sort of co-ordinating council that could prevent the overlapping bureaucracies from costing the taxpayers more money.

Maybe we'll move on – that's as close as I'm going to get, I guess – to another area. The member for Jasper-Edson . . .

MR. DOYLE: West Yellowhead.

MR. TAYLOR: West Yellowhead; I'm sorry. I always want to call him with Joe Clark's name.

The mentioning of the coal mining was very interesting, but as you may or may not know – probably you do know, and it was presented earlier in this committee here – the tar sand mining may be catching on; it may be the thing of the future. Is the department that's been surveying mining accidents keeping up to date and working closely with other heritage trust fund research, AOSTRA, to see the peculiar type of accidents we'd get from oil and gas or sand mining as different from coal? I guess coal's the only mining we do in the province anyhow.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, if you look at the accident rate for the city of Calgary, which is 6.4, and the city of Edmonton at 5.2 or 5.3, and you look at Syncrude with their accident rate of .9, it's pretty evident that they have a darn good policy, and we encourage them to continue on. I was at Syncrude just a while ago to present them with a safety award. If every industry in the province would take the lead of what Syncrude is doing, we'd have our accident rates down dramatically.

MR. TAYLOR: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman; I think there's a misunderstanding here. I'm not talking about open pit mining; I'm talking about AOSTRA's experiments now in actually mining – sinking a shaft and mining out the tar sand – which is entirely different from open pit. I'll agree with your record there, but the other's more similar to longwall coal mining, and I'm just wondering if you're up to date on that. With your answer I'm a little worried that you may not be. I hope you misunderstood my question. That longwall mining, that depth, may be the future in tar sand removal rather than open pit, and I'm just wondering if you're keeping up to date on that. I think this gentleman on your left is probably on that.

DR. WALKER: Our engineering staff has some communication with AOSTRA's staff. As you may know, we administer the mining regulations and have mining engineers. So yes, we are knowledgeable about what they're doing. It is, as you know, still a small-scale undertaking, and to my knowledge there's not been a serious incident in the AOSTRA situation, at least recently. So we're not more involved than that though.

MR. TAYLOR: Because I had to explain I think I should be allowed one more just strictly on the mining. Again, would the gentleman or the minister care to comment on the particular hazards that may be present in tar sand underground mining that are not present in coal underground mining?

DR. WALKER: I don't think any of us today have the engineering background that can give you a good distinction. We can make some general statements, if that's helpful to you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The Member for Wainwright.

10:41

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, and good morning to the minister and his guests. I noticed that your evaluation of the grant program is very positive, and I honestly believe that program has been valuable as far as educating people goes. I noticed – and it's a bit unusual – that nobody asked for any more money to increase the program. Could you comment on that a little bit?

MR. TRYNCHY: I'll let Don comment about the evaluation. In respect to money, I guess we had it here at the committee level last year. The committee recommended three-year funding with an evaluation. We've done the evaluation. We had the funding for last year, and we're looking at funding for this year through the process of budgeting. But if you're asking questions about the evaluation, I think Don would be the person to tell us how they arrived at it and why.

Don.

MR. CUMMINGS: Thank you. When we were looking at the evaluation, we interviewed a broad set of people. The question of the exact amount of money needed for the program was beyond the terms of reference specifically of the evaluation, and we'd probably have taken a different methodology if we'd wanted to arrive at, say, an exact amount of money per year. There were a lot of comments saying that there was a need for continued funding, but as I said, the exact amount wasn't part of the evaluation.

MR. FISCHER: Do you get industry participation, then, a lot of interest for them to help you fund? Or do we have to fund those projects on our own?

MR. CUMMINGS: No. Our understanding is that there's great interest among industry to take a lot more participation in a joint effort with AOH and S, the heritage grant program, and their own efforts. But there is really a holistic need. There's a need for the three groups – industry, being employers and labour, and Alberta Occupational Health and Safety – to be involved through the heritage grant program.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you.

MR. TRYNCHY: Just to add to it for the member, Mr. Chairman, I would hope that in the future the heritage fund steering committee would look at each and every request and maybe consider it an obligation of the industry to add some dollars to their request from the heritage fund so we could do a better job and maybe expand. If they request \$50,000, would they put in \$50,000 to match it? I think I'd ask the committee to look at that in the future and make it a better program.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A question of cancer rates being higher in the vicinity of high-voltage power lines. I brought it up once or twice in the past, and it's sort of been pushed off. I think last time the minister sort of intimated there were studies by the power companies on this. Asking power companies what kinds of cancer results they've had is like asking McDonald's about the value of hamburgers to the diet. I'm just wondering: is the minister now prepared to say whether there are any studies going ahead, or will there be studies? I think there's an advancing body of opinion that there is an increase in cancer rates, particularly in children, in the vicinity of high-voltage power lines.

MR. TRYNCHY: We don't have a study under way, and we haven't had any requests for that.

Dr. Walker.

DR. WALKER: There is no study under way in Alberta at this time. The principal evidence you're talking about has come from a study, I believe, in Denver which found a higher incidence of cancer in children, and it's thought to be associated with proximity to high-voltage lines. But we're responsible for radiation oversight in the province. We're not yet at the point and I don't think the medical world is at the point where we think there is a firm connection, but we're interested in any work that's going on.

MR. TAYLOR: It bothers me a bit, though, Mr. Chairman, that studies show that linkage, yet here we have the department responsible for safety . . . Isn't there at least some sort of co-ordination, a body working with the Department of Energy to try to make sure high voltage power lines are laid out in such a way that they will miss school yards or miss residences by an amount that you feel is safe rather than just waiting to see whether there's a connection or not even working with the Department of Energy at all?

DR. WALKER: I think we have to say that the linkage is not yet established. I mean, at the moment it's a supposition. In terms of a major cause of cancer, I think we're a long way from really knowing that and our knowledge warranting the sort of action you call for in relocating power lines.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, it's almost shocking to me that you have to wait till you see the courts before you decide whether you're going to take any evasive action. Surely it would be easy – although the possibility that there is a connection may be remote in your mind – to take the very simple evasive action of telling the Department of Energy where you want those power lines to go.

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, that's not a responsibility of Occupational Health and Safety. But should there be a request from the industry or from anybody to look further into power line detriments to school yards and that, we would be willing to fund it, because we are providers of funds from the heritage fund.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have one question with regards to the application of pesticides or chemicals to stop tree growth underneath power lines. I could expand that in a study done by the power companies about 10 years ago when I was an employee, more people in the power companies died from suicide than from cancer. So my question would be as to

pesticides that are used for the control of trees under power lines. There are applicators that control the vegetation, but in the evening when they park their vehicles in front of hotels or places of residence, I see big boxes of Tordon and other chemicals left sitting open on the trucks. Is Occupational Health and Safety clamping down on these people who leave this stuff? Even the power company employees themselves were not allowed to use Tordon as an applicator to control trees; they had to bring in special people that were properly trained. But the protection of that stuff – anybody could swipe it off the trucks at night, or it could fall off in fact; it's not properly contained. I wonder if Occupational Health and Safety would take a look at this.

DR. WALKER: We've certainly been concerned generally about learning more about the hazards of pesticide application and making sure people who are in that business know how to use the pesticides safely. If you're saying that the pesticide applicators in their dealings with the community at large are being careless about how they look after the containers, that's not something that's come to our attention, and we would talk to Alberta public safety services, who are responsible for transportation of dangerous goods, and maybe public health about that. We'd be concerned about it, but I think we'd look at both those agencies as the ones with the community responsibility.

MR. DOYLE: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I saw this on many occasions, but I didn't know whether to contact the local police force. Do you contact public services? Do you contact Occupational Health and Safety? But I frequently see these vehicles parked in front of places of residence when they're working in the field. These things should be, I assume, under lock and key in some safe compartment.

DR. WALKER: Well, we'll take notice of what you've told us, and we'll look into it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Ernst & Young report on the evaluation of the grant program was quite complimentary, and basically the first recommendation was that this heritage grant program be continued. I don't know whether you've come up with a response to the Ernst & Young report, but I'm wondering if a determination has been made to continue the grant program and whether that's a sort of open-ended commitment or whether that would be, say, for another five-year period or something like that.

10:51

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, I'd leave that to your committee for recommendations. I suggested last year and I'll say again that we'd like to see it continue. But it's a recommendation that has to come from this committee, and I look forward to your thoughts on whether it should be one year or two or three years.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For the benefit of the member, the minister did comment on that earlier in the meeting. Perhaps for additional information you could review *Hansard* on that issue.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, I wonder if the minister could perhaps inform the committee's decision-making on it. One of the recommendations which follows later on in the report is that a stable and assured future is required to allow for effective programs and to develop long-range targets with industry. Has

any consideration been given to perhaps creating an endowment fund out of the trust fund or elsewhere, like the foundation for medical research or scholarships, in order to give the heritage fund program a permanent basis rather than a year-to-year commitment?

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, I made that recommendation last year. Of course, your committee came back with the three-year proposal. So I will leave that with you.

I believe Tom Whiting would like to add to it.

MR. WHITING: Yeah. From a business point of view, I think the program has been exceptionally well accepted. Some of the programs, like the forum for action which is going to be carrying on with labour and business, have got together and are bringing in industries which have a high incident rate. These types of things should be continually funded. I think the program has done a tremendous amount of good. From industry and labour, we would definitely like to see this thing continued and would want surety that it's coming for more than just a couple of years.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, I appreciate that. I should say, Mr. Chairman, that I also appreciate the fact that an outside body with the reputation of Ernst & Young has taken a look at the program and, as a result of the evaluation, it scores high marks. I think that's a credit to the people who have been administering the program.

As we watch the financial assets of the heritage trust fund declining in that some of it is being diverted into the deemed assets portion where this fund is found, has there been any consideration given to shifting some of the responsibility for the grants program into the department itself and perhaps making some of the funding from Occupational Health and Safety and some of the funding continuing from the heritage trust fund, a sort of shared kind of responsibility for this grants program?

MR. TRYNCHY: We haven't given that any consideration. I would hope not to. I think Occupational Health and Safety as a department has a role to play with injuries and inspections at workplaces. What we have been doing somewhat successfully and will continue to do is take any of the high-injury industries and work with Workers' Compensation and have them augment their funding to Occupational Health and Safety to provide more funds for our people to do a job dovetailed with Workers' Compensation. I haven't heard a request to move the Occupational Health and Safety funding to tie it with the heritage trust fund, and I wouldn't support it. I think there's a role for the heritage fund to play and a role for Occupational Health and Safety to play. But again, that's a recommendation we would consider if you people wish to make it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is exploring a little bit the range of the study of occupational health and safety – and I'm reversing a little bit here on the health of occupations: the occupation of a farmer, the future of a farmer, and the effect of chemicals. You're to be complimented. Your department does a good job of explaining what will happen to people with the misuse of chemicals. But is there much work being done on the long-term effects of chemicals on the environment around the community; in other words, the chain? What happens if too much insecticide kills off the bugs or goes through to the birds and so on and so forth, chain reactions from the misuse of chemicals on the land, rather than the actual direct result on the individual?

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, we wouldn't be involved in that, Mr. Chairman. Our role, Occupational Health and Safety, is to protect the worker. The environmental aspects of chemicals should surely be directed to the Department of the Environment or other government departments. We wouldn't be involved in that. We don't have the technology; we don't have the expertise to go out and check that. No, that wouldn't be a role we would play.

Go ahead.

DR. HEWITT: The projects we have funded that concern handling of chemicals have as an objective a conversion to harmless products. While their main goal is to protect the health of the people who are working with those chemicals, they also have as an objective protection of the environment so that people are not dumping things down the drain or aren't throwing them out on the soil but in fact are able to convert them quite easily. Margaret Ann Armour's work at the University of Alberta on recycling and disposal of chemicals I think is a very good example of where the two objectives concerning the environment and health are met. Betty Crown's work on removing pesticides from clothing is another one where it's going to be done safely, but it's safe both for people and the environment.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you. I like that answer, and I hope you continue along that line, maybe even put more funds into it. You can show somebody how it's safe to handle a chemical, yet that chemical could cause irreparable damage to that person's occupation.

Going a stage further, though, are the occupational health people doing anything in the way of broadening the spectrum of analysis of gas effluents out in the farm countryside that are coming from a number of petrochemical plants? We have various kinds, from a little tank farm all the way up to sulphur, renewable areas, yet there seems to be quite a tie in how that affects animals. Of course, animals are not clothed and don't go around with shoes, but usually what affects animals will affect people down the road. So are we doing anything in looking at trace elements, outside sulphur, and other things like that which may be coming from these plants out there and how they affect the health of the actual farmer? In other words, it's not chemicals he's putting on the land; it's chemicals that some other industry is taking out of the ground.

MR. TRYNCHY: That's a role again for Environment. We're not involved in studies of effluent from gas plants in the field. We are in the workplace. I don't think we have the manpower, the expertise to start with to be involved in that. It would have to be public health or Environment that would look at the air. You're talking now about air conditions outside a gas plant, in the farmer's yard. I suppose if it would affect the worker, because farmers aren't under our Act, then we'd have to look at that, but that hasn't been something we've addressed our mind to at this time.

DR. WALKER: Well, we've supported some laboratory research involving hydrogen sulphide, so in a different way that's involved animals, but we haven't involved animals' health in the way you've asked.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, the Chair is really concerned at how far you're ranging with birds and animals. This department really has responsibility for the worker. Just as supplementary information, the Chair is aware that the Department of the Environment does have monitoring equipment downstream which

monitors sulphur dioxide contaminants from gas plants and so on, and that certainly would impact on animals and birds, but I suspect that's about as far as that goes.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, what I'm trying to drive at is that the occupational health of people and farmers living and working out in the countryside is affected by this, and I think this department maybe should be taking the lead in going out there. You say animals. Well, I'm an old mining engineer. The very first gas analysis that was put out was putting a canary down in a cage. If the canary turned around and put both feet up in the air and quit singing, you knew it wasn't safe to go in there. Now, I hope we've progressed from that state. All I'm saying is that the animal environmental kingdom will tell you a hell of a lot more about what dangers there are to the farmer's health out there than waiting until he's dead or ends up in a cancer ward.

11:01

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, would you give us your supplementary, please?

MR. TAYLOR: I'm asking if they're doing any studies, and what I'm getting back is "It's not our responsibility; Environment does that." I don't agree with that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You've asked the question, and they've answered that. Do you have an additional supplementary?

MR. TAYLOR: That was it.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, the question he raises could very well be raised in estimates. We are here today to discuss how we fund industries from the heritage trust fund, not how we operate Occupational Health and Safety. Now, I invite the hon. member to raise that question when we do our estimates, and we'll endeavour to get the gentleman the answer. But today we're here to talk about how the Heritage Savings Trust Fund gets spent, gets invested, and works for the people of Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The Chair doesn't have anyone else on the speakers list. That being the case . . .

MR. TRYNCHY: There's one more thing . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. TRYNCHY: . . . that I think Dr. Walker would like to raise with you people, and it's in regards to fire retardant clothing. It wasn't asked, but we have some stuff here.

DR. WALKER: It has a major engineering significance. One of our success stories, I think, has been working with the University of Alberta and the department of textiles there to develop fire retardant clothing. We have a sort of show and tell for you here. What the minister's holding over the edge is some clothing that went through an episode, and it is not fire retardant.

DR. HEWITT: Those workers have not yet returned to work after several years.

MR. TRYNCHY: This went through the same thing. The worker that wore this went through the same fire, so it just gives you an example of what fire retardant clothing has done.

MR. TAYLOR: It's not the fact that it's Tory blue, is it?

MR. TRYNCHY: It is Tory blue, yeah, and orange too, yes.

MR. DOYLE: Did they use those in Iraq?

MR. TRYNCHY: Pardon?

MR. DOYLE: Did they use that type of clothing in Iraq, putting out the fires?

MR. TRYNCHY: Yes.

DR. HEWITT: This is an Edmonton manufacturing company that actually is successful now because of the research Betty Crown has been funded to do through this program and our interest in promoting fire resistant clothing since the early 1980s. So they're a success story, and they're exporting around the world. Hilary can say something about the specific incidents that were involved here.

MS LYNAS: Those garments were worn by two different workers in two different incidents. The green shirt was worn by a fellow who was caught in a flash fire at a drilling rig. That incident happened five years ago, and the person has not returned to work and really isn't expected to. The other one was worn at a worksite where workers were preparing to enter a confined space and there was a flash explosion. Being vinyl, it just melted. This one here was worn at a flash fire at a drilling rig, and the worker had very superficial burns to his head. There was no lost time claim as a result of this; there was no injury to the worker.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
A point of information?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Yes. I find it interesting, Mr. Chairman. With the new clothing, is it now standard equipment throughout Alberta, mandatory or standard in the industry now?

MR. TRYNCHY: It's standard in a lot of the industries and mandatory in a number of them, yes.

DR. HEWITT: The Canadian Petroleum Association has developed consensus standards based on this research which they're hoping to get approved through the national standards association across the country. As well, we're making amendments to our general safety regulation that will require protective clothing where it's needed. It won't specify exactly this, but it will have to meet the requirement that it protects the worker from the hazard.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Very good.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Minister and your officials. We appreciate you coming before the committee and the information you have given to us.

The Chair would entertain a motion for adjournment. The Member for Lloydminster. [interjection] I'm sorry; the Chair's already recognized the Member for Lloydminster.

All those in favour? Thank you. We stand adjourned until 2 p.m. this afternoon, when the Hon. John Gogo, the Minister of Advanced Education, will appear before the committee.

[The committee adjourned at 11:06 a.m.]