

[Chairman: Mr. Oldring]

[2 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to another meeting of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund select standing committee.

With us this afternoon we have the Minister of Community and Occupational Health, the Hon. Jim Dinning. We're here to review the Occupational Health and Safety heritage grant program. It's found under our capital projects division, and that's on page 15 of your report. This morning, Mr. Minister, the members did receive a status report on the Occupational Health and Safety heritage grant program as of December 18, '87, as well as the annual report for '86-87, and we appreciated receiving that.

It has been customary, Mr. Minister, to extend an opportunity to the ministers appearing before our committee to open with some comments and opening remarks. We would certainly extend that offer to you, and then from there we'll proceed into our normal question period.

MR. DINNING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon, colleagues. I gather that you do have that material before you, and I think it provides you with a good background to the activities of the Occupational Health and Safety heritage grant program for the year ended March 31, 1987.

I just want to briefly touch upon the history of the program. This is its sixth year of eight years of operation. It was a commitment made back in 1981 by this Progressive Conservative government for \$10 million over eight years. It was a dream, an idea, of a former colleague of ours, Mr. Bill Diachuk. I continue to be grateful to him for that kind of visionary planning, and I believe it has served Albertans well.

The program's basic objective is to encourage innovative projects and innovative approaches for the prevention of work-related accidents and ill health caused through the workplace. The objective is to support research, training, and the development of educational programs as well as conferences. As members will see in their annual report, referred to on page 1 and on page 18 is an evaluation program that began partway through 1985 and was completed about a year ago. That was an evaluation of this program. I won't go into the details of the evaluation -- they're found on pages 18, 19, and 20 of your annual report -- but basically, the evaluation found the program to be a very positive contribution to occupational health and safety in Alberta, to the practice of it and to the effects that such a program would have on workers and on the workplace.

They made a number of recommendations. Of course, as might be expected, one is that the program go beyond 1989. That is something that I and my colleagues will have to discuss as we approach March of 1989. But I think a more important recommendation out of that report was that we ought to be promoting the results of our completed projects even more to let workers and employers know the good work we've done so that it can be applied to the worksite and for the benefit of workers.

The operations, Mr. Chairman, are outlined in the report, so I won't go into the details there. I just want to talk about some more recent events, and one in particular. That is that in the last 10 months I've asked the officials who help to manage this program to focus the program on a more solution-oriented, results-oriented approach so that we can apply the results to individual worksites and to workers. We've focused on five main targets; I'll go through the list. In focusing on those targets, we're only beginning now to get that message out there into the community

and into the research community. Rather than be a passive recipient of research proposals under the program, we're saying, "Okay, we want these five areas looked into." And we're going to identify possible researchers or others in the community who could do that work and go out and talk to those people and encourage them to make proposals, to submit proposals for research, education, and training work. It's that kind of active approach that I want to take, and I think it will be very beneficial in the last two years of this program.

There are five areas, the first of which is small business. It's referred to in your annual report. I think we've got a real job to do, not so much in the large businesses, the large companies who employ 300, 400, or 500 employees and upwards. To many of those businesses, we're preaching to the converted. It's the smaller worksites, the small businesses that have 10, 20, less than 40 employees, where I think we've got to focus some of our attention.

Secondly, it's worksites where serious or fatal accidents have occurred. It's in those areas that we want to be focusing our research, our education, and our training.

Thirdly, just communication: how do we get the safety message across? Not just through books, pamphlets, or posters, but what other kinds of communication approaches ought we to be using to convince employers and employees that safety has to be a number one priority on the job? I'm looking for any kind of sound proposal -- research, training, or otherwise -- that is going to help us to deliver that safety message even more than we have up to now.

Our fourth priority is to focus on the chemical and biological hazards we find in our workplaces. We certainly know about PCBs, and we know about radiation. We know a lot of things about a lot of hazardous materials. We know their dangers, but how do we get workers and employers to actually do something about it? How do we get them to have as a number one thought as they approach a hazardous task: how am I going to deal with this situation; how do I protect myself; how do I operate most safely? Again, I think they have to be cost-effective means of understanding that, because we've got to be thinking again about small business. Larger businesses have the resources to help their workers, protect their workers, minimize risk. But we've got to be thinking about those smaller businesses who need that kind of support.

Fifthly, Mr. Chairman, is the oil and gas industry. It is, of course, a vital industry in this province, and it is a very hazardous industry in the servicing side, the drilling side, and virtually every facet of a well site operation. What I'm looking for are proposals that will focus on the design of safe equipment, the design of safe work procedures and processes, plus the design of better safety equipment for activity in the oil patch.

So, Mr. Chairman, with those five key priorities in mind in looking ahead to the future and encouraging those who are able to do the education/research/training kind of work that this program wants to support, this is an open invitation to a number of Albertans to look at our program, to consider what they can do under its objectives, and come to us with proposals that meet those five key priority areas. I'll leave it there, Mr. Chairman. I know members will have a number of questions.

MR. OLDRING: Good. Thanks very much, Mr. Minister, for a helpful overview. I'll begin by recognizing the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Looking over the material

provided with respect to this section of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund expenditures, given the large number of people involved and the large number of unions and associations, it seemed that there was not a very large proportion of projects funded that had been proposed by associations and unions representing workers. Is that a fair observation?

MR. DINNING: Yes, Mr. Chairman, it is. Perhaps if I could expand on that, because I'm sure the member will have supplementary questions. If members would turn to the December 18 status report, I can just identify six union-sponsored proposals. On pages 23 and 24 you'll see three in a row. Development of Occupational and Industry-Specific Education Materials, as well as Health and Safety Training for Labour Representatives, and A Program to Develop and Evaluate Advanced Instructor Education: all three sponsored by the Alberta Federation of Labour. Three very effective proposals -- I would put to you -- in that the federation was able to train a number of front-line safety practitioners who could then go out into the field and teach their individual workers. So it was 10 teaching 10 teaching 10, which is a very effective means of spreading the message around. As well, on page 27 you'll see a Canadian Summer School on Occupational Health, where the Alberta Committee on Occupational Safety and Health provided an opportunity for an officer to further their education. As well, on page 29 the same committee was in receipt of funds, and then on page 30 the International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Asbestos Workers received funding for a conference, Asbestos Abatement - Train the Trainer.

But I want to underscore, Mr. Chairman, that those six projects that were approved to the tune of just short of \$500,000 were six of not many more written proposals, formal proposals, that have come to the program. I could say -- I think quite safely -- that of virtually every union-sponsored education and research proposal that has come to us, following consultation with the sponsor of that application we have funded that project. We work with a number of unions and are encouraging the likes of the Alberta Federation of Labour Worker's Health Centre to come forward. We want to work with those people. We want to look at good, solid proposals, and where they fit with our priorities, we'll fund them.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, just to follow up on this matter of grants and how they're handled. I notice that on page 20 of the annual report, when we get to recommendations as far as administrative aspects of the program are concerned, the third recommendation states -- if I might just read it. This is a summary:

Several recommendations were made to improve administrative practices and communication with applicants. For example, changes to some sections of the Application Form were recommended.

I wonder if the minister could elaborate a bit on what action, other than the application form being changed, might have been taken under that set of recommendations.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, I don't think I can give you an awful lot of detail on that. If members are interested, I could provide copies of the full report to the committee, so I wouldn't want to comment on the recommendations under administrative practices.

On the whole subject of communication, if I'm not mistaken, the consultant said that we ought to be setting out our priorities

better than we have so that people who are applying know what they're up against when they submit a proposal. Is it just a flash in the dark, or is it something they know has got a good chance that it's going to meet with our approval because it fits within the objectives and the priorities we're looking for? The one I found of most interest was the communication of how you promote, how you explain, how you distribute that which your research has found for you -- getting the word out to workers and to employers so that they can use the results. If members are interested, I can provide them with a copy of the full report.

MR. JONSON: Just one other supplementary then, Mr. Chairman. In the minister's opening remarks he indicated his desire to see more focused research, more focused projects as far as this program is concerned. Has the administrative arm of this program identified problems or issues that are out there and should be dealt with that they would like somebody in the private sector or some association or union to take up and address?

MR. DINNING: It's a really good question, Mr. Chairman, because it's been my concern that you've got to be able to apply the research to those areas where you've got the biggest problems. I'll give you an example. It's in your report, identified as the first item on page 10, where Lakeland College is in receipt of some \$90,000 in funding to do work on a training program for workers who have to work in confined spaces, whether those are vessels or tanks or manholes or other kinds of spaces that are confined, and especially in those areas where a worker might come in contact with a gas, where he might be overcome by some kind of a gas.

The college is taking a mobile classroom about the area. This consists of a tower which will simulate a number of working environments. This will be taken to the various worksites throughout the area, and workers will participate in a number of assignments in a one-day course of training where they put on a certain kind of breathing apparatus and they learn safe entry work and rescue procedures. That kind of an initiative is a direct application. It's not scientific research; it's something that is of immediate use, once the training program is put into place, to the workers throughout the province. That program can be packaged and, in fact, I hope will be packaged by the Lakeland College people and sold to other organizations who want it, on a cost-recovery basis. So it's that kind of direct application to a problem where we found a number of accidents. In fact, a number of fatalities have occurred in confined working spaces.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Stony Plain.

MR. HERON: I'll pass. My question has been asked, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Lacombe.

MR. R. MOORE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the area of prevention we have one profession that seems to have a lot of problems, and that's the taxi drivers. We heard of a stabbing the other day. Just what are we doing in this area for protecting this class of vocation?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, in the last few days an Edmonton taxi driver has suffered a very serious stabbing, and it naturally is of concern to all of us who would sit in this room. It's of immediate concern to our staff and our people in the oc-

occupational health and safety area that the taxi driver is often vulnerable to some kind of an individual who will do him or her wrong. It's another example of an individual working alone. An individual driving a taxi or working in a convenience store at midnight or 4 o'clock in the morning: they're exposed to some dangers. So we're trying to work on that general subject of workers working alone and how we can encourage, how we can prod, employers to be extra careful or to think extra specially about their welfare while on the job.

In the case of a taxi driver, of course, there is nothing that any kind of a health and safety prevention program can do to prevent some crazed madman from pulling out a knife and stabbing anyone, whether he's in a taxi or whether he's anywhere else. The same when he's outside of his taxi: if a driver gets out of his or her taxi, they're exposed to anything that an individual wants to do. I think one of our biggest challenges is to help a taxi driver to identify some of the characteristics of somebody who is going to do him wrong.

Along that line, we've begun to fund a taxi driver safety training program that's been sponsored by the Taxi Industry Task Group, and I can give you some details. The group is chaired by a member of the Edmonton Taxi Cab Commission, a fellow by the name of Frank Johnsrude. Others on the task group include Mr. John Bilton, Mr. Bill Casavants, Mrs. Kathy Dettman, Mr. Maroun Najm, and Mr. Roger Richard. The purpose of this is to produce a training program for drivers to prepare them to deal with aggressive and potentially dangerous passengers and certainly to let them be aware of other dangerous situations. This task group flowed out of a report that was done after a series of incidents back in 1984-85 relating to taxi drivers, a report that was done for the Attorney General and for the minister responsible for workers' health, safety, and compensation. This Taxi Industry Task Group is a direct result of that. The project is supported by the two major metropolitan taxi cab commissions in Calgary and Edmonton, by the police departments in both cities, by a number of taxi companies, and by the Greater Edmonton Taxi Advisory Association. We've funded them to the tune of some \$24,000 in this current year, and we're looking at as much as \$100,000 in additional funding to have them complete the project by the fall of 1988. That extra \$100,000 will flow as long as the project continues to be sound and the results of the \$24,000 funded project show that the project continues to be worthy of funding.

MR. R. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, a supplementary. You say this is under study, but when you look at these studies or research projects that we received from the minister, the status report on all these research projects, it concerns me when I look at the amount of money that is spent on various research projects. I look at the research project itself. I see very little value and a great deal of money in some cases, in my own opinion. I'd just like to know how we arrive at a priority list here for these research projects. How are they selected? You talked a little bit in your overview there, you know, when you were speaking to another question, but just how do we arrive at awarding these research projects?

This might give you an example of what I'm talking about just quickly here, Mr. Chairman. I look on page 3 of this book that was distributed. It says:

Mortality Experience of Firefighters.

To compare the mortality profile of firefighters with that of comparable male populations of Albertans, and to examine the distribution of cause of death, especially with respect to lung cancer, chronic obstructive lung disease and cardiovascular

disease.

Now, I know there could be some relationship, but for \$103,000 there must be many, many other areas in our health and safety area that take a higher priority over this.

The other one at the bottom of that page, and another one that I just can't see getting \$32,000, is:

To conduct an exploratory study which will describe and analyze the occupational health beliefs, attitudes and practices of small business owner-managers in the construction, manufacturing, transportation, communications and utilities industries.

We just have to look at Stan Nelson and we know where all the problems are.

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't know how to respond to the last point, but I can say, I suppose with some protection, that both of those projects were approved before my time.

I think I'm more familiar with the latter one, and that is small business. The member is right. Mr. Nelson is very familiar with small business, as I'm sure most members in this Assembly are. That's where some of our major problems are. A large business has the resources to put on a pretty comprehensive, effective safety program, whereas a smaller business... A convenience store business is a perfect example. Their margins are pretty thin. They need to get the most out of every dollar because they don't get to keep many of them. So perhaps safety becomes of secondary importance.

Whether it's a manufacturing business, whether it's transportation, construction... A small construction outfit is the perfect example. Safety costs, and a small company may not get past the cost of it and begin to realize that safety does pay. Because if we don't pay now for it, surely to God you'll be paying for it in the long run through increased workers' compensation costs, through downed production and productivity time, and social costs: the injury that's inflicted on a worker because he doesn't know what he's supposed to do or because she doesn't have a safety program that her employer has helped put in place, or for whatever reason.

So on the small business side, learning the attitudes, the beliefs, the views of an owner of a small business outfit and how you overcome any obstacles to putting in place a safety program is something I'd be deeply interested in.

MR. R. MOORE: Just a supplementary, back to my original question on the awarding of these research grants. The people on that selection committee -- there must be a selection committee or whatever -- are they all academics, or are there some laymen in it?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Chairman, I'll ask you to turn to page 21 of the annual report that's before you. I realize members wouldn't have had time to read it, and I apologize for not having gotten it to you sooner. There is a listing of some 11 individuals who serve on the Grant Steering Committee. What the committee does is review applications and make recommendations regarding the funding of these. I look at the four public members -- two labour reps and two employer reps -- and I know all four of them because they serve on the Occupational Health and Safety Council. As a matter of fact, I know you would know a number of them as well, Mr. Moore, because at one time you served on that council as well. I look at Sam Lee and I think of a guy like Ron Jones, and they're pretty sound individuals. I've got to rely on that kind of sound, public out-

side advice. I look at some of the individuals who serve from within government, representing six departments or agencies of government. I know a number of them, and I rely on them to make those kinds of recommendations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, followed by the Member for Lethbridge-West.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to the committee, to the minister. The first question I had was just about the finances. On page 6 you indicate the amount of money available each year -- a million dollars the first year, a million dollars in the second, and so on -- and then the amount spent and the unexpended dollars. I guess my question is: are the unexpended dollars stacked up in an account that the minister has control of, or did they just never come from the heritage trust fund? In other words, you never did get them.

MR. DINNING: It is the latter, Mr. Chairman. The Legislature annually appropriates, passes, through the Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act, capital projects division, the appropriation on the top line of page 6 -- a million dollars in '81-82, \$2 million in the current year that we're looking at -- so that on March 31 all unexpended dollars lapse, and they are not drawn from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

MR. McEACHERN: I sort of assumed that was the case. Thank you. I just wanted to make sure.

In your opening remarks you mentioned something about the worksites in bigger corporations, or bigger worksites for big companies, are not all that much of a problem in terms of getting worker health and safety programs going. Of course, a worker health and safety program often depends on the workers getting together and deciding they want one, but its success also would depend, I think, to a very good extent on co-operation and help and maybe even active participation or pushing of the program by a good employer that recognized the benefit of such a program. I can see the need to try to push that down into smaller companies. I guess what I want to ask you is: in the larger companies, where perhaps there's a union involved with the employees, what kind of co-operation, and do they always get -- which your statement seems to imply -- co-operation from the management? If they don't, is there any way in which the department can or does sort of coerce the employers into getting involved? Or can they get out of it?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Chairman, the member basically hits the issue right on. The responsibility rests with employers and with employees, organized or non-organized. That co-operation is essential. If the member will review my remarks in *Hansard*, I think I expressed less of a concern about larger businesses. I continue to be very concerned about health and safety no matter what the size of the business. It's a matter of resources and wherewithal. A large business has the resources and the wherewithal. It's got to have the will as well. Although there may be a will on the part of a small business, the resources and the wherewithal may be lacking. That's where we want to be of assistance to those smaller businesses.

But yes, a very important part of our occupational health and safety division within the department is to work with the employers in large or small businesses to help them mount, design, prepare, and implement a safety program, a safety awareness program, a protection for employees program. So we wouldn't

hesitate; where employees or employers are resistant or are concerned about a safety program, we're not going to be reluctant to go in and do some encouraging, some prodding, and a little moral suasion.

MR. McEACHERN: Good. Thank you. I guess I was trying to get at just how much moral suasion, how heavy you're prepared to lean. I guess that's something that the future will show.

I was looking at some of the research projects. There's one that I asked about last year, and the results were not in. I see there is a small summary about it in this document, page 15: the effect of working environment on pregnancy. The minister, of course, didn't have answers for me last time because the results were not in. So having read through the description that is there, I guess I just wanted to ask him for a little bit more detail. It says that "no specific job category was found to place a woman at increased risk" -- that is, compared to not working -- "with the exception of the heterogeneous miscellaneous category." I'm wondering if that would imply that a further study and a breakdown of that category or perhaps another study, in which more job types fit into that heterogeneous miscellaneous category, is needed. In other words, this study didn't seem to be very conclusive.

One of the things that they do go on to say also is that there didn't seem to be any greater risk to women working than staying at home, that sort of thing, during the pregnancy. They point out, however, that this study had limitations in that "Calgary is a relatively non-industrial city, with a lack of potentially 'dangerous' jobs." One of the worries was -- and I'm sure this study was meant to try to find that out -- whether or not computers were somewhat hazardous to females who spent a lot of time at computers when they were pregnant; that would be secretarial staff. It would seem from this summary that that would not be a problem. In other words, I want some comment on those kinds of details, and I guess I also want to know where I can get a copy of the full study.

MR. DINNING: The second question is easier to answer than the first. All of these studies are available through our occupational health and safety library, and a number of them are in other libraries around the province. But if the member is interested, I will ... [interjection] Thirty-six pages? If you're interested, let us know and we'll make it available. On the basis of looking at that report, perhaps then the member and I could have a discussion. His understanding or knowledge of what "heterogeneous miscellaneous category" might include is probably the same as mine, so I wouldn't begin to try and answer the question.

May I just go back to perhaps a parenthetical comment that the member made before he asked his last question? It was "moral suasion." I said earlier that if you don't pay for safety now, you'll pay later. The Workers' Compensation Board is a perfect example of that. We've gone into what's referred to as the experience rating system, whereby those employers in an industry category who have a better than average safety record or accident record enjoy a discount of up to 40 percent on their annual Workers' Compensation Board costs. Those who are the worst offenders suffer as much as a 40 percent premium that they're obliged to pay. In any sized business -- small, medium, or large -- those premiums can be significantly reduced through an effective safety program. Pay me now or pay me later.

MR. McEACHERN: The more important part of my first ques-

tion is really: do you think this study really said anything significant about women and computers, the electronic thing?

MR. DINNING: I would want to look at the report in more detail to be able to answer that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Lethbridge-West.

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, looking at your annual report, page 6, table A, each year since 1981 there has been a substantial amount of unexpended funds with regard to the program. One is very puzzled by this. The Legislature appropriated a 100 percent increase a year ago, and you still end up with over half a million unexpended. I suppose it would be a fair question to ask: is this hedging, really, for the future, to end up with unexpended funds that you could apply at a later date?

You may care to answer that in the context of this question. It appears to me that over the years, looking at the group of people who determine which applications are suitable, they do an excellent job in that determination. Could you advise the committee if that committee ensures that the applicants do research to ensure that similar study or research has not been carried out in other parts of North America, prior to the acceptance of an application?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, two good questions, because the one relating to unexpended or lapsed funds is probably most noticeable in 1986-87, the year under review. I can't give you an answer about 1984-5 at this point, but this past year is of most interest. In November of 1986, the member will recall, the government basically put a freeze on spending. It was part of an important and, I think, a very effective restraint program and was something that Albertans expected from us, especially when we looked at a serious downturn in our natural resource revenues. Following the implementation of that freeze, I directed the officials in the department not to make any recommendations on any new projects. Ongoing projects were still funded because the commitment had been made, but we were not going to be funding any new ones. So that's the reason for the perhaps larger unexpended amount of a little short of \$600,000 for '86-87.

As for the member's question on research being done that is not duplicating other research: especially with the major research proposals, before they are accepted by this Grant Steering Committee, are run by experts in the field, knowledgeable academics in the field who would be aware of general research going on in the entire hydrogen sulphide area or in back injury. So before we fund any projects, particularly projects of a larger size, we would have them vetted by experts that we can find in the area, and we rely on those kinds of professionals as well as the people on the committee and those within government to ensure that the research doesn't duplicate other research being done.

MR. GOGO: A supplementary, Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Page 1 refers to an evaluation carried out. I feel very strongly that unless we have a sunset provision built in, we should have an evaluation component built into every program that the public dollar supports. But I notice within there, Mr. Minister, the terms of the evaluation, and this ties back to your opening comments that the research carried out and information found is of little value to anyone unless that person receives it, yet in no

way was that built into the evaluation process on page 1. So I'm kind of curious as to whoever drafted the terms of reference for that major evaluation study, why that wasn't built in. There should be within the terms of reference of the evaluation an end user of the product, of that which they were evaluating. Could you respond to that?

MR. DINNING: If I understand the member's question correctly, it is that the evaluation program found . . .

MR. GOGO: Five points, Mr. Minister, that are listed on page 1. The evaluation was to evaluate. It covered those areas, it seems to me, yet it would appear that one of the most important, related to your opening comments, was that the total value of this program is really of not much value unless someone ends up receiving the information -- in other words, that is an evaluation in terms of dissemination of the information gathered.

MR. DINNING: The member is correct. What the evaluator, Mr. Weiden, found was that an inadequate amount of program resources were used to promote the results of completed projects. That perhaps was a deficiency in the first two or three years of the program's operation, that not enough attention was paid to getting the word out. Because of the evaluator's recommendations, as are summarized on page 20 of the annual report, Mr. Chairman, we have turned our attention to getting those results out even more and in a creative and innovative way, because some of this research is terribly scientific and of questionable applicable use. That's one we're trying to turn around.

Now, as far as I'm concerned, every research proposal that comes to us must have a communication, a dissemination, an applicability component. How is this going to affect workers who are potentially exposed to hydrogen sulphide gas? How are you going to get the information to them? Not just in booklet form, not just in poster form. Should it be in video? Should it be on mobile trailers? That's an interest I know the member has had; he's given me some pointers on that a number of times. It's something I'm deeply interested in, so now it's an integral part of our program.

MR. GOGO: It seemed to me, Mr. Chairman, that the law of Alberta is very clear that except for the farming community, worker compensation is mandatory, so the Workers' Compensation Board, although not dealing with that, would be an ideal vehicle to dispense any specific information to the high-risk groups -- right to the Workers' Compensation Board -- and the minister's department wouldn't have to do it at all.

My final supplementary is on the basis of applications that are received for specific research projects. I draw the minister's attention to one that's been completed on back injuries. Mr. Minister, when an application is received to do a specific research project, is the committee in a position, before granting that project, to advise the applicant that they should include in their research discussions with people who have a particular knowledge or interest in that area? For example, I find it difficult to understand how any research project into back injury could possibly exclude the primary legitimate treaters of back injuries, which is chiropractic. Although I've never been to one, it almost seems to me that they are an integral part of anything related to back injuries. Does that committee that approves applications have any jurisdiction to the applicant in terms of recommending or suggesting that they include, for example, the College of Chiropractors in doing a research project? Is that

your jurisdiction?

MR. DINNING: The short answer is yes, Mr. Chairman, and if I may elaborate, my view is that no research projects should be categorically rejected. If it's a good project worthy of funding, then my direction to officials in the program has been: go back and talk to that person and say: "Look, that doesn't fit within our objectives or within our priorities," or: "It's not structured right. Let us help you, Mr. Researcher, redesign it, refine it, redefine it, because we think you're on to the right thing. We want you to do that work, and we want to fund it." So whether it's communication, dissemination of results, consulting with the likes of the chiropractic profession or others, they have that power. And if it's not done before it gets to me, I have that authority. I have that responsibility.

Maybe I could again go back to a comment the member made just before his last question. That was that the Workers' Compensation Board should be an effective means of getting the word out. Don't forget that communication with all workers is not the board's responsibility or mandate. It focuses on providing quarterly information pieces to those who fund workers' compensation, and that's employers. But we've got to find a better way, a more effective way, of getting specific and general safety messages out to employees. I think this should be a more effective program to do just that. I'd welcome some sharp, bright communicator to come forward with an idea as to how we get that message out in a cost-effective way but in a way that has impact. I look at AADAC, which the member is very familiar with. I look at *Zoot* and the way *Zoot* goes to every student in junior and senior high school in this province. That's a very effective means of communicating, and we're trying to duplicate that kind of idea. We're working on that too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to welcome the minister to our proceedings here, particularly since he's appeared here alone. One might describe it as a one-man legislative renaissance person, as compared to the rugby-team sized entourages that other ministers have felt necessary to surround themselves with.

I would like to deal with a topic that I've raised with the minister in a number of other contexts before, and that relates to the issue of smoking in the workplace. There appears to have been no research carried on under this program, and I find that to be very, very incredible in light of the importance of this issue and the increasing evidence we have of the major health dangers of secondhand smoke to workers. I fear that the failure to conduct studies in this regard is merely a reflection of the absence of an overall government policy or approach to this issue. I raised the matter with the minister, in fact, during the First Session, in June of 1986. It wasn't long thereafter that, I believe, he implemented an initiative within his department. I hope there was some connection in that regard. Some other departments have themselves sporadically and independently developed programs with respect to smoking in the workplace. [interjections] I am wondering whether or not the minister could advise . . . I'm not disturbing you guys, am I?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes, you are.

MR. CHUMIR: I wonder whether I might . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Carry on, Sheldon.

MR. CHUMIR: I just couldn't resist it. You guys carry on. [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We could have a few less subcommittees going and recognize the Member for Calgary-Buffalo so that he can get on with his question.

MR. CHUMIR: I'm wondering whether the minister, as the minister responsible in this area of smoking in the workplace, could advise whether he has any plans for an education program or perhaps broad legislation with respect to the right of workers to clean air in their workplace, at the very least as a catalyst -- not to establish unreasonable conditions but as a catalyst to protect the workers who have unreasonable employers or unreasonable fellow employees. Would the minister advise as to whether he, as the responsible minister, has any plans in that direction?

MR. DINNING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The short answer is, from a legislative point of view, from a rule-making, regulation, law-making point of view, no. We will continue to lead by example, and I believe we have done that.

The member made reference to some initiatives we've taken not only in our own government department but in a number of other government departments. Effective July 1, 1987, our department became a smoke free environment, and I believe we are now joined, if I'm not mistaken, by some 20 other government departments who have, if not an entire smoke free element in their workplace policy, a nonsmoking element within their workplace policy, and I think that's great. Others are doing the same thing. Municipalities, school boards, the private sector, private businesses large and small are putting in place those kinds of policies. I welcome that, and I strongly recommend it, but I don't believe we are ready or that Albertans are ready to see legislated no-smoking policies that would be endorsed in this Chamber.

The member suggested that there is some question as to our concern about a nonsmoking policy. That there is no project outlined in the material I've given to all members related to research into no smoking is a reflection, I believe, of either no project having been submitted for funding or a project that did come would have been inadequate or not properly documented and simply wasn't a good proposal. If one did come, I would welcome it, because I'm a strong believer in smoke free workplaces. How we would encourage employers and employees to adopt such a policy: I would welcome an education, training, or research proposal that would have that as its objective.

MR. CHUMIR: Well, I'm not surprised, Mr. Minister, that there is no more significant plan on the part of the government, because that's in accord with the philosophy of "the least government is the best government." However, I would take objection to the minister's statement that there is any form of leadership by way of example. I'm wondering why, if that is the case, if the government is leading, the matter is left to individual departments whose policies have to be described with somewhat 'waffley' terms as having a "nonsmoking element." I'm wondering why we don't have some overall rules or policies with respect to government departments and buildings as a whole, as are now being proposed, I understand, by the Progressive Con-

servative government in Ottawa.

MR. DINNING: I'm not familiar with those plans, Mr. Chairman. As I said before, I don't believe Albertans are ready to have this Chamber make that kind of decision that would impose that kind of a will on our citizens.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for . . .

MR. CHUMIR: That was only one supplementary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. One more.

MR. CHUMIR: I would agree that Albertans are not prepared to have this Chamber make that kind of decision, not because that kind of decision is not appropriate and would not be supported, but I think the emphasis would be on this Chamber -- because we can hardly be said to be within the right of this Chamber, which allows smoking within our Legislative committees themselves, to take any active leadership with respect to what the rest of the community should do. I find this somewhat of a disgrace and hypocrisy. I raised it with the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Martin, and Mr. Young, the Government House Leader, last session. They indicated that they would raise the matter with their caucuses, it being my intention that this matter should be handled on a nonpartisan, an agreement basis. However, not having heard from them, I would hope that Mr. Young has raised it with your caucus. That being the case, I'm wondering whether you might advise whether you anticipate any government initiative to end smoking within legislative committees, in order to provide some element of leadership within this House on what is one of the most important health issues in our community today, that of smoking.

MR. DINNING: Well, I'm not in the position where I could say . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Here the Chair should intervene somewhat. I think we're really stretching it to think that's an appropriate question as it relates to the occupational health and safety heritage grant program. Perhaps it's something you can bring back or discuss further with Mr. Young. I'm sure he'd be in a position to answer it for you.

MR. CHUMIR: Any chance of a brief answer in accordance with your . . . We lawyers are wont to argue precedent, and I note that seems to be the precedent that's been established when Mr. Chairman detects these . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sure Mr. Young and Mr. Martin are looking forward to another meeting with the Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

The Chair would recognize the Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is related to going through the list of projects. I would like the minister's comment on whether many of these projects are just another way for a university to get moneys for research. Going through the list, there's very few that are done by private industry. The majority of the research projects are done by a university. Getting back to your first comments, is it just another way of piling a bunch more paper on the shelves that

somebody may in the future want to read so that somebody's able to complete their PhD or some other similar document?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, by my count, up to the end of November '87 some 143 projects had been approved, 53 of which were from educational institutions. Employers, industry associations, individual companies, unions, and individuals accounted for some 70-odd applications, and the balance were from municipalities, professional associations, and other groups. So I think there's a good mix, a good balance. Whether it comes from a union, a university, or an individual, my view is that the research has to be of some benefit -- immediate, but more important, long-term benefit -- to the health and safety of individual workers and employers and work sites.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, my second question is: I notice this year, and I've noticed in other years, where under educational projects it's approved for somebody to take training elsewhere, other than Canada or Alberta, relating to occupational health. I think there's one case in here -- I thought it was \$20,000 or thereabouts was given to somebody to attend university in England. I wonder if attached to that is any condition that you have to come back here and work either in the industry you were involved in before -- work for them for a certain period of time in Alberta -- or if it's a government employee, that you have to come back and work for the government for a set period of time.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, I don't know the answer to that question, and I will find out for the member in the one particular case he mentioned. Ideally that's what we would want to have happen. But if there's one thing the education side of this program has done, I believe, through funding others to go outside the province to get training, whether it's funding educational institutions to develop a curriculum in the health and safety field, general or specific -- I'm supportive of that as long as those people come back to Alberta -- it has built up within the province a far greater expertise in the whole health and safety field, whether it's in occupational hygiene, whether it's in training in occupational dermatology, whatever, we could go through the list.

What Mr. Weidon found when he was doing his evaluation was that this kind of funding has built up that expertise, that knowledge, and that understanding, so we have in the province the ability in the private sector, in private industry, whether it's in the educational institutions or in private business. The government doesn't do it all itself. There are experts out there who can deliver the service, can sell the service, can offer occupational health and safety service to Albertans, and that's been one of the key success stories, I believe, in this program.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to the minister. In your opening comments you said that a complete copy of the evaluation that was done might be made available to individual members, and I'd appreciate receiving that from you.

I wonder, though, if you could perhaps tell us if in the review that has been done of this safety research and education program, it's found a number of positive conclusions here as far as getting various sectors to become directly involved in establishing programs and so on. Was the evaluation able to con-

clude in any way whether the actual loss of life was reduced or whether there was a reduction in the injury rates of Alberta workers that could be directly attributable to the program of research that's been undertaken here? Were they able to reach that kind of definitive conclusion in their evaluation? Did it actually reduce injury or reduce the loss of life in the Alberta workplace?

MR. DINNING: That's a good question, Mr. Chairman, but in order for that to have happened, I think you would have needed a very detailed baseline study, for want of a better phrase: in the absence of such a program, what was our status, and in the presence of the program five or eight years later, how do we fare? That baseline study wasn't done.

Let me try one on you. Since we funded the Alberta Forest Products Association activity in log hauling, in chain saw safety manuals and videotapes and other kinds of activities that the association did for us, the lost time claims rate -- because it's associated with accidents -- for all forestry industries has dropped by about 25 percent, while in fact during that same time the number of man-years or activity in that industry increased in the order of almost 10 percent. All I can say is that the decrease is certainly consistent with both our efforts and the association's efforts to provide safety training. I wouldn't want to be so bold as to suggest that it was entirely due to our program, but I've got to tell you that the association has been very deliberate in providing copies of materials -- whether it's the videotapes, whether it's manuals that are very simple for chain saw operators to use, some in the thousands of copies. I've got to think that that's been somewhat effective.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: I think that's really the objective or the bottom line in terms of these programs, as others have already said. It's not intended to be research for the sake of research sitting on the shelves but to actually result in a reduction in lost man-years in the workplace and a reduction in loss of life. So if there's any way of demonstrating that, I think that will be very, very well received.

The minister will remember that when we were debating these estimates in the Legislature, one of the areas I talked about, of concern for research being done in Alberta, had to do with office workers and the environment in which they're working, whether it be at these new data terminals or the kinds of hazards that are being created by very airtight, energy-efficient buildings. I still don't see any research proposals to investigate what the long-term impacts might be on the health of office workers in that kind of environment. Given that the minister indicated these five areas they intend to be more proactive in going out and activating proposals from people in the community, I wonder if he's given any further consideration to doing research on the health experience or illness experience of office workers in Alberta, just doing it in terms of evaluating the physical environment in which they're working.

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Chairman, I outlined those five areas for members because I wanted members to be aware of what our priorities were and what our objectives were, because when you've got a finite number of dollars, you've got to use them as best you can -- get the most bang for your buck. We are still in receipt of, and willing to receive, quality research proposals: training proposals, education proposals, and since our exchange in the Assembly and comments I made after, there have been, I'm told, some seven inquiries made to our program: "Could we

do some work for you?" We have sent out seven application forms -- that was back in September -- and we've received one formal application since then. I don't know the details of it. It's still going through the review process, and a decision will be made on it in the weeks ahead.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: That's fine, Mr. Chairman, but one of the areas had to do with chemical and biological hazards, and I think the areas where these are obvious hazards immediately popped to mind, as the minister mentioned in his opening comments. But in terms of the long-term health effects on office workers, with these low levels of chemicals that are floating around in the air of many of these office buildings as a result of the new kinds of materials in furniture and in the carpeting, the kind of lighting, and the fact that a lot of the air is being recirculated in the interest of energy conservation, there's a buildup of these chemicals in the atmosphere -- which appears to be having an effect in other jurisdictions when some research has been undertaken -- that seems to be having an effect on office workers, both their allergies and skin diseases, asthmas, and those kinds of things. I don't know whether anybody has done a similar kind of research as to the hazards in the office environment here in Alberta. I was wondering what process, if this is of concern to the minister, could he or his department take, in a proactive way, to get a research proposal before the board reviewed and undertaken.

MR. DINNING: Well, again, Mr. Chairman, I spelled out for members of the committee the priorities we had. That's where we are focusing many of our efforts. We will receive and review, and if the dollars are there and the project is of sufficient quality, it will be funded.

I don't want to understate the challenge, the potential of a problem in air-quality-sick buildings, but I wouldn't want it to be exaggerated or overstated either. We respond to complaints and concerns by individual workers who express concern about their building and side effects, ill-health effects that they feel might be associated with that. Although it's well known that employees or employers may ask for our service, for our assistance and for our advice, the numbers of those kinds of calls are very, very few.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I've just had the opportunity of going through the research report that was provided by the minister. I guess, as I read through this and set the first premise: whatever we can do to prevent accidents or improve health conditions -- we all agree with that. That's a given, I guess, in this committee. But as I go through the projects and look at them, I have two concerns that come to mind. They've been somewhat echoed by the members for Lacombe and Cypress-Redcliff and Calgary-Mountain View.

Firstly, I'm not sure that there is good follow-up and application of some of the things we find. Secondly, I believe the price we're paying for some of the research seems somewhat puffed up, and I use that in the sense that I believe we could get done what is being requested at less cost. The third item of concern is: as I look at each one -- I'll list them for the minister as examples -- it seems as if we are paying for an employee to do the work during that period of time for either the academic institution or some of these private organizations. To me that would be a concern as well, because that relates to my comment of the values going up because we have to pay for the employee to get the work done. Sometimes in government we become a little

benevolent and say, "Well, we'll help your organization out by paying for the employee," and we don't look at it on the actual cost of getting the work done. I say these things in light of the fact that the minister is new to this and has taken over the responsibility. The completed research projects -- he's unable to do anything. That's a matter of fact, and we have to live with the costs and the prices there. In the new projects and the new responsibility coming up, I would think those would be three things that should be carefully watched for as projects come by his desk for final approval.

For example -- just some examples now, Mr. Chairman -- on page 10, the hydrogen sulphide effects study for \$74,000 by the faculty of physical education, I would assume that some employee there was put on this project to spend the year doing the study. The survey in terms of influencing farm accidents -- we have W. Harrell at \$33,444 expended. I know that over the years there have been many studies done, even through government, through the Department of Agriculture, with regard to farm-related accidents in Alberta. I've had some good manuals and studies presented to me as an agricultural representative, and that seems like an awful lot to spend again in that subject area.

Mechanisms of worker exposure to ethylene oxide in hospitals, Department of Community Health Sciences, University of Calgary, \$65,000. I raise the question again: is that to pay for an employee to do that type of thing?

On page 17, McIntyre Mines is doing a training program for nine foremen: is that taking on staff or picking up some loose ends for them, at \$141,522? Safe work practices training program, phase 1, Oil field Contractors Association, \$87,643: are we paying for them to do something within their public relations area, something they should be doing themselves?

On page 20 we have the safety program for the harvesting activities of the Alberta forest industry, and the next one is woods worker safety program development. One is \$77,000 and the first one I mentioned is \$145,585. Both of them seem like areas related to the use of logging safety and chain saws. Is there an overlap? Are there extra employees in Alberta Forest Products? Are their salaries being picked up by that project? It's maybe something they should have taken into their costs themselves.

The Alberta Trucking Association, on page 21, \$76,000, talking about a safety manual for the trucking industry, 90 pages. Is there an employee they've picked up on that type of thing, or is someone else doing it?

I could go on through. I've listed a number of these, Mr. Minister. I can list of the rest if you want that. Maybe one more that I might want to add to the group, on page 23, the Alberta Federation of Labour has received -- they're in two different program areas -- one grant of \$369,315 for a group of selected Alberta union representatives to be trained as health and safety instructors, and they go on to list some courses. Are we picking up some costs of employees rather than really relating to the task of preventing accidents and improving worker health? I see that related to the one I mentioned earlier, \$58,467, putting forward printed material and a videotape, which seems like an awful lot of money.

Now, there was one other I wanted to mention, so that I'm not just looking at the labour side. The Canadian Organization of Small Business has also received a fairly substantial grant in this group that was, I understand, to accumulate information. I felt that in terms of that information really applying to people in the workplace, I'd wonder how it would get there. This is on

page 7 of the blue material: \$97,600 for the Canadian Organization of Small Business to develop a guidebook on occupational health and safety. The question I ask: is that to pick up an employee of their organization? It also seems like a lot of money to develop that book, and I would ask again: what is the impact in terms of the material?

Going further in these new approved ones, the development of the occupational health nursing certificate program, \$269,000: are we again picking up an employee of Grant MacEwan Community College to put that into effect? If that is what we're doing, we may be putting more emphasis on maintaining people in employee positions than we are at the target we're aiming at. Now, that's the observation I make as I go through this, Mr. Minister. In the final analysis, I guess we all have to answer that in the Legislature, but you have to answer that in administering these programs.

Mr. Chairman, that's my question in an overview, and I'll leave it at that.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's three questions.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I would think so.

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Chairman, clearly the objective of the program is to provide results, whether it's material, whether it's a trained individual, whether it's a videotape, whether it's a body of knowledge that is going to reduce accidents and fatalities and enhance safety in Alberta's workplaces. That's the first and foremost objective. The member went through too many projects for me to deal with in detail, but I go to a health and safety guide for small business prepared by the Canadian Organization of Small Business. But small business is one of our key objectives, is one of our priority areas. I don't know whether the member heard our list of priority areas, but that's one of them. A large business is more likely to have the resources and the wherewithal to put on a quality safety program, a comprehensive, effective safety program. A small business isn't. In companies of 10, 20, 40 individuals the margins are pretty thin, and we're concerned about the employees of those small businesses.

As for a health nursing certificate, that's just short of a \$3,000 expenditure to provide financial assistance to a student in the occupational health nursing program. I think that's a small investment for a return that's going to come about over a number of years. Hopefully that one individual will devote part of his or her next 10, 15 years and dedicate it to occupational health in Alberta. That \$3,000 investment could pay off tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars. Yes, it would have fed or clothed or accommodated that person for one year while they were taking their training, but again, that's an investment.

I go to the woods worker and a very hefty expenditure by the program to the Alberta Forest Products Association to put together safety materials to train workers, whether it's pamphlets or books or booklets or whether it's videos. But a better trained woods worker is one who is going to work more safely, knows his or her equipment, and knows how to operate it properly and is more productive. Because safety isn't just steel-toed boots and hard hats; it's sharpness. And if you're sharp about safety, you're sharp about productivity, and you are more productive. And, yes, the association no doubt would have had to employ one, two, or three or whatever number of employees, plus a number of volunteer workers who are woods workers, to help them prepare that material. But it is again a small investment

for what we believe is a long-term payoff, and I think all the more reason, then, that the heritage fund should be funding that kind of long-term payoff.

But it goes back to what I said earlier: the benefit has to be reduced accidents, reduced fatalities, and an enhanced health and safety environment for workers. And the member's right on. The applicability, the application, and the follow-up is something that has been of concern and of real interest to me since I started to get into my responsibilities. One of the key conditions before a proposal is accepted is: how is it going to benefit a fellow in the forest industry; how is it going to help a nurse who might be exposed to AIDS in a hospital? Is our funding this project before us going to help that worker and prevent accidents or fatalities and improve their health in that environment? That's got to be the number one objective.

MR. R. SPEAKER: In terms of the completed education projects, has the minister an instrument in place to assess the items that I've just raised with regards to . . . You earlier mentioned that we want to get value out of our dollar. Have we looked at it under the basis of: did we just pay for people that maybe did the research but there was no real application after the research was completed, that maybe it is sitting somewhere unused? Has the minister followed that up?

Thirdly, is there a continuation of that employee somewhere? Are they applying for new research grants to keep the person on staff? You know, those things do happen.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, what resources or the number of people used by an agency that's seeking funds is of interest, but the greater interest is: what are the long-term benefits of us paying for a product that is going to be useful for a month or 10 months or 100 months in the future? We haven't done a follow-up with, say, the Forest Products Association to see whether researchers A, B, and C continue to remain on the payroll, or whatever. My concern is: is the product they have delivered useful to people working in the forestry industry? And on that one, I'll say a resounding yes.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Just a final supplementary then, Mr. Chairman. In terms of all of these projects listed in the green pages that are completed projects, then the minister can say he has a planned follow-up program to test the assumption that the information has been used and is in use. I think the Member for Lethbridge-West raised that question earlier, and that's a very valid question. I guess I would ask this: from the funding that's provided to you, do you have someone you are paying that has that special purpose, say this coming year, to assess that matter?

MR. DINNING: Another resounding yes, Mr. Chairman. This research is useless if it's sitting on a shelf somewhere and not being used by the oil and gas industry, the transportation industry, or the farming community. One of my priority areas that I outlined at the start was making sure the results of these studies are put to use to the maximum benefit of people working in that industry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just make a short comment in regard to the last set of questions. I thought they were excellent. And I was impressed with your last answer, the evaluation side of things. Perhaps I could sug-

gest on the accountability side -- which is a little different and relates back to some of his original question -- are we just paying for somebody's work? That would only be the case, I would suggest, if the researcher we were paying for was also working halftime for the the company on their own projects instead of on the research project. If in fact they are working on the research project and somebody else has to be hired to do their job, then I think that's fair game. If you're going to do accountability, you might have to have some spot checks on that kind of thing.

I certainly would hope you wouldn't get to a . . . [interjection] Well, can I just finish that question then? I certainly would hope you wouldn't get to the point of worrying about accountability to the extent that, for instance, we seem to be doing in the occupational therapy world these days, where occupational therapists are expected, at least in some institutions, to account for every five-minute unit of the day. It's totally impossible, and more time is spent trying to account for what they really -- the conscientious ones manage to account for some 50 or 60 or occasionally 65 percent of their day in five-minute units and cannot possibly reach 100. They waste more time trying to figure out what they were doing when they were standing in an elevator for two minutes and talking to somebody else for three minutes than they do getting work done. So although I would like to see accountability, I wouldn't want it to get to the point of sending people after researchers to check the accountability to that level.

You wanted a comment on that. That wasn't really my question; I just wanted to comment on this rather lengthy exchange with you.

MR. DINNING: I've just had some information provided, and one of the things we do check when we're considering an association's or a university's application for funding is that certainly normal administrative costs unrelated to the project or normal administrative costs of any kind are not to be covered, are not to be part of the funding of the project.

MR. McEACHERN: And that would become like almost a shared-cost project in some ways. In other words, the research project money you're giving is supplemented in a sense by the company sharing costs then. Okay.

To get to the first question I wanted to ask. I don't know if this is . . . I got a notice the other day from some chiropractors, and I thought this was what the Member for Lethbridge-West was going to ask, but somehow your answer didn't imply that he had made it quite as specific as I intend to. There is evidently a conference on back pain coming up. I believe it's sponsored by either this government or a government agency and that chiropractors have not been invited to it. If the minister is not aware of that, I will get back to him on the phone when I get back to the document and can look at it. Do you know anything about that?

MR. DINNING: Yes, I do.

MR. McEACHERN: Could you explain?

MR. DINNING: That's four questions.

I am aware of the same concern expressed by the College of Chiropractors and have asked the chairman of the Workers' Compensation Board and the managing director of the occupational health and safety division to advise me as to how chiropractors will be included in the agenda of that conference.

Now, let me say that I'm not willing to accept the chiropractors' suggestion that they have somehow been excluded, willfully or otherwise, and I am expressing an interest as to how they will be included in the conference proceedings.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you. The second question. I just want to take you up on some comments made earlier in which you indicated that the oil and gas industry is still a very hazardous industry in this province. Certainly all we do is look back to December of '86, I guess, to indicate that the high concentration of activity generated by some government programs actually added to that problem. At least we had a large number of deaths in a very short time because of the incredible activity that took place in a short period of time.

I proposed last year at these hearings that you might consider a proposal by a particular person that I know of not only recording accidents but recording near-accidents. And since he can explain this thing a lot better than I could -- and evidently I didn't do too good a job last year, I looked back at the minutes, and you certainly were not impressed with the suggestion. I somehow couldn't help but be impressed by his suggestion and by the knowledge of the person that was suggesting it to me. I wonder if I could get a promise from you that you would be prepared to meet with this fellow, if he is still interested and willing, and perhaps you could at least give him a hearing.

MR. DINNING: Yes.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I recognize the Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Mr. Minister, I was approached some while ago by a young person who raised an issue that I thought was of some importance, and that relates to a sector of our working population who serve as cashiers and salespersons and spend a great deal of time on their feet. I understand that this particular group suffers inordinately from back and foot problems. I've also been made aware that other parts of the world -- in Europe, particularly Norway and Sweden have been raised as examples, and Japan as another -- have occupational safety rules that require seating devices to be provided in certain circumstances. I understand it's very rare in some countries to go through super-market cash lines without the cashier being seated. This struck me, Mr. Minister, as a matter that could have tremendous impact on the quality of life of a group of persons and upon their physical well-being.

I guess I would like to ask the minister whether this is a matter that has ever been brought to his attention, and also regardless of that, urge him perhaps to have his department look into the issue and see whether or not there is some scope whereby some form of relief could be brought to this group of workers, who tend not to be particularly powerful, not to be organized, and they don't have strong spokespeople acting on their behalf. Now, I understand there is a dimension in terms of efficiency of work, there is a perspective from the employers' point of view, but it seems that other countries have taken that into account. I think perhaps he might do a great service to this group of people if he undertook a review of that issue and whether or not some form of regulation -- there, that word again -- might not be useful.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, it hasn't come to my attention, but I'm not surprised that the Liberal member would advocate more regulation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Calgary-Buffalo, any further supplementaries?

MR. CHUMIR: No, that was what I wanted to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Lacombe, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. R. MOORE: I didn't think there were any other questions. I was going to move adjournment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just a couple of quick questions, I think, and then . . .

MR. McEACHERN: Well, it depends on -- the answer might not be that quick. The questions will be quick.

We talked about safety, and there were a number of projects mentioned about agricultural safety. I'm wondering if the minister has any role, when you're talking agricultural safety, in helping to set standards or checking on the standards of safety of farm machinery, if you have any input into that. Because you know, a lot can be done to just make sure machinery is as safe as possible -- power takeoffs and different kinds of pulley systems with slip clutches, for instance, if something gets caught. I mean, I want to get practical input into what companies are allowed to manufacture or put on the market, not so much just theoretical research.

MR. DINNING: Two quick answers, Mr. Chairman. One is that by virtue of policy of this government, farm safety is the responsibility of the Minister of Agriculture. I refer the member to page 11 in the annual report. There is a project we've begun to fund, sponsored by the Prairie Implement Manufacturers Association, to do precisely what he's looking for.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you. The last question is sort of open-ended, and you can take what time you like with it. I want to know what your update is on AIDS. I know it's a major concern of yours. What are you doing, what are your plans, what is your thinking on AIDS?

MR. DINNING: It is an important question, Mr. Chairman. We announced back in October about a \$6.5 million three-year program to combat the disease, primarily to inform Albertans about it and how to prevent it. We're going to do that primarily through the schools for our young people, working with teachers and with students and with parents and community groups. We are going to be working with professionals -- we are now working with professionals, with the medical community -- to provide ongoing training to them and keep them abreast of developments with the disease.

On the workplace front, we have contracted the services of a woman to serve as our AIDS workplace co-ordinator. She is pulling together workplace policies and information related to workplace and AIDS to pool that information and then be able to make it available to those companies and organizations looking for the information. She is now working with the Solicitor General's department and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees to help guards and those employed in our penal system

to develop proper workplace policies to prevent prison guards from getting AIDS. That kind of service is going to be available both inside and outside of government -- work with the Alberta School Trustees' Association, the Alberta Teachers' Association, those organizations who are developing policies. I think it's very good use of her time. It's only through education -- there's not a cure, there's not a vaccine that's going to prevent it -- that we're going to stop the spread of that dreaded disease.

MR. McEACHERN: How closely are you working with the AIDS Network of Edmonton and Alberta in Canada, and any sort of active programs to help those that have got AIDS?

MR. DINNING: Very closely with AIDS Calgary and AIDS Network of Edmonton. We are providing each of them in this current year with a grant of \$130,000. We are working with them to co-ordinate the development of communication materials, rather than one network in Edmonton going off and printing pamphlets or creating a video and AIDS Calgary doing another. We're talking about a pretty similar population as between the two cities north and south. Let's combine our efforts and our resources and come off with a better product. So we're very much relying on those community groups to help us, because the government, and the provincial government certainly, can't do it all alone. We've got to work with health units and with local health authorities, with hospitals, because they're all part of the prevention, all part of the education process.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Is there any plan to make education with respect to AIDS compulsory in our school system so that every student is made aware of the basis of the transmission of AIDS?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, AIDS is one part of what I would call the sexuality education component of our curriculum. It is not mandatory, either at the school board or at the school level at this point. The Minister of Education could give you the number details of those school boards and schools which are delivering the program. I'm strongly supportive of mandatory sexuality education, which would include an AIDS component. But as for the timing of that or how comprehensive the program is being delivered today in Alberta, you'd have to check with the Minister of Education.

MR. CHUMIR: [Inaudible] I am supportive of the minister's position in that regard.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good. Well, thanks very much, Mr. Minister, on behalf of the committee, for being with us this afternoon. I'm sure you can look forward to some innovative and exciting recommendations from this group after all the suggestions that were brought forward during the question period, and I'm sure you'll be able to pass those on to your steering committee as well. Thank you for being with us.

MR. DINNING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The committee adjourned at 3:51 p.m.]