

[Chairman: Mr. Ady]

[2:02 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We would like to call the meeting to order.

Today we have before the committee the Hon. Peter Trynchy, Minister of Occupational Health and Safety, along with some of his department people, and we're here today to review the Occupational Health and Safety heritage grant program. This \$10 million, 10-year program was established in 1981 in an effort to minimize accidents and avoid industrial or occupational disease. We would ask the committee to confine their remarks and their questions to this particular grant. This is the only program that falls under this department, so the other responsibilities of this department are not pertinent to the mandate of this committee.

We would ask the minister to introduce the department people he has with him today and to make whatever opening comments he may see fit. Then we'll turn the time over to the committee members for questions they may have for the minister. So in that vein, Mr. Minister, we'll turn the time to you for your introductions.

MR. TRYNCHY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. This is a learning process for all of us on this side in this particular portfolio, and I thought the staff that I brought along would like to be here to help me when needed and also to learn how the system works. On my right is Lynn Hewitt; she is the director of the planning and research branch. On my far right is Frank Testin, a research officer with the Occupational Health and Safety heritage grant program. Dr. Hugh Walker on my left is the managing director of Occupational Health and Safety. Dennis Lyons is executive director of program support services, and on the far left is Marlene Gibb, my executive assistant.

Mr. Chairman, as outlined by yourself, the Occupational Health and Safety grant program was started in 1981. It's in its ninth year of operation. It was to be a 10-year program, and it's been expanded. It had, with the start of this program, some \$10 million, and the program as outlined now will end in 1991. To date there's been \$7.4 million expended on 170 projects. The budget for this year, 1989-1990, is \$1.38 million.

Much of what will be brought up today was outlined and answered in my estimates on August 1 in *Hansard*, but I did want to provide some additional information to the committee. Of the projects approved to date, 51 percent have been educational projects, 46 percent have been in the research field, and 3 percent have been towards funding of conferences. Just to give you a breakdown on some of this, 45 percent of all of the projects benefit more than one industry. These are those industries that have a higher accident rate, and include such industries as oil and gas, well drilling and servicing, forestry, trucking, construction, mining, and transportation. Of those, 19 percent of the projects benefit the oil and gas industry, and 7 percent of the projects benefit the construction industry. Fifty-one percent of the grant funds were awarded to technical institutions, colleges, vocational centres, and universities, and 19 percent of the grant funds were awarded to employer or industry associations. Other groups receiving funds include unions, professional associations, private-sector companies, and municipalities.

Over the past two years the focus has been stressed on programs that are solution oriented: projects that we feel should be resolved as quickly as possible. These have been receiving and will receive high priority. Some of the critical areas we're looking at are those areas which have fatal and serious accident

injuries, and problems within the small business sector. Another important aspect of this grant has been communicating our information to those with English as a second language and those that might not be able to read or understand the documents. We've put a high priority on hazards in the oil and gas industry and the chemical hazard awareness programs.

In the past the program has supported a number of initiatives, and I'd like to mention just a few. The occupational health nursing certificate program - enrollment has increased some 800 percent since the initiation of this program. We've had courses in hydrogen sulphide emissions and the effect they have on workers; some 163,000 workers received training in that respect in the first year this program was out. We've supplied funds, as I've said, to union representatives. They did a number of things with them, and most of that was that they trained instructors. Right now they have some 220 occupational health and safety instructors working for some 25 unions. This information is still being used by CUPE, the provincial association, and also three other large unions.

We have information provided for the forestry industry, which has one of our higher accident rates, and this document was developed along with Alberta Forest Products Association. Their manual covers a number of things that are so important, and just a few that I'd like to mention are the power saw safety program and how to use power saws. It talks about logging in total, the safety in the logging operations, and about log transportation: getting the logs from the bush to the mills. We have some 18,700 manuals of forestry information now in use in the forest industry.

Something else we developed and announced just last year was the taxi driver safety program. It's available to every taxi company in the province. Occupational Health and Safety is working very closely with both Edmonton and Calgary taxi commissions to see if we can get some safety into the taxi industry.

Another program that's been accepted well is our welding safety techniques workbook. This workbook has been developed by NAIT in Edmonton. We have some 175 sets of videotapes that are available to industry, and we have over 850 workbooks now in use in the welding safety technology.

The University of Alberta has done and is doing quite a bit of work on research on flame resistant clothing for those industries that require them, such as the oil patch and others. The University of Alberta is also developing an easy to use guide for disposal and recycling of hazardous chemicals that sometimes are used in schools and laboratories and in hospitals. We have some 10,200 guide books in use at the present time.

Occupational Health and Safety funded the roundtable conference which was held last year in Banff. It was the first of its kind in Canada, and at that conference we had over 90 people from the labour sector, industry, and from government. There was a follow-up again this year to that meeting on October 14 in Jasper, and many, many useful initiatives will be brought forward very shortly from those two meetings. It was a meeting that was developed to plan, to educate, and I think you've heard me speak of that in the House a number of times. It's to educate the public in regards to workplace safety and, if we can stretch it beyond that, even to our homes and also to our schools. It's to promote and raise awareness of workplace safety and health issues both in the workplace and in our homes and in our leisure.

The grant program was evaluated in 1986 by an independent firm. The evaluation found that the program had made a

significant and positive contribution to safety in Alberta, and the advice was that it should continue. The evaluation found that the grant program was successful in a number of issues and in a number of areas – and I'd like to just put those on record – involving a wide variety of industry associations, workers, employers, and postsecondary institution researchers in addressing occupational health and safety problems. It found that we were establishing permanent education programs in postsecondary institutions, developing new training programs and training materials which are concerned with health and safety problems in the Alberta workplace, and also training occupational health and safety professionals and developing a better understanding of causes of occupational health and safety problems.

Mr. Chairman and members, we intend to continue to work in partnership, and we want labour and industry to take a lead role. We want to assist, but we want to continue working with industry, labour, postsecondary institutions, and anybody else to encourage Albertans to become involved in finding effective solutions to health and safety problems in the workplace.

Mr. Chairman, that's a brief overview of what we've been doing and where we've been, and now I'd be prepared to take any questions. I might add that there's a number of information manuals that are available to the workplace, and the mailing, such as some of this, goes out to every industry or employer that has a workers' compensation number. So we're trying to get our information out as quickly and as positively as we can. Hopefully, with the support of all members of the Assembly – and industry, employers, and employees – we can make this province a safer place in which to work.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Just prior to going to the questions – I had intended to make the committee aware of some changes in our schedule in my opening remarks, and I neglected to do it. So I'd like to take the time to do that.

Tomorrow morning the Hon. Rick Orman, Minister of Energy, will appear before the committee, and tomorrow afternoon there will not be a meeting. The hon. Treasurer has a conflict of schedule and will not be able to appear, and we'll have to reschedule that meeting. I'll get that information to you as quickly as I can finalize the date with him. So to reiterate, there will be one meeting tomorrow morning at 10, and none tomorrow afternoon, if everyone is clear on that.

The Member for Lacombe, please.

MR. MOORE: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. The minister has given us a very factual overview of this grant program. I think he must have had us in mind – occupational safety for MLAs – so we'd get this over fast with few questions so we could get home before the snowstorm. But anyway, we do have a few questions left over that we'd like answers to.

Now, this is a 10-year program, and it's scheduled for completion in '90-91. In the estimates this spring the minister indicated he was going to conduct a review of the program as to whether it should be extended, and at this time I'd like to know what conclusions he came to. Are we going to extend this program?

MR. TRYNCHY: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I did make that commitment that I wanted to have a review of the program to see what we were getting out of it and to then decide whether we should continue. We have not completed it in detail, but from information I have gathered to now, it's been a very valuable program. We're getting the kind of results we expected. The roundtable

discussions in Banff, and again the ones we had in Jasper, have proved that it is valuable, and I would like to see it continue. Of course, that's up to this committee to decide whether they want to recommend a continuation.

This program has since its inception reduced accidents across the province in different sectors differently, and in some sectors it's gone down considerably. Just to give you an example of a few: in the welding industry the accident rate has been reduced 28 percent since 1986; in the servicing sector in the oil patch, 36 percent; in the drilling, 18 percent; and in logging it's come down considerably. So we're finding, with the information we have before us now, that it is working. It can work better, and I would want to see us make sure it works better by educating, promoting, and getting the industry – the employers and employees – sitting down and talking more together to make it work.

That's where we're at now, Mr. Chairman. We're very pleased with what we see, but we can still do better. I might want to mention that just last week I traveled out into rural Alberta where Shell Canada are developing a gas plant, and they've accumulated 570,000 hours of accident-free work. That's pretty darn good. I made the comment that evening that we should be striving for a zero accident rate in the province of Alberta, and they had a good start to it.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, on these programs, these types of research and information programs, I always have a concern of how we get the information out. I realize that workers and employers can access information through the libraries, which is the main thrust of the information flow, and there's an Occupational Health and Safety library. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety and the Alberta Federation of Labour all have libraries. However, workers and employers don't have time to go to that library, and even if they did, there are not that many that have the habit of going there to get their information. Here we have this program and the results out there. My concern is that we spend this money, we gather information, we come up with various recommendations and changes that we think should come in, and it doesn't really get to the people that it impacts on directly, and that's the workers. What are we doing, besides libraries, to get this information right down to the grass roots? Because that's where we've got to have it.

MR. TRYNCHY: A very good question. I've asked that question myself. It's fine to have a document out, but if you just drop it on the coffee table and make no point of making sure your workers are reading it, it doesn't do much good.

We're doing a number of things. Every industry, every employer that has a workers' compensation number receives that information from us. We hope that when that employer receives that information, he doesn't just put it on the coffee table and not pass it on to his employees. We have some instances where the employer has set up committees where somebody's in charge of promoting the education of safety in their workplace, and that's worked well. We have some 73,000 copies of booklets and videotapes in circulation in the workplace now. We have our Occupational Health and Safety officers in regional offices – we have six of them in the province – that go out to the workplace, and they make sure that this information is passed on to the employers, to the employees.

We have industry associations now that are working with us and are promoting this and making sure their workers get it. So

our distribution is quite extensive. Those associations – and I might just mention them to you – are: Alberta Construction Association, Alberta Construction Safety Association, Alberta Extended Care Safety Council, Alberta Forest Products Association, Alberta Hospital Association, Alberta Roadbuilders and Heavy Construction Association, Alberta Trucking Association, the Canadian Organization of Small Business, Industrial Vegetation Management Association, the Oilfield Contractors' Association, the petroleum industry, and it goes on and on. They're working with us to make sure that the information we provide them gets to their workers.

Yes, we should be doing a better job, but it takes all of us to do it. I don't know how much more we can do. We're getting that information out, and hopefully it's being accepted and read by not just the employer but the employees now too.

MR. MOORE: Another supplementary, Mr. Chairman. We all know that there are so many different types of work-related industries. There is just no end to them, and there are so many different sectors out there that have to be addressed, from the oil industry through to small business and so on, that have accidents. I'm concerned as to how you arrive at what you are going to work at. How do you set your priorities – which area? Is it related to an industry where you'll see a high accident ratio, or how do you pick these areas that you deal with?

MR. TRYNCHY: Yes. Very good. The way we set our priorities to allocate this heritage grant program is that we look at the fatal and serious injury accidents first. They are our top priority, and wherever we find those we try to develop programs to change that around. We take the fatal and serious injury accident reports and find out why they happen and how we can address that issue to change that. Our next priority is working with small business, because in the past some 40 percent of the accidents happened in small business. So we want to work with them and find out why they are happening there, and we do that. As I've said before, we do a lot of work in communications. We try to get that material out to everybody in workers' compensation contracts, and also we're moving now towards providing more information through a number of sources with industry. We're looking at providing this stuff to the schools, so when the young people leave the schools in our province, when they enter the work force, they are better trained and have a better understanding of the workplace injuries. So that's how we arrive at those.

Funding: we go to fatal and serious injury accidents first, small business second, and oil and gas and the chemical hazards – all those things are tied in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Members will recall that last year's committee made a recommendation which was tabled in the House, recommendation 7, to the effect that a study be done under the occupational health research and safety heritage grant program on the use of alcohol and drugs, including prescription drugs, in the workplace and the effects they have on safety, absenteeism, and productivity in [the workplace]. As I recall, Mr. Minister, you indicated in the estimates earlier this year that you needed more detail on how the study should be carried out before you could properly ask that one be undertaken. Now I'm not sure, frankly, Mr. Chairman, whether it's the role of this committee to suggest how such a study

should be carried out when there are, presumably, experts in your department who are trained in the area, but I'm wondering if, Mr. Minister, you would be prepared to ask your department to look into how such a study would be carried out.

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, the member is right, Mr. Chairman. In my comments this past summer I was concerned about the kind of information that was coming to us in regards to alcohol and drug related accidents in the workplace, but the difficulty is that it's not very well documented and we have trouble getting that information from the employers or the employees. I believe that when you look at the drug related accidents, it might be something that the new family program would take on. There is just so much overlapping in the workplace. We don't have anything that's documented, and I'm not sure if we have the ability within Occupational Health and Safety to garner that information from the workplace. We're well aware, and I think we are all well aware, of AADAC and their role and what they do, but so far, unless somebody else here can advise us differently, we don't have that much information documented from the workplace in regards to those instances.

I'll ask – maybe Lynn can add to it.

DR. HEWITT: Yes. Just to expand, we don't have any direct evidence regarding the numbers of workers on the job who are impaired either due to alcohol or drugs at any particular time, and we also don't have any direct evidence of the role that either alcohol or drugs are playing with respect to work injuries or fatalities. We have looked at fatalities on the job from the medical examiner's office, who will look at blood alcohol levels, for instance, and we have found that in approximately 4 percent of work fatalities there's a blood alcohol level that exceeds the .08 level. But again, we don't have any information on whether or not alcohol played a direct role in the incident. We do know from research that alcohol is related to things like higher absenteeism and lower productivity, but as the minister indicates, we have very little direct evidence regarding the role that alcohol or drugs play with respect to safety on the job.

I think under our current program we would be interested in a proposal that could demonstrate there was a problem and suggest a solution to that problem. We haven't had a proposal along those lines submitted to us yet.

MR. TRYNCHY: What I've considered, and I'm asking our managing director to look at, is that we might want to sit down with AADAC and find out from them if there's a role for us to play in regard to those difficulties in the workplace. So Dr. Hugh Walker will be sitting down with AADAC in the future and seeing if there's some way that we could assist or some way they can assist us in getting a better handle on alcohol and drug abuse in the workplace. But that's a difficult one, because I'm sure if any of the members here would go to a workplace and ask somebody, you know: "Why isn't he at work? Was it because of drugs or alcohol?" – I wonder what the answer would be from that employer. So it's a difficult one. But it's not one that we're going to step aside from. We're going to try and find out all we can from whatever source we can, and if there's any member here who has something that would help us, we'd be very, very appreciative of their getting that to us.

MR. PAYNE: Well, Mr. Chairman, the minister in his response has made reference to three possible agencies for dealing with what is a very real, here and now problem: AADAC, his own

grant program that's under discussion today, and the new Family Life and Drug Abuse Foundation. Am I to infer from the minister's comments that he's advocating some kind of co-ordinated or co-operative approach to the problem on the part of all three agencies, or is there any one particular agency that he feels is perhaps better qualified or better positioned to deal with the problem?

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, I wish I could pick one that would do the job. The difficulty in saying that this one would do it – and if it didn't do it, the reaction might be different. But I'd like to see all three organizations sit down and discuss this matter and see if between the three of them we might find one that could take the lead role in this difficult and disturbing situation. It might be that the new program of family and drugs would be the spot. It might be that AADAC should play a stronger role. It's difficult for Occupational Health and Safety, with the type of personnel available to us, to get a better handle on it than we have now, but I think the three organizations should sit down, discuss it, and see if there is one, or maybe two, that should take the lead role in getting to the bottom of this.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, when we get to the discussion of recommendations phase of our meetings later this year, perhaps that's a subject that all the members of the committee may wish to discuss. I'm not so sure how appropriate it is for this committee to make a recommendation that affects other agencies that don't have a direct relationship with or are not directly funded by the heritage fund, but I sense that there is a need for some kind of co-ordination of effort. I would hope that this discussion won't founder on the technical observation that one or two of these agencies aren't directly funded by the fund, but that's a subject to which I'll return later in our deliberations, Mr. Chairman.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, if I may make it clear: if there's a role for us to play in funding to some other organization, we would accept that too. I don't think we can just say, "Well, if AADAC could do something for us . . ." We fund all types of research projects, and they could do one for us. No difficulty there if it fits within the mandate of this grant program.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Member for Wainwright.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon to the hon. minister and his staff.

I would like to ask about our federal funding. How much federal funding goes into this to help us out not in this specific program but in relating to getting information out to the workers?

MR. TRYNCHY: The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, a federal program, has \$10 million in it, but apparently from all information that we can gather that's being – what's the right word? – eliminated. The funding will be eliminated by the federal government, and they're asking the organizations now to take the program forward on a user-fee basis. I feel personally, and this isn't a government decision, that if that goes into effect the program would probably die.

They do not provide any funds to us, but they have a program of their own and we're part of it. We have a representative on it, Bill Rozel from Occupational Health and Safety of Alberta, who sits on the board of the Canadian Occupational Health and Safety Council.

I might add that Maureen Shaw, who was our chairman of the Occupational Health and Safety Council, has moved now to chair the Ottawa Occupational Health and Safety Council. She's got some pretty good views and some strong views, and hopefully she might get this thing back on track. If it doesn't happen, I'm afraid that program could die.

MR. FISCHER: Do you think that this grant program, then, is enabling the federal government to back off of their funding?

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, our program, I guess, is one of the few in Canada that is a provincial program, and is one of the best. They might say in their wisdom, "Yes, we'll let Alberta go its own way," and we'd probably have to do it. I can't speak for them, but as I mentioned before, if they do not continue funding and ask the funding to be paid for by user fees, then I feel that the users won't be there and the program will die.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Ponoka-Rimbey, followed by the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon to all the guests and Mr. Minister.

I'd like to just be a bit specific, if I could. Looking at the 1989 annual report of the Occupational Health and Safety grant program, there's a graph in there that shows the number of applications received and approved. Maybe my assumption is not correct, but I would assume that as the cost of doing things goes up, and perhaps even within this Heritage Savings Trust Fund purview, there's an effort at fiscal restraint. You see the number of applications approved going down from 1986-87 to 1987-88. I just say that by way of introductory remarks.

What I'm a bit concerned about is the fact that it seems that also the number of applications is going down over that same period of time. I guess I'd have to first of all say, "Are my observations correct," but follow that up by asking, "Why would the number of applications be going down?" Surely this isn't being treated by industry as an in thing where you apply for a while and then lose interest in it. I'm a bit concerned about the number of applications going down, because certainly there must be issues and areas of research to be addressed.

MR. TRYNCHY: We're not sure ourselves why the applications are going down. We do advertise extensively in major newspapers, trade journals, occupational health and safety magazines, and to our own staff. I think we do a good job of advertising. The question of why there are no more applications is a difficult one for me to answer. Approvals are done the same this year as they have been in the past. We have industry and labour and the public sector all involved in approving, and they do a pretty good job of going through the applications to make sure that there's as little duplication as possible. I'm sure we're all aware that we have to get value for our dollar. The applications that are being approved might be somewhat less, but it's not because we're being any more difficult in our approval; it's just that there are probably less applications to work with, and the kind of

applications that come probably don't qualify.

In the past, '86 and '87, the minister of the day did have a restraint thought to probably not spend as much as possible, and that's why we saw a lot of applications then and not so many approvals. But we've come closer now, in '88-89, to where I think we should be, as we have good approval projects as compared to the applications we've received. But the decline of applications is one that - unless somebody here can explain more fully. We've probably put priorities on fewer areas, and as I've mentioned before, the priorities we placed were on accidents that we could resolve quicker. We probably don't have as many of those as we had in the past. As we have accidents reducing in the work force, people might say, "Well, we've learned, and we're doing the kind of things, and we don't have as many concerns." So that might be something there.

MR. JONSON: If I could just follow up, Mr. Chairman, I think, first of all, that the approach that's being taken whereby you look to the people on the scene - whether they are the employees or the employers, you look to those people for the recognition of need, so to speak. But given that there has been a decline, and that would seem to be verified, in the number of applications coming forward from that source, I wonder if, in your assessment, Mr. Minister, there are areas of study that should be addressed. I see nothing wrong personally, for instance, given that the field isn't bringing forth these applications, if you see a need, you can always get somebody to initiate it even if it's not the department itself. But I'm really interested, and I think it's important: are there areas that you think still need that kind of research and development?

MR. TRYNCHY: Yes, very much so, and I'm going to have Dr. Walker add to it. We were just entering into a discussion with the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary where we will provide \$900,000 of funding this year and \$600,000 next year for research on safety. Dr. Walker, could you explain that more fully?

DR. WALKER: Yes, Mr. Minister. We are discussing with the occupational health and safety people in the medical schools at the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary a proposal for training of future occupational health and safety physicians, for additional training of nurses and other people who work in occupational health and safety, for their undertaking of some research work, particularly an understanding of why accidents happen and how we can intervene in the behaviour that gives rise to accidents, and in some epidemiological research as to where occupational illnesses are coming from, particularly cancer. So those discussions with the deans of the medical schools are ongoing at the moment, and we hope to have an agreement between them and with us in the next few weeks.

MR. JONSON: If I could just, Mr. Chairman, follow up with one more question in the area of possible areas of research. If my memory serves me correctly, it was the Member for Lethbridge-West that last year took up what had been a publicized issue or concern, and that is the matter of recycled air, which is a situation that workers face in some of our most ultramodern, airtight office buildings. At the time that he put in the recommendation to this committee, I believe there'd been some stories, some concern across the province about what might have been adverse effects on employees in certain buildings. Has there been any research undertaken under this

program in that particular area, and if so what were the results?

MR. TRYNCHY: Lynn, I'll let you answer that one.

DR. HEWITT: No, we haven't sponsored any research on the quality of indoor air in this program, and the main reason has been that we haven't received a good solution-oriented proposal. We did promote this area as a priority several years ago and received a number of inquiries. The minister at that time expressed interest in funding something in the area. We find that what would be useful here is to put into practice what is already known about keeping the air quality in buildings at an acceptable level. Something in the way of a practical guide to building owners and maintenance people that was in plain language and not highly technical would be extremely useful, but we haven't had anyone come forward to propose that kind of project.

MR. TRYNCHY: There's been quite a bit of research done, according to what we have in Canada and internationally, but nobody's really come out with a proposal on how to put this in place, and we don't have any new information. I guess if the Building Code standards were revised, then it might be the Department of Labour. That might be another aspect you'd look at, but our information is that there's been some research done but nothing provided to us that would make us go into it any further.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, I had two more supplementaries, but I'm out, so on to the next person.

DR. HEWITT: There is a discussion under way right now between Occupational Health and Safety and the Alberta Research Council and the Alberta Environmental Centre at Vegreville with respect to the possibility of setting up a research centre devoted to air quality in western Canada, but again that's in a very preliminary discussion stage, and it's hard to say how that will turn out.

MR. PASHAK: I'd like to return to page 8 of the annual report for the Occupational Health and Safety heritage grant program. This shows the number of applications that are received and those that are approved. I think the minister has given us some idea of the criteria that he uses to approve applications, but I wonder if he could just elaborate on the process a little bit. Who do the applications come in to? Who makes the initial approval? What's the role of the minister in terms of final rejection or approval or whatever? Is his role sort of just perfunctory? Does he just sign the grant?

MR. TRYNCHY: So far I haven't had to reject any. Go ahead, Hugh.

DR. WALKER: When we get a proposal, it is reviewed both internally by Occupational Health and Safety staff and also sent to outside reviewers who are knowledgeable about the area. Then those reviews come back to us, and they go to a grants steering committee which looks at the reviews, discusses the proposal among themselves, and makes a recommendation for acceptance or rejection. Then the managing director of occupational health looks at the proposal and sends it on to the minister with a recommendation that he approve it or not. I think to date this year we haven't sent you anything we've

recommended nonapproval of.

MR. TRYNCHY: I might mention that the committee that looks at that has a member from the Building Trades Council, the oil field servicing, and two from the employer representatives in construction. So it's a board that has everybody covered: the labour sector, the employer, and the public sector.

MR. PASHAK: In light of that, with that balance I wondered if the minister might explain why it is that continued applications by the Worker's Health Centre that's sponsored by the Alberta Federation of Labour were turned down. We heard in your response to the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek that you do sometimes fund outside operations. The goal of the Worker's Health Centre is quite consonant with your overall goals. They test and screen for workers who perceive themselves to be working in unsafe environments; they carry out education with respect to workers' health and safety; they assist workers in processing Workers' Compensation Board claims and that sort of thing. What is it in their application that . . .

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, I met with the Worker's Health Centre people here just a month or so ago, and I made a commitment to look at their proposal for - they start a new year on November 1, I believe it is, two more days from now. I was asking them to bring forward to myself what they felt was necessary and the type of program they were providing, and I would have a look at it. We're going to revisit that situation. I can't speak for what's happened in the past. We have provided them funding in the past - mind you, not that much - but their program also has to get by the grants steering committee and come to us. I have made a commitment to them that I would look at their proposal after November 1 and see if there's some way we can assist them. So that's the commitment I've made.

MR. PASHAK: Final supplementary. I'm shifting ground a little here. It goes back to occupational health and safety in the oil fields. We know there have been a number of serious injuries and deaths that have probably resulted from the fact that there are a lot of green crews in the oil patch because of the boom-and-bust nature of that industry. I take it that the kinds of projects that the Heritage Savings Trust Fund is funding through this particular grant program have more to do with scientific studies as opposed to procedural or managerial studies. Is that correct, or would it be possible to fund a program that would call for really an inquiry into these deaths in a larger context than just, you know, the effect of a gas on workers or something like that?

I'm not sure if I'm making my question very clear, but I think there's more to the number of accidents that are occurring in this particular area than just the unhealthy conditions in the workplace that sometimes exist. Often it has to do with social factors such as the fact that the crews are green, so what's really needed are regulations as opposed to new health standards. I wondered if grants under this program could address that kind of issue.

MR. TRYNCHY: I just met with upstream, the oil patch people in Calgary, about a month ago in respect to the incidence of accidents in their industry, and they are preparing a document for myself to explain and show us where they're going to go in regards to reducing the accidents.

In respect to whether we could fund an inquiry, we have that

ability now to do it through our regional offices and our Occupational Health and Safety inspectors. I'm going to have Dr. Walker just add to this. I want to work with the oil patch people, and I'm waiting for their report to come forward to us on how they're going to reduce it, with assistance from ourselves. They have to be the lead players, industry and labour, and we will assist where we can. That report should be coming to us soon, I hope. I can't put a timetable to it, but as soon as we can.

Dr. Walker will comment in regards to where we go in regards to prosecutions or more investigations or more research or actually funding these kinds of things for them.

DR. WALKER: When there's an individual incident, that's certainly not a research project. That's an immediate problem, and that's investigated by our regional officers who go through in considerable detail exactly what happened. It's reviewed by us to see that we can learn from it. We often put out something in our bulletin or a flyer that says: "Here's how a particular accident happened. If you don't think this can happen to you, be sure that you're aware of it now." So in terms of particular incidents we look at those on an operational basis.

In terms of what the general problem is in an industry, we think that in the petroleum industry the upstream task force is the vehicle for looking at the problems. You may be aware that there is an agency called PITS, the Petroleum Industry Training Service, that's particularly concerned with training people for advanced issues in oil field production but also for training green hands so that they stay alive. Their problem has been that there's not a lot of demand for the course because the employment is so weak. In any event, even when they get a class started, people come and raid the class halfway through for green hands to go to work. So I think we feel about the oil field that there is a particular training organization focused on their problems and that some of the problems arise from the really depressed state of the industry at the moment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Member for Edmonton-Avonmore, followed by Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MS M. LAING: Thank you. I'd like to just follow through on what the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn has been speaking of, in terms of a broader issue. Much of what I've heard today has talked about employee concern, about employee training. I guess I would wonder about the focus on employer training to ensure that there is a safe workplace, that safe practices are in place, and that safe equipment is being used. Now I would refer you to page 18 of the Occupational Health and Safety grant program [promoting] safety and the study of the view of small business on occupational health and safety.

Owners and managers of small business are often less aware of workplace . . . hazards and unable to afford the costs of reducing occupational health risks.

Then in the final paragraph:

The researchers made several recommendations on how to approach business owners to spark interest in occupational health and safety concerns.

I'm wondering, I guess, about the focus being on workers rather than on employers. Also, what kind of follow-up has come from this research?

DR. HEWITT: I think the phrasing in here was actually directed at the owners and managers and operators rather than



at workers. There's a need to spark interest among the small business owners and operators, so the information here was to attempt to identify what obstacles or barriers there might be to setting up an occupational health and safety program in a small business.

What was found was that quite frequently small business owners were unaware of their legal responsibilities and their employees were also unaware of their responsibilities under our Act. They were also, both the owners and workers, uninformed about the hazards. They knew something about the hazards, but they weren't fully informed about what the real risks were and quite frequently had never experienced an accident in that workplace so they didn't know what the consequences were likely to be to the business if there was a serious accident. So on the whole, health and safety was found not to be a priority among those business owners who were interviewed. The idea of that study was to provide some insight into the perspective that those people now hold on health and safety, and then: what are those specific barriers that we have to overcome in order to get the message through both to the owners and to workers?

Just in general with respect to your question about the focus, whether we're focusing on employers or upon workers, I think the safety engineering course we're funding now at the University of Alberta is quite interesting in this regard, because the course is oversubscribed. They've had to add additional sections of it because there's so much interest on the part of both engineering students and business students, who are going to become senior managers and senior engineers in industry in the province, to get them while they are still students and learning and to inform them about what their responsibilities are and what the consequences of their decisions are in the workplace, how they can set up a safety program and manage risk, recognizing hazards and in effect carrying out their jobs as future owners and managers. So we try to achieve a balance here in terms of who the program is targeted at.

MS M. LAING: I guess I find the word "spark" a bit weak in terms of the costs of an unsafe workplace and unsafe work practices.

I guess to follow from that I would question, in terms of training programs or programs to increase awareness of risk. When workers are working with dangerous substances, say, you give them a training program, but do you assess then have they learned anything? I mean, it's not good enough to expose people to the material if it isn't internalized or understood. So what kind of evaluation do you have in place? Do you do it on an ongoing basis to ensure that workers and employers are in fact current in their knowledge and understanding?

MR. TRYNCHY: We do. We have some graphs here on small business. Since the program started, the high accident rate was a little over 20 percent, and now it's down to about 15.7 percent. So small business are reducing their accidents.

There's something else I'd like to see take place if it can be done, and that's a program for small business whereby they would take their employees to a meeting in the evening. It would be mandatory for both the employer and all his employees to attend and look at films and videos and ask questions and get this material. It's fine for us to lay a document on the coffee table, but if the employees don't look at it, it's not doing the job it's supposed to do. We're hoping that by educating the employer – if you're the employer, you would then sit down with your employees and say, "Look, we've got to do this as a team."

I've talked to a number of employers. Myself included: back home I take my staff and say, "Look, let's sit down and talk about safety for half an hour or whatever," and show them the kind of things. But then I also find the situation where after I've gone through all of this, I've had two of my employees do something they shouldn't have – gone under a machine without putting on the safety equipment. I called them out and said, "Fellas, do you see anything wrong with what you're doing?" They got out and said, "No." So I pointed to the safety equipment, and they just said, "Oh."

You know, it's one thing to work with your employees to teach them, but it's another thing to make sure they do it, unless you're there constantly, and of course you can't be there all the time. But it is an educational thing; you've got to educate and promote and, I guess – what is it? – the tell, show, and do. You tell them how to do it, you show them how to do it, and then you do it with them.

MS M. LAING: I guess I'm concerned about the seeming voluntary nature of this. I think if safety in the workplace is a major issue, then it should be done during work time, and it shouldn't be something that's done in the evening.

I'd like to follow through with another question. In my constituency particularly we've had a number of toxic substances being where they shouldn't be – that is, out on the streets. I understand that under Alberta provincial legislation people that deal with toxic chemicals are trained but that the rest of the staff are not trained in crisis management or what to do in terms of accidents. The question I would ask is: would there be an initiative to have all employees that were even marginally or peripherally involved in an area where toxic substances are being used trained as to what to do if there is a spill or a leak into the atmosphere?

MR. TRYNCHY: From my information when I toured the plant at Fort Saskatchewan, they do exactly that. Employers know what to do and so do the head people, but also every employee knows what to do. So that's being done, and unless you've got some specifics . . .

MS M. LAING: Well, there was a spill in my constituency.

MR. TRYNCHY: It hasn't got down as far as it should into some of the smaller industrial plants or some of the smaller employers, but that is something they're doing, and you know, we promote that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, followed by Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was thrown off the pace a bit when you announced that the Treasurer would not be appearing tomorrow afternoon, and remembering that that's trick or treat day, I wondered what was up.

MR. MITCHELL: His kids are taking him door to door.

REV. ROBERTS: He's not coming on All Saints' Day either.

MR. TAYLOR: He may have a sack with a mask going from door to door in eastern Canada, I hope.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you have a question, hon. member?

MR. TAYLOR: I'm a little concerned, further to the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore and the question of training, that the minister makes much of how much training is going towards safety, and he has quite correctly said that education is the main part of it, yet this government, I think he's aware, is cutting the apprentice period for many trades, the amount of time that they have to spend. I think all governments - Liberal, Conservative, or NDP - are reacting about five years late to try to make up for the fact that there was a shortage of labourers. So they were going to try to cut the apprentice period in order to supply more workmen, keep the law of supply and demand in force by in effect turning out journeymen that didn't have the education they used to have. Now, how can he equate a solid safety education program with the fact that, as far as I can see, your department has been silent on the fact that they're cutting the amount of time to train a tradesman? Part of that training should be education in safety, yet we're cutting the time.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, I don't see how that relates to what we're doing here. I don't have jurisdiction for the amount of time somebody spends in school; I'm sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With respect, hon. member, we probably are stretching relating that to the grant program that's being dealt with here today, because that's the only thing we can deal with with this department.

MR. TAYLOR: As a point of order, though, the grant program is to educate employees, and a part of that should be in the training of employees. He mentioned the other rather ridiculous statement he made to the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek here a minute ago, that three government agencies are all out trying to stop you from smoking, but they don't talk to each other. Now we've got another agency here that's training occupational health and safety. Does he not talk to the apprentice people, the Department of Labour? How can you train labourers without having some sort of safety education? That's all. I'm making it a point of order and he just disowns it. Don't you talk to the Department of Labour?

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't think I made a ridiculous statement here this afternoon, contrary to what the hon. member is saying. We train the employees after they enter the work force; we do not train employees in the schools. That's something that I'd like to see be done more so in the future: have the Department of Education or the Department of Advanced Education bring programs into the schools. But this is not the jurisdiction of this department, to enter the schools and provide programs for the future employees, so we don't get involved in that. But we do talk to employees and employers in the workplace after they've entered the workplace, so that's where we step in.

MR. TAYLOR: I still think, Mr. Chairman, he's not following. Most apprentices take their training in the workplace. They take very little schooling; they go back some evenings. So they are in the workplace, and the point is that they're being graduated as journeymen without as much training as they used to have, which means they're cutting their safety. Apparently I'm having a little trouble hammering the point home, and I'll put it a little stronger later on.

Now, let's move on to an area that you may be more familiar with, also safety hazards. What kind of training or what kind of education are we using now that farming is maybe even more - it always was progressive and perhaps scientific, but more so than ever now when there are collections, for instance, like pig urine, boar urine; there are manure maturing pits and so on. In other words, there is a lot of gas being manufactured and poisonous substances . . .

MR. MOORE: Point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, we have a point of order.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, following on the educational programs and what have you, what has this to do with the grant program we are here for today?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, do you intend to relate this to the grant program?

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, I will try to. Obviously, the Member for Lacombe has been too close to one of those pits. Apparently, the gasses that come off - there's quite a little gaseous effluent comes off. We control hydrocarbon plants and manufacturing plants, but are we doing anything at all about the gasses emitted to the atmosphere from agricultural processes on the farm?

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, farming's an occupation that is not under the jurisdiction of Occupational Health and Safety. I think it was 1983 when the responsibility of farm safety was transferred to the Department of Agriculture, so that's there. But even at that, we've provided grants to Dr. Day in the past to do a number of researches for Occupational Health and Safety, so we're concerned about agricultural safety. But, in reality, the farm safety development program that's presented by educational programs is an agricultural program, and we're not involved in it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you have a final supplementary, hon. member?

MR. TAYLOR: I thought you'd mentioned farm safety under . . . In other words, now the schools, under Labour, do the safety training for trade employees; for farms, Agriculture is supposed to be doing the training for farm employees. I'm having a little trouble figuring just what the hell you do do then.

Let's get on, then, to the smoking and the abuse of drugs in the workplace. Have you given any thought or has any action been taken because a great deal of the nicotine addiction comes at a very young age, 12, 13, 14? Admittedly, they are not in the work force, or they shouldn't be in the work force, but have you been doing any thinking on the controlling of where nicotine is sold? Does that come in in any way in your drug use, because that gets to the public? Have you thought at all about, for instance, that cigarettes should only be sold where alcohol is sold so young adults can't get it?

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, this . . .

MR. TAYLOR: I know it's very progressive, but try to wrap your mind around it.

MR. TRYNCHY: We provide grants for research and programs



that affect health and safety. And if somebody were to come forward and ask for a grant and could justify the need for a grant in respect to smoking and alcohol and all these things in the schools – and I support more education in the schools – we'd have to look at it, but we do not make regulations. We provide funds to those projects that are made available to us by whomever for safety and health in the workplace and in the home and in the schools, if we can get them there. But I can't comment on bringing a program out in respect to us going into the schools and saying you've got to do this, because we just provide the funds to somebody else.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to swing back to some questions pertaining to the Federation of Labour's Worker's Health Centre, which my colleague touched upon a bit earlier. I have some other questions about it. I visited it; I think members of the department have too. It's quite an excellent centre, in a sense taken up from private initiative of those who work in labour, and in that regard needs, I think, to be very much commended and congratulated, that workers are working with workers to improve working conditions. I think it has been a real model of the kinds of things we need to be supporting from the public purse. Yet my understanding is that despite the fact that they get funding from their own affiliates, from United Way, that they do work for Stelco, for the Canadian Organization of Small Business, and that they have a very good reputation, they have continued to apply for grants over the last four or five years and have been denied, to the point now that they have had to suspend operations, needing a budget of about \$250,000 and coming up with just over \$100,000 or more.

I really wonder what's going on here. I mean, here they are, as I say, a model part of an organization that does what we're wanting to do, has credibility in net work in the field, needing some public dollars to keep it going and yet have been denied and have now even shut down operations. So could the minister or his assistant please give me some background information as to why this has been the case?

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, I don't know if the member was in the House or in here when I mentioned that they're bringing a proposal to me effective November 1 of this year for next year, and I made a commitment that I would consider that, have a look at it, and respond to them in respect to a grant from this program.

REV. ROBERTS: Well, I'm encouraged by that. I was in the House when you made that statement. It's nice to know that might be happening in the future. I'm just wondering what has happened in the past to have left us with this record. Maybe I might be illuminated if some description might come. I take it that with the research dollars – the same in medical research – some are targeted for pure and some are targeted for applied research. That is, some might have an esoteric or an academic side; others have very practical worksite applications. I'm just wondering: through the fund and the research dollars, is there any breakdown? Because certainly, again, the Worker's Health Centre would have a very practical application in terms of research and education. Is there a bias in that regard which is

going to help in the future, as it hasn't in the past, their application for grants? It has a very applicable, hands-on effect. Is there a bias in that regard?

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, if the grant application would fall under an educational grant – up to now we've provided funds of 50.8 percent of our total funds to educational programs, and 45 percent of the funds have gone to research. Certainly if they could provide an application to us, whether it's educational or research, we would look at it. Certainly we don't discount it just because it comes from one party or another.

REV. ROBERTS: I guess my question, too, is whether the research is pure research or applied research. But even if it has an applied focus, it stands a good chance of getting some of that 45 percent.

I guess, then, my last supplementary – as I said before, it seems to fit in very well with the criteria for application. I'm wondering: it may be that the minister is . . . Since there seems to be a freeze or cap on the amount that is received from the trust fund, in fact what we're talking about here is only .7 percent of all that we allocate from this fund that goes to workers' health and safety, and out of that little bit of the pie this Worker's Health Centre is having difficulty accessing it. Would the minister and his officials support us in terms of . . . Seeing there is a much greater need than .7 percent, and maybe if there were increased allocation from the fund or trying to get more dollars allocated in this direction for the Worker's Health Centre and other things, would the minister think that that would be consistent with his need for increasing priorities in this very important area?

MR. TRYNCHY: Let me go back to the Worker's Health Centre for a second and just clear up any misunderstanding, if there is any. We do not provide funding for ongoing operations. If the worker's centre would come to us with an application for research in either one of those categories, then they would qualify, but they've been coming to us . . . I think the last year was for operational funds, and this program does not provide that. So let's make that clear: it's not that we don't want to do it; they just have to fit into a category.

In respect to my support for additional funding, yes. I don't think I have to support you; you have to support me. So I'm looking forward to this committee's recommendations to the government to provide more funding, because it's doing a good job. And I hope that after we're done here, you can see fit to do that.

REV. ROBERTS: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, as a general comment I would like to state that it is a concern of mine. I have seen emerging, through the minister's responses, that there seems to be very little advocacy of the findings of his research group's efforts and advocating, for example, the implementation of certain policies, the taking of your findings, or the suggestions of my colleagues – for example, from Westlock-Sturgeon – and ensuring that perhaps there is consideration given to upgrading or enhancing the apprenticeship program with respect to safety

training. We would like to see that come from the minister and much more aggressive advocacy of some of his findings.

The first question, however, concerns training programs, specifically with respect to the transportation of dangerous goods. I was aware of a case brought to my attention of an employee of a trucking company who was told by his employer, "Here, sign this card, this transportation certificate, so that if you are stopped, it will look like you've been trained." And he checked off each of the categories of curriculum under which he should have been trained; he never was. The trucker brought it to my attention. I raised it specifically with the minister concerned. Eventually this trucking company was charged – I had to request that – and convicted and fined. It relates to an issue raised earlier; that is, it's all very well and good to say that there is a training program. The program in this area, the transportation of dangerous goods, I think is extremely weak. Is the minister aware of that weakness? Has he studied it? What would he be prepared to do with respect to enhancing that program, either with centralized testing of truckers who have purportedly taken this particular course or perhaps by taking the assignment or allocation of these certificates out of the hands of the employer and placing that in some central government agency?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, I understand your question, but I don't think it's the mandate of this granting program to enforce anything. The grant is strictly for funding research projects, and I believe you are straying into an area that has to do with other facets of the minister's department. Perhaps you could centre your question more on the grant program, having to do with research, education, and training in the workplace.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. MITCHELL: Point of order, Mr. Chairman. I know that the Conservative backbenchers are always sensitive about this, and they start to rumble and then so do you. I appreciate your concern, but two things. One, it would seem to me that if this program were to do nothing but study, it would be absolutely useless, or almost, and certainly a minister who wants to be aggressive about accomplishing things would want to take the results of this study and do something. This minister is here today and I want to question him about it.

Secondly, I believe that in fact if you look at what this program has done, it has taken action. It has set up a round table to develop ideas. It has set up community education programs, it seems to me. So I'm pursuing that theme or purpose of this program. But let me rephrase it. Have you studied it? Would you study it? Do you need money to study it? And if you have studied it, what have you done about it?

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't need any support from the Chair or the backbenchers to do the job in my portfolio. The first question that was asked: would we provide the findings of the grant programs? That's available to everybody, and I'm surprised the hon. member doesn't have it. If he doesn't, if he wants to be specific, we will get him the answers to everything he wants. If he can't find it by himself, we'll provide it. That's available to every Albertan; that's not a secret.

In regards to the trucking firm being charged, we don't have that jurisdiction. We're here to provide grants. If the hon. member wants to go back home to his constituency and have somebody apply for a grant to look into transportation of

dangerous goods, if it meets the criteria of the committee that we have set up with labour and industry and public, then by all means. I'm concerned about safety, and if he wants Occupational Health and Safety to look into some of these things, we'll take his comments on notice. We will do that, but that question isn't part of the question of the grant program that we have before us. I'd like to spend some time with the hon. member if he wants to talk about safety and what we can do in the other facets of our department, certainly. But to say to me would I look for more funds – I am here to provide funds to people such as he is talking about or companies that he's talking about for research, and with the recommendation of this committee, we'll do it.

MR. MITCHELL: You do identify problem areas, though, that you would seek out to get people to ask for funds or to generate research interest. In any event, the answer to that question is: no, you haven't done it, and (b) you might be interested if we could find somebody who wanted to do it, but certainly . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you please move to your supplementary.

MR. MITCHELL: Sure. My second question concerns hydrogen sulphide. Your organization has done a great deal of work, it would appear, on hydrogen sulphide. That's to be encouraged, and certainly you're to be congratulated for undertaking that. The results of your findings, it seems, are quite disturbing. In fact, you have looked at the effects of low concentrations of hydrogen sulphide and how they affect the body's organs and tissues. Recent results in the spring discovered by a University of Alberta professor indicated that the concerns raised originally in the Pincher Creek area are much more serious than originally considered to be the case.

I wonder if the minister could give us an indication of what the findings of this particular area have been. Are low concentrations a problem, and if so, has he considered the need for the gas industry to simply shut down their plants as soon as H<sub>2</sub>S gas is emitted, and under no circumstances allow some of that to be emitted up the smokestack, which is currently a condition of their operation?

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, we've provided support for two research groups at the universities of Alberta and Calgary on hydrogen sulphide, and yes, we've been involved in it as a department. Again, it's not part of the granting structure. I would hope the hon. member would bring this back when we do our estimates, because I think it's very important, and we can go into it. We provide the funds to the universities at the present time to do research on hydrogen sulphide. And I think if you read the report that was done in Pincher Creek and the one that has come out now, neither one is conclusive as to what actually has taken place, so I can't comment on that. But yes, we're providing funds, and we're concerned about the general public living in the areas. Of course, that's another thing that we have to do as Occupational Health and Safety, and maybe Dr. Walker would . . . I don't know if we should comment beyond the grant structure, Mr. Chairman, because we'd be breaking your rules, would we?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would think you may have to limit your comments to some extent.

DR. HEWITT: I think one of the studies which was specifically looking at low doses was undertaken with a view to looking at occupational exposure limits in Alberta and whether they were at the appropriate level for workers. What that researcher found – this is Dr. Roth at University of Calgary – was that basically there were no health effects detected in mice or rats below the 20 parts per million level, and our level is 10 parts per million. Basically, he had to get levels of exposure up to 75 parts per million before he found some effects to the nervous system and liver metabolism and so on.

An outcome of the other study carried out at the University of Alberta, which was looking at somewhat higher doses but looked at the question of why people stop breathing, specifically when they're exposed to hydrogen sulphide – he was looking at the potential for developing an antidote that might reverse the effects if a worker were treated in time. As part of his research he developed a method for detecting the presence of hydrogen sulphide in a fatally injured worker. That's been useful to us in several fatalities now, because often if a worker falls from a height, it's not known whether he was overcome first by a hazardous gas or not. So there have been some spin-offs that have had an immediate effect in helping us to know whether a hazard was present or not. But again, these studies don't provide all of the answers to, you know, the problems raised by exposure to hydrogen sulphide, either large doses or chronic low doses.

MR. TRYNCHY: I think if you look at page 14 of this document, a number of grants have been provided in regard to that very topic that we're discussing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you have a final supplementary?

MR. MITCHELL: I do. In fact, I have two final supplementaries. Could I ask them both?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have one more final supplementary.

MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Downstream smoke and the workplace: has the minister undertaken a study of the effects of downstream smoke on government workers in the government of Alberta and maybe specifically, as well, on MLAs who have to work in this Chamber with smokers during committee, and if not, would he be interested in doing that?

MR. TAYLOR: Point of order. That corner where the fresh air is always has the good ideas, and that one has bad.

MR. TRYNCHY: I guess there is a concern, but it's not part of our grant structure that we're discussing today.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, maybe we'll recommend that, and I'd just like to get the minister's feelings about whether that would be a responsible thing to research. I need to have some idea as to whether . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do I understand your question correctly, that you're asking if he has done any studies on the effects of secondhand smoke in the workplace?

MR. MITCHELL: Yes. And if not, would he be interested in doing that if we recommended that money be available for that? You could say yes; you could say yes.

MR. TRYNCHY: I will take every recommendation that comes forward from this committee that pertains to my portfolio seriously.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: Well, I'd like to continue this exploration of the relationship between the grant program and the department. Is it Dr. Walker that had indicated that he might ask for an investigation into a particular circumstance of a death or an accident in, say, the oil patch? I don't know whether that comes about as a result of this program or his duties as the Deputy Minister. Right? But in any event, under this program, supposing a situation does come to the attention of the minister's office, could he ask for a study? I mean, is this part of the process, that you might actually go out and ask for a program to deal with a particular problem that has come to your attention? And if so, could you give us an example?

MR. TRYNCHY: I'll give you an example that has nothing to do with what we're discussing today. If a concern comes to the minister's office, we have the occupational health and safety advisory council that would then investigate that for me, if it falls into their category, or else the department itself would take this on. If it's an accident out in the workplace, the department – Dr. Walker and our staff – gets involved very, very quickly. So that's being done.

MR. PASHAK: My question really was: could you commission a study, in effect, under this grant program to deal with them?

MR. TRYNCHY: No, we couldn't do that.

MR. PASHAK: So it's totally a reactive program in a sense. It's not pro-active in terms of . . .

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, we don't use this grant program to fund our own programs. We do that within our other mandate. The grant program comes from industry, unions, public sector, whatever, out there to us for funding, reviewed by a committee, and then we . . . [interjection] Yes, but if we have something to do, we do it through our own facilities and our own funding.

MR. PASHAK: My next question, then, related to that is: what happens, then, when you do get the results of a study? Do you just make that generally available to the public? Or would that go over to the department for a review with respect to maybe asking other ministries, perhaps, to change legislation or leading to new legislation under your mandate? What happens to the studies that are commissioned?

MR. TRYNCHY: We take the appropriate action in regards to whether there are charges laid if you have an accident in the workplace and it's negligence on the part of the employer, Occupational Health and Safety. But, Mr. Chairman, again we're moving to something that . . .

MR. PASHAK: I'd like to look at the studies themselves, what happens. You've funded studies; are they just made generally available to the public or under the grant program? I mean, that's when your responsibility ends: as soon as you've commissioned the study, in effect, under the grant program? Okay.

MR. TRYNCHY: We take advice from the people who have done the research and put it to use; very much so.

MR. PASHAK: In your department? I'm just trying to get at that relationship.

Finally, one last question that would have to deal with . . . A lot of the problems that occur in the workplace not only affect the workers themselves but they affect the general public. For example, we've had a toxic cloud from part of an operation in a chemical fertilizer plant in Calgary that resulted in the hospitalization of people. So I wondered if any consideration had been given to looking at this not just as an occupational health and safety heritage grant program but perhaps as a public health and safety heritage grant program, and broaden out the mandate in effect.

MR. TRYNCHY: I don't know how we could broaden the mandate of this program without a change from this committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, I would think that should be a recommendation coming from the committee for the minister to consider when we debate those. It would certainly be in order for you to put forth the recommendation for the minister to do that at that time.

Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by the Member for Clover Bar.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The minister on four or five occasions over the past hour and a half has quite properly invited members of the committee to develop recommendations for research, to which he might reply or respond sometime in the future. Although I'm very supportive of a minister being that receptive, it leaves the haunting impression that the grant program is demand driven and not priorities driven, and I would like to just clarify the extent to which this grant program has established criteria or priorities of research. Quite obviously I'm asking that question because I'm sure none of us would want to see the great bulk of these research grant dollars flowing to areas that may or may not fit in the broader context of the research needs of Alberta. So I wonder if the minister would comment on the priorities that may be in place for his program.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, yes, we do have priorities. I mentioned them at the outset, but let me mention them again. We'll take any request, but then we have a category of priorities that get first attention. The first five priorities that we work with are: those coming to us with fatal and serious injury accidents are our top priority; small business is number two; the oil and gas industry; chemical hazards; and communications. So if somebody comes to us with a grant application, they'd have to fit into that. After that, if we don't have applications that meet those criteria, the funds continue on to the following year. But we do have a priority, and it's fatal and serious accidents. They're the ones we're concentrating on now. If we can get those down to where they should be, I think we'll be doing a better job. Communications is important; education. If an application comes to us with those five or six criteria, they're given first consideration.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I'm encouraged by the minister's response. I'm wondering, against that backdrop of priorities – statistical

analysis has been undertaken by the grant program officials in recent months or years. Can the minister indicate which industries have been identified as those most prone to work-related injury, which I assume would be a high-priority area?

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, I won't give them to you one, two, three, but it's the oil and gas industry, the logging industry, small business. They're possibly the top three in respect to . . . And meat packing. There are four or five near the top, and then the rest of them. I believe that when you look at the workers' compensation rates – and they're all accident driven – you have the oil patch, you have forestry, you have the meat packing industry, and you have small business. So those are the industries that are our greatest concern now. Mind you, they're all our concern, but those seem to be the high-accident industries.

MR. PAYNE: A final supplementary if I may, Mr. Chairman. I wonder if the minister would be prepared to comment today on whether or not there is a common thread that works its way through those four quite different industries. You know, the work on the rig floor is significantly different from the work on, say, the kill floor, but perhaps there is a common thread that this committee needs to be apprised of.

MR. TRYNCHY: Gee, I'm not sure. Dr. Walker, can you help us there?

DR. WALKER: I don't think I can give you a lot of hope for a common thread. Meat packing, for example, has a lot of non life threatening injuries so cuts to some extent repetitive muscle strain and disability coming from that. The oil and gas world is much more likely to have a serious fatal injury; similarly with logging and forestry operations. Those are people working alone in unsupervised situations who often take shortcuts. They may be economically pressed to take shortcuts, and those shortcuts do them in. Small business, I think, is a setting where small businesspeople try to keep their heads above water. They may not put a very high priority on safety. They may not understand the hazards they face. So I think maybe meat packing is a bit different from the others. The others tend to be small operations – sometimes pressed, sometimes unaware of hazards, often fatal outcomes.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Clover Bar, followed by the Member for Lacombe.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, Mr. Minister, departmental staff.

I want to concentrate my first question on the education portion, the 51 percent you've indicated. In my mind, Mr. Minister – I'm making some assumptions here in order to get to the question – there may be some sort of threshold related to funding and the efficiency of the program, the results of the program. You've given us some very good results and the assurance that you want to pursue and continue the program, and as long as these results – if I have them correctly, 28 percent reduction of injuries in the welding profession, 26 percent in the oil patch, and significant in the logging; you didn't give us a number there. The results are excellent, but I can see that in the future there may be some sort of threshold after which no

matter how much money may be available for grants, it may not effectively reduce the number of injuries that might occur.

With that in mind, then, and particularly on the education portion, Mr. Minister, is there a specific thrust – well, perhaps before I get there, I should also say that the grant expenditure has increased, I believe, 55 percent from the previous year to '88-89, and the result, if I read that correctly, is that there has been perhaps an average of 26 percent to 80 percent reduction, which is excellent. I think that warrants continuation of the program. But is there a specific thrust when evaluating applications to look at self-perpetuating types of situations whereby we can look at perhaps reducing the grant funding over the years, where the industry or the self-perpetuating program that's been put in place actually takes over?

MR. TRYNCHY: A very good question. We'd like to be out of it completely, Mr. Chairman, if we could. We stress education; we stress promotion. The more we do, it seems the more we can do. Whether we can get the industry, big or small or whatever, to take over and run this program by themselves is something we'd like to see happen. I doubt very much if, you know, we can see it going that way dramatically and quickly. We have a number of programs in education, and I should mention again to the member that raised it that we're now funding a hero's program for teenagers in the schools. A \$50,000 grant will be going out shortly, and that's part of our education. We want to start in the schools, so when these young people leave their education and move to the workplace, they'll have some idea of what the workplace is all about. It's focused not just on accidents; it's focused on drug abuse and all those kinds of things young people are involved in.

We also have a project for communities, the Red Deer Safe Communities project, which we are funding, where we have the community involved in promoting safety. That's the first community that's taken this on in Alberta. We hope that when this is over next June or whenever they finalize it, they can tell us in regard to doing this throughout the province. It's something we want the communities to do themselves. We want to provide some guidance, but we don't want to be involved as a government saying you must do this or you must do that. We want to work with them. So those two programs in education are very beneficial in my mind when we get the results.

Getting back to your question, how do we convince industry, the employer and the employees? Well, the employers, firstly, to reduce their accidents to zero, is a tough one. I just mention that Shell Oil had 570,000 hours of accident-free workplace employment. It's very good, and we want to work to zero. What's the old saying? You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. So as much information as we put out there, as much as we spend with our regional officers to communicate to the employers and employees that they must be careful, sometimes it doesn't work. If you have some suggestions as a committee or some ideas on how we can do it . . . I toured your constituency and was at Dow Chemical where everybody gets involved, where the employee knows as much as the head man in the department with regard to safety, and that's good. That's what we've got to promote. But we find small businesses sometimes are so hard pressed they don't have the time or the funding or maybe the ability to do it, and so we have to move more aggressively with small business in regards to promoting and educating the small business sector to prevent accidents. They are one of the higher ones.

MR. GESELL: Thank you.

My first supplementary, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to switch over to the research portion, the 46 percent. I want to discuss a little bit about possible duplication. The problems we are dealing with or trying to deal with in Alberta I don't think are particularly unique to Alberta. They probably apply in other countries and other provinces, and governments, labour, and industry across Canada and, I think, around the world are struggling with the same situations. It's reasonable to assume that we're not the only ones that are digging for answers to overcome these problems and finding some answers to try to resolve that. How do we ensure, under this program, that we are not spending grant money on research and developing educational materials that are already in existence, that perhaps have been created by other governments or industry or other researchers? The example that comes to mind is the question I was asked with respect to the study to evaluate recycled air in closed work spaces. There may actually be some work on that, and you've referenced that in your response to that question. Can we assure that we take advantage of all the research that's already been undertaken and not go and reinvent the wheel in certain instances? Is that actually being done?

MR. TRYNCHY: Yes, Mr. Chairman. A good example is the clean air request here. We haven't gone into research on that because the research we gathered from the rest of Canada and internationally is that there is no solution. To assure the membership here, we make every effort to make sure there is no duplication. We have people that review these application grants from inside and outside government. The ones outside government are experts in that field, and we ask them to make certain that when they review the application, there isn't somebody else doing it even if it is in another province, whether it's another university. We ask our university people, if they are doing research, to work with other universities so we don't overlap. So we do the best job we can with inside reviewers and outside reviewers to make sure duplication is eliminated, and so far I don't know if we have any research programs that are being duplicated. We ask the people that are making their final recommendations to take into consideration very thoroughly where else this information can be garnered from without spending these dollars. So we're doing the best we can, and I don't know of any in the past that we've had duplication on. Maybe that's why our grant approvals are down in number, because they're not as specific as they should be or else somebody else is doing part of it. That could be it.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A final supplementary. In response to my first question, the minister referenced the Red Deer Safe Communities project, and I wanted to ask about that. To me, that program deals with leisure time as well as work-related hours. You mentioned that perhaps that project might be finalized, if I heard you correctly, next June and there may be some results from that. Can you indicate what the effectiveness of that particular project is even at this point? Is there some intermediary reaction? Is it a project that you might want to see apply to other communities?

MR. TRYNCHY: The project was initiated in North Bay, I believe, and was very, very successful. It's because they had certain people take it and run it. My understanding is it's not moving quite that well in Red Deer, but I intend to take a trip out there within the next two weeks to see if I can sit down with

the group and find if there's something we can do to assist it, to do it better. But the member is right on. This program covers employers, workers on the job and off the job, households, children, leisure activities, traffic and transportation, and includes farm safety. It takes everything into consideration. I would hope it will be a positive report next year when it's complete. Right now I don't have anything definite; it's just that I'm hearing it's not running as well as it did in North Bay. But there it ran extremely well. Hopefully, with my visit to Red Deer in the next few weeks, I might be able to find out more about it and assist them in some way to make sure it becomes a positive program.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Member for Lacombe, followed by the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. MOORE: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. The minister indicated in my last question that he thought this was an excellent program, and I gathered he would like to see it continue after its 10-year venture. But it becomes a question of where it should be funded from. It's been 10 years under the heritage trust fund; we've been funding it. But when the minister applies for it to be extended, there is the question of dollars. I would like to know: should it be funded now from general revenue or from the heritage trust fund? When does the responsibility of the heritage trust fund end for funding such programs? There has to be a time when heritage trust fund money is released to go to other pressing needs that we see Albertans would like. To the minister I would like to say: is this the time he should be considering this program from his estimates rather than from the heritage trust fund?

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, I'm not going to tell you how to recommend it, but I hoped you would. My thoughts would be that I feel the same as the member asking the question. We have invested \$10 million. I would like to see us, if we move forward, do it differently: set up an endowment fund, where we would just use the interest off that fund and never touch the principal, and develop that over the years. That way the fund would remain at the level it is today, and all we would use is the interest. I'd like to see it continue through the heritage fund, because I think it's so important – and not only in the workplace, but we should move these programs into the schools and into our homes with safety and health. So as much as I understand that our budgets will be leaner, I would like to see it set up as an endowment fund and not something that would go into general revenue where you would then have to debate whether you do it on a yearly basis. With an endowment fund you could set that aside and use the interest for whatever year you want to, whether it's a 10-year program or five years or 15. That's what I'd like to see happen. So those are just some thoughts for this committee to look at when you make your recommendations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I probably just have the one question as a follow-up to the earlier questions I had on this whole topic of the possible detrimental effects of recycled air. My question is this. As I understood the answer, it was that the

minister and his department were saying they had looked at the studies that had taken place in other places, other research, which is good. I'm glad to see that, because there's no sense duplicating research. I'm sure buildings are not that different in the United States or elsewhere than they are in Alberta. The thing I didn't quite catch for sure is: were the findings of that research negative? In other words, there is no apparent health hazard or no apparent difference between the normal air flow and the recycled situation. Is that what I heard?

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, I didn't say that but . . . Who can answer that? Who has the information on what's been done? Go ahead, Lynn.

DR. HEWITT: No, that wouldn't be correct. The health effects are pretty well documented. What is very well known is how to design ventilation systems and operate and maintain them so the air is of an acceptable quality so people don't suffer ill-health effects. So we would be looking for a proposal that would help to implement those kinds of findings, what's already known.

MR. JONSON: In other words, there's no need for further research.

DR. HEWITT: Well, I think there may be a need for research into what the most effective methods of implementing the findings are, like how you get building owners and maintenance people to implement what is known, how to look after buildings properly, how to design them properly. Primarily it seems to be a maintenance problem with not allowing in enough fresh air, not cleaning filters, and so on. So it's largely an educational type of project we'd be looking at, and then what educational strategy would be most effective.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The question you were mentioning about financing earlier, Mr. Minister. There were a lot of studies done in the last number of years. Is any effort being made over there to export or earn money with these either by translating them or sending them to other countries, or what happens to the results of these?

MR. TRYNCHY: We haven't done any exporting of material. It's certainly documented in thousands and thousands of booklets and information to the general public in Alberta, but we have not gone forward with any sales of our material to anybody else at the present. I don't know if there's . . . But when you look at the number of reports and booklets that come out of these research projects, they're just in the hundreds of thousands. We present the results at conferences, we talk to industry, we let the professional associations know about these things, but we have not gone to an export of our findings.

Lynn.

DR. HEWITT: We wanted to ensure that people had the widest possible access to any outcomes of this program, so we didn't want cost to be a deterrent in any way. So we retain copyright ownership on all materials produced, and we make them available free of charge. If an association produced a booklet, then they have the right to reproduce and sell the material and simply cost recover. They aren't allowed to make a profit on it either, because we want people not only in Alberta



but elsewhere to have access to this information.

MR. TRYNCHY: I might ask a question. Has anybody from outside Alberta looked for our information?

DR. HEWITT: Absolutely.

MR. TRYNCHY: And we provided it?

DR. HEWITT: Yes.

MR. TRYNCHY: Can you expand on that for the members?

MR. TAYLOR: I just think there's a great deal in the emerging and developing world now that maybe could learn a lot from us. If nothing else, if we don't charge for it, maybe put it in the form of foreign aid to send it out a little more aggressively than we have.

The other thing is that I notice you've researched a lot on chain saws in forestry, but the new type of forestry cutting that's coming in Alberta uses entirely different equipment, different approaches, and also they handle a great deal of chemicals now in reforestation - mind you, to the disgust sometimes of a lot of other people outside the area. Is there any research going on into how to safety-train the new pulp cutting type of people that are out there?

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, really, Mr. Chairman, the new techniques that are being used now provide us with very, very few accidents. It's the conventional type of logging that is still causing us some concerns. It's not the new machines, because there is hardly anybody working around the new. You go out there with your scissors and snip off a tree; there's a delimber, and it's gone. It's the power saws and the skidders and all those kinds of things that are still causing us some difficulties. As we get more mechanized in any industry . . . Just as an example, I understand we have a drilling rig now with no chains and no tongs on the drilling floor, which the member is quite familiar with. I'm going to look at this, because I know what a drilling rig does; I've been on it. These kinds of things eliminate the need for people. If you don't have people around, whether it's in logging or the drilling floor, you have fewer accidents. So we're still concentrating on reducing the accidents in the forestry sector where it's happening. But yes, there is education for those with . . . It doesn't stop with chain saws and all that.

When I said logging operation, that means all our new techniques. Whether it's a front-end loader or a fork lift or whatever, it's all tied in there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, our time is spent. Would you be prepared to forgo your final supplementary so we could adjourn this meeting on time?

MR. TAYLOR: Certainly. This is my chance to trick or treat. There's your treat.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. I would entertain a motion for adjournment as soon as I thank the hon. minister and his department people for being here with us today and for their forthright answers and the information they gave us on their granting program under the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. [interjection] Is that a movement for adjournment?

REV. ROBERTS: No, it's a point of order.

Could I ask, just before we adjourn, for some description of when and how we are going to get the Provincial Treasurer to come before the committee?

AN HON. MEMBER: Good question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair will be working with him in the next day to endeavour to set a schedule, and I'll have the information to you, hopefully, within a day or two. I do want to move to have that done quickly so we can stay on the schedule for the completion date of these hearings. So I'll be working towards that end.

MR. TAYLOR: We'll give him 10 days or we boycott Gainer's pork.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I might also add that as we develop that date, perhaps we'll do a poll among all members of the committee to see if it can meet your schedules, because there's not much sense having a meeting if members can't attend. So we'll do our best to work within the parameters.

I'll entertain a motion from the Member for Lacombe for adjournment. The meeting stands adjourned. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 4:01 p.m.]

