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~~Mr. C...~~
Mr. Speak

Alberta
Legislative Assembly COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY, SUBCOMMITTEE B
Carillon Room, Legislature Building

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8:00 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Donnelly

Department of Labour

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's bring it to order, gentlemen, and we can get started. Al, maybe the fellows would prefer if we left the door open and let the smoke get out, as long as the noise doesn't bother you.

Okay, as we did Monday, I want you to address the minister with your questions and give me the high sign for your speaking order. I'll have the minister introduce his support staff and give an opening statement, open it to general discussion, and then go through the votes. Neil, I'll turn it over to you.

MR. CRAWFORD: Okay, thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. The officials that are with me this evening are, on my left Don Gardner, the deputy minister; and on my right is Cliff Broemling, the administrative officer in charge of our budget work; starting down here is John Myroon, in charge of administrative services in the department; Doug Morrison is assistant deputy minister for general safety services; and Gary Gough has a long title having something to do with field services in the labor relations area, our assistant deputy in regard to labor relations isn't with us tonight but Gary knows more than he does anyway, so it will work out fine. We've got Al Dubansky, the chairman of the Board of Industrial Relations; and behind me Dick Saunders, the executive director of the Human Rights Commission; and Dr. Buchwald is assistant deputy minister in charge of occupational health and safety.

So, Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to maybe cover a few highlights by way of general introduction to underline the significance of at least some aspects of the labor estimates this year. We are in the important third year of a three-year program to expand our capacity in occupational health and safety. I think most members will remember the fact that new legislation early in 1976 and the follow-up that came from that brought with it the budgetary thrusts in each year that have expanded our manpower considerably and our budget along with it. The accident prevention branch of the Workers' Compensation Board was absorbed in the first year of the program of consolidation and that involved 82 people coming to the department. This year the final step in the consolidation of the occupational health and safety structure is taking place with the nine members of the mine inspection branch, formerly with the Energy Resources Conservation Board, also joining now the Department of Labour's occupational health and safety branch. The net increase since 1975-76 -- and I give you this figure as an indicator of the priority that's being given to occupational health and safety. The increase, other than transfers in, amounted to 65 new people in our three-year expansion program. That is a very significant number of people now who have been, or are being, phased and integrated into the operation to expand it significantly in the occupational health and safety area. We expect a period of consolidation and of general settling in to run programs now which have been up until this year rather new for the department, and indeed for this jurisdiction.

The increase in this year completing the 65 new people that I mentioned in the three-year program, the figure for this year is 17 and that brings us up to our total figure. I might just mention that in this area, as in other areas within the department, we're served by an advisory committee. We're very pleased with the work of the advisory committee chaired by Dr. Cochrane of Calgary. It's a 12-member committee advising me in regard to general policy on occupational health and safety; a very hardworking committee which has on it one member of the House, Mrs. Chichak. The other representatives, of course, are balanced between labor, management, and the general public interest.

The other significant manpower increases, if you don't mind my trying to put it in perspective this way -- I'm referring to manpower increases because this is the measure of our ability to do a lot of things we do as a straight service type of department. We don't have a lot of funds to provide to other agencies in the province or in the community in any sense for programming, and we don't have our program thrusts that way. We have our program thrusts by putting people in the field to work, in the case of the occupational health branch, obviously with industry and with bargaining units and working on ways in which the work place can be made more safe in addition to the research functions and other things you would expect.

Under the safety services heading. Once again it's people that we're involved in. We have an increase of 18 this year, from 318 to 336 in that division, the first increase in three years. This, being a field force of inspectors and support staff, is a direct response to the increased level of activity in all forms in each part of the province. I think a clear example would be the amount of say housing and similar construction that takes place in the smaller centres in the province at the present time, a phenomenon that requires a certain number of inspectors in the electrical, gas, plumbing, and similar areas. So we are providing some of those and that is a very important role for the department.

The labor relations end also gets 10 new people this year which is a fairly strong increase for a group that size. I forget the exact figures but that amounts to about 39 to 49 people. We can be more clear on that if it's necessary.

MR. GARDNER: From 139 to 149.

MR. CRAWFORD: From 139 to 149. And that's a significant increase in that area once again directly related to the very considerable amount of activity in the labor relations and collective agreement area, the increasing size of the work force, the increasing number of employers in the field, the increasing activity in certifications and certainly in conciliations under existing agreements, and in arbitrations and mediation.

Now I think as far as the Board of Industrial Relations is concerned, I'd like to compliment them and note that our new chairman -- who you may remember was the first full-time chairman the board has had -- our new chairman Mr. Dubensky has been in his position for just over a year. One of the useful moves that was made administratively, in addition to the excellent functioning of the board itself, was the decision by the board to strengthen the Calgary operation significantly. It's certainly not a huge operation, but what it does mean is that a lot of things that people used to have to come to Edmonton for from southern Alberta can be dealt with on an administrative basis by the board in Calgary. They have also maintained the practice -- and I would hazard a guess and say perhaps indeed increased the involvement of the full board itself in hearings in Calgary. I think the government's overall policy, Mr. Chairman, has been that where possible services will be provided to people closer to where they're at with less requirement, if at all possible, to come to Edmonton for certain types of services that can be provided

elsewhere. This is a good example of that type of approach working well, and it's very useful to the people in that area.

So, those are just a few overall general expressions, Mr. Chairman, and back to you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions, gentlemen? Would you like to move on to Vote 1?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Pardon me. I'd like to ask just a couple of general questions to the minister. There's been a lot of talk about the right-to-work legislation that's on. Could the minister just comment on that, as to generally what the feeling is?

MR. CRAWFORD: Well, we don't feel that a case justifying the implementation of legislation of that type in Alberta has yet been made out. From my own way of thinking, I doubt very much if any persuasive case could ever be made out that would persuade me that it would be useful in our economic and social climate. I say that because I think there are a lot of misinterpretations, and some of them are deliberately contributed to, I think, by the opponents of this type of legislation and by those who are promoting it. In other words, oversimplifications are often heaped upon us and we're asked to come to judgments based on a few catch-words and catch-phrases, and make a few rather large assumptions about the suitability of this type of legislation without really looking at the overall field.

I would just like to reflect upon the overall field perhaps a little bit to this extent. There is no such legislation in Canada at the present time. There is no strong urging to bring it about except by, oh, the occasional brief or presentation we get, which is certainly always from the business side. The trade unions for their part are strongly against it and put the merit of their argument on the fact that the American precedents aren't always clearly, you know, a suitable or relevant answer to our situation. They will quickly point out that even in the U.S., where we often have the precedents sought out and quoted for us, the numbers of states that have gone for this type of legislation is minimal and not recent; that only for a short period after the Second World War was it common for some of the southern States to go to this. They are almost in all cases not the industrialized states of the country. None of the industrialized states have gone for this type of legislation. The nature of the legislation itself, in the eyes of the union people, is that it has a downward pressure on compensation for the average worker and that it creates no new freedoms. Well, I suppose in fairness the option to be outside of a bargaining unit would create an additional freedom. Nobody, I think, would dispute that. But the consequences of that are not the ones that we're invited to presume.

Maybe I could just say, subject to further follow-up questioning on it -- because I'm sure there would be some on this issue -- that I think there is something of a contradiction almost in the promotion of this type of legislation by people who say that it's really good for the worker, because statistically the work force in the areas where they do have this type of legislation make less. So I don't see that the advantage to the worker is established when you prove that he's making less in the industrial climates where it does exist.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I haven't any more questions on that subject. With regard to the occupational health and safety committees, can you just bring us up to date on some of the things that are happening out at the field level? You've touched on the number of employees and things like that.

MR. CRAWFORD: Right.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I understand that. Just some examples of things that have happened, to give us a better feeling for the whole program.

MR. CRAWFORD: Right. I would like to start by saying that because of the recommendations of the Gale Commission we do support the concept of the joint committees on worksites. But it runs through our entire philosophy in respect to worksite joint committees that no assumptions should be made that make you conclude in advance that you will definitely get a better performance record at any worksite as a result of the committee. It was for that reason that we declined and have continued over and over again to treat the matter not as a pilot project or anything like that -- it is in fact government policy to proceed in this way -- but to expand the area in which the committees are mandatory at a relatively slow rate. I think that's been the key to our philosophy. It brings us to the point where we have about 155 sites in the province so designated. That was done in three stages. They would cover only about 14,500 workers out of the whole work force. Now we think that's nevertheless a significant intrusion into the field, but we're very anxious to monitor these carefully and work more closely with those worksite committees than we would ever be able to do if it was put on a general across-the-board proposition in the province.

So what we have at the present time is a number of committees in various stages of development. Some of them, although designated like the last list of (inaudible), have been designated but are probably not operational yet but they have imposed upon them a time table within which they must respond and act. Presumably that's happening. With the earlier ones, I would have to say that I doubt very much if we could take a reading on how effective they are yet. I'll check this with Dr. Buchwald right now, but it seems to me that the first meetings of such committees responding to our timetable wouldn't have been prior to about last October. Herb, is that about right?

DR. BUCHWALD: It's pretty well right. It's too early to have any definite statistics in the industrial accidents.

MR. R. SPEAKER: There might be isolated cases or incidences but nothing in general that could be said about them. Is that correct? That's what you're saying?

DR. BUCHWALD: Yes, in actuality the experiences have been with those which are in existence now. They range from fairly poor to very good, and where there are very good committees one can already spot definite changes at the worksite.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Could you just explain that a little bit? What kind of changes? I think that's what I was interested in originally. What type of things do you see happening?

DR. BUCHWALD: The kind of things which happen first are a greater interest on the part of the workers in safety matters. One sees response in better housekeeping and better attention to notices and signs. You've probably been into places of work where you see the safety notices are browned and curled up and you can't see what they read anymore. One of the signs of an active committee is that all these things are spotless and (inaudible). These type of things are first to come, before you see any reduction in the accidents.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further questions, Ray? Anyone else have any general discussion questions?

MR. DIACHUK: Mr. Chairman, I do but I'd like to wait till we get to the section on workers' compensation . . . (inaudible)

MR. MUSGREAVE: I don't know whether this is the right department to address it to, but have you had any pressures to raise the retirement age like (inaudible) passed into law in the United States?

MR. CRAWFORD: I wouldn't call it pressures, Eric. People have suggested that it's a matter relative to human rights which is clearly a responsibility that conducts its operation as far as reporting is concerned through my office. No, I would say we had minimal pressure for that, quite minimal. Now let me check with the commission. Dick, has there been any special outbursts of these things coming to you?

MR. SAUNDERS: No, there hasn't, Mr. Crawford. No special outbursts to this point.

MR. CRAWFORD: Yes.

MR. SAUNDERS: We're aware of that but nothing has come up to this point.

MR. MUSGREAVE: You mean they're not organized yet.

MR. CRAWFORD: That might be the answer. I'm happy to discuss the merits of such a proposal but the question was whether or not we'd had . . .

MR. MUSGREAVE: I was surprised to see it had been passed into law in the United States . . . (inaudible)

MR. CRAWFORD: It surprised me, too. I don't think they talked about it down there for more than the past two years before they leapt right on the bandwagon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, we can move then to Vote 1, Departmental Support Services. Are there any questions?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Vote 2, Labour Relations.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Do you want to comment on the grants? Would that come under that, Mr. Chairman? Under Vote 2 the grants have increased from \$7,000 up to \$188,930. Twenty-six hundred per cent.

MR. CRAWFORD: Yes, this is really a very innocent little departure from past practices in regard to grants. There is a large grant provided for this year of about \$182,000 which is tied directly to the legislation which was passed last fall allowing for the setting up of an impartial jurisdictional disputes board for the construction industry. That board hasn't been formed yet. The concept of it is that after completing a study and report which is being done at the present time in close co-operation -- as a matter of fact, directly on the doorstep of industry and labor organizations in a very, very wide basis -- we would hope to be able to establish such a board virtually operated by the industry, by the two sides of the table in industry, with little or no government involvement. Because of that, although we have plans and hopes in the event it succeeds well that after a year

or two industry and labor will make significant contributions to the operating costs, we thought it was proper that we should be in a position to fund it fully in its first year. The other grants are very small.

It's true there will be other items that could be grants under other headings, but under Labour Relations we just have the labor college annual scholarship and a contribution to them, which is separate from the scholarship fund. One is a small operating grant and one is a small scholarship grant and that makes up the bulk of what's there.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Under Supplies and Services, and I think this is in the breakdown, there's I think Data Services increased about 525 per cent. Is there something new that's going on in the department?

MR. CRAWFORD: Gary, are you able to cover that?

MR. GOUGH: At the present time, the study is being completed within the labor standards branch with respect to the establishment of a data processing system to provide the branch with better information with respect to problem areas so it can use its manpower and resources more wisely in the area of carrying out educational and inspection programs in particular areas of industry where we may be able to identify problems through this data processing system. That would account for part of the cost.

MR. CRAWFORD: Can you give us any further breakdown on that, Cliff?

MR. BROENLING: It's just the computer costs that relate to the (b) budget item on collective agreements.

MR. CRAWFORD: That's a new emphasis. We've had collective agreement information stored in the past, but this is a more ambitious program to extract from all of the collective agreements that are in our possession as a result of the parties to them filing them -- breaking down typical components in what agreements provide and getting a general reading on the trend or direction of the substantial items that arise in bargaining in any given sector. I think it's an important sort of tracking function.

MR. R. SPEAKER: That's satisfactory information.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions on Vote 2? Gentlemen, we move to Vote 3, General Safety Services. All agreed?

MR. YOUNG: Before we agree quite so quickly, Mr. Chairman . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fine.

MR. YOUNG: . . . could we have an explanation of where we are on the building standards regulations at the present time? There were some concerns expressed, and I think some review had possibly been started in the last four months. What's the status now?

MR. CRAWFORD: I think there are a number of answers probably to that question because there are a number of components . . .

MR. YOUNG: One will do.

MR. DIACHUK: The right answer, the right answer. That's all we want.

MR. CRAWFORD: . . . to the whole issue of building standards. But I think, Les, what you're referring to is that I commenced on my own, you might almost call it an in-house type of approach to seeing what our existing information already provided on the sole question of the hardship, if any, that is imposed upon home-owners, builders, and others in respect to the rigidity of standards; and, if the right word is the demanding nature -- and it's a suitable word I think -- of requirements that are made and the ability of the department to stop or curtail developments in the event that standards aren't met.

Now I don't have any conclusion of my own yet, in my own mind, as to whether or not the frequently made assumption that the standards are too harsh is a fair charge or not. I haven't resolved my own views on that yet. I should maybe say, this is a good time to add, that we have an advisory council in regard to building standards which is strongly representative of the private sector. There's just so much to be said on the subject. When I say there are a number of more aspects to or other things to be said -- the whole question of input into what the standards are is quite different from the question of enforcement or flexibility, quite frankly. They're related, but they're different problems. They're different concerns. The input into it is based, to a very large extent, on national standards which are supplemented by codes and the like which are developed perhaps nationally, not as part of the code but as items that are incorporated in by reference to the standards as a result of findings of the Canadian Standards Association or similar testing groups. I admit the complexity and the apparent rigidity of the system; but as I say I haven't satisfied myself yet that there is an easy answer to the concerns that are expressed about rigidity.

MR. YOUNG: Well, Mr. Chairman, is it the understanding or the objective of the particular branch in question that as nearly as possible they will adhere to the National Building Code unless there's a very good reason not to? There have been some suggestions that some redefinitions take place, some more deviation from the code, at least allegations made to me that that might be warranted. At least it's a debatable item it seems.

MR. CRAWFORD: Okay, I'll answer you this way and then ask Doug Morrison to add to it. The understanding that I have had of the code is that the national code has only been varied for Alberta to the extent that would seem to be called for based on different circumstances here in the sense of climate or atmosphere or various things that are part of the requirements to take into account when you're setting a building standard. In other words, to come right to the point, I don't think that our variations create a Cadillac code where a Chev code would serve the average home-builder. I don't think that's happening. I don't think the National Building Code is being uprooted and gold-plated in pieces in order to increase the costs of people here beyond what they should be. But I would like Doug Morrison, who's very close to the issue, to add to that. If I'm wrong don't try to patch it up. Just tell it to them straight.

MR. MORRISON: One of the biggest problems that we're up against now of course is we do have a code; and in Alberta about 75 per cent of the province has been following the National Building Code for years under various jurisdictions. But now it's of course been made province-wide and it becomes compulsory.

But as far as the changes from the National Building Code, the sort of changes we've got into are provisions for the handicapped, for example, some special snow-loading situations that we have in Alberta. Some of the deviations that you may have got feedback on that the director of building standards, Dave Monsen, may have done is this attempt to get some

flexibility so that it doesn't come out quite as rigorous or rigid as the National Building Code. So deviations would be only attempts to try and make it less rigid.

MR. YOUNG: Well I guess to leave the matter, if I may, Mr. Chairman, I take it it's still being reviewed just to see exactly where the particular problems are with the hope that we can get some positive agreement as to not a Cadillac code, but rather that it not be a more costly code than necessary, and particularly with reference to the fact that we have a lot of architects, engineers, other technical specialists coming in from other parts of Canada in the nature of the economy we've had in Alberta. And apparently there have been some peculiar problems arising because of the influx of people working with the national code and suddenly coming against an Alberta code which is alleged to be a little different in some respects. I'll leave it at that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Musgreave.

MR. MUSGREAVE: Well, the concerns I have were something along the same line as Les's, except that the story I got was that you had written your own code which was much different in many aspects from the national code and caused a lot of problems. Is that true or not?

MR. MORRISON: I'd like to comment on that. Of course there were supplements to the National Building Code as I mentioned, primarily talking about air conditioning and certain snow-loading requirements as I mentioned, handicapped requirements. So in order to facilitate the use of this particular document, it was actually consolidated and written into the National Building Code with these changes, normally a supplement, to make it easier for architects and engineers, instead of having to come along and find a reference and go to the supplement. It was just written into the code. But no, indeed they did not change it.

MR. MUSGREAVE: The other comment, Mr. Chairman, to the minister is your advisory council. I think I have a letter in my desk there -- it's only about two months old -- from the architects crying the blues that you didn't consult them, you didn't consult the people in the business, and they're very unhappy about it that they're getting new conditions laid down and they weren't able to participate.

MR. MORRISON: I believe you're referring to a very specific case.

MR. MUSGREAVE: This was from the association too, not one lone person (inaudible).

MR. MORRISON: There was certainly consultation on all of the modifications from the National Building Code itself. But as far as the preparation of the legislation -- and for them to go through the code in detail and decide whether or not each little part of the code should or shouldn't be in the Alberta building code, it would be an absolutely tremendous task. In fact the modifications were submitted to all those organizations. They were asked for comments and we got them back and we responded to them. So I'm not exactly sure where that story comes from. But it's a new system coming into Alberta and of course it's got some growing pains. No doubt about that.

MR. MUSGREAVE: The only concern I have is this, that we have a National Research Council in Ottawa. I assume they do a lot of work, as part of the (inaudible). They're spending a lot of tax dollars doing this. Our manufacturers are setting up their processes to serve

the Canadian market, and then I would hope that we're not going into isolation and coming out with something that's obviously going to cost us more money to build buildings and homes and all that.

MR. MORRISON: No, we're not doing that. In fact the director of building standards actually works with all the other provinces and is the chairman of the organization to try to meet national scale.

MR. MUSGREAVE: One other question I'd like to ask then while I'm on the floor, fire prevention. We passed a smoke detectors act. I wondered, after we did that, I hear that they weren't that good and I wondered where are we on that as far as institutional inspection for older buildings? Can you tell me that?

MR. CRAWFORD: Well, there was a January 1, 1979, date set for older buildings of certain types. I think we would just have to presume that people are moving towards compliance with that. I don't think there's any question about compliance with new construction.

MR. MUSGREAVE: With the new ones, no. I just wondered, are you going to be leaving that up to municipalities to see that that's enforced, or will you be moving on that with your department for the older buildings commencing in January?

MR. CRAWFORD: I would think the major municipalities pretty well inspect those themselves, don't they Doug?

MR. MORRISON: Very definitely. They're really hot after that one because it's a life-saving (inaudible).

MR. GARDNER: The local fire chief has a responsibility as a local assistant to the fire commissioner in carrying out those.

MR. MUSGREAVE: So they'll be carrying them on.

MR. GARDNER: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Tom Lysons.

MR. LYSONS: Yes. I'm sorry to have to ask the question, but I understand there's \$1.8 million, Mr. Chairman, to the minister, for the fire training school. And yet in the Capital and Related Expenditure book I can't find any moneys allocated there. Now where . . . (inaudible)

MR. CRAWFORD: You know, if that's all there was to it, you and I would both be worried, I think. But my understanding is that the Housing and Public Works budget has that item in it. There's only a portion of the work to be done in this fiscal year, is that accurate?

MR. MORRISON: It has three major phases, and two of them have been done.

MR. CRAWFORD: It's a good project, Tom, for Vermilion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Charlie Stewart.

MR. STEWART: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. My question is about the administration in rural Alberta of the program, because the timelag or holdup of construction is . . . I quite well realize when you're building a program like this you can't anticipate the volume and have the personnel and there's going to be a problem. But the criticism I've had is that some of our personnel are spread too thin and don't seem to have the ability to make arbitrary decisions when we need them in the field. I think we've got to recognize that if we're going to see an inspector once every two weeks or twice a month in rural areas, it's going to be a detrimental effect on construction. Also the man in a rural area, I think, has to be senior enough to be able to judge and make decisions, because if you're having an engineered project it obviously simplifies it; where you get in the rural areas sometimes they're not that well engineered. There's got to be some decisions made on the spot. I think that inspectors in rural Alberta maybe have to be a little more senior and a little more able to make judgment decisions in order to make the plan work.

MR. CRAWFORD: That's an interesting observation and I don't think there's any doubt it has been a problem for the department trying to keep up with the rapid rate of growth in a lot of medium-size communities, such surely as Wainwright. I think we would just hope that the 18 new people that we get this year will enable us to service the inspection areas better and that there'll be some of these, if not most, allotted to the rural areas. Whether or not that will make such a significant difference I'm not sure. But it's a step in the right direction.

Now it seems to me there's something else implied in your comments though. Might I start by noting that the mere inspection of gas installations, electrical installations, and plumbing installations, and so on is the type of activity where there may be a certain backlog. We're addressing ourselves to that difficulty with the extra manpower that I referred to. But I think in you were also saying a project might not be so well engineered, it might not perhaps be so clearly up to standards in the actual, say, construction of a building, whether it be pouring foundation, or whatever. I'm not sure that we ever do get into that, do we? You know our building inspectors provincially aren't really there for that purpose.

MR. MORRISON: No, that's true. When we formed the building standards branch, the decision was taken to be providing assistance. It was complexity as far as the technical aspects of (inaudible) buildings. We would try to help out in most cases. We do inspect on a direct request. For example, there may be an arena or something that they're having problems with; then we'll send an inspector out on that situation. But generally speaking, it's been part of (inaudible). That's if you're talking about building inspectors.

If you're talking about plumbing and gas and these other things, certainly the man in the field has got the authority to make decisions. But we may find some of these municipalities that have just taken on an inspector, building inspector. Maybe they haven't got the experience yet.

MR. GARDNER: We are also operating the training programs for the local building inspectors to upgrade the qualifications. We have an active program in that area.

MR. STEWART: I recognize in a program like this that obviously if you're taking on new personnel, everyone isn't going to have the background of experience at recognizing . . . There's got to be a little bit of flexibility in inspection. I think that the problem we're running into in rural Alberta is where we haven't been living up to the standards. Quite obviously -- I don't think anybody denies this -- there's a lot of areas that

haven't been up to standard in recognizing how . . . You know, there's got to be a judgment decision sometimes made on how rigid you're going to enforce inspection. Not that we're trying to lower the standard, but the point is that if you're going to live by the book entirely, it sometimes becomes pretty hard to work.

MR. MORRISON: We work very hard not to do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Rusty Zander.

MR. ZANDER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. I think I have to concur in what was just said. In the Department of Public Works which are now constructing public buildings in certain centres in the rural Alberta, it sometimes takes a week, 10 days before you get clearance -- the contractor's held up until an inspection's made. I think the speeding up of that certainly would help.

MR. CRAWFORD: I can't respond to it, Rusty, other than to say . . .

MR. ZANDER: I know we're talking of two departments, the Department of Public Works and the Department of Labour. But I know one project was held up for almost two weeks until an inspector arrived on the scene.

MR. CRAWFORD: I don't even know if we inspect the Public Works ones or whether they do their own.

MR. MORRISON: In fact we don't inspect. We only do it on request.

MR. CRAWFORD: Right.

MR. ZANDER: But I think there was a request to your department.

MR. CRAWFORD: Well, it's just all the darn building boom you've got going.

MR. ZANDER: The trouble is we don't see it. You know it is difficult. Let's not kid ourselves.

AN HON. MEMBER: They just run out of cement.

MR. ZANDER: The smaller centres in Alberta, and I'm thinking of the town of Drayton Valley, and you get a hamlet or something like that and there's a public building going on and there's buildings going on all over. I know that the people are stressed to the limit and you haven't got enough bodies to get out. Consequently the building standards are not enforced.

MR. CRAWFORD: Maybe this would be a good time to describe the type of inspection that is done so that there is no belief that every facility that is built and is under the jurisdiction of one or the other of the governments is, in fact, inspected because -- and once again I'll call on Doug to describe it better. But if we tried to inspect everything that's built, there's no way anything would ever get done. So we don't. It's done on a selective or sample basis, and all sorts of projects go ahead without a specific inspection being done on them in respect to, say, their electrical installation.

As a matter of fact -- just for fun -- I think the little tag they hung on my electrical conduit in my garage that I had built in 1968, saying that this had to be inspected by a city inspector -- I think it's still there, and my understanding was that he's supposed to take it when he comes to show that he's been there. He hasn't been there yet.

MR. ZANDER: You can shake hands with me, Neil, because I've got one hanging there, too.

MR. CRAWFORD: Doug, can you help us out a bit again? We have discussed ways that we could try to develop inspection systems where you could use less and less inspectors per unit of inspection to be done, and I'd like Doug to just touch on that.

MR. MORRISON: What we've gotten into, we call quality control-type inspection. There may be a contractor who is building 10 houses. We will recognize him as being a very competent contractor. We will give him tickets for 10 houses for electrical inspection and then we'll, at random, pick maybe three of them and if we find any problems whatsoever, we'd have to go through them all in great detail. Now in that way, you might get down to a point where you are doing one-third of inspections.

Where the home-owner comes in and he says he's going to wire his house, we've got to inspect it. We try to do 100 per cent, if possible.

MR. ZANDER: Well, I've requested electrical inspection in my house since 1971 and I haven't got it yet.

MR. MORRISON: You haven't. Did you wire it yourself?

MR. ZANDER: No. You ought to take a look at it.

MR. MORRISON: If it's been done by a contractor, then the possibility is . . .

MR. ZANDER: Yes, it's done by a contractor.

MR. MORRISON: Again, you are looking at about 50 per cent -- our capabilities to handle about 50 per cent of all permits as far as inspection is concerned. We've been trying to complement this with an educational program for the contractors. We have them going all the way across Alberta in all of our areas. There's a tremendous amount of interest in trying to upgrade our technology as far as the standards are concerned, and that's the approach we're doing -- trying to supplement the manning that we obviously can't keep up.

MR. ZANDER: No, I know. But I invite you to come out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, can we move on to Vote 4, and you can get on with your house, Rusty, then I'll let you (inaudible). Occupational Health and Safety. Are there any questions?

MR. R. SPEAKER: I've noticed it running through all of the votes, and this is about the data thing. Is the department buying -- I've noticed, for example, the purchase of data processing equipment. Is the department buying new equipment, or have you equipment at the present time, or are you adding to it, to put forth this program? I notice there is an increase in all of the budgets for data processing. Do you co-ordinate it with . . .

MR. CRAWFORD: Is that Vote 4?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Yes.

MR. CRAWFORD: I think you're right, Ray, that it's going through all of the various divisions. I would be happy if Mr. Broemling adds anything to what I say to be more clear, but that really reflects a budgeting decision under which charges are made to the department for services provided by government services. So it doesn't reflect what we actually acquire in the sense of any new hardware or anything like that, because we don't acquire that.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Well, I notice in . . .

MR. CRAWFORD: It's a change in accounting, basically.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I notice in 4, and under 0.0.3, Grants Control Group -- 8.20 -- purchase data processing equipment. Is that something . . . Oh, it's processing. That's the difference, eh?

MR. BROEMLING: In this case, it's really microfilming equipment. It comes in the same code, and this is the microfilm we use in the . . .

MR. R. SPEAKER: Oh, I see, yes. Because in examination of the total budget, and all of the different estimates in different departments, the question was starting to raise its head as to whether these things were being co-ordinated or not, and that's why I raised the question. I understand what you're saying. Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have a question, Mr. Minister. What is meant by payment to MLAs?

MR. CRAWFORD: Oh, would you like to take a bow, Cathy? We have on the advisory committee for occupational health and safety, one MLA who is entitled to receive a stipend under our legislation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We move on to Vote 5, Individual's Rights Protection. Any questions on Vote 5? Are we agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Vote 6, Workers' Compensation. Bill, I think you had a question on this.

MR. DIACHUK: Yes, Mr. Chairman. In general, Mr. Minister, would you have an idea of how many cases go through the appeal process during the year, and how many have been granted additional compensation?

MR. CRAWFORD: I don't know the answer to that, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I would think that's in the Compensation Board's annual report, but I have no objection to getting that information and providing it to you.

MR. DIACHUK: Well, it's a general kind of thing. Are we giving any consideration to continuing compensation to a worker while the worker is appealing the decision of the doctors of the board?

MR. CRAWFORD: Well, I don't think you could do that. If a claim is made and no compensation is awarded, and then an appeal is made, what would you pay in the . . .

MR. DIACHUK: No, I'm talking about the ones that are discontinued payment, Mr. Minister.

MR. CRAWFORD: I see, where there was a regular monthly amount and then it was stopped.

MR. DIACHUK: Is there a certain amount of interest in this, or is this something that you haven't been approached on, Mr. Minister?

MR. CRAWFORD: That is a suggestion I haven't heard before, and I don't honestly know what the policy of the board would be on it. I think we're talking about a very, very small number of cases. As I say, I would be glad to get it. But let's look at it this way. With 110,000 cases a year, only a small portion of which go beyond 60 days, we're talking about . . .

MR. DIACHUK: But you can appreciate, Mr. Minister, we don't hear about the ones that are resolved.

MR. CRAWFORD: I know.

MR. DIACHUK: We only hear the ones that are not.

MR. CRAWFORD: By the time you get to those that last beyond 60 days, the graph is just dropping down like that, and you're dealing with perhaps a significant number of cases, but a small proportion of cases. I think the only feel I could get for it is that I have not had the impression that the review panel system -- and there are various ways of reviewing claims with bringing in maybe just a review of the case itself by the board, or another one where a review is primarily, purely, a new medical report, and this sort of thing. I don't have any impression that that system is backlogged or particularly broken down. In other words, I think those cases are being dealt with on a pretty business-like and continuous basis.

Now it still leaves unanswered the one question that you put, as to whether or not benefits could be continued. I guess what I was trying to put to you is that the board is very flexible, and if you will notice the report of the Ombudsman this year, he said that he found that where there was doubt -- and I was really impressed at this finding -- the issue was resolved in favor of the worker in all cases. Now I was really impressed by that because I think that's the right policy. I think where there's a little bit of doubt out there, and it can go one way or the other, go in favor of the worker.

Now that makes me think that the problem you speak of may not be a problem, in the sense that the board can certainly, during a review period, continue a payment because they have that power. Now if you have a case in mind, where there's a special problem, we do look at those all the time. But I would like to get to the board -- maybe, Don, we could have a note to do that -- to clarify their policy on the very point you ask, and then I'll be very glad to discuss it with you.

MR. DIACHUK: I'd like to -- not to hold up the vote -- get into some of that discussion because of the very fact that as an elected person I don't refer people to the Ombudsman. Maybe that's what I should do, but I always look at it that that's my role. I have correspondence where they just say: no, the policy is where they will not continue any payment until the case -- or continue the payment that was discontinued -- until the

worker is examined by the two doctors assigned under Section 28, or whatever it is. But I thought you might have some information. That's why I raised it, Mr. Chairman, and we'll work on it later.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Tom Lysons.

MR. LYSONS: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the minister said that there was 110 cases, even though . .

MR. DIACHUK: One hundred and ten thousand.

MR. LYSONS: I'm not used to counting in zeros. One hundred and ten thousand cases. I appreciate you said that they were short term generally. But there's really not that many employed people in Alberta for that number, and it seems an incredible number of cases.

MR. CRAWFORD: Yeah, it does. Our work force is about 900,000 people, and this would literally mean that since less than that number are covered by compensation -- there are people in the work force who aren't covered by compensation -- let us say that it means that one in seven in a 12-month period has a time-lost accident, because that's what these are. If there's no time lost it doesn't get into the records anyway. But some of them are extremely minor, and I would have to say to you that on the statistics I don't know whether a multiple injury goes in as one injury or three. You know, these are the other things to ponder about in that. Once again, I think the annual report of the board would give some helpful food for thought in that area.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Cathy Chichak.

MRS. CHICHAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wonder if the minister has some indication at this time as to whether there has been any decrease in the accident rate since the period of time that official health and safety committees have been in place in some of the industries and the training program has been going. Has there been any indication of any drop, or has there been a special time to have been able to get a reading in that regard?

MR. CRAWFORD: Well, this is a point we were on a little while ago. I was interested in Dr. Buchwald's elaboration on it, and he may want to elaborate more now, Mr. Chairman. But we have about 155 committees, and some of them are not really fully operational yet -- about a third of them wouldn't be.

Dr. Buchwald remarked that there was a terrific variety of committees, and that some were really not up to much, but that other ones were excellent. It was noticeable in the sites where the committee was a good committee, that at least some of the indicators of accident causes improved in the sense of tidiness around the site, the presence of dangerous materials, and things like this. But this did improve, and to me that's extremely encouraging. It's a matter, I think, now, of going back to other committees that aren't so effective, perhaps, and finding out why they're not so effective, and they can probably be helped, too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Agreed? We'll go on to Vote 7, Board of Industrial Relations. Sorry, Les.

MR. YOUNG: Just one quick question if I may, and it's a little bit on the light vein, but not totally light. In connection with a press report today -- I know one should never

quote the press, but nevertheless it gives rise to the question of policy as to whether it's the policy in the department to have one board appear before another board, or one board make public representation to another board or agency, and if so, what they present is departmental policy, or whose policy is it?

MR. CRAWFORD: I don't know a case where one board would be making a presentation to another board.

MR. YOUNG: Well, it seems as though the Workers' Compensation Board may have appeared before The Crimes Compensation Board inquiry, and made some suggestions re policy, which appears to be out of what I would consider the responsibility of the Workers' Compensation Board. I'm just wondering whether . . .

MR. CRAWFORD: That's a fair comment, then. Maybe I can respond to you this way. The Crimes Compensation Board, as an administrative board that handles claims under the overall jurisdiction of the Attorney General's department, I believe, I don't think would be sitting as a board for the purpose of the inquiry you speak of. I can see them having put out a request for representations or briefs to be filed for people wanting to give ideas about changes in overall compensation that might be anticipated or advocated. But I think when the Workers' Compensation Board then goes and says, well, here are our ideas, since you ask, I think they're really almost like a private citizen at that point. They're using their expertise and background, and no doubt information, to make certain views known.

Unless the government developed a policy which was different from that, I wouldn't want to say to the Workers' Compensation Board that I felt strongly that their ideas, given in good faith to another agency to try to assist them in an inquiry on general policy, is something that should be checked with me first. Because I think I'm also in the same position they are, in the sense that I can make my views known, too. And I might not have any.

MR. YOUNG: I guess the reason I raised the matter is that if the report is correct, it would suggest to me that perhaps there's some indication of government policy emerging or being recommended highly, at a level which I'm not sure is the route to go.

MR. CRAWFORD: Yeah. It's interesting, though. The Board of Industrial Relations, for example, frequently holds hearings on policies, where they invite people to make known their views to them. I don't think it's a common thing at all for another government agency to be among them. So from that point of view, I understand you raising an eyebrow when you see that.

But at the same, I guess, The Crimes Compensation Board wouldn't be conducting a hearing without the concurrence of the Attorney General and an approval of their terms of reference, and all they're doing is receiving the representations. They're not deciding anything at that point. That's just an observation. I don't know whether it's right or wrong to do it that way.

MR. YOUNG: Well, I just raise it as a question which maybe should be considered.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Vote 7, Board of Industrial Relations. Any questions? Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then could I have a motion to report the Department of Labour?

MR. BRADLEY: I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister, I would like to thank you and your support people for coming this evening, and for being so succinct in getting it done so early. I appreciate that.

MR. CRAWFORD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now I'll have a motion to adjourn. Mr. Johnston.

(The meeting adjourned at 9:08 p.m.)