

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Monday, May 11, 1987 2:30 p.m.**
Date: 87/05/11

[The House met at 2:30 p.m.]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

O Lord, we give thanks as legislators for the rich diversity of our history.

We welcome the many challenges of the present.

We dedicate ourselves to both the present and the future as we join in the service of Alberta and Canada.

Amen.

head: PRESENTING PETITIONS

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition on behalf of 30 businessmen and -women involved in the electronics communications industry in Alberta. These Alberta businesspeople protest the unfair competition they are facing from AGT's special products division.

head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table the annual report of Westerra Institute of Technology, as required by statute.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton Meadowlark, followed by Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, eight businesspeople from the electronics communication industry in Alberta. These distinguished and concerned citizens are, and I would ask them to rise as I announce their names: Sheila Barnes, Larry Meszaros, Gary Lines, Ken Kenton, Len McIlwrick, Darryl Holowachuk, John Brugman, and Eric Thompson. I would ask the Members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in welcoming them today.

MR. PIQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, today I am very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly, an invasion of 97 grade 6 students from the Athabasca elementary school. The town of Athabasca is a beautiful community nestled in the historic Athabasca River valley, 90 miles north of Edmonton. They are accompanied by four of their teachers: Mr. Ron Golonka, Mrs. Lucy Bahry, Mrs. Dorothy Ryan, and Mr. Larry Armfelt, and also by two school bus drivers, Mr. Harry Panylyk and Mr. Bruce Palsky. They are seated in the members' gallery. Would they please rise and receive the warm welcome from this Assembly.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, seated in the members' gallery today are 20 grade 6 students from the Crestwood school, who are accompanied by their assistant principal, Mr. Chomik. I would ask them to rise and receive the cordial welcome of this Assembly.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly this afternoon, 29 students in grade 6 from Greenview school, located only a block from my home in the constituency of Edmonton Mill Woods. They are accompanied today by two of their teachers, Mr. Don Briggs and Mr. Gerry Mittlesdat. They are seated in the public gallery. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

head: MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**Department of Tourism**

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, in co-operation with the Tourism Industry Association of Canada's National Tourism Week committee, Alberta Tourism has established a provincial committee to co-ordinate activities in celebration of this first ever national and provincial event.

The objective of National Tourism Week is to raise the Canadian public's understanding of the importance of the ambassadorial, social, and economic roles of tourism in Canada. The slogan for National Tourism Week is "Canada Grows With Tourism, Celebrate National Tourism Week, May 11-17." Alberta Tourism has adapted this slogan for provincial use to read "Alberta Grows With Tourism."

Each year increasing numbers of communities and businesses in Alberta and Canada organize events and programs designed to heighten the awareness of and the importance of tourism . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please in the House. The minister, please.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: . . . to foster increased hospitality. National Tourism Week has been established to provide a unifying banner for these efforts and to encourage greater involvement at the local, regional, and national levels. Therefore, as Minister of Tourism, I'm extremely pleased to declare May 11-17, 1987, as National Tourism Week in Alberta, and I call on all Albertans to join their fellow Canadians to commemorate and celebrate this country's first annual tourism week.

I join with Alberta's tourism industry in reminding you of the economic importance of an industry that is expected and projected to be the leading industry in the world by the year 2000. Tourism in Alberta employs over 100,000 residents and contributes \$2.3 billion to our economy. Last year we had one of our best tourism years in the past decade. Tourism offers us an opportunity to play host for approximately 5.8 million visitors, contributing to national and international understanding and goodwill.

Tourism is a renewable resource that enriches our province by supporting the preservation of our historic heritage and culture and enhancing the lives of residents and visitors alike. Tourism brings thousands of visitors to experience our great province and our friendly people. I urge every Albertan to join all of Canada in a salute to the tourism industry and the celebration of National Tourism Week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I certainly have no objection to celebrating National Tourism Week in Alberta. All of us, I'm sure, on both sides of the House are well aware of the importance of tourism to our economy and perhaps the fact that it could grow and be even more important to our industries in Alberta in the future. Of course, much work has to be done, but rather than rhetoric and telling people how much we love them and everything else and how important they are, I have a very specific suggestion to the minister, and perhaps he can talk to the Treasurer. We still haven't heard; the hotel room tax could be eliminated and \$9 million put back into the tourism industry.

It's a very specific suggestion, Mr. Speaker. Contrary to what the government says, that they're for tourism, taking that sort of money out of the tourism industry was not particularly helpful. So maybe rather than rhetoric, we'll see the Provincial Treasurer move in that area.

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Workers' Compensation

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the Minister of Community and Occupational Health. Following the minister's edict to the Workers' Compensation Board to cut benefits to injured workers, officials of the Workers' Compensation Board have been stuck with the job of implementing what I consider irrational and arbitrary cuts ordered by this minister. The executive director of claims services has advised the board that implementation of the minister's directive will require cancellation of important and hard-won protections for injured workers. My question to the minister is straightforward. Will he now confirm that his interventions have caused legitimate claimants to be cut off arbitrarily?

MR. DINNING: No, Mr. Speaker, I will not.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have a memorandum in front of me from that particular director, and it's very clear that he's listing a number of changes that are to take place and that have already occurred and have cut people off. I want this minister to come clean now that we have the evidence in front of us. Will the minister confirm that what he has done then is to force the board to interpret the regulations in a way which is arbitrary and unfair to injured workers and their families and that these changes of interpretation have resulted in an explosion in the number of appeals?

MR. DINNING: No, Mr. Speaker, I will not.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, then the minister obviously doesn't know what's going on at the Workers' Compensation Board. That's the type of silly answer that we expect from this minister.

In this memorandum the executive director of claims services has written of the consequences of the minister's letter of November 12, and I would ask him this question: does the minister agree with Mr. Wisocky's conclusion that significant philosophic and policy gains for workers will be lost as a result of the minister's directive, including things such as the cancellation of the benefit of doubt and the cancellation of the Charter of Rights for workers?

MR. DINNING: No, Mr. Speaker, clearly I will not.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I guess the minister is not aware then of this memorandum. I'd certainly be glad to let him know what's going on over at the Workers' Compensation Board.

But he also goes on to list other regressive things that should be done, and some of them have already started to occur. For instance, psychologists and physical therapists will be redeployed into cost-cutting functions rather than their normal jobs. Claims counseling, claims policy, and research in other areas will be shut down. I could go on, but these are things that are already happening.

Mr. Speaker, my question to this minister: now that it is well documented that the chaos that's occurring to injured workers and to the department is a result of this minister's directive to the board, will he now have the courtesy to withdraw that memo and let the board get on with the mandate that they're supposed to without political interference from this minister?

MR. DINNING: No, Mr. Speaker, to answer the hon. member's last question, I will not. I will continue to exercise my responsibility in asking the board to ensure that they pay injured workers all of which they're entitled to, no more and no less. And where an injured worker has a need that goes beyond entitlement, we will assist that worker with his dealings with the Department of Social Services or the Unemployment Insurance Commission.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Surely, outside of the announced intention to get rid of the 20 percent increase in benefits paid that the minister has fondly referred to a number of times, there must have been some research here. Something provoked him into this move. Could he share with the Legislature what study, what research, or what scientific basis he had to suddenly decide to tighten up on workers' compensation?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the scientific basis was one we witnessed, that in 1986 the cost of claims rose by 20 percent over the previous year, when in fact there was no increase in the number of claims. There was no associated cost or amount in the severity of the injuries or the accidents that took place, certainly not in the order of 20 percent.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Mr. Minister, I've sat on that review committee several times in my responsibility as a member of this Legislature. The minister has stated in this Assembly that the Workers' Compensation Board is an autonomous body. Now, can the minister indicate to the Assembly and the people of this province what the rationale is, that many people are phoning us as MLAs and saying, "Our benefits have been reduced or completely eliminated?" Was there a direction from the minister, a direct representation by the minister, to review the funding and to make the cuts? Was there a directive from the minister?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, there was a directive from me back in November 1986, that the board was to look at two things. One, it was to look at the situation as I've just described it with respect to the amount of compensation, the cost of claims vis-à-vis the number of claims, and to take appropriate action to find out why that was the case and to bring those claims costs properly in line, in keeping with the board's responsibility to

pay to injured workers on the basis of what they're entitled to under the law and under the regulations.

Mr. Speaker, it is an autonomous board, but I have a responsibility as the minister reporting to this Assembly to provide that agency with proper direction with respect to policy as agreed to by the government.

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question, Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to designate my second question to the Member for Calgary Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are also to the minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board. I'd like to ask him questions as to how his cost-cutting policies are affecting Albertans injured at their worksites.

Mr. Speaker, this minister is loosening regulations on the use of vinyl chloride monomers; he's not putting strongly defined exposure limits in his draft regulations for coal dust, silica, and asbestos; and he's not acting on the dangers posed by exposure to isocyanates. In view of these abdications of leadership, why is it the policy of this minister to cut the benefits to workers whose lungs are damaged by exposure to fumes in the workplace? He seems to be punishing the victims of his policy. Why has he adopted that policy, Mr. Speaker?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, we have adopted no such policy. In keeping with this government's practice, before it puts in place appropriate regulations, it has gone out and consulted with all of those who will be affected by the regulations. I am awaiting the results of that consultation process.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, my questions today are based on specific instances brought to my attention in this province. I have to ask the minister about his policies, which they represent. When a vision-impaired worker can support his family with a job at about \$1600 a month, we applaud him for overcoming his disability. But when that same worker loses his hearing due to noise on the worksite, his compensation is exactly the same as any other worker that suffers the same injury but has full sight. Why does the policy of this minister not recognize the special problems associated with individuals that have multiple disabilities that are injured on the worksite?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member has a specific case that he is concerned about, a specific individual, I would welcome representations from the hon. member, and I would go to work on that person's case.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, we've been doing that, and we're not getting a response, which is why we're forced to ask about the policies. We presume they're being treated in accordance with the policies laid down by this minister. Why is it the policy of this minister to deny compensation to injured workers when they also happen to be directors of the small business for which they work? Where is the fairness in that policy?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the workers' compensation legislation provides for owner operators to be covered, to take out personal coverage to a maximum of \$40,000 per year. That is in the legislation; it's in place. Those who take it out are covered

by it.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. When a family's son is killed on a drilling rig where safety conditions were inadequate, according to the inspector, they receive only \$2400 in compensation for that death. Would the minister finally admit that his policy is clearly not fair, that it's hurtful, and needs to be totally revamped?

MR. DINNING: No, Mr. Speaker, I will not.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, as any M.L.A. in the House can tell you, one of the big parts of the mail comes from people that are unhappy with workmen's compensation. The board does not allow any outside consultants. Would the minister go far enough to allow those that want to challenge the board's decision to partially fund, at least, outside consultants or outside advice? It's awful hard to appeal to a compensation board that only listens to itself and Mr. Minister.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, there are provisions for that right now, such that if an individual worker who is injured wants to go and get a second or a third or a fourth opinion from various other doctors beyond the board, that injured worker has precisely that right to do so.

MR. SPEAKER: Vermilion-Viking, followed by Clover Bar.

DR. WEST: Yes. To the minister, a supplementary. Could you indicate whether or not you would be looking at those occupations that have very low accident rates or none over a long track record, that could be precluded from workmen's compensation and set loose to seek private insurance?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, that would violate the kind of approach we've been taking for the last number of years with respect to workers' compensation, so that virtually all workers and all employers are covered by no-fault insurance with no recourse to sue. But I take the hon. member's excellent point and suggest that those areas where there are a severe number of accidents and injuries and fatalities -- those are where we are dedicating our efforts with respect to inspection, education, and counseling.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. We had looked -- to the hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking -- at that aspect of it, and we found out that the system in Alberta was the best that we could find anywhere in the world, so I will give the minister and the Workers' Compensation Board that due.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is: can the minister assure the Assembly that the appeal mechanism that so many workers now complain is too long and too cumbersome -- can the minister have a look to see if that appeal procedure can be tightened up and speeded up so that the worker can get his appeal mechanism in place much more quickly?

MR. DINNING: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have done precisely that. And my conversation with the chairman of the board last week was to ensure that all those workers who had appeals and whose files were complete and had all the information that was necessary to make a decision -- those cases, those workers' files, would be looked at in the early part of June.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, main question.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker. I would like to designate my question to the Member for Edmonton Meadowlark.

AGT Commercial Enterprises

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very difficult for small businesses to compete with a publicly funded megacorporation such as Alberta Government Telephones. While Alberta Government Telephones has a legitimate reason to be in certain commercial enterprises, we are now aware that this company is selling sound systems, intercom systems, which can by no means be considered an appropriate market for a Crown corporation. To the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications. Why would the government be selling sound systems and intercom equipment when there are plenty of private businesses ready and able to provide this product?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, in response to the question from the hon. Member for Edmonton Meadowlark, Alberta Government Telephones, under questioning by me, has indicated that they are in what I call an ancillary service area, partly because of the tie to information processing and the trunk systems. I have pursued that and have asked that they try to split away the audio portion of those sound systems, especially those that aren't involved with the main component of the telephone system. I imagine the hon. member has further questions, so I'll await some further questions.

MR. MITCHELL: That's very encouraging to hear, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister please confirm, therefore, that in the near future his department or AGT would no longer be in the business of providing sound systems to south side discoteques and teen clubs such as the Stardust teen club?

MR. YOUNG: Well, Mr. Speaker, in my discussions with the chairman and the president and also within the last six weeks with the commission -- I actually raised this with the full commission. I raised it as a significant concern and asked that they examine this whole area but particularly the audio area.

Mr. Speaker, I should indicate that as an MLA and now as minister responsible, and from many government MLAs, there have been brought to my attention concerns or allegations about competition. I have gone to some lengths to try to sort out competition in what areas and identified specifically the audio area as one that I felt could be separated from the other areas of competition.

Mr. Speaker, I should also indicate that in doing that separation, I have had meetings with firms in Calgary who were very gracious with their time and sent representatives to a meeting some several months ago -- three months ago, I believe it was -- and I have commitments to have a meeting with certain firms in the Edmonton area when the pressures of this House do not bear quite as heavily as they do at the moment.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister please indicate whether his concern with AGT's unfair competition in commercial enterprises, which no public corporation

should be involved in, will extend to getting AGT out of selling computers, selling computer software, selling computer maintenance contracts as well? Could he please confirm that?

MR. YOUNG: There are two elements, Mr. Speaker, of the question just raised. First of all, and I think it should be clear that even in the audio area there are two international corporations of rather large size -- in fact, I think both of them larger than Alberta Government Telephones -- who would still be involved in that business. So as a question of competition, in terms of largeness of corporations we should realize that that's what's in the marketplace.

But with respect to the electronics data processing, that is a more difficult area, and one that I again have asked them to explore most carefully, because the difficulty we have is that many of the large networks or systems which are being put in place now as part of the telephone system are in fact communications instruments and also data processing instruments at the same time. For instance, the new kinds of switches which are being put in place in telephone centrals have a capacity for many other services than traditionally has been regarded as pure telephone service.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister please indicate when he expects to have a final decision on those areas that AGT should be involved in and those areas that it shouldn't be involved in? And will that decision involve specific criteria upon which decisions as to what kind of commercial enterprise AGT will be involved in would be based?

MR. YOUNG: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm just not sure of the question because of its breadth. But I can say that in terms of a final decision with respect to audio, in the rather narrow sense in which this series of questions commenced, I made that final decision and communicated it some time ago. Now, I suppose it will bear watching to see how well executed it is.

With respect to the competition in the electronics processing area, that is a more difficult matter and one which will, I think, for the long foreseeable future have gray areas, because in fact the technology is moving the former telephone functions closer together with data processing functions and information processing. So that, I think, will be a continuing challenge to us to sort out, and it will be so not only in Alberta but increasingly so in other parts of the world.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Premier. In light of the fact that we're allowing a Crown corporation to compete against the private sector, is the Premier in a position to indicate if and when the government is going to privatize Alberta Government Telephones and let them compete against the big boys?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question. I'd welcome during the course of the House the views of members regarding privatization. For my part, the government has put in place a study to see how the privatization might be conducted and whether or not we could provide this service at the same cost, perhaps more efficiently even, to the citizens of Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary Fish Creek.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although neither the

Member for Edmonton Meadowlark nor the TRT minister made specific reference to Altel Data, there is no question that it is this specific agency that's engendering so much concern on the part of suppliers of EDP type equipment, and I'm concerned with the minister's reference to "a continuing challenge to sort out." That has an indefinite end sound to it. I wondered if we could get a more reassuring response, with some specific reference as to when his review of Altel Data's tax-supported competition could be dealt with.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, first of all, Altel Data was a concept name that was used for certain types of the business activities of Alberta Government Telephones for some period of time. Effective, I believe now, six months ago it rolled what was the Altel Data function into a business information component and doesn't separate or break them out in that manner any longer. That is partly a reflection of the problem we're all onto here today, which is how to differentiate in a very clear and precise way between communications and data processing.

I am very acutely aware of the challenge involved. I have so far been unable to find a sharp, definitive distinction and line which I could draw, but I continue to work on it. I would certainly invite any members to supply any observations or helpful hints they might have on how we could make sure that Alberta Government Telephones functions with a quality of service and in a very vigorous way in those basic systems which I think we fundamentally require for not only small but large businesses in the province and at the same time leave opportunity for other firms to provide the ancillary services.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Can he explain why it is the policy of his government in the city of Edmonton to not accept bids for provincial government telecommunications equipment and services from any other supplier than Edmonton Telephones? Why no competition?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, the answer is in a memorandum of understanding that was reached -- I've forgotten the specific date; my apologies to the House for doing so -- several years ago as a result of differences between Alberta Government Telephones and Edmonton Telephones. There is a very specific reference to competition, and as a consequence of the settlement of that problem or that portion of that problem, Edmonton Telephones was assured that for a period of three years following the settlement there would not be competition. That period will expire in 1988, and at that point there will be competition to provide services to the provincial government. In every other respect there is competition currently in the private sector by all telephone companies or other electronic suppliers.

Sprung Enviroponics

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. minister of economic development. Those of us who support the free-enterprise system, sometimes we stand by and we bounce the ball around until somebody goes broke. My question is to the minister, as to the Sprung family high-tech greenhouse in Calgary, which was located on the infamous site of the former Imperial Oil refinery. Can the minister indicate, in light of the fact that we've lost the very high-technological greenhouse to Newfoundland, what the provincial government did to try and keep that facility here in Alberta?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, my understanding of the situation -- and it may differ from that of the hon. Member for Clover Bar -- is that the Sprung family, which is a well-known, solid Alberta family that has contributed a great deal, have developed a system that is as advanced as any available in terms of the growing of vegetables under cover. In the development of that process they have made a decision that they are prepared to market the technology and develop projects outside of Calgary.

In my most recent discussions with Mr. Sprung he indicated to me that he believes there is the capability in Canada to support at least 100 similar types of operations. So I applaud that sort of approach, and in terms of any establishment of one of the systems in the Atlantic provinces, I also applaud the Sprung family for making that move, because obviously the sale of fruit and vegetables or vegetables in St. John's wouldn't compete with those that are sold in Calgary.

I will be having further discussions with Mr. Sprung in the weeks ahead with respect to the Calgary and Alberta activities.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment. Sprung blames Imperial Oil. Imperial Oil blames Calgary. Calgary says that the Department of the Environment won't do anything. Who is going to help this particular situation? Somebody should have been responsible, Mr. Minister of the Environment. Who is going to pay for the cleanup of the mess down there?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I think I responded to that several days in the Assembly, but on April 16 a statement was put out by the task force that was set up to take a look at this whole matter, a task force composed of the city of Calgary, Alberta Environment, Alberta Health Services, and Imperial Oil. And it's further my understanding that the city of Calgary had made an offer available to Sprung Enviroponics several weeks ago, that the city of Calgary was prepared to pay for a consultant to review the situation on-site.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister of economic development again then. Is the minister in a position to indicate if there's going to be sufficient compensation to the Sprungs so that they can relocate and keep the project in Calgary?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, it's a really difficult dilemma faced by the Sprung family because of the dispute with the city of Calgary and Imperial Oil over the problems encountered at that site. It was raised with me by the Member for Calgary Millikan some time ago in terms of the difficulty, and it's one that evolves around legal responsibility. Notwithstanding that situation, my intention is to again meet with Phil Sprung to further discuss ways that the matter might be resolved.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my last supplementary question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Several years ago it was rumoured that the California growing area would be able to supply just the Pacific northwest, excluding this part of Canada. Is the minister in a position to indicate if, in light of the fact that we do have the technology available under this new hydroponic system to help alleviate the fact that we cannot grow fruits in the off-season, he will be encouraging this type of development to make sure that we are more self-sufficient in fresh fruits for the winter season?

MR. ELZINGA: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton Glengarry on a supplementary, followed by Calgary Buffalo. Then the main question, Calgary Millican.

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you. In view of the troubles experienced by Sprung Enviroponics, will the Minister of the Environment now confirm that this situation does underline the need for much more thorough and detailed laws governing site cleanups after decommissioning and that he will review those laws and soon present the Legislature with them?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, there is no evidence to suggest at this point in time that the difficulties experienced by Sprung Enviroponics are caused by hydrocarbons from an old refinery site.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister. From reports, the Newfoundland government got a piece of the action, by which I mean an equity position in the Sprung development, just as we did some years ago in the Syncrude project. I was wondering whether the minister might advise us as to whether it's government policy to seek such an equity position when we provide financial assistance to developments in this province, or are we going to take all of the risk without getting a share of the benefits, as in the announcement with respect to the magnesium plant and the proposed form of the Husky deal as it was some months ago.

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, the government does not approach companies and make offers to invest. Our approach to economic development is to work with companies, to act in a catalytic role, and to support their efforts and make judgments on projects based on the best advice that we can get, and that will continue to be the policy we pursue.

MR. SPEAKER: Main question, Calgary Millican, followed by Edmonton Glengarry.

Centralized Food Testing

MR. SHRAKE: Mr. Speaker, when the provincial government shut down the testing lab out at Airdrie, Alberta, the food industry in Calgary and southern Alberta expressed some concerns, and the Minister of Agriculture promised this would be on a trial basis. I wonder if the hon. Minister of Agriculture could tell the House if he's monitoring this centralizing of all the testing way up here in Alberta and if this is working out satisfactorily?

MR. ELZINGA: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are monitoring it, and it appears to date to have been working very satisfactorily. I should point out to the hon. member that June 19 is the last day of our monitoring process. It was a 60-day trial period. That was the one option we indicated to individuals who did express concerns to us. We are offering air transport of samples, and to date it has worked very well.

MR. SHRAKE: Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. If during this trial period we find it creates any hardship to any of the food industries in Calgary and southern Alberta, would the minister consider, if there's a hardship, having the city of Calgary Health Services take over some of this testing?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, our purpose in doing this -- and I should say at the outset that because of the concern expressed in Calgary, we took the liberty of not only informing the hon. Member for Three Hills but all Calgary Members of the Legislative Assembly in all parties, because we believe that we can introduce cost savings and greater efficiencies for those who do wish to have their food samples tested. By doing so, we have more efficient services in the city of Edmonton. But I do share with the hon. member that in the event there is continued legitimate concern, I have had communication with the hon. Minister of Community and Occupational Health whereby we can establish a food testing facility within the public health laboratory within the city of Calgary.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton Meadowlark, followed by Calgary Mountain View -- these are supplementaries -- followed by Edmonton Glengarry.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister. Could he please confirm that of the six people laid off as a result of closing the lab, three were men who were offered placement elsewhere, three were women who were initially not offered placement anywhere else, and finally one got a job by taking the initiative to transfer herself to Edmonton?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, there were some allegations as to discrimination as to sex, which were totally false. We are following them up, and there is a possibility of some court action, so it would be very unwise for us to further pursue this within this Assembly. But I want to leave the assurance with the hon. member and the Legislative Assembly that we want to do everything within our power to make sure that those whose positions had been declared redundant do and are offered positions within our own department. We are taking that extra step to make sure that they can enjoy a livelihood, because they have offered such a valuable service to the department and the people of the province in the past.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister has indicated that samples were flown to Edmonton. In order to ensure a true comparison and in order to be able to verify that those samples did not deteriorate due to the travel or the time before they were being tested, what were the controls in place in order to make that comparison with the samples in Edmonton, and was there sampling done in Calgary?

MR. ELZINGA: Yes, Mr. Speaker. We maintained a presence in the Airdrie laboratory. In some samples we did have dual sampling of the process so that we could check to make sure that there was an accuracy to our system. We did follow through with the suggestion of the hon. member, and to date it has shown that there is an accuracy within the system and that samples are being processed as they should.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton Glengarry, followed by Calgary Buffalo.

Hazardous Materials Transportation

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the Minister of Community and Occupational Health. Complaints have been brought to our attention that a Medicine Hat firm, Al-Tec

Sanitation, which has a contract with the Department of National Defence to transport hazardous waste, including lead, acid, and solvents, has failed to provide its employees with proper protective clothing to ensure their safety and has used the same trucks which transport hazardous wastes, without flushing them, to drain septic tanks and put contents on fields or into the Medicine Hat sewage system. To the minister. Has the minister received such complaints? If he has, will he advise the Assembly what action his department has taken? And if he is not aware of this situation, will he now undertake to investigate this and report back to the House?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of the incident in question. I appreciate the representation by the member. I'll take it under advisement and report back to the Assembly.

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you. Will the minister assure the Assembly that his investigation of this matter will include more than just a phone call to company officials and will in fact include sewage and soil testing, inspection of vehicles, and interviews directly with present and recently employed drivers?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I will look into the incident and report back to the Assembly when I've got information.

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you. To the Minister of the Environment, in that case. Has the minister done a thorough on-site inspection to determine whether or not the storage of chemicals in railcars at this site is a contravention of section 11 of the Hazardous Chemicals Act regulations, which require a primary tank and surrounding secondary containment arrangements? And I do know this department is aware of this situation.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'll accept that question subject to my review.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary.

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you. I'm wondering if the minister has initiated any testing, especially soil testing near the railcars used for storage, to prove or disprove reports brought to his department through their pollution hotline of frequent spillage. And if not, will he undertake to do so soon?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the pollution emergency response number is one that's contained in the front page of all telephone books of the province. We get calls on a 24-hour-a-day basis, and all calls are referred for immediate follow-up.

MR. TAYLOR: Supplementary back to the original minister, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the hazardous waste plant has now opened up to take on product, could he tell us, where the case of the transportation of hazardous wastes are shortcuts using municipal highways, say without shoulders, or improperly laid out municipal highways, if that falls under that minister's jurisdiction, or does that come under the Minister of the Environment?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I'm well aware of the hon. member's concern and alleged interest in this, but I would happily refer that question to my colleague the Minister of the Environment.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, to supplement. The information provided to the Assembly by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon is incorrect. The Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation in Swan Hills is only in a test period at the moment. It is not open to the receiving of hazardous or toxic materials in Alberta other than a selected number of transformers that have been there to in fact test up that particular arrangement.

DR. BUCK: To the Minister of the Environment. Is it true that the Bill and Bill show says that all the roads are paved in the constituency of Barrhead?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of my record as a Member of the Legislative Assembly in dealing with the needs of the constituents, the people who live within the area known as the constituency of Barrhead. It's my hope and my intent that should I live long enough, virtually every road in my constituency will be paved. That is a commitment to my constituents.

MR. SPEAKER: Spoken like a true rural MLA, no matter what party.

Illegal Use of Knives

MR. CHUMIR: This is to the Attorney General, Mr. Speaker. Police report that it's becoming more and more common for individuals to pack knives, which are pulled out and used at the slightest affront. In 1986 in our two largest cities somebody was stabbed approximately an average of once every two days. It's becoming an epidemic and an increasing danger to all citizens who get into any kind of verbal confrontation. Has the minister had any discussions with police and/or the federal government with respect to means of combating this alarming trend?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I also read the *Calgary Herald* on the weekend and noted the story which is obviously the source of the hon. member's research.

It is a difficult situation relative to the subject of when one carries a knife for illegal purposes and how to determine that. There are, of course, certain knives which are banned officially in the Criminal Code, but as all hon. members will be aware, each of us is in possession of knives, and large numbers of them no doubt. Therefore, it becomes a very difficult question as to how to determine when a knife is going to be used or is being carried for an illegal purpose.

MR. CHUMIR: In this case, as in many others, Mr. Speaker, the press follows my interest in issues. I have here an extensive report that I had done in April and would be happy to give the minister access to it.

If the minister is aware and if concerned and if the matter is under discussion, is it the government's opinion that it would be useful to seek increased criminal penalties for assaults involving knives or offences in which knives are used?

MR. HORSMAN: If the hon. member was concerned about the matter and did not bring it to my attention until now, I would regard that as regrettable.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that I will discuss matters of this kind with the Attorney General for Canada and other attorneys general at our meeting which will take place towards the end of

the month. I would suggest, however, that it is a Criminal Code matter as to whether or not new definitions as to the use of knives or the carrying of knives should become subject to more clearly defined limits in the Criminal Code.

MR. CHUMIR: Mr. Speaker, I've brought a number of issues to the minister's attention for which nothing was done, and I find that regrettable.

To the hon. Solicitor General. Many hotel owners are trying to control the use of knives in beverage rooms. Why has the government not provided in the Liquor Control Act for a prohibition or a checking of knives in all licensed premises?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I find that in the beverage room we must supply meals, and usually you would require a knife as well as a fork, and you may have difficulty in checking the same.

MR. CHUMIR: That was not the answer I was seeking, Mr. Speaker, but much appreciated, notwithstanding the paucity of hard information.

To the Attorney General, for further comment along the same lines from the Solicitor General, if he's up to it. Will the ministers undertake to make this issue a priority and report to the House next session about what initiatives can be taken to deal with this frightening trend, which must be of concern to all aware Albertans?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Solicitor General has said, and as I have said as well, all of us, every individual Albertan, owns knives of a wide variety which are capable of injuring people. There are certain kinds of knives, however, which are obviously designed for the purpose of carrying out criminal acts, and those are banned under the Criminal Code of Canada today.

The question of enforcement becomes one of considerable difficulty. There are a number of knives that are carried by people quite legitimately; for example, when a person is engaged in hunting. It becomes a very real dilemma for the law enforcement officers to determine when a knife is being carried for an illegal purpose, a knife that is not now prohibited for ownership. It is therefore something that, while it is regrettable that these are being used for offensive weapons, it is also true that knives of many shapes and kinds are readily available throughout the average department store and many other places. It is going to have to be a matter that the police will have to use their discretion in determining whether or not knives are being carried for illegal or legal purposes.

I will of course, as I have indicated, take this up with my colleagues in other provinces and the federal Minister of Justice at our next meeting later this month.

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired. Might we have unanimous consent to complete this series of questions and also to have one minister give a brief correction to a statement made on an earlier day?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the concern the member has in this instance, and I might point out that as of this

morning I have asked my department to do a polling of all the police forces in Alberta to find out what type of knife and the number of incidences where knives are utilized or purported to be utilized. I'd be happy to share that information with the member.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton Strathcona, a supplementary.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Has the Attorney General considered floating the idea of harsher sentences where knives are used in the commission of a crime?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, that of course is a matter that can be discussed and will be discussed when I deal with the matter with the federal minister in terms of the Criminal Code sanctions and the level of penalties which are now provided for in the federal Criminal Code. That of course is something that is also the prerogative of the courts to a considerable extent in determining the type of sentence which is passed by the courts relative to the seriousness of the crime in which the knife may be used. That is something that of course the courts should take notice of, in view of the facts which have already been referred to earlier in question period by way of questions and by way of the answers provided today.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Career Development and Employment.

Employment Statistics

MR. ORMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 8 in this Assembly during discussion in question period on employment statistics I indicated that "Alberta has moved from the fifth highest rate of unemployment to fourth." I wish to correct that statement and indicate to you that in fact Alberta had the fourth lowest rate of employment in Canada in April 1987, having been tied for fourth with Quebec in February.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. SPEAKER: Might we revert briefly to the introduction of special guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Premier.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS (reversion)

MR. GETTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are some students from the constituency of Edmonton Whitemud who came into the Legislature while the question period was on. I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce them to you and to members of the Assembly. There are 29 students, grade 6 class from St. Boniface school, accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Zielinski, and four parents: Mr. and Mrs. Fenrich, Mrs. Norma Steeves, Mr. George Raffa. I would ask them to rise and be recognized by members of the Assembly.

See May 8 Hansard, p. 1109

head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

[Mr. Gogo in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will the Committee of Supply please come to order to consider estimates. Members wishing to address questions to the minister, please indicate to the Chair.

Department of Labour

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, the estimates before us today are to be found in the government estimates book, page 231, with the authority for the programs on page 234.

It's been traditional that the minister responsible, in this case the hon. Dr. Ian Reid, give an overview of his department. Hon. minister, would you care to make opening comments to the committee?

DR. REID: Thank you. Mr. Chairman. I would like to make some brief initial remarks, some to do with the past year and some to do with the future. As we know, the Department of Labour and also the office of personnel administration have a rather small total budget of some \$36 million. The operations impinge upon almost every Albertan. It's true that in many cases those individuals are unaware of the influence and involvement of the department, but perhaps that's a measure of the calibre and skills of those who do the job within the department and the associated organizations.

Having now been the minister for almost a year. I'd like to express my own appreciation to the almost 750 people in the department, the office of personnel administration, the Human Rights Commission, and the Labour Relations Board, who work so hard at times and certainly not within the normal office hours one expects the public service to work. To indulge in some specifics and thereby perhaps run the risk of missing out somebody, I would like in particular to mention the efforts of the personnel administration office in relation to the rather marked downsizing we are indulging in under current fiscal circumstances and the employee assistance program that has been developed to minimize the impact on individual employees of that downsizing.

The effort that has gone into that in conjunction with working with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees has resulted in a program that addressed the downsizing with a maximum of concern for individual employees and thereby minimizing the disruption of individual families. I think the cost has been reasonable, and the program has certainly been very well accepted by our employees, who recognize the efforts and the concerns of the government in their welfare. It's interesting to note, Mr. Chairman, that the approach of encouraging longer term and older employees to retire -- rather than the usual system of last in, first out -- was one the committee on labour legislation noted with approval in other jurisdictions.

In the actual Department of Labour, Mr. Chairman, the general safety services division has been particularly affected by the early retirement program. Quite a large contingent there are taking early retirement, and I think we should recognize their contribution to the province. Many of them have worked in the division for over 30 years.

The Labour Relations Board, of course, as usual has been active with a number of significant hearings and, in addition to their ordinary work, have been reviewing the current Labour Relations Act as it has been applied by the Labour Relations

Board to make recommendations on administrative changes and others that may improve the labour relations climate in the province.

The Human Rights Commission, in addition to their work of holding inquiries and educating the general public of Alberta on matters of human rights interest, have also been holding meetings with Albertans on whether or not those with a mental disability should be included under the umbrella of the Individual's Rights Protection Act. Indeed, they have made a recommendation to me which I will be discussing with my caucus colleagues, I hope, prior to the next sitting of the Legislature.

Mr. Chairman, the most active area of the department in the last year has undoubtedly been the labour relations division in conjunction with departmental support services. Those are the two divisions of the department that had to prepare briefing documents, arrange travel and public meetings around the province for the Labour Relations Review Committee, and I would like especially, on behalf of the nine members of the committee I had the privilege to chair, to recognize the role that was played by the labour relations division and especially by departmental support services.

In relation to the latter, I would like to recognize one individual who is sitting in the members' gallery with his wife, Mr. Jack Tutty, the assistant deputy minister in charge of departmental support services, who is one of those who has taken advantage of the early retirement program and will unfortunately be leaving the department in the middle of June, much to my regret and, I think, to the regret of some others.

The only other remarks I would like to make prior to listening to members of the Assembly who may wish to address questions on specifics have to do with the women's program in the personnel administration office for our women employees in this province. I have some points I would like to make in relation to the women's program and to mention a brochure -- in fact, it's a booklet more than a brochure -- a calendar of services and information for women employees for April 1 of this year to March 31 of next year. It is obtainable from the PA office. But just to put it briefly, there are specific assistance programs for our female employees to encourage them to enlarge their careers and reach their potential and to encourage them to apply for jobs that may be more responsible and more onerous than the ones they initially accept when they join the public service. This program has now been in operation, Mr. Chairman, for some 10 years, with some remarkable successes during that time.

The philosophy has not been one of affirmative action or reverse discrimination, as it's sometimes called. It certainly has not been aimed at the quick fix, but rather it is producing a series of programs that will encourage our female employees to take a full part in the organization of the public service by encouraging them to take courses to upgrade their education, their experience, and thereby be able to apply for and accept more remunerative but also more onerous occupations. Just as an example, in 1975 only some 5.7 percent of the management group in the public service were women; it is now over 13 percent. But those figures have got to be taken in conjunction with the increasing evidence of the occupational groups that feed into the management group. In the three highest paying occupational groups -- they opted out an excluded service, the educational service and the administration services throughout the public service -- the percentage of women has increased in the same order from 23.6 percent to 30 percent, from 23 percent to 45 percent, and from 27 percent to 41 percent. That means that the feeder groups for the future managers are showing an increasing

percentage of women that is now approaching in some groups some 50 percent.

I would say that in spite of fiscal restraints and other concerns, it is our intention to continue these programs on an active basis. We will continue to ensure that women have got open and equal access to all occupations, and we'll encourage this by providing the training and development programs we currently operate.

Of course, we don't do all of this within the personnel administration office; we have to rely on the specific officers in the departments who implement these programs and who recommend them to the women under their jurisdiction. In addition, we have had a resource centre developed, with some 300 books and cassettes on a whole number of topics that relate to women in the workplace. The career planning centre has been developed and also encourages women to take opportunities that may arise. We provide training to departmental staff to assist specifically in the development of the skills within the individual departments to encourage women to advance in the public service.

Mr. Chairman, those are just initial remarks, but I would indicate the very broad interest this government has in the future of female employees within the public service and, indeed, our commitment to encourage them in every way to take a full part in the public service. I think with those brief remarks I will now leave it open for members of the Legislature to ask questions, and I shall do my best to answer those questions in the fullness of time.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. minister. There are six votes before the committee. The Chair assumes questions regarding any of the six votes are acceptable. Hon. Member for St. Albert.

MR. STRONG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll commence my remarks through the Chair to the minister, because basically most of the figures I'll be quoting are from the supplementary information in the element details. Commencing with vote 1 and particularly vote 1.0.1, I note there's a 21.3 percent increase in the minister's office. My question to the minister is: why is the cost in the minister's office up when almost all the other areas of the department are suffering from reductions in their budgets?

The second question I have with respect to vote 1 is with respect to vote 1.0.6. In this department we have a 41.1 percent reduction in a communications budget, some \$34,000, making the total communications budget \$48,728 for the calendar year. Now, I find it very difficult, Mr. Chairman, to understand why this area was cut back, because it was one of the things dealt with in the final review of the Labour Legislation Review Committee and part of the comments they had with respect to increased communications. The final report of that committee suggested and stressed increased communications, said leadership on the part of government is necessary, and made a number of recommendations. Now, why I can't understand this, Mr. Chairman, is because we see such a small amount of money laid out to do a number of things.

Basically, on page 91 of the final report of committee, they suggest

That the Department of Labour develop an information program to assist enterprises in implementing the joint communication process.

We see the requirement for 20 or more employees where an em-

ployer establishes employee/employer communication processes. My difficulty is: if we're going to do all these things and follow through with the recommendations of this committee, that certainly isn't spelled out in the budget estimates we see for this department.

The next area, Mr. Chairman, is vote 1.0.7 for planning and research, where we see a 14.3 percent reduction in the budget of this department, some \$100,000. I'll basically refer back again to the final report of the labour review committee. How is the minister going to be able to implement the recommendations of the review committee with less money? What we have here in recommendation 11 is:

That the Department of Labour seek the cooperation of other agencies to ensure that a program is established to enhance the training of labour relations practitioners.

We also see that we "establish new, joint labour-management organizations" in recommendation 12. We see in recommendation 13 ongoing plans "undertaken by the Department of Labour to inform Albertans of their rights and responsibilities." How, Mr. Chairman, are we going to do this with less money? It's not only less money; it's less people. In addition to that, we have in the final report an information base to be established to provide stakeholders with analytical data that assists labour/management participants. Also, in recommendation 15 of that final report we see that it suggested we establish an organization similar to the Japanese Round Table in the province of Alberta. How, Mr. Minister, are we going to achieve that with less money and less people?

General questions in regard to vote 1. To the minister: since the final report of the Labour Legislation Review Committee was issued in February this year, who is writing the new labour code and is that cost reflected in these estimates? Secondly, we know that the travel costs and some of the other costs last year for this review committee were some \$450,000 to \$500,000. I'd like to know what the final cost will be and how much of that cost is reflected in this budget. Could the minister specifically identify where those costs are contained in these estimates, and what is the amount estimated for the total expenditure of this labour review process?

Next, Mr. Chairman, is vote 2, which basically deals with labour relations. I'd like to specifically make my remarks to 2.0.4, which is the employment standards branch. We see in this department a slight reduction, .6 percent, in a budget expenditure of \$3,728,231. One of the major responsibilities for the employment standards branch is to administer and enforce that employers meet their responsibilities to their employees. Some of these things include regulation of hours of work, payment of wages, vacation and holiday pay benefits, maternity benefits, regulations for young people as far as their hours of work, and many other areas that concern working Albertans. Mr. Chairman, employment standards was another area that was stressed in the final report of the Labour Legislation Review Committee.

In addition to that, Mr. Chairman, I've had a number of calls and visits from my constituents and other Albertans complaining about the lack of service and the lack of satisfaction they've received from employment standards. I'm going to give you two examples of these. One of them was a case where an individual who was a chef went in to work on her days off to do a favour to her employer. Subsequently, her pay wasn't delivered on the appropriate date, and she found that by doing that favour to her employer, when she finished on a holiday weekend on a Monday, the sheriff was there to seize everything. Unfortunately, she was out \$1,600 in wages and benefits and, in addition to

that, holiday pay.

The other example is a construction firm out in Nisku Industrial Park where there were a number of employees -- one of them, \$2,600 in lost wages and benefits from an employer. That might not seem like a lot of money, but to those individuals it means feeding the family, paying the rent, and trying to survive in Alberta's difficult economy. These and many more Albertans thought that employment standards legislation was there to protect them, and they thought this government was going to do it. Unfortunately, they found that the labour legislation in this province wasn't as fair as they thought it was. Unfortunately, the case was that they were left high and dry.

Let's examine in a little more detail the case of the employees that lost, some of them up to \$2,600, with the bankruptcy and receivership of a construction firm in Nisku. This involves, as I said, a receivership. Initially these employees went in and filed a complaint form in February of this year. Now, the employment standards branch investigated and found for the employee and the rest of the employees that were there -- unfortunately, it didn't get the job done. Because as the minister knows, the first thing that has to be done is the complaint has to be signed and normally at that time the employment standards branch will deal with the individual or individuals to justify their complaints. The problem, Mr. Chairman, is that when that employment standards branch has to get hold of the employer to verify and get details from his side or her side, as the case may be, unfortunately for Albertans the employment standards branch is having a very, very difficult time getting hold of employers to discuss things with them. And if you can't meet the employer, it's very difficult for the employment standards branch to do their job.

The employment standards branch next, after going through that process, tries to effect a compromise to settle a complaint. In this case, it wasn't settled. The next step is that the investigating officer then issues an order to comply and the employer has 15 days to appeal to an umpire which can overturn or uphold the initial officer's order. If the employer still refuses to comply, an application for a court judgment -- the Court of Queen's Bench -- is applied for. This is a very long process, very long indeed, and in this particular case, for this employer at Nisku, it took 10 weeks to get this judgment. Now, when that judgment was gained, those employees felt they had something. Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, they still had nothing. Because when you get a court judgment, when that's obtained, it's meaningless because the employee has to enforce the judgment. Unfortunately, almost every time that individual has to go and seek outside legal assistance to get that judgment enforced, and in many cases it costs more money to enforce a judgment than what the employee is out in wages.

With a receivership or bankruptcy, the claim against a company's assets is well down the list. Basically, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, two months to get a judgment that's meaningless. Now, where is the government protection for these loyal employees who, in many cases, worked many years for the employer? Who is protecting their interests?

In the final report of the Labour Legislation Review Committee, the minister and his committee touch on some of the problems in the current labour legislation. That's found on page 94, recommendation 16, where the minister and his committee recommend that perhaps deemed trusts should be set up "and therefore are not to be considered assets for the purposes of receivership, bankruptcy," and it goes on.

As I initially stated, the budget of the employment standards

branch is some \$3.7 million. That's a lot of money, especially a lot of money for a department that really is not doing as well and as good a job as it should be doing because it's somewhat hamstrung and limited in what it can do. I would like to make a suggestion that's going to save the taxpayers of this province a significant amount of money and allow Albertans who are cheated out of their wages and benefits the reimbursement of those wages and benefits. Why should the taxpayer and the employees pay the cost of collections of these moneys? Should not the employer pay the total cost of collections? Or if the employment standards branch finds in favour of the employee, why indeed should that employee bear the cost and why should the taxpayer bear the cost of collection?

I believe the minister will even agree that to charge the individual who is responsible is much more meaningful than seeing employees sitting on the sidelines waiting month after month after month. They're being forced to seek unemployment insurance or, in some cases, social assistance while searching for another job while they're owed considerable sums of money from employers who cheat and abuse them. What I'm going to suggest is that this minister consider allotting sufficient moneys to a fund that would reimburse any employee all moneys owed by an employer found guilty of violating the employment standards legislation in the province of Alberta. In other words, what I'm suggesting is that the employee wouldn't be the loser; the government would immediately reimburse the employee from that special fund. The employment standards branch could then utilize the legislation that exists to not only collect the money owed but levy against the employer the cost of collections of these moneys. Further, the minister should change the Employment Standards Act to allow for recovery from a director or owner of a company similar to the Business Corporations Act. Simply put, those directors or owners should be liable personally for wages and benefits owed to their employees. Where a receiver is in place, employee claims could be subrogated to the Crown, attracting the Crown prerogative entitling the Crown to become a first charge on remaining or residual assets of that company. Again, why should the taxpayer bear the cost of these collections and why should the employee suffer? It's not their fault. Should the minister consider and implement this process, perhaps he could put some of the "progressive" back into this Progressive Conservative government.

Some general questions. A significant part of the report of the Labour Legislation Review Committee dealt with employment standards. Has the minister assigned a dollar value to the process of this review of employment standards legislation in these estimates? Has the minister initiated this review process, and are the costs contained in his budget estimates?

To the minister: is the employment standards branch still drafting and allowing overtime agreements in the construction industry or any employer too? Now, just in that light, I had a letter sent to me by a constituent who recently made application for a job in the construction industry. One of the processes in the final review was to ban or eliminate overtime agreements in the construction industry where overtime agreements, under recommendation 21, should "not be a condition of employment." Well, those employers are still utilizing overtime agreements. I have one of them right here in a letter from a constituent saying that, yes, there are still overtime agreements.

In addition, what will be the process of the review and the costs of this review? Are they going to be dealt with in these estimates? Specifically, the cost to review where we're going with these overtime agreements: how much is it going to cost

the taxpayer to eliminate these?

The next area I'm going to deal with, Mr. Chairman, is vote 3, but specifically reference 3.0.2. as it relates to the boilers branch. Now, we see in vote 3.0.2. a reduction of some 6 per cent, a \$200,000 reduction. My concern is with the privatization of welding tests for B pressure welders. As the minister is aware, this requirement is every 18 months for a B pressure welder to go out and renew his B pressure ticket. To the minister: could the minister comment on what he envisions for this department, and is he considering privatizing the retesting of those B pressure welders to private facilities and not at the government test centre? Now, the minister knows that the current cost of retesting these trades qualifications through the government retesting centre is limited to \$20. If this retesting is privatized, this cost could increase to some \$125. It certainly is something the 6,000 welders in this province are not going to like, as it's a significant cost to them to retest those tickets and certainly one that I don't feel is fair and I know they won't feel is fair in light of the economic downturn in this province.

In addition to that, I want to go to the annual report for Alberta Labour for the year 1985-86. It was recently issued by the Department of Labour, and what we see is a drastic increase in fees. We see fees in '84-85 that totaled some \$4 million in 1985-86 totaled some \$5.3 million. Now that's a 30 to 35 per cent increase in those fees for those particular years. My question to the minister, Mr. Chairman, is: are we going to see in the 1987-88 calendar year a significant increase in those fees again? It's my feeling that these fee increases represent nothing more than a hidden or indirect tax that's unfair to Albertans who are trying to survive in these difficult economic times.

Moving on to vote 4, basically in vote 4 we're talking about the Labour Relations Board. What we see in the Labour Relations Board is the cut of another full-time position, and a 1.5 percent cut in the budget of the Labour Relations Board. The budget for the Labour Relations Board appears to be in conflict with the minister's recommendations in the final report of the Labour Legislation Review Committee, and that report suggests that delays in the process of labour relations should be eliminated.

What I can't understand again, Mr. Chairman, is: how is the minister planning on speeding up the process with less staff and less money? Specifically, I'd like to point out in point 2, the final report of the Labour Legislative Review Committee, again as it deals with the certification process and secret ballots. How are we going to achieve this? Basically in recommendation 36 it says that if a union can get 40 percent support, then fine, we'll get the application on to the Labour Relations Board. But then it says in recommendation 38:

That if the bargaining unit is similar to that perceived by the applicant, the Labour Relations Board [will] hold a vote of the employees within that unit, as soon as possible, to [determine].

Mr. Chairman, in 1983-84 there were 700 applications for certification filed with the Labour Relations Board. In 1984-85 there were 415 applications for certification filed with the Labour Relations Board. In 1985-86 there were 107 more applications for certification filed with the Labour Relations Board. That's 1,222 applications for certification in a period of three years. The three-year average is 407 applications for certification going to the Labour Relations Board. Now, I'd suggest that if we were going to hold a vote on every one of those applications for certification, we would have to hire at least two additional staff on the Labour Relations Board to conduct these se-

cret ballots -- at least two. That's not even getting into any of the decertification applications or any of the other votes the minister's contemplating that are going to be conducted by secret ballot.

What I'd like to know, Mr. Chairman, to the minister: how can we achieve what your recommendations are in the final report of the Labour Legislation Review Committee when we have less staff and less money to do it? In addition, just how realistic are your estimates in vote 4, in light of that final review process?

The minister is also aware that there are two labour relations boards in the province of Alberta, when you consider the Public Service Employee Relations Board. Has the minister ever considered combining these two boards? Because the minister could generate a true cost savings to his department. Also, in attaining that cost savings he could establish a more consistent decision-making process for labour relations in Alberta. I think even the minister would agree that this would be good for us, and we could have one Labour Relations Act that dealt with all working Albertans equally.

Some general questions in regard to vote 4. Has the minister allowed in his estimates a contingency fund for all the unresolved labour disputes currently ongoing in the province of Alberta? Specifically, in recommendation 42, as it applies to the construction industry under registration, how much money has this minister put aside in this budget to deal with recommendation 42 that specifically suggested a multitrade bargaining structure in the construction industry?

We also see as ongoing strife in the industry in Alberta the Zeidler Forest Industries, a protracted and ongoing dispute that's lasted over one year. Or basically we turn around -- the minister ordered a disputes inquiry board. To the minister: what was the cost of that disputes inquiry board? Was it contained in last year's budget estimates, or is it going to be contained in this year's budget estimates? To the minister: how meaningful was that disputes inquiry board when basically it didn't get the job done? Even after the union accepted, management by a vote of one turned it down.

And then we ended up in the ongoing process where -- I think it was January 12 of this year -- we had a deputy minister recommend that employees take a \$2-an-hour wage rollback to justify the institution of a 15 percent Canadian softwood lumber tax. Now, how can Albertans expect this minister, this deputy minister, this government, and this Department of Labour to indeed lead them into the 21st century when it comes to labour relations matters in the province of Alberta?

Again in vote 5, vote 5 deals with the human rights protection Act and branch. I would ask the minister to consider that we implement in the province of Alberta legislation similar to that I proposed in vote 2, when it comes to employment standards. Why indeed should the taxpayers in Alberta pay the cost of employers who are found guilty of discrimination, whether its age discrimination, colour discrimination, or sex discrimination? Why should the taxpayer pay? And what the minister should consider is implementing the same type of fund within the Human Rights Commission to pay those employees that are discriminated against or abused immediately, if that employer is found guilty.

At this point I'll conclude my remarks. [some applause] I know you're all excited.

Just one other thing before I do close, Mr. Chairman, and that's some of the debate we got into the other day on minimum wage. The minister has in his final report a recommendation

"that the minimum wage rate be reviewed on a regular basis and adjusted when necessary." Now, we had some debate in this Legislature over this issue, but again to the minister -- I'll put this question to him. How are we going to increase the minimum wage in the province of Alberta when we have some on his side suggesting that it shouldn't be raised? I would hope the minister has enough stroke in caucus to deliver what he's promised in his labour review report.

In addition, we need to establish pay equity for women, affirmative action policies. These are lacking in our labour legislation, and perhaps the minister could set aside some of his budget this year to examine those issues and report back to the Legislative Assembly with some affirmative and some positive, progressive action.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Red Deer North.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to take a few moments to make some comments and ask some questions on the votes before us, and to commend the minister, in a time in the development of our own economy in this province, for facing some issues which require patience, innovation, creativity, and the ability to be able to hear from a lot of different sectors in the province -- definitely a time of challenge.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

MR. DAY: Thank you.

I'd like to speak specifically, first of all, to vote 3 on page 236, talking about general safety services. I notice in the description of the program, under general safety services, the objective and the services provided certainly indicate an extensive network of people and initiatives to make sure that the general safety of our working population is ensured. These are laudatory moves -- no intent on the syllable "tory" there in the word "laudatory" -- but I would like to ask the question to the minister: what checks or reviews might be in place in the working out of the objectives of these programs? What checks or reviews are in place to make sure that we aren't duplicating services with other departments? I'm thinking specifically of occupational health being one whose mandates would seem to overlap at times. Are there some checks there to make sure there's limited redundancy or no redundancy or duplication of services? How is that observed or maintained?

In the area on vote 2 on page 235, labour relations in general. In looking at the Employment Standards Act, I had a question for the minister. I see \$5.296 million: amount to be voted. I'd like to ask a question in the general context of privatization, which incidentally I am in favour of when the particular privatization can guarantee a maintenance of services or improved services within the cost efficiencies which would be required. I don't think privatization is something to be blindly feared or to be running from. Questions come up, as the member opposite mentioned, that privatization would somehow result in a testing fee going from \$20 to \$125. I fail to see, given the economies at hand, how if that particular service was to be let out to private tender or bid, that would cause an increase of that kind of amount. But I think that's an indication maybe sometimes where we just get caught in a blind fear of something because we don't understand it. Fear often breeds ignorance, and I don't think we have to fear something like privatization.

We can look to other jurisdictions on an international scale

and see where advances in the area of privatization have indeed caused tremendous progress to be made in many areas. I'm thinking of a report coming out of England just recently, talking about how employees of what used to be public companies, having now been privatized, broken down, or sold on the public share market, are now intensely interested in the stock market. They're interested in productivity; they check the newspapers every day to see how their companies are doing. Previously government or public agencies, now they own a piece of them. And the dividends are reflected in increased productivity.

So I don't think there's anything to fear in general, but just a question: as different companies or groups or associations take on contracts which previously were not privately let out, how is the minister's jurisdiction effective in terms of monitoring the standards which once were under public employee schedules and now are out from under that umbrella and our people and employees are going to find themselves in an increasing way under private contracts? What kind of abilities will the minister's department have in terms of overseeing, reviewing, and overlooking employment standards?

Again, in the whole area of labour relations, can the minister give us any indication of how many complaints -- I realize this might take some research or you may have it at hand -- in the whole area of labour disputes or labour relations come before the board? How are they dealt with? What is the process of appeal for somebody -- and I'm thinking in terms now of a non-unionized employee? How is it handled if he has a complaint against his employer and takes that complaint to the Department of Labour? What's the process of appeal there? Also, what kind of turnaround time could an employee expect, taking a concern or a grievance to the Labour Relations Board? We've had one indication from the Member for St. Albert that months and months and months is the general turnaround time on a complaint being dealt with. Could the minister give us some advice on that and let us know if there is an average, or if there is any way of determining that? And in Alberta, how many employment standards offices or offices are set up to deal with these types of complaints? Does it all come through Edmonton, or can they be handled and dealt on a jurisdictional basis?

I wonder, too, if we could have an indication on last year in terms of how many days lost due to strikes and lockouts in 1986? And has the minister been able to translate that into dollars lost to the economy of Alberta? Also, how would that compare with other provinces?

The whole area of labour review, of course, would fall into that kind of question, and as we've had some extensive recommendations and they are being looked at by people all over the province, and the recommendations have been developed after extensive research, we won't delve into any of the specifics of that. But I would like to encourage the minister on behalf of all Albertans to consider any changes to our labour laws in the light of developing international trends, international developments. If I could be a little more specific, for instance, we see and we've seen in this decade the realization of something that all of us for years said we wanted to see happening, and that is the development of Third World economies. We've seen that progress extensively. With that, of course, have come people in other countries who are willing to work for far less per hour than maybe we have become accustomed to work. Naturally then we'll see some severe competitions coming into place and coming into play as manufacturers look at present economies of scale here in this country as compared to some of the developing Third World nations, and wind up shifting factories and plants

and large scale production to other countries. I believe it's incumbent upon us to have labour laws in place which allow us a degree of flexibility and allow that degree of movement to be possible that we can adjust ourselves to compete. We want to be encouraged about the development in the Third World countries -- that's a very positive thing -- but we also have to realize that that now affects us, and how are we going to deal with it in terms of competition?

Again, as we're seeing more and more, the need to stay flexible just in our ability as a free-enterprise system to guarantee supply and even to guarantee oversupply. As methods of production and manufacturing are increasing by leaps and bounds, we know that it's possible under an enterprising type of system to increase supply almost overnight of virtually any product, as long as the incentive for gain is there. We compare that with eastern countries or countries having socialized economies and of course we see that that ability to produce can nowhere near match what a capitalistically based production system can come up with.

So our legislation, again, needs to be flexible so the manufacturer can deal suddenly with a worldwide oversupply of a particular product that he's involved with. He has to have some kind of understanding with his employees as to changes that might have to be made that has to be based on fairness between employee and employer, but it has to be based on the reality of changing and international competitions.

Again, we need that flexibility just in this whole area of high tech. We see in the automobile industry tremendous strides being made in the whole area of 'robotization,' if I can make a word as such. We see in the building industry -- and I've heard here in this province how building manufacturers, house manufacturers, are looking to setting up plants which prefabricate houses done entirely by robots -- virtually no personnel required. That's right to the cutting of the two-by-fours to sizing of the windows; everything is done by robots. Again, we're looking at a need to be flexible, and not to be bound by legislation which may have worked at the turn of the century but which cannot possibly work now. We need to have that flexibility.

Again, I don't think those types of high-tech advancements are something to be feared as long as we're willing to not have tunnel vision but to be able to be lateral in our thinking and to be looking at situations more based on productivity and incentives, where employees can be rewarded in the area of profit sharing and dividends. In terms of the new labour Act, are we going to be unnecessarily limiting ourselves in the ability to move in these areas, or can we see increasingly a time when employees are buying into the various companies and corporations on a profit-sharing or dividend basis? Then if state of the art advances to the place where employees can be replaced by robots, those employees are cushioned by the fact that they actually own part of the company, and as productivity goes up, so their dividends go up. They don't have to be concerned with being replaced by a machine if in fact their livelihood is going to be guaranteed because of increased productivity, not by a law which can't hold up to economic realities.

I'd like to ask the minister also if there are any agricultural groups that are unionized in the province and to what extent we're seeing either agricultural groups unionized now or moves towards certification of farm workers. Is that happening? If it is, to what degree are we seeing it happen, and how is it being received by the agricultural community in general?

The issue of minimum wage has come up again. I'd like to

encourage the minister to be thinking again laterally; not in tunnel vision in terms of narrow-minded legislation that comes from another day but in terms of legislation that gives employers and employees a wide range of options and gives them that ability to look at what it means when a company experiences productivity increase and profit increase rather than simply arbitrary wage increase, which again in the light of economic international realities could easily put a company out of commission, as it were, and therefore all the employees out of commission. These are just some of the areas.

The minister mentioned women's advancement in the workplace. Again, I would like to reflect the concerns of many Albertans in recommending policies which look for the best individuals for the particular jobs, not giving preference to a man or a woman, not being again bound by stringent policies of excessive affirmative action which have been found proven, in documented cases in many, many jurisdictions -- where people were launched in jobs in positions that they weren't the best people for and in fact wound up as a disservice to productivity and to the advancement of the company or corporation, be it private or public.

I'd like to encourage the minister again in his laudatory efforts in advancing workplace participation by any who want to get into the workplace, to be steering away from legislation which would in any way inhibit the best person or the best people being promoted or put into particular jobs.

Those are some of the comments and questions which I have today, which I refer to the minister, and again thank him on behalf of Albertans for being willing and, I believe, more than able to take on and deal with many of the challenging issues that we face provincially, nationally, and internationally.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Edmonton Gold Bar, followed by Edmonton Centre.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I will, as always, be mercifully brief with my comments and questions to the minister this afternoon. It's not my intention to make any remarks about the legislative review committee until this new labour legislation is before us, except once again to express my grave disappointment with the process and the results.

I'm glad, however, to have heard the recent announcement by the minister that it's his intention to give some time to Albertans from right across the province to review the proposed legislation and respond to it before it's necessary to pass it in this House. It seems to me that having taken so much time -- what I consider to be an inordinate amount, Mr. Chairman -- to get with it, we'd better get it right this time.

Mr. Chairman, if I can go straight to vote 1. I'm assuming that the increase in the minister's office reflects simply the amalgamation with the personnel administration, which shows a concurrent reduction. Perhaps he would comment on that. But I'm assuming that that is the case; if it isn't, perhaps he can tell me.

I'm unclear in vote 1, with the reductions that are contained, how the minister intends to implement the recommendations that will undoubtedly be required as a result of labour legislation. Hopefully, this will be here before us and passed in the fall of this year. It's my view that, at least in the initial stages, there would be more resources needed rather than fewer resources to get this legislation functioning. I'd like to hear his remarks about how he intends to accommodate that, which I hope will happen midyear.

If I can go to vote 3. Mr. Chairman. This vote contains the elevators and fixed conveyances branch. Unfortunately, we all grieved over the tragic accident at West Edmonton Mall during the year, and although the final report is not yet concluded, the minister has in fact indicated that with new technology and more sophisticated equipment being used in such rides as the one that experienced the breakdown, we have to really rethink our regulations and our capacity for inspection. I would hope he would comment on that, if he's now satisfied that his department is sufficiently abreast of new technology and the new kinds of equipment that undoubtedly are going to be before us from here on, so that if Albertans can't be guaranteed they are safe from risk at least will have that understanding that the inspectors in fact know and understand the kind of equipment they're dealing with in an intimate fashion, because I appreciate that it is getting far more complex than it was in years past.

In vote 4, Mr. Chairman: the two boards. As a previous speaker has noted, I think perhaps it's time that we considered a combination here for consistency and approach. I frankly don't see any need to continue with two separate boards, and I believe there could be some economies achieved as a result of that, as well as the consistency in approach.

Vote 5, Mr. Chairman, contains the Human Rights Commission. The government appears to be continuing to ignore recommendations of this commission made in the past, relative to the IRPA, the Individual's Rights Protection Act. I'd like to know why, having appointed this commission and given them a mandate, their recommendations are ignored. They've been ignored relative to the inclusion of mental disability in the IRPA. The minister has reflected to me in the House that we are talking about visible disabilities and visible minorities, but I believe this one, contained in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, quite legitimately belongs in the Alberta IRPA. And since the Human Rights Commission recommends it, I'd like the minister to respond as to why his government has consistently not implemented it.

Similarly, there are present hearings going on on pay equity, and I'd like to know if we can have a commitment from the minister. If his Human Rights Commission recommends pay equity be imposed, is the government going to ignore that one, or will they in fact take the recommendations seriously and do something about it?

Mr. Chairman, vote 6. The minister has already reflected on the circumstances of women in the government, and I'm pleased to hear his expressions of confidence that women are doing beautifully, thank you.

AN HON. MEMBER: A better record than city hall.

MRS. HEWES: Well, I'm not there any more, of course.

Oddly enough, the numbers simply don't bear out that confidence. They just don't bear out what's going on. Of the 49.2 percent women, only 13 percent are in management, and of course we know the salary numbers. The averages are approximately -- almost exactly -- \$10,000 apart, and while I realize that there are other variables and factors in these, I think the women in the public service of Alberta really need to have some answers on that, Mr. Chairman. Interestingly, the Public Service Commissioner's report doesn't break the numbers down by gender.

I would like to note that the Liberal caucus has proposed a Bill which will come before us hopefully, the Women in the Public Service of Alberta Act, that would once and for all make

these kinds of numbers available to the citizens of Alberta so that we might all know where the comparisons are. If the programs that the minister and the government have announced in the throne speech and through his comments today, that we want to be proud of, are working, then we should have some way of checking back and ratifying that, because it doesn't appear to me that they are in fact working at all.

Perhaps the minister would comment also in regard to women in the public service, whether or not he has approached this in his responsibilities in personnel from the standpoint of perhaps working out with management in the different departments what targets might be achieved. I'm not talking about quotas, Mr. Chairman; I'm talking about targets. What is the logical objective that a manager feels he might achieve in five years or 10 years as a balance in genders? I believe that this is a rational and sensible approach to develop with management in departments and that in fact it can improve the situation.

Similarly, Mr. Chairman, I'd like the minister to reflect on his views on pay equity legislation. The Liberal caucus has a Bill before the House, and there'll be another one before us shortly. We've had very little response through his department on his approach. I've already mentioned it in regard to the Human Rights Commission hearings.

In view of all this, it seems curious to me, Mr. Minister, that the women's program in this vote is reduced by 10.1 percent. How on earth are we going to accomplish all these brave new initiatives if we're reducing the resources available to them? What kind of impact will that have on the women's resource centre and other parts of the program that he has described? Of course we all want to see people of merit apply for positions, and the person who is most suited and qualified for the position should have it. But I'm curious as to why the government doesn't seem to hold the view that there are competent women within the departments who are there and waiting to be recognized and to be assisted in their striving for upward mobility, because I think we all know that they are there. Of course, I was pleased and I want to congratulate the government on the appointment of the new deputy minister. I think that shows women in the government and women in Alberta that the government is making some attempts, however minimal they are, to show leadership in regard to the promotion of women. [interjection] I'm coming; I'm coming along just fine. It's only 10 minutes, Mr. Chairman, I think.

In this same vote, Mr. Chairman, I note the special placement program. Now, this is a program that I applaud, because it assists people with certain disadvantages -- disabilities, handicaps, age, other factors -- to experience the work environment and hopefully to get permanent employment. But in the statistics of the department there's a rather alarming number -- and I would hope the minister would answer this -- of permanent positions in special placement program statistics. In the year '86 there were only two. Now, it doesn't seem to me -- if I were in charge of that program, I'd really wonder if it's working at all if we only have two permanent placements in a program of that kind and with the sort of needs that we all know are around us. Hopefully, we all have the same objective of trying to give persons with disabilities and handicaps the opportunities for full employment and also work placement opportunities to test out whether or not they can tolerate the work environment.

Similarly, Mr. Chairman. I would like the minister to comment on the age bulge that appears in his statistics in the public service. It appears from the numbers that 36 percent is between 30 and 39 years of age. Perhaps he can tell members of the

House how he's working with this particular bulge to develop and to guarantee to them continuous work within that, how he has perhaps explored exchange programs with private business and industry, education leave, maybe language training, to give opportunities for advancement to that very large number within one nine-year age group.

Mr. Chairman, just finally, the minister has been in the position, by his own comments, for a year. It seems to me that in that time he should have been able to perceive the imbalances that we have in our society in Alberta relative to the restrictions of the minimum wage. I realize that the minimum wage review has been commented on, but review certainly doesn't guarantee any action. In fact, as in the labour legislation review, it may defer action. I think we need to have some commitment from the minister, some comment on his own position regarding what appears to me to require essential action. I see no need whatsoever to review it. I think in the year that he's been in office, he should have seen sufficient evidence that the minimum wage in Alberta is much too low and does in fact need immediate change upward. There's no need to wait any longer before bringing in such legislation.

Mr. Chairman, I hope the minister will have time this afternoon to answer my questions and those of other members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, would like to address some questions to the minister but only as they pertain to vote 5; that is, the vote for the Individual's Rights Protection Act and -- how does it say it? -- the work of education and investigation of the Human Rights Commission. As I've come to know more about the work of the commission and the commissioners and the intent behind the Individual's Rights Protection Act, despite its being within this controversial Department of Labour, the whole area of human rights and the Human Rights Commission is one that's here in Alberta very, very much a leader, very much an initiator, an innovator in terms of human rights legislation, in terms of even setting up the IRPA in the first place, under Premier Lougheed, I believe. It seems that there is so much potential, so much good, so much that shows the hallmark of a civilized and a humane society and province that we have the IRPA and have the Human Rights Commission. I'm surprised that hon. members opposite aren't applauding these compliments.

But all the while, the last few years and the last few Conservative governments and administrations seem to be giving the Human Rights Commission an even lower profile than ever. They're becoming even more reactive and not proactive. In fact, maybe the true colours of the Tory party are showing, insofar as the commission is becoming far more conservative than it is progressive.

AN HON. MEMBER: Not showing as much your tie.

REV. ROBERTS: Well, I'm getting to my tie; you just have to hold on for this.

In the Human Rights Commission itself, I know under the chairmanship of Stan Scudder -- a very able and conscientious chairman who does a lot of excellent work with the commission and takes it around the province for public hearings and meets often to go over some very difficult aspects of the commission and its policy and its mandate. Certainly the executive director and the staff are doing very well under the circumstances, and

the circumstances that I guess we could refer to are the financial cuts that are listed in vote 5. Despite the fact that there's been no subprogram breakdown, it does show an overall decrease in the administrative support for the IRPA of 5.7 percent, and you add inflation to that and you're up to 8 or 9 percent for a commission that I thought even the Ghitter report recommended increasing its profile, increasing its work. This minister, it seems, has taken the axe to it, and as my own colleague from St. Albert said, an unconscionable cut when the minister's own office is up 21 percent. Yet this very valuable, very important area of human rights is down 5.7 percent.

I said last year, Mr. Chairman, in addressing remarks to this vote, that funding was needed, particularly for better education, for better public relations, for better public education of what human rights are all about and what the commission does and how we need even for school children and for the general population to be thoroughly versed about human rights legislation and protection. Yet how can this department get by with an almost 6 percent cut -- 9 percent with inflation -- and begin to develop even more innovative and more widespread necessary public education programs? How can they take a more proactive stance?

Now, I know that all hon. members are in touch with their constituents often and poll them often about various concerns they have, other than just of course the seat belt one. I'd like to share with the minister and hon. members a poll that I took in my own constituency right here in Edmonton Centre, where we all live and move and have our being as we're at the Assembly. But do you realize that the 20,000 people around us here in Edmonton Centre, when I asked them in a recent question if they could rate for me their understanding of the work of various quasi-government organizations such as the Workers' Compensation Board, the Alberta Liquor Control Board, the Alberta Securities Commission, and the Alberta Human Rights Commission -- when I asked them to judge these different bodies as being not very effective, effective, or very effective, I was aghast.

I really thought the Workers' Compensation Board would come out as the least effective, but fully 32 percent of my constituents listed the Human Rights Commission as being the least effective of these bodies. Moreover, it is the Alberta Securities Commission that they feel they need more information for. They feel they have enough information about the Workers' Comp and the Alberta Liquor Control Board, but they feel the one they need more information from is the Human Rights Commission. So we can only conclude from my constituents, Mr. Chairman, that the Human Rights Commission is the least effective of these four government bodies and that next to the Alberta Securities Commission it is the one that they need more information about.

Now, we've been through the horror stories through the province about discrimination and the need for a better understanding of Alberta being for all of us. Certainly Ron Ghitter, that wonderful Conservative, who it seems would have made a wonderful Premier of the province, recommended these same things. Yet what we have today here is a 5.4 percent decrease in operating, a full 23 percent decrease in capital. It makes me wonder, and many of my constituents and people throughout the province who are concerned about a proactive stance in education and investigation of the Human Rights Commission, that it isn't getting the kind of funding that it deserves and that it is in fact falling behind the work of other provinces and even of the federal Human Rights Commission; all of this despite Alberta and Premier Lougheed having brought in the IRPA in the first

place and having been off to such a wonderful initiating start for the whole area. The question I'd have to ask the minister is: how many individual rights is he willing to sacrifice on the altar of balancing the budget? Because it seems there are some things that are just inalienable and that need to be, on principle, profoundly upheld and not sacrificed because of cost-cutting budgets.

Now, on the thorny matter of pay equity, as has already been raised and will be discussed again, it will be interesting to hear the minister's response to that, as well as on the matter in terms of amendments to the IRPA, the matter of mandatory retirement. We know how the Conservative Party has placed seniors right up there at the top of their priority list, yet all we've been hearing about is mandatory retirement at an early age. Yet more and more elderly people are discovering that they can in fact work past the age of 65. Look at His Holiness the Pope, for instance. Look at President Reagan, for instance, and look at some hon. members here in the Assembly who are sitting here, doing admirable work, who are all over the age of 65. Is the minister thinking that it is against one's individual rights to be forced to retire at the age of 65, or can they in fact carry on good and able work? Certainly the thorny issue of that is: what's to be done for the thousands of young Albertans who are looking for work? But these are some of the difficult decisions that we as legislators have to be about, yet it seems to be not discussed very fully under this vote.

Now, when it comes to the matter of mental disability, another area that the IRPA needs to be amended on, finally we've had those public hearings. Finally, I take it, a definition of mental disability has been struck that is satisfactory. I was under the impression that the minister was going to table the amendment in this session. Now, I don't know what takes the time over there; it seems there's a continual dragging of the political feet of this government. I hear that the minister says, well, he will bring it in maybe for next session. It would seem to me incumbent upon the minister to drive his progressive legislation as fast as he can drive his car, that in fact we need some of these things amended sooner than later, and that just dragging our feet on them is not acceptable.

I'd like to share with the minister the case of my own wife's cousin who has a mental disability and is able to only work at a long-term care centre here in the city, has done so for the last 10 years, works two or three days a week doing the dishes and does wonderful work and has had great commendation from various supervisors, despite the fact of her having a rather severe mental disability. Well, a supervisor has come in recently and said that she doesn't like Sherry; she's too slow. She doesn't want to have people working in this centre who have mental problems, so she cut her back to two days a week; now it's to just one day a week. She lives on the south side of the city, and her mother, my wife's aunt, finally called and said, "William, is there anything you can do about this?" She said, "I think it's a clear case of discrimination on the grounds of mental disability." I said that there isn't much we can do in this province in this case, that in fact the minister is dragging his feet, and that while he's taking his time to draft such easy legislation, Sherry is just going to have to suffer. She said, "Well, William, I must confess to you that I've never voted anything but Tory before, but I'm never going to vote Tory again." So the minister really needs to take stock of what he's doing with his political time-wasting.

Then as it comes -- I know hon. members are waiting for this last one, and it's the matter of sexual orientation. It seems to me again, Mr. Chairman, that if the minister is going to finally bring

in some amendments to the IRPA, he should well make it an omnibus amending Act and with it include prohibition against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Again, the commission itself has already recommended this numerous times. Maybe they need, too, to go out and have more public hearings on the matter and have some sort of definition and workability of what it's all going to mean so that people can be more clearly educated about the whole matter. But it seems to me that we have been through this, that we are well in touch with other provincial jurisdictions where the discussion has been at a high level, and that with all the information we've had, the amendment on sexual orientation has really stopped at that high court of human rights in Alberta, which is the provincial cabinet. And it's been the cabinet who has stopped the amendment of the IRPA along these lines, as we know.

Just look at the cabinet in Quebec, who has had it since 1978, I believe; that in fact Ontario, despite the battle they had there, has recently included sexual orientation as being a prohibited ground; and that even Yukon has made amendment; that a cabinet committee in Newfoundland has scheduled a meeting with the gay and lesbian civil rights committee; that the municipal governments of Toronto, Ottawa, and Vancouver have all had clauses prohibiting discrimination against homosexuals; and that the former Justice minister, John Crosbie, that good Conservative, has said that it would take whatever measures were necessary to ensure that sexual orientation is a prohibited ground of discrimination in relation to all areas of federal jurisdiction.

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

Then I know the minister, despite whatever arguments I might make, really, as many politicians, pays only attention to the polls. Well, look at the polls, Mr. Chairman. The polls clearly indicate as recently as September 1986 that 70 percent of all Canadians support the idea of sexual orientation being included as a ground that's prohibited for discrimination and that of those 70 percent there was no group that was less in agreement than 57 percent. So the majority in every area, whether it was religion, age, sex, education, income, occupation, language, or the community side, all -- at least 57 percent -- said that yes, it would be incumbent upon us as people in a human society to have sexual orientation included as prohibited grounds for discrimination.

So I know the minister and all hon. members are concerned that it's going to be such an emotionally charged debate, that people in any issue of sexuality only respond to it very emotionally, and we know what happened in Ontario in their recent discussion over the matter. But despite whatever other arguments there are, it is clear that under the Criminal Code of Canada it is not illegal to be a homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual person. But it is under the Individual's Rights Protection Act of Alberta. Men and women, because of their sexual orientation, can be fired from their job, they can be evicted from their apartment, they can be refused service at a restaurant, and they can be maligned in advertising. Yet here we are in this Assembly and can sit idly by offering those people no protection from that kind of inhuman treatment.

What would we do, Mr. Chairman, without the musical works of Gustav Mahler or the *1812 Overture* of Tchaikovsky or Oscar Wilde's *Importance of Being Earnest*? All people of a sexual orientation which is not the main one, yet together with the gifts of many other homosexual men and women are gifts

that are continually being oppressed and continually being discriminated against in their workplaces, in their homes, in their apartments, and in our society.

And so, Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that this minister needs to rethink his conservative attitude on this question and be, as I say, far more progressive. I know the minister has argued before that while it can be excluded as a grounds because the IRPA is only there to protect those with uniquely outward physical characteristics, obviously this argument does not hold when you consider that already religion is included as a prohibited grounds for discrimination. And how do you know whether someone is a Muslim, or a Jew, or any other religious faith? That's not uniquely an outward physical characteristic, and yet there is already in the Act prohibited grounds on that basis.

Well, what about race? What about if you're a Scot, for instance, Mr. Minister? It can only be told if you're a Scot by the kind of funny way you speak in your voice or by the kind of funny ties you wear; you know, with this Robertson tartan. But there are many ways in which a Scot or a Welshman or an Italian can't be solely told that they are of that race, by the fact that they have a particular physical characteristic. So this argument, Mr. Chairman . . .

Similarly, a mental disability; we finally just concluded that it's not an outwardly physical disability. If someone's had a mental nervous breakdown or has been depressed for a period of time and has received some rehabilitation, they can certainly go back to work and not be discriminated against on that basis. Why then for sexual orientation is this lame excuse brought out? And why does the minister not see the faulty logic of his own arguments and rather take the human care and compassion, the understanding that is necessary to bring in this amendment on the grounds of sexual orientation?

So in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, and in summary, I really should say that I don't know quite why this whole vote 5 and the Human Rights Commission is in the Department of Labour. Maybe the minister could explain the history behind that. It seems to be stuck in there in the busy, controversial areas of labour that the minister has to deal with and has taken not only a backseat but has been put in the trunk for a while. But it needs far more attention from us in a progressive, human, civilized society and province. It needs a much higher profile that's going to enable it to be proactive and to be bringing for all Albertans that Alberta is for all of us and that discrimination on these narrow-minded and bigoted grounds is just not acceptable. It needs immediately these progressive amendments to bring it into line with the best that there is in terms of human rights legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton Beverly.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, want to take a few moments to speak to the labour estimates, but before I do that, I wanted to say that when the Member for Edmonton Gold Bar was speaking, some comments were made about what happened in city hall. And I know the member doesn't need any defending from me in this regard, but I know -- I was in council when the other member was there at the same time -- that she led the assault on both the politicians and the administration at city hall, calling for affirmative action, particularly relative to women's issues. She doesn't need to take a backseat to anyone

in that respect.

In any event, Mr. Chairman, one can't really address the labour estimates without somehow wanting to speak about the labour review committee. While I don't want to dwell on it, because hopefully we will be dealing with legislation relative to it in the not-too-distant future, I must make comments to the effect that we told you so. I think the committee that jetted around the world to collect information relative to labour could very well have -- the information was certainly available to it without incurring the large expense that they did. The information was certainly available for a much lesser cost, as we had indicated to the minister.

I was, however, impressed that the decision was made to travel throughout Alberta and speak to Albertans about labour legislation. Being interested in the hearings and in labour, I followed the hearings the best I could, and I was impressed with the kind of presentations that were brought forward. However, I must say I'm disappointed in the report dealing with the review of the Alberta tour, because you only dedicated three and half pages to what, as I understand, were virtually almost hundreds of submissions. Either they're all very similar or else you didn't pay too much attention to what Albertans were telling the committee.

My particular reason in rising was to speak to vote 3 in the estimates, and that's dealing with general safety services. I'm amazed that there are in fact cuts in this particular department in light of the discussions that have been going on in this Legislature in the last several days regarding safety and health in this province. When we have the kind of horror stories that are being related to us that are occurring as a result of injuries, I would have thought -- I would have hoped -- that the minister would have found reason and justification to in fact increase his safety standards, his inspection processes, and investigative services rather than making cuts in that particular area.

The Member for Red Deer North asked the question: how many days have we lost due to strikes and lockouts? I think that's a question many people ask. The question I pose to the minister is: how many days have we lost as a result of injuries that have occurred in the workplace? I know without even looking at any statistics that those figures are much larger than those of days lost because of strikes or lockouts.

The other thing that concerned me -- and I'm a little amazed that the Member for Red Deer North made the comment. He referred to the Third World countries and somehow suggested that we in Alberta should be lowering our standards to compare to theirs, rather than our taking the initiative to help increase the standard of living in Third World countries. I am quite frankly amazed and ashamed that someone in this Assembly would have that kind of a position.

He made reference to robots. There's certainly no argument that there are technological changes that are advancing rather rapidly, and indeed robots are replacing workers. But one must understand that if there's going to be a replacement of the human element in the workplace by robots, then somehow this benefit should be reflected to all of society. We can't simply let a few benefit from that kind of technology. It has to be reflected throughout all people. Because of technology, the demand for labour is becoming less and less, and of course the need for labour is diminishing.

Let me give you an example of an industry that I was associated with. Before I got involved in other things, I was in gas plant operations, where at one time a gas plant required a variety of people to do a variety of tasks. Now you can run a multimil-

lion dollar plant with only a few people and produce billions of dollars of processed gas on a daily basis. Certainly, while those people are well paid, there are those in the same community who are receiving the minimum wage or less, so there is a disparity when you look at that kind of a process. I think that when we talk about robots and we talk about technological changes, we have to think in larger terms to ensure that all of society benefits from technology.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wonder if the committee could revert to introduction of visitors, and I call on the hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**
(*reversion*)

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to the members for agreeing to revert to Introduction of Special Guests.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon is the MP for the riding of Kamloops-Shuswap, also the House leader for the New Democrats in Ottawa, Nelson Riis. I'd ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

Department of Labour
(*continued*)

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

DR. REID: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps I should answer the questions I've been asked so far; it won't take me very long, I don't think.

To start off with the Member for St. Albert, I think the first question he asked was about the minister's office. The Member for Edmonton Gold Bar picked up the point that essentially this is an amalgamation of what was previously two ministers' offices, and I think that accounts for it. It is essentially one more person on top of the previous staffing of the Minister of Labour to cover what comes with professions and occupations and the personnel administration office.

On the matter of the communications budget, although that may appear to be a significant percentage decrease, it is of course a matter that is not a very large budget in any event in the department. I can assure the hon. Member for St. Albert that we will be communicating and we will do it very thoroughly. But all communications are not done through departmental support services; quite a lot is done through the Labour Relations Board. We'll make sure we do the job properly, he may rest assured.

He also asked about the committee costs; that is, the Labour Legislation Review Committee. Those costs were covered by a special warrant, and they're not included in this year's fiscal requirements as they were covered in the 1986-87 fiscal year.

On vote 2, when it comes to employment standards, the hon. Member for St. Albert did mention recommendation 16. The recommendation covers the difficulty with receiverships, bankruptcies, and other items, and recommendation 16, I can assure the hon. member, will get the fullest of consideration in the government caucus.

He mentioned an item of the department and the Labour Relations Board perhaps charging for their services. This is one area where I don't think that user pay should apply, in that the very fact of having user pay is a two-edged sword. If one is going to put charges through to the employer where it's the employer's fault, then we would also have to put charges to the employee where it's the employee's fault. Certainly I don't think any member of the Legislature would suggest that that's a valid way of operating the Department of Labour, either within the employment standards function, in the Labour Relations Board, or in the other services that the department offers to employees and employers. Once again, the member had a concern about the cost of review of employment standards. The cost of that review is wrapped up in these estimates, and there will be no supplementary requirements for it.

Again, with regard to overtime agreements, recommendation 21 in the final report of the Labour Legislation Review Committee addresses overtime requirements not being made a condition of employment. Again, the government caucus will give thorough attention to that.

In the boiler branch, in vote 3 under general safety services, it is my intention, Mr. Chairman, once I have dealt with the labour code, to have a thorough review of general safety services from the standpoint of what government should be doing: the role of government in inspections and in setting standards and regulations, to what extent the ordinary functions should be regulated. I think this also addresses the concern mentioned by the Member for Red Deer North. It's interesting that in the general safety services division of the department, as I mentioned in my initial remarks, there's been a considerable number of retirements under the early retirement program. I can assure members that I will take the opportunity, along with the deputy minister and the assistant deputy of that division, to make sure that the management systems are addressed to see whether efficiencies can be achieved there which will indeed assist with the reduction in salary costs.

It's interesting that the hon. Member for St. Albert didn't ask about the cost of the roller coaster inquiry, but once more those costs were largely in the 1986-87 fiscal year, and they've already been addressed.

In relation to the comments about the Labour Relations Board, I think that if the hon. member reviews the report in its totality, he will realize that the philosophy of that report was that we should encourage a system that develops a much better employee/employer relationship both in the unionized and in the non-unionized sector, and that of itself will probably reduce the workload on the Labour Relations Board and indeed other parts of the department. If that comes to pass, then that will be a bonus for the members of the committee, who worked so hard to make recommendations that would indeed work towards changing the relationship from a confrontational one to a co-operative one.

The member mentioned the disputes inquiry board. Again, those costs were in the '86-87 budget expenditures, and they've already been covered.

In relation to the Human Rights Commission -- again, I'm going to get on to items mentioned by other members in their questions. I have encouraged the Human Rights Commission to concentrate on the education function of that commission, not just upon its investigatory capacity and making recommendations to government but to actually approach the concept of educating Albertans and informing them as an active process. I trust that that will again do much to avoid problems rather than

dealing with them. It's a much better philosophy that government should encourage people to be knowledgeable and to avoid getting into trouble and into difficulties in the employer/employee relationship, or in any other relationship, rather than trying to fix the damage once it has occurred.

Mr. Chairman, to progress to the remarks of the hon. Member for Red Deer North, I've already addressed, I think, the vote 3 items that he mentioned. In employment standards, I can't give him the numbers of complaints in total at this time, but I'll try and get those subsequently for him.

Again, the education function is crucial. I would like to mention one specific area in relation to that. There used to be a very large number of complaints about waiters and waitresses being docked for those who eat and drink, and run and don't pay. In co-operation with the Alberta Hotel Association and the restaurant and food association, the department did run some educational programs on that item, and indeed they are now receiving three, four, or five complaints a year in total in relation to that. I'll check for the hon. member whether there are other areas where we can achieve such significant results by educating the employers.

In vote 4, the Member for Red Deer North mentioned the complaints that we receive through the Labour Relations Board, and again I would like to make some comparisons. Members will without doubt remember two strikes last year, both involving large numbers of people: one at the Suncor plant at Fort McMurray and the other at the Gainers plant here in Edmonton. In both of those settlements there was a commitment in the collective agreement to a communication system.

When the Suncor dispute started and the strike took place, there were a very large number of unsettled grievances, working out to about one employee in four having an unsettled grievance at the time of the strike. That is certainly an indication of poor labour relations, perhaps on both parts. There may have been some ridiculous grievances presented, but obviously they were not being dealt with properly. Since that dispute was settled, there has been a very marked drop in the number of grievances that are occurring, because they are being dealt with through that communication process. I would like to think that the influence of the committee's report and my own intervention prior to the settlement during the fall had an influence upon the concept being incorporated and being implemented.

On the other hand, I cannot report such a favourable improvement in the relationships at Gainers, and that will take some more work on the part of both the employer and the union at Gainers. But I would hope that by the time they come to their next collective bargaining process, they will have improved as well.

The member asked about the costs and days lost in 1986 from strikes and lockouts. I don't have the final figures yet, but the last figures that I saw indicated that 1986 was for number of days lost about the average for the previous 10 years. It was not a record year by any means, which probably put us in the category of about the same number of days lost in Alberta as in the Federal Republic of Germany or in Japan. I've commented on those numbers before, indicating that there is considerable room for improvement in Alberta.

The philosophy of the Labour Legislation Review Committee was essentially that we should concentrate on improving the relationships -- communication, education, and commonality of interests -- and that that would do more for labour relations in this province than trying to regulate how the strikes and lockouts should occur.

In regard to agricultural unionization, most of the unionization in relation to agriculture in this province is in the processing industry: the packing houses, the canneries, the dairies, and establishments of that nature. There is not much unionization in the base agricultural industry.

The Member for Edmonton Gold Bar mentioned that she was disappointed with the results of the Labour Legislation Review Committee. She must be prescient to have that. Being a Scot, I know that those from the Western Isles are regarded as having something called the second sight. I cannot yet predict the results of the work of that committee as the legislation hasn't even been introduced, never mind passed and acted upon as yet, and it may take some time for the results to work their way through the system.

In relation to vote 1, as I said, she had noted it was the amalgamation of two ministerial offices, and she expressed a similar concern to that of the Member for St. Albert in relation to the implementation of the recommendations in the new legislation with reduced dollars. I won't attribute it all to my national heritage, but it is our intention to manage within the budget that we have.

On vote 3, the roller coaster incident and that tragedy, the final report I do not as yet have. I understand that the hearings have finally concluded and that the lawyer for Triple Five Corporation is still critical of the whole process. That's his privilege, and I won't respond to his comments about myself, the department, the government, and everything else. I don't think they were really the remarks of his clients, but perhaps he was upset at the process. The role of government in relation to the increasing complexity of equipment I have addressed in the past, both in the Legislature and outside, but surely it is not the responsibility of government to hire an engineer in relation to every new piece of equipment that somebody may wish to operate. It is the role of government to make sure that the manufacturer's inspection manuals are dealt with properly, that they are followed, and that there is a log of their being followed. We did find some deficiencies at the West Edmonton Mall operation in relation to that, and those were corrected before the other hazardous rides were allowed to reopen after the accident to the roller coaster. I may say that they were very co-operative in implementing those changes. I'll await the final report because there may well be something in the technical side of that final report.

[Mr. Gogo in the Chair]

The comment on amalgamating the Labour Relations Board and the Public Service Employee Relations Board. I will again note that and perhaps discuss it with the appropriate minister, as I'm not responsible for the Public Service Employee Relations Board.

In vote 5 -- and perhaps here I can address some of the remarks of the Member for Edmonton Centre as well as the Member for Edmonton Gold Bar. With regard to the mental health recommendations, as I said. I have received the recommendation from the Human Rights Commission. It arrived at a rather hectic time in the career of the Minister of Labour, and I have not as yet had a chance to review it with my caucus colleagues to bring in suitable legislation. But on the basis that I may be able to get their co-operation on that item. I would hope it will be addressed at the next sitting of the Legislature, especially in view of the difficulties that were mentioned by the Member for Edmonton Centre in relation to -- I think he said it was his nephew.

Pay equity is a very interesting problem, and there is confusion in that -- again, there is a problem of terminology and how it changes. Equal pay for equal work is well accepted. Equal pay for work of equal value is much more contentious, and we therefore have a difficulty in implementing it. I notice that even in the federal and Ontario jurisdictions it is not absolute. It is within the same entity or within the same corporation and not across the total parameter of work. Quite honestly, in view of the difficulties they are now seeing with their legislation, I would rather see what happens in Ontario before we step into the same problems that they are now anticipating.

On government gender hiring, I have some statistics and figures available, which I'll be happy to give a copy of to the hon. member. I had them prepared in anticipation, but I don't think I would have time to go through them all in the few minutes that are available. I appreciated the member's comments with regard to the new Deputy Minister of Advanced Education, but in view of what I said the other day, the hon. member would realize that I can now make the commitment to the lady who got the appointment that she was indeed the best candidate for the job. It's nice to see that there are qualified people of that calibre already available within the public service from our female employees.

I have addressed most of the remarks by the Member for Edmonton Centre. The only other item would be the 23 percent cut that he mentioned in capital, a cut from \$21,000 to \$16,000. I addressed my remarks last year in regard to homosexual rights and sexual orientation. His figures from across Canada may well apply in some areas of Canada, but it's certainly not universally accepted in this province. It may be that with the passage of time things will change, but they'll have to change from a societal standpoint.

The large expenditure that the Member for Edmonton Beverly mentioned in relation to the Labour Legislation Review

Committee worked out to about 25 cents per Albertan. I've already commented elsewhere that that's the price of the *Edmonton Journal*. I can assure Albertans that they got much better money's worth out of those people than they do out of the *Edmonton Journal*.

In regard to general safety services, I think there was some confusion between the role of this department and that of the Minister of Community and Occupational Health in the remarks of the hon. Member for Edmonton Beverly. There is some overlap, but it doesn't extend to health and accident prevention.

I think, Mr. Chairman, I've answered the questions that were brought up, and if there are any that I didn't, then I'll go through the *Hansard* record and answer them in writing.

Thank you.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Chairman, I move the committee rise, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: Do you all agree with the report and the request for leave to sit again?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

[At 5:25 p.m. the House adjourned to Tuesday at 2:30 p.m.]

