

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA**

Title: **Thursday, May 21, 1987 8:00 p.m.**

Date: 87/05/21

[The Committee of Supply met at 8 p.m.]

head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

[Mr. Gogo in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Committee of Supply will please come to order.

head: **ALBERTA HERITAGE SAVINGS TRUST FUND  
CAPITAL PROJECTS DIVISION**

**1987-88 ESTIMATES OF PROPOSED INVESTMENTS**

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before the committee tonight is the capital projects division of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, commencing with Community and Occupational Health.

Hon. members, without restricting the questions, comments, and amendments, if any, to the vote before the committee, I would direct members' attention to page 4 of the capital projects division to deal within the objective of the vote before us.

It's been traditional that the sponsoring minister who is proposing this vote would make opening comments to the committee. Hon. minister, Mr. Dinning, would you care to make some opening comments?

MR. DINNING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to introduce and bring forward the estimates of the ... I have no glossy pictures, but if all members would care to wait around, we will have a glossy picture show later.

AN HON. MEMBER: How about some apples?

MR. DINNING: No apples either.

It's my pleasure to bring before the committee, Mr. Chairman, the \$1.5 million in estimates for the occupational health and safety heritage grant program. This program began some seven years ago under the guidance and leadership of my predecessor, the then Minister of Workers' Health, Safety and Compensation, Mr. Bill Diachuk. It was through his foresight and good graces that we're here this evening discussing this program. If it hadn't been for him, we wouldn't have had such a successful program that we've had for the last seven years.

I just want to mention a few comments, Mr. Chairman, so that members are enlightened as to some of the activities that the program carries out. Generally, the overall purpose of the program is to support research, training, and education with twofold objectives: one, to prevent accidents and ill health resulting from employment on Alberta worksites and to promote the health and well-being of Alberta workers through improved working conditions.

Five specific areas where the program concentrates its efforts and its attention: one is to reduce the incidents and prevalence of job-related accidents and ill health in Alberta; two is to increase the participation of employers of workers of educational institutions as well as researchers in other private-sector groups in responding to health and safety concerns in Alberta worksites; thirdly, to increase the use of effective prevention

strategies at Alberta worksites; fourthly, to increase understanding and awareness of occupational health and safety problems in Alberta; and finally, to increase the numbers and expertise, both the skills and qualifications, of individuals who are active in the occupational health and safety field in Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, up to the end of the past fiscal year, March 31, 1987, some \$5.2 million had been expended in this \$10 million program in a variety of worthy projects. Some 26 research projects had been completed, some 44 education projects completed, as well as some 22 conference projects that have been completed.

I want to mention one important one tonight, Mr. Chairman, just as a good example of the kind of work that is done. One is in conjunction with industry: the Petroleum Industry Training Service, which is located in the city of Calgary, has been developing three safety courses related to hydrogen sulphide. The first one is H<sub>2</sub>S Alive, and it's a one-day course directed at all workers who may be exposed to hydrogen sulphide gas during their work day. The second one, H<sub>2</sub>S Rescue, adds another day of instruction and provides hands-on practice using protective equipment to provide for the undertaking of a rescue in an emergency situation. Thirdly, the instructors' course provides certification to instructors on the course materials plus provides guidance on adult educational techniques. Together these three projects provide an up-to-date series of courses which meet the needs of industry, and it is ensured that it's available throughout the province.

The estimates before the committee tonight, Mr. Chairman, are for some \$1.5 million of expenditure in 1987-88 to continue the ongoing research projects in hydrogen sulphide as well as for protective clothing on the worksite, some 15 ongoing educational projects, including one to provide for a health and safety guide for small businesses in Alberta. This is an area where we've got to be concentrating more and more of our efforts to the small business side of the province so that safety can be something that can be equally accessible for small business as it is for the larger companies in the province.

Two ongoing conference projects as well as a number of other submissions are currently under review, and hopefully others will be coming in the front door in the days ahead, Mr. Chairman. Those are some comments that might be helpful to the committee as we begin our discussions on these estimates, and I certainly welcome the comments and suggestions from all hon. members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Edmonton Beverly.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure for me this evening to speak to the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund capital projects as they relate to Community and Occupational Health.

First of all, I also want to commend the minister and the previous minister on their initiative in this particular area. Certainly research regarding health and education in the workplace is a very significant and important aspect for those of us who may be in that particular field and those who may have been there. I say that because I personally spent some 18 years in the chemical industry here in Alberta. Consequently, I developed an appreciation for health and safety as it relates to the workplace, particularly in that area.

I am therefore somewhat concerned, Mr. Chairman, about our record in the province of Alberta as it affects workers and their safety in the workplace. Quoting some figures, if I may,

and these are comparative figures from 1983 to 1985 where Alberta didn't really rank too well. For example, in 1983 we had 37,346 lost-time injuries. In 1985 that increased by 11 percent to 41,376. I think that just doesn't speak too well for our record. At the same time, there were casualties in the province. Again in 1983 there were 95 persons killed in accidents that were recorded by the Workers' Compensation Board. In 1985 there were 94, so we held static in that particular area.

The major areas where we need to concentrate and do work relative to health and safety seem to be in the mining areas, both in the direct mining and petrochem jobs. I say that because again using the figures from 1983 through to 1985, we have a 144 percent increase in the mineral fuels industry. That is, in direct mining and petrochem jobs. That is really an unacceptable figure. At the same time, in the mining services we have an increase in lost-time injuries of 31 percent.

I'm sure the minister is aware of these figures, and hopefully efforts are being made in that direction. However, when I look at this particular vote and at the Community and Occupational Health estimates this year, I'm not so sure we are going in the right direction. In this particular vote, where we are spending money in research, training, and education, there is of course the half a million dollar cut in the expenditures compared to last year, when indeed the previous year there had been a million dollar increase. So for some reason we found it necessary this time to make a half million cut in expenditures. When you compound that with the minister's actual votes in his estimates, where worksite services are cut by 6.5 percent, occupational services are cut by 14.9 percent, research and education are cut by 13.1 percent, and so on, and then when you compound this with the half million dollars cut in this particular vote, perhaps the emphasis on health and safety may not be as good as the minister and his government seem to suggest.

I know the minister has indicated that there are expenditures in educational institutions; I understand that both NAIT and SAIT have received money to train safety personnel and to teach safety in direct vocational training. I think one has to be commending the department for that. I think it's a good place to start to teach people about safety, when they are in fact learning their job.

Another area that needs a great deal of attention --and I think the minister may want to communicate with the Minister of Labour -- is the establishment of health and safety committees in the plant site. There's no doubt -- and I agree with the minister; I've heard him say it before, and I've agreed with him previously -- that safety responsibility is not only the employers'. The employee has equal responsibility when it comes to the health and the work environment on the worksite. However, I think there needs to be a working, co-operative agreement between employer and employee in terms of the safety committees.

Again, if I may use myself as a sample, when I spent time in the plant, I must admit that the very progressive organization I was with agreed that there needed to be a health and safety committee in the plant that met on a regular basis, that was chaired mutually by the plant manager and the president of the particular local union in that plant, and where serious discussions relative to safety were held. Suggestions brought forward were looked at seriously by plant management, and the record in that plant, although a chemical plant, was a good one. I think both the management and the employees were proud of the record we established in that plant.

The reason I bring this point up, Mr. Chairman, is that I am

also aware that there are companies, large and small, who do not accept the theory that there should be a health and safety committee in the plant, that somehow plant management has the management rights to establish the set of conditions, and they will look after the safety of the workers. I think that's commendable, but it doesn't work. I think there has to be an input from employees, because they are actually the people in the work area. They know what might not be safe. Their suggestions for improvements to management in most cases that I'm aware of are generally well received. However, there needs to be a co-operative effort by both management and the employees.

I note that in his comments to the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act in November of last year the minister addressed an area that he felt was important for the future, where expenditures from this particular vote would be required or would be used. I agree; the ones he listed here I think are correct. If I could just take the time I could quickly read them out to you. The areas that were mentioned at that time were: mental stress in the workplace; drug testing; fitness to work; ethics, rights, responsibilities of employers and employees in the workplace; and the right to information of a worker to know the hazards of his workplace. Now the minister suggested that these areas need to be looked at in the future, and I agree. Again I then come back to this particular vote, and I wonder why, with those important areas that need to be looked at in terms of research, the minister found it appropriate at this time to cut that particular budget by half a million dollars.

That leads me into the last item that was stated in these particular comments, which was the right of a worker to information to know the hazards of his workplace. I think that's a very significant statement, and one I think really does need to be addressed. Too often employees are not told or they don't even inquire about what kind of environment they're working in, what is it that they smell. Is it healthy for them? I think there needs to be a fair amount of research done. I think even management in some cases, or at least the frontline management, may not be totally familiar with what in fact they're producing. The rate of production of chemicals in today's technology is producing chemicals very rapidly, and we're not really sure what impact these have on individuals.

Certainly I'm sure the minister must be aware of people that have submitted claims to the Workers' Compensation Board citing that they have acquired an illness as a result of where they worked sometime, in mining or maybe it's some other area. It's difficult to prove that indeed the illness, whatever it might be, was in fact acquired because of where they work. We can't say that; we don't know that. There needs to be an effort made so that employees are familiar with what they are working with, the kind of impact that chemical or product may have on their breathing it, their body exposure to it. I think it's incumbent upon the government, the employer, and the employees to know what it is that people are being exposed to.

So I hope the research and the work that's done is in that particular field. I don't know what has been done. Perhaps the minister may later wish to inform us about the kind of work that's being done there.

Coming back briefly to safety committees, by coincidence this morning I got a publication across my desk from Stelco. Most of the people in the Assembly perhaps did. I bring it here under employee relations. This is a large company that's of course well known across Canada. It speaks about employee relations, and it speaks about its health and safety component within its plant. If I may quote, Mr. Chairman, from this article,

it says:

Health and safety issues achieved a higher public profile during the year than ever before. The initiatives undertaken by Stelco to attain its objectives of providing employees with a safe and healthful working environment continued to withstand increased public and regulatory scrutiny. The principle of internal responsibility for such issues forms the basis of the joint Company-Union Health and Safety Committees functioning at all our plants.

Again, I think a progressive company, a company that has a concern for its employees, also has a concern for the community in which they live. So I think I would ask the minister that some persuasion be applied to those employers who somehow want to resist the need to structure within their operations employee/employer committees to deal with health and safety. I think the employees would benefit, and I think society in the community would generally benefit.

I'm pleased to see that the minister in his opening comments made reference to some emphasis being placed on health and safety as it relates to small businesses. Through the material that was given to us that was published by the Occupational Health and Safety Council -- in fact, in there one of their submissions states that small employers seem to have a disproportionately high rate of accidents. So I'm pleased to hear that the minister did say that there is emphasis being placed to provide some additional training courses in small business. Obviously, there is a need.

I have a disappointment in one area, however, where because of budget cuts the occupational hygienists have been removed from the worksites -- a very necessary position, I think, in the plants in various worksites. Yet the government, because of budgetary cuts, decided to do that. So then one has to again question how sincere the government is about your health and safety on the worksite.

The other area that I must mention before I conclude is the lack of support for the Alberta Federation of Labour's health centre. I think that centre is going to go a long way in assisting workers in this province, not only union people but all people who have need to use that particular facility and who were hoping that there would be some contribution from the government to this. I understand that the government did say they couldn't give any money, but they made the departmental library available to them. Of course, that's appreciated and accepted. However, some financial assistance for operations might well have been also given to them.

Mr. Chairman, I think that pretty well concludes my comments, for the present time at least. I would like to hopefully get some comments from the . . . Oh, one more before I sit down, if I may. I note also that from this vote moneys have been dedicated to Athabasca University for the possible development of a degree program in occupational health and safety. Also, Grant MacEwan Community College is to be provided with \$400,000 through this program to help them put together a program for an occupational health nursing certificate. The question I pose is: how are these doing? What is happening in this area? Are they in fact going ahead? There seem to be some ifs and ands whether in fact this is occurring and taking place. The minister may want to address that particular topic as well.

Also, the possibility of a Chair being established in safety engineering for a course on confined space entry, a course on chemical risk management, and seed money to provide an occupational environmental health and safety program at the schools.

Here we're talking about Lakeland College, SAIT, University of Alberta, and the Banff School of Advanced Management. I wonder how that program is going and whether they are in fact proceeding in those particular areas.

That, Mr. Chairman, concludes my remarks for the present.

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

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to first commend the Minister of Community and Occupational Health in my remarks and questions tonight by saying how much I appreciate his concern for the welfare of workers in this province and concern for their health and for their safety.

I know I was more than impressed to see on one occasion when visiting our fair constituency of Red Deer -- I had reported to him a problem on a worksite in terms of a hazardous situation that a person had encountered. He wanted to personally go to the worksite, look at the situation, and evaluate it. He did that. I was also pleased to see and to find out later that his department had actually sent information to that worksite before this accident had ever happened, information which, if the people on site had followed, that particular accident wouldn't have happened. Yet I certainly appreciate a good demonstration of his concern for the care, health, and well-being of workers as is demonstrated in the objective on page 4 in the estimates:

to provide funds for research, training and education with the objective of preventing accidents and illness resulting from employment and to promote the health and well-being of Albertan workers.

I specifically would like to address the question of dangers to health care workers, those working in health clinics and health units and hospitals, specifically related to dealing with the increasing concern that we have in dealing with samples or people related to the AIDS virus. People don't like talking about AIDS. It's not an enjoyable topic. It's a topic that most of us shrink away from, yet I believe we cannot shrink away from the figures on this terrible disease, which are increasing at an overwhelming rate. I know that the statistics as released in the United States by the surgeon general there indicate that 12,000 people have already actually died from contracting AIDS -- 12,000 -- and their conservative predictions there are that within the next four years, a quarter of a million people who already have the virus and who are beyond being protected now will have died from contracting the virus. The World Health Organization, in their estimates and analysis of the disease and the spread of it, have said that, again, of people who have already contracted the virus, those who are beyond protection right now, 100 million people by the end of this century will have died from AIDS.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair is hesitant to interrupt the hon. member. The Chair is having some difficulty relating the subject matter to employment, but if the hon. member can connect the disease of AIDS to employment, I suppose it's within the vote.

Hon. Member for Red Deer North.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'm glad you allowed that pause because it gives me time to emphasize that connection very directly. What I'm talking about is with the growing numbers of people contracting actively the virus and therefore coming into areas of treatment, health care workers are facing grave dangers in terms of dealing with people and the samples,

whether it be blood, urine, or fecal samples. Whatever it might be, they're facing very grave dangers, as was accentuated just recently. We know now that three health care workers have actually contracted the AIDS virus, as has been reported by the Atlanta Centre for Disease Control. They actually contracted the disease by accidents on the worksite, and that is specifically what these votes and estimates are dealing with, protecting occupational health and safety. The accidents happened by these particular health care workers having had blood accidentally splashed on them.

The head of the Atlanta Centre for Disease Control, when asked the question, "Can you confirm that the blood actually hit lesions or breaks in the skin?" said, "No, we cannot positively confirm that the blood actually passed through the skin by present lesions or cuts that were there." The reason I want to address this under these estimates is since the objectives are directly to do with the health and well-being of Alberta workers and through the minister's stated objectives here tonight -- which are commendable and objectives which I know he will be actively trying to move on -- that is, to reduce the incidence of accidents, which he has stated.

His second one was to increase the involvement of employers in responding, his third one was effective strategy, and the fourth one was awareness. Within his own definitions, I'd like to ask him if he could deal with the anomaly that we are facing now and address this. My concerns are brought to me from health care workers and from doctors, who are saying that publicly that the situation is being downplayed -- for what reason, I'm not exactly sure -- but privately that there is very grave concern about the possibility of workers facing the chance of picking up the virus by dealing with the various samples. Again, why it's being downplayed, I'm not sure.

When we have statistics showing that a few dozen people die because they don't put their seat belts on, we have people clamouring for legislation. When we have a tragic accident, as we did last year in one of our oil fields where somebody was burned to death, a very tragic thing, there is again loud clamouring for legislation, especially dealing with protective clothing. Yet in this particular area we see a real reluctance to even discuss it openly and to be taking active steps to protect the health care workers through effective strategies and through awareness.

I'm told by doctors that there is a list of some 50 communicable diseases that when a doctor encounters them with a patient, he is required by law to report to the Alberta public health. It's a law. That includes diseases like hepatitis, syphilis, and other diseases, many of which are not terminal when contracted, many of which are serious diseases but we can deal with them and we have ways of seeing the person cured. However, with AIDS, which when contracted is absolutely terminal, a disease about which the finality cannot be emphasized, there is no requirement by law on the part of a health care worker or a doctor to report that particular individual as being a carrier of the disease. I would like to ask the minister what he can do to fulfill his own stated mandate to increase the awareness and also to increase the employer's involvement in making the workers aware of the dangers that they're facing. What can we do within the guidelines of the objective, as I've already read and as the minister has already stated?

Another question, too, again to do with workers directly. In dealing with the hepatitis virus, I understand there are different strains of hepatitis. My studies and terminology are not at the doctoral level in this particular area, but the type of hepatitis that is very serious there is a vaccine for, and a number of health

care workers and people in the medical community avail themselves of that vaccine. I understand that now there is a means test which a person has to take to find out if they have to pay for it themselves or if indeed it would be given to them. The test runs about \$150. I appreciate the steps the minister is taking to see that people assume responsibility in the area of health care, community and occupational health, to cover costs. However, I wonder if the minister can confirm, either yes or no, or give us more information: a drug user or a prostitute or homosexual could go into a health unit and, simply by declaring their involvement in that activity, can get the vaccine without the means test, but a health care worker -- and again this is to do with the health and well-being of Alberta workers -- has to pay for it. I'm hearing from a number of constituents who have concern about that, and if the minister, within his mandate and objective here under Community and Occupational Health, could answer some of those questions.

I just encourage him to continue on the strong path in which he has already set out in many different industries and in many different areas of employment in seeing that the care and the health of workers are protected. He's doing a commendable job. I would ask him also to devote his energies to this very serious area that I believe we're going to see to be an area of growing concern.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Calgary North West, followed by Edmonton Mill Woods.

DR. CASSIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, appreciate the opportunity to speak to the first and only vote under Community and Occupational Health, and I certainly support the minister in this vote in asking for these sums. I believe that the minister indicated in his opening remarks that these sums would be earmarked primarily for problems in the workplace as opposed to the community. I quite frankly do not recall last year whether some of the funds that had been designated for research also applied to some problems in areas pertaining to the community.

I understand the comments of the Member for Edmonton Beverly and concerns about the amount of money, but I don't know in a research project how one really puts a ceiling on funds that are available for research. I think that a group of researchers, or community, would use whatever funds are available. I appreciate that under the present budgetary constraints that this government has, we are able to set aside these moneys and be fortunate to have the Alberta heritage trust fund to assist us and to help us out at this point in time, recognizing that there are other funds that have been allotted to this particular department for carrying on some of the other activities and works that again have been questioned by the Member for Edmonton Beverly.

I would applaud first of all the direction with regards to research as a first priority. I think it is particularly important in our province when we're dealing with a large number of our people who are involved in the petrochemical industry and in mining and, more specifically, in the areas of new technology. We have a problem presently identifying some of the complications and the hazards in the workplace for some of those products that we've worked with for the last 15 or 20 years, because there is a direct relationship to exposure and to time. But we must be continually vigilant to the concerns of the new products, the new chemicals, the new technology, and the hazards they may present in the workplace. I think that this province has an

opportunity not only to be on the cutting edge of the new technology but also to be on the cutting edge of dealing with the complications and the problems and the applications of some of this new technology in other markets where we will be delivering this new technology.

I would also support the second directive pertaining to training. The training really pertains to a number of different fields. It pertains to the learning process, the individuals at an apprenticeship level. It may be referred to perhaps as an orientation in some occupations where there is not a formalized training program, but even beyond that there should be more time dealing with the in-service as new technology and new pieces of equipment become available and are turned over to the worker. I think it was unfortunate that even in the last 24 hours, I believe, we've had one casualty in the drilling industry. I think that it is extremely important and I again applaud the minister and his department for setting up a training facility that will address the whole question of providing training and concentrating on safety on the worksite, particularly with our very young and inexperienced workers who, as so often is the case, are those that are injured.

I would also like to applaud the fifth point that has been identified, and that is illness with the employee. The research is dealing with the when and the why and the how of these illnesses so that we can learn from these experiences and can document these illnesses to address and take on the challenge that we have there.

I think that perhaps even a bigger problem and a concern that we have -- and it's been there for some time; it's been under the surface, but it's been brought to our attention just recently by a couple of major fatalities in the United States. That pertains to substance abuse by our employees and perhaps even at various levels -- I shouldn't just designate employees -- of the worksite. I think that governments are going to have to look very seriously at this whole problem and how we deal with it, and I appreciate that perhaps there is some help from some of the other departments. I again applaud the work of AADAC and other groups in their awareness program as it pertains to casualties on the highway, but I think that those same principles apply to the individual in the workplace. And I would like to ask the minister if his department is looking at the possibility of reviewing and testing on the jobsite if there are accidents where a question of substance abuse may be considered and should be ruled out.

I also appreciate, Mr. Minister, the direction from the standpoint of trying to identify those hazards to the worker. I also understand that that's a double-edged sword, that all of us are very suggestive so that it's important that those hazards be identified early, when someone is first exposed to a hazardous situation or to chemicals, that he is sensitive, and that he feels free to report to a supervisor or the safety engineer on the job. Because if there is going to be a problem and if we're to identify that problem, it will come from our workers first and foremost.

I would just in closing like to support the Department of Community and Occupational Health. I think this is a very important department. I think it is going to play a tremendous role in this province because of the unique position that Alberta has in moving into new fields and new frontiers, particularly in the area of petrochemicals and new technology.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Minister of Community and Occupational Health.

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Chairman, I thought I'd get in now.

I know there are other speakers who want to get in, but if I don't have my piece now, I may not have a chance. I've appreciated the comments from my colleagues from Edmonton, Calgary, and Red Deer, all very helpful comments.

The first one, Mr. Chairman, from the Member for Edmonton Beverly, talks about a reduction in the budget. I can tell the member and tell all members that this is an eight-year program: \$10 million over eight years, just a little over \$5.2 million having been expended to March 31, '87. In '86-'87 some \$2 million was set aside for this program, and our estimate is that that budget will have gone spent by about \$1.4 million. So there's only so much research that you can do given that you receive, go out and cultivate, attract, and invite submissions. But there are only so many good proposals that you can simply fund. So we believe this \$1.5 million budget will allow us to fund all of the good projects that do come along that meet our needs, meet our criteria, and meet many of the issues that have been mentioned in the remarks by the three speakers this evening.

The hon. member mentioned the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and some of the very fine work it's doing, and it's an opportunity to give NAIT a good pat on the back for the preparation of a series of welding safety video tapes. These tapes have addressed the wide variety of hazards, such as burns and gases and fires and explosions, faced by those workers in Alberta who do welding on the jobsite. Since the completion of this series of tapes in January of '87, the series has been recognized for its quality both within the province and by demands from a number of people and groups outside the province. So that's just one other good example of the kind of work that we're supporting here that's getting the recognition here where it's important of course, but also that work is being recognized outside the province and is being used by jurisdictions that can find it useful.

The member mentioned health and safety committees. This is something that has been discussed for many, many an hour in this Assembly and I'm sure will be discussed even further in the days and years ahead. This government has taken the approach in its legislation that the minister may designate certain worksites of 20 or more that shall have, that must have a health and safety committee. But we on this Progressive Conservative side of the House, Mr. Chairman, believe that that's the best kind of approach, that to dictate that thou shalt have a committee and thou shalt do this and thou shalt do that -- certainly not in keeping with my socialist confreres on the other side of the House. We believe that it is a responsibility of employers and employees to take that on without government looming or luring over top of them to act responsibly. I'm not here to defend industry; that's not my job. But some of them have acted responsibly and are deeply committed to safety on the job. That's not to say that their work or our work is done, because it's simply not done. There are too many accidents. There are simply far too many fatalities.

The Member for Calgary North West mentioned one that took place earlier this week, on Tuesday, a very tragic accident. Our responsibility through this program, through the occupational health and safety division of our department is to inform, is to educate. This program supports, complements, and supplements that. It is also there to inspect. It's a form of consultation. It's a form of counseling. It's a form of advice- and direction-giving. Where necessary and where the law has been broken, we will provide the information to the Attorney General and work with the Attorney General to take those offenders to

court. That is also a very strong message to industry, to workers, to owners and employers, employees as well, that safety must be a priority, must be a responsibility of everybody on the job.

The Member for Edmonton Beverly and the Member for Calgary North West raised the whole subject of hazardous materials and the proper handling of them. I want to say two things in that area. One is that the workplace hazardous materials information system, better known as WHMIS, is something that has been developed. I've talked about it in the Assembly in days past, and I don't intend to get into it any further except to say that we are committed to putting that system in place so that both employers and employees know the products that they're handling, the hazardous nature of those products, and how they are to be properly and safely handled to ensure that all workers and all employers are protected from the potential dangers of those materials.

The other one -- the Member for Calgary North West made a very good point about occupational safety vis-à-vis occupational health. We all think of occupational safety as something that's hard hats and steel-toed boots and following good, safe procedures of the worksite. Well, that's what safety is. But occupational health is something that we are learning more and more about, and that again is what this program is there to fund and to support, and the whole handling of these hazardous chemicals which bring on a disease with which we have too little familiarity and too little knowledge. But that knowledge base is growing, and it's something we've got to put a lot of our attention on in the days ahead.

Now, I just look at something that the University of Alberta chemistry department has been working on in the development and testing of safe and practical methods of disposal and recycling of hazardous materials. Well, without that kind of research, without that kind of careful thought being given to it, workers in Alberta are exposed to diseases that only begin today, but the effects, the impact of those diseases takes place over five, 10, 15, 20 years' time. Our knowledge is growing in that area, but the progression of disease is still an art, is still something that's being studied. We still have a ways to go, and I'm glad to be able to say that through grants such as we've been able to provide at the University of Alberta chemistry department, that kind of work can continue.

The Member for Red Deer North raised something that is growing in alarm, that I am becoming increasingly alarmed about, and that's acquired immune deficiency syndrome, better known as AIDS. Mr. Chairman, you raised the question: how does it relate to the workplace? How does it relate to workers in Alberta? Well, we're finding out more and more about this disease every day. It touches embalmers in the funeral business. It touches all of those health care professionals who are working in our hospitals, who are working in dentists' offices, who are working in laboratories: anything having to do with the medical field.

The Member for Red Deer North raised what are startling statistics that are being spread wide and far throughout the United States: a suggestion that by some period of time some 250,000 Americans will have died of the disease. Just to give you a bit of a financial impact, Mr. Chairman, of the disease, it's estimated that the treatment costs and the hospital costs, the medical drug costs associated with one AIDS disease carrier is estimated to be in the order of \$150,000 U.S. in the United States. So you multiply that 250,000 person figure by \$150,000 U.S., and you're talking in the order of \$37.5 billion in the care,

the treatment, the hospitalization, and the general care of those people.

That's something our Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care and I have talked about at length, and the only way to stop the spread of the disease is education. There is no cure. It's not expected that there will be a cure for at least a decade, and the disease kills. There is no cure. So the kind of approach that we are taking throughout the general public and in those high-risk professions is education, and those are the tools that we can provide to those who have to handle the blood and other body fluids of those who have the disease. We have provided to all health care professionals, through a number of manuals and booklets, the information they need to handle properly and safely these blood fluids and other body fluids of those people who suffer from AIDS. And we will continue to provide that information. I've met with the Alberta Medical Association, with the College of Physicians and Surgeons to ask for their help, and they have strongly supported our initiatives to get that information out there so that members of their profession are equipped and tooled and know how to deal with the disease.

Our job is to inform, to provide the necessary information so that all Albertans can act responsibly and carefully. We've recently, as all members know, produced a brochure on the facts on AIDS, that has met with what I'm told is tremendous acceptance and reception within the community. In fact, some employers have ordered them in the hundreds, and in fact some thousands, to put in month-end paycheques of their employees so that their employees have the facts on AIDS, what the disease is all about, and how you can properly prevent it.

The member raised another good point that he's discussed with me on a couple of occasions in the past, and that's with respect to hepatitis, a vaccine that we provided through the public health program until April 1 of this year. It was a vaccination program, the only one of its kind in the country, that was provided to those high-risk workers, especially those in the health care field, to protect them from becoming afflicted by and acquiring hepatitis. Concern was raised that those in the community who practise what the norm considers unacceptable, whether it's prostitution, whether it's homosexuals or others, were receiving the vaccine. They were, but the program is now basically eliminated. The funding is no longer there for those people to receive the hepatitis vaccine simply because we found that we had to take our resources, reduced and limited as they were, and target them on those we felt had the greatest need. In this case, we decided we'd move funding for that program to the haemophilis influenza B program for our children two years of age and three and four year olds as well so that they would be protected from the life-threatening, crippling, long-lasting disease of haemophilis influenza. We felt that those in the health care professions who were employed were either able to pay for the hepatitis B vaccine themselves or it would be the responsibility of their employer to take that on to ensure that their employees were properly and adequately protected.

The Member for Calgary North West raised the subject of disease progression, something that I've talked about and I just reiterate my concern for. I've asked the Occupational Health and Safety Council, working in conjunction with our officials, to provide me with a better understanding of the state of the art, of the information that we've got now, and what we need to go further down that path. Because it is something that in this province, with the workers that we've got to be looking after and caring for the welfare of, I want to make sure we can get on top of that concern.

One of substance abuse: the member for Calgary North West raised that concern. More and more recently, Mr. Chairman, we're finding that some employers are cracking down and are so concerned about safety on the job and protecting workers and their fellow workers that some of them are actually having to go through mandatory testing before they can get a job or if they're going to remain as an employee of that firm. It's a public debate that we're going to be having, I know, in the Assembly in the days ahead. Mr. Chairman, I've got to say that I'm not uncomfortable with that kind of approach. I realize that we all have individual rights and individual freedoms, but if I'm working in a very hazardous situation where my fellow worker may be abusing some kind of chemical substance, whether it's alcohol, drugs, or otherwise . . .

MR. DOWNEY: Tobacco.

MR. DINNING: . . . he's playing with my life, she's playing with my life, and that's not something that I'm not willing to stand idly by and say, "Well, that's just fine with me." I just don't think that's right.

The Member for Stettler mentioned tobacco. I'd like to suggest that the Member for Stettler put his money where his mouth is and break the habit. I welcome that commitment, implied, not explicit yet, but perhaps his constituents in the constituency of Stettler will see this exchange and prevail upon him, as many of us in our caucus are trying to do, to bring him out of the back ranks, the back rows of our caucus room, and have him join us in the fresh air arena in the centre of the room.

Freedom to report a concern by an individual worker on a worksite: if I as a worker am concerned that my employer is forcing me to go into a confined entry that is not properly protected, properly stabilized, that I am not protected from any potential hazard there, the worker has that responsibility in our legislation. In fact, Mr. Chairman, he has not only the right but he has the responsibility. He must not go into that confined entry; he must stand back and say, "No, that's not something I'm going to do."

I'll leave my remarks there, Mr. Chairman. I know there are others who'd like to get into the debate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Edmonton Mill Woods, followed by the leader of the Liberal Party.

MR. GIBEAULT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The vote before us here that the minister is asking our support for tonight is the occupational health and safety research and education vote of \$1.5 million, and I have to say that certainly the objective of preventing accidents is absolutely commendable. But it seems to me that we can't talk simply about research and education by itself, because it's part of the broader picture and it's part of the picture of the compensation system for injured workers in our province here. I have to wonder, Mr. Chairman, I'm uncomfortable about this, because the more I find out from my constituents about the Workers' Compensation Board, the more I wonder if in fact it is designed to assist workers or help workers who have been injured or if its primary intention and purpose and goal is to protect the employers from legal actions. It seems to me that that, more often than less often, seems to be the way a lot of my constituents see how the WCB operates.

I have to tell the minister that my constituents in Mill Woods have not been lobbying me for additional health and safety research. We're asking for a million and a half dollars. But I

have an obligation to tell the minister what my constituents are lobbying me for in this area, and I want him to know that last night in my constituency in Edmonton Mill Woods, the same night as there was a Stanley Cup play-off game in town, the same night as there was a benefit concert for the food bank in this city, I had a public meeting in my constituency to discuss the area of occupational health and safety and workers' compensation. Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, there was standing room only in my constituency office last night. That tells me . . . [interjections] Standing room only on a night when there are those kinds of other distractions and things for people to be engaged in. There's a whole number of people just in my constituency. There are people here who laugh and snicker about this, but I want to tell them that the injured workers in my constituency are not amused at all by some of the treatment they have had at the hands of the Workers' Compensation Board.

I want to ask the minister the kinds of questions that people are putting to me. One of them said he wants to know how it is that he is now supposed to live and support his wife on a disability pension of \$77 per month. I'm looking at this vote that's before us for occupational health and safety research and I'm wondering, Mr. Minister: is this one of the issues that's going to be researched, how somebody can live on a pension of \$77 a month? Is that one of the research projects? I'd like you to tell me that, because I have to answer these kinds of questions to my constituents.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair hesitates to interrupt the hon. member. The Chair would refer the hon. member to the objective of the vote, and that is: with the objective of any accidents and illness resulting from employment. With respect, hon. member, if the member wants to talk about worker compensation, it's going to have to be in another form, unless it relates to research into accidents. Hon. Member for Edmonton Mill Woods.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Chairman, we are being asked here to vote on \$1.5 million, and as a member of this Assembly, as a representative of constituents in Mill Woods, I need to know what exactly this is for. The minister hasn't really explained what these research projects are for. We know for a fact what they aren't. They aren't to go to support the Alberta Federation of Labour occupational health centre. But we'd like to know what they are for. How can I vote for this, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, if I as a representative of people in my constituency can't make an intelligent vote here without more information? I'd like to know what it is there's going to be research on.

One of the other things that people in my constituency would like to know is if perhaps that's going to be one of the items that will be researched here: when an injured worker gets his benefits terminated abruptly and he has to wait some three months or so to get an appeal, how he is supposed to support his family in the meantime. Is this one of the projects that this vote is going to support, to try and find out how workers are supposed to support themselves and their families while their claims go through the bureaucracy? Is that one of the research efforts you want me to support, Mr. Minister? Because if that is, I want to vote in favour of that. If it's not, I'd like you to tell me that, so I can tell it to my injured constituents.

Mr. Chairman, research is important. There's no question about that, and I support that. But that is totally meaningless in a context where many injured workers in this province are

treated with about as much compassion as one would have in throwing away a used Kleenex. The problems I am getting from injured workers in my constituency -- there's case after case of these kinds of shabby treatments. I'd like to know how in good conscience I can support a vote of \$1.5 million for this safety research and education vote we're being asked to support when I keep getting these kinds of representations. I want to be able to support it, Mr. Chairman, but the kinds of representations people are making to me are very, very disturbing. I don't know if the minister is aware of them or if he's not. If he would like to come to my constituency, perhaps talk to some of these injured workers. Or maybe some of these projects are ones he's going to undertake. It says right here in the vote, Mr. Chairman, that there's "No subproject breakdown." I'd like the minister to explain that.

Maybe one of the projects he's proposing to us for research is to find out how injured workers are able to find another job, because what is happening now, apparently very frequently, is that when you apply for a job, employers want to know if you've submitted a Workers' Compensation Board claim in this province. And if you have, the interview is terminated. Now, is one of these projects for research, Mr. Minister, to find out how injured workers are supposed to find alternative employment when employers ask for their workers' compensation history in the past, and if they have a history of claims, they're terminated or given no further consideration for employment? If that's one of the research projects, I want to vote in favour of that, Mr. Chairman.

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, I just can't in good conscience support this vote until I see some sort of commitment from the minister and from his government to look at cleaning up the whole mess of the WCB and putting an end to the shabby and disgraceful treatment so many injured workers in this province are experiencing. This is just not acceptable. If some of these research moneys that we're being asked to vote are going to investigate some of those areas or to improve that system, then I'm in favour of it. Mr. Minister, just explain exactly what that is.

MR. TAYLOR: If I may take a few moments to direct some questions to the hon. minister who is the ... [interjections] They get a voice from the far communist ranks over there.

I want to touch on a couple of areas. First is one that's already been mentioned. I think the fact that you put out \$1.3 million in grants is not broken down well enough. It would be a lot nicer to see it broken down more. If the minister could see his way clear to circulate the House with a list of the grantees -- we know who the grantor is -- or whether in fact if he speaks now, how much of that is already committed, whether it's all committed or just a portion, or is he doing like the minister of manpower services, carrying a fat wallet around in his back pocket in case he needs re-election toward the end of the year? [interjections] You don't know, but there's a move afoot. Secondly, my understanding is that you might be resigning to run for the new party that is being formed in Vancouver on the weekend.

I might touch on another area: smoking. I think you've made some great strides in the smoking area, but you still have some backbenchers and people around here that are working at it. I think it would be an idea that somehow or another that basement office washroom that had been remodeled for the Lib-

erals some time back, that we have not taken possession of, should be the sole place in this building where you're allowed to smoke. Maybe we as an opposition party would make a move, if it's at all necessary, that we give full smoking privileges to that basement washroom. But all kidding aside, I think we have an example to set to the public, and the government, if it wants to prove that its own program of nonsmoking is working, should work on its own members.

I am a little concerned about whether or not you couldn't use some funds for a new worker safety centre. I think something like that is long overdue. I know the unions themselves, and I believe we are both. . . . The minister and myself were at the opening of a counseling service by the unions themselves. But a worker safety centre in the modern day and age might be a good idea for government. Just as we in the past realized that education in many areas is too complex to be left to private society, it may well be that worker safety, with maybe some sort of surtax to industry or whatever it is, could be set up. We are dealing with such a complex society in manufacturing and work today, and the fact that jobs are so short, that we have people plunging into jobs they are just not properly trained for.

Particularly, I'm worried in the case of well drilling. Well drilling last year, when we saw a boom come along about Christmas, resulted in quite a few accidents, I believe a total of six deaths all told. As an oilman, I think I can reasonably predict that you're going to get another boom in drilling in late summer and early fall and winter again this year. It's just the way the industry works. As a matter of fact, through the years -- I guess it's 30 or 40 years I've been in it -- it was the rule rather than the exception to boom in winter and do nothing in summer. It was only the last number of years that we had drilling spread out at all evenly. So I think you can expect another influx of drilling rigs getting under way with green people at the helm or on the brake, as they say, and getting some more into Esso. A worker safety centre starting now, training people and giving them a certificate they would have to have before they could go to work on rigs, might be an idea.

Radon testing: that's something, of course, that the *Globe and Mail* has made much of, and it might be more the Department of the Environment's argument. Radon is considered to be present in many areas of the world and certainly North America now, and I think it's certainly in the field of community health. Some researchers say it may be, in numbers anyway, a bigger cause of cancer than any other type of community pollution, and yet it's done in the home. It comes into the home. It comes out of our soil. Radon is the case of a gas that's escaping from the soil that is trapped by the home that's sitting on top of it. Anyone familiar with geology knows that we have fracture lines and mobility lines in Mother Earth that radon gas moves up through much faster than other areas. It depends where your home is built, whether indeed you are living in an area that could be quite dangerous and cancer-causing.

I would also like to suggest to the minister a solution he could maybe work on with the Provincial Treasurer. This is the case of lead in gasoline. We are still not making the conversions to unleaded gasoline that we should, and yet we have a wonderful opportunity here in this new increase of 5 cents a litre in tax, which is not on propane and not on farm gas. Why don't we take the 5 cents off unleaded gasoline at the pump or increase the leaded gasoline? In effect, leaded gasoline and unleaded gasoline are taxed the same at the pump, and I think that's sending a message to the public that maybe the hon. minister could investigate. It need not cost the taxpayer any money.



He can sit down with a slide rule or an abacus and work it out so the yield would be the same. But the increased tax should be on leaded gasoline and a lot less tax on unleaded gasoline, and yet there seems to be no move.

In fact, unleaded gasoline is one of those unique things in society where the object you're buying costs more without additives than it was with additives. In other words, it's a classic example of the power of advertising and control of the market when they can sell you a product that has less in it than the other product and charge you more. The very addition of tetraethyl lead does not substitute for gasoline. Tetraethyl lead is more expensive than no lead, and yet we pay less for it.

Lastly, I want to touch on for a minute -- and you may argue that this too is the Department of the Environment's cause, but I think the Department of the Environment in this case is particularly hopeless -- the question of the transportation of hazardous waste. Now, the transportation of hazardous waste . . . And I'm not speaking about the minister. He's not really hazardous if you're more than six feet away or have your hearing aid turned off. But either way, the transportation of hazardous waste over highways in the rural areas that do not have the ability to carry hazardous waste is a danger. It could wipe out some small town someday down the line -- some farm community accident -- because it is a time bomb waiting for somebody to set it off as these people that gather hazardous waste around this province take shortcuts to the hazardous waste plant to dump their goods. There is no plan of hauling this through the countryside or through the small towns. In fact the whole idea seems to be -- and the Minister of the Environment seems to think -- that if you can disguise the load and sneak it through in the middle of the night without anybody knowing, down any back road, that's okay.

I hear a little bit of mumbling and rattling going on down there, but I know that somebody has to . . .

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon . . .

ANHON. MEMBER: What citation?

MR. KOWALSKI: Oh, sure, 347.

Mr. Chairman, the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon just suggested that there was no plan with respect to the transportation of hazardous and dangerous goods in the province of Alberta. Then the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon went beyond to suggest that as far as the Minister of the Environment is concerned, he would just as soon be happy that somebody would wheel and deal through the middle of the night in the wee hours -- Mr. Chairman, that's totally irresponsible. The whole subject matter of the transportation of hazardous and dangerous goods in this province is one that is very important to me, very important to the government, and the government is very determined that in fact every effort will be taken to ensure that every danger will be minimized and the greatest degree of scrutiny of public safety will be adhered to.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Point of order, Mr. Chairman. The Minister of the Environment might wish to reconsider his citation from *Beauchesne*, in particular the fact that he's referring to a speech given by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, in that citation 347 in *Beauchesne* has to do with the "Address in Reply to His Excellency's Speech."

MR. TAYLOR: It shows again, Mr. Chairman, the tremendous respect the Minister of the Environment, the hon. Member for Barrhead, holds for those that come from Westlock-Sturgeon. I would ask though, Mr. Chairman, that he cease and desist from the unseemly conduct of genuflecting every time he goes by me.

I finished off. . . Mr. Chairman, that was the last question. I think the transportation of hazardous waste could result in quite a community disaster down the road, and there does not seem to be a plan in the rural areas as to where, how and when it should be hauled, and on what type of roads, what should be used.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Stettler.

MR. DOWNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's a pretty hard act to follow, I must say.

I'm going to start working backwards through my notes here. I think the . . .

ANHON. MEMBER: What else is new.

MR. DOWNEY: The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon was making some comments about leaded gasoline and the, I suppose, obvious fact that unleaded costs more than leaded gasoline, and he says you're getting less and paying more. That's not quite true, Mr. Chairman. In fact lead is an octane enhancer. It's the cheapest octane enhancer we have and the substitutes are more expensive, hence the differential in the price between leaded and unleaded gasoline. But he is on to an interesting point and one I tend to support, because the hazards of lead in the environment are well known to all. The alternatives, particularly grain-based ethanol, could provide some benefits besides cleaning up the environment, in that they could provide at least some outlet for the surplus grain situation we have.

Just one other comment on what the member was talking about, confining smokers to the basement washrooms. Mr. Chairman, this government stands for tolerance and understanding, and I hope it will continue to do so. I would consider that a very regressive move.

I want to congratulate the Minister of Community and Occupational Health for the way he has taken charge of his portfolio and particularly for the efforts he is making to restore soundness of operation and financial soundness to the Workers' Compensation Board. The Member for Edmonton Mill Woods, if I understood him correctly, would support this estimate, Mr. Chairman, if the research was directed toward how more injured workers could access more workers' compensation money quicker. I take that to mean that the NDP would like all research funds to go to find ways to give away the taxpayer's dollar; they'd vote for it then.

Mr. Chairman, the opposition has been uncommonly kind to us tonight, so with those few brief remarks, I would call for the question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton Glengarry.

MR. YOUNIE: The minister wanted to respond first. That's . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman. I would like to respond to some comments made by the members for Edmonton Mill Woods, Westlock-Sturgeon, and Stettler. The Member for Stettler was hitting on exactly the point I'd like to. And it has nothing to do with the estimates before us, but that hasn't stopped either member from the opposition ranks from totally distorting the purpose of the debate. So let me just spell out for the Assembly so that it's very clear where the NDP stands on the Workers' Compensation Board. They are making it -- they want it to become a social service agency; they want it to be a replacement for the Unemployment Insurance Commission. I can't support it, this government cannot support it, Albertans will not support it, and we will not stand for it. What I'm saying is that by saying that injured workers who are entitled to benefits will continue to receive all of the benefits, no more and no less than what they're entitled to under the law and under the regulations, because if we were to follow the NDP approach, we would be deteriorating, undermining the board's ability to pay future benefits ...

MR. TAYLOR: A point of order, Mr. Chairman. In all due deference to the hon. minister, the meeting is on the estimates as presented on page 4, and there's nothing about the Workers' Compensation Board there. The fact that somebody may have gotten away with breaking the rules in mentioning it and it got under your skin does not allow him to break the rules also. Otherwise, this would really get ridiculous. But there's no mention here at all of the Workers' Compensation Board.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I think the Chair allowed the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon to talk about leaded gasoline and unleaded gasoline. I couldn't understand what relevance that was, so would the hon. minister please proceed.

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Chairman, I'll be brief, only to say that in promoting occupational health and safety on the worksite, the occupational health and safety division will be in partnership with the Workers' Compensation Board to ensure that the board has an ability to pay future benefits to injured workers who are legitimately entitled to them. For to go the route the socialists are promoting would mean that paying it like social services, paying it like unemployment insurance, would undermine and put in jeopardy the board's ability to pay those future benefits. This government will certainly not do that.

The Member for Edmonton Beverly and the Member for Mill Edmonton Woods both mentioned -- and I failed to mention in my first response -- the occupational health centre funded and sponsored by the Alberta Federation of Labour, an excellent initiative on the part of the Alberta Federation of Labour, one that I fully support. I've been involved in one of their programs they tape in Calgary on cable television in being able to explain the services that are available to workers in the province, working with the very talented Susan Ruffo to put on an excellent program at the occupational health centre. We will continue to provide all of the services we can from the education and research division, from the hygiene division, from the inspection division within the occupational health and safety division. That's a commitment. [interjection] No, there are no dollars, nor are there dollars for many or any of those kinds of programs. But we will deliver the professional service, the professional resources we have in-house to help them do some very good work.

I can't help but comment on the Member for Westlock-

Sturgeon's one excellent comment with respect to smoking. It's so great to see the Minister of Agriculture this evening in such good health. He has quit the habit and his health improves daily. It's so noticeable in our caucus. His vim and vigour is returning after sagging for all those years, and it's something we will continue to work on in our caucus and throughout society.

The member also spoke of transportation of hazardous wastes. I won't even respond to his notion of a lack of a plan. We have sponsored and put forward by the professional, the superb, Minister of the Environment a hazardous waste management plan and plant that will be second to none in this country. Something that all Albertans can be very, very proud of: the initiative that this government is taking to properly handle those hazardous wastes and to make sure all Albertans are protected from them.

The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon also spoke of workers' safety centres and the role they can play. It's a very good idea. As a matter of fact, the member would be wise to turn to page 3 of *Hansard*, dated March 5, when Her Honour read the Speech from the Throne. I go to page 3, where I'll just briefly restate a couple of sentences:

Safety in the drilling and well servicing sectors of the industry is another priority of my government. This commitment to the safety of workers in the ... industry is being fulfilled in the construction of a world-class petroleum industry training centre this year.

That is taking place in the constituency of my colleague the MLA for Wetaskiwin-Leduc. It will open in Nisku this year, I believe. That safety training centre is where activist people in the Alberta oil and gas industry can go and learn the trade, learn it professionally, learn it carefully, and learn it safely. The same will be also be available through the Workers' Compensation Act.

We are currently working with the Alberta Construction Association to have them set up an industry safety committee that will provide to all employers and employees in the construction industry access to and management of a good and improved safety program for all the people in that industry. So those are the kinds of initiatives that we have taken, and I hope to be able to report even greater progress when I appear before the committee next year.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton Glengarry.

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. [interjection] I'd like to say something nice once, if you don't mind. I do it so seldom to ministers, I thought it would be nice.

I must confess I do have some sympathy for this minister at times. He's saddled with the job of testing dumps and wells for the Environment department through the health units. He's now got the bad news that he's also going to have to provide, through the health units or some other office, pregnancy prevention counseling and other services. If I could commit the parliamentary sacrilege of paraphrasing a British parliamentarian, one might say, "Never has a government department had to do so much for so many with so little." I would argue, in fact, that every dollar we put into this department would save us hundreds of dollars off the medical care costs down the road.

AN HON. MEMBER: Where are you, Marvin?

MR. YOUNIE: Yes, I wish you were here.

One point I would like to turn to that the minister made, though, was on the freedom of workers to report issues. In fact, a worker in the Medicine Hat area did report an issue of worker safety to me concerning Al-Tec. He had reported it to government offices and . . . [interjection] Yes. I don't know if that's related to the fact that someone in one of the government departments he did phone must have revealed his name to the employer, because he did get what he considered to be a somewhat menacing phone call later, and I guarantee I didn't tell anyone who it was who gave me the information.

I did want to suggest an area of research that the minister might put under this program, although it would be very easy for him, and that is in checking the contracts that this Medicine Hat company has with the Department of National Defence. I wasn't aware of the contract they had with draining porta-potties for the Suffield base, but obviously the minister wasn't aware of the contract the company had with Cold Lake to bring chemicals down to Medicine Hat and store them in a train car. I would suggest that the research would have been fairly easy: phone the same person in the Environment department we phoned, who said, "Well, yes, they do have a contract there. They're trucking this kind of stuff from Cold Lake." They were very aware of it, and so I'm surprised that the minister wasn't. I would not presume to suggest that he would selectively present only one of the two contracts he was aware of, so I must assume he was totally unaware of the second contract that the Environment department was aware of. I think that indicates perhaps a need for more research. Or was the Minister of the Environment also unaware of the contract? That's possible. But one of his officials knew of it. Hopefully, he won't get a lateral demotion for being forthcoming with information like others have been.

[Mr. Gogo in the Chair]

ANHON. MEMBER: If you want information [inaudible].

MR. YOUNIE: Well, sometimes I wonder if that department isn't using the old technique of burying problems in a sea of information without getting to the real kernel of truth at the centre that's most needed.

Anyway, I also have some concerns about the provincial lab here in the city, and I think it would make a great location for some of the research projects that this particular project might do. Although the minister may say not, I think any research facility can be used if planned properly. From what I've heard from colleagues, that lab is being turned over mostly to the U of A. It was used for testing for communicable diseases in the past, and that's going to be phased out, the concern being . . .

ANHON. MEMBER: Come on, get your facts right.

MR. YOUNIE: Well, please correct me. [interjection]

Okay. Anyway a lot of that is now being done in private labs, and the cost of doing it in a private lab is much greater than the cost of getting it done at the provincial lab. But because the lab hasn't been funded well enough in the past it's slower. That's why doctors are going to the private labs, the problem being that that cost, rather than being shown in the operating costs of the provincial lab, more or less disappears into that medicare budget that the minister has complained about and used as justification for deinsuring services and so on. So perhaps the provincial lab should have been better funded and used

much more efficiently. I'm sure the minister, from the look on his face, will want to comment on that later.

I have some concerns in one area of industry in the Edmonton region, one that I've expressed concern about in the past. I hope that the research done under this estimate will in fact include some research into this area, and that's into the area of chemical production in the Fort Saskatchewan area. There are a number of chemicals produced there that I think are quite dangerous, and workers' health could be at risk in many of them. We've certainly seen Cancer Board statistics to support the possibility of that fear being correct, and I hope the research being done by the department in that area will concentrate on that potential.

Specifically I'm worried about pesticides and various herbicides and insecticides that come out of factories like those. The reason I'm concerned, as I've pointed out, is that research is not done in Canada, not done in Alberta, to decide whether or not those chemicals are even safe for use. It's done primarily in the States or other foreign countries. In the States it's done and reviewed by the Environmental Protection Agency. The reason I have some concerns about the safety of those and would like to see some of the testing done here -- and the Minister of Agriculture asked for information on this and I've been doing the research on his behalf; it won't be too much longer before I do have some of the information he did ask for. I'm concerned because EPA auditing of many of the labs tells us that the chemicals workers out there are producing and farmers are spraying on fields and forestry workers are spraying on forests and so on were tested in labs that were found by the EPA to be conducting tests, some of them in a manner that was considered scientifically invalid -- some, it was even said, were doing it in a manner that was downright fraudulent -- and that there were 55 labs that fell into those categories.

The minister may remember past arguments about, for instance, a plant to produce pentachlorophenol in the Edmonton area. I wonder if either minister is aware that when plants produce pesticides they get a mixture of something called "inerts" to put in with the active ingredient, and pentachlorophenol is one of the inerts that is put in some herbicides or pesticides. Yet it was considered to be a toxin unsafe enough that the plant wasn't wanted in the Fort Saskatchewan area. Another one is xylene, and certainly the Minister of the Environment will remember that from the Morinville dump. The Speaker will never forget it from the jars I brought into the Chambers. That was admitted to be something that should never be put into a dump, and yet it is one of those inerts.

Toluene was found on a lot in Gleichen; that's another one of the inerts. They found hundreds of them that may be of serious toxicological concern. They aren't listed on the container that farmers use. They may be in some cases more dangerous than the active ingredient, yet nothing on the container tells them how to safely use that inert, because not only are the officials of the Canadian and the provincial government not aware of what inerts might be in that particular can; sometimes even the manufacturer who sells it isn't. He buys something called inerts and puts it in without even knowing what the list of ingredients is.

In terms of that testing, and that's why I'd like to see this minister taking some responsibility perhaps under this area to do some of it himself, there was a lot of to-do made by the Minister of the Environment about an LD<sub>50</sub> figure: lethal dose for 50 percent of the population. For a number of pesticides that are used widely in this province by farmers, the LD<sub>50</sub> tests were found to be invalid because halfway through the experiment the

labs would add more rats because too many were dying, so that they would have a much nicer looking LD<sub>50</sub> figure -- a rather interesting procedure from a scientific standpoint. It certainly makes it easy to prove that the stuff is okay if you're going to use those kinds of scientific methods. They also found things like the markings of a lot of the animals didn't match with the original ones, so they couldn't be sure if these were the original rats that started the experiment or other ones.

I think those kinds of things indicate that we have to accept in this province some responsibility for the safety of workers who are working in those factories, the safety of our farmers, and in some cases, government employees who are applying them, whether or not the labels and instructions on the cans which tell you how to apply it in terms of safety with the active ingredient, which may have been tested fraudulently, but may say nothing about the inerts, which may never have been tested at all or may not even be known for that ingredient.

Just to conclude, I think this department should represent, and I think by and large does try to represent, a sound philosophy, and that is the philosophy that when it comes to health and worker safety and medicine, an ounce of prevention is worth a ton of cure -- not a pound of cure -- and that when we start cutting in the prevention, we can't predict how long the time lag is going to be before we start paying the tenfold or hundredfold cost of that lack of prevention. But eventually it's going to hit us. We can hope by then the price of oil has skyrocketed and we'll have lots of money, but I don't think that's a good method to work on and I don't think we can afford any cuts in this kind of area.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Calgary Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to ask some questions, raise some issues with the minister, certainly as it affects something that really hasn't been talked about at all this evening under the category of occupational health. That has to do with what's been termed "sick building syndrome." Now, I don't know, I'm sure the minister has heard about it and has maybe even had some briefings on it, and for all I know, his department under this particular vote has actually been conducting studies about sick building syndrome. If so, I'd be very interested in his comments or his information which he might give us, because in the opening remarks the minister mentioned that there were something like 26 studies and 22 projects but did not go into any detail about what the tides of those studies were. That would be interesting information for members of the Legislature just to see what kinds of emphases, in addition to the ones he's already mentioned tonight, are being undertaken in this vote.

The reason this is a concern, I think, for growing numbers of people is that when you think about it, Mr. Chairman, close to 80 or 90 percent of the time we spend is now indoors, in the home, in the workplace, our automobile, in stores, waiting rooms, theatres, restaurants -- the list goes on. Up until recently the prime concern has been on pollutants in the outdoor environment, but because so much of our time is spent indoors, particularly in office buildings, there's growing concern about what effect the air that people breathe and the environment in which they're working is having on them and on their health.

It's particularly been accentuated or developed or increased in recent years because of the concern with energy conservation, and with that concern there's been a lot of effort taken to make

buildings literally airtight to ensure that they're sealed from air coming in from the outside that would have the effect of either cooling or heating the building and raising the costs of energy for that building. By restricting the building's ability to breathe, so to speak, it means that air tends to get circulated in that building a much longer length of time, and so the airborne pollutants in that air have a greater effect on people who work in those buildings.

I guess, as well, that with the new synthetic materials I'm told have been introduced into the office environment in recent years, it adds further problems because of the emissions that those kinds of materials are putting into the air. So with all these factors at work, things are happening in the environment where people work in office buildings that are creating health problems and syndromes for people who are in those buildings to the point that in other jurisdictions, at least, there are studies and research going on. I don't know whether the same thing is happening in Alberta to determine what could be done to ensure that the indoor pollution is reduced for office workers.

The kinds of symptoms people have are varied. They could be headaches, dizziness, nausea, or fatigue. It could be respiratory problems, backaches, neck aches, blurred vision. There's just a whole list of them, and the severity can vary between individuals or can progress as the day goes on. And with many of them, the reason they've become conscious of the work environment is that often after they've been out of the building for a little while the symptoms disappear. So with these complaints that are growing -- and I don't know to what extent they're growing in Alberta -- in other parts of Canada, this is cause for study and research and proposals of how to reduce the impact of the office environment on the workers.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I could go on at some length, I guess, reciting some of the things that are contributing to this situation. Perhaps the minister is well aware of them. I've mentioned a few already. But into this chemical mix or chemical soup, one that caught my attention is the fact that when you have these emissions from the synthetics of the furniture in office buildings -- they're circulating in the air -- they come in contact with fluorescent and gas vapour lighting which emits ultraviolet radiation, and little photochemical reactions take place, so that there's now even a term for it called "indoor photochemical smog." And whereas the Minister of the Environment, you know, has to keep up with all the chemicals that are being produced for the outdoor environment, this is a situation where all kinds of things are being produced in the work environment, having an effect on office workers.

So in view of that, I just want to know from the minister if these votes, any of these studies that have been done under this vote, have to do with review of the kinds of chemicals that people are being exposed to in office buildings in Alberta.

Now, as I mentioned, Mr. Chairman, because of the nature of the chemicals and of the pollution, it can vary in its impact on individuals. Just as individuals are different, they experience different reactions to these chemicals. One, of course, is that skin becomes sensitized to a particular chemical, and after, say, 10 or 15 years in the workplace, when their skin comes in contact with even a small amount of the offending substance, it can trigger a massive skin reaction. They could have a sensitizing effect on the nervous system, on the pulmonary or cardiovascular systems, or the digestive tract. So depending on the chemical, depending on the individual, there are lots of different reactions that people could experience.

So one of the things that has been undertaken in at least other

jurisdictions and, again, perhaps in Alberta, is to begin a comprehensive process of analyzing the air inside office buildings. Now, perhaps the minister isn't too interested or perhaps considers it inappropriate at this time to go into the workplace of others in the private sector, but even within the provincial government civil service there are thousands of people who work for the government in buildings all over the province: some new, some old, some renovated for energy conservation, some not. And just in his role as an employer, or as a member of the government who employs these people, has he looked at what effect internal air pollution is having on the work force within the provincial government, in the offices in which they work for the provincial government? Just go out and monitor. See what's out there, and see if there are complaints from people in particular areas, particular buildings.

There are no particular standards in Canada for ventilation in office buildings. And so my question would be: if any of the studies that are being undertaken in this vote are directed towards determining what kinds of practices of ventilation might be effective in office buildings to ensure that people don't suffer from sick building syndrome, is there any consideration given to testing the materials that go into buildings in Alberta or the furnishings that this government buys to furnish offices in which provincial employees work?

For example, particle board might contain urea formaldehyde. Again, we've seen where this sort of chemical has had major effects on others. People have had to leave their homes, and the federal government had to remove its approval rating for that chemical as an insulating material. To what extent is the government looking at the materials it purchases and the furnishings it purchases to furnish office buildings? What is it doing to look at maintenance methods and schedules in buildings to ensure that air is being properly circulated, properly discharged, and properly filtered to ensure that the mechanical operations within a building are at their maximum efficiency, again to ensure that the absolute least exposure is contributed to the office workers in the provincial government's civil service? So just some comments from the minister would be appreciated about this whole matter of sick building syndrome.

Now, the minister has also made reference tonight on a number of occasions to tobacco and the presence of tobacco in the workplace. Well, it's fine to say that he hopes so and so and such and such a member and others will reduce tobacco smoke in the workplace, but, Mr. Chairman, their various studies have shown that it costs an employer close to \$5,000 a year for every smoker they have working for them. The cost to an employer for absenteeism, property damage, health and fire insurance costs, lowered employee morale and productivity: \$5,000 a year to every employer for every employee they have hired that smokes.

I don't know if you'll want me to go into some of the evidence as to what tobacco smoke contains, particularly sidestream smoke, which is far more dangerous than direct smoke. It's been estimated that tobacco smoke contains nearly 3,800 chemicals, at least 50 of which are known to be carcinogenic in animals, humans, or both. The particulate phase of cigarette smoke contains the bulk of carcinogenic materials of tobacco smoke, and there are at least 38 known or suspected carcinogens in the particulate phase. Now, when you have a person in a room smoking, they're inhaling directly, but the smoke that's coming out of that cigarette in sidestream smoke contains far more carcinogens, to the rate of 50 times higher, in sidestream smoke than mainstream smoke. These are powerful

organ-specific carcinogens.

So the people who are in a situation where others are smoking are at great risk, as much and if not more so that the smokers themselves, and there's lots of evidence to substantiate that. For example, nonsmokers in an office where smoking was permitted would absorb respirable suspended particles at a rate three times greater than in a nonsmoking environment. So we are exposing people to significant health risks by allowing people to smoke in the workplace.

There have been studies, one done by two people published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1980, White and Froeb. They did a study which evaluated the effect of various degrees of long-term workplace exposure to tobacco smoke -- by "long-term", greater than 20 years -- and they looked at what effect it had on pulmonary function in 2,100 healthy middle-aged workers. The results showed possible damage to small airways in the lungs. And relative to those not exposed at home or at work, passive smokers of both sexes suffered statistically significant declines in mid-expiratory and end-expiratory flow rates, to the extent that they concluded that chronic exposure to cigarette smoke in the work environment reduces small airways function in the lungs to the same extent as smoking one to 10 cigarettes per day.

Well, Mr. Chairman, there is significant and growing evidence that smoking in the workplace affects not only those who are smoking but those who do not want to smoke and who are in turn called passive smokers because they have no choice but to inhale the sidestream smoke.

In view of the evidence, I'd like to ask the minister what steps he's prepared to take in his capacity as minister for occupational health to see that smoking is decreased in provincial government offices. For example, he could do what any of a number of institutions in this province and across the country have done to restrict places where smoking is available, hours when smoking is available. He could outlaw smoking in the workplace. What steps, if any, is the minister taking to ensure that nonsmokers' rights are upheld, that they do not have to suffer grave health consequences as a result of working in an environment where people smoke, an environment over which they have no control and which offers to them a serious health hazard?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Chairman, I have asked the minister. I would like to get . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. No minister is compelled to answer any question. Hon. Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Mr. Chairman, there is a list, is there not? Who's up next on the list?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Minister of the Environment.

MR. KOWALSKI: I move that the committee rise, report progress, and beg 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: Having heard the report and the request for leave to sit again, does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, before adjourning, I'd like to indicate that tomorrow the business of the House following the question period will be continuing progress and third reading of Bill 38, the Appropriation Act, 1987.

[At 10:03 p.m. the House adjourned to Friday at 10 a.m.]