

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Tuesday, May 17, 1988 8:00 p.m.**

Date: 88/05/17

[The House resumed at 8 p.m.]

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Be seated please.
head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

[Mr. Gogo in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Committee of Supply, please come to order.

**ALBERTA HERITAGE SAVINGS TRUST FUND
CAPITAL PROJECTS DIVISION
1988-89 ESTIMATES OF PROPOSED INVESTMENTS**

Department of Advanced Education

1 -- Clinical Research Building

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Minister of Advanced Education, do you have any comments to make prior to comments, questions, or amendments to the appropriation?

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This project was until last year a project of Hospitals and Medical Care, but because of some reallocations of property responsibilities on the campus this building was deemed to be more appropriate under the ownership of the university board of governors. That switch was made, so the funding now must follow through to the new owners. But it is a building that had been started, using the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, as an adjunct to the Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre building, and the space involved covers the clinical research space for the Mackenzie health sciences hospital. It's being built next door to the research building for the Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, so the whole thing will provide a good research component. The total cost of the project is \$17.6 million, and the \$14,100,000 asked for this year are the funds required to complete the project.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. minister.

Members of supply, those who have comments, questions, or amendments please indicate to the Chair. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

MR. GIBEAULT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This particular project of the clinical research building and a capital allocation of some \$14,100,000 is certainly an interesting one. It will allow the university to do some additional research activity in an important area that it otherwise wouldn't be able to do.

But, Mr. Chairman, it would be a gross mistake to allow this debate to go by without making some related references to the situation facing the university. Just on Saturday past, May 14, on the front page of the *Edmonton Journal* there's an article that says, "U of A alarmed by cuts." It says that the university is

looking at a \$2.5 million deficit in the current year's budget, the '88-89 budget. It goes on to say, quoting Dr. Allan Warrack -- who, you may remember, is a former member of this Assembly, currently the vice-president of administration -- that this "is just part of the financial dilemma" facing the university. They refer to additional staff positions that are going to be . . .

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister, the Chair was about to intercede. The vote under consideration is the Clinical Research Building, which really doesn't relate to either comments by the president of the university or the operating fund of the University of Alberta. Perhaps the hon. member would come back to the vote under consideration.

MR. GIBEAULT: Well, of course, Mr. Chairman, there's no point building a building unless you can operate it, and that's the point I'm trying to make here. I'd just like to see if the minister can stand in his place tonight and give some assurance to the university and to the people of this province that once this fine facility is open, we're not going to have the university having to make public declarations of how we're having to close it and we can't maintain it properly and we haven't got the staff to run it. I'm looking forward, as I said before, to the kinds of research activity and teaching activity that will take place in this new facility, but I for one am not comfortable voting for a project like this unless I can have a concomitant commitment from this government, from the minister, to provide the operating funds that are required to support it.

As I've made reference to before, you know, I think this is the preference of the government: to have facilities that they can put a plaque on and cut a ribbon at. That's all fine and dandy, Mr. Chairman, but we've got to have the funds to operate these facilities. We've got to have the utilities, the staffing, all the operating funds that are required. And I want to hear the minister here, before we come to a vote on this particular allocation -- that he in fact is going to make a commitment that there will be the operating funds there for the university to make this facility one we can all be proud of.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to make a few comments in regard to the clinical research building for research facilities in medicine, respecting delivery and treatment systems. It's very interesting looking at all the estimates as they affect this department. There's this through the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. We find that there's a separate Capital Fund for the expenditure of money for Advanced Education facilities. Then we find also as part of the overall review of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee that we review the work and funding that's being done by the Heritage Foundation for Medical Research. So trying to keep track of where all of these various projects and funding responsibilities fit and how they all fit together is like reconstructing some sort of a maze.

Now the clinical research building at the University of Alberta, I presume, is in conjunction with the work that's being carried out by the Heritage Foundation for Medical Research to some extent, as well as money provided to the University of Alberta to operate and conduct various research activities there. As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has already pointed out, once you build a building, somebody's got to operate it, and I'd like to find out from the minister whether it's going to be funded through additional funds to the University of

Alberta. I see that they got a very modest increase in this particular year's operating budget. Whether they can expect to get additional funds next year or the year after -- whenever the building is completed -- in order to properly run it, or else if it's being carried out by the Heritage Foundation for Medical Research in terms of the operating expenses, I'd like to have some idea when and how the operations of that particular foundation for medical research are going to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order in the committee, please.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you.

I'd like to find out when the operations of that foundation are going to be reviewed by the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee. For example . . . I'll find it later and make the actual reference to legislation, Mr. Chairman. But, as I understand it, now that the six-year review has been undertaken for that foundation, in which they looked at the funding that's gone into some of the operating grants as well as capital grants made by that foundation, it's now expected that the select standing committee is going to review whether the amount of the endowment fund is adequate for future requirements of the foundation.

Now, one of the important things that committee would have to review is where all these capital expenditures fit with the overall direction of that foundation. Here, instead of funding this capital project through the Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, it's being done through the capital projects division. Now, that may have future years' implication. The point is, Mr. Chairman: I don't know who on the government side is taking a look at all these different spending projects. Who's making the co-ordination of them? Who's ensuring that one fits with the other? Who's making sure that when one hand does one thing, the other hand not only knows what it's doing but takes that into account in its future years' planning?

It seems to me, given that the legislation for the Heritage Foundation for Medical Research now mandates the select standing committee to review the future requirements of that foundation, one of the things that the select standing committee should be doing is having a look at these kinds of expenditures and see where they fit in the overall delivery of medical research in this province. Maybe there's a need for that \$14 million and it's a reasonable expenditure and it fits within a long-range plan, but I certainly didn't detect that from anything the minister said earlier this evening. I haven't seen it from any of the documentation put in front of me, and I'd just like to know when that review is going to be taking place and where that review fits in guiding the government on these sorts of expenditures. It's something that requires more explanation than what we've received from the minister this evening.

What I can't tell either from this request: is this \$14 million the total cost for this clinical research building? Is it a one-year expenditure, or is it 20 percent of an expenditure that will take two, three, four, or more years to complete? I don't understand what the full cost of this might be. Even though we're only being requested \$14,100,000 in this year's budget, I just have no idea what the future estimates for expenditure are. So, Mr. Chairman, a general comment from the minister I think is required. Number one: where does this fit in the overall direction of the provincial government? Number two, where does this fit for the long-range direction of the Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, and why is it proceeding prior to review of the requirements of that foundation by the select standing committee? Thirdly, what is the total cost and over how many years

is this expenditure going to be required for the University of Alberta?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. PIQUETTE: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to also ask a few questions of the minister, because I'm a member of the heritage trust fund committee and we do realize that we are bumping very close to the 20 percent for expenditures in the capital division.

This was not one of the recommendations that was advanced by the committee in the resolution in the general meeting, and it comes as a surprise that we're looking here at a \$14 million expenditure out of the heritage trust fund for a clinical research building for the University of Alberta. How did this come about? Why wasn't it proposed as part of the Alberta heritage trust fund committee hearing? I find again, I guess, that it's really a lapdog committee if we can't even be party to some of the government's own priorities when we're sitting in the committee. We finalized our recommendations here just about a month ago, and this was not put on the table at all. We had other recommendations, which were voted down, which we thought as a committee would have been priorities to be established elsewhere. Really, I would like to ask the minister: why wasn't this part of the general budget expenditures? I'm noticing approximately a 34 percent decrease in funding out of the general revenues for capital projects. If we're also going to be having problems with the funding of the programs at the university, how will the addition of a clinical research building be impacting on the future budget for the university in terms of their own operations? Had that been taken to account when this project was being announced?

I think genuinely again that we have a government that seems to be deciding at a whim's notice to be taking money out of the heritage trust fund capital division without looking at the long-term implications of what we're doing. I wonder why the review of the Alberta heritage trust fund, of the direction we're taking in terms of the future use of that fund, has not been addressed by this government. We did have a recommendation two years ago that we should undertake a 10-year review of the Alberta heritage trust fund in terms of making sure we are taking a look and consulting with the Alberta public in terms of how they see the priorities and the money that is available still in the capital projects division, or whether we should be providing more money for the capital projects division and where those priorities are going to be applied provincially. I'm sure that the Alberta public has not been consulted relating to this \$14 million expenditure. It comes out of the clear blue sky. The minister did not make any pronouncement here whether the \$14,100,000 is the first installment from the trust fund committee, whether it is . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order in the committee, please.

MR. PIQUETTE: . . . whether we're looking at an expenditure that might be up in the \$75 million, \$100 million -- no estimates here provided for the trust fund committee to be having the handle on. I find that the government here is continually using the Alberta heritage trust fund without having first of all done any

consultation with the public of Alberta, as they promised they would be doing, and setting forth through public consultation how that fund should be spent for the next 10 years of its operation. I think it's high time we did that kind of review and that we don't continue to pull money out of the Alberta heritage trust fund without clear-cut goals for the future viability of that fund.

I take exception, for example, to the comment that was made by the Premier not too long ago when they were talking about the Husky upgrader in Lloydminster, that we have provided 5 percent -- you know, I'm not upset about that part, but the statement he made relating that we might be withdrawing \$300 million from the Alberta heritage trust fund to get the Husky upgrader under way without, again, looking at the whole budget process that the Alberta heritage trust fund should be going through and its long-term viability. It again appears to be a government out of control.

So I would ask the minister here to give us more information about this clinical research building. How does it fit in its long-term use of this fund of the capital projects division? What is the total cost of the clinical research building and how will it be funded after it's in operation? Will it be funded through the Alberta heritage trust fund or through the general revenue?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?
Hon. minister.

MR. RUSSELL: Well, I'd just like to clarify some of the concerns raised by members of the opposition. I think they must have come into the meeting late, because I'm sure *Hansard* will show that in my opening remarks I gave the total cost of this building at \$17.6 million. My understanding is that this \$14,100,000 being asked for this year is required funds to finish it, that it was transferred at the end of the calendar year from the Mackenzie health sciences board -- this was part of the Mackenzie health sciences complex -- to the University of Alberta simply because of the configuration on the site and the way it sits. So it's attached to another medical research building which belongs to the university, and therefore it is simply for all cases and in fact a part of the the university.

But it is the clinical research department of the Mackenzie health sciences hospital that is housed in this building. That legal transfer was made in December 1987, so there's no sleight of hand here. The Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre has been in these capital votes of the heritage trust fund for as long as there's been a trust fund. So I just wanted to clarify that. And of course the operating funds will flow. This and the other building are funded through the Department of Advanced Education for operating funds. In fact, this year the heritage research building at the University of Calgary has an operating component of half a million dollars, and that's in the U of C budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ready for the question?
Hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Chairman, one of the other things I wanted to mention on this particular vote, an allocation of some \$14,100,000: I'm wondering if the minister could tell us if there is some reason why he has not yet acted on the recommendation of the Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations and others who encouraged the province to set up under the heritage trust

fund auspices an additional research foundation for the engineering and natural sciences and another one for the humanities and social sciences. Now, this particular project is an interesting one, but I think the idea of having a foundation for additional research in the province is one that merits considerable attention. This is a proposal that has been advanced to the government for some number of years now, and still we have not seen any indication that the government's going to be moving on this. I'd like the minister, if he would tonight, to tell us if we might see in the not too distant future some indication through the heritage trust fund in some capacity or another for enhancing the research . . .

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Chairman, again on a point of order. When the hon. member first got up he talked about the GRF operating budget, and that's not under discussion. We're now talking about the general heritage trust fund budget. That is not under discussion. This is the capital projects division of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, and the member is not talking about capital projects.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. minister. I would draw members' attention to page 1 of the estimates before the Committee of Supply dealing with estimates of proposed investments, and very clearly on page 3 it's spelled out the vote before the committee.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Chairman, the point is well taken. I just want to mention that to the taxpayers of this province, to the people of this province, it doesn't matter under what division or department you want to talk about it. We've got limited resources. Are we going to put them into capital projects and put up plaques and cut ribbons and so on, or are we going to do other things? I think that's a valid argument to have some discussion about.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, that's probably a very valid argument, but it's not the matter before the committee at the moment. The vote before the committee is fairly restricted. I draw your attention to page 3 of the proposed investments before us, not the matter of the size of the capital projects division. That discussion, if it was going to take place, perhaps should have taken place.

MR. GIBEAULT: Well, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of many of the people in the research sector and the Advanced Education sector of this province, I want to indicate my disappointment that we're having such a narrow approach to this debate, because really the whole question of research in this province is one that concerns many of us. It's essential to the future economic development of this province, and it's unfortunate that the government is so embarrassed about their performance that they don't want to talk about this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ready for the question?
Hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I take it, then, that what we're really looking at is that if we were to take the dollar amounts that have been funded through the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care, Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre, we see a total actual expenditure to March 31, 1987, of \$388 million. Then we add another \$10

million from the last year's estimates. We're going to request another \$2.4 million, and to complete that complex, then, I take it that there's also now an additional \$14,100,000 that has been requested in this year's budget, rising to something like \$17 million before this expenditure under Advanced Education is finished in a year's time.

Well, that's really interesting, then, to find that this particular facility is now \$417 million. I think it would be very, very interesting -- I don't have the information in front of me -- to go back some years ago when this was first being announced by this minister, when he was at the time minister of hospitals, to find out what the estimate was to complete the Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre, because I tell you, I would guess this has escalated in cost many, many millions of dollars' worth. Now, my additions here add up to something in the neighbourhood of \$417.5 million. When this project was first announced, if people had been told that it was \$417.5 million, I wonder whether it would have been proceeded with or whether it was some of the delays in this minister's former department that had to do with the kind of design work that was undertaken and the kind of additions that were placed in it and going just first class with it. It looks like it's a very nice looking building and all that kind of stuff, but \$417.5 million compared to the original estimates: I'll bet you that's a very major cost overrun from when the approval was first given to this particular facility, a hundred and some million dollars. Again I'd have to go back. I don't have the information in front of me. But the minister would know what it was, and he knows how much over budget it is.

You know, that kind of money, Mr. Chairman, coming out of the capital projects division, Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, means that there are things that we can't spend on other projects. It seems to me that shifting this expenditure from one department over to another to somehow make it seem that the increase in the Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre is not as great as it might appear on the surface -- there may be valid reasons for doing it, but I can also see some political reasons for trying to shift that funding into two departments instead of one. It just means that there's less money in the fund to be putting into other areas.

The members made one suggestion that the minister could take into consideration. If there had been funds or commitment from his government to introduce under Advanced Education, which would be the proper place to bring it, some kind of endowment fund for research in natural sciences or the social sciences? There's all kinds of research that could be done for people, to fund people instead of building these buildings first class, adding all the whistles and bells, the chrome pipes and all those sorts of additions that cost a lot of money, but I don't know whether they're really that necessary in terms of advancing research when the researchers in this province are having difficulty getting the grants to maintain the work they're doing in their laboratories.

Now, the minister assures us that there are going to be enough operating funds for this particular facility. Well, that's very good. I'll accept that the minister believes that to be the case, but I do know as well that the Heritage Foundation for Medical Research did request the standing committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, when they appeared before us -- to say that they have a lot bigger requirement. One of the points -- they may not have said it specifically but that I interpreted from their presentation to the committee, Mr. Chairman -- was that with these new buildings going up and with the reductions in operating grants through the Department of Ad-

vanced Education, there was some pressure on. If they were going to maintain this critical mass of medical researchers in this province, we would have to look very seriously at enhancing the level of the endowment fund to ensure that it can make its commitments, meet its commitments, and carry them on into the future which will, if that's the case, make further demands on the Heritage Savings Trust Fund capital projects division at a time when the Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre has been eating up a lot of the resources to the point that they just aren't there to help fund those sorts of requests. It just makes...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, the Chair hesitates to interrupt. We're getting further from the vote all the time. We're dealing with a very specific proposed investment on page 3. Would the hon. member come back to the proposed expenditure of \$14,100,000 dealing with the Clinical Research Building.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Chairman, in the sentence I spoke just before you called me to order, I said that because of the money that's being spent on the Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre over the years -- and they were my opening comments, where we had grown in the expenditure for this particular centre to the point that it now looks as if it's going to be \$417.5 million before we're done, and it may even be more than that. We haven't even gotten to the expenditures under Hospitals and Medical Care. But all I was saying, Mr. Chairman, was that the Minister of Advanced Education clarified for me the second time he got up this evening that this \$14,100,000 is going to go towards the clinical research department at the University of Alberta, which is a part of the Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre complex.

That's why I was saying to the Assembly that the way the expenditures of that health sciences centre have grown from what they were originally projected to be to what they are now likely to be, given the expenditure under these two departments, has taken a lot of money out of the trust fund from what was originally projected to be taken out of the trust fund. By doing so, by putting money into projects, putting money into buildings, as this request is doing tonight, it leaves less money in the trust fund to fund the other requests that come forward for research facilities and the operating costs, the grants to house and man those particular facilities. That was the point I was trying to make. I didn't, in my view, Mr. Chairman, stray from the comments in ensuring that the comments were directed to vote 1, Clinical Research Building under Advanced Education.

So I just want to make that point that when I see that this Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre has increased the way it has over the years, I just wish that we could turn back the clock, had been more modest in our expectations, had provided the same floor space, the same facility, at less expense, cut out a lot of the peripherals, and then had more money available in the trust fund to do all kinds of other things in addition to that.

So those are my comments, Mr. Chairman, that it's too bad it's a government that seems so bent on building the facilities, but when it comes right down to the crunch, the people who man and operate them, it seems to be a continual fight to get the funding and the ongoing funding in place to maintain the work that's supposed to be taking place within those buildings.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

Agreed to:

Total Vote 1 -- Clinical Research Building \$14,100,000

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Chairman, I move that the vote be reported.

[Motion carried]

**Department of
Community and Occupational Health**

1 -- Occupational Health and Safety Research and Education

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 6 of the capital projects division. Hon. Minister of Community and Occupational Health, do you have any comments to put to the committee?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, just very briefly. I have some material that I would ask the pages to circulate, just material for information of all members on the projects that are funded by these dollars over the last seven years, and will provide those to the pages to circulate to hon. members.

Mr. Chairman, the last time I appeared before this committee was Thursday, May 21, 1987, and I also appeared before the standing committee on the Heritage Savings Trust Fund on January 7, 1988 and laid out the purpose of the program at that time and would certainly welcome any comments or questions from hon. members tonight.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Comments, questions, or amendments to the proposed vote? Perhaps we could take a moment and determine . . . Edmonton-Mill Woods, Athabasca-Lac La Biche, Edmonton-Beverly, St. Paul, Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Chairman, I am intrigued by this particular vote of \$1,380,000 because we've been reading and seeing on television just the other day of people still being injured and killed on the jobsite, so obviously there's much that still needs to be done in terms of occupational health and safety research and education. I would have to indicate my inclination to support this particular vote because . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just one moment, hon. member. Perhaps that material that's being distributed -- simply distribute it to the hon. members who are sitting in committee, will you?

MR. GIBEAULT: Now, in contrast to the Minister of Advanced Education, who got himself all worked up about the fact that we're talking about the capital projects division, here we're talking under the same capital projects division about the Minister of Community and Occupational Health, who's got himself going in the right way, because he's talking here about a vote for grants for research, education, and training in the area of occupational health and safety. So if we can have a vote here, Mr. Chairman, for grants for research and education for community and occupational health, I would suggest, with respect, that we could be doing the same thing in Advanced Education. But I've already made my point about that, so I'm going to come back to the Minister of Community and Occupational Health's vote and only hope that the Minister of Advanced Education is paying attention.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, that vote's behind us, as the member well knows.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Chairman, this is an excellent vote. I'm glad to see that the minister is bringing it forward. I'm looking forward to having an opportunity to look forward to the details of the projects that he has just now put before us. I would like to ask him if he could tell us, as valuable as research is -- and we know that it is an important first stage in terms of developing better job site safety -- if there is some mechanism for ensuring that that research is, in fact, implemented to people at the jobsite level. So that once we find out how things can be handled in a safer manner and there can be safer procedures implemented, safer ways of getting jobs done, that that in fact doesn't just stay at the research lab but gets out to the jobsites, to the construction sites, to the well-drilling sites around the province in all job areas where currently injured workers are continuing to have difficulties with unsafe jobsites.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. member.
Hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. PIQUETTE: Yes, Mr. Chairman. The amount to be voted is \$1,380,000. The objective, as indicated by the minister, is:

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 through improved working conditions.

Now when I see a decrease of approximately \$120,000 this year from the '87-88 estimates and we look at the increased accident rates in the oil patch, I wonder how the minister can justify the decrease in the estimates here this year, which I think is a very valuable type of funding available for necessary research. So I wonder where the government priorities lie in terms of providing a much safer oil patch working environment.

As an individual who for a couple of summers did work in the oil patch as a roughneck, I find it almost unbelievable about the safety standards that presently exist in many of our operating oil derricks and oil drilling platforms. You find that individuals are hired with no experience whatsoever, put in very dangerous situations. And I wonder how this research that he's providing the research grants for is addressing that kind of particular need that exists in the oil drilling industry. If it is to make safety an important consideration, research in terms of providing training and education -- I take a look at a lot of the status reports, projects which have been approved by his department, and I wonder how they actually relate to an industry which has one of the highest accident rates of any industry. I find very few of those research programs actually impacting the workers on the jobsite. Why aren't there more programs or videos or mandatory training program for employees mandated to the companies to make sure that the oil industry becomes a much safer industry for young people and individuals to be working in?

I find, for example, the industrial tower entry and rescue program. Nothing to do with the oil and gas industry here; it's relating to confined spacing. Taxi driver safety training program, phase 2 to 3: \$135,000 allocated. Is that the most dangerous occupation in Alberta? It could very well be, but again it doesn't answer the concern of the oil industry here about their high rates of accidents on the jobsite. Alberta farm equipment manufacture safety program. Just to engage a safety consultant who will conduct safety audit at some 80 firms in

Alberta which manufacture farm equipment: is that where the accidents occur, or did they occur on the farms? A lot of times, again, I wonder if the research goes in the right direction. Again, a lot of accidents are caused by lack of education on the jobsite. Not necessarily simply on the equipment used, but how the equipment should be used by individuals. I can go on and on through the whole listing of various programs, and I find very little impacting on the oil patch industry, which has the highest rate of accidents on the jobsite anywhere in any kind of industry.

I guess there's some that very definitely impact on the oil and gas sector. We, for example, the other day had an individual who fell 10 metres off the top of a tank at, I believe, the Esso plant, and now the investigation that's going on, I hope, is to find out exactly how that accident did take place. Was it caused by hazardous gas being emitted from that tank which caused his fall? Is that an area which is being studied by the provincial government? Refineries do have a lot of hazards created by toxic gas releases which, again, are a grave concern of mine. Because again is the worker being taught through these research and education programs, or are these simply little research grants which are given to one or two individuals and where the research papers remain and there's a nice, glossy, little six-month project? Where does it go from there? What's the impact? What's the education program that evolves from these research programs, or are they basically kind of busybody research grants to keep a couple of people or one individual occupied for a make-work project, and then basically sits there?

Going to university and being involved with a lot of educational kind of things, I do know where a lot of this so-called research ends up: in somebody's filing cabinet under Z compartment, "Miscellaneous." I wonder how much of these research grants and projects are actually going down to the worker level and to the company level. What guarantee is there, or is this just basically money being thrown away and not impacting on the worker safety and education training program?

I guess what I'm looking for from the minister is especially in relating to these research programs when we're talking about some of these few thousand dollars: are they really addressing the concerns that are out there on the jobsite, or are they basically nice shiny veneer which is showing that the government is doing something but is really doing nothing to impact the high accident rates on many jobsites in Alberta?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before proceeding, the Chair would remind hon. members it's not the role of the Chair to impede debate, but as members of the House know, the select standing committee on the heritage fund have called this minister as a witness and many of these questions were testified to at that time.

Having said that, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too want to take the opportunity to make a few comments relative to this particular vote on Community and Occupational Health.

First of all, I want to say I'm pleased the minister made available to the Assembly a copy of the various projects that are in fact being undertaken relative to research and the studying of prevention of accidents. I think that certainly has already been alluded to as a good move. I certainly commend the minister for proceeding and carrying on with these particular studies.

I must add that there is a silent plague in the workplace. Injuries are killing workers at a greater number today, this year, than they ever have in the history of this province. That seems

peculiar when, in fact, we have perhaps the least activity in the workplace throughout the province relative to construction and so on.

Of course, there is no doubt the oil patch is the major culprit, the major concern, and this has been addressed a number of times here in the Legislature. I know the minister is going to say that the industry has in fact struck a committee. They are going to be investigating the problems they're experiencing relative to safety and attempt to develop procedures that will deal with that. Well, I don't have as much confidence perhaps as the minister has that indeed the industry will do that. My experience and knowledge in that field are that really when it comes to the difference in the matter of making a dollar or safety, generally, making a dollar takes the lead. I would hope that the minister will monitor the progress of this committee that's studying the safety in the oil patch industry, and hopefully if there's nothing being done, then at least I hope that some kind of mandate is given to them, that they in fact produce some kind of a paper that's going to tell us and tell the minister what it is they're going to do and how they're going to do it to ensure that we curtail the number of accidents that occur in the oil patch.

I think that without too much investigation, one knows what's happening in the oil patch. They are being given funding from the province in lump sum amounts at critical times so they can rush out and do as much drilling as they can, because of seasonal conditions. What they do, of course, is hire young, inexperienced workers. They throw them onto the jobsites without proper training or experience with the equipment, and in fact the equipment itself is suspect. Because of the need to rush out there and do the job, they aren't maintaining their equipment. As a consequence, I think we are experiencing or seeing the continual high level of injuries and fatalities on the oil rigs in this province.

So I would like to share with the minister that indeed the committee will come forward, will indeed produce the kind of information, will deal with the problem, but again I say that I really don't have quite the same confidence, perhaps, as the minister has. I hope that you are monitoring very closely and that you will be able to come to the Legislature before too long and advise us that indeed they have set forward a program of how they're going to deal with the safety problems in the oil patch.

Coming back for a minute to the report that the minister gave us just before he stood up. Again, I repeat that the programs are commendable, and they are the ones that need to be pursued and should be pursued. However, as someone else has already said, what mechanism is there to in fact process this from the research lab, to the worksite, to the management, and to the workers? Is there a mechanism in place that these funds used in this research area will in fact transport themselves to the worksite? Perhaps the minister may want to tell us how that's being done.

I think the other area that there is some mention of, in that there is research being done, is the environment in the workplace and effect that environment has on the workers on a long-term basis. I think we're finding that more and more as the older generation comes off the workplace, people who worked in our refineries, and our gas plants, chemical plants, upon retirement will probably become sick, have respiratory problems, have other problems: very difficult to prove that this was job related, yet I think most people believe that's where it started. I believe that many of the ailments these men and women who are coming back, retiring off the worksites, are experiencing are a result of the environment they have been placed in during their

life in the workplace. I think we need to have some serious work done in the area to ensure that workers know what they're working in so that they can take the necessary precautions. I think management needs to know what kind of environment these people are working in so they can provide the necessary protection for the workers.

Chemicals are being developed, well, on an hourly basis almost, in the technological expansion in our society. We need to be able to deal with those. Workers, when they are exposed to them, must know what they are, how they're going to affect them, and how they should protect themselves. I hope that there's a lot of money or at least emphasis being placed on that area in terms of environment in the workplace.

Our small businesspeople, you know, good as they are, have probably as high a record of injuries and lack of safety as probably the oil patch industry. Again, economics dictate quite a lot of their problems. Here again there needs to be an extensive education program in the small business area, to ensure that the workers who work for small employers are also protected. We can't just concentrate on those in the multimillion dollar plants, large plants where safety is quite often a high priority. In the small business community that may not be the case.

I'm not sure, and again I'll have the argument for the minister here again, that he does not want to develop regulations that will guide these people through in dealing with their employees and with the provision of safety. Again, I know that's commendable, but on the other hand I think there needs to be guidance and regulations developed to ensure that the worker is protected on the worksite. We can't always rely that the employer's first interest is going to be his employee. I think from time to time that's been proven, and I think I would like to see the minister take under consideration that opportunity to develop with industry, for that matter, the type of regulations that they could live with, the type of regulations that he can live with, and that society generally can live with, so that when people go to work for small employers, they'll feel some sense of security that their job is safe and being in that job is safe.

Stress is a catchword that's being used a lot these days, and I think it does have effect on injuries. The need for workers to work long hours -- we're getting more and more into the practice of using what they call condensed work weeks, where people work 12 hours, maybe more, in one day, and then compound that into three or four days and they get a long period off. That's fine. But I think on the other hand individuals who are exposed for a long period of time in a work environment that may have some detrimental effect -- that is not being taken into account when these shorter hours are provided to the workers, and I think that the stress factor comes into play. And again I think part of the investigation, the studies, the research, that the minister wants to conduct should have a look at that kind of a work schedule and how that affects workers.

Still, with stress and the back injuries -- and that's a very common injury these days. It seems like most of the people that I have come into my constituency office who are dealing with the Workers' Compensation Board are the long-term cases. Quite frequently these are people with back injuries. And just recently I learned -- and I'm certainly no doctor nor do I know too much about back injuries, but there seems to be a relationship with stress and back injuries. That individual may initially have a back injury, but because of his concern for his back or for his ability to get back to the workplace, a stress sets upon him, and of course the pain returns back to his back and it's a continual back to doctors. He may feel good again. The

thought of going back to work again recreates a back injury for him. I think it's something that needs to be looked at.

Psychological treatment, while maybe not acceptable by many workers -- I know that's just my experience. They don't like to be told that perhaps it's psychological and that they should deal with it some other way other than a medical doctor. That's difficult to convince workers that that's the case. Again I think that here is another area that somehow through our rehab centres at WCB or some other forum, there needs to be an effort made to deal with that individual who probably could make a valid contribution to the work force; however, because of a back injury in the first instance, generally becomes an individual who does not and cannot go back to the workplace. It's not something we can blame on him and say he's swinging lead or being lazy. It's simply a situation that develops in an individual as a result of that back injury.

Those are some of the comments I wanted to make. I do want to emphasize the need also for safety committees in the workplace. Again I've mentioned this previously, and I'm sure the minister probably won't agree with me again today. But I think the need for workers and employers to work in unison in talking about safety and practising safety on the worksite -- until we have that go down again, I think perhaps in a mandatory state, there needs to be a structure, be it a plant, a manufacturing plant or whatever location, there needs to be the ability for employee and employers to sit down on equal basis and talk about safety in the workplace: how they're going to deal with safety, how they're going to deal with accidents when one does occur, and what they do if one does occur.

I think it's not good enough to simply have a board and boast about the accident-free days that the plant has experienced, because in a lot of the occasions that is not the fact. A lot of employers and employees in collusion with the employer will not record an injury. An employer will give individuals some time off, give him a couple of days out, and he can come back on the worksite, and there's no record of an injury occurring. I don't think that's the way we want to deal with our injuries and to conduct safety on our worksites. I can say that because I was in a plant when those things were happening. I think we have some awfully good employers who take safety seriously, and I think that shows out if you do a profile on our industry throughout the province. On the other hand, there are employers who do not, and I'm sure the minister is aware of those. I hope that through this study, through this research, through these training programs, education programs, before too long we'll be able to come to the Legislature and, in fact, all of us boast that we have decreased or almost eliminated accidents at the worksite. Perhaps that may not be a reality, but I think it's something we should be striving for. I hope the minister through this kind of work will be able to accomplish that, and I would be glad to be part of that accomplishment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for St. Paul.

MR. DROBOT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe the minister is to be commended for the many programs and his ability to address the issues and concerns in occupational health and safety programs. I've also worked on the oil rigs, and I say we've come a long way in worker safety. Of course, there's always room for improvement. I think it's more important to create a public understanding of an issue than it is to legislate, and I thank the minister for his interest in worker safety.

My question to the minister is: what are the priorities as he

considers application in parts under the program?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

MS LAING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of questions to the minister. I, too, congratulate him on the kind of research that's being done and the kind of training materials that are being prepared. The question I would ask is: what will be done with the outcome of this research as we have heard, and will there be any monitoring to see how many of the training films and the materials will be used? What will be done with the results of some of the research? I'd like to just draw his attention to a couple of pieces of research that were done and ask him what kind of follow-up will be coming out of this. And will he be consulting with other ministers in regard to this?

On page 26 we see that there was research into stress, health, and coping in managers, and discovering that there were many similarities between men and women who were managers but some differences that arose out of treatment by others at work, as well as difference in homework conflicts. I'm wondering if he would be doing any education in terms of sensitizing employers to this kind of differential in treatment.

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

The other one I am looking at, on page 27, is in terms of miscarriages as in pregnancy and finding in the research indicating that miscarriages are more likely where the woman is working out of financial need. So what kind of social policies might arise out of that kind of finding, and will he be consulting with the Minister of Social Services in that regard?

Another area I am concerned about is the whole area of training in other languages. Many people who come into the workplace are not proficient in the English language. Is he developing training programs that are in languages other than English and French? What about signs in the workplace? Are they decipherable by people who are not literate, say? Is he looking into that?

I see many guidelines being recommended by the research, and I'm wondering if there's any monitoring of employers to be ensured that they are implementing these guidelines.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a few questions. Some of my colleagues touched to some extent on the particular concern I wanted to raise, and I've got to say that because of the way the document's worded, I'm not sure that necessarily the specific questions come under the estimates from here. But since it is a question of the \$1.3 million being spent on occupational health and safety research in a number of fields, it's certainly related.

Perhaps the minister could answer some questions I did pose the other day on the oil patch. He has set up a task force, I believe, on safety in the oil patch, asking the companies and oil organizations to form a committee, which they've done, and to consider some options and bring forward a plan to the minister. My understanding was that they were going to report at the end of April, so I wonder if the minister could indicate what progress has been made from that committee.

I wanted to ask also -- and I think my colleague did ask it, so perhaps he already has it on his agenda -- to comment on the

recent accidents in the refinery end, which they say is a little bit on the rare side compared to the exploration end of the oil industry, which we all understand is quite a lot more dangerous than most of the other parts of the oil industry.

I wonder if also the minister could comment on . . . You remember the oil well that blew out to the west of Edmonton and killed a couple of people.

AN HON. MEMBER: Lodgepole.

MR. McEACHERN: Yes, Lodgepole. Just recently a foreman and a supervisor, I believe it was, were fined some \$7,500 for not seeing to the safety of their workers, although they, too, were injured, so certainly I'm sure they didn't do it intentionally or anything like that. But what I wonder is why the company was only fined some \$500. I know the minister did seriously consider at one stage bringing in a law that would allow much larger fines, and somehow he dropped that idea not too long ago. I didn't get any answer to that question when I asked it before. I'm wondering if the minister could take some time now. I think he should have care to saying what value is a life and when or why somebody should be able to sue a company or the government. The Workers' Compensation Act, I believe, doesn't allow that right now, but on the other hand, I think the Charter of Rights raises a very fundamental question: can somebody give away that right to sue when other people in the society have it? So I would like some comments from the minister in that regard.

One of the members from the other side mentioned that we've come a long way in the oil patch, but I don't really think that's true. I think we've had a couple of really disastrous periods, as the minister himself acknowledged: December '86 for one and the first couple of months of this year for another. It was partly because of government policy, so I wonder if the minister of occupational health and safety shouldn't be making representation to the Energy minister and some of the other ministers who agree to these programs that have these cutoff dates that end up causing this mad rush all of a sudden near the end of a program. There should be some other way to figure out how to help the oil patch, if that must be done, without causing that kind of problem.

I would say to the minister also that, as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly sort of mentioned, right now we have less construction than usual and less work in the construction area in this province and yet we seem to have more deaths. So it seems to me that one of the bottom lines there is pressure for companies to stay profitable in a time of difficult economic pressures and an economy that is being deregulated all the time. I think the minister has to address those rather larger issues and not just count on the research that's done under this program, which is good research and I commend the minister for doing it. I also commend him for the attitude he has put forward on occupational health and safety, up to a point. But it seems to me he stops a little short when he says that the oil industry must find a way to become safer. I agree that you have to work with the oil industry, that you can't sort of impose totally a foreign program on them that they wouldn't want. But, for instance, the program I mentioned to him about the near-miss, and which he now knows quite a lot, was in fact thought to be a good idea by several different major oil companies and oil organizations. The minister, in fact, has in his possession letters to that effect.

So what it really amounts to is that the oil industry is waiting for the lead from the minister. If the minister would take that

lead and say that, yes, he will do something more than what he has so far indicated he will do, the oil industry would get outside. But no one of them can afford to get outside and do something for themselves if the others aren't going to. So what is needed, then, is somebody to take the first step and say, "All of you must do whatever it is that needs to be done." I think the near-miss program, as described to the minister, would be a good first step to analyzing what the problems are in the oil industry and how to avoid accidents. I don't think it's good enough for the minister to tell the task force of the oil companies, "You guys have got to come up with something." What they will end up doing, of course, is a half-baked near-miss program, a sort of voluntary one that doesn't quite do the job, unless the minister has the courage to stand up and say, "This is what we're going to do and this is how we're going to do it, and you will participate." The minister does have that kind of clout if he wants to use it, but he seems reluctant at this stage, seeming to think he can slough it off onto somebody else's responsibility.

Of course, it just isn't going to happen in these deregulated times and in these tough economic times. People are not going to spend that little bit of extra money. If they all had to spend it, you know, they'd still all be on an equal playing field, one of the favourite expressions of people that like to have a deregulated situation and a level playing field, as the expression goes. It would be, in fact, a level playing field if everybody had to abide by these safety rules that should be in place and are not. So I would appreciate it if the minister could make some comments in that area.

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

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When the minister appeared before the standing committee, he made reference to an evaluation report. I take it this is now the seventh year of requests, the one in front of us, out of an original eight-year program for Community and Occupational Health in terms of research and education. The minister made reference to an evaluation report when he appeared before that committee. I requested from him at the time a copy of that complete report. I'd just remind the minister that I have yet to receive it. It hasn't come, even though it was requested in early January of this year. So I would ask him if he would be so kind to ensure that I receive it. It would have been nice to have had the entire report prior to this review this evening, because I think it might have helped in terms of making comments to the minister and making suggestions about directions in which this particular fund might go.

Now, apparently one of the reports that was made at the time in this report was that this program go beyond the year 1989. I presume that's the 1989-1990 fiscal year. If the minister could correct me on that, I hope he would, because according to this report which he made reference to, this program has been successful over the years. Well, there are some caveats to that, and I think some of them have been raised this evening. He indicated at that time that one of the concerns raised in the evaluation report is that the research is not necessarily getting out to the community, out there at the worksite, where people are being hurt and being injured. The kinds of research projects that have to be undertaken -- or more so, not just research but simply communication of research -- have to be more proactive and more all-encompassing. I think that's been echoed this evening. I'd like the minister to indicate, given these status reports he's

presented to us tonight, to what extent these projects reflect that direction provided by the evaluation he was giving. What I guess I'm saying is: can we see from these status reports the new direction in which the minister is taking this program, based on the recommendations of that evaluation?

He mentioned at the time again that small business was one area in which focus and attention would be given. I see one or two items here, but I don't know whether this is part of a new endeavour towards small business. I certainly concur that many small businesses don't have the kind of resources to do the training and the safety development that larger businesses have. They can't hire the specialized personnel to put on training programs and so on. So I agree; I think that's an important area.

The minister also indicated that work has to be done in specific workplaces where fatal accidents have occurred. Well, that's fine as far as it goes. I would like to think that in areas where serious or fatal accidents have occurred, it's more than just research and communication that's needed. It may actually be new practices that have to be implemented by that corporation or that business for the workers there. It may be that some shortcuts were being taken that shouldn't have been made. There may be a lot more that needs to be done in the area of enforcement that goes far beyond what this particular research and training and education project can undertake.

The minister also indicated that communication is an important element of it. That's very important. I mean, it's fine to have these reports done and all the work being completed, but if you don't get it into the hands of the people on the worksite, either management or the workers, it's not going to do anybody any good. So I'd like to hear from the minister: can he advise what specific initiatives are being undertaken this year to implement that particular priority?

Now, he also mentioned the chemical/biological hazards that we find in the workplace. That's one I really concur with. I don't know whether we're doing enough in that area as well. There's the obvious ones -- and I can see a research report and a status report presented to us earlier this evening -- the recycling and disposal of chemical wastes, and things like chemotherapy drugs, carcinogenic agents. How are those to be disposed of safely and practically? I'd really be interested to hear what the Minister of the Environment has to say about this. I don't know to what extent the disposal of these wastes is governed by his department, whether it's more than simply community and occupational health, more than good, safe workplace practice. I'd just like to know how we do dispose of chemotherapy or carcinogenic agents in this province. I hope we're not flushing them down the sewer system so the residents downstream from Calgary or Edmonton have to consume it in their water supply. So I'd really be interested in the minister's comments on that one.

But he also knows -- and he's heard me put my oar in a number of times to have him undertake some research about indoor pollution. Very many people in our society, in our province, are office workers. I noticed just this last week new research being done in, I believe, the United States. I saw it on television the other day, as a matter of fact, from the States. New research evaluated the U.S. military to compare those who work inside offices with those outside as a test group or control group to determine to what extent the air in these office buildings is influencing asthmas, allergies, skin reactions. Because, as the minister knows, with the energy conservation practices in recent years of tightening buildings to reduce the amount of fresh air that's being taken in, the building air tends to be recirculated

and the recirculation picks up the chemicals off furniture, rugs, walls, and wallpaper, the smoke and the neon lights. It's quite interesting, Mr. Chairman, the amount of hazardous chemicals that are created in that process. People are finding now that many office workers complain of nausea, headache, sore throats, a variety of ailments, losing time at work. In fact, for some of them who develop a hypersensitivity, they find it very, very difficult to work in that kind of environment. So when I see that one of the minister's priorities is to focus on chemical and biological hazards we find in our workplaces, I wonder to what extent he's requesting or pursuing or interested in receiving studies about sick building syndrome. I'd like to have his comments on that.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the minister, when he appeared before the committee, emphasized that the fifth priority area is the oil and gas industry. I think for a number of reasons that's probably the right priority to give. I can see from the research projects in front of us that there are quite a number of projects funding sulphur dioxide. There's one here predicting exposure hazards from toxic gas releases. Evaluation of seismic geophysical equipment in identifying hazardous tunneling conditions: I guess that's not so much oil and gas as it is the Oldman River dam, perhaps, where they're building the diversion tunnels. I don't know. It might have to do with the coal industry. Nevertheless, given the large number of working people in this province who are in the oil and gas industry and the hazards associated with it -- virtually every aspect from well sites to the petrochemical industry -- I can see where that's an important area.

But again, I just would like to be reassured that it's not so much communication and research and education as it is ensuring that proper safety standards are followed and, when they're not, some action is taken to act as a deterrent to those who don't follow proper safety procedures. So I'm saying to the minister that there are some limits to what can be expected reasonably from this particular vote and there has to be a commitment on his part that his department will ensure they do all that's necessary to clean up the safety in various worksites across the province.

So with those questions to the minister, Mr. Chairman, I'd appreciate hearing his response and would hope that if he hasn't answered all the questions or if I need clarification to some of his comments, I may request to get back in again this evening.

Thank you.

MR. DINNING: well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to respond briefly if I can. A number of comments, some good. I think the most important one is the practicality of the research, and I think some members took the time to do a bit of research by reading this document. Others, such as the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche, chose to have a knee-jerk reaction, saying that anything the government does is naturally bad. That's his constant attitude. He didn't really take time to read the document. Instead he got up and just spoke, as he is wont to do.

The practicality of the research and as it relates to the priorities as we laid them out on January 7, the priorities being -- and this is in response to the question from the Member for St. Paul -- number one, small business; the second one being worksites where serious or fatal accidents have occurred; thirdly, the area of communications; fourthly, focus on the chemical and biological hazards we find in our workplaces; and fifthly, the oil and gas industry: I think if the hon. members look at the status report, they'll see in the blue pages some pro-

jects that have recently been funded. I look at the health and safety guide for small businesses: a \$150,000 grant to the Canadian Organization of Small Business; I look at the recycling and disposal of chemical wastes through the Department of Chemistry at the University of Alberta; I look at Fire Spread through Stratified Fuel-Air Mixtures -- unusual title, I admit -- for the Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Calgary, that kind of work. It relates to the oil and gas industry. I look at the Alberta farm equipment manufacturers safety program put on by the Prairie Implement Manufacturers Association, and that addresses our concern as it relates to farm safety.

The members have got to realize that the kind of research, the kind of education, the kind of conferences we would fund or support are dictated and justified by the requests that come in for us to fund certain research or project proposals. So we're limited in that we as a government don't do that research; we fund research proposals that are brought to us. But we've made it very clear in the communication effort -- and this was of interest to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View -- that we would want to deliver those priorities to the research community and to other interested practitioners, make sure they're aware of our priorities, what we want to fund. I have done that recently by having delivered our January 7 transcript from the committee to members of the community so they're aware of our priorities.

Question about practicality of the work. Clearly, virtually all of the research -- I'd say a good portion of the research -- that is done is actually done in the field. It's not done in a lab; it's done in the field. I look at safety program development for the harvesting activities of the Alberta forest industry on page 20. It refers to a number of initiatives by the Alberta Forest Products Association. The work that was done by the association was not done in any lab. It was done in the field, working with workers and helping them to come up with a video training aid for chain saw operators. That has been useful in the forestry industry.

Look at the welding safety videotapes. Those are done in the field; they're not done in any lab. There's an interesting story there. The welding safety videotapes are being used by a number of organizations, including Ontario, which is using them for their Industrial Accident Prevention Association. As well, the United States Coast Guard has taken advantage of those videotapes that have been prepared and are using them in the coast guard operations as it relates to coast guard vessels.

It was interesting for the hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche to make the kind of knee-jerk critical comments that he's made, because he was talking about some of the airy-fairy type organizations, if I can use his words. Of course, when he's making those critical comments, he's referring to the likes of the international brotherhood of boilermakers; he's referring to the Alberta Federation of Labour; he's referring to the Canadian Organization of Small Business and the Alberta Forest Products Association. He's taking a knee-jerk antiunion, antilabour kind of approach when he makes those kinds of comments, but it's nice to have those on the record for all members of the Assembly to see them.

The comments by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly were helpful as it relates to safety in the oil patch, and other members referred to this. The various associations in the oil patch -- Canadian Petroleum Association, Independent Petroleum Association of Canada, Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors, Petroleum Services Association of Canada, and Small Explorers and Producers Association of Canada -- have put together a task force on industry safety. It was their hope that they would have something for me by the end of April, but

their deliberations have taken longer than they had expected. But they're going to come back to us by the summer with a comprehensive safety action plan -- not a bureaucracy, not something that's inapplicable to the roughnecks or to the hazardous, risky side of the industry but something that, I believe, is going to be useful and applicable to prevent accidents and turn down that totally unacceptable increasing trend toward fatalities in the oil patch. Twelve fatalities in 116 days: all members in this Assembly will find that abhorrent and totally unacceptable, as does this government, and we're working with the oil patch to make sure they clean up that record.

I heard reference to knowing what's in the workplace as it relates to hazardous chemicals, and I look forward to introducing legislation sometime over the next five to seven days that will implement our commitment to join the worksite hazardous materials information system, as was agreed to amongst representatives of governments, industry, and labour, and will go into place nationwide October 31, 1988. We will be introducing that legislation, which is education driven, which is training driven, so that employers and employees at worksites know the various hazardous chemicals they're obliged to work with; what happens if an individual is exposed to those chemicals; the medical treatment, the first aid treatment that's required; proper packaging and handling and storage of those chemicals. I believe this is a unique system that's been put in place as a tripartite effort amongst government, labour, and business. It sets a model, sets a new standard for that kind of co-operative effort.

I've talked about small business and our commitment there. I've talked about the oil and gas industry. Mr. Chairman, the matter as it relates to Lac Minerals and the two individuals who were found guilty some number of days ago and the judgment, the penalties having been laid down by the judge yesterday -- I am told informally that those matters are going to be appealed, so I am reluctant to get into the details of those matters as they will be before the courts.

So, Mr. Chairman, I welcome those comments. I hope I've answered a number of the questions that have been put to me by hon. members and would ask all members of the Assembly and of the committee to support this vote.

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

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the minister. I take it that the copy of the complete evaluation report that was done would be available to individual members. Would he confirm that, if it is the case, and that he would get a copy of that to me?

I guess the question for me was: in terms of evaluating the effectiveness of this particular program, could they conclude that the actual loss of life was reduced in Alberta over the last six years? Has there been a reduction in the injury rates of Alberta workers that might be directly attributable to the research that's been done? Or if the rates haven't gone down, have they gone down in relation to, say, other provinces in Canada -- B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, whatever? Have we performed better than other provinces, and could that be in any way attributable to this research program? Were those the kinds of criteria this particular evaluation focused on in making their decisions? It seems to me that all of this activity has to be directed towards that end; that is, reducing the rates of deaths and injuries in the workplace.

So I'd just like to know if the minister could share with us

some statistics from Alberta, whether those rates are actually decreasing and whether that can be attributed in any way to this sort of research. Because if all this effort and work and energy and money is going into this kind of research and education and yet the rates of deaths and injuries at the worksite continue to climb or stay static or we don't perform as well as other provinces, then something obviously is amiss and all this effort, energy, money, and activity is not doing any good at all; it's not leading us in the right direction or it's counterproductive or it's irrelevant.

So it seems to me that the final bottom line on any of this stuff has to be that effect that it has on working people in the worksite. And I'd just be interested if the minister would be prepared and able this evening to share with us that it's had that kind of result of reducing the rates of injury and death in the workplace. That, I think, would speak more than anything else could speak to the effectiveness of this program. But if that information can't be provided to us or isn't part of the evaluation that's been done, then I just really wonder what we're doing with all this money and what we're doing wrong if we can't have that desired effect. So I'd just appreciate the minister's comments on that.

I also appreciate his comment that in the Bill to be introduced sometime in the next while, the notion of hazardous products within the worksite, within offices, and so on is going to be a part of that to some extent I'll be anxiously looking forward to reading that Bill when it's introduced. If he's moving in the direction that I've requested that he move, then I would simply commend him. But I'll wait and see the legislation, how far it goes, before making that a definitive congratulation. Nevertheless, Mr. Chairman, I really would like the minister to make some general comments about the rates of injury and death in the workplace, if he could, as a means of convincing us that this work is having the desired effect.

Thank you.

MR. DINNING: In response to the member's question, I'd refer him to the government library with respect to the evaluation report. He can find it there.

As for oil and gas statistics, I'll give the hon. member one for tonight and it relates to 1987 or 1986: 25 percent decrease in lost-time accidents in the service industry in 1987 over '86. That's a statistic.

Mr. Chairman, there was no baseline data prepared in advance of this program beginning, so it is very difficult to compare how things were before we began this program vis-à-vis how things are today. We have seen improvement in various industry safety statistics, and we've seen some worsening situations. How we can link research directly to successful outcomes, reduced accidents, reduced fatalities: no, I don't have those statistics here. But if the hon. member is saying, "Unless we can do that, we shouldn't do this kind of work," it's that kind of shortsighted thinking that leaves the New Democratic Party in the dark ages. Because we accept that this kind of work must be done for any number of reasons but not the least of which is awareness raising, heightening of awareness of workers and employers to the hazards of their workplace. And whether it's hydrogen sulphide, whether it's taxi drivers, whether it's confined entries, whether it's working around farm machinery: all of this work is going to just that. It's prevention, Mr. Chairman.

Some hon. members will say, "Well, if you can't prove that which did not happen, if you can't put it in my hand, then you shouldn't fund it." I don't accept that. That's one of the prob-

lems associated with doing preventive health work, that you can't prove that which did not happen. But I know, and I accept at a minimum as an article of faith that this is an investment for the long term in reducing accidents, reducing fatalities, if only to raise awareness and raise the understanding and knowledge and education of our employers and our workers.

Mr. Speaker, I think of confined spaces and some of the work we've done on confined spaces, and I can show you some 11 Albertans who are convinced that because of the work we've done in research and inspection to make sure that deep cuts are properly reinforced, 11 men are alive today because of that research, because of that inspection, because they didn't go down into the ground too deep in unreinforced walls and see the water, the sewer line break, and those 11 men are today alive, not having died by drowning. So the work that we've done here and the work we've done in inspection and in regulation is a small investment in saving those 11 lives alone.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. YOUNIE: Pardon? [interjections] Okay. I had more than one voice talking to me at the same time, which can always be a problem.

I would like to ask the minister a couple of questions about this particular area of the expenditures and the sheet he handed out earlier tonight. Specifically, I'd like to ask him about the health and safety guide for small business, phases 1 and 2. I'm wondering what plans he has for effecting distribution of that guidebook once it is completed. [interjection] It's on page 2:

A Health and Safety Guide for Small Business (Phases

1-11) . . .

To develop a guidebook on occupational health and safety et cetera. I'm also concerned not only that the distribution be very carefully carried out so that all the small businesses that need it have access to it, and by that I include probably some small businesses that may not realize they have need of it, but I would also be concerned that the minister look at some kind of what teachers would call in-service training, some kind of mechanism by which small businesses will be helped to see the benefits contained in this guidebook for their particular business, so that the whole process of awareness is carried on. I couldn't agree more with the minister that an ounce of prevention is worth a ton of cure.

When I look at the amount to be voted on here, I just have to sympathize with this minister that so often he sees money that might be better spent on prevention in other areas of budget going to satisfy the hospital minister's edifice complex or, alternately, the Environment minister's edifice complex in this and other areas of the budget. And perhaps we could have seen more money put into this area for research into ways to prevent death and injury in the workplace and how to make the workplace a safe and productive place for all workers as well as profitable for those who run them.

Another question that I'm sure the minister will describe as being a bit off the wall, but he's the first to note that I've never let that stop me before. There are three projects in a row on page 4 related to toxic gas releases or a type of gas that is often involved in releases: predicting exposure hazards from toxic gas releases, neurological actions of sulphides -- I'm especially interested in that one; and a multidisciplinary assessment of low doses of hydrogen sulphide. Now, the reason I ask is that what we see developing in the province is a surprising rate of suicide

in the Drayton Valley area that has recently hit the news and has, I'm sure, been a concern to his department as well as others. I note that in fact there is research being done into the neurological actions of sulphides, and I'm wondering if the government isn't considering the possibility that there is a relationship between the level of pollution that resulted from the Lodgepole blowout and what we see happening now in terms of an unexplained rise in the suicide rate. I certainly have read before that a number of gases, including sulphides, do affect people neurologically and behaviorally. The minister is studying it in his own department, so I would hope that might be part of the long-range consideration.

There were a couple of others. I'm sure the minister will excuse that I didn't have extensive notes, considering how short a time we have had this from him before we had to consider it in the debate.

The Symposium on Immunotoxicology, phases 1 and 2. I'm wondering what implications this might have for the Workers' Compensation Board, specifically the number of cases we see coming forward of people who have been exposed to toxic gases in the workplace. And the effect is a very pronounced but often very hard to define effect on the immune system, in terms of severe complications with allergies, in terms of an inability to go back to work because of those very severe allergies, and medical opinion that the allergies were caused by exposures in the workplace and so on. I'm wondering if in fact the study being done here is going to make it easier for workers who have been poisoned and had their immune system damaged in the workplace to be able to get compensation appropriately, in that the workplace has made it impossible for them to continue working.

One other, and this is somewhat of a personal note, I notice an occupational and an environmental health and safety seminar that was arranged for the Banff Centre. I don't know if it was the same one I received a brochure for, but I received one for that, and it looked quite fascinating. Then I looked at the cost of registration, and I considered the minimal and drastically cut budget the Official Opposition receives, and I decided it might be impossible for me to go to it, although it certainly would have been extremely informational.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry just made an absolutely, totally erroneous statement. The member has just stated that the opposition research budget has been dramatically and drastically reduced. That is factually totally incorrect, Mr. Chairman. The budget allocated in the estimates of the Legislative Assembly for the Official Opposition is exactly the same in the fiscal year 1988-89 as it was in the fiscal year 1987-88, and the hon. member's credibility once again is totally and completely at stake here.

MR. YOUNIE: If the hon. minister of pomposity could control himself over there, we were cut 18 percent. And at the time I am speaking of -- of course, the minister didn't really wait for any explanation, but then he seldom does before he blusters in and ends up with both feet in his mouth -- I was talking about a part of last year's budget year and a seminar that was offered and would have been paid out of last year's budget year. That budget had been cut 18 percent from the year before . . .

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The estimates that we have before the committee tonight deal with

the estimates of Community and Occupational Health for the fiscal year 1988-89, and the Assembly is being asked to approve estimates in the neighbourhood of \$1.38 million for the fiscal year 1988-89. The gentleman has been talking, he says, about estimates of the previous fiscal year, Mr. Chairman. The purpose of this committee is to deal with and approve estimates for the current fiscal year, 1988-89, not the estimates of previous years. Certainly there is an opportunity for all members to raise such questions when the hon. minister would appear before the select standing committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I wonder if the . . . Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. YOUNIE: I don't know how long this minister considers it fair debating time, reasonable debating time, polite listening time, from one who does that so seldom, to allow one to bring a point to clarity for him. I would say that for this minister less than 40 minutes to bring something to clarity for him is insufficient, so I would like him to listen for at least 20 or 30 seconds while I get to the point I was trying to make . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Perhaps we . . .

MR. YOUNIE: . . . before his interruption was made . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order. Order.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Perhaps the hon member could get back to his debate, which is . . .

MR. YOUNIE: I'm getting there as soon as the minister shuts up and lets me do so, as difficult as it is on occasion.

The point I was going to make was a very simple question to this minister. I try to keep them simple, even simpler when I'm talking to the Minister of the Environment. Does the minister envision a costly registration fee for the one described in this paper he gave us tonight? I do believe it must be pertinent to what he wanted us to talk about or he wouldn't have given it to us. Does he envision some kind of restrictive registration fee that might make it difficult for a number of interested people, including managers of strapped small businesses in this province that could use it to learn about how they can protect their workers in the workplace? Or does this funding hopefully make it a little easier for those who are interested to get to it?

Now I presume even the Minister of the Environment can see what I was leading to before he interrupted me. If not, I'll explain it to him at some other point when I do have an hour or two.

Another question I have, because in the brief perusal I was able to give this since I got it, I didn't see anything related to research on dioxin in the workplace, so I'm wondering if out of what we're voting on tonight there will be some money to start doing some in-depth investigation of dioxin in the workplace. When I consider that we already have two very large pulp mills in the province -- we're looking at more, and in fact the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife says that we have foreigners lined up for more forests than we have to allocate to them, and some of those might possibly involve pulp production, which produces dioxin -- I'm very concerned that the minister do some research on dioxin in the workplace. As I understand it, the Minister of the Environment would probably also lead this min-

ister by the hand, as he's offered to do with others, and show them the 20 samples he's not yet gotten around to testing.

Perhaps this minister as part of his research on dioxin in the workplace could start helping us to ascertain how much dioxin is being produced by this industry, although I would suggest that for this minister's responsibility in this particular vote, the minister would do well to take some samples within various areas of the workplace and various stages of the production line to see how much workers are in fact exposed to dioxin in the workplace. I would hope he's going to accept the research done by the EPA, which has come to the conclusion that there is absolutely no safe exposure to the dioxin that is found connected with the pulp and paper industry. I would hope he would also be checking into the studies done by the union involved that have indicated that pulp and paper workers do suffer higher rates of a number of cancers. I won't go into great detail because I did ask the minister in his other estimates and have not yet received answers to everything I'd asked about dioxin in the workplace at that time.

Mostly what I'd like to see tonight is a firm commitment by this minister that in view of how much the province is moving towards pulp production and increasing it, he will commit himself to doing some very thorough examination of the pulp workplace, the dioxin pollution that may be associated with it almost undoubtedly, and will come up with some testing procedures in the near future. He might want to contact a number of other parts of the world where reliable protocols that have been used by the federal Environment department do exist so that he might do that testing in a reliable way.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. PIQUETTE: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to correct a few flawed impressions by the touchy minister over there who indicated in his comments that I was against the research portion of this vote. Not at all. I did indicate that we need more funding, not less funding.

But the question I had for the minister is whether the education is being followed through with these research programs. Because it's all very nice to produce a research document, but is there a commitment by this minister to ensure that education of people in the workplace is your government's priority? That was the issue which I was raising. Because all the research in the world can go on, but if it's not applied at the workplace, it has no benefit.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee of Supply rise, report progress, and request leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

MR. MUSGREAVE: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration the following resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund sums not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1989, for the purpose of making investments in the following projects to be administered by Advanced Education: \$14,100,000, Clinical Research Building.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the report and the request for leave to sit again, all in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

Hon. Acting Government House Leader.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I would move that the Assembly do now adjourn till 2,30 o'clock tomorrow afternoon.

[At 9:56 p.m. the House adjourned to Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.]