

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, April 24, 1990 8:00 p.m.**

Date: 90/04/24

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

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Good evening, everyone. I wonder if hon. members would please come to order so the committee might start its work.

head: **Main Estimates 1990-91**

Environment

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: These estimates are on pages 145 to 157 of the estimates book and on pages 59 to 63 of the supplementary estimates and details. Would the hon. minister like to make some introductory remarks?

MR. KLEIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I welcome the opportunity to make a few brief opening comments.

Members of the Assembly, it's my pleasure this evening to present the 1990-91 estimates of the Department of the Environment. The estimates of Environment are increasing by nearly 10 percent, to \$131 million. This significant increase continues the government's firm commitment to keep Alberta in the lead on environmental issues. According to Statistics Canada our government's expenditure on environmental programs is the highest per capita in Canada.

If one thinks about it, the environment is the most all-encompassing concept known. Environment can extend from our immediate surroundings to our planet and even beyond. "Environment" can also mean much more than our physical surroundings; it is directly tied to our quality of life and health. Thirteen departments of the Alberta Government have, in some sense, responsibility for our environment.

All programs are increasing their overall capability to respond to the department's mission: to achieve "the protection, improvement and wise use of our environment now" and into the future. We are actively seeking advice from the public, environmental groups, and businesses on the best approaches to ensuring that Alberta remains a leader in protecting and enhancing the environment. Through this open process the government will develop a new environmental protection and enhancement Act to meet the environmental challenges of the next decade.

I would like now, Mr. Chairman, to take you through the vote highlights. Vote 1.0.2: this represents an increase of 23 percent in the deputy's office. The rationale is the increased role of the deputy's office in federal/provincial co-operation; i.e., the Canadian council of ministers of the environment and some of the responsibilities that have been placed upon the government of Alberta.

Vote 1.0.5 represents an increase of 10.4 percent in Policy, Planning and Information Services. The rationale is the increased role in communicating to the public. There were concerns raised about the \$630,000 budgeted to publish and distribute the vision document; it was referred to by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place. By the way, I'm pleased to inform the Legislature and the hon. member that we will

actually be spending approximately \$250,000, and the balance will be returned to the Treasury. Mr. Chairman, it's an important document, the mission statement. Basically, it was a document that said to the people of Alberta: "Here's where we are in terms of protecting and enhancing our environment. Here's what the department is all about. Where, as Albertans, would you like us to go?" I've said before that I know where some people would like us to go. "Where would you like us to go in terms of protecting the environment?"

We asked Albertans to respond to the mission document in terms of helping us to draft new, all-encompassing legislation. I have some letters with me today. We've received literally thousands of letters, and these letters are being read very, very carefully. There are some extrapolations being made, and we're trying to get some consensus as to where Albertans want us to go in terms of protecting the environment. I would like tonight to read some of the comments that have come from Albertans. I want to remind members of the Legislature that this is not a multiple choice kind of thing. We asked Albertans to actually sit down and think about the environment and write down their thoughts. When thousands and thousands of people respond, you know immediately that there's a tremendous concern out there about our environment.

One letter says: quality of life is the central issue; the current priorities of the government will ensure that our long-term quality of life is not sold off for the short-term profits; clean water, clean air, and undisturbed landscapes help to define quality of life; environmental protection must be the number one priority of the provincial government.

Another writer says that all persons, corporations, groups, and associations intending to build or who have built plants and other commercial facilities which will or are now impacting negatively on the environment must be made to install pollution-free emission devices before businesses commence.

A writer says thank you for the invitation to comment on matters of interest to the Department of the Environment and that often in the past regulatory limits for unwanted substances have been set equal to the detection limit, and there has been very, very limited input in the past as to the public's responsibility in helping to establish these regulations.

A writer says: I welcome and appreciate the opportunity that you have provided to me and to other Albertans to express our hopes and concerns for the environmental future of this province.

Mr. Chairman, it goes on and on and on. But these are thoughts of Albertans, people who have taken the time and the effort to pick up their pens or take out a typewriter and write down their thoughts and to say to the government: "You know, this is probably the first time this has happened in a long time. You've actually asked us what we think and how we can help not only to enact into legislation a new set of environmental laws but enact into legislation an environmental agenda that will take us through this decade and well into the next century."

So, Mr. Chairman, notwithstanding the earlier comments of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place who questioned the motives of this particular exercise, notwithstanding those somewhat vicious comments, we have received from the people of Alberta their thoughts and their ideas not at a cost of \$640,000 – yes, that's what we thought we were" going to have to spend – but at a cost of \$250,000: little enough to spend to get the true, honest thoughts of Albertans from all walks of life as opposed to the few thoughts that come across the floor from time to time that are often ill thought out.

Vote 1.0.5 also includes \$60,000 in seed money to get the round table on the environment off the ground. Sometime later this year when we establish the round table, and we're in the process of doing that now, we will be coming back for an additional allocation, because it will need a permanent budget and a full-time secretariat. But I think it's important that when this expenditure comes back in its entirety, we as legislators all support the expenditure, because the round table will allow for reasonable debate on the environment, well-thought-out debate on the environment, not the emotional kind of debate that we're hearing all too often and too much these days.

The environment is too important an issue to be emotional about. It's something that deserves rational debate, rational discussion, and the round table will provide that. It will bring together perhaps 18 to 25 Albertans from a cross section of society to help the government put forward an environmental agenda and monitor that agenda to make sure that we're on the right track. Hopefully it will break down some of the polarization that has occurred in the past where all too often we see environmental groups yelling at industrialists and industrialists yelling at environmentalists and all of them yelling at the minister. So if for no other reason, I would very much urge support of that particular expenditure, Mr. Chairman.

MR. McINNIS: Could we have a new speech?

AN HON. MEMBER: You should talk.

MR. KLEIN: Maybe you should attend one of my speeches sometime, hon. member.

AN HON. MEMBER: He might learn something.

MR. KLEIN: You might learn something. That's right.

I take you now, Mr. Chairman, to the vote 2 highlights. In vote 2.2 we have an increase of 4.5 percent in expenditures for Environmental Assessment. The rationale is to accommodate new environmental impact assessment processes to be outlined in new legislation. Indeed, in the proposed environment enhancement and protection Act it's thought that we should address this very, very important question of bringing rules into law and to create a level playing field for those projects that need to come on stream to maintain the economic viability of our province. People are saying out there, "Okay, we're willing to play by the rules, but what are those rules?" What we hope to do is to bring in place some firm rules, a level playing ground for people who'll be required to undergo formal environmental impact assessments. That, of course, includes the proposal to bring forth a natural resources conservation board that will provide a forum and a process for public hearings, a process, hopefully, that will allow for true examination of the facts, taking into account social and economic issues but a process that will be able to review in a rational manner details surrounding a particular project and determine not only the environmental worthiness but the economic and social impacts and to reach conclusions based truly on sustainable development.

Vote 2 highlights also a decrease of 1.2 percent in Wastes and Chemicals. You might say, "Well, why are we decreasing our expenditures on cleaning up wastes and chemicals?" Well, Mr. Chairman, the rationale is due to efficiencies within the department. While we're talking about a decrease of 1.2 percent, again, another special warrant will probably have to come forward later this year to accommodate the new comprehensive

waste minimization and recycling program. Hopefully we'll be able to announce that not in one month, not in six weeks; it's getting down to about two or three weeks now. It really is there, and I say that for the benefit of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, who is really impatient about this particular program. He reminds me of the youngster in the automobile, you know. As they head off on a long journey, he's in the back seat, and he says, five miles down the road: "Daddy, how long? When are we going to be there?" "Soon."

Vote 2 highlights a 16.7 percent increase in Pollution Control.

AN HON. MEMBER: Is that the end of the story?

MR. KLEIN: That's the end of the story except when he wanted the ice cream cone.

Vote 2.5 represents an increase of 16.7 percent in Pollution Control, and the rationale is the increase of 13 positions to meet the government's commitment to increased enforcement activities.

If I can go back just a second to vote 2.4, the comprehensive wastes minimization and recycling program, I'd like to speak a little bit about that because I think that while the program and the policies are now being framed and a lot of thought and a lot of research has gone into it, it deserves some mention relative to the focus of this particular program. The focus of the program is to really enhance and to encourage municipalities and other authorities and jurisdictions in this province to get involved in waste separation and waste collection of recyclables. It's also going to involve a program to encourage industries to establish in this province, to take those recyclables and add value to them.

I think one of the most important components of the program is going to be a component whereby the government, demonstrating leadership, will put in place procurement policies to buy back recycled materials on a priority basis, thereby creating markets that hopefully will extend to government-funded institutions such as hospitals, school boards, and municipalities and to the private sector and beyond our borders to create export markets for recycled materials. There is a tremendous, growing demand for this kind of material in today's environmentally aware society.

Going now to vote 3, vote 3 highlights Water Resources Management in this province. Alberta Environment, Mr. Chairman, has the responsibility for the management of Alberta's most important natural resource, water. It is a resource essential to all human activity. Water originating in Alberta's Eastern Slopes, in the watershed, eventually reaches three different shores of the continent: the Arctic Ocean, Hudson Bay, and the Gulf of Mexico. Alberta Environment has a major responsibility in the management of our water resources. Because of the province's geographic position it's custodian of the headwaters of Canada's most important watersheds. So water is an integral part of the environment. Therefore, the management of water resources must be carried out in concert with environmental management. This means that water quantity and quality management must be co-ordinated for both surface and groundwater.

In that regard, Mr. Chairman, vote 3.1 represents an increase of 16.1 percent in Surface Water Development and Operations. The rationale is primarily due to irrigation projects, most notably the Blood Indian irrigation project. This is a \$2.2 million contribution to a tripartite agreement, and hopefully it will spur

on economic development on the Blood Indian Reserve in southern Alberta.

Vote 33 represents an increase of 8.3 percent in Water Resources Planning and Co-ordination. The rationale for this, Mr. Chairman, is primarily due to our commitment to proper long-range river basin planning. Most notably, there is a 17 percent increase in Northern River Basins planning. These are long-range planning projects on the Athabasca and the Peace rivers.

Vote 3.4, Mr. Chairman, represents a decrease of 32.4 percent in Data Collection and Inventory. The rationale for this is the completion of the highly successful water supplies assistance program which provided some \$15 million to assist over 11,000 Albertans and approximately half a million dollars to assist 45 communities.

Vote 4 highlights Alberta's leadership in hazardous waste management. The estimates reflect more than \$7 million budgeted for expanding capacity at the Swan Hills special waste management facility. This expansion will speed up the important job of eliminating hazardous waste in Alberta, particularly solid wastes. By undertaking this expenditure, we will be further reducing risks in our own communities.

I think it's worth pointing out, Mr. Chairman, that Alberta still remains the only province in Canada with the capability of handling hazardous waste, and that means a tremendous amount to Albertans not only in an industrial sense, to clean up industrial waste, but very soon communities throughout this province are about to embark on a toxic roundup where citizens throughout the province will be asked to collect all their old paint cans and other materials that are deemed not to be usable but are nonetheless toxic and take them to transfer sites within the province so they can be collected and transported to Swan Hills and destroyed safely. It's a tremendously important initiative, the expansion of the Swan Hills facility, and I think represents very well the foresight of this government in pursuing a course of action that would lead us to be the only province in this country capable of handling hazardous waste.

Vote 5, Mr. Chairman, highlights the Environment Council of Alberta, and it represents an increase of 43.8 percent. The rationale is twofold. One is the hiring of a new chief executive officer, Dr. Natalia Krawetz, a remarkable individual who is doing great things within that organization to bring it back on track and to establish a meaningful mandate for the Environment Council of Alberta. In addition, the Environment Council of Alberta has had an operational reserve fund which was depleted last year and is being replenished by the government in order that the chief executive officer can fulfill her role of revitalizing that particular organization.

To conclude with the reiteration of some of the highlights, Mr. Chairman, of course expenditures will be needed to bring into place new, exciting legislation. The Alberta environmental enhancement and protection Act: legislation that has public involvement; legislation that will be tabled in draft form this spring sometime; legislation that will then be taken out to the public for further consultation; legislation that will be drafted during the winter months of 1990-1991; legislation that will be tabled, hopefully in final form, in the spring of 1991; and, as I mentioned earlier, legislation that will not only be a compilation of laws but a true agenda that will have within it the concept of wise use and protection of our environment now and into the future.

In addition to that, expenditures will be required to take a good look at the Water Resources Act, and separate public

consultation sessions will be held to review that Act and also to introduce amendments to that Act in the spring of 1991 to strengthen that Act and to hopefully have it reflect today's environmental realities.

Expenditures will be needed to bring into place probably the most important piece of environmental legislation to be passed in a long time, and that is the natural resources conservation board, to create that level playing field, to define the rules.

Expenditures, of course, will be needed to bring in, as I mentioned, the recycling and waste minimization program, which will address municipal waste action and industrial waste action and economic development and education and procurement and research.

Money will be needed to bring into place a new centre of expertise in special waste management so the people from around the world can come to this province and learn from the pioneers and the leaders who have developed strategies and techniques and technology in special waste management and take that information back to other countries – perhaps some of the east bloc countries that have emerged from the grip of socialism and communism only to be exposed, unfortunately, as countries that have become so tremendously polluted that they will need help from around the world virtually, especially the modern nations like Canada and the modern jurisdictions like Alberta, to help them with their problems.

We will need funds for the round table on the environment.

Mr. Chairman, I'm very pleased to mention in closing that for these expenditures, for new and exciting initiatives, and to be able to deal with some of the problems we've had to deal with, I as the minister and my department have had complete support from our Premier, who has demonstrated tremendous leadership, from cabinet and caucus and the environmental caucus committee headed by my friend and colleague the Member for Banff-Cochrane. I have had tremendous support for this \$131.5 million budget, a budget for the enhancement, protection, and wise use of our environment.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I would be glad to sit down, hear the comments of Members of the Legislative Assembly, and hopefully not much later on, within a reasonable amount of time, I'll be able to respond to those questions.

Thank you very much.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm very pleased to be able to take my part in this debate on the very important matter of the spending estimates of the Department of the Environment. I want to say first that Albertans share with all of humanity a very deep concern about our future on this planet. We all want a healthy future for ourselves. We want a healthy future for our children. We like to think of our descendants throughout time having better opportunities, better access to the good things of life, a long and healthy life well into the future.

I think where Albertans perhaps differ from people in other parts of the globe is that we have unique opportunities to enjoy the outdoors in Alberta, and I know the Minister of the Environment is one of those who does like to get out and enjoy the great outdoors. My experience with Albertans is that they have a very special relationship with nature. They enjoy the change in the seasons; even those who occasionally lapse and travel to warmer places in winter months enjoy the change of season as well. I think the minister is in a very unique and

responsible position in relation to our love and regard for the environment, and I don't want him or anybody in the government to be trifling with this.

I was just looking over my notes from last year's debate. I recall that I welcomed the opening moves that the minister had made in his portfolio. Along with quite a few others I thought that he brought a breath of fresh air to it: a new approach, some new ideas. I think he received a goodly amount of praise for some of the initiatives he took in those earlier days. I would have to say that from the perspective of a year later, there seems to be a gap between what the minister says he can do and what he can deliver, and that's essentially the theme and the burden of the remarks that I have to bear this evening.

It is a fact that the department's total expenditure has increased by some 10 percent, a fact that was touted in a news release issued on budget day with the headline "Premier Pledges Priority to Environment." Well, in today's climate I don't believe there is an elected politician alive who doesn't put priority on the environment. What was not mentioned is that the entire amount of the 10 percent increase is accounted for, in fact more than accounted for, by the Special Waste Management Corporation. Take special waste management out and in fact the departmental estimates drop by three-tenths of 1 percent, some \$200,000 or thereabouts.

The priority of the environment within this government is an issue that's yet to be determined. The minister spoke at some length about the mission statement, he called it, which he's spending \$250,000 to circulate throughout the province and to receive back the input of Albertans. Now, it has been described as a statement of where we are today. It also is something upon which the minister said he wanted to extrapolate about the responses that were received. I suggest that the extrapolation is contained within the statement itself. I find the statement to be a fairly unsatisfactory accounting of what the government's policy in fact is today.

I do find that there are a number of what I call weasel words in it, words that don't mean a great deal when you examine them; for example, the department's policy on the vital question of freedom of information. I maintain that freedom of information is, from today's perspective, the single most important issue in the province of Alberta in the environment. The document refers to "information sharing." Now, I think information sharing probably means they share whatever it is that they want to share, not necessarily information that people need or information that people want. The document refers to "public participation." We'll go into this in a little bit of detail, but I find that public participation means whatever this minister and this government want it to mean on any given issue or any given subject matter that comes along. It does not mean a guarantee of the right to be heard. It does not mean that you have a right to a public hearing on very critical and major licensing decisions, which are being made on a day-to-day basis by this Department of the Environment.

I find reference to "best available demonstrated technology." I believe that's a term that is quite subjective as well, because we have technology that's being installed in pulp mills in the province of Alberta today which is, in my opinion, not the best available and is probably going to cause a lot more harm than Albertans deserve and can afford.

There's a whole section in the document which is headed "Polluters Pay." Now, I wrote a letter to the minister a couple of months ago asking, "Well, if the polluters pay in Alberta, how much did you collect for all of these clean air and clean water

licences that you hand out," which in fact are licences to make the air dirty and the water dirty. They're just called clean air and clean water permits because that's the name of the Act that they're issued under. I asked how much money was paid by polluters for applying for those permits, for processing the applications for the permits, for reviewing the environmental impact statements. I haven't got an answer to date, so what did I do? Well, I put it on the Order Paper, and lo and behold, I haven't gotten an answer to that either, but it turns out I'm not alone in that regard. I think I counted a fair number of written questions and motions for returns in the Environment department which are on the Order Paper today and which have not yet been responded to.

MR. KLEIN: Patience, patience.

MR. McINNIS: The Minister of the Environment looks for patience. Well, I think it's time that we said that, you know, this old world we're in needs some care. It needs some attention immediately. You know, I recall that Gro Harlem Brundtland, when she completed the work of the World Commission on Environment and Development, held a news conference, and the media wanted to know, as they usually do: well, what's the important concept in the report? Some of them thought it should be sustainable development, which has since been sort of the shorthand version of what's in that report. Gro Harlem Brundtland said the key word in the report is "now." All of the other things have to do with analysis of the problem and concepts that might be applied to solve it, but she felt and I feel that the solution to the problem is now. The rewards to the solution are in the future, but the solution to the problem is now.

Now, I don't deny that the minister deserves to have an opportunity to have dialogue with Albertans. I merely ask that he look at cleaning up some of the problems, some of the messes that are in front of us right here, right now. It's one thing to wait two years to have a new environmental protection and enhancement Act, but it's quite another to deal with a situation in which our environmental laws have been judged by the environmental law task force as unenforceable. I think that's reflected in the fact that there was one conviction under all of our environmental laws in the last year, a case I know quite well. Alberta Power at the H.R. Milner station leached sulphuric acid in the Smoky River for 18 days and didn't tell anybody about it. They copped a plea to avoid the embarrassment of a trial, in my opinion, and that was the one conviction that we did have. It's like a situation where you're in your home and you discover some cracks in the walls, some cracks in the foundation, and the roof leaks. Well, you might undergo a visionary process. You might hire some consultants. You might sit around and dream about the ideal dream home that you would like to build in the future. That might be a good and sensible thing to do, but you bloody well want to get out a hammer and nails and fix the cracks and fix the holes in the roof right now, and that's the thing that the minister has failed to do.

We've got unenforceable environmental laws. We have an environmental impact process which has been criticized not by me but by the Federal Court of Canada for not guaranteeing independent scientific review and not guaranteeing public involvement, public hearings in the process. That has to be fixed, and I still don't have a clear indication on whether we will see environmental impact assessment legislation this sitting. I think it should be passed before we rise for the summer, and I

hope that it is, but that hasn't been done thus far as well. So we have a situation where there are some outstanding pulp issues, and I'd like to get into those right now, if I may, because I think these are among the most important that we have to deal with in this Assembly today.

I especially want to deal with the problem of dioxin and furan and organic chlorides. You know we had some discussion about this various times in question period, and the minister keeps coming back and saying, "Well, this is a brand new problem, isn't it?" I mean, they only discovered dioxin – what was it? – two years ago, you said, or three years ago.

MR. KLEIN: Listen. Listen. Pay attention.

MR. McINNIS: Well, dioxins have been known to be toxic and the health effects have been known in some respects since roughly World War II, but let me read for the minister what the federal government Ministers' Expert Advisory Committee on Dioxin stated in 1983:

It is quite clear that dioxin are very unpleasant things to have in our environment, and the less we have of them the better. It is, in fact, imperative to reduce dioxin exposure to the absolute possible minimum.

That was 1983.

Well, it's now 1990, and the material that's coming out about dioxins now is extremely frightening from whatever perspective you want to look at it. I mentioned earlier today that dioxin is the most toxic lethal substance ever tested on laboratory animals. It's also been identified by the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States as a potential human carcinogen. Now, the thing that annoys me is that we have pulp companies and environment ministers – and we have one in Alberta – who like to talk about the virtual elimination of dioxin or state-of-the-art or various other of these weasel words that describe a process where, through alleged miracles of modern chemistry, the amount of dioxin per tonne is reduced to a fairly negligible figure. Sometimes they use the term "undetectable." Well, that's not good enough. It's not good enough for me; it's certainly not good enough for the Al-Pac EIA review board. What they said about it, and I quote again:

Various studies have shown that dioxin and furan can be bioaccumulated from undetectable concentrations in water to concentrations in aquatic organisms that are toxic to the organisms themselves, or pose a hazard for organisms higher in the food chain, including humans. Thus, even if dioxin and furan are undetectable in effluents . . . there is no assurance that they will not add to the contamination of fisheries on the Athabasca River, or waters into which it flows.

That's at the undetectable level.

Then Al-Pac comes along, and they've got a plan that they figure will virtually eliminate – virtually eliminate, again – the dioxin in favour of other kinds of organic chlorides. I mean, the reason that dioxin is so deadly is it's a very small molecule and it latches onto the protein receptors. It actually looks to the body like a natural steroid like estrogen, and the body grabs up the dioxin and brings it right into the nucleus of the cell where it can do the most possible damage, right? Well, these pulp companies think that if they only produce the larger molecules, it won't be a problem. Well, the new research shows that even though some of the lighter, more acutely toxic organic chlorides are reduced, the heavier organic chlorides break down in the environment to smaller, more toxic organic chlorides, and there are over a thousand different organic chlorides in bleached kraft mill effluent.

So what I'm driving at and I think this is the policy the government has to adopt: the only acceptable level of organic chlorides is zero. None. Zero. That's the only possible policy that we can accept as a province. I think this minister has to somehow grab the bull by the horns, recognize that that's the approach that we have to take, not in the future, not after Daishowa is written off and can be mothballed, now, because we're playing with fire. We're playing with absolutely deadly material. All this talk about virtual elimination and state-of-the-art standards: it's all talk. Zero is zero is zero. If I could leave one point with the minister, it would be that one.

I also think we should be looking at the concept of zero liquid discharge from pulp mills, because that's the way the world is heading. You know, we have people who have been doing research in the province of Alberta. I think of Ted DeLong, Tigney Technology, who's gotten the royal runaround, courtesy of the pulp industry and the Alberta government, for his efforts to develop a chemical-free pulping technology. I look at what Millar Western is proposing to do in Saskatchewan at Meadow Lake. I look at the new proposal at Chetwynd. The world is coming around to the view that zero discharge is the way to go. So why in Alberta are we signing deals to give away our trees to companies that are going to pour millions and millions of gallons of effluent including thousands and thousands of kilograms of organic chloride?

I mean, the facts are quite alarming. Daishowa has a permit from this government that says it can build a mill that'll dump 5,000 tonnes of organic chloride in that river every year. Al-Pac was asking for only 3,500. They feel a little put upon because they get put through the wringer even though they're looking to do less than Daishowa. Then you've got Procter & Gamble, you've got Weldwood all dumping megatonnes of organic chlorides. That stuff is dangerous. I don't care, you know, if they play with the chemistry in such a way that they get the dioxin out of it; what's left breaks down to dioxin in the atmosphere. That's what science is telling us. We have to listen to it. We have to listen to what science is telling us. So all of these efforts, you know, the Jaakko Pöyry plan, the son of Al-Pac, Al-Pac progeny, Al-Pac 2: you're playing with fire.

Speaking of not getting information back, in the early part of this session I raised some questions about the Wapiti River, Procter & Gamble. The minister promised to investigate why the department allowed Procter & Gamble to dump a couple of hundred thousand kilograms of sludge, much of it I wager contaminated with dioxin and furan, into the river. He promised to report back and then he attacked me personally. I don't attack him personally but he attacks me personally. So be it. I don't insult his intelligence. I know he's a very smart man. I know he's smarter than most of you over there.

MR. MARTIN: That's not saying much. Damning with faint praise.

MR. McINNIS: Damning with faint praise.

Anyway, he talks about British Columbia. I want to tell him about the pulp mill in Quesnel where they had this problem in February this year where they were dumping excessive amounts of suspended solids in the river. You know what happened to the Quesnel pulp mill? The provincial government shut them down. They said, "You can't do that." All right. You know what happens in Alberta when it's time to exceed the permitted level? Procter & Gamble, well they get permission from Alberta Environment to do it. There's an imbalance there, and I think

we have to address that. I would like to know what investigation the department made before they allowed them to do that, as late as last summer when you were the boss. [interjections] The Daishowa situation calls out for attention. The people in that area have been fighting tooth and nail for the last two years to try to get a proper environmental review of that project. What they have gotten from the provincial government is the square root of nothing. The square root of nothing. So they had to go to court under federal legislation to seek an independent environmental review. Well unfortunately, there isn't a judge available to hear that case. It has had to be delayed.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order please, hon. member. While the Chair appreciates this is a very important topic and all members have agreed that it's a serious topic, let us have order in the Assembly so that all important thoughts can be expressed. Proceed, please. [interjection] Order, Red Deer-North. Please proceed.

MR. McINNIS: I hope this doesn't come off my time, Mr. Chairman.

The judges are unable to hear the case until September, by which time conveniently Daishowa is already built and in operation. Today I asked the minister: will he please convene a proper environmental assessment, give people their chance to be heard, and have an independent review of the signs before he gives them an operating licence to dump the 5,000 tonnes of organic chlorides into the river every year? Well, the only answer that I've been able to receive is a letter dated August 25 from Jerry Lack, director of standards and approvals, which says, "The department does not hold public hearings for any licences issued under the Clean Air or Clean Water Acts." Well, thank you very much, but sometime or other those folks are going to have to have their say, their opportunity to be heard about the question of all that organic chloride material.

We have a pulp mill in Slave Lake approved by this minister: no independent review of the science, no public hearings whatsoever. They get a licence. He signed it. Now they're trying to have some input in the forest management agreement. They're being turned back at every turn. So as far as I can see, nothing much has changed when it comes to the handling of pulp mills in the province of Alberta, and there's no commitment that they will have their public hearings at Peace River or at Grande Prairie on Procter & Gamble. They're awaiting a new licence, which I understand could be issued anytime now. They've requested public hearings, and they're not getting any. Instead we have this sort of two-year dialogue. Well, I don't mind the two-year dialogue, but I think some of these problems have to be fixed in the interim.

The problem of global warming. What do we get? Another dialogue, another merry-go-round, this time on clean air. You know, there's a lot of research that indicates that if we got our heads together, we could save money at the same time that we save energy and clean up our atmosphere. There's a lot of evidence to suggest that if Alberta were doing research and investing in that field, we might be able to make some money and get some jobs out of it. Instead we get more hearings and more dialogue.

One of the things that I thought was going to happen this year that would start to pull these things together is a natural resources conservation board. I recall well the promises that the minister made about having open public hearings, intervenor funding, a place where you could go for an environmental

review. Well, the draft legislation that was given to me indicated quite the opposite. Now, I know the minister protests that he never saw that, had nothing to do with it. Like so many things that go on in the department, so many of the important day-to-day things, so many of the cracks in the wall and the foundation he has nothing to do with because he's off visioning the future. It's just starting to add up, and I think it's getting to be a problem.

Recycling strategy. Well, we're going to get another special warrant. We're going to get more studies. I wasn't the one who told the Legislature last June it would be available within two months. I wasn't the one who said that. I didn't say that again in October. I didn't say it again in January. I hope we get it soon. I hope that reflected in that is a real solid initiative to reduce the amount of waste, because as many people are finding, recycling is the band-aid at the end. It's what you do when you produce waste to try to get it back into the stream, but the real answer to the problem is reducing the amount of waste. Some of the initiatives in the city of Edmonton, which are not supported financially by the province, have resulted in a reduction in waste. We've got a lot of ideas out there. I just don't understand why it's taking so long. I do appreciate that I have no choice but to be patient, and I will be patient, but I think we have to look at a very clear timetable and a commitment to a reduction of waste in the province. I think we should be looking at least to a 50 percent reduction in waste in the province by the end of the century, and I think that would be a reasonable and solid goal, a commitment to be made.

On the industrial development side, I simply want to remind the minister that when he started talking about recycling initiatives, we used to have a glass works that recycled glass in the city of Medicine Hat. We used to have a company that recycled plastic in the city of Edmonton. I hope as this drags on we don't lose any more of them.

Swan Hills. I thought I heard the minister say the need for expansion shows the foresight of the government. I think the need for expansion shows that the government made some very poor choices on technology in that mill, and one of the very many outstanding motions for a return asks how it is that the government came to choose these Von Roll kilns that have never worked for their designed purpose. They've never been able to handle the solid waste which is backed up to the rafters up there at Swan Hills and in all the transfer stations and unsafely stored in industrial sites all over this province.

The need to expand is really a need to rebuild that plant from the ground up, and that's what's happening. There are two plants. There's one that works for half the job, the liquid waste, but not for the solid waste. I think the administration there is proposing to spend another \$40 million or more to try to make it do what it was supposed to do in the first place, and I think there's a real scandal there. In fact, I'm of the view that we may need some type of an inquiry to get to the bottom of why that technology was chosen, fabricated, installed and never did the job from day one, and that's a problem.

The important matter of water was mentioned by the minister, and I think that we all have to be concerned about our water resources in the province. We need baseline studies on all of our river systems. We need provincial water quality standards down the line. I don't mean objectives, variable objectives; I mean water quality standards. We have to identify the sources of pollution. We have to have a provincial plan on how to reduce the pollution in every one of our river systems, not just the Peace and Athabasca but the North and South Saskatchewan

and all the rest of them as well, and we have to have an operational plan on how we're going to reach those objectives. Right now we have none of those things. We have a lot of political shots being traded, a lot of speeches being made, a lot of loose talk about, "let's all be friends," but not very much done at the end of the day.

We need a lot of research on groundwater problems. We need a licensing system for groundwater in the province of Alberta. We have to do these things, because we can buy all the science we can afford, all the Jaakko Pöyrys in the world, and we'll find that science is not an antidote for environmental mismanagement. Properly handled science can influence decisions in a way which will make them more environmentally friendly. They can contribute to a healthy future, but only if it's given a chance. Science can't fix up problems after the fact.

I have a question I'd like to ask the minister about Wagner Bog natural area at the western boundary of my constituency. The department of highways wants to punch a road right through this very small natural area, which has, among other things, an Alberta species of orchid. Well, there was a time when the county was pretty gung ho to build that road, but the most recent motion that they passed at the county council suggests that they want to preserve and protect that natural area, and they only want roadway development

subject to it being the term that such a roadway connection be provided in a manner and at a location that will not adversely impact the integrity of the Wagner Natural Area.

The only body that I know that's going bent for leather on that project is the department of transportation, and we're counting on this minister to stop that thing, because, you know, we have so few natural areas, especially adjacent to urban areas, especially in that aspen parkland ecology, and I think we really do need to look at it.

Another question about the Cochrane Ranche. There is a proposal by the Western Heritage Centre to build a big tourist attraction in the middle of this historic site, a fragile ecosystem in many ways. I would like the minister to commit to require an environmental impact assessment on that project. I think it's a reasonable suggestion to make. Let us find out whether it's compatible and in what ways with a healthy environment in that area.

Round tables. I'm pleased we're finally going to get one, but I'm wondering why we haven't had one for the last two and half years. That's when this thing was supposed to be done. I understand there is a convention of round tables coming up. Who's going to represent Alberta? Is the minister going to go there? We don't have a round table right now. The time we needed one was when we were making all these plans for pulp development. That's when it was needed. I'm glad the minister indicates he is going, and that's a good thing, but we have to get this thing going and get into the decision-making loop. Sometimes I think we have to get the minister into the decision-making loop as well.

I want to touch briefly on the urban environment. Often the minister says that pulp mills are okay because they're not as bad as the cities. Let us do what we can to clean up our cities. Let us have a safe, clean, environmentally friendly transportation system. Let this minister get behind a rail system in both the cities. I know that Calgary managed to get one with the able assistance of the province for the Olympics, and now let us work on the capital city to get that thing in place. Let us work on the water quality in cities, together with the water quality objectives on our rivers. Let us complete the Capital City Park.

Mr. Chairman, those are a few of the questions that I would like the minister to address, and I thank the Assembly for its attention.

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

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's with some surprise that I saw the Minister of the Environment actually presenting these estimates. I had come here anticipating that the Premier would be here to introduce these estimates, because he seems to be making some of the critical decisions in this department. And it's that thought that really introduces what I believe is at the crux of these estimates and at the crux of the ability of this department to do its job. The fact of the matter is that there is serious question about whether or not this minister has sufficient influence within his cabinet and within his caucus, whether he has been accorded sufficient authority, sufficient power to do what must be done within the mandate of his department.

I can remember last year at this time congratulating the minister on his appointment and wishing him well. Since that time I have been encouraged, at least early on, at some of the initiatives, the thoughts, the ideas that this minister had been inclined to talk about and to attempt and to wrestle with. In fact, I wasn't alone in that feeling of encouragement. I notice that the message from the president of the Alberta Wilderness Association, Vivian Pharis, in the fall issue of their magazine, said:

I think he . . .

being the Minister of the Environment,

... is genuinely concerned about Alberta's environmental wellbeing, and has launched a number of initiatives which should bear fruit in the future.

Yes; I have always said that this minister is well intentioned. He has some good ideas. He has some encouraging thoughts. And I've been willing to admit that, particularly because, of course, he is a Liberal. We would expect no less of him. However, the problem occurs in that he cannot convince his caucus and his cabinet to do what must be done with respect to environmental policy in this province.

So we have seen a great deal of process. We have seen a great deal of talk. For example, we've seen an 18-month review of environmental legislation in this province. Encouraging, but faulty in two respects. First of all, there is no suggestion that forestry department legislation, which clearly has environmental implications, will be part of that review. Interesting. Clearly, the minister doesn't have the respect or doesn't have the agreement of the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife to undertake a truly comprehensive review of environmental and environmentally related legislation in this province. But what's more telling about the minister's certain frustration in attempting this kind of 18-month review is that it was not accompanied by a discussion paper or a position paper of any depth. It was not accompanied by the development of at least initial discussion, ideas by this department.

I can remember in the early '80s seeing the then-Premier of the province proudly unveil the white paper on science, technology, industrial development – whatever it was called – in front of hundreds and hundreds of people at the Convention Centre in Edmonton. Not only were they convinced of their ideas; they had developed this very detailed paper about what they felt should be the direction for economic development, science and technology development, in this province. One would expect

that an 18-month review of environmental legislation would be heralded with a similar comprehensive document to give us some direction, to give us some focus, to give us an idea of what this government is thinking about, so not only can we present ideas but we can react to their ideas. Clearly, this minister was unable even to get the support of his caucus, his cabinet colleagues, his Premier, on ideas – not on action, not on policy; on discussion ideas. This is a minister who has some ideas. We know that. This is a minister who is without influence and without impact in that Conservative cabinet in his ability to get any of these ideas implemented.

The round table. I believe it's three years since this province endorsed the round table idea through its endorsement of the National Task Force on the Environment and the Economy. The minister is to be congratulated for bringing in that round table. Ha. Two telling things. One is that the forestry minister wasn't part of that round table. Isn't that interesting? Here we have a round table on the environment, and one of the most significant actors in the province in environmental matters, the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, doesn't sit on the round table. Then maybe he had some second thoughts, but we still haven't seen that specifically resolved. Again, this is process. This isn't getting anything done. This is simply an action that this minister could take within his mandate, within the purview of his own authority within that department. But it is not representative of an action that has required broad government, Premier, endorsement to achieve.

The Environment Council of Alberta. He finally appointed the executive director – good for this minister – and then he said he would reinvigorate that body. Let's look at the budget. That body's budget has finally been increased in some significance, in a substantial way. But it still isn't as high as it was in the early '80s, at which time it was reduced because it was doing such a good job that it was giving this government the things it didn't want to hear. So if it gets too much money, we're going to, of course, probably see its effectiveness within government erode, and the cycle will occur again. But, again, the minister can take the action to appoint that head; he can't get enough money to bring that body up to the level of funding it had even in the early '80s.

He's made promises of recycling. We still haven't seen recycling. We heard it was going to be in December. I'm encouraged to hear it'll be in three weeks. Patience.

He's made promises of a natural resources conservation board. We still haven't seen it. What's very, very fearful for us is that when we do see it, it will be too late to review some of the major projects, which undoubtedly they're delaying this board for, so they can jam these projects through without the review of that board. Promises. We've seen the promise, as I said, of the reinvigorated Alberta Environment Council, and of course the funding doesn't support it.

But where the true test was to be seen was with respect to the Al-Pac review. Yes, expectations were raised. The minister implemented a review process that, while it was not perfect, had some features which recommended it. In fact, it brought out an excellent report, a tough report. This minister said it was a great report, and this minister said it would be political suicide for any government not to agree with that report. The true test was: would they act on the report? And the true test was failed; they did not act on the report. What they did was hire Jaakko Pöyry to test the report. That's become even more ludicrous now, given that that particular proposal isn't even in place any longer. It's been replaced by a second proposal.

This minister's enthusiasm in his initial response for the Al-Pac review has been directly overruled by the Premier. This minister does not have influence. This minister's ability to exercise his mandate within this department is without influence. Mr. Chairman, he can argue; he can say it's not true. It's been a year. It's been a year of promises and public relations and "Tell them what they want to hear and I think I can make it stick." Then when push comes to shove, he can't make it stick. That's not his fault. I think he's an excellent Minister of the Environment. I would never call for this minister's resignation. I'd call for the resignation of his government on environmental policy, because they have inhibited his ability to do any of the things that he has imagined should be done.

AN HON. MEMBER: Never say never.

MR. MITCHELL: Never say never.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Chairman, that his response, his government's response, in the Al-Pac review panel case is deplorable. We would expect that they wouldn't have sought a clearly biased firm to review the review. We would expect instead that they would have embraced the idea of doing the baseline studies that have been called for by the Al-Pac review panel. We would expect that if Al-Pac decided to bring in a second proposal, the Al-Pac review panel would be reconvened to consider that proposal. After all, they have expertise; they have a base of knowledge. They can be reconvened easily and readily. And no; none of that has occurred. Instead, it is proof, Mr. Chairman, that what we have seen is nothing more than public relations.

If there's any doubt at all, let's look at the numbers. The minister keeps saying, "Well, we're going to get money later." Well, then, what's the good of this process? If you're thinking about doing recycling in two weeks, before the budget is even passed, why don't you bring in some recycling dollars? We don't see it. Mr. Chairman, they say they have the highest per capita environment budget in the country. Well, let's analyze that. And they say they've had this enormous increase. The entire increase has gone to Swan Hills to expand a facility which one can question the need to expand, which raises, therefore, the spectre that they're really considering importing dangerous goods from across the country. But the entire increase goes to Swan Hills waste management. I'm not saying that that waste management proposal, that idea, the need to manage waste isn't a good idea. Yes it is, and there was a time when this government could have been congratulated for having taken the bull by the horns and done something about it. But now they're trying to construe that as 1990s enlightened environmental policy. It is not. That is in place.

Then let's look further. Recycling, environmental impact assessments: huge features of what this minister is saying is his environmental policy. Recycling. Well, there's \$400,000 in the budget for it. I don't know what you're going to do with \$400,000. I know we can't do a blue box program with \$400,000. I know we can't do a home composting program with \$400,000. I know that a 1.7 percent increase in Recycling is an insult and underlines the fact that he can talk about it, but the money isn't there for him to do it.

Similarly with environment impact assessments. Well, if we're anticipating seeing the natural resources conservation board, I don't see why it would be so difficult to set it up. We've got a precedent. We've seen how much it costs to run the Al-Pac review. He could easily have put some of that money in the

budget. If there is strength in his determination to do these kinds of initiatives, to do something on recycling, and to do something on environmental impact assessments, then why do we not see it in the budget?

Finally, Mr. Chairman, when you take out one-third of the staff of that department – in fact, 44 percent of the staff of that department – and one-third of the budget of that department, which is really not for environmental matters at all but for planning water management projects like dams and the downstream paraphernalia that goes with dams, then what you have is about an \$80 million budget for environmental matters, and that is nowhere near the top per capita in this country. That, in fact, is quite negligible, and it underlines once again the lack of capability of this minister to make strong environmental policies stick within his government.

Talking about the strength of environmental policy, clearly the ability of a government to enforce regulations is fundamental and essential to doing it right. You can say it; you can write in a piece of legislation. If you never do anything about it, then it isn't worth the paper it's written on. Well, we've seen a number of cases, Mr. Chairman. Certainly the Procter & Gamble case of going over total suspended solids limits something like 30 times, a minimum of 30 times, and not being shut down for having done that, not having been issued a control order, not having been issued a certificate of variance, not having been issued a modification to their licence, all of which are legal structural administrative processes within their own legislation – none of that was done. This government is not prepared to implement the high standards that it says it has.

We look at Millar Western. Individuals in that town brought to their MLA, the Member for Whitecourt, on December 1, samples of fly ash to have it tested. Well, it wasn't tested. The tests weren't submitted until January 26. They weren't completed until several weeks after that. They weren't reported to these people until March 15. Mr. Chairman, if there is a problem under regulations, if standards are not being met, why is it that this government wouldn't want to act aggressively and rigorously in determining what the problem is and act accordingly? Even after the decision was made to move that fly ash burner, it was allowed to burn. Has this minister been to Millar Western? Has he seen the garbage on the ground? Does he understand that kids play in that? No. Does he want to exercise his power to do something about those things, or has he simply not been able to exercise his authority and his power?

I am convinced, Mr. Chairman, from speaking with people in industry that they are not afraid of tough regulations; they just want to know that they are applied fairly. If they're not sure that the next company is having to spend the money to meet those regulations, then they're afraid to spend the money to meet those regulations because they can't remain competitive. You've got to make it very, very clear in administering environmental regulations that they will be tough and that they will be implemented in a consistent and rigorous, aggressive way.

Recycling and waste reduction. It is with some encouragement that I heard the minister say that he's actually going to bring that in. He calls it recycling. I'd like to see that concept expanded to waste reduction. Recycling is an initial step in this process. It's a very important step, but in a sense it is premised upon the consumptive society. It says: "It's okay; we can keep recycling. We can keep using and using and using and using." There comes a point where you have to address the issue of waste reduction. But first, with respect to recycling, I'm very encouraged to hear the minister talking about government

purchasing policies and extending those to government funded institutions. It's nice to know that he was listening to the Liberal environment critic this time last year. I encourage him in doing that. I'd like to encourage him also to look, if he hasn't already, at the use of recycled oil for this government's fleet; the use of recycled tires; the use of recycled plastics and other recycled materials when they might be used, for example, in construction processes; at the possibility of recycling cement, as is now being done in Ontario, and encouraging that through the involvement of this government in construction projects.

I would like to see this Bill address, if it doesn't already, home composting, and more broadly address industrial composting as well. Ontario has a very, very successful home composting program. It may be that it doesn't need provincial government encouragement, but it is important that the provincial government contemplate whether or not that program will take hold without provincial government leadership and initiative.

One issue that is sensitive but I know is being addressed elsewhere in the world now and deserves our attention here, is the question of disposable diapers; sensitive, I guess, because they are convenient; however, sensitive as well because they are putting a huge pressure on the environment of this province and of this country. Vermont and Nebraska in the United States are now grappling with – in fact, Nebraska has passed legislation which limits the use of nonbiodegradable disposable diapers. That's half the problem. Biodegradable helps. You still have to cut down a whole bunch of trees, however, to create these diapers. The statistics on the resources these diapers use are really shocking. In Canada, 2.4 million trees a year are cut down just to make the disposable diapers that are used for Canadian babies; in the world, 1 billion trees a year. Mr. Chairman, it is easy to stop and discourage and to begin to reorient families to using cloth diapers. You can get them in a diaper service; you can wash them yourself. The cost savings to a family are clear, and the savings to the environment are very clear as well. It's a sensitive issue. No question.

But this is a government that should be in a position to provide leadership, that could gain some credibility in its environmental policy if it would provide leadership in some of these difficult and sensitive issues. There are very few environmental issues that aren't difficult and that are not sensitive, and in fact gradually people are coming around to the fact that, yes, they are going to require significant life-style changes. But that process can be facilitated if government begins to provide leadership.

Ozone depletion. This is an extremely serious problem. It's a serious problem from the point of view of the greenhouse effect. CFCs are very, very virulent, if you will, in creating ozone depletion. It's also a serious problem, therefore, with respect to long-term agricultural production, with respect to individuals' health, and to the extent that it breaks down the ozone layer which, of course, protects us from harmful rays of the sun. I would like to see this government aggressively encouraging the recycling of CFCs that are utilized now in refrigerators and in car air conditioners; encouraging that quickly, sooner than federal regulations would, and ensuring that they use their powers to see that such initiatives as recycling CFCs and ultimately the replacing of CFCs is undertaken quickly. We cannot wait to do that.

Carbon dioxide. I've spoken a number of times in the Legislature, and I spoke last night to the Minister of Energy. I'm very concerned about the global warming potential for two reasons: one, because it is evident that it may be a very serious

problem; and two, within the context of this government and this province I am especially concerned because this government is now starting to talk as though there isn't a problem and as though we can proceed with our head in the sand, and that problem, if it exists, will go away. Well, I've heard the Minister of Energy speak about CO₂ and the greenhouse effect. I've heard the deputy minister for the Premier, Barry Mellon, speak in very cynical terms about CO₂. Now, if I were the Minister of the Environment, I'd be doing something about that guy, Barry Mellon, because that is a very corrosive attitude that he has, and it should be stopped.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Chairman, that the studies this government has referred to as saying there isn't a global warming, and concluding on the basis of these studies that there isn't a global warming trend, do not conclude that at all. What they say is that there are uncertainties as a result of the methodologies that science has been able to use to this point to determine and assess the greenhouse global warming effect and that action is required to firm up those uncertainties, to enhance the methodologies that are used to assess global warming. But it is also the case that proceeding as if there is a global warming problem cannot possibly hurt this province if it is done properly. It will help us environmentally, and it can help us economically. It can initially help us economically if we implement conservation measures that reduce costs: costs to people's daily lives, costs to businesses. It can help us if we are very, very creative and innovative in the way we address the need for R and D to ensure that fossil fuels can be burned cleaner; that is, with fewer CO₂ emissions. We can develop technology that can recapture carbon dioxide that is a by-product of natural gas processing, and so on. Mr. Chairman, I believe that if we set objectives and if we set standards to which industry must aspire, the world will come to see what we have achieved. That, in turn, will generate further economic development, economic enterprise that can be environmentally sound and that can be premised upon environmentally sound technology and environmentally sound industries.

I believe an important feature of any policy to contend with global warming and carbon dioxide is, of course, a transportation policy. I would like this minister to consider talking to the minister of transportation, dealing with his caucus colleagues to enhance improved funding to cities like Edmonton so that they can expand their LRT, light rapid rail transit, much, much more quickly. It's going to take at least 10 years, maybe 15, to get it out to the west end. I would like to see this minister providing some insights into how we promote something as simple as bicycle commuting. One day that may be an extremely prevalent mode of transportation. It certainly is a mode of transportation which brings with it many health benefits to the individual who does it as well as many health benefits to our environment. It is the kind of program that can be supported through simple planning changes, so that we design our roads perhaps slightly differently, so that we don't have square curbs. It's enough to drive a bicycle commuter crazy, a square curb.

We need to have some insights into how we reduce gasoline use. How do we discourage eight-cylinder cars when four- and six-cylinder cars work just fine? How can we justify the luxury of driving a car that has very, very poor mileage in this day and age? Why would we want to justify that luxury? How is it that government can provide leadership to see that those changes are made? I know these people will say, "Well, we don't want to intervene." Well, I'll tell you that the market can't solve all problems. I mean, if these guys would have left the market to fight the Second World War, we would have lost it. Sometimes

it takes some co-ordination and leadership on the part of government, and this is one of those. This is a huge issue. It is a huge problem, the environmental problem that faces this province and this country, and governments cannot hide their heads in the sand and they cannot say that although there are infinite numbers of studies indicating that global warming probably exists, there are two that question the methodology, and therefore we grab those conveniently and say, "Hey, there's no global warming problem."

Mr. Chairman, we need leadership. I would like this minister to consider a couple of pieces of legislation specifically that we have presented.

The environmental ombudsman. So many people have such an interest in this issue, and so many people are so frustrated by their lack of access to a system where they can right some of the wrongs which they see or where they have a fair chance to right some of the wrongs which they see. Consider the Daishowa case. Well, you've got Milner & Steer – a battery of lawyers, hundreds of thousands of dollars – hired by the government of Alberta to see that they can get status. You've got a huge law firm in Vancouver representing Daishowa: hundreds of thousands of dollars, I'm sure, in legal fees. You've got one lawyer working for individuals, the public – those people who are concerned with Daishowa and concerned that it be assessed properly – without resources to support that particular legal initiative. Well, Mr. Chairman, what the ombudsman can provide is redress for people who simply don't have those resources, to even out some of the problems that people encounter.

Yes, we need an environmental Bill of Rights, but that doesn't solve all the problems either, because that ultimately will end up in legal recourse. There are many people in this province, I know unbeknownst to this government, who have a desire, who have a right to have an input just like Daishowa has an input, just like Weldwood and Procter & Gamble have inputs; who have a stake in this society, who have a right to express that stake through the legal system or through some other mechanism that allows them to do it, because they don't have the resources to do it otherwise.

Access to information. It is incomprehensible that this government will continuously hide information from the public, from the opposition, from people who would like to be able to assess it. Accountability doesn't make a government weaker; it makes it stronger. A great government understands that. There was a time when this government understood that, when they weren't afraid of questions, and they weren't afraid of information, and they weren't afraid of accountability. The weakness, the tiredness inherent in this government today is vivid in their reluctance to bring in access-to-information legislation. I mean, how extreme can it be? We listened to the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife say, "Yeah, we're going to have an open public process into forestry management areas." Well, one can only question: how would you ever possibly do that when you can't see the agreement until it's signed? Of what possible use, of what possible efficacy could that process be? Zero; none.

That brings me to another point. Who is it that's responsible for environmental impact assessments into forestry management agreements and forestry management areas? We've always thought that it would be the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife who would be responsible for that. Recently in the House he said that the Minister of the Environment is responsible for that. If that's the case, one, could the minister please confirm that it is the case, and two, could he please tell us why

he's been insisting that they are done in accordance with the recommendations of the AI-Pac review process, which he was so adamant in congratulating?

Some specific issues, Mr. Chairman. Groundwater: the government had a study apparently. It was revealed in the fall that they were undertaking a study of groundwater. Could the minister please indicate what the results of that study are and what policy he's going to implement to, among other things, identify empty wells, because they can be catch basins for toxic runoff and so on, but also to identify rules and regulations for the use of groundwater, aquifers, and so on? Because there can be serious environmental contamination if those resources are not used properly. A feature of that policy area that has to be considered as well is the issue of oil drilling companies being able to use 50 percent fresh water in their activities. Well, why would that be? Is that resource not an extremely important resource, a resource that is far too precious to be utilized in that way?

Wynd valley. We now see the prospect of six golf courses being built through that Bow valley corridor, and I would ask the minister to indicate what environmental impact assessment process he is going to implement for that valley development and when we can expect to see that start. What will be the nature of public hearings and so on?

I would ask the minister to give us a clear indication of when a public environmental impact assessment process will be structured for the Sunpine project proposed for the Rocky Mountain House-Strachan area. I would also . . . [The hon. member's speaking time expired]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm delighted to have an opportunity to enter into this debate. I've listened both with interest and with patience over the last hour and a half to, firstly, a very interesting, thought provoking, and I must say factual presentation by the Minister of the Environment, factual because it did not talk about generalities, it did not talk about unsubstantiated claims. It talked about what this government is doing about making sure that we continue to have the best environment in all of Canada and, in fact, in all of the world.

I then heard the members from Edmonton, first the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place and then the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, who are charitably considered to be critics. They're doing, I would respectfully submit, Mr. Chairman, the best job that they can, and they are trying to be critics; I grant you that. But I feel very sorry for the average Albertan reading *Hansard* over this past hour and a half and trying to get a sense of what is reality, comparing what are government programs and the initiatives that are very proactive which are being initiated by this government, and then comparing those facts with the very negative comments that are coming from the two members from Edmonton. Now, I was born and raised in Edmonton, Mr. Chairman. I grant you that I had the good sense to move to Banff-Cochrane in southern Alberta some 14 years ago, but when I was growing up in Edmonton, there seemed to me to be a great sense of optimism about where this province was going, and I do not see that sense of optimism in any of the comments that have been brought forward by either of the hon. members from Edmonton, Edmonton-Jasper Place and Edmonton-Meadowlark. I think that is regrettable at the very least.

I've had the very distinct pleasure over the past year of working closely with this minister and with the department in my capacity as the chairman of the environment caucus. I'm working with various government members who are very interested in the environment, and my constituency is extremely concerned about the environment, and I'm very happy to have that capacity. It's interesting as well that there have been two references made to projects in my constituency by the two members opposite. I thank them for that free advertising, and before I go on to the general comments about these estimates, I'd like to address the two issues that were raised by the hon. members.

Firstly, the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place brought up the Cochrane Ranch. He brought it up in the context that there were going to be irreparable or very serious environmental repercussions to the Cochrane Ranch, which has been designated by our province to protect the area and to therefore preserve the history of ranching in the Cochrane area. Now, that is a recognition to begin with of the importance of the area. But the comments from the member opposite would indicate that there is the potential for environmental catastrophe on that site. Because the member, Mr. Chairman, is asking for an environmental impact assessment on the Cochrane Ranch, I would ask the member to take the time to either come to my office or invite me to his or to speak with the minister of culture, who is the caretaker of that very important resource called the Cochrane Ranch.

There is a proposal by private enterprise to construct something called the western heritage centre on the Cochrane Ranch. Let's not be fooled by this: the Cochrane Ranch is not in wilderness country; the Cochrane Ranch is in the townsite of Cochrane, Alberta, within my constituency of Banff-Cochrane. On its east is a very large hill surrounded by residences that overlook the ranch, to the south is Highway 1A, to the west is Highway 22, and to the north is yet another coulee. The Cochrane Ranch area is, in fact, a coulee. Of some 150 acres of Cochrane Ranch, approximately 20 to 25 will be utilized, if funding is available to the proponents, to recall and recollect the history of ranching and the history of cattle in that very special and particular part of Alberta. A ranch-style house is going on the property. To suggest that that type of development, which, yes, will include a roadway, a very unimproved gravel roadway into the site, and, yes, will include a parking area – to suggest that those types of intrusions, if you will, into the Cochrane Ranch would create any kind of environmental catastrophe or significant problems on the Cochrane Ranch is pure myth, Mr. Chairman. That suggestion comes from a lack of knowledge. Again, I would encourage the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place to take the time to become involved in the project and get to know what it's all about.

A more serious concern – and I'll grant that to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark – is the focus that is occurring right now in the Bow corridor. It is a matter of recognizing in the marketplace the very unique and special nature of the Bow corridor on the Eastern Slopes of the Rocky Mountains. There are a number of private enterprises that are interested in building four-season resort developments in that area. I, too, share the concerns with overdevelopment that I believe the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark feels. I chose to live in that Bow valley, and I do not want to see development occur which is unbridled, which is out of control, that will lose to that area the very focus, the very magnetism that makes

people want to go there today. I share that interest that the hon. member has brought up.

I'm convinced that the natural resources conservation board, when it is in operation, will in fact review the types of all-season recreational opportunities and proposals that are now being reviewed in the Bow corridor. In the meantime there is an environmental review of any type of major project. We're not starting from scratch here, and I have every confidence that this department will carefully review every aspect of the proposed developments. I will be there working with the department, because I believe in the concept of sustainable development. I believe that we can have development, but I believe that it must be sustainable. I'm going to assure all of the members in this House and ensure for myself and my family and my grandchildren, hopefully, that everything the Bow valley has to offer today, it will offer in the future.

To go now to some of the issues that are in the budget estimates and just to make some comments before I ask some questions. I heard from the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place a reference to the waste minimization and recycling plan which the minister has indicated will be announced formally very shortly. At least the member recognized that it is a two-part plan: it is waste minimization and recycling. Listening to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, I got the impression that he felt there was no concentration on minimization, and that is clearly not true. I've listened to the hon. minister many times in this House and many times in public appearances, and I've heard him say that not only do we recycle, but we focus on the very important matter of waste minimization.

[Mr. Moore in the Chair]

That's part of the education process, Mr. Chairman. That is part of communicating with Albertans, and that's why we're so lucky in this department to have one of Alberta's greatest communicators as the minister of the Department of the Environment. I'm confident that he will ensure with his abilities that the important matters of today are communicated well to Albertans.

The round table on the environment and the economy is an extremely important initiative, and all members will recognize that this is coming out of the Brundtland commission's *Our Common Future*. I'm very pleased that we will soon have the membership established for this committee, and I'm also pleased to know that the numbers on the round table may increase to as many as 25 individuals. I know from speaking with the minister that there are many, many incredibly competent Albertans who have been nominated for this round table. We will be sure through this department that the very best people who are available to us in Alberta are part of this important process, this think tank, that will continue to work towards Alberta as a leader in this very important field.

I must bring to the attention of both hon. members opposite something that perhaps they've missed in their research, and it's a video that I saw early in this year called *Big Fears . . . Little Risk*. It is a video which was broadcast by Walter Cronkite, who, as all members will know, is likely the most respected broadcaster in America today. The theme, Mr. Chairman, of that video is that, yes, we have to be very, very cautious about what we are doing today, but we should not become paranoid about what is happening in the world today. Paranoia doesn't solve any problems, and Albertans must be made aware of what the true facts are.

We talk about dioxins, and I heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place indicating to Albertans that dioxins seem to be nothing but a result of industrialization gone amok. Well, I would encourage the hon. member to watch this video, because very reputable scientists, men who are leaders in their field, recognize that dioxins are created naturally in the environment by plant life. They're all around us, and in their latent state there is no evidence that they create or cause any permanent damage or any damage, period.

Now, I am not a scientist, so I must depend upon scientific information which is provided to me, and another very interesting analysis and review contained in that video is with respect to the zero tolerance concept. We hear on a regular basis from the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place and from the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark that we should be requiring zero tolerance. Well, five years ago, 10 years ago we were measuring components in parts per million and then per billion. Well, today, Mr. Chairman, we measure components in parts per trillion. Technology is so advanced today that we can pick up such minute components that it is literally impossible to conceive, with the technology that is at hand today, of ever having zero tolerance. That's not to suggest that we don't work towards reduction of pollutants as much as is possible. That's a commitment that this government has, that this minister has, because we want to maintain what we have today; we want to have sustainable development.

The Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place talked briefly about the Oldman River dam and the Federal Court of Appeal decision and left me with the impression that he felt that the court decided there was an EARP required, an environmental assessment review process, because the provincial government was deficient in the environmental impact assessment study that it did on the Oldman River dam. That is totally incorrect. The finding of that court of appeal was that there was a requirement that the federal government did certain things because of a guidelines order that came about in 1984 through federal legislation. It had no reference whatsoever to the process that had been initiated by the province of Alberta. Mr. Chairman, I want to make it perfectly clear to all hon. members here that the federal government concurred in the process and, in fact, delegated the process of the EIA to the Alberta government because they had confidence in the information that we had at hand and the very thorough process that we have for an EIA in the province of Alberta. I think the hon. member opposite would do well to review that case and to review the decision. I'm very pleased that the Alberta government is seeking leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada to have an opportunity to have a final say on this issue at the highest level in this country.

I want to just say a few words about Alberta Special Waste Management at Swan Hills. The comments by the members opposite would indicate that because we have a backlog of solid wastes, there's something wrong with the process, there's something wrong with the system. That is absolutely insane, absolutely insane. We have a system which can be improved, and which the minister is taking the initiative to improve, so that we can dispose of all of these solids. Alberta took on this project, the first in Canada, and, with the best information available at the time, calculated a mix of solids and liquids that would be disposed of at that site. Well, that calculation wasn't a hundred percent. We get criticism from across the floor that that means there's something wrong with the department, that that means there's something wrong with the people who are

running the Special Waste Management. I say nonsense, Mr. Chairman. Now what is happening is that the Special Waste Management Corporation is identifying a way, even better than before, to take advantage of technology today to be sure that we dispose in a safe and reasonable manner of all the solids and liquids that are within this province and which potentially pose a threat because of a hazardous nature.

I would ask the minister to make some comment on what kind of money, what kind of focus in the department itself is being placed on improving our collection and transfer process to make it as safe as possible. I say that, Mr. Chairman, because I am a believer that we should review the possibility – and I say it very carefully – of a regional process for disposal of hazardous wastes.

I say that for a number of reasons. One of the most important is how safe and how scientifically correct the process in Swan Hills is today. I firmly believe that because of the amount of money that's been put into that process by the Alberta government in a very visionary way, we have the best technology available. Certainly if we can obtain, store, and transfer hazardous wastes from within the province in a safe manner up to Swan Hills, we can also do it from outside the province. We can then ensure, in my view, Mr. Chairman, that what happens throughout western Canada will be that hazardous wastes are not dumped, are not stored in a manner which is not the very best and the very safest, but rather that these hazardous wastes are transferred to and disposed of at Swan Hills. I ask the minister to carefully consider that type of system. Again, I emphasize that I'm not saying this is the end-all and the be-all, and certainly there must be more work done to ensure that the safest methods possible are available and to quantify those methods, but in the final analysis, if the methods are the safest possible, I believe we should seriously consider a regional approach to the disposal of hazardous wastes.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

I'd like to make a couple of comments on enforcement and prosecution. In my view, Mr. Chairman, the best disincentive to polluters, those abusing the laws of the province, is the threat of being shut down, the stop-work order. In connection with that belief, I would ask the minister to give us some particulars about what increases in manpower the department will be taking on this year which will be allocated specifically to enforcement. Prosecution has its place and high fines have their place, but I believe the quickest way and oftentimes most expeditious way to get results from a polluter is to shut down. But to do that, you need enforcement; you need the personnel to be out there in the field watching over industry. That's not to suggest that industry is a bad actor, because there are many, many good actors in industry. But there are some bad actors and they colour the milk. What we have to do is get back to the purity, and we can do that by putting more manpower and man time into enforcement.

I would also ask the minister to perhaps make some comments on what kinds of incentives will be available or may be available with respect to recycled products, such as deinking plants. I know of an example of a recycling initiative in my constituency that got off the ground recently with a great deal of enthusiasm, but I received a phone call shortly after the kickoff to advise me that they were already having difficulty disposing of paper, newsprint. This is a significant problem because we just have too much. People are responding so well and the next phase of

the process is lagging slightly behind. I would ask the minister to perhaps make some comments about what he envisages happening later on this year, and hopefully soon this year, on this issue. I would also ask him to make some comments about some of the disincentives that could be used with respect to recycling, namely some legislated time limits for reduction and adding charges for the use of certain products which are identified as bad actors, causing a great problem in terms of just bulk, and are being left in landfills, et cetera.

I want to make one other comment, and that is in relation to the legislation that is upcoming. I want to commend the minister for the environmental protection and enhancement Act and the natural resources conservation board. But I don't want to compliment only the minister, because it is the Premier of this province who gives direction to and communicates with the Minister of the Environment and creates the policy, in working through that minister and through caucus, that we see in front of us today in terms of the promises of the legislation and tomorrow we will see in black and white when that legislation is presented. So I want to make sure Albertans are aware that this is a joint commitment between this government and Albertans. We all have to take personal responsibility for it. We are working towards a much better future, a future that will be secure, and 10 years from now hopefully we won't be hearing that we only have five years of life left unless we make these changes, because Alberta is making the changes today. We will work for the people of Alberta and globally to ensure that we do continue to have the earth we live on today and it's better as time goes on.

So those comments, Mr. Chairman . . . I appreciate I went a little longer than perhaps I'd intended. I will take my place and look forward to further debate.

Thank you.

MS M. LAING: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to raise a couple of points. One is the environmental threat posed by the activities at the Defence Research Establishment, Suffield. We would note that they have stored their 18 tonnes of chemical agents and they are being asked to be destroyed under the recommendations of the Barton report. We note that there has been open-air testing of chemical agents in that area and that has posed a risk to wildlife. The requirement for destruction is apparently going ahead.

In that context I would draw the minister's attention to the fact that the United States has decided not to put their civilian populations at risk and has decided to use the Johnston atoll in the mid Pacific as an island burn ship for U.S. chemical weapons, because even state-of-the-art incinerators would release unburned poison, heavy metals, and newly formed toxins such as dioxins and furans. In addition, the Soviet Union will not be carrying out the destruction of chemical weapons at a plant that they have built for that purpose, even though it is a thousand kilometres from Moscow, because they have environmental concerns. I would then ask this minister to raise our concern with the Minister of National Defence that in fact they would build an incinerator just 30 miles from Medicine Hat.

The second concern in relation to the Defence Research Establishment at Suffield is the proposed construction of a level 4 biohazards containment facility. Such a facility would allow for the testing of biologically engineered weapons. Again, the reality of accidental release of these deadly agents is not without precedents. The citizens of the United States have prevented the building of such a facility at the Dugway Proving Ground in

Utah. In fact, we believe this facility is being built at DRES because the American population will not tolerate it on their lands. We know that the work at the Defence Research Establishment at Suffield now includes research with poultry viruses, research with laboratory animals including rhesus monkeys, and therefore there is the likelihood of research with human disease. We can only imagine the risk to the residents of the Medicine Hat area if an accident occurred. We can be concerned that the Department of National Defence knows of the risk of chemical and biological warfare research but that it is unwilling to alarm and outrage the citizens of this province and this country by fully informing them of the nature of what is going on there. The rationalization that it is defensive research will not withstand examination. So I would ask the minister to advocate on behalf of the citizens of this area and of Alberta and communicate our concerns to the Minister of National Defence and act to safeguard our environment and our citizens.

The third point I would like to make, and the final point, is that we can applaud the efforts of activists and concerned people that were evident at such events as Earth Day. But protection of the environment, ensuring survival of life on this planet, requires more than individual action. It requires political action; it requires corporate action. It requires that we do not posit false choices, that we do not say, "Jobs or environmental protection." It requires that we no longer see nature as something to be overcome and conquered but something to be protected and nurtured, for it is the very basis of our life. It requires that we understand the planet as an ecosystem, a biological entity in which, if you damage or destroy one aspect of it, you will affect in a detrimental way the wholeness of it. It requires that we recognize that Earth has finite resources and a finite capacity to absorb waste, toxins, and death-dealing by-products. I would therefore ask the minister to recognize that he and his department must support individual efforts, but he must go further and ensure that industry, business, and society as a whole recognize the severity of the problem and the danger our planet faces in terms of survival and ensure that the kinds of laws and monitoring are in place to protect us all.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Wainwright.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I'd like to congratulate our minister for the nice job he's been doing with our environment. Certainly it's been a very sensitive department and quite a tough department, and I know you're doing a good job. I'd also like to compliment the staff and the deputy minister's office and the people who work there. It's not an easy department to do a job in.

I have three issues I'd like to discuss tonight for just a few short minutes. I won't go on for half an hour recycling, like I hear a lot of it happening.

Our regional incinerator in Wainwright is my first one. As you know, we have had an experimental incinerator down there for the past few years. We put \$13 million into it about five years ago and we haven't got very much out of it yet. We've had a lot of problems with the burners and the scrubbers and we weren't putting the right amount of pure air out the smokestack. Consequently, it got shut down. I am very pleased that we are working toward getting that started up again. We're spending some more money putting in different burners and scrubbers and seeing if we can't make it so we can burn our garbage in our region down there. Certainly I think it's an important part of

trying to get rid of the regional landfill sites we have in this province. The time will come when we have to do that. I'm convinced that we should never be putting as much into those landfill sites as we are.

The second thing I had is that I noticed you had a 16 percent increase in 2.2, I think it was, with pollution control. We do have in the far west part of our Wainwright constituency a dumping ground for the CNR. They bring an awful lot of their waste and dump into a large pit there. They have roughly 40 acres. They dig holes and bury things, and no one seems to ever see or know what goes in there. I don't know if there's any inspection of it or not, but I do believe the grounds around it should be monitored for chemical leakage. Possibly it could get into the water system and do some polluting that we don't want to see happen. I would like it if we could have some kind of monitoring system there and some media attention, I guess, or education for the people of that community, because they do get pretty worried when they take a trainload – and it seems like they don't know what it is sometimes – and bury it there. It would be nice if people just knew a little bit more what it is about.

One of the other concerns, and a fairly major concern, is the use of our potable water for oil field injection. We all know how precious our water resource is, and sometimes we have a lot of difficulty seeing some of the decisions that allow the oil field to use what we think is a limited amount of potable water. We pump it down where it will never get back into the system again. I wondered if they were planning on changing some of those standards a little bit. I know that we had a review and we put in place some recommendations where if there was what they felt was a good supply of water, they could share it with the oil industry. Possibly more education of our public and a better monitoring system so people understand it. I really believe our water resources branch has got a good handle on it, and maybe it's just a matter of explaining it to our people a little bit better, but it does cause a lot of concern.

Another small item I have: we have a little industry down in the Metiskow area that takes alkali out of an alkali slough and brings it in and dries it, packages it, and sells it in bags. We employ about 20 to 25 people in this little industry, and we've had a lot of trouble with the emission standards at that plant. It's quite interesting, because the plant is putting a certain amount of alkali dust out into the air. When we've had the droughts we've had and it's over a big, flat, almost small lake area, where it's all dried, the sky can be absolutely full of alkali blowing off this lake and so on. Yet we've got a tiny little bit coming out of a smokestack and we say we've got to lower the standards coming out of the smokestack. It just doesn't seem too reasonable to me that we're making them spend a lot more money on something that's in the air and around the ground and has been there for years. It's natural. I'm not sure how much damage or pollution we're really doing with that.

I guess that leads me, then, to the last little thing – you did allude to it in your opening remarks – and that is to use a bit of a commonsense approach in detecting our new contaminants. We do develop a lot of instruments that measure the tiniest little contaminant and then we put a fancy name on it and tell everyone it is terribly, terribly dangerous. Yes, in a lot of cases in the concentrated form it is dangerous, but I think we have to all get a better handle on at what levels it's dangerous. We put some of the names on there, the dioxin names and furan names and even PCB names, and scare people with them. I personally have never heard of anyone killed by a PCB yet, and we've been

absolutely scared to death over there for years over that. We spilled some in Ontario coming out of a truck and they had it through the news forever and ever. PCBs are part of our . . . We live with them, and all of a sudden we scare people. I just think that somehow or other the department – if we can go ahead and explain things, what a dangerous level of any of these contaminants is. We've got to get a better handle on that. We might have had zero for a level five years ago. Now we've developed a new little gadget that measures it and all of a sudden we're scared of it. I think it's too costly to our industry to . . . People don't even want to be frightened by those kinds of things.

With that, thank you very much.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. WICKMAN: I'll keep it short, Mr. Chairman, in view of the time.

Mr. Chairman, I first want to say that in the last two years I think we've seen something tremendous happen when we talk in terms of environmental concerns. When I say "tremendous," I mean tremendous from a positive point of view. It's not that many years ago, if we look back, that we can recall the perception, the image, that so many people had of people who were concerned about the environment, the so-called environmentalists. They were called radicals. There was the Greenpeace movement that nobody wanted to be associated with, the Green Party in Europe. We can look even in this House to a former minister responsible for the environment making some reference to the environmentalists being bearded commies. It was some expression of pipe smoking, whatever. In any case, it wasn't a very favourable comment. Back in those days, which isn't that long ago, that's the way environmentalists unfortunately were regarded.

Now we see surveys that clearly indicate that of all the lobby groups in Canada the most trusted, the ones with the most respect, are the environmentalists. That's how it's changed. That's how it's turned around. Suddenly we're finding people – not just politicians but people – who are saying: "What's happened to our water? What's happened to our air? What's happening to our forests? What's happening to our wildlife or animal life?" And so on.

The minister made reference during his opening remarks to a letter sent to him by a Liberal describing the environment as being quality of life, and I have to agree with the writer of that letter. I think we have to look at today's environment from two points of view, one point of view being, I guess, that today's environment can be regarded to an extent as yesterday's mistakes, but at the same time, today's environment is tomorrow's future. I think it's the latter that we have to dwell on. It's the latter that we have to look at.

When we talk in terms of the environment, we're talking in terms of a resource. Some of the comments I've heard here tonight are a bit disturbing in their point of view. It's a little too casual an outlook towards our environment. When we talk about our environment, we're talking about a future that we're leaving behind for our children, for our grandchildren, and I don't think that we as the guardians of the environment today have the right to be callous or indifferent or casual about it. I can respect the difficulties that the minister has in that particular

portfolio. It's probably the highest profile of any portfolio in this particular government or, in fact, probably any provincial government, any government at almost any level now because of the concern that people are feeling towards the environment. He does have a responsibility to attempt to lead. He has a responsibility to do more than just react. He has a responsibility to attempt to initiate, to lead. Even at times we sit back as critics, at times we are a bit skeptical, and at times we are critical. To a degree we have to be critical, and many times we have cause to be critical.

Mr. Chairman, whether the minister's doing a good job or not is beside the point to a degree, because the people out there will not tolerate a government that is not showing leadership when it comes to the environment, and as you go down in the age group, that awareness becomes greater and greater. When the current Minister of the Environment, I know, was mayor of the city of Calgary, he used to spend a fair amount of time going into classrooms and speaking to schoolchildren. I do a great deal of that in Edmonton-Whitemud, and when I ask those students, whether they're in grade 2 or grade 6 or grade 8, what their number one concern is, it comes across repeatedly: the environment. They insist and they say that they want a government that will protect that environment, because they regard that environment as their future. If a government is not performing to those standards, the people simply won't tolerate and that minister will no longer be around.

There's optimism amongst the youngsters. There is more optimism amongst the youngsters than there is in the older generation. In Edmonton-Whitemud there's a group of students, grades 6 and 7, and they call themselves Our Future, and they're putting together their own particular program because they want to ensure that the environment is being protected. They're being led by a girl by the name of Kimberly Thompson, and I'm sure that one of these days the minister is going to hear from that young lady.

Mr. Chairman, I pointed out previously that our environment is our greatest resource. It's too precious to play politics with. People have screamed and they will continue to scream for action, and they'll continue to scream for a government that will provide that leadership, not simply react. I don't think the environment can be sold for economic exchange or can be considered in terms of economic benefit from the point of view of a trade-off. I don't think it's realistic for anyone to sit back and talk in terms of let's experience short-term gain, with the consequences being long-term pain. I've heard those statements in this House from members fighting for pulp mills, saying that we've got to create those jobs. It's fine to create those jobs today, but what about tomorrow? And that's the long-term pain that I'm talking in terms of when we try to go for that short-term gain.

When it comes to the pulp mills, I don't think there should be any question, any question at all, in the mind of the Minister of the Environment or in the minds of the government that if those pulp mills cannot perform, if they cannot abide by recommendations that come through a process – I don't think there should be any question at all, any hesitation in saying that that particular pulp mill cannot go ahead. Why we dillydally around looking at means of trying to accommodate something that could be very, very damaging to our environment, I don't understand. I don't know why we get into this game-playing of saying, "Let's hire a firm from Finland because that firm may tell us what we want to hear, because the public hearing process we set up didn't tell us what we wanted to hear."

There was reference made to penalties and such with polluters. Yes, I believe that penalties have to be imposed and very heavy penalties have to be imposed. We've seen many chemical spills that have occurred within the city. We've had many cases that have occurred in the city of Edmonton and I'm sure in the city of Calgary, where industry has deliberately poured dangerous toxics down the drainage systems, knowing exactly the contribution they were making towards damaging the environment. I believe, Mr. Chairman, that the minister has to work very closely, very co-operatively, not only with environmentalists, with environmentalist groups, but with municipalities. Those municipalities that want to set up municipal environmental councils should be encouraged to do so. School boards: there should be co-operation with the school boards to create further awareness at that level.

Mr. Chairman, I'm going to conclude on the note that I regard the Minister of the Environment as a good performer in the House. He's a good entertainer; there is no question about that. But there are times when we need a bit more than just entertainment. There is a time that we need action, there is a time we need commitment, and there is a time we need results. When it comes to the environment, we need that action; we need that commitment; we need those results.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Chairman, just to close, hopefully, and to be as brief as I can, I would like to answer some of the questions and address some of the comments that have been made here this evening.

First of all, I believe as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud believes that it all starts with the children, and I've had the opportunity of visiting numerous schools. I make a point of going to at least one or two schools per month around the province to talk to children and talk with children about the environment, and it's phenomenal the amount of information they have, the amount of knowledge they have, the technical knowledge. They talk about dioxins and furans and chlorinated organics and SO₂ and carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, volatile organic compounds. They talk about automobile emissions, and they talk about the problems of disposable diapers and recycling. They're very, very aware. That's why we have budgeted significantly for education, to make sure that awareness continues. I tell the kids to go home and tell their parents about this issue of the environment, because when I went to school, the environment was hardly a word. We used to refer to it as nature. We used to talk about the birds and the bees and the flowers and the trees, and now we talk about process and jurisdiction and dioxins and furans and chlorinated organics and depletion of the ozone layer, and so on. Yes, it has become a very, very complex issue, this issue of the environment.

I can tell you one thing for sure, Mr. Chairman: it's not dull. It's not dull. Certainly we have problems to contend with, but we also have challenges, challenges for the future. I think if we're to understand this issue of the environment, perhaps we should look at where we've been in terms of providing environmental leadership in this province, because I didn't hear much of it coming from the opposition benches this evening. So I think it's worth a bit of a story to remind the members of the opposition that this was the first government in Canada to have a stand-alone Ministry of the Environment, that this was the first

province, the first jurisdiction in this country, to have something as simple as deposit for return on beverage containers. This was the first province in this country to have a state of the art, world-class environmental research centre. It exists at Vegreville. We were the first jurisdiction in this country and we're still the only jurisdiction to have a hazardous waste facility so that we can clean up all the contaminants that pose a tremendous danger and hazard to our environment. We were probably the first jurisdiction in Canada to have a comprehensive land reclamation program, a program that exists under the Heritage Savings Trust Fund that will be brought to this House later on. Nonetheless, its results have been the reclamation of some 1,100 abandoned sites in this province.

So where are we today? We're trying to deal with the issues of pulp mill development. We're trying to deal with the complex issues of process and jurisdiction. We're trying to get a handle on what chlorinated organics are all about, and maybe the Jaakko Pöyry report will provide us with some of that good, solid information, because I'm sure that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place doesn't have all the facts. He's not a scientist, no more than I'm a scientist. Sure, he knows about 2,3,7,8-TCDD, and he knows that that is a nasty, and it is. It's a nasty. But I was told by a scientist at Vegreville that using the AOX formula, absorbable organic halides, at 15 kilograms per air-dried tonne, to find this one dioxin, 2,3,7,8-TCDD, would be like taking a fingernail clipping, throwing it someplace between here and the moon, and trying to find it. Now, I don't believe that. I don't believe that. I think it's an exaggeration, but I've heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place exaggerate a few statements.

MR. McINNIS: Name them.

AN HON. MEMBER: Comparing B.C. and Alberta standards.

MR. KLEIN: Yes, the comparison of B.C. and Alberta standards. But I'm wondering if this member, who talks about total elimination of chlorinated organics, will stand up with his NDP colleague in Hinton at a town hall meeting and say, "Close down the mill." No. He talks a big storm, but I doubt if he would go to Hinton and stand up at a town hall meeting with his NDP colleague and say, "Close this mill down." He knows he wouldn't.

This member talks up a big storm about the urban environment. The urban environment. He talks a big storm about the urban environment. Well, I'd like to remind the hon. member that municipal sewerage also produces chlorinated organics. The stuff we put down our sinks every day, the stuff we flush down our toilets every day produces chlorinated organics, and we're trying to deal with the problem in this city. Granted, the city of Edmonton has a good recycling program, but it probably has one of the worst sewerage treatment systems of any municipality in Canada. I find the former mayor of the city and now the leader of the Liberal opposition was incapable of providing the citizens of this city with a proper sewerage treatment system, so negligent, in fact, that we have had to ask the mayor of this city to submit to Alberta Environment an action plan as to how they're going to clean up a billion-dollar mess. That is a problem. That is a problem. But because these members from Edmonton contribute to the problem, they don't want to talk about it.

To answer the hon. member's question with respect to Wagner Bog, an environmental impact assessment is under way. It's being completed by a consultant for Alberta transportation, and

the public has been invited to provide comments. The advertising to solicit those comments is now being undertaken.

Mr. Chairman, rather than commenting on the kinds of expenditures that we plan to undertake to further protect and further maintain our leadership role in the enhancement and the protection of the environment, I will attempt to answer some of the questions that have been raised today. I have answered the question with respect to the Wagner Bog. With respect to being a Liberal, well, there was a time when I'm sure the Conservatives thought I was a member of the NDP, you know, and there was a time that the NDP always thought I was a Liberal and, worst of all, that the Liberals always thought I was a Liberal. I was a Liberal a long, long time ago, but I have seen the error of my ways, believe me. I'll tell you that.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark obviously wasn't listening again, because what we are going to do relative to our environmental legislation is take the comments of the public and prepare a draft. Then we're going to unveil that draft and take it out to the public. So there will be lots of public notice. There will be lots of opportunity for public comment, and certainly there will be an opportunity to give this document the widest possible exposure.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark mentioned Millar Western and the fly ash, and as far as I'm concerned, our department investigated that problem and investigated it properly. What I find surprising, however, is that this member wouldn't have it in his heart to mention that this company has shut down that operation and they're moving the teepee burner outside of town at considerable expense. They have recognized their responsibility to the community. They have apologized most profusely to not only the people in the community but to the department. They've admitted their embarrassment over this, and they've done everything possible to remedy that particular situation. I find it somewhat deplorable, Mr. Chairman, that the hon. member wouldn't mention that particular move, that good move by the company.

The hon. member refers to the expenditure of government dollars on LRT. Well, I can tell you a lot about light rail transit. The way to get light rail transit out to the ridership is not to spend a lot of money putting it underground. With respect to the reduction of automobile emissions, again mentioned by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment has recently assigned a protocol that calls for a significant reduction in automobile emissions by 1994.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane wanted to know, Mr. Chairman, how much we are going to spend on increased enforcement. The percentage increase in the budget is something like 16.7 percent. This will result in the creation of 13 more positions to enforce violations of environmental laws, laws that will be strengthened and strengthened significantly when the environmental enhancement and protection Act is introduced.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane asked also about deinking plants. He raises a very good question, because recycling doesn't work unless all the components are there; that is, the components of enhanced collection and separation of recyclables, the plants, and the manufacturing ability to add value to those recyclables, and of course the creation of markets

to consume the recycled materials. We are negotiating and negotiating very vigorously with respect to deinking plants in this province, with respect to oil recycling plants in this province, with respect to plastic recycling plants in this province. Indeed, when the comprehensive waste minimization and recycling program is brought forward, you will see mention in there of programs to provide incentives and encouragement for recycling industries to establish in this province.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane also alluded to municipal grants and charges for various products. Well, at this moment we're looking at perhaps a deposit for return on those pesky Tetra Paks. We're examining a recycling fee on tires, and we're looking at various other products that can be returned for deposit. So that is in the mill right now.

With respect to the Suffield issue, all I can say is that we have expressed our concern to the federal government over this issue. They have assured us that we will be allowed to participate in all the federal environmental impact assessments and to offer our views. They have also indicated – and we have, as a matter of fact, told the federal government – that in no way will there be transportation of those very, very hazardous substances off the base at Suffield.

With respect to the concerns raised by the hon. Member for Wainwright, well, I'll be going out there tomorrow, so we'll just have a look at the CNR dumping, the alkali plant, and all the dust that's flying around, and perhaps the water well situation. If the hon. member can wait until tomorrow, I'll try to address those problems as best as I possibly can.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I would like to conclude my remarks. I would like to thank all members for listening, first of all, to my presentation and for participating in the debate this evening.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to move right now that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

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

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the report, does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, all members are aware that tomorrow in Committee of Supply we will deal with the Department of Health.

[At 10:40 p.m. the House adjourned to Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.]

