

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, May 15, 1990 8:00 p.m.**

Date: 1990/05/15

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

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

head: **Committee of Supply**
Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund
Estimates 1990-91

Executive Council

1 – Occupational Health and Safety Research and Education

MR. CHAIRMAN: Members of the committee, it is now 8 o'clock. When we adjourned yesterday, vote 1, Occupational Health and Safety Research and Education, under the heading of Executive Council, was under discussion. The hon. minister adjourned debate. At the time of the adjournment there were two members who were on the speaking list, but the Chair doesn't see them at the moment.

The hon. minister.

MR. TRYNCHY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods did ask some questions, and I'd like to answer those. He started off by asking if there'd be an extension of the program. He's right that in 1986 we did an independent study to evaluate the program. That study was quite successful and outlined a number of positive aspects of the program. Of course, the heritage fund committee themselves recommended that we would continue, so I would like to advise the member and the House that I will be working with my colleagues to see if we can get an extension of the program over this summer. This one doesn't end till '91. We have this year's budget to look at, and I would take it forward.

I would like to advise also that no project that is being funded now, that is under way, will be stopped midway through. All the funding that's being approved is approved that the funding will be sufficient to carry the program to its end. So there'll be no program stopped halfway.

The member also asked the question about less dollars this year than before, and that's not correct. The first year the program was \$1 million, and it went between \$1 million and \$1.3 million each year till this year. So the funding is pretty equal throughout the program. I might suggest that this year's funding is somewhat more because there was a carryover from last year, so there'll be more funding available this year. There are still a number of dollars that are not committed, and we're waiting for projects to come in.

Another question was about administration being too high. Mr. Chairman, the administration budget is there, \$180,000 for supplies and administration, but that does not necessarily say what's going to be used. If we only need to use part of it, that's what will happen. Last year the administration was \$30,000 under budget. We would hope that if we can see our way clear and we don't have to use all the dollars for administration, they will not be used.

The next question was in regards to the Worker's Health Centre grant. I might suggest that I can't comment on that, because all the grant applications have to go to a steering committee. That steering committee then recommends them to

the minister, and the minister takes them forward. I'd like to advise the members that since I've been responsible for this fund, I have not rejected or turned down any recommendations that have come to me. So if the recommendations from the steering committee, which includes labour, industry, and a number of government officials – what they recommended to myself will go forward. So if the Worker's Health Centre grant application is approved by the steering committee, then of course I'll just pass it on, and it'll be approved by myself.

Another question was that the Alberta Federation of Labour were not getting enough dollars from that. There again I don't have any control, because they have to make their request to the steering committee, and they judge which proposals should go forward and which don't. I might add that from the beginning of this program, labour has got a little over 6 percent of the dollars from the heritage fund. I hope that if the Alberta Federation of Labour is making a submission, the steering committee would, after reviewing them, make sure that they use their good common sense. If they qualify, they would then be brought forward.

The next question was in regards to welders' material. I'd like to suggest that that has been out for some time. I just looked at the graph. This program was done by NAIT, and the information was out in 1986. Since that year the lost time accidents in regards to welders have been going down each year. So the program is working.

I would just like to outline who this information went to. It's been well advertised and maybe not used as well as it should be, and that's unfortunate. The presentation made by NAIT to promote the materials and the videos went to the Canadian Vocational Association conference, the Canadian Welding Bureau seminars, Red Deer College, the Welding Institute of Canada, the pipe fitters' association union hall, the Mechanical Contractors Association, and a number of other companies. It also has been loaned by the library 104 times to businesses and schools, and in 1987 brochures went out to 103 small businesses in Alberta and to a number of unions advising them that the tapes were available on loan or from NAIT. The unions that were advised of this were the United Steelworkers of America, the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers and Welders, the International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Ironworks, the plumbers and pipe fitters union, and the United Auto Workers. In addition to that seven technical colleges in Alberta were advised and a number of the corporate sector: R. Angus, Dome Petroleum, and businesspeople like that.

The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods said that maybe it's time that we took a look at all that information that's been provided and available since the program started some 10 years ago, and I think he makes a good point. Maybe it's time we concentrated on getting this information out to the workers. I accept that.

I just presented to each member a little card that I'd like to see all of us get to our constituents, and I might suggest to all members that if you would take the time to provide these to all the businesses in your constituency or all your workers, I would make them available to you. You can use them in your brochures, if you wish, or do a mail-out to the employers in your constituency. I think it's important that workers in the province ask these questions. I'm doing something different; I'm sending these cards out to every high school in my constituency and every student that's graduating in my schools. I've also noticed that my colleague the minister responsible for career development is doing a brochure on that too. I've talked to my other

colleague from Advanced Education, and he will make sure it's available, and also the Minister of Education will make that available to all the schools. It's a positive brochure, and I think it's time we got the message out to all the employees. It says: "It's your choice . . . stay alive"; ask these questions. Hopefully they will read them.

You know, it's interesting: I look at this pack of cigarettes, and I know some pretty fine people that use these things now and then. It says on here, "Smoking is a major cause of heart disease," or "Smoking will cause cancer," yet they all go out and buy this and use them. So I don't know how much you can educate people. They've got to want to do it. I guess you can only sell safety if the person really wants to have safety. So I would encourage the members in the House here to make a request to myself for these 10 questions. I will make sure I get enough out to you so that we can blanket the province and get every worker involved so they could ask these questions, thereby promoting safety in the workplace and reducing, of course, injuries.

I believe, Mr. Chairman, that those were all the questions the hon. member raised. If there are any other questions, I'd be pleased to answer them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've got a couple of comments following on the minister's response. I appreciate the response that the minister made, and I think it's just important to try and follow up a wee bit. The minister talked about funding that went out to the Alberta Federation of Labour for their occupational health and safety program. I note that out of the million dollars that's contained in the proposed area that we're speaking of, the Alberta Federation of Labour, through its occupational health centre, applied for a great deal of money and received a grand total of under \$4,000. I heard that the minister responded, saying that the steering committee makes a recommendation to the minister and that the minister has not turned down any single program.

Well, Mr. Chairman, with due respect, you know, when you have a group, an umbrella organization that represents approximately 100,000 workers in Alberta in the unionized sector and you take that \$4,000 and try and distribute that amongst 100,000 unionized employees that may have access to an area, the occupational health centre, it's not very much money on a per capita basis. I would wonder why the minister wouldn't be making inquiries about how come more money isn't going into a particular area. We've heard the trade union movement on a number of occasions talk about health and safety issues at work. We've heard them bargain it in the negotiating and the collective bargaining process. They talk about health safety issues and the right to refuse unsafe working conditions, and here we have a minister that stands up and says, "Well, if the steering committee makes the recommendation, I accept the recommendation." Well, that's all well and good, but again what it comes back to, I believe, Mr. Chairman, is that the minister at some point ought to say, "Well, how come the money isn't going somewhere?" as well as saying, "I'm not turning down the recommendation." So I would ask the minister: how many inquiries has he made back to the steering committee about where the funds are directed, and why aren't some groups getting more money than what appears on the application before them, not just accepting their recommendation carte blanche?

Mr. Chairman, I also raised in question period the matter of the welding safety videos, and the minister of Occupational Health and Safety addressed that matter by referring a number to the members of the Assembly that are here this evening: how many people have looked at the videos or how many companies have received the video equipment and the brochures. Well, according to the completed education project we've expended \$127,000. This was completed some period of time ago. When I raised the matter in question period, I asked the minister about who had seen it, who got it, because there didn't seem to be an awful lot of information about who got it. One of the reasons that a lot of people didn't have the information is quite frankly because the cost of the package may have prevented some people from purchasing it. Now, perhaps the minister would care to tell us how many people of those groups that he cited paid for the package. How many packages are still available, waiting to go out, for anybody that can cough up the dollars for those five video tapes?

We also have a cost to the brochures that go out. I don't know if the minister is referring specifically to the study, the large brochure, or if he's referring to a brochure that's just going out advising that the larger study is available. I would hope that, you know, if we're going to have a library, a collection of information that to some degree is probably very valuable, quite frankly I would hope that we're going to have a catalogue and say that these materials are available free of cost to get the information out to those people that are employed in certain industries that have a high risk factor.

Now, I see that we've also expended a great deal of money, \$153,000, on another completed education project: health, safety, and accident prevention, phases 1 and 2 — \$153,000 expended, and what does this one do? This one, Mr. Chairman, is designed to improve management skills. Well, I know that's important, and I'm not going to critique it without having seen the package, but I want to know how many people have taken this one up. Is there a charge on this one? If we're going to talk about those people that are exposed to fumes, not having proper air ventilation systems when they're welding, I want to know how many people have taken up the health, safety, and accident prevention program, phases 1 and 2.

The minister also cited the card: "If you don't know . . . Ask! Before you start work." Well, it's an interesting proposal. I think that there are a number of people who, when they start employment, ought to ask questions. In some places of employment those good employers are going to be more than glad to respond to those questions that are posed by their new employees or by young people who are starting in the work force. But the problem, quite frankly, isn't with those good employers. The problem is with some of the bad employers that are out there, and they are there. Goodness knows, in every constituency office we've probably had our constituents who come to us with a Workers' Compensation claim, an individual who has been unfortunately injured due to a bad employer. I've got, I think, probably the worst case example out of my constituency, and I've cited that before.

But the problem is: how are we going to address those concerns? What guarantees do you have if you ask certain questions of the employer, if the employer says, "Well, if you're not interested in doing the job that you were hired to do, if you're not interested in doing that, you're down the road"? That happens, because there's no protection guaranteed to that employee that their job is going to be there after they ask the question. So we've got some serious problems.

I think this is a good program. We should make people more aware that they are able to ask questions, that they ought to ask questions, and that their employers ought to respond to those questions, but again there has to be some kind of guarantee that they're not going to be terminated for asking those questions. So when we get to number 8, "Whom do I ask if I have a health or safety question?" that the answer isn't dial-a-prayer, because, Mr. Chairman, quite frankly I think that in many instances if you do undertake to ask some very serious questions about safety on the worksite, information about the kind of industry that a person is entering, some employers – and they're few, but those are the problem ones – are not going to respond too well. In fact, they may very well just say, "If you're not interested in the job, it's okay; we'll find somebody who is." There have to be some guarantees to make sure that those people are looked after.

Finally, the minister of Occupational Health and Safety referred to his colleague the Minister of Career Development and Employment and talked about the sharing of information between the two departments. Well, I've seen that example as well. I, too, want to congratulate the Department of Career Development and Employment for putting some packages together. We've sent out counselors to counsel people who were injured and got into job rehabilitation programs, and I know that the very material those counselors are using, Mr. Chairman, is printed verbatim from Career Development and Employment. So there we are paying some counselors in the private sector a great deal of money to go out and photocopy material that's already provided free of charge by the Department of Career Development and Employment. And, boy, are we getting ripped off. We pay out of this minister's department X number of dollars to make sure that people are being supposedly rehabilitated, supposedly re-educated, supposedly able to re-enter the work force, and the product is coming directly from the Career Development and Employment department. So congratulations to you and to Mr. Minister of Career Development and Employment. I would hope that our monitoring programs are going to be a little more in effect so that we can catch some of those problems that we've got in the department of Occupational Health and Safety and perhaps save the taxpayers a few dollars there.

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

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to make three brief comments. I would first like to mention an issue that I think requires some general consideration by the minister and would possibly fall well within this program should the program directors feel it is an area of research that they might consider. It's a problem that I have encountered frequently in dealing with constituents who have encountered difficulty with their claims before the Workers' Compensation Board. It is a problem that relates to back injuries. I just want to mention this, to make this point quickly, but emphasize it for the minister. It may be something that requires further consideration.

Frequently, too frequently, workers' claims are turned down because the claim is made by the Workers' Compensation Board that the back problem that the worker feels stems from an injury some years before is in fact related to this generic condition called degenerative disk disease. It seems to me that all too frequently the board, the department is inclined to assume that

degenerative disk disease explains away the problem, without acknowledging that logic would dictate at least some relationship between today's current back problem in the worker and an injury that was severe – and many of them are – several or many years before. I guess what I'm really addressing is a policy issue, and it seems to me that from time to time the policy of the board is to reduce the claims . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please, hon. member. We're not really dealing with anything related to the Workers' Compensation Board tonight in this vote. So I'd ask the member to stay away from that subject and on the subject of the vote before the committee.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, you know that I have never let you down before and that eventually I get to my point, and the point will be relevant to this debate.

I simply want to say that this is a continuing problem, a problem that may well require the kind of research that could be done by this occupational health and safety heritage grant program group. Either the research should be enhanced into the reduction of back injuries – of course, that's much more easily said than done – or the research and therefore ultimately the education of the board could be enhanced into how it is that somebody can hurt themselves seriously in their back 35 years ago, for example, today have serious problems that other people of their age don't have, yet be told by the board that their claim is turned down because whatever their problem is is related to the normal course of degenerative disk disease. I know many people who are old who don't have serious back problems and didn't have an injury 35 years ago and many people who come to my constituency office who are the same age who did have a serious injury 35 years ago and have very serious back problems. That's an area that I would like to emphasize for the minister's consideration and for further research under this program.

The second point that I'd like to make is to say that I'm very impressed by what this program accomplishes, by what it's designed to do, and I think it is exactly the kind of program that is required in the area of preventative measures, which in the long run, of course, are an investment in reduced expenditure in the future. While I haven't had a great deal of personal experience with much of the research program, I would like to congratulate the occupational health and safety research and education program on their Heroes program. I had the pleasure of seeing that presentation at the Jasper Place composite high school, which was the first school, I believe, to which it was presented. It is a high school in my riding. That program is well worth the investment. It is an excellent program, and the funding, I would argue, could not have been spent in a more productive and successful way. So congratulations to the occupational health and safety heritage grant program, its staff members, and to the minister for having the foresight to fund this program in a way that would see that research done.

We are concerned, because of our faith in this program, to see that funds for research grants have been cut by 13.5 percent and that, in fact, the overall expenditure for this vote has been cut by about almost 12 percent. Our feeling is that workers' safety is of course of extreme importance, that the productivity losses, the losses in human terms, the potential gains from investing now in this kind of research and preventing accidents in the future as a result of this kind of research make the investment today well worth while and do not justify cuts of this nature. Of all the things that the heritage trust fund undertakes, it seems to

me and it seems to my caucus that this particular vote is of overwhelming importance. We would like to see the funding sustained, and we would like to also be assured that this will not be an ongoing problem, that the threats or the jeopardy that it's been in during the last several years can be overcome, and that the minister can make a commitment to long-term funding, funding at levels at least equivalent to last year, or that today, at the very least, he would justify this cut in some kind of rigorous and legitimate way.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of areas where I wanted to raise some questions and suggestions for the minister. I was looking at page 8, the various projects undertaken by the department under the occupational health and safety heritage grant program. I see one of them is the Alberta farm equipment manufacturers safety program, and it prompted me to mention a couple of problems that I have personal information about.

A brother-in-law of mine a number of years ago, something like 15 years ago, lost both his arms in a baler accident, and also another neighbour, not too far from that same time, lost his life, actually, in a power takeoff on a combine. It raises the question that if one were more careful in manufacturing some of this equipment – it's fairly clear that neither of those accidents would have been so severe had there been some kind of slip clutch arrangement, which could have easily been built into the machinery but was not. The companies have been sued a number of times since by different people that have had accidents of a similar nature. They may be now getting around to doing something about that. But it is an area that makes me think that the minister and the people working with him, perhaps this group that did this program, should be strong advocates on behalf of farmers for farm safety. It's an area that's been neglected for too many years. So I think the idea of spending some money on this is a good one, and I think that the minister and his department should take on the role of being advocates for that kind of progressive change that can go with that.

Also, another problem that cropped up in the case of my brother-in-law: because he happened to be driving the neighbour's combine instead of his own, the insurance company didn't want to come through with any money. In fact, they had to be taken to court, and there was an incredible amount of difficulty in getting any responsibility on the part of the manufacturer, which obviously had not built the machine the way it should have been built or the accident would not have been as severe as it was. The brother-in-law's was a baler accident, sorry, not a combine accident. In any case, that's an area I wanted the minister to be aware of. I think there's a lot of work to be done in that area yet, and I expect the minister to be a strong advocate in that area.

The other area that I wanted to talk just a little bit about is safety in the oil patch. It is an area that has been neglected for too long in this province. As I've pointed out in this House before, some of the stop/start kind of programs that the government has had have actually even increased the number of accidents by having oil companies rush to get their rigs set up before a deadline occurs, so we ended up having a number of people killed that probably didn't need to be had the programs been longer term and not had such short durations and specific

deadlines. So the government policies in other departments, of course, should then be a concern to this minister, who is supposed to be guarding the health and safety of our workers.

But I wanted to also suggest to him that I picked up an idea from a man by the name of Don Taylor a few years back that had some merit and has been to some extent recognized and sort of almost half taken over by a group of oilmen who were set up to investigate safety in the oil patch by the former minister of occupational health and safety of this government. His idea was that while it's important to record what happens in accidents, it might also be instructive and useful and maybe even more worth while to record in great detail near accidents. He called it a near-miss program. It could work in the agricultural area or any other area for that matter, I would think.

His idea was this: if workers and supervisors on oil rigs, for example, or on seismic crews or whatever – anybody in the oil patch is what he was particularly interested in – would record in some detail every near accident, the kind of equipment involved and the kind of procedures involved, since there was no accident, there would be no liability in terms of anybody protecting their interests in terms of worrying about being sued. There would also be no problem about confidentiality of information as there is in an accident where some person or the members of a family may not wish to have some of the information made public. I know this government certainly is very secretive about giving out information about anybody that is killed; whether it be in the oil patch or wherever. It's very hard to get much in the way of details as to the circumstances and the kinds of things that went on in a fatal accident, for example. That is because certain people have pecuniary interest in whether somebody's going to be sued over it or whether the Workers' Compensation Board is going to do it, because families are sensitive about confidentiality of information. But those problems would not be in the way for near-miss accidents, besides which there would be about 10 times as many near-misses as there are real accidents. So you could gather a large body of information that would be very instructive about how some machinery operates and how some safety procedures work or don't work or should be changed.

He just wanted to set up a central information gathering system for Alberta for the oil patch. He felt we were one of the few places in the world where there was enough concentration of oil equipment and oil activity where communications were good enough that that information could be collected together and put into a magazine which would be put out monthly and then fed back to the industry and to the workers and managers in the field. It seemed to me a very excellent idea. As I said, it has been somewhat picked up by this committee set up by the oil industry and sanctioned by the former minister of occupational health and safety, but I don't know that it's ever got off the ground. In fact, if the minister knows of the program or knows of their suggestions, he might want to report to us whether any improvements have been made in the area or any work has been done in that area to follow up their suggestions, which were somewhat different than the main but also included to some extent the idea of this Don Taylor.

I guess I would also just say at this stage that Don Taylor is still around, as far as I know. I haven't talked to him for quite a while. If the minister were interested in following this idea up, certainly I'd be prepared to facilitate getting him in touch and looking at that proposal in much more detail than I've been able to outline it now.

So with those comments, Mr. Chairman, I will stop.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we have a long way to go before worksites are truly safe in this province. That's fairly clear to a lot of workers, at least in this province, because they continue to get injured at unacceptable rates. Recently a constituent of mine that I was talking to said that he had formerly worked on an oil rig in this province. His comment was that whenever he sees a young person without any arms or legs or fingers or whatever, nine times out of 10 that person probably has worked on an oil rig in this province. I think that's pretty shameful. I know for myself and my colleagues, and I'm sure for most of the members in this Assembly, the majority of the cases that come into their constituency offices would be injured workers who are trying to obtain fair compensation for their injuries. Their lives have been virtually destroyed in that they don't have the employment that they used to have. They are trying to discover what kinds of retraining they can go into, but oftentimes because of their age or whatever they're not able to do that.

Recently, Mr. Chairman, we received a yellow card in this Assembly, put out by Alberta Occupational Health and Safety, entitled "If you don't know . . . Ask! Before you start work." It says: "10 questions to ask your employer." I remember thinking when I was reading this that all the employer has to say is "no, no, no" to these questions. It's one thing to ask them; it's another thing to get a guarantee of some kind of safety. Some of the questions that are asked on here are: "Will I receive job safety training?" Any employee could ask that question and receive a no as an answer. And then what? "Will I be trained in emergency procedures [like] fire, chemical spill?" Again, the employer could simply say no. "Whom do I ask if I have a health or safety question?" Again, the employer isn't obligated to answer these questions. Even though I feel that the questions are good, important questions to ask, I would ask this minister: what assurances do we have that the employer is obligated to provide safety gear, for example, which is talked about in one of the questions, or these training programs? We need assurances that the employer is made to provide these kinds of job safety programs for their employees. Until we do that, until we have a clear obligation on the part of the employer, we will continue to have serious injuries in this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. minister, to wrap up.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to go over these questions as quickly as I can, starting with Edmonton-Calder. If the answers to the 10 questions are no for every one, then you shouldn't accept the job.

MRS. GAGNON: He shouldn't be allowed to be in business.

MR. TRYNCHY: No. If you go looking for a job and you get no to those questions, well, don't accept the job. I don't know how else you're going to do it.

But, Mr. Chairman, more important than that is: when was the last time the Member for Edmonton-Calder talked to some of her employers in her constituency? Why don't we do that? Why don't we take some time and talk to our employers, go out

there and say: "Look, we've got to have safety. Are you doing it?" I've talked to a lot of my employers in my constituency, because I go to see them and see what they're doing. We should be doing that, all of us. I'm not saying you've got to pick on anybody, but go and try and find out what they're doing. So let's spend some time there.

The Member for Edmonton-Kingsway talks about PTOs on machinery. Well, I've been in the business for 28 years, and if you leave your guards on the PTO, you do not have any trouble. The most important thing is: there are PTO guards, and everybody that makes machinery, protects those PTO shafts and has for years. But some people neglect the guards or take them off, and that's where we have the troubles. If you follow the signs on the machinery that say, "Do not touch this part until the machine is shut off" – if we do that, we don't have any difficulties. But if the hon. member can tell me what machine this was or when it happened and what it was all about, I'd sure be interested because, as I've said, in the 28 years that I've sold farm machinery, I know what's been there. Maybe it was before my time. But the guards are there, and there are signs on every machine going back that many years. You're well protected. But I did it myself, where we'd neglect – if the guard cracks or breaks, you throw it away and say, "Well, look, I won't touch it," and then somebody gets hurt.

The oil rigs. Yes, there's been some incidents in the oil patch, but there's been a great improvement in the last year, just a super, super improvement. Just to advise the member, UPIT-FOS receives funding through the workers' compensation safety association program, and they're there. Alberta farm equipment manufacturers have received some \$80,000, on page 8. That's important that we do that.

The last question he asked was about the near-miss program by Don Taylor. Yes, as a matter of fact, I'm still looking for Mr. Taylor to come forward with his submission. He made an application in September of '85, when he requested a certain amount of dollars. But he was asked to change the focus of his application because he wanted to start a business, and not go to safety. Since that date he hasn't come back with the redoing of his . . . So if you talk to Mr. Taylor, tell him to come and see me, and we'll see if we can get him on the right track.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark – and I won't comment on it – says the compensation isn't fair. Well, I beg to differ with him. If he has some constituents that have some concerns, they should get them to my office, as I've asked everybody else. Of course, the proposals that go forward from this grant have to be scrutinized by the steering committee, and that steering committee is made up of pretty good people, fine Albertans representing labour and industry and the public. I don't know how we could change that. I wouldn't want to change it, because then I'm messing around with what the committee does. I would like to see the committee do a real good review of these applications and bring them back to myself for advancement.

He talks about research on back problems. Maybe he didn't look at his document, but on pages 32, 33, and 38 – there's been a number of initiatives in regards to back research. Yes, we could do more on back research. It's one of the toughest things to diagnose. I've talked to doctors about this. How do you diagnose a back injury? You just can't do that. The doctors have a lot of difficulty because nobody has come up with an idea of how you can really diagnose that.

The Member for Edmonton-Belmont talked about the Alberta Federation of Labour. They have applied for more dollars yet have not received them. Well, I'm not aware of that. If this happened before my time, I can't comment, but since I've been there, they've had no programs that were accepted by the steering committee rejected by myself. So if they can't qualify, hopefully he would talk to the Alberta Federation of Labour and say, "Look, put something in there that would qualify," because the steering committee makes the recommendations to the managing director, to myself, which I take forward. I can't change that, and I wouldn't want to change that, because I think that's the fairest way: to have it come from people that have the knowledge of what to approve and what not to.

The welders' concerns. Certainly there's just been a number of people that received the information. Who got it? Well, it's free from Occupational Health and Safety. They can get it free: the video and the documents. This is a document that's available, 60 or 70 pages of it. It's free to them. All they have to do is ask for it. We've had darned poor response, yet all those people, and then some that I didn't mention, know that's there. They know it's there, but they haven't taken advantage of it. I'm saying to all members: if there's somebody out there that you're talking to and you're not sure about, say: "Look, why don't you talk to Occupational Health and Safety? They have a library, and they have a documented catalogue that goes out in our monthly papers." It's there; all those documents are available to everybody in Alberta at no cost. We're providing that.

You know, with all due respect, the member talks about bad employers. Sure there might be some, but let's not put them all in the same barrel. There's so darned many good employers out there that are doing it. I would encourage the Member for Edmonton-Belmont to talk to some of his employers and get a better feel for what's going on out there. Because you have to remember, members of this Assembly, that without an employer there are no employees. So think about that. Nobody works unless there's an employer.

AN HON. MEMBER: Not if it's a socialist government.

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, unless you know of a socialistic way that you can make jobs without having an employer. I haven't found one.

Mr. Chairman, the steering committee looks at high-quality education and research programs that have an immediate impact on the workplace. That's been their criterion for years, and they've done a super job because of what we have in this status report. I would encourage all members to talk to their employers, and I will send over to fill the requests of a couple of members across the way in regards to these questions. I'll do that, and if any other members wish to have some, please advise me, and I'll make sure you get them.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

MR. GIBEAULT: Yes. Mr. Chairman, we can't let this debate go by without making some further comments on these questions the minister suggests employees ask their employers. I would like to suggest that if we have a minister that's really concerned about occupational health and safety and likes to refer to himself

as a friend of the injured, we'd have these as 10 questions that employers have to be asked before they get a business licence. There's a question that is asked: we don't put the onus on individuals, especially in the unorganized sector, who face a very unequal sort of power relationship, asking for all these rights when very often if you ask these kinds of questions when you apply for a job, before you start working, the employer will just show you the door and terminate the interview. If you're on the job and then ask these questions, people – and I know of many cases – have been threatened with termination, with being fired. So let's have a minister here and a government that advocates a little bit, stands up a little bit on behalf on workers. I mean, that's what this minister is being paid for here. I don't think he's here to represent employers, particularly. It's to protect the health and safety of workers. Let's have him and his government require that employers have to answer these questions before they get a business licence.

For example, question 6: "Where are fire extinguishers, first aid kits and other emergency equipment located?" Did you know, Mr. Chairman, that some employers in this province don't even have those items on their premises? In fact, it is a disgrace that this minister's Workers' Compensation Board even had a placement recently of an injured worker at Frontier Manufacturing. They had no phone, no fire extinguisher, and no first aid kit on the premises. What if there had been an accident or an emergency? How can it be that that is allowed in this province? Particularly, how bad can it be that the Workers' Compensation Board is even referring injured workers to placements at employers like that? It's a damned disgrace. Mr. Chairman, that has got to be changed.

Now, I also just want to bring to the attention of the minister that we are spending a lot of money on Occupational Health and Safety Research and Education. Looking through the list of projects, I didn't see one about the occupational health problems of smoke-filled workplaces, but there's lots of research available to point that out and indicate the kinds of problems that creates for workers in the workplace. Yet can the minister tell us why, when we're spending all this money on research,* we don't follow through – this minister doesn't and his government – with legislation that says workers in this province are entitled to work in a smoke-free workplace? Now, I challenge the minister. Why don't we show a little bit of leadership here? We've got legislation like that in many jurisdictions in North America but not Alberta. We are spending a lot of money on research on various occupational hazards. That's one that's been known for a long time, yet we haven't seen any action on that. In fact, just in this complex, Mr. Chairman, just walking into the annex building or down the causeways, a lot of the commissionaires are smoking away, filling the air with carcinogens and so on. I feel like I'm being gassed when I just walk between the buildings here. I would like to put that to the minister. There's got to be some action forthcoming on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are two points that I wanted to correct. One was that the minister in his response to me – and I do appreciate the response that the minister made – I think was trying to pass off that I was implying that all employers are bad. I'm not. In my remarks I said that there was a very small minority of employers that, were these questions to be put that the minister proposes be put to

those employers, those very few, that very small minority, would advise that the potential employee just leave the employer's premises. I didn't mean to imply that all employers are like that. If the minister took it that way, that's incorrect, and I just wanted to clear that up.

The other matter that I do want to raise again goes back to the communication between the two departments, Occupational Health and Safety and Career Development and Employment. While it's important, I think, to look at training programs and the very beneficial work that's done between some departments, I would encourage the two ministers to sit together or have their deputy ministers or whoever might be responsible for industrial training, especially in the area of proficiency trades certification process, in that on the PACs and the LACs there is no representation made from any of the large industrial unions that primarily involve the use of welding equipment. My understanding is that there isn't any representation from the ironworkers, the steelworkers, the boilermakers, or the plumbers or pipe fitters. Those are the trades that are primarily involved in the welding process, and yet in those four areas there is no representation from the unionized industry on the PACs and the LACs. Perhaps if we're going to try and filter down that information through Occupational Health and Safety, maybe one of the areas to start looking at is the use of some of the very valued information and experience that journeymen folk, tradespeople, would be able to offer the program on those committees. So I would just encourage the two departments to establish some form of protocol that would facilitate the transference of that information. If we're going to have safety at the worksite, we've got to start a step or two earlier, and that goes to Career Development and Employment, hopefully at the initiative of either minister.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the vote?

The hon. Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I felt the urge to get involved in discussion of vote 1, Occupational Health and Safety Research and Education, after hearing some of the minister's comments. Certainly we on this side are anxious to see money spent on worthwhile and benevolent projects such as this, but in considering the number of dollars to be spent, I think we have to think about in whose hands we're putting the money as well. I'm really concerned that the minister get a handle on what his department is supposed to be doing and what his department's responsibilities are.

Now, I found his little description of his understanding of the social contract to be quite enlightening: about how if there are no employers, then there are no employees, and that's what makes the world go round. But I think he needs to understand that safety in the workplace is a complex thing and involves responsibility on many sides. He quite properly referred to experiences on a farm. If you want to experience safe working conditions on a farm, it's likely almost entirely up to you as a farmer to create those circumstances. I mean, having been a farmer myself, I recognize that if I decide to take the power take-off shield off the PTO to make it easier to service, then I entertain some risks. It's irresponsible on my part because I have a responsibility to my family, that needs my love and support, and to my banker, who depends on me to make payments on all those loans I have, and my neighbours, et cetera, but basically it's my risk and my responsibility. However, when I expand my operation to the point – and it did in my case

– where I have to hire someone to work for me, then I take on additional responsibilities, and it's not the responsibility of the person working for me to make sure that the workplace I provide for them is safe. It's up to me to make sure that's the case, Mr. Chairman.

I find these questions, this little questionnaire that the minister put out, to be almost naive in their perspectives. Certainly it's important for employees to have their eyes open when they go into a workplace, but the government, the minister responsible for Occupational Health and Safety, has a responsibility to the people of the province to make sure that we don't have employers that are going out and jeopardizing the health and safety of their workers, that aren't causing a potential burden to the public at large by putting people in situations where they'll be injured and where we'll have to care for them.

The minister has to recognize that there are employers who are willing to cut corners. Now, if I want to cut corners myself working on the farm to save time or save money, that's my business and my own foolishness that I have to live with, but if I've got an employee and I want to avoid the cost of having to buy a respirator when I'm getting him to spray herbicide on the field because I figure, "Well, he probably won't be working for me long enough; maybe he'll get sick when he's on his own time," – that sort of thing – that's irresponsible for me as an employer to do that. I submit that the people who work for the department of Occupational Health and Safety and indeed the minister have a responsibility to come down hard on employers that are willing to cut corners, come down hard on employers that are willing to view abuses of safety and situations where they jeopardize the lives of their workers as a mere expense. You know, perhaps if I get fined a little bit for this infraction, I just view that as a cost of doing business, and compared to the cost of putting in a reasonable job safety training program in terms of putting in the kind of new equipment that I need to make sure the workplace is up to date, it's a small investment in the future profitability of the company.

Let's not kid ourselves: people are in business to make a dollar. Now, the vast majority of people in business – and I meet many of them and have been in that situation myself – are doing it in the most responsible way possible, trying to make sure that they earn a profit in a legitimate, upstanding sort of way without imperiling the health and safety of anybody or selling anybody anything fraudulent. But the minister, if he wants to properly administer the money that we may allocate to his department tonight for Occupational Health and Safety Research and Education, Mr. Chairman, has to understand that not all employers are benevolent.

Let's be realistic. When you go into the work force the first few times you're looking for a job, you're eager, you're nervous, you're not really sure what's going to happen to you when you go out there. You go out and apply for a job. Maybe you wait in line. You don't get to talk to the boss. Somebody underneath the boss hires you. You're put in a position where you feel that if you even ask what you're going to be paid for doing the job, you're likely to be shown the door before you get in. You know, to suggest that an employee starting out in the work force has as his or her responsibility grilling the prospective employer to make sure that all of the things that they're supposed to have in place by law are in place is more than a little bit naive. I suggest it's irresponsible.

I should show the minister some of the responses to these questions that are written on this card. Because I guarantee you . . . I've worked on pipelines, I've worked on construction,

I've worked in all sorts of situations, and the kind of responses that someone pencilled in here after these questions are the answers that you're going to get from several employers. So I just want the minister to start to accept some of the responsibility that he has and that this government has. Not to be blaming workers for unsafe conditions in worksites; not to be saying to the people who work in a battery recovery plant in Medicine Hat, after the plant operator has been warned 16 times by department officials, that it's up to you to make sure that you work in a safe place and up to you to take showers even though there are none: you know, the responsibility is yours. The responsibility in that instance belongs to the government to make sure . . .

DR. WEST: No rubber duckies in the shower; you've got to use soap.

MR. FOX: The Minister of Recreation and Parks wants to get involved in this debate. I remember the position he took when people died out at a recreation park . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Get back to the point.

MR. FOX: This deals directly with Occupational Health and Safety. . . . when people died on the . . . What do you call that thing out there?

AN HON. MEMBER: The Mindbender.

MR. FOX: . . . Mindbender roller coaster, suggesting that the responsibility lies with the people who get on there. Well, certainly they undertake some risk when they get on that ride. It's a dangerous ride, and I wouldn't ride on it. But if the department has inspectors, the department has a responsibility for making sure that things that operate are safe. Then the department better live up to that responsibility. I remember the headline. You do too, Member for Vermilion-Viking.

And I think the minister has got to understand that it's not up to the government to go and make sure that everybody every day is doing things that are good for them. But when people go into a workplace that's monitored by the department, when the department is advocating occupational health and safety, when the department is responsible for what happens to workers after they're injured, then I suggest it's their responsibility not just to be nice to employers and encourage them to comply. When there are instances of violation, when reports come in daily from the Weldwood expansion plant at Hinton, the responsibility is there for the minister and his department to come down hard on these employers and make sure that they're not tempted to violate the laws that we have in this province, Mr. Chairman. I hope the minister wakes up to his responsibilities.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are we ready for the vote?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

Agreed to:

Total Vote 1 – Occupational Health and Safety Research and Education	\$1,218,000
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MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, I move that the vote be reported.

[Motion carried]

Energy

1 – Renewable Energy Research

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Energy.

MR. ORMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the estimates before us today I have responsibility for the southwest Alberta renewable energy initiative. By way of background, this initiative was first suggested by the Premier in the spring of 1986 in the Pincher Creek-Crowsnest area. It was his desire to pursue and establish solar and wind initiatives in southwestern Alberta. Certainly today, Mr. Chairman, the rationale is as sound as it was then, and that was to look at renewable energy initiatives, given the very public concern about the environment that is before us today. So a renewable energy industry was consulted, and there was a process put in place to look at what the potential would be for renewable energy projects that would provide clean and viable alternative energy sources and, at the same time, provide a tremendous opportunity to diversify and develop alternative energy initiatives in a part of the province that at that time, and to a lesser extent today, was badly in need of some economic stimulus.

My predecessor, Dr. Webber, the Minister of Energy, had embarked on an initiative that included a symposium, and he established, in consultation with the Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, an advisory committee in February of 1989. This advisory committee looked at the alternatives, looked at the location, consulted with a variety of people conversant with renewable energy initiatives, and came up with a consensus, and that was, firstly, that research should be based on a practical application of technology, and secondly, that it should be cost shared with the private sector. They were very straightforward in their comments after their review, and that was that there should not be grants; there should not be outright, 100 percent grants for the furtherance of renewable energy initiatives.

The Pincher Creek area was identified as an ideal place to start this pilot project. The area is a pilot project, but the initiatives that are involved in this, of course, include a number of areas: wind, solar, and other renewable energy initiatives. Pincher Creek was a highly favourable area in that the wind velocities in the area are some of the highest in the country. We know that the Palm Springs area of California has a number of wind turbines, and the velocities there are, in some cases, a third less than they are in the Pincher Creek area. So obviously if they're on the verge of being viable in that part of California, certainly with the wind velocities in the Crowsnest it becomes all that more attractive. We all know about the sunlight in Alberta, the fact that we are amongst the highest in Canada for sunlight. At the same time, as I've indicated, it was identified as an important area to establish an economic initiative.

Out of the recommendations from the advisory committee there was a policy that was developed by government. These recommendations came to me shortly after I became minister, and our government made a long-term commitment to an initiative to support renewable energy technology demonstration projects in southwest Alberta for a three-year period at a cost of \$1 million per annum. Therein lies the rationale for the \$1 million in this vote we're talking about today, Mr. Chairman.

The second portion of the commitment was that we would establish a facility for an \$8 million loan guarantee in the second and third year for a wind farm project. In addition, the govern-

ment agreed in principle to establish a long-term, 10-year program commitment to this type of a program. Mr. Chairman, other specific recommendations were to create an office of renewable energy technology. This office would be responsible for program implementation, monitoring and control, and would be responsible for the development of a detailed long-term program. I should say that today we announced in Edmonton the board of directors, and as you'll recall, I introduced the chairman of that board, Dr. John Rottger, from the Pincher Creek area. He is a medical practitioner in that area who has a particular interest in renewable energy technology. Dr. Rottger was also the chairman of the advisory committee that reported to my predecessor. The second part of our commitment was that we would provide support for a renewable energy technology that is not only environmentally sound but makes good economic sense and provides the potential for establishing new industry and new jobs.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

Mr. Chairman, I was asked today by the media: why would a province that is so dependent on the production and sale of conventional energy resources embark on competition in the way of renewable energy resources? It is my feeling and our government's feeling that yes, there could appear to be a conflict of interest, I guess, but at the same time, it is also our judgment that we – when I say "we" I'm talking about industries and governments that are involved in renewable energy technologies – are on the verge of breaking through and making viable the wind turbine process and solar energy process to the point where I don't think it's going to take much more other than a little bit of a kickstart by government to provide the environment for new technologies to break through so that they become viable and become competitive. If that viability and that new technology is discovered and established here in the province of Alberta, then that's great, and we'd be glad to foster that technology in our province.

The second part of our commitment, Mr. Chairman, is to create a program information education centre, and we'll be doing that in the Pincher Creek area. As Dr. Rottger said today in the media conference, there are a lot of things that can be done on the renewable energy side that people just aren't aware of, and he talked about on the farm and how we can take advantage of wind turbines, and I know that has been done over a number of years. I can remember going to my grandfather's farm out by Cayley, Alberta, and he had a windmill that ran his water pump. There are other areas, and the solar energy area, that can be used, that can be quite practical and quite efficient. So it's a matter of education, and part of our commitment will be to provide a centre in the area that will be a point for information on renewable energy technology and things we can do on our own in our own homes or on the farm to foster the opportunity that is there with renewable energy.

The third point we are committed to, Mr. Chairman, is support for a 10 megawatt wind farm project in southern Alberta. This would be a 50-50 proposition between the government and the industry, and funding would be provided – the loan guarantee and a portion of the \$1 million per year over the three years – to further the technology of a wind farm project.

The fourth initiative would be support for the Lethbridge wind turbine test site involving a precommercial technological

demonstration site. That would be funded by the government, Mr. Chairman, over a period of five years.

Those are basically my opening comments. I think it gives you a flavour of the things we'd like to accomplish. I think the use of the heritage fund is a very appropriate use in that a lot of the dollars in the heritage fund were diverted there from resource revenue. If we can use those resource revenues from the conventional side, from the nonrenewable side, that will facilitate the establishment of a renewable energy technology in the province of Alberta, then we would have the best of both worlds. The more I think about this project and think about the opportunities, the more excited I get about it, Mr. Chairman. So I will be paying very close attention to this initiative over the coming years.

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

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I listened with interest to the comments of the Minister of Energy and agree with almost all the comments he made. Certainly the idea of getting involved in renewable energy resource development is very important.

He says this idea came from the Premier back in 1986 in Pincher Creek, and it's true that the Premier did suggest that. In fact, in 1986 they actually put a million dollars in and started the program. I've got to say that we on this side of the House were very disappointed when it was canceled for the next two or three years and then picked up again last year with half a million dollars and finally this year with a million dollars again. Had that program not been stalled for those couple of years in between, it perhaps by now would have been a bigger and better program. Certainly it was moving in the right direction.

But if we're looking at history for a moment, I'd like to go a little further back in history. The minister did mention something about conflict of interest and the press asking him about that. Because we have oil and gas in this province, perhaps by developing solar and wind energies we are shifting the population faster out of those very lucrative industries – or at least they have been for Alberta. The idea of wind and solar energy research was also raised back in the Lougheed years, and he said no for exactly that reason. He said, "Conflict of interest; we've got oil and gas." But I think concerns about the environment have come to the fore in such a serious manner that everybody now realizes we should be moving in that direction. Whether we sit on top of oil sands that have a lot of oil or gas fields that have a lot of gas in the long term and never develop them, we do know that they contribute significantly to the greenhouse effect and the environmental problems of the global warming, so obviously we've got to move in this direction. There's certainly no reason that we in Alberta shouldn't be taking a lead just because we have gas and oil, so I'm glad to hear that. And coal, actually: coal, of course, is the worst in terms of pollution. So if we can develop some wind and solar and perhaps some geothermal energy sources to be viable and cut down the amount of gas and oil and coal we need to burn, so much the better.

The various projects that the minister mentioned in some detail are important and of interest, and one will be watching them. I was glad to see that in most cases there was a multiyear commitment. I think that's really fundamental. If you do something in an ad hoc manner – might I suggest like you did in 1986, where you put in money for a year and then dropped it

and then had to sort of start over again three years later – it's not a very efficient or effective way to develop these energies. So I think that's an important move that the minister's making there by putting in a three- and five- and I even heard a 10-year commitment on one of those programs.

Since the minister did get into it a bit – he talked of the traditional energy sources that we have in Alberta: the gas and oil, and I suppose one could add coal to some extent. The technologies around those three industries have been, I think, very sloppy in terms of their environmental concerns. I worry that it's going to take our society and our world several decades to really shift from a lot of coal and oil and natural gas energies over to solar and wind energies on any kind of significant basis. In fact, there's really a particular problem in Canada in that we have the atomic energy commission of Canada saying that nuclear energy is the way to go because it's cleaner, although I don't think they've learned how to dispose of it in any way that's safe in our view, or at least certainly not in my view. But I think the minister should know that our society particularly, but probably most of the western nations, will for the next several decades be using a lot of coal and oil and gas. I would hope that his department would work with the Department of Energy – and AOSTRA, I guess, would be a more appropriate mechanism than this particular program.

But since this program is slated at making clean energies, because of environmental concerns, then I think that the minister mustn't neglect the other side of this too. We could probably improve the environmental concerns in the oil and gas fields incredibly over the next few years. I know that at the final end, where you burn it in the car, except to make smaller cars and cleaner burning cars, there isn't going to be much change there unless we start using hydrogen or some other forms of fuel. But while we are using gas and oil and coal, we must at least try to make them as environmentally sound as possible. Otherwise, a million dollars, which is really a very small amount of money to try to develop clean, renewable energies like wind and solar energy, is just a drop in the bucket.

So I hope the minister will keep that in mind and not just say, "Well, we're doing our bit for the environment by developing wind and solar energies because they're clean," and sort of say, "Aren't we really altruistic and great citizens of the world because we're doing this?" when in fact there are several decades left of using a great deal of the oil and gas and coal. Those industries are very polluting and probably much more polluting than they need to be, just in terms of how we develop them when we do the OSLO project kinds of things, the Syncrude projects. The tailings from the Syncrude project: as you know, there's a particular proposal put forward by a company to extract some of the oil in the tailings and reduce the amount of tailing ponds we have to hold in that project. It may have implications for the OSLO project as well. Now, I don't know much about the technology and whether or not it's a clean technology itself, but using that waste product would certainly be a help, even in itself.

So with those comments, Mr. Chairman, I will yield the floor to the next speaker.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also listened very closely to the minister in regards to renewable energy resources. Indeed, I have ventured for many years into one of the best

renewable resources we have in this province, and that's the geothermal that's located throughout Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, some years ago the government funded a project for Dr. Lamb and Dr. Jones from the U of A to explore geothermal: its uses and its potential in Alberta. It was a very positive document, but the government failed to follow through on any further funding for geothermal. However, in 1986, I believe it was, when I was a councillor in the town of Edson, I met with the then federal minister of energy in Ottawa, Mr. Jean Chrétien – our next Prime Minister – who funded a project in our area for some \$125,000. Mr. Chairman, that study indeed proved up that the resources are there. They're environmentally safe, they're renewable, but I didn't hear the minister mention anything about geothermal in his renewable energy research projects. The research has basically been done. It's a matter of putting some kickstart money out of the heritage trust fund into geothermal and having quick development of that very fine resource that sits there unused. I know that perhaps the minister might have some problems in that he has to look after gas, oil, coal, and other energies. But in the riding of West Yellowhead a proposed development at the Silver Summit area which would provide year-round facilities in golfing in the summer months, skiing and relaxing in the hot tub in both summer and winter – just a little kickstart money would help to get that project off the ground, and I would hope the minister would be open to suggestions on that particular project.

Geothermal energy is used around the world. Of course, in France and Japan, Mr. Chairman, the geothermal resources are used as medication for employees. Rather than going on long-term compensation, some of the employers send their employees on a week's holiday to a bathtub, and they seem to come back in good shape. I think they use it in many other countries for the same reasons, but in different sites I looked at in the U.S., they use it for such things as flushing trees out of sewer lines when they grow in the sewers. They put the hot geothermal in that actually burns off the tree and seals it.

In recreation, of course, Mr. Chairman, I have Miette Hot Springs in my riding that was funded under federal money of some \$18 million. That particular water does not go back into the ground. It is flushed out into a creek that runs eventually into the Athabasca River. But in a closed system, in a loop system in geothermal you can bring the water up, put it through a heat exchanger, use surface water in your heat exchanger, and run that through your facilities, whether for heating a building or for heating a hot tub for recreation. You could also use it for such things as aquaculture, greenhouses, and just many other things. I want to stress that it's one of the best sources of renewable energy that we have available to us in Alberta and especially in west-central Alberta. I would hope that the minister would seriously consider spending a fair share of this renewable energy program in the renewable and environmentally safe geothermal. People of Alberta and people of the world I'm sure would visit Alberta if they knew that we were using such a clean and such a fine resource of energy not only to promote tourism but for the health of people who like to visit these particular places.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to hear the minister's response, and would surely support any further funding that he might find to put into geothermal as a resource we should be tapping and a resource we must have.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I listened with great interest to the minister's presentation on this particular renewable resource research, and I heard him refer quite frequently to wind and wind and more wind. I noticed with some great significance that he didn't even bring up the potential of the geothermal, which the hon. Member for West Yellowhead has just alluded to.

I would like to ask the minister if this particular initiative is going to continue to be restricted to the southwest corner of the province. I notice that the objective states quite clearly that part of the reason for placing it there was to create some sort of economic opportunity in the area. Perhaps the minister would be so kind as to be quite specific as to what kind of economic opportunity has, in fact, happened and what may come about.

I did appreciate hearing that there is going to be a practical application of the technology and research. I would like at this point to suggest to the minister that since this particular thrust is happening in southern Alberta, and since we've spent heaven knows how many millions of dollars playing with water in southern Alberta, and since some of the rationale for spending all the money on the irrigation in southern Alberta is because there's a high cost of pumping it, which I assume is largely electrical, perhaps some of the research should be directed into somehow or other looking at the wind as a manner of pumping water for the irrigation. I think that might be an interesting and also very economic approach to irrigation.

Also, I would like to know – this says wind and solar and other, and like I alluded to, first of all, we haven't heard too much on the other. We haven't heard very much on specifically what has been done in solar energy research in Alberta, although we're all aware that there have been some rather interesting strides made in the field of solar heating and solar cooling of homes. But, unfortunately, it appears that once the world shortage of fossil fuels was over, the research into that field declined, and I would wonder if the minister is going to jump-start a little bit into that area. That would be rather an interesting one, because although Pincher Creek and southwestern Alberta may have a corner on all the wind that blows in this province, I think the sunshine is more equitably distributed, and the solar research could be done elsewhere. Perhaps we could move this around the province a little bit.

I see that the recommendations of the advisory council are for long-term support. Does that really translate into three years, or is this long-term support going to go beyond the three years as stated now? The other aspect of this particular program that, as the minister pointed out, I think is quite positive is that it's going to make economic and environmental sense, and I think that's very important. However, on the economic side of it I would imagine the economics of it would depend largely on the kinds of arrangements that could be made for the sale of the power into the provincial grid, and also I would wonder if the capital cost of setting up a wind farm of any dimension would really warrant the playing with it. I notice they've got a rather substantial operation near Palm Springs, just a little bit west of Palm Springs in California. I really don't know how well that one has worked, but I can foresee that there has been an awful lot of money put in just for the mere capital setup of it. So I think the degree to which the province goes into the wind farm effort has to be looked at very, very carefully, because we're on the verge of breaking through the technology, but we may not necessarily be on the verge of making that an economic venture.

Along with this particular wind farm that's being looked at, I understand from the minister's comments that there's an

involvement with industry. I would, for the sheer sake of curiosity, want to know specifically: who is that industry? Is it a company? Is it a consortium of individuals? Just who is the industry that the provincial government is going to throw in with?

Along with that, I'm quite pleased to see that there's going to be a little bit of a shift away from Pincher Creek and into Lethbridge with respect to the windmill test site, and that should be interesting. I'd also like the minister to comment, if he can, on how much research has been done on the different types of windmills to this point, or if there's any research planned, because as the minister well knows, there's a variety of windmills that can be used, and various ones have different advantages and disadvantages.

So on that note, Mr. Chairman, I'd like the minister to comment a little further, if he can, on what's really happening in the wind propulsion, what is happening in the solar, and what the other renewable resources are that he so frequently alluded to in his introductory remarks. I await his comments tonight.

Thank you.

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Chairman, if I could first comment on the questions posed by the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway. He did express concern about the dollars that we were committing to this project, and I can, I guess, in all honesty and humility say that it wasn't as much as I'd asked for, but it was as much as the Treasury Board decided to give me. Health got all the money, so they took it away from me.

But the point to be made, as both the last two members that spoke have pointed out, is that there's a long-term commitment, and I think that's important. It may in some people's minds be a relatively meaningless commitment for the government to say that they have a 10-year commitment to this project, that it's only \$3 million over three years with an \$8 million loan guarantee. But as I tried to indicate earlier, what we're trying to do is create the environment for this thing to work. And if it works, then that gives us the ability, Mr. Chairman, for a long-term commitment to the project.

Now, one of the questions the Member for Stony Plain had asked was about the opportunity for other parts of the province. Well, yeah, let's try the pilot project. What we've done is picked a location in the province where it looks like, given everything else being equal, a good place to establish a pilot project for a variety of renewable energy sources, and that's why we've picked Pincher Creek-Crowsnest. It may well be that we can expand it beyond there, and possibly geothermal is an area where we'll be able to access this program beyond this test phase. But we have to make sure it works, because we don't want to be putting a whole bunch of heritage fund dollars into an area for cosmetic reasons to make it look as though the government has got some big commitment to renewable energy. We have to do it in a way that's responsible, and we want to see whether or not it works. The committee that is established, the board that's established, will determine that, and they will watch it very closely and be making recommendations as to what we should be doing for funding beyond the three-year commitment. So the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway did in fact leave the impression that maybe it wasn't enough dollars, but in that we have the 10-year commitment, the dollars will be there if there's any indication that we're going in the right direction.

Geothermal is not ruled out, Mr. Chairman; there's just no geothermal in the Pincher Creek-Crowsnest area. As I've indicated, this is the concept for this part of the province, but as

the program, flourishes and shows that it's going in the right direction, it could be that sometime in the future geothermal can access the program. The small power producers program is one that geothermal could certainly access if it meets the criteria, and I'd recommend that the hon. Member for West Yellowhead look at that program and see whether or not geothermal would be prospective for that program. But I admire his commitment. This is not the first time he's brought up geothermal, so it's obvious that he does have a personal interest in that area.

The Member for Stony Plain. I've answered his first question about the reasoning for restricting it to southwest Alberta. Our commitment is 10 years, as I've indicated; it goes beyond the three years. It's the capital funding that's in place for the first three years. And, you know, one of the other areas that's a potential for that part of the province is biomass. You know, we're not drawing a fence around anything other than the area of the province. If there is an opportunity for industry to go and access this program for that part of the province, then they're more than welcome to make a presentation to this board of directors that has been drawn from the community to review prospective projects.

The Member for West Yellowhead asked the cost of a wind farm. I can tell him that for a 10 megawatt wind farm the capital cost is about \$15 million to \$20 million.

So, Mr. Chairman, those are the responses to the questions that the hon. members have raised.

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

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I actually rise to encourage the minister in this particular expenditure and to be a nice guy about this. I believe it is important that we seek to address the global warming/carbon dioxide/noxious gas issue, air pollution generally that is caused by fossil fuel burning, in an aggressive manner. This program has the promise of doing that. One feature of the program that I would like to emphasize and congratulate the minister on in particular is that the program emphasizes solar and wind alternative energy sources. In my discussion in the debates earlier in this session on small power production and so on, I'd raised the point that perhaps this kind of small power production could be further encouraged by paying a bonus, a green bonus, if you will, to producers of solar and wind power who sell into the provincial grid.

I would, however, like to add in my comments some caution to the minister when I consider the amount of money that's being spent. I appreciate what the minister is saying about not proceeding too quickly, making sure that it's in place, and so on and so forth. At the same time, it seems to me that we have certainly proceeded with huge commitments in traditional energy developments: new ones; for instance, tar sands in the past; and so on. I believe that the total amount of money, \$1 million, is relatively small given the size of the problem that is to be confronted, given the fact that our fossil fuel reserves are diminishing, and given the fact that market changes in the world to meet environmental and pollution problems could dramatically alter the demand for what fossil fuel we have remaining. I believe that while the minister has emphasized his good intentions in this regard with his commitment to this program, certainly I would have to argue that it may be – and I believe that it is – that his department and this government are not proceeding quickly enough to confront the carbon dioxide problem, the potential threat of global warming and the huge

consequences that has not only for our society but for the world as a whole. Therefore, while I congratulate the minister on this particular program and I am assured of his good intentions, I would want to emphasize the need to proceed with greater commitment, to some extent with greater haste, and certainly to proceed on a much broader front than is represented simply by vote 1, Renewable Energy Research.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Does the Member for Vegreville wish to speak?

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wondered if the Minister of Energy, in terms of the money that is being granted his department for renewable energy research, might tell us what effort he has made to encourage research into the use of ethanol as a renewable fuel in the province of Alberta. It's something we've discussed in the context of debate on his budget on other occasions. I could go into it at some length if members would like me to explain how ethanol holds a lot of potential in the future in terms of a renewable source of energy in the province of Alberta. I could talk about its benefits to the environment, to agriculture, and to economic development, but perhaps I'll wait and see if the minister has some response to tell us what he's been doing over the past year to stimulate the development of this important alternative and renewable source of energy in the province of Alberta.

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Chairman, the answer to the question is: nothing.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shame. I'm shocked and appalled.

MR. ORMAN: You've got to appreciate my candidness though.

We are talking though, Mr. Chairman, about this particular vote in the Heritage Savings Trust Fund capital projects division. Let me say that if the hon. Member for Vegreville has a proponent or proponents who are interested in promoting the use of ethanol, then I would suggest that he contact Dr. Rottger, who is now chairman of this initiative. If they're interested at this particular time in establishing in the southwest region of the province of Alberta, then they would give it full consideration. Unfortunately, as I've indicated – unfortunately for the Member for Vegreville – we are not going beyond the bounds of the Pincher Creek-Crowsnest area at this time until we are sure that we are going in the right direction and we get some positive feedback. Once we do, and once it's determined that we should be expanding beyond the bounds of that particular area, we'll certainly give it full consideration.

MR. FOX: Thank you. I appreciate the minister's candour and honesty and suggest that perhaps he's setting a good example for his colleagues. [interjections] Is "good example" unparliamentary, Mr. Chairman?

I'd like the minister to indicate to us if he considers ethanol to be a legitimate renewable source of energy and that its development would be something he would take an interest in in terms of planning how this budget might be allocated down the road, not just in a specific part of the province but in terms of his overall responsibility to make sure that Alberta is kept at the leading edge of energy research, be it nonrenewable or renewable.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Vote 1 . . . Oh; Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Perhaps I'll phrase my question a different way, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister.

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Chairman, I'm all ears on the issue the Member for Vegreville brings forward. I can quite frankly say that other than the exchange between him and the ministers of Agriculture and Economic Development and Trade in this Assembly, I don't have much knowledge about ethanol and its role as a potential for replacement of the conventional hydrocarbons, but I'm certainly willing to listen.

Now, with regard to southwest Alberta, as I've indicated, the decision-making process is out of my hands. I have put it in the hands of a board of directors that has been drawn from the community, chaired by a very respectable gentleman by the name of Dr. John Rottger. He and his members will be reviewing all projects that come forward to access these capital dollars. If the hon. member would like me personally to introduce him to Dr. Rottger and they can sit down and have a chat about the initiative he'd like to see them consider, I'd be more than pleased to do that. But I'd caution him, Mr. Chairman, that I think it is appropriate that these individuals who are conversant in the renewable energy area be the ones that make the decision as to how these dollars are allocated. That's the way we've set it up, and I want to respect the integrity of that structure.

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Chairman, I was pleased with the response from the minister in regard to geothermal energy. I am aware that in the area of the geysers in California they generate many, many megawatts of power from geothermal. They generate electricity from the geothermal resource, for the hon. Member for Highwood. Mr. Chairman, certainly I will take his advice and venture into the other grant he mentioned.

Another thing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway raised regards coal and its polluting factor. The slurry coal projects coming up in the future and the scrubbers going on the stacks of Ontario Hydro I would sure hope would not cut back the production of coal, especially in the riding of West Yellowhead, where some 1,500 to 2,000 jobs are held very securely.

I would also like at this time to pass on my regrets to the Mitchell family, the owners of Luscar Sterco. The senior lady passed on yesterday, and I just wanted to pass it on to the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

Agreed to:

Total Vote 1 – Renewable Energy Research	\$1,000,000
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MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Does the hon. minister wish to report his vote?

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

[Motion carried]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I would like to just draw your attention to page 14, vote 2, and a point of order that was raised last time we were in Committee of Supply. The ruling there is that there's no question being put before the committee on that particular page, and it is a matter of reporting information to the committee only.

Health

1 – Applied Cancer Research

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to make a few introductory remarks on the estimates proposed for applied cancer research. The \$2.8 million to be voted this evening is with respect to the establishment of new or expanded treatment programs for research into cancer. The research can deal with the application of basic findings and includes advances in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer. Important balances are established between the clinical and basic research. The program provides benefits which extend well beyond the laboratory and clinical trials to the bedside patient table. I'm pleased to report that from the initial inception of this program in 1976-77 to the end of the 1989-90 fiscal year, the province has contributed approximately \$41 million toward cancer research under this program.

I thought I'd give members a bit of a sense of the manner in which the funds for research are chosen. The province, as we know, has provided funds for applied cancer research from the heritage fund since 1977. The Heritage Savings Trust Fund applied cancer research program was modified slightly in 1987 with the direction being specifically oriented to more interdisciplinary programs – interdisciplinary between clinical and basic research scientists – and consists of colleagues from the cancer institutes, the universities, and other centres who have developed a collaborative cancer research program in Alberta. The Cancer Board has appointed an advisory committee on research consisting of seven international oncology experts knowledgeable in various fields of cancer research. This committee advises the Cancer Board on the utilization of the research funds and, obviously, on the choice of the research proposals.

To be eligible for the support through the program, the research initiative should be directly related to the problem of cancer, and in addition to the study of cancer as an experiment of nature, the research could deal with the application of basic findings from any discipline to the control of cancer, including advances in prevention and diagnosis and treatment. Researchers are not limited to only this research funding body as a source of funds, because other aspects of their research plan may well be sought from the Medical Research Council, the National Cancer Institute of Canada, and the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research. The funds under this particular program are primarily operational and support nurses and researchers right in the hospital. It's a unique source of funds for researchers. Great care and effort is taken to ensure that we don't overlap or we don't use our research dollars unwisely. As a result, the Cancer Board co-ordinates with the Alberta foundation for medical research to ensure that there's not overlap of study.

Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to answer questions with respect to the applied cancer research and some of the new and innovative ways the resources are being used and would be happy to respond to questions in the House.

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

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to address a few remarks to this vote. However, there's not very much more to add after what I've asked in this vote for the last three or four years now. I am convinced that the funds are well managed and operated and the research that proceeds from them is of very high quality and monitored by a very good set of folks, both in the Cancer Board and in the committee that adjudicates which research projects get the funding and which don't. I guess I could rehash some of those points I've made in the past year that might be around the edges with respect to where this is all going. The one question that might still be outstanding is: how about public dollars and some private dollars? I know, for instance, that the Cancer Society is a private organization. It gets a lot of money which they say is for research, and I'm just wondering how much of the overall research dollar in cancer is from the public purse as opposed to privately generated.

I guess in that whole area . . . It was pointed out to me some time ago how in some ways research in cancer, until a cure is found, often is a bottomless pit and you can keep putting millions and millions of research dollars into it and it's hard to determine at what point we reach some threshold in terms of what is necessary, where the edges of research are going. Somehow we've cut off \$2.8 million here when, in fact, I'm sure we could devote 10 times as much as that, or the private charitable dollar could be used for that. But in terms of the overall, what is deemed to be appropriate and necessary, and how much should the public purse and how much should the private dollar go toward it?

Now, I'm not sure – I know last year the minister raised the interesting point about this being applied research as opposed to pure research, and had an application, for instance, in the new program for breast screening clinics throughout the province, which again is a very important initiative for not only breast cancer but all other forms of cancer: cancers of the colon, lung cancer, every other form of cancer there can be some screening for. Early detection is certainly of great importance to proper treatment and so on. However, again, some questions have been raised as to just how much screening is appropriate. In fact, there was a study, I think out of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, which suggested that there was too much screening going on – if you can believe it – that we were overscreening and there wasn't enough of a saving of any sort resulting. But again, whether this applied research can get into that whole area of utilization of that kind of procedure – even though it's an important one not just for breasts, as I say, but other forms of cancer.

What I'd really like to get into tonight is not the details of the fund as such, but perhaps move more into the area of how this fund again relates to the overall health research policy of this government. I've tried to raise this before, and I guess I can be satisfied with some of the answers. Last November I called for a health research co-ordinating council which would be in place to see in the whole range of health research what needed to go on and was going on and co-ordinate that in a much better way. Applied cancer research is one component that would be co-ordinated by this overall health co-ordinating research council. Then to my astonishment, Mr. Chairman – I'm sure you, too, read recommendation 14 of the Hyndman report just put out last

February. The whole Hyndman report seems also to move in this direction and with this recommendation, saying that the mandate of the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research be reviewed and expanded to include research into health care systems, health status, and so on, and

that the name of the Foundation be changed to the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Health Research to reflect [this greater] mandate.

I would imagine that applied cancer research again would come under the wider mandate of this new foundation, a position very close to my own.

As I articulated last November, I would very much agree with this recommendation from the Hyndman report. So again I'm wondering; with these kinds of movements and developments going in terms of some new policy directives and initiatives, what will be the ongoing fate of the \$2.8 million for applied cancer research? Are we going to continue to get this one segment of the health research pie before us in the trust fund committee capital projects division estimates each year, or can it not eventually be a part of a wider and more co-ordinated health research policy which we can have greater reflection on in terms of the larger questions in applied cancer research as interacting and a part of that? I think the minister knows of what I'm speaking.

I think for now that's all I'd have to say. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: The hon. member is absolutely right, and I was probably remiss in not having spoken to the review that is under way between the departments of Advanced Education and Technology, Research and Telecommunications and the Department of Health as we look at the overall mandate for research, which has to obviously include the issue of mental health research, research into very legitimate goals like how we can better manage the health system, issues of prevention, and certainly issues of more direct disease linkages like cancer and other things under the heritage fund. That review is not yet completed. Basically we were faced with the decision as to whether or not we continue to fund at least the clinical and applied cancer research under the heritage fund until we get a better sense of the macro, and that's exactly what we did. So this is really a hold on one year. We may need two, but we've given it one year at a time. The recommendations in the Hyndman commission obviously touched very directly on that as we look toward the best value for our research dollars, including, frankly, the resources under the family life and drug abuse foundation if you look at issues of toxicology, which can very much apply to cancer research as well as drug addictions and those implications.

So my response to the hon. member is that it's a very legitimate question, and it's one that the government is attempting, with the benefits of the specific study that was done in the Cancer Board's research, to apply on a more systemwide basis. And I think the timing is right with the Premier's commission on future health care.

The second point the hon. member made was the issue of applied research and how much screening is appropriate. He's absolutely right that there's a good deal of medical review going on now which says that the screening is in itself a danger. I guess that's one of the things that – although he might not agree with me – I believe is a medical assessment that must be made.

But one of the steps we very clearly took in setting up the pilots for the breast screening program, that we will pilot in Edmonton and Calgary before sending it provincewide, was how to minimize the radiation on an individual woman who's being screened and have built-in protocols such as: the actual X-ray or the screening will be able to be passed to a second radiologist, for example, passed through in order to minimize the radiation buildup with respect to the patient.

The third point the hon. member makes – and I'm sorry I don't have an answer with respect to what private dollars are raised in Alberta with respect to the Canadian Cancer Fund and the Alberta Cancer Fund which raises funds locally. I do know that Alberta is a very lucrative place for the Cancer Society, which really speaks to the big hearts and the very strong health conscience Albertans have, but I would be happy to provide that information for the hon. member by writing.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate those comments from the minister. You know, I'm learning patience and greater patience, and I know this review needs to take time and all the rest. I'm just wondering if the minister might give us some hint or clue as to when this overall new direction or new initiative might be taking place and whether I need to get impatient or whether in due time, within a year or two, these things will come to pass.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: I think the important point is that we obviously need and want to continue clinical research in cancer, and in the absence – and I think this is the assurance that needs to be given to those researchers who are over there – of an overall review being completed, the heritage fund will continue to dedicate resources. Nonetheless, it's the hope of the three ministers that it can be looked at within the 1990-91 fiscal year.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

Agreed to:

Total Vote 1 – Applied Cancer Research \$2,800,000

MRS. BETKOWSKI: I move that the vote be reported.

[Motion carried]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We have for information purposes on page 22 vote 2, but there is no amount to be voted. So we move to page 23, vote 1, Municipal Recreation/Tourism Areas.

Recreation and Parks

1 – Municipal Recreation/Tourism Areas

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Recreation and Parks.

DR. WEST: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At this fine hour I'd like to present the 1990-91 estimates for projects to be funded through the capital division of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund for Recreation and Parks. My department and all

Albertans have benefited tremendously from investments of the heritage fund in Recreation and Parks projects. Of course, Kananaskis Country is one of the more notable of these accomplishments. Of course, this project this year does not draw any capital funds from the heritage fund and, therefore, is not under consideration here tonight. There are two programs, however, that I would like to make a few comments on before some other members may want to ask some questions, those being the municipal recreation/tourism areas program and phase 2 of the urban parks program.

First, the municipal recreation/tourism . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, hon. minister. Could the Chair just suggest that we go one vote at a time, starting with the MRTA?

DR. WEST: All right. Sounds like a good idea at this time of night.

The municipal recreation/tourism area program, under vote 1 this year, is requesting \$2,825,000. This is a program that was started five years ago and was addressed to some 41 constituencies throughout the province. The emphasis of this program is to encourage local communities to realize their tourism potential through the development of recreational opportunities and to benefit from the associated economic and employment impacts they have. The funding for this program is \$13.8 million and provides capital grants up to \$100,000 to some roughly 200 community projects in 41 rural constituencies. The projects undertaken are campgrounds, picnic areas, boat launches, docks, beaches, ski hills, golf courses, and other park amenities. They've been a tremendous success, and this year we are looking for \$2,825,000, as I said. To this date we have seen 30 projects already recommended by the MLAs in 20 constituencies for a total funding of \$1.675 million. A further 15 projects are in the process of being reviewed at this time. To note is that the operational funding for the MRTA program comes out of the General Revenue Fund. With each hundred thousand dollars goes a \$20,000, 25-year operating fund, and this will ensure the proper maintenance of these areas throughout the province and a protection of the investment of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

I'll stop there on this vote, Mr. Chairman, if anyone has comments on the MRTA program.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have no problem addressing the minister's budget on the Municipal Recreation/Tourism Areas, and I'm very pleased the government has spent over some \$10 million in that area. Municipalities indeed need more parks and more recreation facilities. With the winding down of the municipal parks and recreation grants, I'm sure all communities in the 41 constituencies that were funded are most pleased.

Just prior to 8 o'clock I returned from my riding in the Grande Cache and Hinton area, and I stopped to see the developments in Grande Cache and the proposed development in Hinton and, in fact, had the opportunity to walk the Hinton route. I would hope that the minister will be announcing those grant applications very shortly because of the Seniors Games in Hinton this year. The one particular route would need to be

finished in order to hold a very positive Seniors Games this year in the town of Hinton. They're looking forward to the minister's support on that grant, and I hope the minister would authorize that and announce it in the near future. Also the town of Edson, Mr. Chairman, has a grant application I recommended to the minister, and I hope he also would look at that in a positive way. It's a trail through the bush along a creek that's quite remote, running through the town, and certainly with the advent of seniors wanting more recreation, youth wanting more recreation, and family outings and picnics and that in those areas, it would certainly benefit that community.

Mr. Chairman, the 29.4 percent cut in the municipal recreation/tourism areas program – perhaps I didn't pick it up, but is this the final year of this program? Is it winding down? Is that the reason for the cut? But I did want to stress how strongly I support this particular program. It certainly has benefited municipalities throughout the province, and the municipal councillors and mayors are very pleased with the development that's taken place under this program. The taxpayers are very pleased that the government put the money in there, that it didn't have to come out of their local taxes.

So, Mr. Chairman, as the critic for Recreation and Parks, I have no problem with the funding towards this program.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Further speakers?

Hon. minister.

DR. WEST: Just a couple of comments, and I thank you for your support of this program.

It is the final year, and that is why it's decreasing by 29.4 percent. As I said, the total program was five years, \$13.8 million, and that made \$300,000 projects to 41 constituencies. As I say, it's in the final years. We will be announcing that those 30 projects, that I said have already been put forward by the members of the Assembly, will be coming forth at the end of May or early June. The following projects to finish this year – if all members get them submitted and get them in on time, we should be able to facilitate that by the end of August. So to refer directly to the member's constituency, West Yellowhead, certainly your two that you have put forward will be finalized and coming forth in those time frames.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Vote 1 . . .

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Chairman, is the minister going to address urban parks, vote 2?

AN HON. MEMBER: Next vote.

MR. DOYLE: Next vote. Thank you.

Agreed to:

Total Vote 1 – Municipal Recreation/

Tourism Areas \$2,825,000

DR. WEST: Mr. Chairman, I move this vote 1 be reported.

[Motion carried]

2 – Urban Park Development

DR. WEST: A few remarks on vote 2, the Urban Park Development program. This is the second phase of the urban park program. It was approved in February 1989 for a total funding of \$82.2 million. Also, on top of that are administrative costs that will be incurred over the next 10 years.

This new phase involves nine new municipalities, and phase 1, which was \$86 million, included five municipalities. The nine new municipalities are St. Albert, Fort McMurray, the county of Strathcona, Leduc, Camrose, Fort Saskatchewan, Spruce Grove, Airdrie, and Wetaskiwin. There will also be further funding to the cities of Edmonton and Calgary for the expansion of their existing urban parks programs. Of course, the intention of this program is to provide open-space areas in close proximity to urban centres or in the urban centres for recreational use and appreciation. It's certainly a successful program and, I think, of interest. If members get hold of *National Geographic*, in this issue there's an awfully good article on urban parks, trails, and inner-city recreational areas, called *Greenway: Paths to the Future*. It's based on developments in the United States, but I think you'll find it very interesting in the development of these programs. Phase 2 of this urban parks program I think will create a diversity of recreational and antistress environments throughout this province, with a great benefit to Albertans.

I'll stop there without going further. We're asking for \$3 million in this vote and \$150,000 for administrative costs this year. This is a 10-year program, and we will be coming forward in future years, as funds are made available, to take this program to its completion.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Vote 2 also is a very positive step for the future of Alberta in urban parks development. I'm pleased to see that the funding is very fairly distributed throughout the province. In fact, northern Alberta has a very large number of these programs. St. Albert, Fort McMurray, the county of Strathcona, Camrose, Leduc, Fort Saskatchewan, Spruce Grove, Wetaskiwin: that's a very large number of northern cities to take up good portions of this grant. It's quite a large increase, but I understand that this is a fairly new grant; no money was there in 1989.

On this vote 2, Mr. Chairman, I would strongly endorse the funds in this direction.

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

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would agree with my colleague that this is a very important initiative under vote 2, Urban Park Development. It's obviously affecting 11 communities throughout the province, and while I recognize that the administration and co-ordination of the program is done by the department and grants are conditional and are made in accordance with approved park plans, I would like to ask the minister – I realize that the communities need autonomy when they're making decisions such as how to spend the money and that we must trust our elected officials within the municipalities to make those kinds of decisions on behalf of the citizens of their communities. But I'm wondering. Oftentimes municipalities are making these decisions when in fact the funding is not

adequate to meet the needs of the people in their communities. I know that in many areas of the city of Edmonton there is a need for parks not only to meet the recreational needs of people, but also, when we take a look at mental health benefits from parks and also environmental benefits, we can see how important it is for them to have parks.

I know in my riding of Edmonton-Calder we're about half an hour's drive to the river valley. There are no parks per se in that particular area, and a lot of people for one reason or another don't have access to the parks. They may not have the transportation or they may not be able to afford the transportation to get to those particular parks. What I would like to ask the minister is if his department has done any analysis in terms of how many parks should be in a municipality to meet the needs of the people in that particular community. I don't know if the department has done an analysis like that. Just in terms of how much money is allocated, is it in fact adequate in his opinion, if his department has done an analysis on that?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Further speakers?

Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of questions and suggestions. In the city of Edmonton, of course, which is not directly involved in this particular vote but in which we've done a Capital City Park, I think it's important to realize that sometimes it's hard for local community people to get down to the parks. I'm wondering if that's a problem. I realize that some of these centres are much smaller. But as well as having a nice park for each of these communities, I'm wondering to what degree the government has been able to co-operate with the local municipal authorities and see to it that there are little neighbourhood parks also for the people in the various communities, because some of these cities are a fairly good size, and unless you can sort of get in a car and drive down or get in a bus and ride down to the parks, sometimes it's rather hard. You know, just have a little sandlot, somewhere where we can have a little baseball game or some kiddy slides and that sort of thing. So I'm wondering if the provincial government is into those kinds of things with local governments in some of the smaller cities.

I also can't help thinking that we shouldn't only, of course, be building parks for each city, and I know that you're not, that there are other municipal parks around the province.

But I'm wondering how the minister responds to the idea that we should be setting 12 percent of our land aside for future parks. I believe it's an idea put forward by the United Nations, the idea that we need to save some of our natural ecological systems for the future. I believe that in Alberta the environmentalists have identified something like 17 different ecological zones that, if we were to preserve one of each type, we would need 17 ecological zones or parks, I guess is the right terminology for it. I'm wondering if the minister could respond to some of those suggestions.

DR. WEST: Yes. Just a few comments on the various questions asked. To the Member for West Yellowhead: you brought up the fact that you thought this was the first year of this program. Last year we had \$900,000 in the estimates, which was dealt with, and that money was directed towards each community here for the development of their master plans. This year, of course, we're asking for \$3 million direct and \$150,000 for administration. So just to clarify that for you.

To go to the questions asked by the Member for Edmonton-Calder, I found it very interesting that you would ask if a study had been done on the density of population versus the amount of green area or parks or programs put on. I don't know that I could answer that to say that we've done a study directly, but we work constantly with the municipalities who are in charge of administering this themselves. We have 14 offices in our rec development division throughout the province, and our parks division, of course, has facility consultants in not only the MRTA program but this urban park program to work with municipalities to help them plan and designate their funds towards proper parks development. In the city of Edmonton, of course, the rec and park division is huge, and they have to address that on their own merits. It's interesting to note that Capital City Park in Edmonton over the years has had some \$125 million in operational and construction developments through the river valley. It's spread out a long ways and, I think, addresses a great number of the communities within the city itself. But I will take that forward to my department to look at some of the specs that we may have on population density versus the amount of park availability throughout a city. It's a good question.

To Edmonton-Kingsway: again, I think I will just say, Mr. Chairman, that he got a long ways off the target here tonight. If you want to have a meaningful discussion on protected spaces in the province of Alberta, there's a motion on the Order Paper, and we'll have ample time to get at that that day, and I would ask you to join that debate.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

Agreed to:

2.1 – Program Support	\$150,000
2.2 – Major Urban Centres	\$600,000
2.3 – Other Urban Centres	\$2,400,000
Total Vote 2 – Urban Park Development	\$3,150,000

DR. WEST: I move that vote 2 be reported.

[Motion carried]

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

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

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

Resolved that sums from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1991, for the purpose of making investments in the following projects to be administered by:

Executive Council: \$1,218,000, Occupational Health and Safety Research and Education.

Energy: \$1,000,000, Renewable Energy Research.

Health: \$2,800,000, Applied Cancer Research.

Recreation and Parks: \$2,825,000 for Municipal Recreation/Tourism Areas, and \$3,150,000 for Urban Park Development.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: All those in favour of the report, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, it's the intent of the government

tomorrow to call estimates again of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund capital projects division. Two of the departments that will be proposed will be Environment and Technology, Research and Telecommunications.

[At 10:22 p.m. the House adjourned to Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.]