

Legislative Assembly of AlbertaTitle: **Wednesday, May 15, 1991**

2:30 p.m.

Date: 91/05/15

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head:

Prayers

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

As Canadians and as Albertans we give thanks for the precious gifts of freedom and peace which we enjoy.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly we rededicate ourselves to the valued traditions of parliamentary democracy as a means of serving both our province and our country.

Amen.

head:

Introduction of Bills**Bill 35****Family Life and Substance Abuse Foundation Act**

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured on behalf of our Premier and the government to introduce Bill 35, the Family Life and Substance Abuse Foundation Act. The Bill being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor has been informed of the contents of this Bill and recommends the same to this Assembly.

[Leave granted; Bill 35 read a first time]

head:

Tabling Returns and Reports

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table four copies of the communiqués which were issued by the Western Premiers' Conference recently held in Nipawin, Saskatchewan. Should they indicate an interest in them, all members would have copies provided to them.

head:

Introduction of Special Guests

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of the Environment.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly a good friend of mine from Germany Mr. Fritz Bieling, who is chief purser for Lufthansa German Airlines. Fritz was a wonderful host, a wonderful ambassador for Calgary and Alberta before and during the Olympic Games and continues to be a great ambassador for our province today. Mr. Bieling is accompanied by his Calgary hosts, Adrian Stimson, Frank Lucente, Andy Gibson, and Cons. Hal Taylor. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Drayton Valley.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 87 very bright and likable young students from Riverview school in Devon. They're seated in the members' gallery and the public gallery. Today they're accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Marilyn Hendrickson, Ms Beth McCormick, Mr. Ron Petesky, and Mr. Mark Lake and by one parent, Mrs. Lloyd. I would ask that they all stand and receive the warm welcome of this House, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Beverly.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly 22 students from St. Bonaventure school located in Edmonton-Beverly. They are accompanied by their teacher Mrs. Betty Morris and a parent, Mrs. Elsie Stang. I'd ask them to rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by Edmonton-Highlands.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure that I introduce to you and to members of the Assembly a group of 16 grade 6 French immersion students from St. Angela school in the riding of Edmonton-Calder. They're accompanied by their teacher Ms Gauvreau. They're in the members gallery, and I'd ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce some more victims of the closed Bara Academy of business. They're seated in the public gallery. They are Tina Mann and Linda Fryk. I'd like them to stand and be recognized by members of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly Mr. Ray Victory. Mr. Victory is sponsored by Crossroads International, an organization that is supported by CIDA and also the Alberta government. It allows Alberta volunteers to give services and education in Third World countries. Mr. Victory is a returning volunteer from St. Vincent, and he's here to study Canadian methods in water and sanitation. He's accompanied by Mr. Ralph Haeckel, who went as an Alberta Crossroads volunteer to St. Vincent. Both gentlemen are in the public gallery. I'd ask them to stand and be welcomed by the Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period**Municipalities Funding**

MR. SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier. In communiqué 3 from the Western Premiers' Conference, the western finance ministers complain that the federal government continues to off-load its financial responsibilities onto the backs of the provinces. If I may say so, it shows again the hypocrisy of this government. What is most shocking about this communiqué is that this government is consistently and increasingly off-loading its own financial responsibilities onto the backs of Alberta municipalities. As proof of this fact there were two charts recently prepared by the cities of Calgary and Edmonton which show that since 1989 this government has off-loaded 37 percent of its financial commitment onto the city of Edmonton and a staggering 68 percent onto the city of Calgary. My question to the Premier is simply this: will the Premier tell us how his government can justify hounding the federal government for off-loading its financial commitments onto the provinces' backs when this is exactly what his government is doing to the municipalities?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, that is not what we're doing.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I would have thought that being with the other Premiers he would have been a little more forthcoming. The conference must not have gone very well.

The reality is – and the charts are here; the Premier can't deny it. As a result I'd like to file four copies if I could. The result of this government failing to meet its obligations to Alberta municipalities is simple. Municipalities have no choice but to continually raise taxes on local residents, property owners, and businesses to make up for the abdication of responsibility by the provincial government. We need only look at the Edmonton council and school boards recently hiking property, municipal, and school taxes for evidence of this fact. Now, will the Premier comment on this fact and finally admit that its real agenda in pursuing this off-loading policy is to force municipalities to take the political heat for rising taxes because his government doesn't have the backbone or the honesty to do what they . . .

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I come back to the first question because he literally hasn't changed with the second question. We are not doing that.

MR. MARTIN: So I guess all those people in Calgary and Edmonton working in civic government are liars; they don't understand the same way that the Premier does. Is that what he's saying?

Mr. Speaker, it goes even further. Calgary's commissioner for finance states in the cover letter to this data that at the rate this government is shuffling its responsibilities onto municipalities' shoulders, they will soon pay more to the province than they receive back in annual operating grants. That's what he's saying. My question to the Premier: how does he justify his government's relentless push to force Alberta cities to become net contributors to the province instead of the other way around?

2:40

MR. GETTY: I guess, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member isn't listening, because we're not doing that.

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

MR. MARTIN: This time I'll ask a question of somebody over there that knows something. Obviously this Premier doesn't know what's going on, Mr. Speaker.

Food Banks

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, let me ask one question more of him. Maybe I'll get an answer. Let's move away from the outrageous hypocrisy of this government to its habit of always overstating the positive and understating the negative. In a desperate attempt to hoodwink Albertans into believing that all is rosy with Alberta's economy, the government conveniently but deliberately refuses to acknowledge those major factors that contradict its position. Its refusal to recognize the mounting job losses in Alberta, especially in Calgary, is unfortunate. Today we see yet another sign that life is getting tougher under this government, not easier, for many Albertans. I'm talking about the food banks. The Calgary Food Bank reports an alarming 22 percent increase in food bank use in the first four months of this year, and Edmonton's Food Bank has seen use increase by another 14 percent in April. My question to the Premier is this:

will the Premier tell us what this skyrocketing increase in food bank use in Calgary and Edmonton says to him? Does he . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. [interjection] No. [interjection] Hon. member, you've asked the question.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Family and Social Services may wish to comment on this matter as well, but I think nothing is more clear to me, having been able now to meet with the Premiers of Quebec, Ontario, the four western Premiers, the territorial leaders, and governors of two states, than to realize after talking with them how strong the Alberta economy is in relation to other parts of North America. I've never seen it so clearly. Now, nobody likes a layoff, and nobody likes the idea of people having to use food banks. But be very clear on the matter of the Alberta economy. It is a shining strength in North America right now, and it's a result of government's efforts to diversify and strengthen this economy.

I'll say one thing. You can be talked into a recession. Now, there isn't a recession in Alberta. You can be talked into a recession if you listen to the media that comes in, stories out of other parts of North America. You can in fact hurt the confidence of people, and you can make a recession self-fulfilling. I just want to tell the opposition that they are so intent on opposing that they would try instead to break the confidence of the people and bring on some kind of a downturn. That's the worst kind of opposition, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: That's typical callous behaviour. People lining up to go to the food banks, and the Premier's telling them that they're well off, that all they need is a little more confidence. What nonsense, Mr. Speaker, what nonsense. These are the facts. Look at the real world. He must have been talking to his millionaire friends again.

The Calgary Food Bank forecasts a 33 percent increase in food bank use if the present trend continues. Now, even to this Premier that should be an appalling and scary forecast, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Premier: rather than telling us, with rose-coloured glasses, how wonderful things are, what contingency plans does the government have to deal with this trend of more and more people having to use the food banks for survival?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that if one were to reflect back over a short period of time, they would have heard similar questions in Ontario from the then opposition leader, a Mr. Rae. It's interesting to note that in Ontario now, six months into Mr. Rae's mandate, what we see are food banks doubling and tripling in demand. What we see in Ontario is a social allowance caseload that's gone up by almost 33 percent at a time when our caseload was showing moderate decreases. So you can bet that we're not going to take the NDP approach. You can bet that we're not going to take that approach. We're going to continue with the approach that we've undertaken over the last four and five years. That's to diversify our economy and to create new jobs, some 100,000-plus new jobs in recent years, because we happen to believe that employment is a tremendous alternative to food banks.

MR. MARTIN: I thought this minister represented Alberta. When are you going to start taking your responsibilities seriously here?

MR. SPEAKER: Was that your question, hon. member? [interjections] No. The question . . . [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

MR. SPEAKER: No. Both of you, thanks very much. [interjection] Hon. leader, I'm sorry; you fell into the business of asking those rhetorical questions, and that's what prompted the response obviously. [interjections] Order.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, you have to help them. We understand [inaudible] rhetorical questions.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Edmonton-Belmont, that's enough.

MS BARRETT: Shame on you.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, I couldn't have put it better myself.

MS BARRETT: I was imitating you.

MR. SPEAKER: No, you weren't, hon. member. My voice isn't quite so squeaky.

MS BARRETT: Oh, clever. [interjections] Aren't you smart. What happened to the nonbias of the Chair?

MR. SPEAKER: Watch your mouth, hon. member.

MS BARRETT: I am not your child, hon. member.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank God for that.

Now, could we have the question from the Leader of the Opposition.

Food Banks (continued)

MR. MARTIN: We were getting to the question, Mr. Speaker. This is an important issue and I want . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Ask the question.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, one out of every two clients at Edmonton's Food Bank are people on social allowance, and children on social allowance make up 20 percent of the clients. He can laugh and talk about Ontario all he likes. I want to ask: what does it tell the minister about his policies when so many social allowance recipients have to turn to the food bank to get food in this province? All he . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. We've heard the question.

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the Leader of the Opposition wanting to distance himself from that NDP government in Ontario.

In response to food banks, I've said on many occasions in this Assembly that none of us as Albertans or as Canadians take any pride in seeing the necessity for food banks across this nation. I think, Mr. Speaker, that it is fair to say, though, as the Premier pointed out in his discussions with other Premiers and with other jurisdictions, that we're very fortunate in Alberta because of the initiatives we've undertaken to not have nearly as harsh a problem as they have in other provinces. We're going to

continue to forge ahead with the very progressive changes that we've made in Alberta as it applies to strengthening our economy, as it applies to strengthening our social programs, the program that I brought forward last year, the supports for independence. We're going to continue to help those Albertans that need our help in a very meaningful, a very fair, and a very appropriate way, and we're going to continue to see results.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister.

Education Standards

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the hon. Premier. The Liberal opposition has sent out many thousands of questionnaires relating to issues that affect Albertans and the Constitution of our country. [interjections] One of the questions that was put to Albertans . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please, so that I can hear the question.

2:50

MR. DECORE: What this House needs is a little decorum, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] These guys have got to learn how to relax a little bit over here.

Mr. Speaker, 95 percent of the responses that we have received on the questionnaire show that Albertans want minimum national standards for education, health care, and social safety net programs. I believe that the Premier may well be making the same error that he made in promoting Meech Lake and the arguments on Meech Lake as he's promoting now on decentralization and particularly dealing with national standards in education. My first question to the Premier is this: why does the Premier continue to push, like the Premier of Quebec, the issue of decentralization, particularly on the issue of national standards in education, that will weaken our country to a nation that won't be able to compete in the international marketplace?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the hon. leader of the Liberal Party understands the Canadian Constitution. It does not mean that there's a senior government and a lower level of government; it means that there are equal governments with different responsibilities. In the Constitution the provincial government is given the responsibility for education, and we take that responsibility very seriously. As a matter of fact, we consider that probably the number one priority from a social point of view is that we should have the best possible education for our young people.

Now, the hon. member talks about asking Albertans about constitutional matters. Of course, we are doing that now through the Horsman committee, and that's a bit different. Alberta in a New Canada is going out to Albertans, and we are starting the hearing process.

He also mentions, however, standards. Now, Mr. Speaker, Canadian standards for education are established by the Canadian Council of Ministers of Education. They meet regularly for exactly that purpose: to establish Canadian standards. If the hon. member feels that you can have the matter of curriculum dictated by some public servants in Ottawa, I do not agree with him. We have locally elected school boards. We have constitutional responsibility, and we believe that we're going to fulfill that responsibility to the best of our ability. We do not need someone in Ottawa telling us what to do. There's no special wisdom so that when they become elected to a federal Parliament, they care more about education or know more about it than being elected to a provincial parliament.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I believe that using the example that a bureaucrat in Ottawa is going to foist education on local communities is absurd; it's nonsense. Of course, education is a provincial matter, but we're looking at what should go where. Does it all have to be one way, that we have to grab power and get more powerful and ruin our nation? Is that what the Premier wants to see happen in our country?

MR. GETTY: Well, I haven't heard anything about grabbing power. It's clearly stated in the Constitution that it's our responsibility, and we're fulfilling it. Now, it is true that over the past years of Liberal governments in power, in fact there was a consistent pattern that when the federal government bought its way around the Constitution, they centralized power in Ottawa. They dictated to the provinces, and then they walked away leaving us to carry the mess after. We're not going to allow that to happen any more. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Let's hear the last question.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the questionnaire that we've had returned to us shows that the vast majority want national standards. Why does the Premier continue to be so arrogant as to say that he knows it all, and he doesn't give the opportunity to Albertans to go through the constitutional hearing process to tell him and his colleagues and all of us what they think should be the situation for national standards in education? Why does . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. You asked the question.

MR. GETTY: Well, I'm not sure the hon. member is paying any attention at all, because in this question and answer period I've already talked about Alberta in a New Canada and that we were going through the process with the Horsman committee. I can't believe the hon. member is totally ignoring what he's hearing.

Now, I want to say that standards are perfectly capable of being established by people elected to provincial Legislatures. We don't need somebody in Ottawa dictating. I explained to him that the ministers of Education in Canada establish Canadian standards for education: the Canadian Council of Ministers of Education. Why would anyone think that because you're elected to Ottawa, you would have a better idea of what the standards should be in Alberta? Why wouldn't it be the people elected here and the locally elected school boards who would be able to do that? I don't understand that centralist view that the Liberals keep trying to impose on this province.

Western Premiers' Conference

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Premier regarding the Western Premiers' Conference. Before leaving for the conference the Premier went on record that he had some specific goals in mind. I know that most of the conference was in public; however, some was in private. I'd like to ask the Premier today: is he willing to go on record with full disclosure today, especially in light of the specific goals he had in mind? Show us the scorecard. Was there some success? Were there some failures? What was the accomplishment?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member raising the matter, because it was, I felt, a very productive conference. It was different. It was in a beautiful community

in Saskatchewan, and we were treated very well by the people there. We had the territorial leaders participate with us for the first time and then two western governors.

Alberta wanted to establish the importance of national unity in the minds of the western Premiers, the territorial leaders, and in the minds, I guess, of all western Canadians. We made our number one issue there the matter of how important it was that the country we love so much can only be great if it's unified. I had a good feeling from the meeting with my colleagues. Just like the Premier of Ontario and the Premier of Quebec they strongly wish to build a united Canada. So that gives us a chance in a difficult situation to be able to work to that end.

I also wanted to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that we were supported with our views that in order to have strong economic union in Canada, you must have political union. I was pleased that there was unanimous support for that.

We also reviewed matters of trade. The Premiers unanimously supported the Alberta position that we must have full provincial participation in international trade matters, because after all they are talking about our resources, the things we produce. So I was pleased with those matters. We also endorsed our Environment minister's report: co-operation between the four western provinces and the territories. In general, Mr. Speaker, it was a very good, productive conference.

MR. DAY: Supplementary to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, control of immigration matters is just as important to Albertans as it is to Quebecers. As nearly as I could follow, most of that discussion was public, yet some of that was private. I'd like to ask the Premier if he would be prepared in a specific way to give full disclosure of those discussions. What progress was made in terms of immigration discussions?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is true that our agenda was very heavy, and it continued in the public meetings. As well, it was conducted when we were having breakfast or lunch and privately. While we were unable, except for this communiqué, to deal with the matter of immigration in the public sessions, we definitely dealt with it in one of the private sessions. I stressed to the other Premiers, and they supported us, that it's extremely important for a provincial government to have full input into immigration policies that impact on it. The minister responsible for immigration matters in our province may wish to supplement this matter. I felt very good that all the Premiers and the territorial leaders supported us in calling for full provincial input and, secondly, a federal/provincial conference of ministers responsible for immigration in order that we lay the groundwork for entering into specific immigration agreements between each province and the federal government, because our needs are different in every province.

3:00

MR. WEISS: Mr. Speaker, if I may briefly supplement.

MR. SPEAKER: Very briefly.

MR. WEISS: I'm pleased to hear those remarks, but while the Premier is aware, all hon. members may not be, and that is: I'm negotiating a bilateral agreement with the federal government at this time. I'm most pleased that the western Premiers would fully endorse and support the views as outlined in communiqué 4, that was tabled earlier today in the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Stony Plain.

School Dropout Rate

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Education likes to boast about the achievements of his department. Something he can't possibly be happy about, however, is the extremely high dropout rate amongst Alberta students, apparently the highest rate in Canada, higher even than in Ontario. Obviously the needs of these students are not being met or else more of them would be graduating from high school. Given that almost half the kids starting school don't find their studies worth while and are dropping out, what specific programs is the minister prepared to implement to encourage students to stay in school and complete their education?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I will acknowledge to this Assembly that the results that were released by Statistics Canada are not ones that make me and this government satisfied with our education system. I said back in November that education is not yet Alberta's best subject, but we are putting in place the necessary changes to ensure that that occurs.

I'd ask the hon. member to consider other indicators. The one that was published in this morning's *Edmonton Journal* is but one indicator. Look back at some of the narrative around those numbers. One thing it talks about is children 18 years and under graduating from our schools. It doesn't count those kids who are graduating at 19 and 20 years of age, and we have a growing number of those. Mr. Speaker, when I look at the rigorous standards, the rigorous graduation requirements that we have in this province, school is tough. School is tough in this province, and it should be, and I'm not going to recommend to my colleagues that we back down on very rigorous graduating high school diploma standards just to improve the numbers. We're going to make sure our kids get the best possible education instead.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Whether they're 18 or 17, the basis of comparison is equal across all the provinces.

Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta is supposed to provide a quality of education for every child. This should include areas of education outside of the purely academic studies, such as math and science. If students are not dropping out of the academic stream, then they must be dropping out of the general or vocational programs, and certainly if they're dropping out of those programs, there must be something wrong. What is the minister prepared to do to improve vocational and nonacademic programs and make sure that the school curriculum is relevant to all students regardless of the type of program in which they enroll?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, when these results were published, there was no such thing as a certified graduation diploma or certificate for those students who chose the vocational route. They're counted as kids who didn't complete school. We have that in place today. The integrated occupational program is in place today. The same with the changes that we're making in our career and technology studies. For those students who are not necessarily academically inclined, those new career and technology studies programs are in place, and we're increasing them.

I should share with all hon. members that the number of students who actually left school, who started in September but did not finish with a diploma or finish their year the following

June, dropped from 8.3 percent in 1988-89 to 7.5 percent in 1989-90. Still not good enough, Mr. Speaker, but our efforts in working with school teachers and trustees and other stakeholders in education across this province are making sure that the trend is moving down and that there is improvement in our education system in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Reforestation

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the government's new Free to Grow reforestation regulations the Alberta government, believe it or not, will be paying \$20 million to subsidize reforestation of land logged over the next four years by none other than major forestry companies in this province like Daishowa, this on top of the loan guarantees, debentures, and infrastructural support to the tune of over \$1 billion that has already been given to that particular industry. My question is to the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife. What in the name of common fiscal sense would ever possess this minister to contemplate for one moment yet another \$20 million subsidy to major forestry companies in this province, like Daishowa?

MR. FJORDBOTEN: Well, Mr. Speaker, he's barking up the wrong tree, as usual. If I were doing anything like that, then I would be upset too, but the facts are these: we implemented what's called the new Free to Grow reforestation standards in this province, which make the standards the highest, I think, anywhere in North America and at a tremendous additional cost to the companies. Now, all the forest management agreement holders, or pulp mills, have to pay for that standard, and there's no relief and no phase-in period for them. Effective March 1 they are fully responsible. The quota holders are the ones that operate sawmills. Recognizing the state of the industry, not only here but across North America, a phase-in process was necessary. The additional costs are very significant.

The \$20 million number is used if the worst case scenario on the quota holders over a four-year period is to be realized, and I don't believe it will be anywhere near that. For the small quota holders, the small sawmillers and those, that would be the cost. Mr. Speaker, I don't believe the cost will be anything even close to the \$20 million, but that's the worst case scenario, and it covers all small quota holders as well.

MR. MITCHELL: The minister says I'm "barking up the wrong tree." If he continues the way he is, there won't be any trees in this province to bark up at all.

My second question, Mr. Speaker, is: why is it that in announcing his new Free to Grow regulations, the minister was very careful to point out that he would be subsidizing the reforestation of the land logged by small forestry companies in this province but he neglected, very conveniently, to point out that in that document he was also stating very clearly that he would be subsidizing the reforestation efforts of major pulp and paper and other logging companies in this province, like Daishowa?

MR. FJORDBOTEN: Nonsense is the word for that, Mr. Speaker, because we're not subsidizing anyone. We've implemented a new standard that costs significantly more than what it cost before, and we've allowed a phase-in period for the quota holders. Now, the small sawmillers even gain additionally, because if they don't have the expertise or can't do the work,

they can pay a levy and we will do the work. The large quota holders in Alberta don't have that option. What we've done is made absolutely sure that we recognize the plight of the sawmill industry in this province. Recognize as well that we want to have strong, healthy forests for the future, and we want the best reforestation standards in the world. We won't jeopardize that, and we've allowed a phase-in process to do that. That's only common sense.

MR. SPEAKER: Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

Daishowa Pulp Mill Emissions

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of the Environment today. Yesterday I brought forward to this Assembly the issue of poverty in northern Alberta and the need for real jobs, not food banks like the members on my left here are promoting. Upon reading Monday's *Hansard*, I find that the Leader of the Official Opposition again is up to his old tricks of misleading Albertans. He indicated to this House that Daishowa is not within compliance with its licensed emissions of chlorinated organics. Since then I've received a number of phone calls from my constituents concerned about statements of this nature. My question is: is the minister now in a position to clarify this situation?

3:10

MR. KLEIN: Thank you. Now, Mr. Speaker, I think we can start with the convenient misquote used by the Leader of the Opposition when he alleged that I told the House on March 27 that pulp mills were discharging into the Peace River at up to "10 times [below] their licensed limits." If hon. members would check *Hansard* that day, they would find that I said, "In some cases . . . some of the mills are performing 10 times less than their licensed limit." I did not mention either Daishowa or the Peace River. The Leader of the Opposition sometimes has trouble reading, and that's why I filed charts on March 27. He understands pictures much better. I can confirm that Daishowa is currently discharging less than half its licensed limit, and I have no reason to believe that the mill won't operate below its licensed limit for absorbable organic halides when it reaches full capacity. The Peace River and the people downstream will be well protected.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, my supplemental is: in order to make the Leader of the Official Opposition honest, could the Minister of the Environment clarify the difference between his charts and the charts provided by the leader?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the information that the Leader of the Opposition filed in the House is readily and publicly available, and updates are circulated monthly by Daishowa to its public advisory committee, a public advisory committee, by the way, that was put in place by this government. It was the same information used by the department in developing the chart; however, in January the company changed its reporting format. This does not change the fact, however, that in January when the graphs said that Daishowa was performing at 20 percent of its licensed limit it was actually performing at something around 45 percent. I think all members will agree that is still . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Conclusion, hon. minister.

MR. KLEIN: That's still excellent performance, Mr. Speaker. I think all members will also want to know that this performance is measured against very, very tough standards for AOX. Daishowa is licensed at 1.4 kilograms per air dried tonne, the lowest AOX standard we know for any kraft mill operating anywhere in the world. Other jurisdictions, like Ontario, hope to reach similar standards in four to five years; Alberta has them today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Environmental Impact Assessments

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, most ministers have the courage to provide supplementary information at the end of question period, where they face supplementary questions.

Yesterday the minister took time out from his usual occupation of misrepresenting the opposition's position – you know, where he says that we want to have an environmental impact assessment on everything, every doghouse in the province – and he actually addressed the real issue, which was the list of 14 major projects for which we have requested environmental impact assessments. What he said was: yes, we'll have an EIA on three of them, but the other 11 we won't. I would like, even though that's some progress, to ask the minister if he will now table the criteria he used to make this important decision, assuming that he can't table his political elbow in this Chamber.

MR. KLEIN: The hon. member won't understand this, Mr. Speaker, because the criteria is common sense. Whatever makes sense is the criteria, but he doesn't understand that. This member would have this government do EIAs on museums, EIAs on animals, EIAs on subdivisions, EIAs on doghouses, EIAs on garages. These are the kinds of statements you can make when you have no mandate, when you have no responsibility, and when you have no understanding about how the real world works.

MR. McINNIS: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are no doghouses on this list. There may be some dogs, but I'll leave that to other people to judge.

The minister also said that the 11 projects for which he has denied an environmental impact assessment will be adjudicated through some other process. Well, I wonder if he would now care to admit that that other process consists of himself, the Premier, Economic Development and Trade, Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, and Energy cutting deals in a back room where people can't have access to what's going on.

MR. KLEIN: I explained yesterday that there are other processes in the province for adjudicating the environmental, social, and economic worthiness of various projects. The rules are quite clear relative to those projects that are subjected to environmental impact assessments. Basically, a project is referred to the Department of the Environment's environmental impact assessment branch, a recommendation is made, and on the basis of that recommendation an environmental impact assessment is launched, which includes the preparation of documents by the proponents, an informal public review of those documents, and a deficiency review by the department. Following that deficiency review, if the project is not a mandatory project, is a decision by the minister as to whether that project

will go to the newly formed Natural Resources Conservation Board. Soon that process will be legislated, and I would think that the hon. member would be quite happy about that. What we're striving to do in this government, Mr. Speaker, is to take a good process and make it even better, and I think that the hon. member should be pleased about that.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon.

Office Space Utilization

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to join the members who are welcoming back the Premier with a question. This government has once again displayed its well-known incompetence in the field of planning in that the public works minister announced just a couple of days ago that the federal building on the north side here would be destroyed or leveled. We have to remember that eight years ago we bought this building for office space, and three years ago the past minister of public works, in spite of this building being empty, decided it wasn't big enough and rented space through the Premier's friends from Olympia & York. Then late last year the former public works minister suddenly decided to decentralize and ship everybody out of town. What is the point of this *Alice in Wonderland* scenario, Mr. Premier? What's going on?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it's difficult to find any sense in the way the member presented his question. I don't know quite what he's trying to get, first of all. He did start out with a false allegation in which he said that the minister of public works had said that the federal building will be destroyed. Now, the minister will be back in the House. The hon. member can raise the matter with him when he returns. I'll tell him of the hon. member. We'll read the *Hansard*, if we can find anything else in the question.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, the Premier likes to pose as little Alice but really is the Mad Hatter. What I'd like to get across to the Premier – again I'll repeat it. We have a building that's not being used. Whether it's destroyed or looked at or painted doesn't matter. We're not using it because we've rented more space from his friends downtown, and then the Premier announces that he's going to move people out to the rural areas. What is going on? Where are you going to put the people?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. [interjection] You're finished. [interjection] Thank you.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I can only tell by listening to the hon. member's question that he repeated it, and therefore the answer is the same.

I'm glad to be back with the hon. member. I'm sorry I missed some of his more colourful conduct.

Economic Development Strategy

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks the opposition have been very critical of the government, particularly the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, for some of its programs. It would appear that a very prestigious and authoritative source does not share their views. I read recently with interest that Alberta Economic Development and Trade received recognition as one of the top 10 economic development groups in North America. As the award was provided by *Site Selection* magazine

and the Industrial Development Research Council, which is the premiere site location group in North America, this is obviously a major achievement. In light of the budget reductions for Economic Development and Trade, could the minister explain the status of this department's winning programs?

3:20

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, we're delighted that our department did receive this award, because as the hon. member indicated, it is a very prestigious award. If he'll allow me, I wish to also salute the individual within our department, Miss Lori Schmidt, who is the manager of our site selection division, and the department itself for the excellent work that they do do in attracting businesses and private-sector capital to the province so that we can be the leading province as it relates to economic growth in all of Canada. I salute the outstanding work that these individuals do do, because far too often criticism is directed by the opposition towards these hardworking public servants.

MR. ADY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, would the minister please explain the background of this award and the impact he sees it having on us?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, it should be noted as it relates to this award that it is not solicited. *Site Selection* magazine itself examines a number of criteria, the packages that are put together as it relates to attracting businesses. We're very active on a worldwide basis in attempting to attract industry to this province so that we can create jobs for Albertans, and we're going to continue very actively in this area making sure that we are a competitive province. We do so with one of the programs that the hon. member mentioned, site selection, plus we have a partnership with the business community itself so that in turn, again, we can create jobs for Albertans.

MR. SPEAKER: Might we revert to the Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**
(*reversion*)

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague Ken Kowalski, from the constituency of Barrhead, it's my pleasure to introduce some 81 members of a delegation from the Barrhead elementary school visiting our legislative proceedings today. They are joined by teachers Mrs. Maureen Tansowny, Madam Cournoyer,* Mr. Laurin Lamothe, aide Mrs. Sue Ann McColl, and bus driver Bill Lane. I'd ask them all to rise and receive the very warm welcome from all members of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Another one? Thank you. The Minister of Recreation and Parks.

DR. WEST: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to the other Members of the Legislative Assembly 27 grade 6 students from the constituency of Vermilion-Viking and the Mannville school. They are seated in the public gallery, and

*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

they are accompanied by their teacher Robin Roland and parents Barry McDonald, Susan Obrigewitch, and Gary Poliakiwski. I would ask that they stand and receive the cordial welcome of this House.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I would ask that the Committee of Supply come to order.

head: **Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**
head: **Estimates 1991-92**

Environment

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions, comments?

The hon. Minister of the Environment.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There were a number of questions raised by both the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark relative to both votes 1 and 2. Many of those questions did not relate in any way, shape, or form to the estimates, but I would nonetheless be very happy to answer those questions, perhaps in another forum. The questions that were asked that did not relate to the Heritage Savings Trust Fund estimates revolved around various water resource and water management issues separate and apart from those that relate to headworks and main canals in the irrigation systems.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, for instance, alluded to the McDowell case in the Priddis area. The way we would deal with that program would not be under the land reclamation program under the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund; that would be dealt with under the HELP program, Help End Landfill Pollution. We have entered into a joint agreement with the federal government to identify some 13 orphan sites and have tried to come to grips with those sites to, first of all, secure them to make sure that they don't pose a public health hazard and, secondly, to decontaminate those sites when the funds become available. So the questions in no way relate to the votes before us, Mr. Chairman, but in another forum, for the benefit of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, I would be very happy to provide him with the answers and as much information as I possibly can.

With respect to one of the votes and one of the specific questions that was asked by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, I believe the question was: how do we assure that there will be ongoing assessment of the improvements that are now being made under the program to the main canal system? Quite simply, Mr. Chairman, it's our intention, after the program runs out, to put in place an extensive monitoring program, a program of constant and consistent maintenance to make sure that the canals never again come to be in the state of disrepair that many of them did experience over a long period of time. As to what that program will be precisely, I don't know at this particular time, but I do have assurance from the department that there will be a program of maintenance and monitoring and ongoing repair of the canal system. This may require down the road another allocation of Heritage Savings Trust Fund money to facilitate that ongoing maintenance program.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place also asked me a question – and I thought I had the answer here; yes, here we are – relative to the Picture Butte lime pit and the restoration attempts that were being made there under the land reclamation program. Mr. Chairman, I'm happy to report that the town of Picture Butte acquired a 4.9 hectare abandoned lime pit from Alberta Sugar Company in 1988. They applied for partial funding for reclamation of the site to clean up an eyesore and eliminate a blowing lime dust problem. Indeed, there was a notion at one time that this site could be used for industrial purposes. The cost for the reclamation was over \$320,000, of which the department contributed \$230,000 through the program. The reclaimed land is located adjacent to the existing industrial subdivision in Picture Butte and has added approximately 3.6 hectares of land to their industrial land base and leaves about 1.3 hectares as a greenbelt or parkland. Mr. Chairman, the town of Picture Butte presently has title to this property, which is vacant, and at this time there is no agreement for sale or lease or any other plans for disposal of this particular parcel of land.

3:30

Mr. Chairman, there's one thing I should add. A number of questions – and I don't have the specific questions that were raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark – related to groundwater, related to other situations relative to the management and the wise use of water. I would like to advise members of the Assembly that we're now preparing a discussion paper under the auspices of the Water Resources Commission to take out to the public and to hold very extensive public consultations relative to a complete rewrite of the Water Resources Act. Hopefully this discussion paper will result in legislation that can be brought back to this Assembly sometime next year, hopefully in the spring session, to bring about a new piece of legislation, a new Water Resources Act, that will better reflect today's realities and expectations with respect to the wise use and the protection of our very precious water resource now and into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I did want to address some concerns to the minister concerning the land reclamation program sponsored through the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund capital projects division.

As the minister knows, there is a situation out in the northern part of the county of Two Hills along the North Saskatchewan River at the abandoned chemical plant site near the hamlet of Duvernay. The minister is certainly well aware of this, because his department was able to provide considerable assistance along with the Department of Transportation and Utilities to help provide a water system for the people who live in the hamlet of Duvernay, some \$500,000 in funding, coming mostly through the Department of Transportation and Utilities but some as well through the Department of the Environment, to provide a safe and adequate supply of water for the people living in the hamlet. The reason this was necessary, Mr. Chairman, is because the groundwater in the hamlet was found to be contaminated. Extensive testing was done through the Department of the Environment after the contamination was discovered, and there was some fear that it was linked in some way to the operations of the former chemical plant just to the south and west of the hamlet of Duvernay, and uphill, I might add.

Now, I toured the site with residents of the hamlet and did a lot of lobbying along with people from the county of Two Hills to get the water situation resolved. As well, we made the department aware of three or four abandoned dump sites on the piece of land that the chemical plant is located on. There was some assistance that came through the Department of the Environment through HELP, the Help End Landfill Pollution program, to recover that site.

Now, the recovery is not complete, and the county of Two Hills were very disappointed to learn that in response to their request for assistance through the land reclamation program, apparently it was deemed that this site did not qualify for a couple of reasons. One, the property in question belongs, I believe, to the Hongkong Bank of Canada. The ownership of the property is fairly convoluted. It's gone through a lot of different people's hands and companies and permutations, but I believe is in the hands now of the Hongkong Bank of Canada, and apparently funding is not available for that property. As well, an official from the department, the head of the reclamation branch, Alberta Environment, informed the council by way of letter that there was nothing that was deemed to be dangerous or of particular concern on that site, so it didn't seem to be a pressing and urgent concern as far as reclaiming. I just want to make that submission to the minister.

There are three or four abandoned dump sites on that property, and one of them, I can tell you from personal observation, is right on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River. The process of erosion is causing part of that landfill there to become exposed, and I think there's a reasonable chance that the contents of that dump may eventually start to fall into the river. My first concern is from the environmental and health protection standpoint. The county's anxious to get the site cleaned up. The other aspect is an economic concern, that this site has sat vacant for a number of years. There were some attempts to locate other industries on site, but one of the impediments there is the history. You know, a lot of companies are reluctant to purchase a piece of land and commit themselves to operation of an enterprise on a site that has some questionable history and has some abandoned dump sites that have not yet been reclaimed.

On behalf of the residents of the hamlet of Duvernay in the county of Two Hills, and the county of Two Hills, I would like to ask the minister to have another look at the request for funding under the land reclamation program. The record's been very good so far in terms of the government's response to providing safe and adequate drinking water for the people there. We need to go one step further and clean up that site and start fresh.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to make some comments relating to some of those that were made last evening. I'd like to welcome the Official Opposition on side in supporting irrigation in southern Alberta. I can see that obviously they and the Liberal Party, in fact, have been talking to their candidates in the area and finding out how popular and how necessary irrigation is in southern Alberta and the value that it has. Now they've decided to support it in the Legislature. That's a welcome problem.

MR. McINNIS: They said they were opposed.

MR. HYLAND: Well, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place says they were opposed. I was at a meeting in Lethbridge where one of their former candidates and a well-known New Democrat in Lethbridge and one of the aldermen got up and told him how wrong they were on the support of the Oldman dam. Mr. Chairman, that's under a different subject, so I'll stay off that.

Nevertheless, I'd like to deal with some of the comments related to the headworks. The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark asked about headworks and why the Department of the Environment was involved in headworks. Mr. Chairman, I think part of the reason is related to the supply of water to 42-plus communities in southern Alberta. Those are the communities that receive water directly from the irrigation systems. Even the city of Lethbridge is somewhat dependent on water from the irrigation systems because the St. Mary reservoir and the Waterton reservoir let water down those two rivers to go past Lethbridge to supplement the water from the Oldman River in times of low flow. The upgrading of those storage reservoirs and the upgrading of the canals relating to and from them – as I said, they take water to a large number of people in southern Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place also asked about efficiency in the system and about metering. I think probably one of the rules of thumb – if you talk to many people involved in the irrigation industry, one will find out that the increase in efficiency has been greater in the delivery of the water system from the irrigation district. That's been a great change in efficiency, but there's been a greater change from there to distribution by the farmer, moving from the old-fashioned flood system to the sprinklers and then to the wheel moves and then to the pivots.

3:40

Part of the reason for that is economics. You put on as much water as what you need to grow your crop, and because of the cost of getting that water on your land – the cost of power, the cost of gas, and the wear and tear on your machinery – in many ways that is just about as good a way. The economics have controlled it, because of the increasing costs, virtually as much as what you could have controlled it with water meters and charging by the amount of water used. You're putting on what you need to grow the crop and you're not putting on excess, because it's getting fairly expensive on a per acre cost for power and your natural gas.

Mr. Chairman, other comments were made regarding the improvements of the canals. It was partly relating to the efficiency, partly relating just to the improvements of the canals and the salinity, et cetera. Prior to starting to improve and rebuild the irrigation systems, there was a lot of habitat along the canals because there was a lot of seepage. The one thing that nobody counted on with the improvements of the system in probably 99 percent of the cases was the sealing off of the seepage. Much of that habitat has disappeared because the water isn't there anymore, and the cattails, et cetera, have dried up. So in conjunction with the districts, Ducks Unlimited and a number of other people have set land aside and put water into land for habitat. I think that is also a good measure. One can go back and look at pictures of what canals used to look like before and look at a canal five years later, and it shows that there's far less seepage out of those canals than what there was.

The other one thing related to efficiency is that in many cases one was probably irrigating 100 acres more or less on a quarter section. They're probably irrigating close to 140 or 150 acres

on that quarter section with virtually the same amount of water because of the change in the efficiency.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark made comments about communities in southern Alberta, the amount of water used through municipal use, "because particularly in southern Alberta there is not water metering in municipal systems." I would think – depending what you call southern Alberta, but Calgary is certainly southern Alberta. Granted, Calgary with – what? – 600,000 people or whatever doesn't have water meters. Beyond Calgary, I know Lethbridge has water meters; Medicine Hat has water meters in a major part of the city.

AN HON. MEMBER: They have a lousy mayor there.

MR. HYLAND: In Medicine Hat? I'll tell him that.

We have water meters in the communities that are dependent on irrigation. Just to name two or three in my constituency: Foremost, Bow Island, Grassy Lake. There are water meters in those towns. In fact, some of the water costs are high. My water bill was \$81 for two months, just basic, without turning on the outside sprinklers.

MR. DAY: It's more than Red Deer.

MR. HYLAND: Somebody says it's more than Red Deer.

There may be the major city without water meters, but it isn't all the small towns. Most of them have water meters. In the last number of years there have been very few of the councils that have cut the water rate in the summertime like they used to. Now they maintain just about the same water rate throughout the year.

I think, Mr. Chairman, that covers a few of the points that I wanted at least to reply to. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mine are fairly short. I was interested in . . . My colleague just closed the book on my heavy reading here, but I'll get back to it.

MR. MITCHELL: It's the first time he's ever wanted to use notes.

MR. TAYLOR: Maybe I learned.

I listened with interest to the Hon. member from Cypress, my old hometown, talk about a loss of habitat along the ditches. I think that's very, very important, especially when you come from a country where there's no water, there's no brush, there's nothing, there's no habitat except maybe some rattlesnakes. I was a little intrigued. I wonder if the Minister of the Environment, or somebody, I suppose, who is taking notes for him somewhere, would maybe answer whether there's been any research – I spent some years in China in the early '70s, Mr. Chairman. They found willow planting along the irrigation ditches – and willows are notorious for the amount of water that they use. The whole new cycle that it set up, all the way from carp fishing to game and everything else, more than paid for the fact that there were willows along the banks giving shade and pools for fish and so on. Now, I was just wondering if anybody – we're rediscovering all sorts of Chinese cures, and that might be one of them for these modern engineers, of which I am one. You know, a modern engineer is one that would put a four-lane

highway right through the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre in order to get from A to B in a hurry.

I was wondering if in the irrigation ditch process, as our hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff has already pointed out, whether we haven't been in a rush to move the water fast and haven't seen what nature would do with a certain amount of leakage. I just pose it as a question to see whether they want to – as a matter of fact, I think the hon. member might want to go to China and study it. If that's the case and he'll promise not to come back, we might even arrange financing.

The second item was on the land reclamation. I'm just wondering; it says here that this is to make the land "as productive as it was prior to disturbance." Mr. Chairman, I have the impression, but maybe the Minister of the Environment can correct me, that some moneys from this are leaking into straightening out creeks and rivers to move the water along faster, under the guise that it's claiming grassland and farmland that was normally underwater or part of the year was underwater, because with an oxbow, highly meandering stream, the water traps in the turns and goes out and floods the floodplains. Quite often it may be okay for hay, but it's not okay for seeding because it takes too long to dry out. Some of the engineering geniuses – there again I'm criticizing my own profession – for instance, out of Waskatenau, took something that no philhellene or poor peasant along the Nile or upper Africa would have ever done and cut a straight path through the incised meanders so the water would move out in a hurry. Well, of course it moved out in a hurry, and it emptied the so-called oxbows – those are the swings on either side – which were feeding the subsurface, and the wells went dry.

Now, I'd like to question the minister to see whether some of the funds that are here to reclaim land throughout Alberta which has been disturbed to make it "as productive as it was prior to disturbance" isn't leaking into some of the so-called progressive engineers to drain lands that never were intended to be drained. There again, I think the hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff may be able to help out from his work as chairman of the wetlands committee.

A drift into vote 1; it was very close here. I notice Water Management Planning has nothing down for it, yet I received in the mail the other day from an NGO or a nongovernmental organization, IRDA – I forget just what that stands for. Possibly the hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway will remember. One of the things that was intriguing, because I've never seen this advocated before by irrigationists, but the conservationists have, is the differential charging for water, now that he's talking about meters. In other words, this is a system that I have seen in other parts of the world, that if you are raising a crop that can't be grown anywhere else except with water – say, melons or something like that in the lower Nile – you get your water cheaper than if you go to plant wheat or grass, which can be grown anywhere and in effect is competitive with much of the dryland area. They suggested this differential pricing of water, which is a sort of an indirect form of rationing, but now that you've got the meters, you can do it. I was just wondering if the minister has done any work in that area. I realize that these are coming out of left field at him, and he may want to write it or put it in letter form later on.

Thank you very much for sparing me a few minutes, Mr. Chairman.

3:50

MR. KLEIN: If I could reply very quickly to some of the questions raised. Mr. Chairman, I think there will be ample

opportunity to answer many of the questions raised by the hon. member relative to water resources management through the public consultation process that will be taking place over the course of the next four or five months, which will lead to the rewrite of the Water Resources Act. We're looking for precisely this kind of input relative to the use of water.

I didn't catch the hon. member's complete question with respect to the oriental fish. I think you're referring to the grass carp, are you not? Thank you. Indeed, we are doing some experimenting with grass carp. This experimentation is taking place in Vegreville at the Environmental Centre, and I'd like to tell the story about the grass carp. They've been genetically engineered, of course, so as not to reproduce, I hope, and they have been introduced on a controlled basis to some dugouts and controlled spans of irrigation canals in southern Alberta. One of the problems with this fish being an oriental fish, a tropical fish, is that we don't know how well they winter. We have to make that determination. We do know that they are very effective in grazing the weeds and other things that break off and get into the irrigation pipes and so on. They do quite an effective job, and they're a good alternative to mechanical devices and chemicals.

I often tell the story about these things perhaps being the genesis of a brand-new fishing industry in southern Alberta because I understand they grow to be anywhere from 30 to 100 pounds. I can just imagine the expression on a ditch rider's face, seeing one of these things surface, you know. They're edible and they're fishable, and I've often wondered what you would use for bait. Perhaps hay bales or something like this.

MR. TAYLOR: Old Tories work pretty well.

AN HON. MEMBER: Liberals are hard to digest.

MR. KLEIN: Well . . .

Anyway, we're doing that experimenting and we're trying to address the problem as best we can, but we are looking for alternate solutions to keeping those ditches clean.

In answer to another question posed by the hon. member, I can assure him that there is no money leaking from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund land reclamation account into an operating account for water resource management. None of this money would go to support any of the projects that are under way now, such as the project described on Waskatenau Creek.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to raise a couple of questions to the minister with respect to one of the projects in particular that's been completed, and that's the water supply pipeline to the Sheerness power plant. In view of the fact that that power plant's future was in doubt for a long time, I'd have to wonder under what basis that particular project would end up being a part of Environment's efforts into doing irrigation headworks and main irrigation systems improvement. I would hope that . . .

Chairman's Ruling Relevance

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, order please. The Chair does have to question how this is related to the votes. Perhaps you could clarify that prior to proceeding.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Well, we're talking about the estimates coming up, and this is one of the projects that was under the estimates. That's why I'm asking him about it. It's one of the projects that have been done under this.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please proceed.

Debate Continued

MR. WOLOSHTYN: All I would like to know is: why is that particular project under Environment in this program, whereas perhaps it might have better been looked after by Transportation and Utilities?

The other end of that pipeline – I don't know where it ends. Hopefully it was proceeded on and served towns down the way or will be planned at some point so that it's not just to the power plant.

The other one that gives me a degree of concern – and I hope this is a onetime only occurrence. The Sheerness blowdown canal was used early last fall to dump a sewage lagoon from the Sheerness plant worksite. Now, on a onetime shot I suppose that can be justified, depending upon concentrations and whatnot. However, the people responsible for that particular effort didn't take the time to inform the residents along the path of the canal, which ended up dumping their effluent, at great distress to the residents on the way, into Berry Creek. Berry Creek, which serves the water needs of the hamlet of New Cessford, fortunately had just finished filling their dugout two days previous. They were totally unaware of what was coming, and we could have had a water supply contaminated for a school of approximately 100 students and the residents of the hamlet there. I'm sure the intentions were good, but perhaps some better precautions should be taken if we're going to do similar kinds of activities in the future, because the residents there made the assumption that that blowdown canal would have water only in it, not sewage.

With respect to vote 2, Land Reclamation, I would ask if this part of these activities under here have to do with some of the excellent work being done on reclaiming the strip mines that are appearing in conjunction with the power plants throughout Alberta that are using coal. I would wonder if early in the mining process, in applications to expand the mines that go to the ERCB, the reclamation plan is put into effect then. As the minister likely knows, Mr. Chairman, at the end of the mine's life we end up with a leftover hole, and that's the last pit. Rather than the expensive proposition of filling it up again, the location of that pit can be adjusted to where you want the mine to end, provided you preplan it with a good degree of foresight. I could see those large pits becoming very excellent recreational facilities, provided that the planning of the mines operation is done in conjunction with people like Recreation and Parks. We're looking down the road some considerable number of years. I think that's something that should be kept in mind when the ongoing processes are made for both land reclamation and, in fact, for the mine process itself.

The other thing that I do have some degree of concern on: again, this is stretching it a little bit to put it under Land Reclamation, but we're getting a real proliferation of dried landfills. These are supposed to be left in most cases in a workable fashion after they're finished with. I would say that if you take a little toot out to the west end of Edmonton, there are two of them that are nowhere near meeting the criteria that we would like to see. I'm talking not of the content of the dump but the shoddy way in which they're being approached, and

certainly the area will not be usable to any degree. I would suggest, if we're talking about land reclamation in this one, that some rather stringent and realistic sets of criteria be in place so that local municipalities and development appeal boards don't get away with this nonsense of an eight-inch coverage of land over a bunch of concrete, so that the operators of these landfills can, as they proceed, reclaim them as a process, as a part of their operation, and it would enhance the aesthetic quality of it as well as make it a usable piece of real estate after the fact.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4:00

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

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Minister of the Environment says that he doesn't want to deal with some of the urgently necessary reclamation projects in the province under vote 2, Land Reclamation, that he wants another forum to deal with those issues, which calls to my mind a very important question and one that I hope he will address before we leave this vote. How does he determine what sums are paid out of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund in respect of land reclamation as opposed to from his departmental spending estimates, whether it's the Help End Landfill Pollution program or whatever? This is a confusion that I think runs throughout these estimates. Is the Heritage Savings Trust Fund simply another pocket from which taxpayers' moneys can be spent by the government, or is there indeed some commitment toward achieving certain goals that will be funded out of capital funds out of this special savings account, if you like, because of their long-term importance and payback?

Among the hot spots, the 13 sites identified federally and provincially, there are some very serious situations. Priddis has been mentioned already. We have, for example, at Three Hills an abandoned chemical plant which I think is in a very serious state and in need of some attention very soon, and a wood preservative plant at Faust. There's a site just east of the city of Edmonton, an abandoned refinery. There's a number of them that seem to have some urgency to them. I think as a matter of a social goal to say that we're going to clean up these sites and do it within a certain period of time has some validity and perhaps makes some sense in terms of funding from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. The way it's been presented so far, we don't really have any clear understanding of why funds are allocated out of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund when you have virtually duplicate objectives being served in the department. It seems more like it's shifting accounting back and forth.

Admittedly, the 2 and a half million dollars budgeted is a very modest sum of money, but I think there would be some support if the government were to say: "Well, we've identified these sites. We know there's some potential health hazard. There's a necessity to clean them up, and by gosh, we're going to do it. We're going to do it from our savings, and we're going to do it in a fixed period of time." As it is now, spokespeople for the Environment department have to explain these things to the public. I notice the minister doesn't often volunteer for this assignment, and to say, "Well, we know we've got these 13 sites that are urgently in need of rehabilitation but we only have money to fund three of them, and you're not one of the three, so you have to suffer with your problem a little longer or maybe a lot longer because we don't really have a master plan in place" – perhaps he could explain what objectives are served, particularly by vote 2 from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. What is

he hoping to accomplish there as opposed to these other problems which definitely cry out for and need some attention in the very near future?

I think we need to have the Minister of the Environment and not just the Member for Cypress-Redcliff address the question of metering water, because where we're at today under vote 1 is that we've spent almost \$500 million to date to clean up and rehabilitate the headworks and the main irrigation system. We've got that system virtually, a matter of 80 percent, complete in terms of bringing it up to the highest and the most modern standard, but still a tremendous amount of water runs through the system. The question we have to ask is whether we're making the best and the highest allocation of those water resources throughout the entire system. If we're going to spend this kind of money, then I think we have to look at what happens at the downstream end. I'm aware that the Minister of the Environment comes from the city of Calgary, and I'm aware that the city of Calgary doesn't practise water metering. To me, that's a very bad mistake. It treats water as if it's not a valuable resource, not the valuable resource it is.

Let me give the minister an example of the kinds of problems we get into if we're not very careful in the allocation of water. I cite the example of the Highwood River system, where the government is politically committed to this Highwood diversion project, which is going to take additional amounts of water from the Highwood to feed the irrigation system even though we know today that there is a very serious environmental problem with low water at certain times of the year. It's very definitely a hazard; in fact, it's fatal to the trout population at certain times of the year. You know, they keep adding it up, keep adding it up, and they can't seem to come out with a system that allows the needs of the river to be met as well as the needs of the irrigation farmers. They use this instream flow needs technology: a number comes back, the politicians don't like the number, so they boot it back and they keep trying. Well, I mean, that IFN process is not working the way I understood it, and you've got, you know, potentially the same situation in every one of these projects.

Now, if you rely on energy costs, operating costs at the farm level to dictate the use of water, then you treat water as having zero value, whereas in fact we know that water has a tremendous value. It has a value running wild in the river for the environment, a value to the environment which I submit must come first, although you don't find that in the priority list in terms of water users; there's a recreational value; there's a value for human consumption; there's a value for irrigation. There are all kinds of potential values that we can't even think of today. So why put zero value on the water? If you're going to spend half a billion dollars to clean up the headworks, why not make certain that the rest of the system is run as efficiently as it possibly can be? The PC Party pretends to believe in free enterprise values. Well, the free enterprise value is that you allow the market to determine the value of the use that's going to be made of a product, but in the free market system you can't say that some goods are worth zero and allow them to be used indiscriminately. That's the way we've treated our environment in the past, and that's why we're in the problems that we're in today.

I'd like the minister to address specifically that question of metering in the downstream edge of the system so that we can ensure that the efficiencies that have now been built into the system are going to be realized in terms of savings of water consumption, so that the savings that are in water consumption

will be available for other purposes, other needs, other economic values in the system.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Minister of the Environment.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In answer to the first question, both these programs were brought in at approximately the same time; that is, the land reclamation program under the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, and the HELP program, which is funded out of general revenues. I appreciate what the hon. member has had to say relative to the ongoing funding of the more serious problem, the more serious problem being contaminated sites. That is the fundamental difference between the two programs.

The HELP program deals with contaminated sites, sites that are deemed to be hazardous to public safety and public health. Those are the sites that we have to address immediately, such as the Canada Creosoting situation on the banks of the Bow River, where we have a problem of leaching. We know that this nasty stuff has formed pools, we know that that substance is now getting into the river, and we know that the cost is going to be something between \$35 million and \$50 million. We know that to deal with the other 12 sites, it's going to cost megadollars to decontaminate these sites. Perhaps – and I don't discount the hon. member's suggestion at all – perhaps as we get a better handle on the severity of this pollution, there should be a program devised to make sure that the funds are in place, perhaps through the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, to address these problems. The program that we're addressing today is one that ostensibly looks after small sites that don't pose a hazard in particular. They are unsightly, and they can be better used as something else, such as parkland and small golf courses and just pretty, nice, pleasant, passive, open spaces.

4:10

The hon. member also makes a point with respect to the use of water, including the question of metering in the irrigation districts. Water, of course, is metered – it's metered as to flow – as it leaves the main canal and enters the various irrigation districts. But I think what he's talking about is the user-pay concept and how we better refine that concept to achieve a better and wiser use of our water resources. This is precisely why we have determined that the Water Resources Act as it now exists is an Act that really is reflective of the ownership of water, the allocation of water, and really doesn't address the issue of water quality and water management. That's why we're going to be taking that Act out for public consultation – first of all, a discussion paper which addresses many of the questions raised by the hon. member – to find out how we can come to grips with some of these problems and achieve through legislation a better system for wise use and wise management of our water resources.

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

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just did want to follow up on one particular instance that has come to my attention, particularly in the land reclamation area. I do appreciate the discussion we had with the minister in the heritage trust fund on this matter back last fall and the incredible program of needs that it represents in terms of reclaiming

land for better use and just how many sites and incidents there are throughout the province that need attention.

As it's being debated today, I didn't want to let this discussion go by without raising the issue of a landfill site in St. Paul that is used by the county of St. Paul, and some residents there, Wayne and Velma Hudson, who have been incredible in their persistence in trying to get some better sense of what is to be the fate of that landfill, just how contaminated a site it is, and having some groundwater testing around it. It apparently has been in use for some 12 to 14 years. Their home is less than 300 metres from this site, which has been used as a landfill in the St. Paul county for 14 or 15 years, full of all kinds of contaminants, as you can imagine, Mr. Chairman. In fact, he even has a whole stack of photos here of things he has seen and photographed in the landfill that is less than 300 metres from his home.

Apparently, the county continues to say, "Well, in terms of the regional strategy we're going to look at some other sites, but we'll just sort of cover this up with some dirt for now and hope that it isn't going to cause too much of an offence in terms of the aesthetics of the area," and has tried to get the local health unit to do some groundwater testing of the site. They come back and say, "Well, it's not really a problem now." I guess the point is that both the county and the health unit now realize that it's going to cost money to do something about what I think is a rather flagrant abuse of the environment in St. Paul.

It did go before the Public Health Advisory and Appeal Board. They say they'd like to give it some more investigation. They say, and I quote:

It is to the credit of Mr. and Mrs. Hudson that they have succeeded in identifying the potential issues, and caused the County to respond to the potential health issues. The evidence presented to this Board of dead animals, pesticide containers, fires and ground water issues relating to this modified landfill site should be of significant concern to the County.

They go on to make a number of recommendations of what needs to go on. This was 1988. Here we are, three years later. I am told that not much has happened, except that this poor environmental citizen up there in St. Paul has gone to his MLA, has written letters to various ministers of the Crown and to various places where he feels there is jurisdiction and he might get a hearing. He's come to the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place and to myself with just a mound of evidence. I mean, this man has not just got a NIMBY syndrome – not in my backyard – he's got some real, legitimate concerns. He's hired private consultants to look at the matter, and they, too, say that this is a deteriorating situation which needs to be investigated.

So I just put it to the minister today, and I want to do it in a very direct way so that he might take a personal interest in this matter. I know there are dozens and dozens of sites throughout the province that fall under his attention, particularly in this vote, but to me this one is just a glaring area of concern. If the minister with the powers that he has through his department might look thoroughly at just how contaminated the site is, how much of the contaminants are leaching into the groundwater – which goes, I believe, to the whole town of St. Paul as well to this person's home, which is only 300 metres away. If it isn't that contaminated a site, then could we at least get on with not just having it covered with some dirt but rather reclaimed to its full use so that Mr. and Mrs. Hudson will not have to live with this festering situation for much longer?

Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I didn't bring this up earlier, but the hon. minister touched on it when he talked about water

rights, and I thought I'd have a moment to ask him. The minister has done a very good job, and I'd like to compliment him, because he has been more forthcoming than most ministers are in the meeting. He's been so forthcoming, in fact, that I would like to continue the questions.

I happen to be one of those, and I think there is quite an increasing number of people, that believe the river bottom rights where they flow through Indian reserves belong to the Indian peoples or the Indian nation that had a particular treaty or that are living in a particular area. What I'm interested in asking the minister – and he could correspond later because it is a complicated matter – there are some books now by the Law Reform Commission and natural resources law commission in Calgary and the University of Saskatchewan that fairly strongly point out that the river bottom rights of rivers through Indian reserves belong to the Indians. Bearing in mind that back in the days when we allotted a lot of Indian reserves, we turned what we thought was useless land up in the foothills over to Indian reserves. Now the Indians have found – and so has the nonnative majority – that those reserves are very strategically placed as far as being at the headwaters of many of our rivers.

If indeed, then, the bottom of the river rights – not water rights; the bottom of the river – do belong to the Indian nation that made the treaty at the time in the area, I think we're in quite serious jeopardy as far as water control is concerned. So I'd like to pose the question to the minister: when he mentions water rights, is there a committee or a group within his department that is studying the ownership of river bottoms in federal land, Indian land, fee land, all the different lands that a river can flow through?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I can answer that question very quickly. As we propose to take this water resources discussion paper out, there is a section that deals specifically with water on Indian lands for irrigation, the whole issue of ownership, the whole issue of Indian jurisdiction overpassing their own bylaws and so on for the use and control of water. We recognize that it's a special situation. It's one that has to be addressed on more than just the water issue. It has to be addressed on constitutional grounds; it has to be addressed on the basis of traditional rights, and so on. So that issue is addressed in a very special way in the discussion paper on water use in the province.

Can I just answer just one more question? It relates to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. We will look at that site. I've just discussed this with the MLA for the constituency involved. There are some 350 dump sites that have to be looked at in the province. There are some 30 more industrial sites that we've identified; about 80 coal mines, smaller operations that we've identified that still have to be addressed; about 20 reservoirs; a hundred sand and gravel pits; and about 55 abandoned sewerage lagoons that we still have to look into under this program.

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

4:20

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of things I wanted to ask about. The first one that comes to mind, looking at the two votes that we're talking about here – Irrigation Headworks and Main Irrigation Systems Improvement, and Land Reclamation: I can't help wondering why those two, or at least certainly the first one, couldn't have been under the ordinary budget estimates, vote 3, Water Resource Management,

on page 143 of the budget book. It does seem to me that the heritage trust fund capital projects division has become a bit of a place where the government can get a little bit of extra money to do some extra things that they don't want to own up to as competing for the hard dollars for the main budget. It seems to me that the capital projects division expenditures in all areas where it fits in any way, shape, or form into the budget – and of course they all could in the various departments – should be put back under the departments, and the budget process for the overall budget should be opened up a bit so that we don't have to have these extra hearings on this. What we should have instead is a general debate on the heritage trust fund and the whole concept of it. Having said that, perhaps the minister would comment on that anyway.

I wanted to get to a specific point or two. I was listening to the radio around the lunch hour today, and there was an engineer from B.C. talking about the Bennett dam. Of course, the question that was put to him was: what's anybody doing about and why is there all this great devastation of the delta of the Athabasca River? I can't help wondering if any of the money that's being allocated to land reclamation – if the minister has thought about some land reclamation there. In terms of water management, really what the area needs is some water. The engineer pointed out . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: It's in B.C., isn't it?

MR. McEACHERN: No, no. The dam is in B.C., but the consequences are very much in Alberta, so one does need to be concerned about this.

The engineer did point out that, of course, on the benefit side the dam does produce electricity for about a quarter of B.C. Obviously there's a strong economic benefit there, but you have to wonder about Alberta sort of getting the short end of the stick. I wonder if the minister has been in any negotiations with the province of B.C. to see how this might be mitigated.

I think what he pointed out points out the difficulties of the whole irrigation and dam building process and what it does to rivers. In this particular case, anyway, he said that if the water was released so that there was that usual spring flood down in the delta region, then you would not have enough water in the dam to run the turbines through the winter to produce electricity when in fact it's needed most. Obviously, we've got a direct conflict between the needs of the users and the needs of that delta if it's going to stay the vibrant and lush area that it used to be. Of course, it's not been that for some time; that dam has been in for a long time.

What I'm asking the minister is: are these votes in any way, shape, or form connected with that, or if not, is the budget in any way connected with that? Is anybody doing anything about the delta and the devastation it's been subjected to over the last few years because of lack of water?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

MR. KLEIN: Very quickly, there are ongoing negotiations through a transboundary protocol with the province of British Columbia and the Northwest Territories. This is a recent phenomenon. There is a notion now or some evidence being developed that the Bennett dam is having some deleterious effect on Alberta's river systems, and we're looking into it. I just can't give you a specific answer right now, but if you give me some time, I can provide you with some information as to what exactly is being done.

The other question . . . I'm just trying to remember. What was the other question?

MR. McEACHERN: Why is the vote in the heritage trust fund instead of in the budget estimates?

MR. KLEIN: Right. I'll repeat the question, just to put it on the record, Mr. Chairman, thank you. The question was: why is this out of the heritage trust fund and not out of general revenue? The answer is that the irrigation network in this province is probably – well, there are some areas where it's a hundred years old. I would say the average age of the irrigation system in southern Alberta is about 60 years, and over the course of time, it's suffered terrible damage, not through neglect so much but through ignorance of the proper ways to manage water and use the canals efficiently and properly. That was recognized about 10 years ago. The government of the day did a detailed examination of the cost, and it was determined that it would cost megadollars to restore the irrigation network, far beyond the capability of the general revenue account to accommodate. Therefore, it was deemed to be an appropriate long-term project under the Heritage Savings Trust Fund in keeping with the mandate of the trust fund, and that is to preserve and protect and provide things for the future benefit of Albertans.

MR. McEACHERN: Just a quick point on that latter answer. It would seem to me that there's no real, logical reason why the \$3 billion . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, just a reminder. Order please. [interjection] Order. The Chair was wishing to indicate – it seems to be, you know, one of those things that happens when we have people rapidly standing up and down – that you must be recognized before proceeding to speak.

The Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. I hadn't realized you hadn't recognized me. When my colleague sat down, I assumed that I had the floor.

I really won't elaborate much on the point, but it doesn't really seem to me that there's any sort of logical reason why. I mean, you could take heritage trust fund dollars – in fact, we do now; we take the revenues from the heritage trust fund and put them into the general revenue account. You could take other dollars if you wanted. This \$3 billion that has been spent on the capital projects division could just as easily have been transferred first to the general revenue account and spent out of the general revenue account, so that those projects would have received the same degree of debate – mostly within the government, really – in terms of priorities and allocation of those dollars into various projects.

Of course, in order to debate it in the House, we would then have to have a longer period of time than we've had on the budget. But that's another question.

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

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm afraid the Minister of the Environment isn't doing a very good job justifying the expenditure under vote 2. He says that this program deals with small sites, itty-bitty sites that aren't causing any hazard or any problem that he can identify other than that they're unsightly, and he doesn't want to bring forward an

estimate which will put forth what he described as the megadollars that are necessary to clean up the really toxic, dirty, chemically polluted, filthy industrial sites around the province that do pose, I think, a real and a present human health hazard as well as a danger and a risk to the environment. I don't mean to pretend that humans are not a part of the environment; clearly we are.

I think this is the nub of the question: if the Heritage Savings Trust Fund is there to deal with important matters that are for the benefit of future generations, why aren't we seeing a program here which is going to deal with those real industrial threats to Albertans rather than the small, rather unsightly, and not hazardous plants that are with us today? It's really the essence of what comes out of the heritage trust fund, what comes out of day-to-day spending of the department. If you've got problems that are relatively insignificant, that are "small," not "hazardous," and "unsightly," to use the minister's words, perhaps that's something that's more properly funded from the regular operating account, whereas this more serious and potentially more tragic problem, it seems to me, is something that is worth while dipping into savings, if indeed that's what the Heritage Savings Trust Fund is.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

Agreed to:

1.1 – Program Support	\$1,337,000
1.2 – Irrigation Headworks Rehabilitation	\$22,750,000
1.3 – Water Management Planning	–
1.4 – Water Resource Development Projects	\$13,650,000
1.5 – Improved Operational Capabilities	\$2,263,000
Total Vote 1 – Irrigation Headworks and Main Irrigation Systems Improvement	\$40,000,000
2.1 – Land Reclamation	\$2,000,000
2.2 – Reclamation Research	\$500,000
Total Vote 2 – Land Reclamation	\$2,500,000

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Chairman, I move that the vote be recorded.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That votes 1 and 2 be reported.

[Motion carried]

4:30

Executive Council

1 – Occupational Health and Safety Research and Education

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

MR. TRYNCHY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to present the heritage fund estimates for Occupational Health and Safety Research and Education.

Mr. Chairman, this has been a 10-year program. It started in 1981 with \$10 million, and I'm just grateful and wish to congratulate the government for extending it to the 11th year. It's a unique program, it's the only one of its kind in the country, and it has made a number of important contributions to occupational health and safety research and education in the province of Alberta. This has addressed many high priority and problem areas in many industries: oil and gas, forestry, manufac-

turing, construction, and on and on. It also has helped to train workers and employers to recognize, control, and avoid health and safety hazards, and it's helped expand professional and educators' services. It has created job opportunities in occupations such as medicine, nursing, hygiene, and safety engineering and has promoted health and safety as well.

Over the past 10 years, Mr. Chairman, we have seen many encouraging signs. The lost-time rate has declined in the past decade. Oil and gas injuries have decreased by 54 percent; forestry's have decreased by 42 percent. Mind you, there's a long ways to go yet, and hopefully we'll be there. Welding has decreased 33 percent since 1987, and there has been significant improvement, in large part thanks to the heritage grant program.

Mr. Chairman, the heritage grant program has provided funds to help employer safety education associations to get started. The Alberta Construction Safety Association is now funded under WCB. The program has supported research into fire-resistant work clothing, and Occupational Health and Safety is promoting the need for protective work wear to prevent fatal and serious burns. An Edmonton company is now manufacturing this clothing. The spin-off has created economic benefits and jobs for Albertans.

The University of Alberta has just received \$160,000 as start-up costs for courses in safety engineering and loss management. The university then raised another \$800,000 from the corporate sector. That's just got to be a super, super plus for the university, both in the way they've raised the funds and in only receiving a small amount from the heritage fund.

We are supporting a major investigation into the impact of drug and alcohol abuse in the workplace, and we're funding AADAC with some \$165,000 for that. We have provided funds to the Workers' Health Centre, and major grants have been awarded to the universities of Calgary and Edmonton to establish occupational health and safety resource centres. This will help small business and workers in construction trades. Money to the forum for action committee will be to conduct an injury reduction campaign in the food and beverage industry, manufacturing industries, and others. The Alberta small loggers association, which I met with recently – it was a question asked by the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place – just recently received \$50,000 to develop a safety program specifically for small woodland operations.

We have provided funds to three communities to develop a safe- community program.

We have supported in the past a number of programs that have had merit, and we will continue to support these outstanding programs and projects. The awareness and popularity of all our programs are growing, and it's encouraging to see many, many of the industries responding and requesting funds through the heritage grant program. Over 200 applications have been funded. We've received some 500-plus, and we hope to provide funds which will assist in the reduction of lost-time injuries.

In '91-92 we have a total budget of \$1,180,000; \$50,550, or 5 percent, has been committed, with the balance of \$915,000, or 95 percent, available for new projects in this year. The funding priorities will, we hope, pay special attention to fatal and serious injury accidents, occupational health and safety in small business, communications, English as a Second Language and poor reading skills, chemical and biological hazards, and also new workers. In the past the type of awards that have been awarded – the education programs have claimed 56 percent of the funds; the research, 40 percent; and conferences, 4 percent. All these applications go through a grant steering committee, which has four public members and seven government members from

assorted departments. Approval is then given to the managing director and then on to the minister for approval. We plan to have an evaluation of the whole program this year, and I'm sure and have no doubt that it will prove beneficial, and hopefully it will continue on.

Mr. Chairman, before I close, I've delivered to all members two documents, which they have before them, and that answers pretty well most of the concerns and questions that I'm sure they'll have. I'd be pleased now to take any questions they might have in regards to this proposal.

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

MR. GIBEAULT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do want to get a few remarks out today on this debate on the Occupational Health and Safety research and education program. I want to say, first, that of course this is a program that is unique, and we can be proud that we are doing a lot of this research here in Alberta through this program. But, Mr. Chairman, I think there are a number of areas where we could be doing better, and I want to outline a few of them first.

The first thing I want to mention here is in terms of the expenditure proposal itself. We're looking at a decrease of 3.1 percent in the overall funding level according to the figures that are in the estimates before us, from \$1.2 million last year to \$1.18 million this year. If you account, then, as well for the increase in administrative overhead, including Supplies and Services, which went up 58 percent . . . Then when we come to the actual Grants part for research, it's down by almost 8 percent. So that does concern us. In addition to that, I think it really is questionable the way this is arranged under the trust fund. It's purported to be a capital project of some kind, yet in fact it's basically a grant program, and it would seem to be more appropriate to come under the general operating budget of the province.

4:40

Now to the program itself, Mr. Chairman. There are a number of good research projects that have come out of this program, yet it seems we cannot seem to convince this minister to move from research to regulations, to implement the information that has been learned about hazardous conditions and have regulations put in place so that all workers in the province will benefit from that research.

[Mr. Moore in the Chair]

For example, we had a project on flash-fire protective clothing that the minister just referred to in his remarks, a report in March '91, just two months ago. We don't have a regulation requiring protective clothing to be worn by workers who work in those kinds of hazardous environments, even after we've got the tragedy of the PetroCan fire deaths and severe injuries. We've got this research that points the way for protective clothing, yet we haven't been able to get this minister to come forward with regulations to implement that research.

Mr. Chairman, I would suggest that we're really not making proper use and full use of the research information that is being developed through this program unless we follow it through to implementation. That's the same basic kind of idea that this government likes to talk about: how we go from research to implementation and business opportunities and so on, that pure research in itself is not enough; it's got to be implemented and

it's got to have some economic value. In the same way, when we talk about occupational health and safety research, it's only academic until it reaches a point when we've discovered what the problems are and some of the solutions to the problems and we implement a regulatory environment that will ensure that all the workers in the province who are affected by those conditions are protected and get the benefit of this research. We simply don't have that, and I would ask the minister to address that concretely.

Another example is the question of – and the minister referred to that again in his opening comments – the project that developed a health and safety guide for small business. Yet we have this minister continuing to stall and refuse to implement health and safety committees in the work force. Now, what is the point of having health and safety guides for small businesses if we're not prepared to ensure that there are health and safety committees of workers and management at all the worksites around the province to take advantage of this research and these materials that have been developed, to ensure that health and safety is in fact required, that there are mandatory committees, and that we don't take this optional "everybody does their own thing" approach? So, Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned earlier, again we're just not getting the value for the money that's being spent on this research to transform it and implement it to make sure that the workers of Alberta get the protective benefit of it and try to reduce the serious rate of accidents and injuries that we have here in the province.

Another example under the same idea, Mr. Chairman: we've got the project by the painters' association on the chronic painters' syndrome problem. I ask the minister to correct me if it's been changed recently, but as of this moment, as far as I know, the Workers' Compensation Board still does not recognize chronic painters' syndrome. The minister himself I know has still not introduced any regulation governing the painting trade. So what's the point of doing research, identifying the problems, if we don't get any follow-up on the part of the government, the minister and the department who are paid to promote occupational health and safety?

So that's the main point, Mr. Chairman, in terms of having some regulations that come out of this research so that workers do in fact across the province get the benefit of this research. Because it's really unrealistic, I would suggest to members of the Assembly, to expect workers to try to take time off work and go down to the department's library – and it's a fine library; I don't question that in any way. But a lot of the workers in this province can't take time off and go down and look up these materials in the department library. A lot of them are not from areas that are serviced by OHS regional offices and so on. So what I'm suggesting here is that we have to move beyond the research stage, and we have to have a government minister and a department that is committed to making sure that the research is developed and implemented into regulatory conditions, environment regulations that will protect the health and safety of the workers of the province.

Now, thirdly, I really think we've got to make a much better use of these resources in terms of involving workers in these projects. Now, I just tabulated, in terms of the report the minister circulated for us, the supplement for the last six months of projects, from November '90 to April 1991, which came, if my math serves me right here, to a total of some \$343,000 of approved projects. Mr. Chairman, do you know how much out of that \$343,000 was sponsored by trade unions or employee associations? I'll tell you: \$6,800, barely 2 percent, to one project sponsored by the Alberta Federation of Labour. The

Building Trades Council of this province, which represents thousands of workers, does not have any projects whatsoever in this particular allocation period.

I'm suggesting that we should rethink this approach. It's not enough just to hand out money to employers associations or universities, with all due respect to the academic community. We've got to involve workers and their organizations and their representatives in this kind of health and safety research. So I would suggest, out of the million dollar allocation or thereabouts that we're looking at under this particular vote here, some \$1.18 million this year, that the minister look at allocating a significant portion of it – and I think 50 percent would probably be about the right place to start – to funding that is reserved to be applied for by trade unions and employee associations in the province of Alberta. The rest can be applied for by employers associations and by the academic community and so on. But 2 percent is certainly not adequate in terms of having workers involved in the process.

I'd just give you an example of that, Mr. Chairman. I was speaking to the president of the Edmonton local of the fire fighters association. As the president of the local, he hasn't received any information about this program. He would have liked to have known that this program was there and that money was designated for employee groups and workers organizations to apply for so that they could have sponsored a project, perhaps in collaboration with a university team or some group of researchers, but with the direct involvement right from the very beginning of the workers involved.

I put that challenge to the minister: I think we've got to do a much better job of involving workers in these research projects right from the beginning. A way of doing that is to designate, I would suggest, a substantial proportion like 50 percent, perhaps even more, that is reserved for projects that are sponsored by workers organizations and their trade unions.

Mr. Chairman, I'm going to just leave that for the moment. I know some of my other colleagues want to make some additional comments here, and I look forward to the minister's replies to the questions I've raised.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to take this opportunity to just make a few comments about this particular program within the heritage trust fund. I view this particular program as being a preventative measure, a preventative measure in the sense that the dollars that are spent here can mean reductions in expenditures in other areas such as worker compensation claims, such as costs that may have to be borne by other departments, like the Department of Health, and hospitals and such.

I was quite shocked, quite stunned, if I read the figures correctly, to look at them and see that last year there was \$1,218,000, and that's being reduced to \$1,180,000. Now, maybe the reduction is there for some reason that I'm not aware of. Maybe there weren't sufficient applications to warrant an expenditure over and above that amount, or maybe the minister felt that it was a lesser priority than it had been last year. Nevertheless, that is a reduction of 3.1 percent, which in itself is quite marginal, but what it does, Mr. Chairman, is it sends out a message that this is no longer the priority that it was the year before, and any type of preventative measure has to be seen as a priority.

Going through the information that the minister made available to us today, the updated report and the previous year's

report, some of the projects that have been approved are very, very interesting, and some of them are very, very beneficial. I commend the minister for recognizing the great deal of benefit in some of them that have been approved. I realize there is some emphasis, but I'd like to see more emphasis directed to the new type of injuries that we've spoken of in the past, those that may be caused by things like repetitive movements. Back problems are becoming more and more recognized as a legitimate health problem that may not have been there before and so often are created within the workplace or as a result of long years in the workplace.

One that really stands out, Mr. Chairman, is the exposure workers have to certain types of gases, to certain types of chemicals, to dust, to pollutants that may be caused by working, for example, in a meat shop, where you're working with that plastic wrapping paper all the time that shoots off a type of fume that can be very, very harmful to the respiratory system.

4:50

Those are the types of areas that I think there has to be a great deal of research in, new areas that we're not nearly as up to date on as we should be. The one obvious example which comes to mind that possibly research may have prevented or at least answered a number of questions on is the situation affecting the workers in Hinton, which has been raised in this House. That's been raised a number of times and hasn't been addressed. I'm still not sure at this particular point as to what caused the problem, what the medical results or the long-term effects of that exposure are going to be to those workers.

Mr. Chairman, I'd also like the minister to use this opportunity to explain precisely what the relationship is in terms of these dollars that are available under this program to, let's say, the Workers' Compensation Board, which has to have a direct impact and which has to benefit substantially by any research that is done that means a reduction in injuries in the workplace, a reduction in lost days of work, whether it's a physical injury or an illness caused by some type of chemical or whatever in the workplace. When we've had presentations by Workers' Compensation before, they've made it quite clear that they are involved in the area of research to reduce the number of man-years or man-days that are lost. So it's important that there be some co-ordination between this program and that particular program.

There's also some obvious groups out there that I'm surprised didn't take advantage of the opportunity to apply for these dollars or possibly weren't encouraged to apply for these dollars or possibly applied for the dollars but were rejected. One that comes readily to mind is the Workers' Health Centre. Going through all the information, I see one grant of \$315 that was given for a conference that was held. Now, that's not very significant in terms of the benefits that the Workers' Health Centre can provide. Another one is the injury awareness centre that operates out of the University of Alberta. I don't see a great deal of focus in that particular area at all.

Basically, Mr. Chairman, just to wrap up, my major concern is that we may be overlooking an opportunity to reduce, in the long term, health care dollars, dollars related to job loss, because we're not placing enough emphasis on an opportunity we have here, and that is to prevent injuries and illnesses caused within the workplace.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

MR. TRYNCHY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I could just answer some of these questions.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud mentions that we should provide more funds to the universities. I want to inform the member that the University of Alberta has just been awarded \$500,000 to do the kinds of things that he's talking about. The University of Calgary has been awarded \$500,000 to work on that.

Also, Occupational Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation are working together, and Workers' Compensation provides an additional million dollars to Occupational Health and Safety to supplement their programs. He suggests that the budget is too low. It's not too low because last year we didn't use up all the funds, so the funds we've got this year will probably be more than we can use. That depends on the people that make submissions.

Now, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods suggests that the fire fighters want in. Well, I'd like to see them in. If he's been talking to them, why doesn't he get them in? Why doesn't he tell them to come and see us and make an application? The applications go to a steering committee. It has members from labour on it; it has a member from the public sector and government members. They're the ones that screen every application and then make their recommendations to the managing director of Occupational Health and Safety, who in turn makes them to the minister. Now, if they can't go through that process or are not approved through that process, I can't change it, because that's the fairest process. So if labour has got no funds here, it's because they haven't made an application that was accepted by their own peers. I said that last year, and I guess the member forgot. Maybe he can get that through to them. They have to make an application, and if they make an application that is acceptable, they will receive the funds. That's the fire fighters, the unions, the painters. He talks about not having a program for painters. Well, we have an allocation of \$22,000 for the painters, but that report won't be finalized till September of 1991. Hopefully when that's done, we'll implement what's there. The same with the other regulations. As soon as they come forward to Occupational Health and Safety . . . I don't hold them back and never have and never will. I'll make the recommendations as long as labour and the industry and all those get together and say, "This is what we want." There's a number of regulations in the works now, five or six of them in regard to fire retardant clothing and all the things he mentioned - I'll check *Hansard* to make sure that I respond correctly, and if I don't, we'll get back to him - that are going to be implemented.

So it just doesn't happen overnight. He says the minister doesn't want to do it. Well, he's wrong. The minister wants to do it, but I'd like to see the member across the way help. He never gets involved. For two years he's never come to my office. The Member for Edmonton-Beverly, the Member for Stony Plain have been in my office. We've discussed these programs, and I've assisted them. The other ones of the opposition have never taken the time to come in and say, "Look; here's how you can help us." I would do that.

He goes on to say that he wants mandatory laws in health and safety worksite committees. I wrote to every industry; I wrote to all the workers. I said this the other day. Sixty percent of the replies coming back to me said, "We do not want mandatory legislation; we want to do it through a voluntary basis." When I visit the worksites, they're working. There's many, many volunteer committees put into place. I don't know if you can police a mandatory worksite committee with five people working. Can you do it? How do you get five people in a small business

that you can put a committee in place and make it work without having inspections?

He says he can't convince the minister to move on research recommendations. Well, that's as wrong as can be. I've outlined what I'm prepared to do, but nothing has come forward that I haven't moved on. The mining regulations: I have to go out to the mine at Hinton to talk to those people. I want to do it, but they can't seem to agree between themselves just what it is. If someone comes to my office and says, "Here is an OC that we want to change," I have never turned one back.

They talk about the budget, and they're disappointed because we have some reduction. In Supplies and Services, yes, but you should remember that \$29,300 of that \$79,000 is for evaluation of the program in 1991 to see if we're on the right track and doing the right things in regard to this program. Let's evaluate it. If we're doing a good job with the research, let's implement it, and if we're not, well, maybe it's time to cancel it. Purchase of Fixed Assets was a complaint. That's for the purchase of two computers that we can use that do a better job and get things going. I don't make any apologies for the budget. I'm satisfied that we have enough funds in here to take care of the requests, and if I'm wrong, we'll know at the end of the year. Every year since this program's been in effect – for 10 years – we have never had the whole fund used up that year. There's always been a carryover, and for this year there's an \$84,000 carryover from last year which wasn't used.

So hopefully, Mr. Chairman, if we continue working together, we'll have the kind of programs we need. Again, the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary have just been awarded a million dollars out of last year's budget which they're working on, and we hope to have those recommendations back within a year to do the kinds of things that were mentioned here. Repetitive injuries and communications, work with workers in the painting and decorating association: all those people have to be called in, and they're the experts. Now, if the labour unions and the fire fighters aren't involved, I apologize. I wish they were, and hopefully we can get the message to them to make an application, get it approved, and I'll certainly take it forward to its implementation.

5:00

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Beverly.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to make a few comments on this vote, the Occupational Health and Safety Research and Education area of Executive Council.

First of all, I have taken the time to peruse these two documents that were made available to us, and certainly with my some experience in the energy industry I find these to be steps in the right direction. I think the studies here will no doubt have some impact on health and safety in the various industries that they've been addressed to.

I have looked at the annual report as well, and I'll have some comments to make on it a little later.

Of course, the expenditures are really in my opinion not sufficient. I think there is more to be done in health and safety and perhaps the need to make industry employees, employers more knowledgeable that funding is available for the kinds of projects that they can apply for. That might help to deal with that. I do believe there is a need. Every day there is new technology developing on the worksite, new chemicals that really need to be looked at and researched and refined. I think continual researching from the safety point of view is necessary.

I want to come back to an old chestnut of mine that I have advocated on numerous occasions in the House and that was briefly addressed here before, the need for mandatory safety committees in the worksite. Now, I'm sure the mechanics of how they're worked out and the numbers can certainly be developed, but I think the legislation to have safety committees in worksites would be beneficial. It would certainly supplement what is being done as reported in these two documents. I think the workers, as do the employers, have a responsibility relative to their own safety environment. They can and do contribute to the safety of the workplace, but I do think they have to be given the opportunity, and my experience has been that unless there is some mandatory component to the legislation, these aren't always adhered to. I particularly look at the high-accident industries such as energy, forestry, transportation, construction, and mining. Admittedly, the information here suggests that there has been a decrease in those industries, and that's good. To follow it up and to monitor that the decline in injuries continues, I think you really have to do it with on-site safety committees that are going to deal with it on a daily basis. In my opinion, that would help to continue to make safety an important part of any worksite.

Something that I didn't see in here – maybe it's not occurring and someone hasn't thought to do it – is to study the long-term exposure of individuals. Now, it becomes a medical situation, but I think there needs to be a tracking of occupational diseases. There's some work being done in that area, but too often . . . Because of my involvement in industry, I have talked to individuals who had worked in a particular area for a lengthy period of time. They may retire, or they may get ill before they reach retirement age. They're sick. They get off work. There's no way to really trace their illness to a particular work environment. I think doctors hesitate to get involved in that process. They're afraid – I'm not sure they're afraid; they just don't want to do it because there are certain implications for doctors in that area. So I think there needs to be something done somehow, perhaps through this program, to see if we can start developing and finding out reasons why people end up in some situations in a rather terrible state, as a result in many cases of working in a particular industry.

I'm pleased to see that the annual report addresses alcohol and substance abuse, research into that area. The only comment I would make to this one is, and I believe I'm correct, that the United Auto Workers in both Canada and the United States have done extensive research into that particular field and, I would think, would have a fair amount of information available. I guess you could supplement what they've done, but I would think that they do have a great deal of information, because that particular industry has had problems for many, many years and I know that they have done a fair amount of work. I would think a review of what they've done might be of a fair amount of value for us.

The other area I'd like to also see perhaps some work done in is the exposure to the computer. I understand that the present-day computers are much safer than presumably the earlier models were. Nevertheless, I think there are some problems still, particularly to individuals who are exposed to it on a regular eight hours a day, five days a week situation. There have been identified a variety of illnesses as a result of that occupation, and I'd like to see something done. Also included is the need to study the workstation. I think many of the problems relative to computers are the workstation situations.

I note, as the minister has already stated and the graphs here indicate, that a good portion of the funding has gone to

educational institutions to do research, and one can't argue too much with that. I was wondering what effort can be made to provide some direction to high schools, particularly those in the vocational field. Because many of those students come right out of high school and go into the workplace, I think it'd be advisable if we had some programs in the high school area that would make our students more conscious of safety when they enter the work field right out of high school. Something in the vocational fields in high schools might be appropriate.

One other question, I think, before I sit down. I note that the minister has indicated there have to be requests made from whoever to apply for the funds. The question I have: can the minister in fact initiate a study that he feels should be done? It seems to me that you may have, you know, suggestions made to you, and they're not necessarily made from the industry or from employee groups. That's certainly something the minister may want to deal with.

The other area, and I think it deals more with workers' comp, is that a lot of the problems with workers' comp are in the back area and the pain. I wonder what we are doing in this province relative to dealing with pain and assessing pain. I know there are centres in, certainly, the United States. There may be the odd one in Canada as well. I wonder if the minister has any comments about what is being done in that area of helping to deal with injured workers to cope with the pain situation.

Those are my comments, Mr. Chairman.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

MR. TRYNCHY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All members have made some pretty good suggestions. What I'd like to do at the outset is: we will take the *Hansard* after this is over, and I will make sure that *Hansard* is presented to Occupational Health and Safety. I would hope then that the managing director could talk to the universities and other people in respect to the questions raised.

Back injuries and back problems are serious injuries. If you look on page 5 of your yellow copy, we've done some work. As I've talked to doctors, there isn't, I guess, a doctor anywhere that can diagnose a back injury. It's so difficult. So we're having some difficult times getting a real research program to get that information to us, but we are working on it. We're providing more funds, and we're having more people take a look at that.

5:10

The question: can the minister apply for some of these funds? I'm not sure, but if something came to me that I thought we should do, certainly. If I get a request that isn't being looked at that we feel is necessary, I don't see why I couldn't recommend to the committee and have them approve it. I guess I'd hate to overrule it, because so far they've done a very good job in the 10 years, but certainly if any member has a recommendation to myself and would like to see it come forward, I'll do it. That's no problem.

The high school education. Yes, that is something that I'm really concerned about. Yesterday I met with the dean at the University of Alberta. We had lunch and talked about how do we get this into our schools. They're going to work on a proposal where they can get it into the universities and then talk to the Minister of Education, the hon. Mr. Dinning, and see if he can get it into the high schools. We've developed a card that many of you have used that I pass out to every student that graduates: "If you don't know . . . Ask! Before you start work." That has been received well with the young people that I've sent

them to in my constituency. We have those available for any member that wishes to use them. That is a concern. We have to get an education program on safety into our schools, and the quicker the better.

We have to look at adjusting our workstations for workers such as [inaudible] repetitive. We have a research program now on repetitive injuries. That has to be done.

AADAC I'm sure will be looking at whatever comes from the States in regards to alcohol and drug abuse in the workplace. I recall some information that I provided two years ago from research in Ontario: General Motors spends more money on alcohol and drug abuse than they spend on steel for cars and vehicles. So it is a problem, and I would hope that the member responsible for AADAC would do that.

Another question raised was: how do you trace illness to past work habits or past work activities? I don't know. I guess that's a question we'd have to ask more of doctors. The doctors I've talked to said it's impossible, because as we get older, whether we were in a worksite before that affected your lungs or not, your lungs get weaker. Things happen to you as you age that they cannot trace back to a work problem. But it's a good question, and we've got to keep asking those questions.

Again, on-site safety committees. I have no objection to having mandatory worksite committees if that's what the industry wants and that's what the workers want. I've asked workers, and they said, "No, we can do it." They want to work amongst themselves. They don't want to have the heavy hand of the law on them at all times. If there's a place where anybody in this House feels that we should have a mandatory committee, the minister has the authority to implement that mandatory committee in that worksite. I've never had a request in two years where somebody said, "Look; let's have a mandatory worksite committee put in place here," but I'd be willing to listen to it. Again, if you look at pages 21 and 32 of this document, it answers some of the questions.

We've provided again \$50,000 towards the Heroes program for young students. That's a super program. Any of the members that have seen it would support that, and those that haven't, I would encourage them to see it. It's something that I believe our young people are grasping now. I see as I talk to young people - I might just do this as an aside: I've talked to some grades 4 and 6 students in a class in my constituency, and they really take an interest in safety. They seem to grasp it a lot quicker than those in grades 11 and 12, and I don't know the reason for that.

Mr. Chairman, I believe I've answered the questions, but we'll go through *Hansard*. I will make sure that *Hansard* is available to all people concerned in Occupational Health and Safety and compensation. If the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods would make *Hansard* available to the firemen and to the labour unions, by all means I'd like to see them make some applications, because that's what it's all about. Safety is for everyone, and I'd be the first one to support it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Beverly.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just perhaps a brief response. I agree about the minister's comment that to have a long-term trace of individuals held and try and pin it down to perhaps the work environment may be difficult to do, but I think that's what research can do. For example, I use the case of an individual working in an environment of heavy concentrations of acetone. I think the experiments, the research

can in fact use acetone and use rats or mice, or whatever they use for experiments, and maybe over a period of time can determine that certain things happen to their lungs or to their liver or whatever. I think through that process you might be able at that point to apply that kind of research: that perhaps it could happen to humans as well. I think it's that kind of process that I'm talking about that might be able to determine why someone at 50 years of age after working in a certain area has certain ailments. It's very difficult to pinpoint the fact that it might be work related.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

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

Agreed to:

Total Vote 1 – Occupational Health and Safety Research and Education	\$1,180,000
---	-------------

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

[Motion carried]

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

[Motion carried]

[Mr. 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 from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund sums not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1992.

For the purpose of making investments in the following projects to be administered by the Department of the Environment: \$40,000,00, Irrigation Headworks and Main Irrigation Systems Improvement; \$2,500,000, Land Reclamation.

Executive Council: \$1,180,000, Occupational Health and Safety Research and Education.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the report, do members concur?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.
Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, it would be the intent of the government to sit tomorrow evening dealing with the capital projects division of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund with the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.

[At 5:19 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 2:30 p.m.]

