



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

Standing Committee  
on  
Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

Bill 212, Official Sport of Alberta Act  
Stakeholder Presentations

Monday, March 15, 2021  
10 a.m.

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**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature  
Second Session**

**Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

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**Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

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Canadian Professional Rodeo Association .....PB-314  
    Jeff Robson, General Manager

Jim Depew .....PB-316

Strathmore & District Agricultural Society .....PB-319  
    Ryan Schmidt, CEO and General Manager



**10 a.m.****Monday, March 15, 2021**

[Mr. Ellis in the chair]

**The Chair:** Okay. Good morning. I'd like to call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Mike Ellis, MLA for Calgary-West and chair of the committee. I'd ask that members and those joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record, and then I will call on those joining in by videoconference. We'll begin to my right.

**Mr. Schow:** Good morning. Joseph Schow, Cardston-Siksika.

**Ms Glasgo:** Good morning. Michaela Glasgo, MLA, Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Getson:** Good morning. Shane Getson, MLA, Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Good morning, everyone. Chris Nielsen, MLA for Edmonton-Decore.

**Dr. Massolin:** Good morning. Phil Massolin, clerk assistant and director of House Services.

**Mr. Huffman:** Good morning. Warren Huffman, committee clerk.

**The Chair:** Okay. I will call those MLAs participating via videoconference, at least that I can see. How about Mr. Dang? We can start with you.

**Mr. Dang:** Good morning. Thomas Dang, Edmonton-South.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Member Lori Sigurdson, go ahead.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Yeah. Good morning, everyone. Lori Sigurdson, Edmonton-Riverview.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Member Rutherford, I see you.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Good morning. Brad Rutherford, Leduc-Beaumont.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Member Amery, go ahead.

**Mr. Amery:** Good morning, committee members. Mickey Amery, MLA, Calgary-Cross.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I see Member R.J. Sigurdson. Go ahead.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Chair. R.J. Sigurdson, MLA for Highwood.

**The Chair:** And there should be Member Dach on there.

**Mr. Huffman:** He hasn't joined yet.

**The Chair:** He hasn't joined yet? Okay.

Did I miss any of the MLAs? I don't believe that I did. Okay.

Just for the record, as Mr. Dach attempts to get on, Mr. Dach will be officially substituting for Member Janis Irwin. We'll get him to introduce himself when he does sign on.

A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. Pursuant to the February 22, 2021, memo from the hon. Speaker Cooper I'd like to remind everyone of the updated committee room protocols, which encourage members to wear masks in committee rooms and while seated except when speaking, at which time they may choose not to wear a face covering. Based on the recommendations from the chief medical officer of health regarding physical distancing, meeting attendees are reminded to leave the appropriate distance between themselves and other meeting participants.

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We'll next move to the approval of the agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the draft agenda? Hearing and seeing none, would someone like to make a motion? Okay. I see Mr. Getson would like to make a motion that the agenda for the March 15, 2021, meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Bills be adopted as distributed. All those in favour, say aye. On the phone? Thank you. Anybody opposed, say no. On the phone. Hearing and seeing none, that motion has been carried.

We'll next move to the approval of the minutes. We have the draft minutes to review from the meeting on Monday, March 8, 2021. Are there any errors or omissions to note? Okay. I don't see anybody. Would somebody like to make a motion in regard to the minutes?

**Mr. Nielsen:** So moved, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Nielsen. Mr. Nielsen to move that the minutes of the March 8, 2021, meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills be approved as distributed. All those in favour, say aye. On the phone? Thank you. Anybody opposed? Hearing and seeing none, that motion has also been carried.

Mr. Dach, I see you have joined us. Could you just introduce yourself for the record, please, sir.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Chair. Lorne Dach, MLA for Edmonton-McClung.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

All right. Next, ladies and gentlemen and committee members, we'll move to the stakeholder presentation on Bill 212, the Official Sport of Alberta Act. Hon. members, at our meeting on March 1 the committee agreed to invite stakeholders to provide oral presentations on Bill 212, Official Sport of Alberta Act.

According to the committee's agreed-upon process stakeholders may make presentations of up to five minutes, followed by questions from the committee members for up to 15 minutes. Both caucuses could invite up to three stakeholders, and stakeholders lists were to be submitted to the chair by noon on Wednesday, March 3. For the record, government caucus requested to hear from three stakeholders: Mr. Jeff Robson, general manager of the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association; Mr. Jim Depew, mayor of Raymond, Alberta; and Mr. Ryan Schmidt, the CEO and general

manager of the Strathmore & District Agricultural Society. Before we turn to the stakeholder presentations, I'd like to note that the committee also received a written submission from another stakeholder, which is available on the committee's internal website.

Okay. Now we will begin with our presentations. We'll start with Mr. Robson. Thank you for agreeing to present to the committee, sir. You have five minutes to make your presentation, followed by up to 15 minutes of questions from the committee members. The floor is yours, and you may begin. Thank you very much, sir.

### Canadian Professional Rodeo Association

**Mr. Robson:** Thank you very much, everybody, for having us today and allowing us to present on Bill 212, making rodeo the official sport of Alberta. Some interesting things as we pondered this presentation today were, one, we wanted to give a bit of a high-level context of, you know, kind of why it's an important piece of Alberta and then, I guess, talk a little bit about the competition and then, lastly, share some factual data about the economic impact around the events that we have and how many events, et cetera.

First off, you know, I think what makes rodeo really special in terms of the event, obviously not just because I represent it but because I used to be a competitor and it's obviously a big part of our heritage in Alberta, is that the professional side of rodeo is different than any other sport. Everybody pays to play, and then you only get paid when you win. In other sports largely you get paid to be there, and I think what it does is that it really has a unique cultural appeal, at least to me, anyway. You have a lot of skin in the game, and you only get to win when you win. I think that's an important piece of it.

Competitions. Rodeo is also really unique in terms of the competitions. You compete against everybody, but you're also helping each other, so sportsmanship probably takes a much higher road than other sports. It doesn't create the big rivalries like an Edmonton-Calgary hockey game might, but also, as much as you're competing against your neighbour, you know, you're over there helping him get on his horse or helping share horses and/or you travel together. You're not taking team airplanes and buses; you're driving there, and how you get there and the camaraderie that you get through that is a big part of our sport and what makes it really unique.

Then, you know, last but not least, is that approximately 45 events in Alberta really garner the lead-up to our Canadian Finals Rodeo. The Canadian Finals Rodeo has been hosted in Alberta since its inception. I think that we're on CFR 47 or 48 now. I think that that's a really important piece, that it's a near and dear piece to Albertans to keep that event in Alberta. It's only ever been in Edmonton and Red Deer, and just in Alberta alone, not our other provinces, we pay out about \$6.1 million annually to contestants that come here to compete. I think that's been a big part of it. I know that when we did the first year at CFR in Red Deer in 2018, the economic impact it had on central Alberta was approximately \$30 million. I know previous reports that were done in Edmonton had that number a lot higher, but reports are reports. I think that it's been a really big, big part of our province and a big part of what drives tourism and communities.

That's really what I had to say.

10:10

**The Chair:** Wonderful. Well, thank you very much, sir. Really appreciate those comments and your presentation to the committee.

Next, we're going to go to the 15 minutes worth of questions from committee members. Of course, as is convention of the committee, this particular bill is a government member's bill, so

we're going to start with the Official Opposition. First on our list is Member Lori Sigurdson.

Member, you will have a question with a very quick follow-up and then we'll continue on. Thank you very much. Go ahead.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Yes. Thank you so much.

Thanks, Mr. Robson, for your presentation. I appreciate it. One of the things that I'm kind of curious about is if you could just talk about female participation in rodeo.

**Mr. Robson:** Yes. Barrel racing has been predominantly our biggest female participation. You know, if we look at the overall membership, we have seven major events. Barrel racing is obviously one of them. I think barrel racing would be our biggest membership by sport. So I think that speaks a lot to the female participation. We're just getting into a new realm of events called breakaway roping. We're really excited, and we were hoping to unveil that before COVID hit so we could add, hopefully, some other memberships to our organization. We're really excited about our female athletes.

**The Chair:** A follow-up, please.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Yes. Thank you. You said there are seven major events and one of them is barrel racing. Do women participate in any of the other six events? It's just that one event? I know you talked about the breakaway roping, which is new, but just of the seven majors.

**Mr. Robson:** We have had women compete in other events. We've had saddle bronc riders, team ropers. You know, those would be the two that come to my mind that they've competed in other events but predominantly barrel racing so far.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir. We will now continue to Mr. Schow for a question and a quick follow-up.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Robson, for being here today and for your presentation. Rodeo is unlike anything else that I have ever seen or been to. It's quite an intoxicating environment. I love going to the rodeo, so much so that this weekend I had an opportunity to go down and visit a constituent of mine at Two Bit Bucking Bulls. You may be aware of them. They have some championship bulls, and they are some incredible, amazing animals.

You know, I want to touch on something that you had mentioned. Maybe you didn't mention it, but just talking about animal protection. This is a topic that comes up a lot when you talk about rodeo, and I saw first-hand the first-class facilities that are being maintained at Two Bit Bucking Bulls by Josh and Tammy Berezay and the incredible job they do taking care of these animals. I was hoping maybe you could comment a little bit about animal protection as a major concern for Albertans and maybe what steps are being taken by your organization to ensure the health and safety and the welfare of these incredible animals.

**Mr. Robson:** Yeah, no, great question. I appreciate that. I reflect back on, you know, my early days in rodeo, in probably the mid to late '80s, and what was kind of what I would view as acceptable at that time clearly is not acceptable, right? What we've done to take steps is – we used to keep stats on animal injuries. Every rodeo we submit as part of the official report we get from every rodeo. We do stats. We do injuries not only on the athletes but on animal athletes, everything from inspections of the rodeo grounds before we get there to inspections afterwards, any incidents.

I'm really proud of our organization in terms of how much we've been able to drop the injuries to the animals. You know, I actually can't remember in the last four or five years the last time we hurt an animal ever. I would say that truly has taken another step with our stock contractors, the people that own the bucking bulls, the people that own the horses, the people that own the calves, the people that own the steers. The amount of preparation and the health of those animals has unbelievably improved. As such, we haven't really had an incident in so long that I can't remember the last time we had an incident, which is embarrassing to say. It also speaks volumes to where the sport has come to.

**The Chair:** A follow-up, please.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you. I tend to agree with you. You know, if you can't remember the last time you had an incident, it probably tells you that it was so long ago that it's something to take pride in. So thank you for that.

I did want to follow up a little bit about something you said regarding inspections. I'm hoping maybe you could elaborate on the types of inspections you're doing to reduce harm to the animals. I do want to commend you specifically for the steps that have been taken to protect animals. Again, just to repeat what I said before, I have seen these facilities, and the way that they take care of their animals at Two Bit Bucking Bulls is probably better than some people take care of their own children. It's just really quite an incredible facility. But back to the question, if you could talk a little bit about the inspection process and what you're looking for, just to let us know.

**Mr. Robson:** Yeah, absolutely. I can't remember how many years ago – five, six, seven years ago – we had an incident when we unloaded a set of bucking animals at an event. It wasn't a major incident, but it was an incident. Still, the incident got enough attention that we really felt like it was part of our duty for our officials, when they show up to rodeos, to walk through where they're going to be unloaded and where they're going to be kept. Is it safe? What's the quality of it? I really think that it's not even an issue that we talk about with a lot of vigour anymore because of the standards that have been kept and saved and sent. Everything from the pens: people used to have old plank pens with nails sticking out. Lots of things were unsafe. Our communities have really rallied and built nice steel pens. Their handling facilities have improved dramatically, so the amount of possible injuries that we have – most of our injuries were not even arena related. They were usually how we kept them or how we housed them.

I was probably the most impressed myself personally as we moved the rodeo finals to Red Deer. We did a whole safety briefing on the state of those pens, what they look like, where the shelters are, and how deep the bedding was. I think that everybody has just taken a lot more care in terms of what it looks like when we get there, how we set ourselves up for success, and then how we not have any issues. You know, I'm really happy with all of our communities and the way that we've responded to making sure that we keep our animals safe.

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

We'll next move on to Mr. Dach for a question and a quick follow-up, please. Go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Dach:** Thanks, Chair. My question will be for the following presenters, so I'll wait till then.

**The Chair:** Okay. Great.

We'll next go to Member Glasgo for a question and a quick follow-up, please.

**Ms Glasgo:** Hello, Mr. Robson. I really appreciate you being here today. I represent Brooks-Medicine Hat, which is a largely rural constituency. I'm pretty sure every town in my riding has some sort of rodeo. Maybe they're not all pro rodeos, they're not all eligible for the CFR, but they're definitely rodeos nonetheless, and they draw a huge crowd. I know that my colleague – I think this is actually great that I can follow him because we've heard a lot of conversation, and we hear it every year with the Calgary Stampede, with the likes of PETA or whatever else protesting rodeos. Some even outright want a ban of rodeo. Can you outline the significance of rodeo to the economic well-being of the province as well as those smaller communities? If you could give us a dollar figure and if you happen to know what those smaller rodeos contribute as well, that would be very helpful.

**Mr. Robson:** Yeah, thanks. A great question. I don't know that I can speak to each and every community in terms of their economic impact, but as you think about the people that come and go from these communities through the summer, your riding is very specific. You know, Medicine Hat has two pro rodeos a year. Brooks has a rodeo. What I do see is that having a year like 2020 probably highlights where our communities felt that not having those events really raised the bar in terms of how important those events are in their communities. It's a celebration in each of those communities.

**10:20**

One of the interesting parts is that to make our schedule and our logistics go, we sometimes suggest to certain communities, obviously gently, that maybe we should shift some dates to try and accommodate more rodeos or more communities or less friction in terms of driving and how to get places. What generally comes back is: "We've been having this rodeo since, you know, 1919. These are our dates, and we're not moving." So I think the people's buy-in and their passion for why those dates have to be specific to them, obviously, it's a big deal. It raises a lot of money in the communities. It really is a celebration, and it brings people together, and there's not near enough of that in the communities today.

**The Chair:** A follow-up, please.

**Ms Glasgo:** Yeah. You know, I think that just leads into my next question very carefully. I also wanted to touch on a previous comment. There was a comment around women in rodeo. Just speaking from experience, my aunt, actually, was a mutton buster when she was a little one, and I know that I've been able to watch young people. I feel like rodeo is so ingrained within rural culture and especially within Alberta's culture that while somebody might not be intimately involved with rodeo until they're older, there are a lot of young girls who see themselves in calf ropers and whatever.

I know I was actually at the spring rodeo the last time they had one in Medicine Hat, and there was actually a female competitor. I think that might have been in either tie-down roping, or I can't remember what it was. But it was really cool to see because you saw a lot of young girls stand up and go: "Mom. Mom. Look. Look. I could be her." I just think that's really neat.

I know you guys work a lot with Miss Rodeo Canada as well. Medicine Hat had the honour to have Brittney Chomistek serve as Miss Rodeo Canada for a while.

Back to the question, I guess my question is: how has COVID-19 specifically impacted the bottom line for rodeo and sports and

recreation? We know that it's taken a huge toll on things like junior hockey. How has it affected the professional rodeo and for those cowboys who make a living doing this?

**Mr. Robson:** Yeah. Great question again. You know, I would categorize our members as that there's kind of the elite – there's an elite few, probably 10, 15, 20 – that come from Canada that compete for world championships every year. Then we have a whole bunch of other really high-quality members that, you know, for whatever reason, they decide not to pursue it quite to the same level, but they still are obviously very competitive. They want to stay at home, they have other jobs, they have family, whatever the case is. Not having our top-tier athletes being able to stay home and compete and have to go to the U.S. and spend nine months on the road in the U.S. and not being able to be home, I think, has been devastating, not having our competitors that are here being able to compete.

So where do they go to compete? Where do they go to scratch that itch? Like, they don't go anywhere. They have to sit at home. It's been a lot. Will it be the end of the world? It's not the end of the world. We all know that's not true. Will we be able to regroup and get back at it? For sure. Stampede is already asking, like: how do we qualify people for 2021 when we didn't rodeo in 2020? Those are really interesting conversations we're having with them right now. So how do we maintain a top-level rodeo on an invitational basis? Really interesting comments.

But it's been hard. Like, it's been hard on us as a sanctioning body. By the time we actually knew that we couldn't rodeo, I mean, the bigger part of our costs have already been incurred with setting yourselves up for rodeos. So we're impacted. Will we survive? Absolutely, we will. But not having a place for people and festivals to gather . . .

**The Chair:** Mr. Robson, let's try and get another question in here. We have about a minute left.

Mr. Nielson, go ahead.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Robson, for being here this morning. I appreciate your presentation. I guess, with what's contained in Bill 212, I'm just wondering if you're aware of any other jurisdictions that have tried to look at what Bill 212 is proposing. Has there been any significant or measurable impact on the sport because of those?

**Mr. Robson:** I'm not aware of any others, so I couldn't speak to the impact.

**The Chair:** A quick follow-up. No. We're good? All right.

You know what? We have five seconds left. Mr. Robson, thank you so much for being here. We really appreciate your comments, your presentation, and, of course, your answering questions by committee members. Thank you very much, sir. We're going to move on to our next guest. You certainly are welcome to stay on the line and listen. We only ask that you mute and turn your video off. Of course, if you want to leave us, then that's your prerogative as well, and we thank you very much for your presentation.

We will move on to our next presenter. It's Mr. Depew.

Sir, you are the mayor of Raymond, Alberta. Welcome, sir, for being with us today. You're going to have five minutes for your presentation, followed by up to 15 minutes of questions from the committee members. The floor is yours, sir, and you may begin. Thank you very much.

## Jim Depew

**Mr. Depew:** Well, thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on Bill 212. I'm from the town of Raymond. When you hear "Raymond," I sure hope you think "rodeo." The town of Raymond is known as the home of the first stampede. For 120 years the citizens of Raymond have been proud of this fact. The statement "Home of the 1st Stampede" and the silhouette of a bucking horse with a rider is on our entrance signs coming into town. Our town logo is the bucking horse. It's our symbol; it's even on our town flag. Two years ago a bronze statue of a full-size bucking horse with a rider was donated to us, and it's on display on our main street.

As the mayor of Raymond I am honoured to represent our community and give you a brief history on rodeo and how it has played an important role in the town of Raymond's history, thus the province of Alberta's history. Raymond was incorporated as a town in May 1902. The first Raymond Stampede was held in a vacant lot in 1902 as part of the town of Raymond's first Canada Day celebration. Famous for being Canada's oldest professional rodeo, which started a full decade before the Calgary Stampede, it is among almost 300 different rodeo events all around the world, from North America to Australia, that use the word "stampede" in their name.

Raymond's Stampede is held each year on Canada Day, July 1. Under the direction of Ray Knight, whom the town was named after, cowboys from the surrounding ranches were invited to participate in this first rodeo, which consisted of saddle bronc riding and steer roping. A chute was built for the steer roping, but the bucking horses were all blindfolded and snubbed and then ridden until the horse stopped bucking.

Raymond Knight was the world's richest rodeo producer and rodeo contractor. With ranchlands of almost 400,000 acres, pasturing 18,000 head of cattle and some 2,000 head of horses, he provided stock for this and many other stampedes and rodeos in Alberta. As a rodeo pioneer Raymond Knight has been called the father of many things: the father of Canadian stampedes, the father of Canadian professional rodeo, the father of Canadian calf roping. He even coined the rodeo terms "stampede" and "stamping." He was even called the Buffalo Bill of Canada by King George V of England. Raymond Knight was invited by the city of Calgary to oversee their first rodeo, where he also won the calf roping event. So Knight was inducted into the Canadian Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame in 1982.

Hundreds of spectators witnessed the first Raymond Stampede. The first contestants included Raymond Knight, DeLoss Lund, Ed Corless, all rodeo hall-of-famers. DeLoss Lund, the cowboy from the Hat L Ranch, dressed in fur chaps. He rode the first bucking horse. In the end Ed Corless won the bronc riding competition and Ray Knight won the steer roping competition. The Raymond Stampede of 1903 was the first professional rodeo in Canada with official contest rules, entry fees, and prize money.

Knight financed construction of Canada's first permanent rodeo grounds with an engineered oval track, a single bucking chute, and a covered grandstand. This rodeo grandstand is the oldest continuously used in rodeo history. The bucking chute, which was a shotgun style, was the first ever built in rodeo history.

10:30

Rodeo events held at the Raymond Stampede over the years include the rough stock events of saddle bronc, bareback bronc, and bull riding, but they also featured steer riding, saddle bull riding – I'll talk about that later – steer decorating, steer wrestling, calf roping, steer roping, barrel racing, wild horse racing, wild cow milking, chariot racing, Roman racing, and cowboy saddle horse



racing. Knight even introduced thoroughbred racing on his constructed oval track. A race would run every 45 minutes, postponing the rodeo event for about five minutes to run the race as the finish line was right in front of the grandstand. Ray Knight won the North American Calf Roping Championship in 1924 and 1926 at the Calgary Stampede. In 1934 he introduced the world's first senior professional calf roping event at the Raymond Stampede, and he also won that.

There were many famous horses that performed in the early history of the Raymond Stampede. One of them was a bucking horse named Fox, and he was owned by Raymond Knight. He was sold to the Pendleton Round-Up in Oregon and renamed to No Name. The bucking horse No Name was later . . .

**The Chair:** Sir, your five minutes have expired, but I'll let you finish your final point before we move on to the questions.

**Mr. Depew:** Bless you.

Rodeo has been active in this province for almost 120 years. Calgary, Ponoka, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Strathmore, and others may have taken this rodeo to another level, but in Raymond we still fill our grandstand. Over 500-plus contestants from all over Alberta, western provinces, and even the U.S. come to perform and show their rodeo skills. We may not be the biggest, but we are proud of being the first stampede. We do put on a very fine show. We estimate that over 10,000 people come to Raymond on July 1 to celebrate Canada Day with us, and many attend the rodeo.

Thank you for this opportunity to talk to you today.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, sir. That was an excellent presentation.

We will now move on to 15 minutes' worth of questions from our committee members. Mr. Dach, we have you on the list first with a question and then a quick follow-up. Thank you very much. Go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much, Mayor Depew, for bringing in that fascinating history of the oldest rodeo in Alberta. I know that one of my favourite things was to go to the rodeo in Thorhild, the Thorhild Stampede, which is one that is long standing as well. You might say that my hometown has been competing against yours for spectators since the early '20s because every July 1 the Thorhild Stampede is held.

I might ask, though, sir, with respect to Bill 212 I'm wondering what measurable impact, if any, this declaration of rodeo as Alberta's official sport might have on the rodeo in general in Alberta and for your Raymond Stampede.

**Mr. Depew:** Well, I think that a lot of the contestants, a lot of the people that are involved in the rodeo will be thrilled to hear that it's the official sport of Alberta. A lot of them put a lot of money and a lot of time into it. Like Mr. Robson talked about, the horses aren't cheap that these barrel racers and these calf ropers, these team ropers own, and they're proud of their horses. They'll be thrilled to see it's being recognized by the province.

For the town of Raymond, since we're the first rodeo and we've been involved in it for over 120 years, I think we'll be thrilled to know that it is an official sport of the province and that we had something to do with it.

**Mr. Dach:** All right. For a follow-up question, if I may, Chair, that would be to ask Mr. Depew if indeed the agriculture societies are adequately supported in terms of funding to maintain the infrastructure that each community like Raymond requires to put on a rodeo each year, especially of the size and grandeur of the

Raymond rodeo. Do you find, sir, that your infrastructure is adequately maintained and funding levels are high enough to enable you to do that, or are there shortfalls that you're suffering and you'd need further supports from the provincial government through ag societies to sustain your rodeo, especially after a year like we've had this year?

**Mr. Depew:** Well, we make it work. That's the big thing. We make it work. But if we could get more money, for sure we would take it. We make it work, and we all try to work together in trying to make everything. We have a big day that we have called Heritage Days, and, yeah, we just all try to make it work with our ag society and with our stampede committee in the town.

Thank you.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mayor.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you very much.

We'll next move on to Mr. R.J. Sigurdson. Go ahead, sir. A question and quick follow-up.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Mayor Depew, for your presentation. I guess what I'd like to ask is: as somebody that grew up around rodeo my entire life, living in a small town and just understanding that it's not just the day of rodeo, that this encompasses a lot more than that, how it builds our communities, sustains our communities, and helps keep them strong, can you speak, from your opinion, as far as it goes, to what you feel the cultural importance is and the importance of rodeo? I mean, you've stated that you're the oldest rodeo in Alberta. I think that's why it's very relevant to say that rodeo could be, if this bill passes, our official sport in Alberta. Can you explain what rodeo means to you on a cultural level and as a community as a whole, just in broad reference?

Thank you, Mayor Depew.

**Mr. Depew:** Sure. In the past, if you think about rodeos, this is what brought everyone together. It was a big, cultural bringing together of people. Families would all come. They'd all come into the town for the rodeos. It brought the farming, the ranching communities together. As I grew up in town, like I said, over 10,000 people come into town, and a lot of these are family members coming home also. When they come into town, they're coming to be a part of this celebration and a part of the Canada Day celebration. Yeah, it's been huge for us in our town and, I think, other towns as it's what knits the towns together, the town people and the rural people together.

**The Chair:** A follow-up, sir?

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you again, Mayor Depew. Just moving on, to add to that, you know, when we talk about the economic impact, my father's company, Aaron Paramedical lease, started supplying ambulances for the rodeo cowboys at rodeos after seeing what they experienced. His entire business was built around the rodeo. That's how he started and then ended up building one of the largest privately owned ambulance services in North America. Seeing that, we understand the spillover, how many people survive off of rodeo, and what it means. Can you speak to the overall impact, whether it be stock contractors, the small businesses in your town, everything as far as what it means to Raymond, Alberta?

**Mr. Depew:** Well, we are an agricultural-based town, and the economic impact is huge. These people who have horses, they have

to buy hay. They have to buy grain. There are trailer sales. There are truck sales. For sure, the economic impact is huge. There are a lot of people involved. Without the agriculture industry, it wouldn't happen. You wouldn't be able to have rodeos going. Yeah. Does that help?

**The Chair:** Great. Thank you very much.

All right. We'll next move to the Official Opposition. I don't have anybody on the list, but is there anybody from the Official Opposition? A question? Nope.

Hearing and seeing none, we'll next go to the next person on our list, which is Mr. Getson. Mr. Getson, a question and a follow-up for the mayor, please.

**Mr. Getson:** Perfect. Well, thank you, Mayor. I have an admission to make to you right off the start. I apologize. I've never been to Raymond for the rodeo, but that now is officially on my bucket list. You're a heck of an ambassador, sir. I'd like to get down there to see it.

My questions were, you know, kind of for the prior speaker as well, Mr. Robson. Can you walk us through a little bit of the pipeline of how you get those little mutton busters out there and then they actually can get on the stage at the stampede, which, in my opinion, is the epitome of the pinnacle of the profession when you go to the stampede? Even though they might have a bigger show down south in Vegas, I still think the stampede is it. Maybe you can walk me through that. How does a little fella get into the rodeo game, and is there still a good pipeline for that in Alberta?

**Mr. Depew:** For sure there is. I can talk on a personal note on that. As a young boy going to the rodeo, I wanted to be a part of it, a participant, so my father hauled me around to many rodeos as a boy steer rider. That's really your first event.

**10:40**

Mutton busting is fun for the little kids, which I've seen. We've put them on here in Raymond, the little kids. There's not much to hang on to but the wool, but it's the boys' steer riding, which I did, that gets the young men into it. I was hauled all around the country by my father and even won the Raymond Stampede in the boys' steer riding. It makes you want to compete and go farther. I even tried my hand at the amateur bareback bronc riding.

As a boy in Raymond there used to be airplanes. We used to be a pro rodeo, so the airplanes would fly in and bring the contestants, the pro cowboys. They'd fly in and they'd do their event, and then they'd get on the plane and fly out to Ponoka, which was the next rodeo they were trying to get to. When you saw this, the airplanes flying in, it was exhilarating in the town. There was a lot of buzz, a lot of people trying to get into our own rodeo to see the performances going on there.

Yeah, it was like you're saying: the young kids can get in if they want, but they usually start with the boys' steer riding.

**Mr. Getson:** As a follow-up on that or a comment, you know, the other thing, too, is that I believe, at least with the rural kids out there, you can go and start doing your own little rodeos, and they can work with the animals and do that. In my country, where I represent Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, we've got Mayerthorpe up there, and the likes of Denny Hayes came from that area. Again, maybe you can just talk a little bit about how it's not too cost-prohibitive and also some of the new protective equipment for the little guys getting into it as well.

**Mr. Depew:** If you're in a rural setting, for sure you have the opportunity to have your own calves. I think that's where I first

started riding, when we'd brand our calves. The older kid would hold the bigger calves down, and I'd get on those calves, me and my friends, and we'd start riding them that way, so there are lots of ways. You've probably heard of the Duces. I remember once I went out to their place as a young boy, and we got on some young horses and were bucked off them. It's just the way we were brought up, to grow up in our rural environment. Nowadays they don't have those kinds of things; they find other things to do that are in the homes, but in the country you can do those things.

For equipment, as you see now in the rodeos, a lot of the bull riders, especially, wear helmets, just trying to protect themselves from getting concussions. I think that's probably the biggest thing. I got hurt as a steer rider as a young boy, but it was all part of the game. I think you want to toughen up anyway, and that's one way to toughen up.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you very much.

We'll move on to the Official Opposition to ask questions.

Hearing and seeing none, I do have another person on the list. Mr. Schow for a question and a follow-up, please.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mayor Depew. I appreciate your time here. You know, when I think about Raymond, as someone who went to high school in Magrath, a lot of things come to mind. Rodeo is certainly one of them. Another one is that you can talk about rivalries, and Mr. Robson talked about that. I know there are rivalries in the south, but I love how rodeo brings people together. When I think about Raymond, I think about passion and how engaged the community is behind their local athletes and behind the things they do there. Raymond doesn't do anything by any half measures, and I think that's a real source of pride for the town of Raymond. It's something that I think is incredible about the south in general.

What I was wondering was if you could maybe comment about what rodeo does in bringing southern Albertans together from different communities in a volunteer capacity. One of the members had talked about being adequately funded, and I know that every organization would love to have more resources at their disposal, but I also know, having worked on lots of campaigns, some of the best people that I've worked with are my volunteers. Maybe you could talk about where your volunteers are coming from and how that brings to life the rodeo and the efforts of getting this event off the ground.

**Mr. Depew:** Well, there are a lot of volunteers that are part of this day, when we have our Heritage Days and rodeo. For example, the COPs: they're active in helping with parking of the cars at the rodeo, the cars and trucks. When they come in, they park them in the ball diamond area, so those people are involved. A lot of people are involved in bringing the livestock, and that's also income for the contractors.

I don't know if you remember Reg Kesler. He used to do the Calgary Stampede, but he always wanted to do the Raymond Stampede, too. He was a contractor that would come in and do that. So you have those people that are involved.

Then to put on the rodeo, there are a lot of people involved there, and that's a committee of men and women that are involved. On this committee they plan and try to get the prize money, get the events going. There are over 500 contestants that want to participate in the rodeo, so you can imagine all the paperwork, all the work they have to do to organize all of this to make this all work. It's turned into a two-day rodeo, not just a one-day rodeo, because there are so many people that want to perform and be involved. So you can imagine all the work that goes on.

To start the year off, they have to go down and clean up the arena, and they paint and make everything look right. The grandstand has to be fixed, so the town has a lot of work to do, too, when they get the grounds ready. Yeah, there are a lot of people that have to pull together to make all of this work and to put on a great rodeo and a great show for everybody.

**The Chair:** Okay. We have about a minute left. Mr. Schow, a follow-up?

**Mr. Schow:** Not so much a follow-up question as a plug. I've been to the Raymond rodeo. I think it's a spectacular event. Anybody watching this or who will watch it should absolutely go and visit the Raymond rodeo. Raymond does a tremendous job putting this show on, and I just want to thank you, Mayor, for coming on and talking about rodeo. I'm very excited about the potential of this bill passing. Of course, we'd never presuppose the outcome of a vote, but I am very excited that we're having this conversation today.

**The Chair:** Mayor, do you have a final comment before we wrap up here?

**Mr. Depew:** Well, I just appreciate this opportunity to be able to present today, and I sure hope that you will make rodeo the official sport of Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you.

With 30 seconds, I'll ask if anyone has a final question. Hearing and seeing none, okay.

Mayor, I'd like to thank you very much. I agree with all of my colleagues here, especially Mr. Schow and Mr. Getson. I think you're a fantastic ambassador for your town, so thank you very much for your presentation today. You as well are welcome to stay on the line and listen to the final presenter if you would like, or of course you are also free to leave. But if you do stay on the line, we ask that you go on mute and actually turn your camera off. We'd appreciate that.

Next we move on to our final presenter, if we could, please. Mr. Schmidt, thank you very much for being here, sir. You are going to be presenting today. You have five minutes to make a presentation, followed by up to 15 minutes of questions from the committee members. Thank you very much, sir, for being here, and the floor is yours. Go ahead.

### **Strathmore & District Agricultural Society**

**Mr. Ryan Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning, members of the Legislature. My name is Ryan Schmidt, and I am the general manager of the Strathmore & District Agricultural Society and CEO of the Strathmore Stampede. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding private member's Bill 212, Official Sport of Alberta Act.

Sporting and farming and ranching are at the very heart of what it means to be an agricultural society, and directly tied to ranching is the sport of rodeo. It evolved out of the need for cowboys and cowgirls of the west to sharpen and hone their agricultural skills, which led to training, which led to competing, and from this was born the rodeo. The first-ever official rodeo held in Canada, as we've heard today, took place in Raymond, Alberta, in 1902, a few years prior to Alberta even becoming a province. Rodeo was here already, even before Alberta. From that point on it spread quickly across the region and amongst its peoples, and it was not just the sport of settlers.

In fact, rodeo remains now and always has been a sport actively supported and participated in by our First Nations. The first-ever saddle bronc champion at the inaugural Calgary Stampede, in 1912, was none other than Tom Three Persons, a rancher from the Kainai Nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy. Organizations such as the Northern Alberta Native Cowboys Association exemplify this act of participation today. It's not a stretch to say that rodeo, hand in hand with ranching, in fact, formed a historic bridge and point of friendship between settlers and First Nations in our province. The same remains true today. Each Canada Day, Strathmore, Alberta, is home to Indian relay races put on by members of Siksika Nation and hosted at the Strathmore & District ag grounds, which are widely attended and broadly supported by the entire community.

**10:50**

In addition, Strathmore hosts the annual Strathmore Stampede, the Strathmore high school rodeo, and Strathmore Senior Pro Rodeo. It also hosts weekly barrel races, an annual rodeo school for high school kids, and the Foothills Cowboys Association rodeos throughout the summer, including their finals. The Strathmore Stampede is one of the largest pro rodeos in Canada and brings economic benefits to the region approximating \$4 million per year in addition to the impact of the other events we put on.

Not only is rodeo a huge economic driver in the province, but unlike any other sport, rodeo is tied fundamentally to our agricultural heritage. This is demonstrated and highlighted by the tremendous number of volunteers and sponsors that come out to support these events. In our town more than 400 people come out to support our stampede alone, and nearly every business in town finds a way to support it, either through sponsorship, decorations, or pancake breakfasts. The transformation of Calgary during its own stampede is not something unique to that city. Rather, it reflects the culture of year-round support that rodeo receives in cities, towns, and hamlets across the province.

Members of the Assembly, no doubt Alberta is changing. It is becoming more urbanized, more modern, and the active traditions of its agricultural people are often now misunderstood by those who have little connection to our farms and ranches. But the sport of rodeo continues to be a great bridge of this urban-rural divide. Each year in Strathmore a full 50 per cent of the 40,000 visitors at our annual stampede come from urban areas and, through this, enter into and learn more of their own history and the life of their fellow rural Albertans. Rodeo is an important catalyst, then, towards maintaining an urban-rural bond.

I would like to highlight also the rich opportunity that rodeo creates for the passing on of knowledge and the traditions of our elders. I often witness retired farmers, many of whom due to age have been forced to move to town, bringing their grandchildren to the rodeo. It's heartwarming to witness them carefully explaining to a bright-eyed child the importance of each event and why it was important to their way of life on the farm.

Female participation in rodeo was brought up earlier, and I want to say that women are excellent rodeo athletes. In fact, I would say that our rodeo grounds are used more by women than by men. Yes, barrel racing is one of seven main events, but the number of participants in barrel racing far outnumbers, I think, the participation in all the others together. Almost every weekend there are dozens and dozens of barrel racing competitions going on across this province. It is definitely a myth that rodeo is a man's sport only. I would say that there are more women overall participating in rodeo than men, actually. I just want to make that point. They're also running rodeo businesses, too, and . . .

**The Chair:** Mr. Schmidt, your time has expired, but I will let you make your final point before we move on to the questions.

**Mr. Ryan Schmidt:** Thank you. One can easily see that rodeo is, in point of fact, a celebration of agriculture and unity through its many participants, volunteers, supporters, and fans. Nothing could be more appropriate than to highlight this fact by recognizing rodeo and implicitly thereby also our farming and ranching heritage, including our First Nations, by declaring it the official sport of Alberta.

Thank you, everyone, for your time.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir, for your presentation.

We'll next move on to our series of questions from committee members. We have Mr. Dach first on the list for a question and a quick follow-up, please. Go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Schmidt, for appearing and for your well-versed presentation on the importance of rodeo to you and those people in Strathmore. Now, as the CEO and general manager of the ag society in Strathmore you'd be well positioned to answer this question. I'm just wondering: what measurable impact will the designation of rodeo as Alberta's provincial sport actually have on your Strathmore rodeo? Maybe I'll start with that.

**Mr. Ryan Schmidt:** Thank you for the question. I think it could have an enormous impact. I think, you know, that aside from everything we've heard about ranching – the history and the importance and the traditions – rodeo is an important tourism driver in this province. Nothing would heighten and pique interest like declaring or making a statement like that. Like, I think that would be heard in Europe, across the continent. It would drive tourism to Strathmore and other small towns to come and experience this. I think that from a tourism perspective, it's an excellent initiative. We do have international travellers that I know come to Strathmore. We know that they're in Calgary. They're coming for this experience. I just think that from an economic and tourism perspective, it would be a great idea.

**Mr. Dach:** All right. As a quick follow-up to that, I know that the designation of the sport as Alberta's provincial sport has no dollars attached to it, but where the dollars flow from the province, actually, are to the agricultural societies, one of which, of course, is in Strathmore. You're the CEO and manager of it. How important is that provincial funding to your agricultural society to enable you to keep your infrastructure in appropriate condition and to host and operate your rodeo each year?

**Mr. Ryan Schmidt:** Yeah. Thank you. The funding we receive through the province is crucial, especially to the infrastructure and the basic operation of the agricultural society. That's really what it's intended for.

As far as professional events that we put on, funding is not allocated to that. The program really focuses on the agricultural aspects of the society. It's incumbent on us to make sure that we run our professional rodeos and professional activities with a smart head on our shoulders to make sure that they can remain profitable. In fact, what happens is that money that's earned through our professional activities, then, is used to support the rest of the activities of the agricultural society, in fact, you know, subsidizing some of that funding that comes in.

But it's super important to us. It's about 10 per cent of our budget in Strathmore. We find the rest of our revenue in other places. But that's what allows us to make sure that our basic infrastructure, our

basic operations can stay at a high quality in order to do all the programs we do for not only the agricultural community but, really, the whole town of Strathmore, which we support for recreation and agriculture.

**Mr. Dach:** All right. So that 10 per cent represents 10 per cent of your rodeo budget or about 10 per cent of funds that would go towards infrastructure for purposes other than the rodeo?

**Mr. Ryan Schmidt:** Yeah. Our overall budget is approximately \$2 million as an agricultural society. I would say, you know, that just under 10 per cent of that is coming from provincial funding, and that funding is used for basic operations of the ag society and maintaining the infrastructure. None of it goes towards our professional rodeo, but it does help fund our rodeo school and having our facilities in place for the amateur rodeos, the high school rodeo we put on, or any activities that take place at the nonprovincial level. Like, that's really what it's supporting, those broader agricultural activities for kids and amateurs in the broader community.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you.

Member Glasgo, go ahead, please.

**Ms Glasgo:** Hi. How are you? I'm so happy to see you here today. I represent Brooks-Medicine Hat, which is just a hop, skip, and a jump away from Strathmore. I actually went through Strathmore yesterday. It's usually where I stop for gas. I just wanted to say thank you for the comments that you've provided so far.

On the topic of ag societies, our ag societies serve and support rural communities, and they're a huge part of our province's history. I know that the province actually changed the funding formula for 2021-2022. It's usually based on the events that you've had the year before. I was wondering if you could comment on the importance of rodeo to your stampede and what that means for a typical year, and then, as a follow-up, if you could comment on how COVID-19 specifically has impacted the Strathmore ag society. Yeah. I'll let you run with that.

**Mr. Ryan Schmidt:** Thank you for the questions. On the first question, the importance of rodeo to Strathmore and the community, it's huge. I mean, first of all, it's a huge economic driver. I mentioned that it's about \$4 million in total economic impact on Strathmore and the area. That's everything across the board, from people coming and spending money, getting gas, as you have, staying at hotels, in campgrounds, visiting local businesses, buying groceries to the farmers and ranchers that are involved in stock contracting and the money that goes there and the trickle-down effects from this. And that's just one event.

With our rodeos throughout the year, it's bringing people to town almost every weekend, so the economic impact is huge. It's by far the largest event in our region. I mean, you'd have to get all the way to Brooks, probably, to find a larger event. I don't know who has the bigger economic impact, Strathmore or Brooks. We won't debate that. It's by far the hugest event in our region. It's 40,000 people through the grounds during that weekend. It's not just the rodeo; it's our town fair, which is attached to it. Really, we bring in the midway. We bring entertainment. The entire community comes out and is involved that weekend. That's the second part of your question. It's an event that draws people together. It's a huge volunteering event. The Lions are there. You know, community groups, sports teams, tons of groups that just need to fund raise: they play a part in that weekend in order to do that. It draws everyone together.

11:00

As far as the impacts of the cancellations and COVID-19, they were large. I mean, like everyone else – I don't want to complain, because everyone had a tough year. We had to close down everything, lay off staff. It was a challenging year. We did reinvent ourselves, and we will make it through, guaranteed, and are looking at ways to do smaller events.

The funding formula that the province put together was greatly appreciated. A huge concern coming into this year and putting our budget together for the year was not knowing, you know, if it was based on the old formula. Because we weren't able to have any events, our funding would have gone down dramatically. So we had to put a pretty cost-contained budget together for this year. Going forward with the new formula, which is based on past years prior to last year, for both this year and next year, is greatly appreciated. It gives us certainty for planning, and it's going to allow us to operate in a good manner this year. It remains to be seen what kind of events we can have in the summer, but that's something that's out of each of our hands.

**The Chair:** Okay. A follow-up, Member Glasgo.

**Ms Glasgo:** No follow-up, Chair. I just wanted to say thank you. I appreciate the clarity on the ag society funding framework and how that's helped Strathmore.

**Mr. Ryan Schmidt:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll go to the Official Opposition for a question.

Hearing none, we'll go to the next member on our list, Member R.J. Sigurdson. Go ahead, sir, a question and a follow-up.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Mr. Schmidt, for your presentation. I guess I just kind of honed in on a little bit about what you're speaking to about the major importance of the rodeo and the fact that it connects a lot of our urban to agriculture, you know, connections to our communities in that way. One of the things that I would like to also discuss is the fact that there are very few sports that get into the cultural importance of not just rodeo but indigenous, too, as well, and your statement there was huge.

I guess, building on that, can you kind of speak to, you know, when it comes to youth development and development through the sport of rodeo and that connection to our culture, both indigenous rodeo and agriculture? Can you speak a little bit more to that?

**Mr. Ryan Schmidt:** Yeah. Sure. It carries on, right? This sport is in the blood of Albertans. I mean, we host our annual rodeo school here at the back half of August, and it's jammed. We fill up very quickly, and we've always got a huge wait-list. These kids come from all over the province. They're coming from our indigenous communities, they're coming from Strathmore, and they're coming from towns and cities around the province. There are boys and girls involved. It's actually quite diverse, and the interest in the sport is high among young people. You might not see that in the cities, but we see that here when kids from the city are coming out to our rodeo school. There's a lot of interest in it, and it's going to continue to thrive.

We need to as agricultural societies make sure that we focus on these programs and training programs for our young athletes. The love of rodeo is being passed from generation to generation without a doubt, and we definitely see huge youth involvement. If we could put on a month of rodeo school, we'd probably still be full every day. We do have to do some other things, so we can't just do that, but it's popular.

**The Chair:** Mr. Sigurdson, a follow-up, please.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** No follow-up. Thank you, Chair.  
Thank you, again, Mr. Schmidt.

**Mr. Ryan Schmidt:** You're welcome. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'll open up the floor to any committee member. Would any committee member like to ask Mr. Schmidt a question?

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Schmidt. I mean, Mayor Depew, there: he's a tough act to follow, but you did well. So thanks for that and for promoting rodeo.

Maybe you can walk us through two things. I think you ran out of time a bit talking about – I'm not sure if you said it – gymkhana and how that leads into the barrel racing and how that's, you know, for men and women. It's for both when it comes to rodeo. The second one: can you talk about how the role of the ag societies is pivoting a bit given that a bunch of our population, as you put it, is becoming more urbanized? I really liked that story of the grandpa talking about the grandkid and bringing him out, so if you could bridge on that a little bit, please.

**Mr. Ryan Schmidt:** Yeah. Sure. Thank you. I just wanted to – you know, with the involvement of females in rodeo, I think there is a misconception out there, because when you go to a rodeo, women are predominantly the athletes in barrel racing. It's one of seven main events you see.

You do see definitely in the wild pony races and the mutton busting as well, but the reality is that, yeah, the popularity of barrel racing is so huge that – there is no official statistic that I've seen on this, but running rodeo grounds, I know that more women use our rodeo grounds than men because barrel racing is so hugely popular. It's going on constantly. There are leagues. Like, SS barrel racing here out of Strathmore is one. They have their own league, basically, and these are occurring at rodeo grounds throughout the province. When you actually add up the number of participants, I suspect there are more female participants in rodeo than men. That's not a well-known thing, so I wanted to make sure that that, you know, got across.

Sorry. What was the follow-up question again?

**Mr. Getson:** Yeah, the second part is kind of that pivotal role that ag societies are playing, again, with our urban population. How is that transitioning to keep that bridge to the past? Obviously, you guys have to work a little bit differently now. It's not as rural as it used to be. So maybe walk us through a little of your role there.

**Mr. Ryan Schmidt:** Thanks. That's a great question, and I would say that agricultural societies have, you know, been this way from a certain point of view for a long time, but they are evolving that way more. Like, in the town of Strathmore we're now, you know, 12,000 people. We don't just serve the agricultural community. We serve the broader community of Strathmore for also their recreation needs. We have 150 acres or so inside the town of Strathmore. We have quad baseball diamonds on our grounds and basically host most of the baseball in Strathmore. We have an outdoor hockey rink where kids come to play all year round. We have a campground.

We also have five buildings that we rent out to other community groups and nonprofit groups to make sure that they have an affordable place to host their activities. We have the air cadets here. We have Girl Guides here. We have the Wheatland quilters club in our buildings. There are a ton of community groups and recreation groups from the town that converge on the agricultural grounds for

their activities, so we definitely have evolved to see our mission not only as supporting agriculture – though we have to stay true to that – just supporting the broader community in which we serve, and definitely we're doing that. It's a broad mission, for sure, for us.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Getson.

Mr. Schmidt, we only have about 30 seconds left. I don't have anybody on the list, but, sir, if you'd like to make a final comment before we go to deliberations, you're welcome to say something.

**Mr. Ryan Schmidt:** Yeah. Thank you. I'd just briefly return to: not only is rodeo a sport that's completely tied to our history in Alberta and completely tied to our agricultural roots, but making rodeo the official sport of Alberta would be something unique, and I really think that the economic and tourism benefits of doing it would be a really smart move by the province.

Thank you very much for hearing me out today.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir. Thank you for your presentation, and you are, as well, a great ambassador for your organization. Thank you for being here.

Committee members, that wraps up our stakeholder presentations on Bill 212. I'd like to once again thank our guests for presenting to the committee today, and thank you to the members for asking your questions to our guests.

We'll next move on to deliberations and recommendations on Bill 212. The committee will now begin its deliberations on Bill 212, Official Sport of Alberta Act. Having heard the presentations, the committee must consider its observations, opinions, and recommendations with respect to 212, including whether or not the bill should proceed. The committee's process allows for up to 60 minutes of deliberations on the bill although members may extend this time limit if there is consensus that additional time is necessary.

I'll open up the floor to discussion of committee recommendations, but I do have Mr. Schow on the list first to talk.

11:10

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all the presenters who were here today and other members who are participating in this committee. I suspect that you may have a draft motion there because I do believe this bill shall proceed. If you have a draft motion, maybe you could get it on the screen and we could have a conversation about it.

**The Chair:** Yeah, I'll allow the clerk. We will also get it up there when we open up the floor to some further discussion. A possible draft motion would be that Mr. Schow moves that

the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills recommend that Bill 212, Official Sport of Alberta Act, proceed.

Does that sound about right?

**Mr. Schow:** That sounds great, Mr. Chair. Thank you for that, and if I may just add a couple of comments as well.

**The Chair:** Yes, you may.

**Mr. Schow:** Well, I think we did hear from some excellent stakeholders today, who represented their industries in the rodeo and the province of Alberta quite well. This is a unique bill in that it is unprecedented around the country in making rodeo an official sport of any province. I think that at the heart of this province is agriculture, and agriculture is a driver of rodeo. I think it's very representative of this province. In addition, there are tremendous cultural, economic, and even educational impacts of rodeo, so I

would very much support this motion that I just moved and ask other members to support it. I simply say: giddy-up.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Well, let's move on to Mr. Nielsen for some comments. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. First, of course, I'd like to say thank you to all the stakeholders – I appreciate their input that they've given to the committee – and of course a little bit of a shout-out to the many rodeo enthusiasts in Alberta. All the stakeholders communicated very clearly the cultural importance that it brings to Alberta.

I think there are concerns about designating rodeo as our province's official sport. I don't believe that the designation will have a substantial impact on supporting rodeo. We've seen some of the numbers that have been quoted today about what's happening in the communities at this time. I certainly would – and I suspect all members of this committee would also – encourage the government to focus its efforts on supporting agricultural societies with all the necessary funding, maybe even restoring some of the cuts to many of the community grant programs offered through the ministry of culture. Those grants go to benefit many community sports groups.

I think we also know that the cost can be a bit of a huge barrier to participation in rodeo. Most young Alberta athletes don't own horses and wouldn't probably have the financial means to get one should they wish to pursue competitive rodeo. I do believe there's also some concern around female participation in rodeo. There's generally one event in rodeo where women compete, which is barrel racing, and while it does not appear that there is any kind of ban or anything like that on women competing in the other events, through some research, general event descriptions all describe them as being sports for men. It's very rare to see women competing in these events. So I think there should be concerns about Alberta designating it as an official sport because of those low participation rates. Obviously, through our stakeholders today we did see there are efforts to try to grow that, so I'm very encouraged by that.

With some of the research that I did, Mr. Chair, I think participation in general should be a concern for us as a committee. A government annual report from 2018-19 found that of the adults that participated in organized sport activities, 22.7 per cent played hockey, 16.3 per cent played soccer, 11.5 per cent played golf, 10.7 per cent played basketball – I would have hoped that number was a little bit higher – and 10.2 per cent were involved in curling. Unfortunately, the report did not identify rodeo as a common sport of high interest and participation. For adults with children that have participated in organized sport activity, 33.3 per cent of children played soccer, 25.4 per cent played hockey, 19.9 per cent swam, 19.2 per cent played basketball, and 17.5 per cent played baseball. Again, unfortunately, no mention of rodeo.

Also, I noticed in some research that it was interesting that the playing of soccer in the region of Alberta dates back to as early as 1862, with references made by John McDougall with a game at Fort Edmonton Park. I was quite surprised to see that number. I think we as a committee have to ask ourselves why other major sports have not been consulted and considered for designation as Alberta's official sport, just based on some of the numbers that I've been seeing in the research. Frankly, I think any decision in regard to this requires more consultation not only just within the rodeo community but also the dedicated communities focused on other sports as well.

I think that, for all of those reasons, we as a committee should not support the bill moving to the Legislature at this time.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you very much, Mr. Nielsen.

We'll now go to Member Glasgo for comment.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Those comments were comments, but we will move on. I will support this bill moving into the Chamber. I'd like to support Mr. Schow's motion. You know, I heard a great deal of conversation from the stakeholders that were given today, one of them being the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association, another being a small grassroots rodeo, and also on the very first rodeo from the mayor of Raymond.

I think that we as a committee and as Albertans need to acknowledge the role that rodeo plays in Alberta. I know that in rural Alberta, which is where I mostly represent, and in Medicine Hat, the absolute biggest events of the year are the rodeos. The Calgary Stampede is the greatest outdoor show on Earth. What's central to the Calgary Stampede? The rodeo. I know that anybody who has time to go take in those events sees how it's really an event that brings people together. It honours our indigenous heritage. It honours our western heritage and the agriculture communities that have allowed us to be where we are today.

Another thing that goes also in tandem with rodeos is agricultural fairs. These fairs are super important for our communities to show off. I also think that we have an opportunity to be supporting something positive that unites Albertans. I've seen recent polls from different news outlets in the province that show that the vast majority of Albertans do actually support naming rodeo as Alberta's provincial sport.

One other thing that I'd like to comment on is that there are comments from the member around people being precluded from entering, specifically women. I would like to just point out that we have two national sports in Canada, being hockey and lacrosse. Now, there are a majority of men who are playing those sports, but that doesn't necessarily preclude women from entering. I personally grew up playing lacrosse. I played on a mostly boys team until we finally had enough girls to play on our own. I think the point is that we will see more female participation.

Actually, by naming this as Alberta's provincial sport, it will attract more investment to the area. It will also attract more tourism to be centred around rodeo. I represent Brooks-Medicine Hat, which has the amazing rodeos of, you know, Medicine Hat stampede, Brooks rodeo, Patricia. I'm probably forgetting three or four at the top of my head. Bassano: I wouldn't want to forget the Bassano Rodeo. It's one of my favourites.

I have to support this bill. I'm so proud of Member Yaseen for bringing it forward.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

The next person on my list is Mr. Getson. Again, if you want to speak, just let myself or the committee clerk know. But we have Mr. Getson on the list next.

**Mr. Getson:** I appreciate it. Thank you, Chair. I'm going to read something here that was just sent on the chat line. It was from a lady. She's an administrator. Her name is Patti Auger. If I've said it wrong, Patti, I apologize on your last name. She's the CPRA business administrator, and she's listening in to all the speakers. She's on the line with us.

As a follow-up to the women in rodeo, there is also many more events for women in the earlier levels of rodeo (high school, college) which include breakaway roping, pole bending, cow riding as well as barrel racing. As a born & raised Calgarian, I had the opportunity to compete during University in the pole bending.

I think it speaks to a lot of things.

We've heard the person from Strathmore there, that talked very eloquently about how a 12,000-person community now has this event that has been ongoing for a number of years, you know, second only to Raymond, when you start listening to the mantra back and forth, and how it's bridging different elements. It's bringing in tourists, Mr. Chair. It's bringing in people from urban backgrounds and through those different areas that haven't had the exposure themselves personally. There is that bridge, that generational bridge.

**11:20**

I think the other thing that we heard of is that, you know, this sport itself preceded the province, so this has been around longer than we have been as a province. If I don't know anything about cultural significance, it's something that actually precedes when an actual provincial territory was set up. We've heard about the First Nations participation in this, not just as a sideline periphery but part of it as it's evolved. It's brought people together for literally generations in our province.

I would be hard-pressed to say that there isn't anything else that is more symbolic of what we are in the province than the sport of rodeo. It acknowledges our heritage, it acknowledges our back, it's full participation for, you know, all genders in the sport itself, and it's really breaking down barriers. The other thing that it does is that on the international stage it really encapsulates what it is to be the west. A lot of the folks don't have that anymore. I can speak specifically to bringing in folks from Wichita and from New Orleans or even over from Germany to come on business trips, and they wanted to hit the Stampede because it was something unique. So I honestly think that we should cowboy up, embrace this, and acknowledge what our province is. This is definitely the sport that says "Alberta."

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Getson.

The next person I have on my list is Mr. Rutherford.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Chair. I just want to speak in support of Bill 212, and I'd like to highlight the comments around the ability to increase the level of tourism and to really highlight rodeo in this province and to highlight it across the country and across North America, and I think it was even mentioned in Europe as well. I think it's a really great way to do that. I always look forward to the Black Gold rodeo here in my riding.

I also wanted to say that I have two daughters. They're still quite young, but I really look forward to taking them to the rodeo when I get a chance and showing them what they can do. I think that it'll be really positive for them to see that, to see the women that are involved, and for them to be able to choose for themselves what kind of sports they want to take on, but also to make sure that I highlight all of them for them and really open their eyes to the possibilities that they have.

That's all I wanted to say, Chair. I appreciate the member for bringing forward this bill. Thank you.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Rutherford.

I'll open up the floor. I don't have anybody else on the list. Any other comments by speakers?

Hearing and seeing none, okay. We'll call the question on the floor here. Mr. Schow would like to move that

the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills recommend that Bill 212, Official Sport of Alberta Act, proceed.

All those in favour, say aye. Any opposed, say no. Okay. On the . . .

**Ms Glasgo:** Recorded vote.

**Mr. Schow:** Recorded vote, please.

**The Chair:** Recorded vote? Okay. All right. We'll do the recorded vote. Within the room, I will ask those who say aye, of course, to put your hand up. When we move to those who say no, I will ask you to put your hand up. Over the videoconference – I wish there was a better process for this – it will be a bit of a free-for-all just because certainly as a member you have the right to abstain from the vote as well. When I ask the ayes, I guess we'll just try to do your best one at a time to let the clerk know so that he may record your name, and then we will just kind of go from there.

All those in favour within the room, please say aye. I have Mr. Schow, I have Member Glasgo, and I have Member Getson. Now, all those in favour on the videoconference, if you can please identify yourself.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Brad Rutherford, Leduc-Beaumont. In favour.

**Mr. Amery:** Mickey Amery, Calgary-Cross. In favour.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** MLA Sigurdson, Highwood. In favour.

**The Chair:** I will ask if there's anybody else in case I missed anybody.

Hearing and seeing none, we will now go to those opposed. Within the room, is anybody opposed? Mr. Nielsen. We will now go to the videoconference. Over videoconference, can you please identify yourself for those opposed to the motion?

**Mr. Dang:** Thomas Dang. No.

**Mr. Dach:** Lorne Dach, MLA, Edmonton-McClung. No.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Lori Sigurdson, MLA, Edmonton-Riverview. No.

**The Chair:** Okay. Is there anybody else for the no vote that I may have missed?

Okay. Mr. Clerk, could you read the results, please?

**Mr. Huffman:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In favour, we have six; against, four.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much.

That motion is carried.

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

Hon. members, having finished its deliberations on Bill 212, the committee should now consider directing research services to prepare a draft report, including the committee's recommendations. Would a member wish to move a motion to direct research services to prepare the committee's draft report? Mr. Getson. We'll get that up on the screen, but ultimately Mr. Getson will be moving that the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills (a) direct research services to prepare a draft report on the committee's review of Bill 212, Official Sport of Alberta Act, which includes the committee's recommendations, and (b) authorize the chair to approve the committee's final report to the Assembly by noon on Tuesday, March 16, 2021.

I see the clerk has put that on the screen. Okay. All those in favour of this motion, please say aye. Any opposed, say no. Hearing none, that motion is carried.

Okay. Ladies and gentlemen, members of the committee, we'll move to other business. Are there any other issues for discussion before we wrap up today's meeting?

Hearing and seeing none, the date of the next meeting will be at the call of the chair.

Can I get somebody to adjourn the meeting? All right. Mr. Getson will move that the meeting be adjourned. All those in favour, say aye. Any opposed? All right. That motion is carried.

Thank you very much. I hope everyone has a great day today.

[The committee adjourned at 11:27 a.m.]









