



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

Bill 213, Traffic Safety (Maximum Speed Limit for
Provincial Freeways) Amendment Act, 2021
Stakeholder Presentations

Monday, March 22, 2021
9 a.m.

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The 30th Legislature
Second Session**

Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UC), Chair
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UC), Deputy Chair

Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UC)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC)*
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UC)
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)

* substitution for Mickey Amery

Bill 213 Sponsor

Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)

Support Staff

Trafton Koenig	Senior Parliamentary Counsel
Philip Massolin	Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services
Michael Kulicki	Clerk of Committees and Research Services
Warren Huffman	Committee Clerk
Janet Schwegel	Director of Parliamentary Programs
Amanda LeBlanc	Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

Participants

Omer Moghrabi	PB-334
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Ian Tootill, Cofounder	
Gordon Lovegrove.....	PB-341
Don Voaklander.....	PB-344

9 a.m.

Monday, March 22, 2021

[Mr. Ellis in the chair]

The Chair: All right. Good morning, everyone. 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. I'm the 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: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Joseph Schow, MLA, Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Sigurdson: R.J. Sigurdson, MLA, Highwood.

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

Dr. Massolin: Good morning. Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and director of House services.

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

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

I know that we have a number of guests on videoconference, and we will be introducing those folks shortly. We will do the introductions of our committee members and MLAs. Maybe we can start with Mr. Dang.

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

The Chair: Thank you.
Member Irwin.

Member Irwin: Janis Irwin, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

The Chair: Thank you.
Member Lori Sigurdson.

Ms Sigurdson: Good morning. Edmonton-Riverview, Lori Sigurdson.

The Chair: Thank you, and good morning.
Shane Getson.

Mr. Getson: Yes. MLA Shane Getson, Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

The Chair: Thank you very much.
We have Member Michaela Glasgo.

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

The Chair: Good morning, Michaela.
Member Brad Rutherford.

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

The Chair: Thank you very much.
Just joining us now at the table we have Member Angela Pitt. If you could introduce yourself for the record, please.

Mrs. Pitt: MLA Angela Pitt, Airdrie-East.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

For the record I will note that Member Angela Pitt is substituting for committee member Mickey Amery at this time.

Ladies and gentlemen, committee members, a few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. According to the February 22, 2021, memo from the hon. Speaker Cooper I'd 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 somebody like to make a motion to approve the agenda? Mr. Sigurdson. Mr. Sigurdson will move that the agenda for the March 22, 2021, meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills be adopted as distributed. All in favour, say aye. On the phone? I hear some ayes. Any opposed, say no. Hearing and seeing none, that motion has been carried.

We will next move to the approval of the minutes. The draft minutes of our meeting on Monday, March 15, 2021, are ready for the committee's consideration. Please note that the draft minutes from the meeting on Wednesday, March 17, are not yet ready for consideration and will be considered at the next meeting. Are there any errors or omissions to note for the March 15 meeting minutes?

If not, would a member like to make a motion to approve the minutes of last week's meeting?

Mr. Nielsen: So moved, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nielsen.

Mr. Nielsen moves that the minutes of the March 15, 2021, meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills be approved as distributed. All in favour, say aye. On the phone? I heard ayes. Any opposed, say no. Hearing and seeing none, that motion has been carried.

All right. Ladies and gentlemen and committee members, we'll go to the stakeholder presentation on Bill 213, the Traffic Safety (Maximum Speed Limit for Provincial Freeways) Amendment Act, 2021. Hon. members, at our meeting on March 17 the committee agreed to invite stakeholders to provide an oral presentation on Bill 213, Traffic Safety (Maximum Speed Limit for Provincial Freeways) Amendment Act, 2021. According to the committee's agreed-upon process, stakeholders may make presentations for up to five minutes, followed by up to 15 minutes of questions from committee members. Both caucuses could invite up to three stakeholders, and stakeholder lists were to be submitted to the chair by noon on Thursday, March 18.

Now, for the record the government caucus requested to hear from three stakeholders. We have Mr. Omer Moghrabi, mayor of Lac La Biche county; Mr. Gean Chouinard, a councillor for the town of Edson; and Mr. Ian Tootill, cofounder of SENSE BC. The Official Opposition caucus requested to hear from the following: Dr. Don Voaklander, a professor at the University of Alberta, and Dr. Gordon Lovegrove, associate professor at the University of British Columbia. Now, the Official Opposition had also requested to hear from the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police. However, they respectfully declined, indicating that they were not able to consult with the appropriate personnel in their organization on such short notice.

We'll next move to panel A. Now we'll begin with our presentation. In our first panel we have Mr. Moghrabi, Mr. Chouinard, and Dr. Voaklander.

We'll start with Mr. Moghrabi. Thank you for agreeing to present to the committee, sir. You're going to have five minutes to make your presentation, followed by up to 15 minutes of questions from the committee members. Again, thank you very much for being here. We will start the clock, and the floor is yours. Thank you, sir.

Omer Moghrabi

Mr. Moghrabi: Thank you very much. Good morning to all the members. If you'll give me a little bit of leeway, I certainly won't use five minutes, but I'll give you a little bit of my history. In the early '70s I played competitive sports throughout western Canada. That included baseball, volleyball, basketball, and hockey.

At this point I have six kids – two sets of twins – and I did a lot of coaching, so I probably put on well over a million kilometres. The highways that we mostly used were 216, 1, and 63. It's funny that I recall the road up to Fort McMurray. When I worked there for two years, it would take us up to eight hours to travel that road when it rained. We eventually got it paved, and a lot of it goes through our community. It is a wide-load corridor also. I do travel that road. I also travel 16, and – it's funny – I travelled highway 2 this weekend. It wasn't as busy, but it does have a lot of traffic on it, for sure.

You know, you go through these roads, and since I got elected as mayor, I've met with three ministers. One was with the PCs – I don't recall which name it was – and the other one was with the NDP. I can't recall his name. What's his name? I apologize to him and to the NDP. And I met with Minister McIver. Basically, the one comment that always was said was that Transportation is in the business of moving traffic smoothly and safely. I have to agree with that, but it's funny that in going on highway 2 this past weekend, in the right lane it was 110, and in the left lane it was always 125.

Some people will say: what about accidents? Well, I'll give you a little about some of the accidents. I have cars that can really self-drive. I don't use it. I don't use Bluetooth. I think what we need to do is more enforcement on distraction. That is one of the things. I think our highways are well built, are to a higher standard. Remember that a posted speed, to me, does not indicate you do that speed. There are a lot of factors that go into it, whether it means traffic volume, moving heavy loads, weather conditions. Those are all the types of things that affect the speed you can travel, especially on the divided highways.

9:10

I think the request, you know, that I see – basically, I reviewed the bill – is really to give the minister the opportunity to increase the speed where it's safe, not in urban areas. If you go down 16 and you go east of Edmonton, I mean, it's a roadway to Saskatchewan. It's not that busy. Everybody seems to drive 10 over. I guess the

question will be: if it's set at 110 and everybody is driving 10 over, we're going 120. I'd like it to be posted where it is possible to move traffic. That is my personal opinion. It may not be the one of my council.

I'm basically open for any questions if someone needs to ask. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, sir.

I will say that I believe the NDP minister was probably Mr. Brian Mason because he was Transportation minister, a former colleague.

Mr. Moghrabi: That's correct. I apologize.

The Chair: No, no, no. I was in the last session with him, a very nice man.

Thank you very much for your presentation, sir.

We'll now move on to a series of questions. You are a sponsor of the government, so we will start with the Official Opposition. We'll start with Member Lori Sigurdson for a question and a quick follow-up. Thank you very much.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mayor Moghrabi. It's nice to see you, and thanks for your presentation. I just wondered if you could talk a little bit more about safety. Certainly, there is some research that does indicate that as speeds go up, there may be more issues with accidents. I don't know. If you could just elaborate on that at all.

Mr. Moghrabi: I'll try to elaborate a bit on that. We're part of the safer highways for 63, 881, so we sit on that. We're also part of the Vision – what is it? – Zero for pedestrian fatalities. I can't speak to it technically, but I can tell you that if you're driving down 63 and you have the right lane going 108 and the other one is doing 110, then it clogs up traffic. For me to give you the specs, 881 used to be one of the most dangerous ones in Canada, and I believe there's work to be done on that. What I speak to is just the experience I have of driving on these twin highways.

In terms of if you want the numbers for safety, Madam MLA, probably talk to the professionals because I probably do not fit into that category.

The Chair: All right. Do you have a follow-up, Member Sigurdson?

Ms Sigurdson: I think I'll just leave it there. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

All right. We'll next go to Mr. R.J. Sigurdson for a question and a follow-up, please.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Mr. Moghrabi, for your presentation. I guess I want to lean a little bit on your experience of being a mayor of a municipality in Alberta. Talking about this potential increase in speed, there are of course going to be people who are worried about road safety. Can you just say, in your opinion as a mayor, how you would approach road safety in your area if a bill like this passes?

Mr. Moghrabi: Yeah. I don't think it would make that much difference. In terms of a lot of people that are in the rural areas, the larger areas, we're a county that's 16,000 square kilometres. We have highways 55, 36, 881, and 63. We've learned to drive. But we do encounter varied weather conditions. I recall going to Lloydminster for the provincials in the middle of the winter at minus 35, and it started raining on highway 16. I mean, we've learned how to drive in Alberta. I think that the problem with a lot

of – well, what you have to address are the people that think it's a race, where they're going in and out of lanes while driving. And the distracted driving: that's where you need the enforcement.

The Chair: A follow-up, Mr. Sigurdson.

Mr. Sigurdson: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess I'll just leave this a little broad. I mean, you brought up some concerns before. I think this is quite flexible. A lot of us can remember how this can be adaptable. Of course, this would only be implemented on highways which, as you had stated, would be safe. There are also variables that could be done with this, including dropping nighttime. Who knows, right? Like, there are all those possible ways to do this, so when you see this and the fact that this is moldable – it's just allowing up to 120 for the increase on the speed limit – do you have any concerns at this time about this type of an increase for the province of Alberta?

Mr. Moghrabi: I don't. I can tell you that, like, it's the type of traffic that could be on the road. In our area, the northern part of the province, which is resource based, you're seeing a lot of big trucks and stuff like that. But if you look at – I mean, it's a known fact that the cars produced today exceed 99 per cent of most drivers' capabilities, so that is something that I'm not concerned about. I mean, there are reckless people out there. There are people you have to worry about, people driving under the influence, driving dangerously, distracted. Those are the things that – I think throughout the whole province we have that trouble.

I also want to just comment a little bit on the comparison with B.C. I mean, the landscape is completely different. I've driven the Coquihalla. My father-in-law and brother-in-law live on the island. I went to visit. The posted speed – and that was about two years ago – was 120. Stayed there for four days. Coming back, they posted it back down to 110, and the reason was because of curves and stuff. But it was a beautiful divided highway.

The Chair: Great. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mayor Moghrabi, and thank you for presenting to us today. I guess I just have a question around sort of insurance claims. I know that we've heard a lot about insurance in the last year or two here in Alberta and how insurance rates have been going up. Are you worried about, if the speed limits were to change, whether insurance companies would look at this as a reason to raise insurance or if a potential increase in collisions or incidents could lead to insurance premiums going up as well?

Mr. Moghrabi: Well, my first comment – and I know it's being recorded – is that insurance companies will find any way to increase premiums if you've seen how they've been climbing throughout the province. Again, it's a private business. That's something that the provincial government has, the ability to talk to them and address some of those issues. But in terms of raising it, it's been going up for the last 10, 15 years.

The Chair: All right. A follow-up, please, Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mayor, for that. I guess, to expand on that a little bit, do you think the province, if they were to go forward with this, should enter into some sort of negotiation or deal with the insurance companies, I guess, or legislation to ensure that there is better regulation on insurance?

This isn't an excuse to raise insurance rates. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Moghrabi: Yeah. I believe right now there is a bit of a concern on where the insurance is going. I believe all the governments have always had their eye on it, and a lot of the residents do complain when they see the insurance keeps going up.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll next go to the government members. Is there anybody in the government members who has a question?

Okay. Hearing and seeing none, I'll go now to the Official Opposition. Is there anybody who has a question? Last chance.

Hearing and seeing none, all right. Thank you very much.

Mr. Moghrabi, thank you very much for joining us here today. We thank you for your presentation, and we thank you for answering questions from the committee members. You certainly are welcome, if you like, to stay on and hear the remainder of the committee. We just ask that you stay on mute.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Moghrabi: Yeah. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

All right. Next, committee members, we will hear from Mr. Chouinard.

Mr. Chouinard, are you online at this time?

Mr. Chouinard: No, I'm not online. I'm having trouble with my Teams, so I'm going to be calling in on the phone.

The Chair: Okay. Well, we can certainly hear you, so that's wonderful. Mr. Chouinard, thank you for joining us here via the telephone at this time. You're going to have five minutes to make your presentation and up to 15 minutes of questions from the committee members. Again, we really appreciate you being here. The clock has started, so the floor is yours, sir. Go ahead.

Thank you.

9:20

Gean Chouinard

Mr. Chouinard: Yes. Good morning, Members. I am Gean Chouinard, town councillor, the town of Edson, but today I'm the Alberta rep for the Trans Canada Yellowhead Highway Association. We're going to start off with a little bit of history. The Trans Canada Yellowhead association represents interests along the Yellowhead corridor concerning highways. We've been in since 1947, and we're from Manitoba to B.C.

The Trans-Canada highway itself is a key corridor to Canada's transportation highway system and a major economic driver in both movement of goods and people. It is the only east to west highway providing direct access to three major ice, freeze – Canadian from the Pacific port to Prince Rupert, Kitimat, Vancouver. It is important to tourism factors, showcasing much of Alberta's history, including national parks, historical sites, access to indigenous-related activities. It presents diverse economic transportation routes through the mountains, which saves fuel, time, and vehicle maintenance costs because it has lower grade elevations, excellent weather conditions, commercial amenities, and recreation travel. It effects safe vehicle movement along the highway. It is important to maintain economical advantages of the Yellowhead corridor. Improvements to road construction and engineering design, material use coupled with advancement to vehicle technology

improvement allows that the consideration of participating speed limit increase to the areas can be accommodated.

Trans-Canada Yellowhead 16 presents many opportunities for speed increase. Just for information: the Trans-Canada Yellowhead 16 was built to accommodate speed limits rated up to 130 kilometres an hour in many areas. It is a four-lane divided highway, which can safely handle travel speeds. In 2011 Transport Canada reported about two-thirds of fatalities occurred on rural roads, typically undivided with two lanes. Much improvement in road safety in Canada over the past 30 years can be attributed to improvements in roadways. In addition to that, vehicles have been designed to be safer over the past 40 years. Electronic stability control systems in vehicles have 41 per cent fewer collisions, 23 per cent fewer collisions compared to similar vehicles.

As one of the resources, tourism often turns – it is not uncommon for us to hear comments from travellers wondering why certain stretches of the Trans-Canada 16 do not have increased speed limits. Having the highway properly serviced for users is of key importance to the Trans-Canada. We would encourage users to return, with the effect on municipalities, increased travel, engagement, and local economy.

As such, the Trans-Canada highway association supports Bill 213, recognizing that the implication of increasing speed limits would be applied to only those areas which would be safe to do so. Over time the province will invest the necessary infrastructure such as addressing that the Trans-Canada highway requires improvements, accommodating extensions of increased speed limits.

Just an extra comment on here is that because I drove truck for 30 years, a personal thing is that by increasing the speed limits to 120 on major highways – as it was mentioned earlier, I do drive the Coq quite often – it helps the normal vehicles to clear to be safer for the trucks.

That's my presentation. Now I'm open for questions.

The Chair: Well, Mr. Chouinard, thank you very much for your presentation, and thank you again for being here.

We will next move on to questions. First is Member Irwin for a question and a follow-up. Go ahead, please.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chouinard, as well. Yeah. Thanks for presenting. You know, we're going to be hearing from a few experts here shortly in regard to the safety aspects of this bill. I know you touched on it a little bit, but can you just elaborate a little bit more on what you've perhaps read, what you've researched in regard to the safety aspects of the bill? I know you've got some personal experience, but are you familiar with the research done? Are there any pieces of the research that should be sort of taken into account before these changes are made?

Mr. Chouinard: Okay. Yes. I am very familiar with the research. In a lot of cases we're talking about implementing a speed for the entire province. A lot of times what I'm mainly looking at is the corridor of highway 16. I agree that certain areas should not increase speed limits. An example of a highway I travel quite often, I'd say, is from Edmonton to Jasper. You could increase, let's say, two-thirds of it, so certain areas like Gainford, and of course you could increase the speed limits for sections of the highway. I believe with the new technology of vehicles as well as transports, of course, they'd stay at 110. It would help to clear the traffic.

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

Member Irwin: Thank you. I know you touched on a little bit there – let me phrase it this way. A 120-kilometre-per-hour speed limit

might be safe during good conditions. We all know and we've all driven in very terrible conditions here in Alberta. What are your thoughts on that? Should speed limits just be set for the best conditions? Thoughts?

Mr. Chouinard: Okay. A prime example: on the Coquihalla highway they have electronic speed limit signs warning you. A lot of times if we were to increase the speed limit, we could have signs that come up that would lower the speed limits due to road conditions. Any speed limit is just a recommended high speed. When the roads are bad, especially snow and ice, then there could be a warning telling you that, no, you shouldn't do 120.

Member Irwin: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

We'll now go to Member Glasgow for a question and follow-up, please.

Ms Glasgow: Hello. I want to just say thank you for taking your time to speak to us today. I understand that the Trans Canada Yellowhead Highway Association advocates for maintenance and development on the Yellowhead highway to increase community development and promotion. By enacting Bill 213, do you believe there are greater investment opportunities and development for our community? Like, do you think that an easement on highway speeds or making travel easier in the province would contribute to greater development?

Mr. Chouinard: Yes, it would because a lot of times when people are planning a tourist trip somewhere, they're going to travel across Canada, we encourage them to go farther north. Most people travelling always look at: how fast can I get there? If you did increase it, so therefore the speed has increased, then we would have to maintain the highways to be equal. I believe it would encourage more people to travel highway 16.

The Chair: Okay. A follow-up, please, Member Glasgow.

Ms Glasgow: Yeah. Thank you for that. I know that rural highways – we heard from Transportation last week that highways are actually engineered for a higher speed than what is posted. Obviously, those speeds are suggested to drivers at the optimal condition. We know this. I know, driving from Medicine Hat to Edmonton all the time, that sometimes the speed limit might be 110 or it might be 100, but there's no way you're going that fast just because of conditions. As a driver the onus is, of course, on you to be aware of those conditions. Because we know that rural highways are engineered to allow for increased speeds, can you speak to the benefits that this would have for drivers across Alberta and perhaps how this will improve connectivity between communities, especially rural communities?

Mr. Chouinard: Yes. In most cases we are talking about major highways, but if you can join any of the secondaries going to it – so someone, let's say, travelling to highway 63 could travel the 16 and go up 63 or even highway 28. Any of the highways joining to it would help you use 16 as a major route. I believe that by putting the speed limit up, it will encourage more people to come this way, either tourists or for transporting goods.

The Chair: All right. Thank you very much.

We'll next go to Mr. Nielsen for a question and follow-up, please.

Mr. Nielsen: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and again thanks to the presenters here so far. I think one of the components about this debate that

hasn't maybe gotten as much attention – we did get the chance to ask officials last week – is around the issues of highway maintenance. I guess, given your position, do you think increasing the speed limit would increase the issues of highway maintenance?

9:30

Mr. Chouinard: It would help us in our lobbying efforts. I mean, we all know that some of the highways fell apart due to the seasons of the last few years with the warm and cold. It would definitely help. If you're increasing speed – I hate to use the argument – we have more of an idea to say that we've increased speeds, so now we need to maintain the highways better as well.

The Chair: A follow-up, please.

Mr. Nielsen: A follow-up, then: I guess, as we, you know, debate this further and potentially in the House, is that a component that must be brought into consideration when looking at deciding about this bill?

Mr. Chouinard: Yes. That is very true. On certain parts of the highways, then, you can have areas like when you get to the far east, around Kitscoty and in through there. There have been some issues and concerns. For some of those ones, we would have to not increase the speed limit.

It might be a trial thing. We can take parts of the highway. Highway 16, let's say, going east and west of Edmonton: you know, you could have it where it's out to Lloydminster, only do a part.

To answer your question, yes. It would be important to maintain the highway to be suitable for the 120 speed.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

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

Mrs. Pitt: Wonderful. Thank you, Mr. Chouinard, for being here. Sorry if I butchered the pronunciation of your name. I appreciate the information that you've provided in your presentation and in the follow-up questions here. I particularly just want to delve into the tourism aspect of this a little bit further. Tourism, of course, increases revenue to our province and just generally promotes this beautiful place that we live in. Do you have any more in-depth information, maybe like a cross-jurisdictional analysis that sort of proves or supports the rationale that higher speed limits increase tourism to some of the parks, particularly that are along the Yellowhead? I know it is said internationally that Albertans in particular measure distance by time: you know, it's two and a half hours to Edmonton instead of 250 kilometres. Given that information, does that exist?

Mr. Chouinard: There is information that does exist. I'd have to get Don to do the follow-up. But I know an example where we were contacted. If someone is going across Canada, they do look online: do we take highway 1, or do we take highway 16? I agree with your comment that a lot of times they look at travel time. You know, if the speed limit is up to 120, even though you may not go that travelling, people look at the factor that the GPS will say that rather than two hours, it will take you an hour and 40 minutes. That would encourage people to come up this way. As far as the stats, yes, we have them. I don't have them off the top of my head right now, but we could get follow-up information on that.

Mrs. Pitt: That would be good just given that topical information is helpful and certainly relevant.

I guess just a follow-up, Mr. Chair, if I might. In terms of other provinces, I recognize that your group sort of works with four different provinces here. Other than the Coquihalla, are there any

other jurisdictions that have raised speed limits, and do we have any economic data that supports this?

Mr. Chouinard: The other provinces have looked at it. No one has yet. Like, through B.C., that's when it changed over on highway 5. In the past they went from 80 and 90 to 100. They didn't go as high, but they have increased. Saskatchewan, Manitoba at this time have not. They are improving their highways.

What we're advocating is, say, you know, part of 16. Here's a good starting point. Let's start with Alberta, see how that works. Our highways generally are better maintained at the present time. Not faulting the other provinces, but I believe it'd be a good start. If we can start in Alberta, then we can help maybe Saskatchewan and Manitoba and make the entire corridor travelling. When you go into the U.S., a lot of your major freeways, the speed limit is higher, and they seem to be used more.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Dang for a question and follow-up, please.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for your presentation, Mr. Chouinard. I just wanted to ask a question about enforcement. I guess that if the speed limit were to be increased, let's say, to 120 kilometres an hour, how strict do you think enforcement should be on that speed limit? We know that we've heard that oftentimes people would drive up to 120 or even more sometimes already, and that's, I guess, something that could have a complication if people now take this as leeway to drive even faster than that. Just your perspective on that.

Mr. Chouinard: Well, what we could do is review. I agree with your comment. We always got that 10 kilometres, so if it's 110, we do 120. But, I mean, you know, that could be mentioned in there. Maybe that's something to factor, that if we go to 120, we could go in that you've only got a five-kilometre leeway because – you're right – everyone will always push to the max. I believe law enforcement right now is feeling that traffic going at 120 seems to be a safe speed for the average traffic to go. That is a very good point. We could, you know, put that into consideration, that at 120 there could be zero tolerance or a lot less tolerance on over the speed limit.

Mr. Dang: Thank you. No follow-up.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Rutherford for a question and a follow-up, please.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Chair. I just want to quickly ask about, I guess, congestion on the highways. Would this be better for the flow of traffic in general, or would we find that slower moving traffic is going to cause better or greater sort of congestion that occurs? You can see on highway 2 where a pocket of traffic ends up side by side. A slower vehicle on the left lane might cause it. I just want to get your thoughts on if you see that problem getting better or worse.

Mr. Chouinard: My thoughts on that: this is the experience of driving a truck. Like, if we're talking 16, once you leave Edmonton heading east or west, I believe it would help the lighter traffic clear because, you know, they are doing 10 kilometres faster than the transport trucks. I believe it would, as you travel a few kilometres down road, help to clear traffic.

The Chair: Okay. A follow-up, Mr. Rutherford?

Mr. Rutherford: No, not at this time. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. I'll next go to the Official Opposition. Is there a question?

Hearing and seeing none, I go to Member Pitt. You had a question? Go ahead.

Mrs. Pitt: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chouinard – my apologies; it's early.

Mr. Chouinard: That's all right.

Mrs. Pitt: In your memory, I would say, has the Yellowhead had any raising or reduction of speed limits in its history? If so, do you know any of the rationale behind that?

Mr. Chouinard: Okay. To the best of my knowledge – and I have to get the stats – when it used to be two lanes, it was at 100. When we switched to four lanes, it went to 110, but certain parts of it stayed at 100 until they were four lanes. Going back, you know, 25, 30 years, it has changed, but right now it's 110, and it's been like that for years. When it has increased was due to the highway in better shape and four lanes.

The Chair: Do you have another question? No? Okay.

I'll open up the floor. Does anybody else have a question? A few moments left. Hearing and seeing none, okay.

Mr. Chouinard, thank you very much, sir, for your presentation and for the great answers you had for our committee members. We really appreciate your time here today. Again, you are certainly welcome to stay on the phone if you like and listen to the remainder of the meeting. If you are, just make sure you're on mute, and if you decide to get off, then make sure you have yourself a great day. Thank you very much for your time today, sir.

Mr. Chouinard: Okay. Thank you, guys.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Our next presenter is Dr. Voaklander; however, he is not online or on the phone at the moment here, so we're going to move him to the bottom. I'm sure the clerk's office will make an attempt to try to get ahold of him, and we may or may not hear from the doctor. With that, we will move to our next guest, who is Mr. Tootill. Is that correct? Yes. He is online at the moment here.

Sir, thank you very much for being with the committee here today. You will have up to five minutes to make your presentation and then up to 15 minutes' worth of questions from the committee members. With that, we'll start the clock. The floor is yours, sir. Again, thank you for being here.

9:40

SENSE BC

Mr. Tootill: Well, thank you very much. Good morning, committee members, Mr. Chairperson. Thank you. We are thrilled to participate in your consideration of Bill 213, which, when implemented, I am certain will result in the improvement of the travel experience for the people using Alberta rural divided highways.

SENSE BC is a grassroots group of concerned B.C. citizens who for 25 years have taken an active and vigorous interest in road safety and enforcement from the perspective of motorists. We support speed limits reflecting the upper limit of safe travel speeds to ensure that reasonable and safe actions of the majority of drivers are made legal. We believe that good laws should be based on science and not politics or ideology. We are volunteers, and we are entirely self-

funded. We have no sponsors or grants and sell nothing. We don't get paid for studies or analysis, and we don't get invited to paid speaking engagements. We owe nothing to anybody.

In the time remaining, I will share experience with you following our traffic law improvements in B.C. and why I believe Albertans would be well served when Bill 213 is passed. It took some principled individuals to take a stand, particularly when that stand was criticized by some, albeit incorrectly, as potentially having negative safety consequences. When discussing speed limits, there is no shortage of naysayers and special interests or activists who are not experts in traffic engineering to tell you they know best and to scare the daylights out of you that you will have blood on your hands if you pass a common-sense bill like this.

The U.S. Congress debated for years whether to remove a nationally mandated speed limit of 55 and later 65 on interstates. The special interests, most notably the insurance industry lobbyists, whose members benefit from higher premiums related to speeding tickets, stalled it and insisted tragedy and mayhem would occur on U.S. interstates as soon as the speeds motorists were already travelling at were legalized.

Speeding tickets could have accounted for up to 60 per cent of revenue for moving violations in B.C., so coupled with a strong ideological movement in B.C. to discourage people from vehicle use, it's easy to understand the well-funded, institutionalized, and organized opposition to making automobile travel less costly and less stressful, from both the benefitters of ticket revenue and the advocates against motor vehicles. The push-back, both prior to the limits being raised and afterward, was emotional and aggressive in B.C. Fortunately, engineering principles trumped ideology and emotion, which enabled increases to speed limits on 33 segments covering 1,300 kilometres of rural highways in B.C.

As a result of both the speed limit review on some rural highways and an enhanced keep-right-except-to-pass law, our driving experiences have improved dramatically, with smoother flowing traffic, travellers arriving at destinations safely, and without the constant worry that they may be arbitrarily ticketed or targeted for tickets and fines and higher insurance premiums. Scarce and costly police resources can be directed to enforcement activities with proven safety benefits, like incompetent, unlicensed, uninsured, and, most importantly, impaired drivers.

The antidriver lobby calls the B.C. experience a failure and referred to applying proven and recommended engineering principles an experiment. These vocal and taxpayer-funded groups found an audience with the new B.C. government, which shortly after their election in 2017 completed a speed limit review of the increases that were done. Whatever you have heard or hear about that review today or any other time, remember this: if the new government in B.C. could have found a reason to roll back all of the speed limits raised by the previous government, they would have done it. But they didn't. They rolled back less than half. Of the half that they rolled back, half of those roadways saw measured speeds either drop or remain the same. In other words, no correlation and no causation established. So the plausible thesis that's being tossed around of higher limits equal higher speeds equal more crashes disproved itself in British Columbia. If you don't believe me, bypass some of the sloppy news headlines and go straight to the report and read it for yourselves.

Keep in mind that what is being proposed is the option for engineers to place a different sticker on the sign by the side of the road. It's not a requirement for drivers to increase speeds. The Coquihalla, which I'm sure many of you are familiar with and have been talking about today, one of our most mountainous main highways, with changing weather patterns and relatively dramatic grade changes, saw both its 85th percentile speeds remain at 127

and serious collisions remain unchanged. The new reasonable limit only recognized speeds drivers were already travelling at. Drivers do not drive any faster.

As a result of the change of the two laws, I noted that traffic flow is better and driver behaviour is improved, with better lane discipline and fewer drivers feeling left-lane entitlement. As a result of this, personally I observed fewer interactions which increased the potential for a collision, I'm not constantly scanning the horizon for police, knowing that I may be arbitrarily targeted for tickets, and I make my trips both safely and without stress.

The Chair: Mr. Tootill, the time has expired, but I'll allow you to make one more final point before we move to questions. Go ahead.

Mr. Tootill: Sure.

You could move forward knowing that responsible changes in speed limits, where traffic is already flowing above the limit, should not negatively impact road safety, and your engineers will have the tools to do this.

Thank you very much.

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

We'll next move to questions from our committee members. We'll go to Mr. Nielsen first for a question and a quick follow-up, please.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thanks, Mr. Chair, and thank you for the presentation. Just getting the opportunity to read a little bit of your organization's work, I know that there are concerns with a lot of the aspects around traffic enforcement, particularly on the revenue that's generated by it. If the speed limit should increase in Alberta, do you think that there should be a comparison enforcement around that speed limit increase as well?

Mr. Tootill: Well, you know, enforcement is obviously a component of making sure that people obey speed limits, but if you don't have a problem, there's no problem to address. I mean, what we found in B.C. is that on many of these roads people were doing – you know, on the Coquihalla the 85th percentile is 127. That's just remained unchanged. Everybody does up to 127.

You know, one thing I will say is that in talking about the economic benefit of this, yeah, there are no studies on this, but I can tell you anecdotally that when I want to do a trip to Kelowna these days, I don't necessarily take the plane. I'm certainly not going to ride my bicycle, but I don't think twice anymore about whether or not I want to drive it and about the fact that I may have a negative interaction with police for driving along with the speed that everybody else is doing.

The Chair: Do you have a follow-up, sir?

Mr. Nielsen: Yeah. Just a quick follow-up.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Nielsen: I guess, speaking of enforcement and in Alberta, do you think that there should be more or less of it than there is now?

Mr. Tootill: Well, I don't know anything about your enforcement in Alberta. I really don't, so I can't comment on it.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Schow for a question and a follow-up, please.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Tootill. I appreciate your presentation, you being with us here today. I also appreciate a number of your

perspectives on things that you've presented on today. Also, I really appreciate your background. That's quite a beautiful, picturesque scene you have there. Looks like a place I'd like to visit someday soon.

I wanted to address something that you talked a little bit about with engineering. I was hoping that maybe you could elaborate a little bit on the relationship between the posted speed limits and the speed limits that the roads are designed to safely handle. Is there any correlation there or in your research? Do you have anything you can comment on that?

Mr. Tootill: Well, you know, generally what's recommended for undivided highways and divided highways is setting the speed limit to the upper end of the travel speed by the reasonable and safe majority, and it's something called the 85th percentile. The rationale behind that is that the best people to determine the chosen speed on a roadway are the people that are behind the wheel of a car. They make the decision all the time based on their driving ability, the weather conditions, the condition of their vehicle, and the speed of the other traffic. The idea is that when you set at the upper end of the bell curve, you'll actually tighten up the bell curve, and theoretically you could reduce your variance.

Again, I just want to say that if your members or the other stakeholders or the people that are sponsoring this bill, which is only really just to increase the ceiling – it's not even to raise the speed limit – if they're saying that people are driving at, you know, X speed, then theoretically your speed limit should be just above that speed. The idea behind a speed limit is to set a limit at the upper end of safe travel speed. It shouldn't be considered the floor. Canadians and British Columbians have been lulled for years into some sort of thought that a speed limit should be the baseline instead of the upper end. People can moderate their speeds if they want to.

I hope that answers the question. I know that I rambled a bit. Sorry about that.

The Chair: Mr. Schow, go ahead for a follow-up.

9:50

Mr. Schow: Sure. Maybe you can elaborate a little more on something you just said. You were talking about how B.C. residents have been lulled into this perception. Can you maybe talk a little bit about who's doing the lulling?

Mr. Tootill: It's a collection of things. You know, over the years we have grown used to having a sign by the side of the road represent something that can be universally ignored because it just didn't recognize reality. I had a British tourist over here a few years ago who put a YouTube video up. It was an interview with the tourist, asking what he thought about driving in Canada, and he said: well, it took me about three or four days on the road to realize that the signs on the side of the road don't really have too much bearing on the speed that I'm going to choose to drive, and I quickly learned that when I saw those warning signs coming into a curve, I could basically double it and I'd still be fine. Those are the kinds of viewpoints that you get from people that come from other countries, where they're used to driving considerably faster.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

I'll next move to the Official Opposition. There's nobody on the list, but I'll ask if there are any questions from the Official Opposition.

Hearing and seeing none, I'll go to the next person on the list. Member Pitt, go ahead, please, for a question and follow-up.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you so much. Thank you, Mr. Tootill, for being here. I should start by saying that I'm a big fan of SENSE BC's work, and I've been following you for quite some time, particularly with your fact-based approach around photoradar and its terrible uses in our cities. Also, left-lane entitlement is a real thing. From someone who drives the QE II, you know, two and a half hours twice a week, left-lane entitlement is a big thing. In fact, you might be interested to know that the former Transportation minister, Brian Mason, under the NDP government went to B.C. and loved the only-pass-in-the-left-lane signs so much that he brought them to the province of Alberta. Now, no one actually listens to those or reads those signs. I would go so far to say that he might even support this private member's bill, knowing his passion for transportation here in our province, so maybe this is not a partisan issue at all.

I really do appreciate the information that you're providing in a really truth-based way. You owe nobody anything. You know, there's no funding coming from government or from lobbyist groups. I really do appreciate just the facts and just the truths that your group provides. Sorry; that's a lot of statements. I really do apologize for showing my bias here, but I'm really passionate about this.

One of the things that's been said by SENSE BC in the past – forgive me if I say this wrong – is that speed limits have been set artificially low for quite some time, and you kind of touched on that with the limits being set at the floor and not the ceiling. In fact, if we raised it to a level which Albertans, in our case, are comfortable driving at – could you speak to that piece in particular and the data that you would have on the safety?

I say this because if we have a whole bunch of people that are comfortable driving at 127 on our QE II and then you have some people that are driving 110, the posted speed limit, if you increase the speed limit to 120, you'd have more people driving near that 120, 127 mark, I would assume increasing safety because you don't have those, like, slower guys holding things up, driving in the left lane, quite honestly. Can you expand more on that particular piece? If we increase the speed limit, we have the slow guys driving at a better speed and we have more people driving at the same speed limit. Can you speak more to that and the data that you have on that relationship?

Mr. Tootill: Sure. Member Pitt, I guess what I'm hearing you ask is: if you raise the speed limit, are you asking for more variance or are you looking to get less? Is that kind of what I'm hearing? Is that the question?

Mrs. Pitt: Yes.

Mr. Tootill: Look, this is one of the reasons why I really recommend an enhanced keep-right-except-to-pass law so that there is – the idea is that you want fewer interactions between drivers in motor vehicles. That's the idea.

You know, it's quite possible that if a speed limit is raised, those people that would not have wanted to drive that speed in the first place can continue to drive the speed they were always driving at, but if they feel that they wish to raise their speeds, they can do that. In theory, the variance would be reduced, but if it's not, if you've got better lane discipline, then that kind of makes up for that. I find when I'm driving the Coquihalla these days, sometimes I can look down a two-kilometre stretch of road and I can see maybe one car in the left lane and a whole bunch in the right lane. You never saw that before the 120 and the keep-right-except-to-pass law.

In terms of, you know, this conversation about speed limits going up producing higher speeds and therefore more crashes, I can just tell you that contrary to all the headlines you've been possibly

exposed to and what you may have heard, here's the reality with the B.C. speed limit review that was done in 2018. Eleven measured speeds dropped; 16 of the 33 segments saw no negative safety consequence and a 14 per cent reduction in collisions; 5 of the 33 saw measured speeds down but serious collisions up; and 9 of the 33 saw measured speeds up but serious collisions down. There are always these people that will say: it's been proven over and over and over again that if you raise speed limits, speeds will automatically go up. The B.C. experience did not show that. Headlines said otherwise, but it's just not true, and you can just read the report.

The Chair: Okay. Do you have a follow-up, Member Pitt?

Mrs. Pitt: I kind of have another question.

The Chair: Okay, but make it brief, please. We have another guest.

Mrs. Pitt: Just in regard to training, I know that the European driving experience kind of often gets thrown into this conversation, but it's important to note that drivers are trained differently in Europe than they are in Canada. Are there any recommendations that you would have for this committee in terms of driver training, and is there any correlation, in your experience, to training and safety and speed limits?

Mr. Tootill: Well, driver training, unfortunately, is kind of low on the political totem pole because quite often there's a delayed benefit. You know, the benefits don't show themselves for a long, long time, so it's usually kind of one of the last things you get looked at. I really believe that people in Canada could be better drivers, and they could be trained better, and there could be more emphasis on the training and the practical testing. It's never going to hurt. But, by the same token, Canadians aren't bad drivers. If you look at the statistics and compare them on a world basis, we do very well here, particularly given the challenging conditions that we sometimes face. There's this tendency among people, particularly in B.C., to say that we can't do something: they may do that in Europe, but we can't do that here. Well, we can do that here, and we do it all the time.

It's just a matter of raising the bar a little bit and, you know, recognizing instead of this don't ask, don't tell attitude about speed limits – I mean, I personally can't think of another law that I'm exposed to in my everyday life that makes a scofflaw out of so many people than the speed limits. I'm not saying that there's not a reason for a good speed limit in certain areas, urban areas. I don't deny that people need to slow down a bit, but on rural highways, divided highways, it's absolutely ridiculous to think that in some places we're forced to drive at 100 kilometres an hour or we're told that we should be at 100 kilometres an hour when everybody is driving well above that, albeit safely.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll go to the Official Opposition although I don't have anybody on the list.

Okay. The next person on the list will be Mr. Getson. Go ahead, please, sir.

Mr. Getson: Hello. Thanks again for your work on this, Mr. Tootill. It's very interesting to hear some engineering practices thrown into this without some of the political conjecture that sometimes follows. I was one of those people who went to B.C. quite a bit driving motorcycles and doing that, both sportbikes and cruisers. The biggest thing that I had for that tool that I had there was the agility and the ability to change my speed both up and

downwards, and the biggest thing that I always had issues with when riding in those environments was when the speed limit was lower – it was 90 kilometres – and then you were talking about the left-lane entitlement. Again, on the open highways, you're absolutely correct. I believe that that's part of the element.

Also, I've had the pleasure of driving over on the autobahn, an Alberta farm boy driving on the autobahn with unlimited speed limits in areas, knowing that the drivers' behaviours, once they were in place with understanding the higher volumes, the speeds – in that left lane, if you're in it, you'd better be doing 200 kilometres an hour. With that, could you expand a little bit on some of the psychology of the behaviours behind that left-lane entitlement and also on why the passing lanes are kind of put in place? How does that play into this?

10:00

Mr. Tootill: Right. Well, first of all, you know, there's not a lot of money, and it's more difficult to go out and enforce left-lane or right-lane discipline. We found . . .

The Chair: Mr. Tootill, time has expired, but we'll allow you to answer the question from the member. Go ahead.

Mr. Tootill: Okay. Just very quickly, when you have a speed limit that doesn't reflect the speed that everybody is doing, you find that people tend to sit in the left lane and feel entitled to it. Then you get those people that are just not aware, and then you get the other people that are sociopaths, I like to call them, probably about 5 or 10 per cent, that are trying to make a point and, you know, plug up traffic. When you create a law that says that you must keep right except to pass, then you get everybody in the right lane, and you get fewer people in the left lane, and you get people there only for one purpose, which is to overtake.

I just want to say one thing. Along with the keep right except to pass law, we also recommended a change in the lines on the roadways. You'll now see in B.C. that when you come to a passing lane, the dotted lines actually point you towards the right, so you find that people naturally go into the right lane. Instead, what they used to do was that everybody would climb into the left lane, try and pass everybody. Speeds would all increase, but nobody would end up, you know, executing their pass.

Anyway, that's all I have to say. I know I've taken more than my time.

Thank you very much, Member Getson. I appreciate the question.

The Chair: Thank you, sir, very much for your time and your presentation and, of course, answering questions from committee members.

We were going to wait for one of our guests to get online, but apparently he is now online. All right. Wonderful. Thank you very much.

We will now go to our next guest, who is Dr. Gordon Lovegrove, associate professor, University of British Columbia. Thank you, sir, for joining us. I know you've had a busy day today. Thank you again. You're going to have up to five minutes for your presentation, followed by up to 15 minutes of questions from the committee members.

With that, sir, again, thank you very much. You'll have five minutes. The floor is yours. Thank you.

Gordon Lovegrove

Dr. Lovegrove: Wonderful. Am I able to share any of my screen, or do you want me to just do extemporaneous thoughts?

The Chair: You're not able to share your screen at this time.

Dr. Lovegrove: Okay. No problem.

Some of the things I've done, as I was wondering what to share with you that you haven't already heard – I actually just was reflecting over Alberta traffic statistics, including the number of deaths, and what struck me is that your youth are involved heavily in fatal crashes and also in a lot of the higher speed enforcement events. That's a lot of productive years of life that are being lost already due to traffic crashes.

What I do is that I look at the system. I take a systems approach. My PhD is in road safety planning, which looks at the vast majority of reasons and causes with crashes. Ninety-six per cent of crashes typically involve the driver making an error in one way or another, the vehicle is typically involved in about 10 per cent, and the road environment is about 30 per cent of the time. There's overlap. There are multiple factors often.

When you're dealing with drivers, how well educated, how experienced they are, the age – and it relates right back to my opening comment: wow, I just noticed a lot of young drivers involved in the roughly 280 deaths per year across the province. I thought the best way to encapsulate my thoughts on all of this was to take it down to the level of an example, travelling between Edmonton and Calgary.

As it turns out, my daughter lives in Edmonton and travels, so she was reflecting a little bit for me on what she sees in terms of prevailing speeds. My wife, who works for Canadian Blood Services, was travelling between Calgary and Lethbridge, again on a divided highway, last week, and they had a close call. They were behind a pickup truck that they couldn't see beyond, and it was travelling in the fast lane. They were going at the speed limit, but they came upon a very heavy freight vehicle that was also in the fast lane but travelling below the speed limit. For the life of them – and they had a near miss because the truck in front of them swerved suddenly to get out of the way as it was coming up behind this vehicle. They didn't see the approaching big truck below the speed in front of them because the view was screened.

That was all, by way of example on a specific, difference in speeds. The composition of the traffic stream here is really, I think, a salient point. The question that needs to be asked is: when we talk about safe systems – speed, mass, direction – how homogeneous is your traffic stream? If they were all vehicles of similar mass and going at similar speed, it would not be a big deal. It's still important to take the speed increase into account, but if you raise the speed limit, it's a speed maximum limit, not a speed minimum limit.

So are those slower, bigger, heavier vehicles going to increase their speeds? That's the first. I can't say that. One of the things that we know from physics and transportation engineering: the energy involved in speeding up a vehicle. If you're talking about – and there's a lot of good theory out there that suggests that the objective for this is to reduce differential speeds. So if you raise the speed limit, those that are going slower will increase their speeds more than those that are already going well above the speed limit, and you'll see a stream that'll get more homogeneous in its speed. That's not necessarily the case with bigger, heavier freight vehicles because the increase in energy or fuel consumed to increase the speed 10 per cent actually goes up 20 per cent.

So now you've got increased cost to the company, and you have to address the speed governor. Many of these heavier vehicles have speed governors. You will have to make those adjustments. That company is going to actually be paying more. So I question the economics and the practical aspect of it. Not only that; you've got wind drag. While your energy consumed is going to go up by 10 to

20 per cent because of the simple kinetic energy equation $1/2 mv^2$, your wind drag . . .

The Chair: Sir, I'm sorry. Your five minutes have expired. However, I will allow you to finish your last point.

Dr. Lovegrove: Okay. What I'm trying to say is a business case, from a business case perspective. Increasing the speed limit doesn't make a lot of sense to people from the cost perspective, okay? Your higher speed vehicles will continue to go higher, your lower speed probably won't increase, and those trusting you – I'm hoping that they will continue whatever they're doing that they can. I just don't see the business case for increasing your speed limits, and I'm concerned about the safety as well.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, sir. Thank you for that presentation.

We're next going to move into 15 minutes' worth of questions from our committee members. You are a guest of the Official Opposition, so as is convention here, we're going to have the first question from our government members, so government member R.J. Sigurdson, followed by Member Irwin.

R.J. Sigurdson, a question and a follow-up, please.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Dr. Lovegrove, for your presentation. I'd have to say that your research on sustainable transportation is impressive, but from a very quick review of some of your work that you've done so far, it appears to focus on improving urban development, in particular using collision prediction models. Of course, Bill 213 specifically applies to rural multilane divided freeways, and as we have mentioned throughout this process, this is just the potential, that only in certain applications and certain areas this would be applied. When it comes down to it, have you applied your work with your collision prediction models to rural multilane divided highways?

10:10

Dr. Lovegrove: The analysis and the response in my opening remarks to you did not rely at all on any of those models. Those models are only in urban areas. They can be used on limited-access highways. They were, actually, originally developed for higher speed highways with limited access, but I did not apply them in this case because I actually think you're dealing more with the social cost-benefit analysis here, and you can look at safety. You've got many instances where you're going to have, because of increased energy dissipation in the crash, increased severity, and they're going to occur. You just have to ask yourself: is the gain in travel time – and, you know, for example, Edmonton to Calgary, gaining 15 minutes – worth the increased incidence of crashes at a higher speed, which means you're going to have increased severity?

The Chair: Do you have a follow-up, Mr. Sigurdson?

Mr. Sigurdson: Yes. Thank you, Chair. I guess that within your work, of course, your collision prediction models also focus on primarily, from what I've seen, four main themes, which are exposure, sociodemographics, transportation demand management, and network. Can you maybe just explain the basis and what those four things mean within your studies?

Dr. Lovegrove: Sure. The dominant factor, the first one you mentioned, is exposure. That's essentially the number of vehicles times how far the average vehicle is travelling. So that relates to vehicle kilometres travelled, and that's a dominant factor in assessing the exposure or risk of a driver being in a crash. How far

is that person going? How long are they exposed to the risk of being in traffic?

The second one is sociodemographics. That relates to people and the people involved, the culture that you're involved in. It could relate to simple factors related to housing density. It could be related to the driver's capability, so when you talk about safe system design, the tasks, the experience, the training of the driver.

The third one is much more of an urban theme. Transportation demand management deals with: can we do something to get the driver right out of the equation, put him on a bus or a bike or a sidewalk? Well, not, obviously, on a divided highway, so you wouldn't see variables like that in a collision prediction model pertaining to highways.

The last one is the road network. Well, again, in an urban area you've got a lot more intersections, traffic lights, or types of different controls at those conflict points than you do on a highway, so again those variables in a collision prediction model on a divided highway wouldn't necessarily apply. The biggest dominant influence that's a predictor for traffic crashes is how many vehicles and how far they're travelling.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

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

Member Irwin: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Dr. Lovegrove, for being here today. You know, I just wanted to touch on something you said in your opening remarks, the aspect of youth being involved heavily in fatal crashes. As someone who grew up in rural Alberta and lost friends as a teenager in a crash, I think that's something we haven't heard a lot about. We did just hear, prior to you joining, from SENSE BC, and they seemed to minimize some of the statistics. I would just love for you to expand a little bit more on your statistical analysis on increased speed and the impact on driving, maybe just a little bit more on how much that youth fatalities aspect really stood out for you.

Dr. Lovegrove: Yeah. Actually, it is sad, but it's a phenomenon around the world, less experience, and youth tend to be more risk takers, especially young males. Hi. I'm Gord. I used to be young once, and I can definitely say that I was a risk taker and survived some close calls, and we all do.

There's a level of public trust in traffic engineers and decision-makers on how we set our speed limits, how we design our infrastructure, including roads. If you're raising the speed limit, that's sending a signal, and people are assuming, because of trust in the system, that you're going to do the right thing: that speed limit has increased because it's safe for me to go faster. Whether it's young men, young women, youth, a new driver, inexperienced, they're going to assume that that speed limit is safe. There is a certain amount of instinct and people's personal risk-taking attributes and habits that might dampen that and have them go slower, but essentially we have to be very, very careful on what signals we're sending by the speed limits we set.

SENSE BC: yes, I appreciate that people want higher speed limits. One of the questions I had for all of you collectively was: what's the objective behind this? Speed differential is often used, reducing speed differential so there's less difference in speed between the highest speed vehicle and the lowest speed vehicle in a traffic stream. But we didn't see that in B.C., and I don't think you're going to see that in Alberta because you've just got even a higher instance of heavy vehicles using the roads and in that traffic stream. You're not going to achieve it if that's the objective, so I'm going to discount that immediately. I could be wrong.

The other objective often used is saving travel time, folks saving travel time to, you know, for example, Edmonton, Alberta. If you're saving 10 per cent in travel time but spending 20 per cent more in energy or even more because of air drag, is it worth it? The statistics are there, and we're talking about the value of a human life. I hate – I apologize that I have to put a dollar value on it, but when you talk about planning, we often say, "Just multiply a young person, who hasn't even grown into the fullness of their career, who makes maybe \$80,000 a year over a 30-year career" – that's millions of dollars in lost productivity to the economy. That's the tragedy of all of this, that the youngest, really most vulnerable sectors of our workforce, the ones that have the most potential, their career fully ahead of them, are being taken out. We have to look at ways to improve the safety of our system.

It's a tough one. In B.C. we were trying things like speed intervals, so not photo radar, where it's just a snapshot in time as you go past a parked van on the side of the road. We looked at an interval, so a distance, and we looked at the time it takes to travel that distance. That's a fairer way. You don't have these radar traps, speed traps, and you looked at the whole trip.

I apologize, Member Irwin, if I didn't completely, directly answer your question. I hope that's close or gives you a little bit, though, of a flavour of where I'm coming from.

The Chair: All right. A follow-up please, Member Irwin.

Member Irwin: Yeah. Absolutely. I mean, I don't have much of a follow-up, but I think, you know, the teacher in me thinks about your comments around the fact that this almost gives permission. Without education, especially perhaps for younger drivers, newer drivers, this is potentially quite concerning. I just wonder – and, again, I'm not sure if it's a question – if any amount of public education, very much targeted education programs, could help. Do you have any comment on that?

Dr. Lovegrove: Well, new drivers are entering the traffic stream every year, every day, so that education would have to be deeply ingrained right back to a mandatory driver training program. I don't know if they have that in Alberta. I know that anywhere in Europe – for example, you've got the autobahn, with no speed limit at all – it's a requirement. The driver training is absolutely mandatory. The testing, the amount of on-road time is extensive, and the fees involved – people think twice before they take their road test. Here in B.C. I know it's a \$50 charge. You take it. My kids took it three times before they finally got through.

I think there needs to be some increased education and also another system support, enforcement. If you've got 140 kilometres – and this is my daughter speaking – I've got to rely on the Alberta traffic authorities to know what the prevailing streams are. I didn't go there, but I've heard – so not good science; I apologize – about 140-kilometre-high speeds, and in fact that report showed that there were quite a number above that speed. Really, it's a matter of maybe operating the other way down as well, to try to get some automated enforcement to educate people so that the risk, their fear, their concern about getting caught educates them as well constantly, not just while they're in training but when they're actually participating in traffic.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Chair. I want to make sure that we're just sticking to what the bill would actually do, which is allow for

the minister to set the limit as high as 120. We're hearing arguments as to what should be considered, I think, you know, by the minister if they are making any changes. I guess I just want to make sure that I'm getting a clear understanding from you on that. All of those factors that you have raised, I think, are important to consider when you're allocating any speed limit: the safety, the area, the engineering that went into the development of the road. I guess I just want to make sure that I get this clear. What is your opinion of the minister having the option to set the maximum to 120? It doesn't mean that it's going to happen. I just want to hear your thoughts on that.

10:20

Dr. Lovegrove: Well, thank you, Member Rutherford. Having dealt with decision-makers, you're in the seat of adjusting the speed limits as you see fit. I'm not clear if you're asking whether a politician should have the power to make the decision or whether the engineer should. Is that sort of where you're coming from with that question, if it should stay with the engineer or go to the minister?

Mr. Rutherford: No. I think what I was just trying to suggest was that the comments around considerations on speed limits: they're fair considerations that we talked about. This particular bill only provides the minister the option to have the speed limit set as high as 120; it doesn't actually impose a speed limit of 120 if it is passed. I just want to get your opinion of the minister having the option to set the speed limit as high as 120. It doesn't mean that it's going to happen. I don't want to confuse two debates – what should a speed limit be on a road, and what option should the minister have? – because the bill does the latter of the two. I hope that clears that up.

Dr. Lovegrove: Okay. Well, I'll give an answer, and if it's not what you expected or what you wanted, please clarify. In giving the minister the option, no matter what he does with that, there's going to need to be a monitoring program to see if the objectives were met, right? There's going to be a reason for increasing it, and I actually don't know what those reasons are. I've speculated, and I haven't heard. Any good decision-maker will come back and monitor: did we achieve our objective? So that's the first thing. Whatever options are given, whatever decisions are implemented, monitor to see if you've met your objectives.

The other thing I was going to say is about that perception reaction time if you go from 110 to 120. I'm going to leave it to the traffic engineers in Alberta, that have done the math and all the good design work, to confirm that the highway is designed properly, and that includes things like sign readability, interchange spacing, and all the other stuff that goes into that. If I could say one thing: it's hard for me to answer with an authoritative opinion because of all the unknowns regarding how the road is designed, okay? If it's designed for 110, then my opinion is clearly: no, don't do it. If you can adjust the infrastructure of the highway so that it can accommodate a 120 speed limit, then perhaps. I'm still concerned, though. I need to know more about the objectives, about why.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Dr. Lovegrove. Thank you very much for joining us here. Thank you for answering questions from our committee members. You're welcome to stay online; we only ask that you stay on mute. We certainly thank you again for your time.

The clerk worked some magic here, and we were able to get a hold of Dr. Voaklander, a professor at the U of A.

Sir, thank you for being able to join us here today. We're going to allow you up to five minutes for your presentation, and then there

will be 15 minutes' worth of questions from the committee members. Sir, thank you very much. The floor is yours.

Don Voaklander

Dr. Voaklander: Okay. Thank you very much for having me. I guess my first response to this is that, you know, we've been driving for decades on these roads. We've all been driving about 100, 125 kilometres an hour, and it's no surprise that bringing the speed limit up to that level certainly would bring most Albertans into becoming law-abiding citizens when they're on two-lane roads. However, I guess the concern that the Injury Prevention Centre has is about driver behaviour.

It's pretty much customary in Canada and Alberta to have a certain flexibility on the speed limit. In other countries like Australia, New Zealand, anywhere in northern Europe, they have no tolerance. The speed limit is the speed limit, and there's little flexibility there. Here our culture on speeding is such that enforcement is somewhat looser in regard to ticketing people and controlling the speed. Our concern at the Injury Prevention Centre is, actually, that if the intent of this is to bring people into the realm of law abiding, that's good, but if the average speed goes up from instead of 120 or 125 to 130 or 135, there is going to be quite an increase in burden of death and collisions on Alberta's major highways. A change from 120 to 130, if that was allowed by our enforcement folks, would be about a 20 per cent increase in collisions on those highways and about 30 per cent of fatal collisions on those highways. I don't know if that's a burden we want to put on the people of the province of Alberta.

The other thing is that, especially with highway 2, raising the speed limit, especially, again, if it's loosely enforced, would make quite a difference between the slower vehicles and the faster vehicles. Trucks that are governed at 100 or 110 would be at quite a different speed than someone going 130 kilometres an hour. With highway 2, with only two lanes on either side for the majority, that doesn't give much leeway for mistakes or for impatient drivers to pass. If you look at a road like the Coquihalla, there are passing lanes on every hill, three lanes for a large part of the road, so it's quite a different situation than we see on highway 2 here in Alberta.

Yeah. I guess that's pretty much all I wanted to say. It's really a confluence of driver behaviour and enforcement in this. I think that is the real key issue about raising the speed limit.

Thank you.

The Chair: Well, sir, thank you very much.

Again, as with convention, we would start with the government members as this is a guest of the Official Opposition. Mr. Schow first, followed by Member Irwin. Mr. Schow, go ahead.

Mr. Schow: Thank you very much for your presentation today. I appreciate your remarks. I know that you talked a little bit about speeds and average speed. I was wondering if maybe you'd comment. I know that in B.C., when the speed limit was increased, the average speed actually did not increase specifically on the Coquihalla. Have you personally or has the Injury Prevention Centre at the U of A done any research on rural multilane divided freeways with speed limits?

Dr. Voaklander: Sorry. Could you repeat that last bit you said there?

Mr. Schow: Sure. Have you or the Injury Prevention Centre at the U of A done any research on rural multilane divided highway speed limits?

Dr. Voaklander: No. We specifically have not done any research, but we know, as far as safety goes, they're about half the fatality rate per kilometre or collision rate per kilometre of other rural roads. We know they are safer, but I don't have anything specific about people's driving behaviours other than what we all know occurs when we do travel on double-lane highways at present.

The Chair: A follow-up, please.

Mr. Schow: Okay. Well, based on the research you have done, do you have any recommendations on what the most appropriate speed is for rural multilane divided freeways?

Dr. Voaklander: Well, I would suggest that maintaining it at 110 with some flexibility is probably the way to go, especially with highway 2 because it is so oversubscribed right now, especially at certain times of the day. It's virtually bumper to bumper. If you have much more of a deviation between the slowest and the fastest vehicles, I think that could lead to more problems on that specific highway.

10:30

The Chair: Thank you.

Member Irwin for a question and a follow-up, please.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Chair, and thank you for being here, Dr. Voaklander. Yeah. I was really curious about your comments around the 20 per cent increase in collisions, 30 per cent in fatal. We had just heard, prior to you, from Dr. Lovegrove, who also shared his concerns around fatalities for youth in particular. The numbers are pretty troubling. You know, the bill sponsor, MLA Turton, shared during his presentation last week that this is only an option, increasing speed limits by Transportation when it's safe to do so. I'm curious: do you think that it's valuable for the Ministry of Transportation to have that option? What are your thoughts on that? Like, what circumstances would make it safe to do so, in your opinion?

Dr. Voaklander: Well, I think the ministry should do some very careful research around traffic volumes, and once they have been assessed, I think that, you know, depending on what the outcome of those assessments would be, there might be some way to move this forward into a higher speed limit. But I think that it should take some very careful research and maybe even a short period of piloting perhaps an increased speed limit before a final decision is made on this. I think that we need to proceed with extreme caution, especially with the traffic volume between Edmonton and Calgary.

The Chair: Thank you.

A follow-up, Member Irwin?

Member Irwin: No follow-up.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

We have Mr. Getson. Go ahead for a question and a follow-up, please.

Mr. Getson: Perfect. Well, thank you, sir, for your presentation today. It's really good. The area I'd like to ask you to focus in on is, obviously, those youth drivers that are coming in and your statistical analysis and your data on that. I don't know if you can separate or disaggregate the two, between what's taking place in typical municipalities or freeways versus actual rural, but I'm wondering if there's anything that comes into play there with distracted driving. Again, where I'm heading on this one is that

there's a generation that was brought up with the Internet and these darned smart phones, and I'm wondering if there's a bit of a correlation there as well that you're starting to see in driving behaviours or patterns or issues.

Dr. Voaklander: Yeah. It's always an issue with distracted driving. It's hard to get a denominator on who's actually doing the distracted driving and how often they're doing it. I would suggest, though, that because reaction time is so important when you're driving at high speeds, any type of distraction could lead to an unfortunate incident. I know that with the stopping distance, if you go from 120 to 130, if it's increased like that, you're looking at about a 20-metre excess in stopping distance, or about 60-odd feet, for us that are still in the feet business. But, you know, it does make a big difference if you're distracted and you don't respond in time. Again, I wish to reiterate that if you're coming up on a slow-moving vehicle and you're moving very quickly, you want all the reaction time you possibly can get. If you're doing anything that's distracting you, it would be a limitation.

The Chair: All right. Mr. Getson, a follow-up, please.

Mr. Getson: Yeah. I really appreciate it. Again, it comes down to – I agree a hundred per cent that you can't beat physics when it comes down to stopping times and distances. We understand that the design limits through the TAC manual and otherwise for these highways are already at 130, and a lot of that comes down to road conditions, vehicle operations, but you already have an engineering factor built in there to give it a design limit or an operating limit at 130. Distracted driving is a big concern. Again, I ride motorcycles, and I can tell you which drivers are paying attention to the road and which ones aren't, and I think that there's a strong correlation between that and the reaction distances.

I appreciate your input. Thank you, sir.

Dr. Voaklander: Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Member Lori Sigurdson for a question and a follow-up, please.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Dr. Voaklander, for your presentation. You did already reference it, but I just wanted to give you a bit more time to do so. You know, one of the major highways in Alberta, of course, is the Queen E II, and it has some unique challenges. I just wondered if you could sort of elaborate a little bit more on what it means. Like, are there sections of it that are safe to be 120? What are some of the concerns of it being at that level? Just please respond to that.

Dr. Voaklander: Well, I think the major concern on the QE II is the lack of a third lane. I mean, there are a few places around Lacombe and between Airdrie and Calgary, but primarily it's a two-lane-on-either-side highway. The traffic volume is very, very heavy. We've all driven it. We've seen the impatient drivers. We've seen the contrast in slow- and fast-moving vehicles. I urge a lot of caution before that speed limit is raised on that particular road. I don't have nearly the concern for the east-west four-lane highways because the traffic volume on those is much less, but the QE II is a special situation.

The Chair: Go ahead, Member, if you had another question.

Ms Sigurdson: Yeah. Thank you. You know, something that we have had other speakers talk about and that we've talked a little bit about is just how relevant or how important the maintenance of

those highways is in terms of increasing the speed limit. Can you say anything about that?

Dr. Voaklander: Well, it's interesting. If you do travel a bit around western Canada, it used to be always the case that Alberta highways were the best maintained, and now, when you cross the border into B.C., which used to be much worse, the highways are actually quite a bit better maintained than Alberta highways. You know, I think we're in fairly dire need of some infrastructure around our major highways to make sure that they're up to grade and that the contact with the road is the best you possibly can make it. Right now they're, I would say, not as up to standard as some of the other provinces in the country when it comes to infrastructure maintenance.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Are there any government members with a question?

Hearing and seeing none, I'll go to the next person on our list, Mr. Nielsen, for a question and a follow-up, please.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for your presentation. You know, throughout some of the discussion on this bill we've seen some comparisons that have been drawn between the experience here in Alberta and the experience in B.C. Even the bill sponsor says that they're completely different provinces and that the driving is completely different as well. I guess the question would be, then: what is it that we can draw and learn from B.C.?

Dr. Voaklander: Well, B.C. did reduce the speed limit, after increasing it, after a couple of years because they had an increase in collisions. I think that if we take this path of raising the speed limit here, the lesson we can learn from B.C. is to carefully monitor the roads that the speed limits are increased on and make sure that, you know, like a vaccine trial, we're monitoring the adverse events. If there are too many collisions or too many incidents on the road, it may be that certain roads should have their speed limits reduced back to the initial value. Again, it's all about the science and monitoring to make sure that people have the safest possible roads for their travels.

The Chair: Mr. Nielsen, go ahead.

Mr. Nielsen: Yeah. I guess just a quick follow-up, then: should we consider that experience between, you know, our discussions on what's transpired in B.C. and what Alberta may be looking for? Is that a fair comparison to take into consideration, or should we be just focused on Alberta?

Dr. Voaklander: I think it's hard to compare Alberta and B.C. If you look at fatalities across Canada, Alberta actually is below the national average in terms of fatalities per kilometre driven, so we're actually doing pretty well in Alberta. B.C. is considerably higher than us, so it's really hard to compare their experience. You know, my personal thoughts are that we take this slowly, that we consider all the variables involved, specifically traffic volume, and do our own analysis here, and that if we decide to raise the speed limit, we monitor it very, very carefully to see where that's taking us.

10:40

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Are there any government members with any questions for our guest?

Hearing and seeing none, I'll open up the floor to any opposition members.

Hearing and seeing none, all right.

Dr. Voaklander, thank you very much, sir. Thank you very much for being here, thank you for your presentation, and certainly thank you for answering questions from our committee members.

Ladies and gentlemen and, of course, committee members, thank you for the flexibility with our guests. We were going to take a break a little bit earlier in the program, but we had to accommodate some of our guests and, of course, their time. It looks like we were able to manage through that.

I will just say this. Before we get into the deliberations – I know that we've been sitting down for a long time – we're going to take a five-minute break. We will return in five minutes, and then we'll continue with deliberations and recommendations on Bill 213.

So, with that, we'll take a five-minute break. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned from 10:41 a.m. to 10:46 a.m.]

The Chair: Okay. Welcome back, ladies and gentlemen and committee members. We're now going to begin deliberations and recommendations on Bill 213.

The committee will now begin its deliberations on Bill 213, the Traffic Safety (Maximum Speed Limit for Provincial Freeways) Amendment Act, 2021. Having heard the presentations, the committee must consider its observations, opinions, and recommendations with respect to Bill 213, 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 if there is a consensus that additional time is necessary.

I'll now open up the floor to discussion on the committee's recommendations. Mr. Schow, go ahead, please.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the stakeholders that presented today, thank the mover of the bill, Mr. Turton, and also anyone else who is tuning in on this and watching the committee proceedings. We've heard from five stakeholders today, and I think that the general information I have received from them has a lot to do with engineering of these roads and what they're capable of handling from a traffic safety perspective and a speed perspective.

I think that it's also important to note that when this bill was tabled and when Mr. Turton presented to us, there are a number of factors that are not maybe widely circulated among the public. One is that this bill does not immediately increase the speed limit but, rather, there's a two-year period where it can, you know, be reviewed. I think that that's really important.

You know, while there may be some differing opinions about the speed limits on the roads and what they should be, I do think that this is a bill worth debating in the Legislature. I think that it's one that has a lot of merit, and I would be in favour of this bill proceeding. Mr. Chair, if you have a draft motion in favour of this bill proceeding to the Chamber, I'd like to know if we could put that on the screen and then further debate that as a committee.

The Chair: Sure. There's obviously more debate on this, but, Mr. Schow, I think what you'd like to say is: Mr. Schow would move that the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills recommend that Bill 213, Traffic Safety (Maximum Speed Limit for Provincial Freeways) Amendment Act, 2021, proceed. Does that sound about right?

Okay. I'll open up the floor to further discussion on this. I see Mr. Nielsen. Go ahead, please, sir.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I, too, of course, want to thank all of the stakeholders for coming in and presenting today with a lot of information to take in, you know, hearing those

different perspectives from community leaders, some safety experts and whatnot.

I guess one of the first things that I want to point out here, as we've been discussing and what initially seems to be the understanding, is that, of course, this bill gives the ability for the minister to make the decision about potentially raising the speed limit. Unfortunately, I was a little bit concerned leading up to this committee meeting today because some of the communications that seem to have come out around this do kind of infer that should this bill pass, those speed limits will be going up. We've got to be very, very careful that that message is not sticking, that this is just simply a case of it might happen. I thought that was necessary, to, I guess, point that out.

Through the discussions, of course, what we got on was about the casualties around youth being inexperienced, new drivers being inexperienced, potentially raising the limits, of course, testing those abilities. One of the things that I think is important to note, that the committee should take into consideration as well – although it hasn't been a formal presentation to the committee, it was clearly commented. I do want to recognize Toby Boulet, who is the father of Logan Boulet who, of course, we know was one of the young gentlemen that was tragically lost in the Humboldt crash. He shared his concerns about the bill, including the priority of the bill as well. So I do think it's very, very important that committee members listen to that voice as well and potentially ultimately the House as well, which leads to the important role of formal consultation that can be done by the government and department.

I cannot stress enough that there needs to be considerable due diligence to be undertaken before enacting a bill, again, not presupposing the decision of either the committee or potentially the House in advance, and any specific changes that might come to that. We've clearly heard that there are some concerns moving forward with this bill. I guess the good news is that when I look at this bill, what's going on in the House in terms of private members' business, there is time. This bill was, unfortunately, very low on the Order Paper in terms of what we're discussing right now. With the coming-into-force date of the bill there's room for discussion, which I'm grateful for.

It's going to give us the opportunity to, I think, hear from the Minister of Transportation on some of the safety and consultation that they're able to do around this bill. The Minister of Justice will be important, too, around the enforcement aspect of this and including even maybe the Minister of Finance around insurance. You know, again, we've seen changes recently around claims and insurance. As we know, with higher speeds, when an accident does occur, that does mean greater damage. That does mean greater injury, including fatality. So we need to understand how changes like this correlate potentially to that.

I think, generally speaking, it'll give us the ability for people to talk to us. You know, I'll admit that this has certainly generated an interesting conversation. I've heard everything from very opposed to very in support and everything else in between, but the reality is that there are 4.4 million Albertans, and I certainly haven't heard from 4.4 million people. I think our role as MLAs is to listen to arguments coming from both sides. Maybe it means that should this bill go back to the House, potential amendments may need to be made. I don't know. Maybe it might have to be referred back to a committee to go out and do those fulsome consultations, again, maybe listening to voices like Toby Boulet.

I'm not sure at the moment whether I'm prepared to support the bill in general, but at least with the discussion that I've heard today, I don't see anything preventing it from being discussed in the House, so I'm willing to support it moving to the House. I'm reserving judgment, of course, on the bill itself.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nielsen, for those remarks.

I'll open up the floor to any other committee members.

Hearing and seeing none, I will put the question to the committee.

Mr. Schow will move that

the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills recommend that Bill 213, Traffic Safety (Maximum Speed Limit for Provincial Freeways) Amendment Act, 2021, proceed.

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

Hearing and seeing none,
that motion has been carried.

10:55

Hon. members, with the committee having finished its deliberations on Bill 213, 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. Sigurdson. Mr. Sigurdson would like to move 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 213, Traffic Safety (Maximum Speed Limit for Provincial Freeways) Amendment Act, 2021, 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, 23, 2021.

Mr. Sigurdson, does that sound about right to you?

Mr. Sigurdson: That sounds excellent.

The Chair: And it looks about right to you on the screen there?

Mr. Sigurdson: You betcha. Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Wonderful.

Any further discussion on that?

Hearing and seeing none, a question to the floor. All those in favour of Mr. Sigurdson's motion, say aye. On the phone? Thank you. Any opposed, say no. Hearing and seeing none,
that motion has been carried.

All right. We'll next 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 a member to move for adjournment?

Mr. Nielsen: So moved, Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Nielsen moved that the meeting be adjourned. All those in favour, say aye. Any opposed? Thank you. Hearing none, that motion has been carried.

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the committee, thank you very much, and have yourself a great day.

[The committee adjourned at 10:57 a.m.]

