

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, December 3, 2007**

**1:00 p.m.**

Date: 07/12/03

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Grant that we, the members of our province's Legislature, fulfill our office with honesty and integrity. May our first concern be for the good of all of our people. Let us be guided by these principles in our deliberations this day. Amen.

Hon. members and guests here in the galleries today, we'll now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Paul Lorieau. Please feel free to join in and participate in the language of your choice.

**Hon. Members:**

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

head:

### Introduction of Visitors

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly some distinguished guests from the state of Jalisco, Mexico. I know they met with you earlier this morning and with the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology, and I think that individually we all apologized to the delegation for the weather that we served them when they came here.

The province of Alberta and the state of Jalisco have a memorandum of economic co-operation and protocol, which includes a Spanish language development exchange program and an educator exchange program. It has significantly enhanced Spanish language programs in Alberta schools, as over 10,000 students now study Spanish at the K to 12 level.

I'm honoured today to introduce my counterpart, the Secretary for Education for Jalisco, Mr. Miguel Martínez Espinosa. With him in the Speaker's gallery I would like to introduce the following: Pedro Díaz Arias, co-ordinator of teacher training; Ana Bertha Guzmán Alatorre, co-ordinator of basic education; Eduardo Díaz Becerra, co-ordinator of high schools, higher and technological education; Héctor Salgado Rodríguez, principal of the polytechnic school of the University of Guadalajara; Enrique Valdez Tort, director general of the Higher Technological Institute of Puerto Vallarta; Gerardo Acosta Pazos, co-ordinator of international outreach and follow-up for the international affairs office; Mr. Franco Antonio Osuna Garzón, director of international affairs for Panamerican University – and Mr. Garzón, by the way, if any of us have experienced this: Air Canada lost his luggage, and that's why he's dressed the way he is – Benito Gutiérrez Levy, chief of an academy at Panamerican University; Francisco Lancaster Jones, director of Canadian studies, Autonomous University of Guadalajara; Raúl Rodríguez, director of internationalization, University of UNIVA; Ms Mónica Sánchez, director general of international affairs for the governor's office; also

from the governor's office, Ms Melissa Fierro, sister states co-ordinator; from Cecytej high school Hídalía Ahumada Quintero, principal, and Alejandro Fernández Paniagua, the state director general. They are accompanied today by Waldemar Riemer and Carole Pelé from our department. I would ask all of them to stand and be recognized by the members of the Assembly.

**Ms Evans:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm likewise honoured today to introduce somebody from a very warm and wonderful country, Malaysia. It's the first visit to Alberta for the consul general of Malaysia, who is located in Vancouver. He is with us today. His name is Mohd. Hassan bin Bal. He and I share in common the fact that we have three sons, although his are younger than mine.

Malaysia and Alberta, of course, share much in terms of oil and gas exploration, the wonderful opportunity we have for trade, for importing and exporting telecommunications and other kinds of electronics. Mr. Speaker, our honoured guest today shared a luncheon where we discussed many of the partnerships currently under way with universities in Alberta and some of the other opportunities he has to visit with some of the nonprofit groups that are helping to make our Malaysian people coming to Alberta feel at home. We have about 1,100 people of Malaysian descent in Alberta.

I would ask Consul General Hassan to stand. He is accompanied by Tim Marriott on behalf of IIAR. Please, let's give them the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

head:

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 42 grade 6 students from Brander Gardens elementary school located in my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. Each year Brander school comes under the capable guidance of their teacher, Ms Natalie Gago-Esteves. She's accompanied this year by teacher Alissa Sept and student teacher Jocelyn Lee. They're seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask them to rise. Each year I ask that the students who come help us with our job as MLAs by doing their job as citizens, by letting us know what's important to help build their community. I'd like to ask you to give them a warm welcome to this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I cannot believe how lucky I am today because on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview I get to introduce Lynnwood elementary school. Lynnwood is participating in the School at the Legislature program for the week. I'm just delighted that I got to be the person that is introducing them. They are very bright and inquisitive and asked excellent questions, I hear. We have 21 students joining us in the public gallery today. They are here with their teacher, Mrs. Heidi Medhurst, and parent helper Mrs. France Boucher. I would ask them all to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also delighted and truly honoured to be able to introduce some child care operators and parents also joining us today. I'd ask you to please rise as I say your name: Judy Babyi, Patricia Drake, Le-Ann Ewaskiw, Roxanne Fournier, Kyle Dowdeswell, and Becky Quigg. They are here to express their concern and, hopefully, see some action on child care. Please join me in welcoming them to the Alberta Legislature.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

1:10

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with an interesting number of introductions: two and a half. Of course, my wife, Jennifer, is expecting our first child in just a few months. As you know, Jen is a friend of this Assembly. She continues to be the general manager of SpiritQuest Enterprises. She is my manager personally and professionally. On the political side I often say that Calgary-Lougheed has two MLAs for the price of one. She also continues to run our charity, the Top of the World Society for Children, which leads me to my next introduction, a very special one.

Danaru Sherpa is a dear friend. He comes all the way from the other side of the world, the village of Phortse in the Solo-Khumbu Valley beneath Mount Everest. He's a great inspiration to me. He's incredibly innovative, and he's an extremely hard worker and a wonderful husband and father. His wife is Yangzen Doma. His 14-year-old is Nawang Tshering, also 11-year old Paljom Tsomo, and nine-year-old Pemba Neru. For over a quarter century, Mr. Speaker, he has helped to make dreams come true for Canadians who go to the Himalayas to trek and to climb. He has climbed Cho Oyu, the sixth highest mountain in the world, three times; Makalu, the fifth highest; Kangchenjunga, the third highest; and Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world, not once or twice or three times or four times but a five-time Mount Everest summiteer. He will tell you that that is not the most important thing in his life, though. I will tell you that the strongest person I know in every way is Dawa Sherpa, not the biggest man but the biggest man in heart. He is gentle and strong, and I have literally seen him give the shirt off his back.

I say a big namaste to our friend, Dawa Sherpa, and my wife, Jennifer. Please rise and accept the warm congratulations of our House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to introduce to you and through you two people who are outstanding and tireless advocates for persons with disabilities. First, Dr. Austin Mardon, Order of Canada. Today Dr. Mardon was the keynote speaker at city hall, where International Day of Disabled Persons was recognized with a day-long fair. Dr. Mardon was diagnosed in 1992 with schizophrenia and advocates on a national and local level for those with schizophrenia. He is also a prolific author, space researcher, and world explorer. Dr. Mardon is the author of some 40 books, some in collaboration with his father, Dr. Ernest Mardon, and they tell Alberta history. They are presently working on a book that tells the story of political figures in the history of Lethbridge from all three levels of government.

The second person is Bev Matthiessen, who is currently executive director of the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities. Bev has volunteered over many years with numerous organizations and service clubs. She was instrumental in the creation of the Alberta Disabilities Forum, an advocacy partnership of 35 provincial disability organizations. Bev is a social justice advocate who believes in equality and fairness for all and works hard toward that goal.

They are sitting in the members' gallery, and I would ask them, please, to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House six more child care operators and parents who are visiting the Assembly today to observe the proceedings and to express their concern about child care spaces in this province. Please stand as I call your names: Robyn Zimka, Patricia McEwen, Jan Lawrie, Sue Bowman, Paulette Prosser, and Colleen Ruhl. Thank you very much for coming. Please enjoy your day.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly today a group of child care operators and parents who are visiting us for question period. I'd ask them to stand as I mention their names: Teena Tesluk, Leon Comer, Suzanne Vokurka, Jayne Brzezicki, Elaine Levy, Wendy Smith, Mima DeLilla, and Karen Sanderson. I'd like to have you all stand and receive the warm and traditional welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I introduce to you and members of the Assembly members of the Alberta Métis harvesting council and fellow Métis harvesters. These harvesters come from all parts of Alberta, including the most southern and northern communities. They are here today to observe the Alberta government in the hope that they will respectfully accommodate Métis harvesting rights. These members are: Wayne Hadley-Roberts, Valleyview; Matt Hadley-Roberts, Valleyview; Jim Lambert, Robb; Ron Jones, Leduc; Sam Stephenson, Boyle; Dennis Gable, Fort McMurray; Brian Hamelin, northwest of Cochrane; Jeannette McLelland, Edmonton; Pat Ronald, Okotoks; Robert Lee, Edmonton; Phil Leveque, Brooks; Ralph Servo, Edmonton; Josh Slager, Edmonton; Jordan Reves, Edmonton; Deanna Whitelock, west of Edmonton. They're in the public gallery. They are now standing, and I would ask them to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Technology.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My guests have arrived, no doubt due to the weather today and the large amount of traffic that we have coming in from St. Albert, and no doubt we'll get that fixed in short order with the help of the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. I have 53 students and eight adults in the galleries with us, five parent helpers and two teachers from the J.J. Nearing elementary school, whom I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly. The teachers with the group are Mrs. Christine Sowinski and Mrs. Jody Sekundiak; teacher aide Mrs. Rosemary Demers; parent helpers Mrs. Kim Ciampantelli, Mrs. Lorie Kary, Mrs. Wendy Battenfelder, Mrs. Renée Whitefield, Mrs. Jennifer Medwid. I know the school well, have been there many times. They're great kids, great staff, and a great facility. They are in both galleries. I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four introductions today. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two outstanding constituents of

Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. Mr. Philip Rowe is a councilor and deputy mayor of the town of Vegreville, volunteer firefighter, and outstanding community supporter. Philip is accompanied by his daughter Jenna. Jenna is a grade 4 student at A.L. Horton in Vegreville, has been studying government and, I understand from her dad, has a very keen interest in politics. I would ask them now to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure again to introduce two more outstanding constituents of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville to the Assembly. I recently had the pleasure of attending the high school awards at Vegreville composite high school. The gentleman I'm going to introduce was the recipient of many, many awards, including the citizenship award, the Alexander Rutherford scholarship, without a doubt an outstanding student, an outstanding citizen of Vegreville. Mr. Curtis Steinbach is, indeed, a promising young Albertan. Curtis is accompanied today by his father Al, and I would ask them both to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. I believe Curtis is really interested in engineering, so we're in good hands.

The next gentleman I'd like to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and again to all members of the Assembly is the nominated candidate for the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta for the riding of Athabasca-Redwater. His name is Mr. Jeff Johnson. Jeff is a very active member of his community, raising significant funds for the sports complex in Athabasca, very involved in the local business community. He's a proud father of three young children, whom he raises with his wife, Kim, in the constituency. Of note to all hon. members in the House, Jeff is the son of our current MLA for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, and I am thrilled to see that this lineage will continue in our caucus. I'm proud to have Jeff as a member of our team, and I would ask that he rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, again my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the nominated candidate for the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta for the riding of Wetaskiwin-Camrose, and his name is Mr. Verlyn Olson. Verlyn has a great deal of experience both in his professional and community life. He has worked as a lawyer assisting farmers, seniors, and small-business people in the area; very active in his community, not only as a sports coach but a member of his church. Verlyn and his wife, Mardell, have raised three children in the community of Camrose and have recently been blessed with a grandson, Joshua. I am proud to have Verlyn as a member of our team, and we look forward to building our future. I would ask that Verlyn now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

1:20 head:

### Members' Statements

#### Hockey Alberta Centennial

**Mr. Webber:** Mr. Speaker, on Thursday last week I attended the Hockey Alberta centennial gala at Rexall Place here in Edmonton. The 100th anniversary event showcased the core of Alberta values. One hundred awards were given to recognize the contribution of 100 individuals, including coaches, players, officials, parents, teams, and hockey enthusiasts, people who encouraged and built a game enjoyed and loved by young and old.

I'm sure that many of the hon. members have fond memories of playing hockey: putting on the pads and lacing up the skates, tripping over a battle for the puck or sliding into the boards, skating down on a breakaway or scoring in overtime, all the while thinking and dreaming of the thousands of fans cheering you on as the TV cameras follow your every move. In those moments, Mr. Speaker, nothing else mattered. We all played in the Stanley Cup finals and scored the winning goal at one time or another. Even though it was

fictitious, it meant the world. It was real to us. Of course, as kids we all wanted to make the NHL. It was not the money, though, that motivated us; rather, it was the love of the game, the desire to be the best.

Mr. Speaker, Hockey Alberta prides itself on allowing kids here in Alberta this same experience that we and many before us have had. I would like to commend Hockey Alberta and all the volunteers, parents, and contributors that make the minor hockey experience possible in our province. After 100 years we can reflect on the possibilities available in our next century of hockey here in Alberta. As we look forward, we must also embrace the past. By honouring the past, we can inspire the future.

Mr. Speaker, our colleague and friend the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose received one of these Hockey Alberta centennial awards. He has been a key figure in the development of hockey in Camrose, from founding the Camrose Sports Development Society to bringing the Viking Cup and junior A hockey to Camrose. He is truly deserving. I would like to acknowledge his contributions. He truly deserves this award.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

#### Child Care

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The need for accessible quality child care is no longer primarily an issue for single-parent families or a narrowly identifiable sector of our population. It is no longer an issue of party politics since the hon. Premier declared support for increased child care availability on taking office a year ago. It is no longer primarily a matter of the pressures of growth or an expanding economy that implies it will go away next time we have a downturn or when supply catches up to demand in the housing market.

Each of these angles on this story is only a small part of a much larger picture of what is primarily a human issue and an issue of priorities. I therefore appeal to the Premier to make good on his promise and to the government to move this issue forward on its agenda. This is a season when our priorities are challenged. There is the contrast between the warm fireside ads and stories of homelessness, between spending on a new gadget for someone who has everything and sustaining a basic standard of living for those who struggle to make ends meet.

In the matter of child care I note with appreciation that Alberta Children's Services is rethinking its regulations for existing operators. This is a good step and a necessary one, yet it is only one small step to where we must go to make children's needs a primary focus of public policy. To go further will take more than programs and institutions. It will take a shared commitment to build a child-friendly society. It will take a new approach that looks at each new initiative in Health, Environment, Education, Justice, Energy, and Finance and asks: how will this affect Alberta's children? When we do this, Mr. Speaker, it will be able to be said of us, as it was of Ebenezer Scrooge after his awakening: he knew how to keep Christmas with the best of them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona.

#### Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Awards of Excellence

**Mr. Lougheed:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, 2007 marks the fifth anniversary of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities awards of excellence program. The program was begun to highlight the good work of individuals or organizations that

enhance or enrich the lives of persons with disabilities in our province. The awards are usually presented on December 3, which is the International Day of Disabled Persons as recognized by the United Nations.

It's my pleasure to announce to the Assembly the 2007 awards of excellence winners. Faith Jahelka of Red Deer has been awarded the Gary McPherson award for outstanding leadership or achievement. Mrs. Jahelka has been an unrelenting advocate for survivors of brain injury and their caregivers since her husband suffered a head injury more than a decade ago. She has played a lead role in getting the voices of the brain injured heard. Her leadership and persistence were responsible in part for the creation of the provincial government's successful Alberta brain injury initiative in 2000.

Bill Hurley of Calgary has been honoured with the award of excellence in public awareness. Mr. Hurley is the game night entertainer at Calgary Vipers' baseball games, and thousands of fans look forward to his energetic performances as he interacts effectively with those of all ages. He's well respected by his employer and the fans.

The winner of the award of excellence in education is the Calgary public library. The library has had a long tradition of providing collections, programs, services, and facilities in a way that makes them accessible to Calgarians of all ages and abilities. In 2004 the library opened a diversity services department to integrate and coordinate accessible services.

The Grande Prairie Residential Society is being honoured with the award of excellence for community work. The society was formed in 1986 to provide affordable and accessible housing for persons with disabilities, and today the society has three major housing projects to its credit.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

#### Royal Alberta Museum 40th Anniversary

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On December 6, 1967, the Royal Alberta Museum under its original name, Provincial Museum of Alberta, officially opened its doors. Then Premier Ernest Manning and former Lieutenant Governor Dr. Grant MacEwan were on hand for the opening ceremonies. For the last 40 years the Royal Alberta Museum has educated, entertained, and enlightened Albertans and visitors alike. Both in-house and travelling exhibits displayed at the Royal Alberta Museum over the last 40 years have covered all aspects of our society, including nature, culture, history, and technology.

To celebrate this 40-year milestone, Mr. Speaker, the Royal Alberta Museum will be holding a four-day extravaganza from December 6 to the 9th. Admission will be free, and the celebrations include a behind-the-scenes open house, new interpretations on 40 of the museum's most exciting objects, and special movie presentations. Exhibits like the immensely popular Southesk collection will continue to be on display.

For these last four decades the Royal Alberta Museum has been helping Albertans play an active role in shaping their world and inspiring Albertans to explore and understand the world around them. The museum tells the story of Alberta and preserves our rich natural and human heritage.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all the hon. members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating the Royal Alberta Museum on reaching this significant milestone. The name may have changed, but it truly remains Alberta's museum.

Thank you.

head: **Oral Question Period**

**The Speaker:** First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### Energy and Utilities Board

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The scandals and controversy plaguing the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board have made all Albertans aware of the critical role it plays in each of our lives. The independence of the regulatory process is crucial to the integrity of the board and to trust, public confidence in its decisions. Last week the Minister of Energy said in this Assembly that this government "would no more go and influence the hearings" of the EUB than "attempt to change the decisions of a judge." My question is to the Premier. Does the Premier concur with his position that direct government interference in the EUB is inappropriate?

1:30

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the Energy and Utilities Board is a quasi-judicial authority, and there are rules clearly established through legislation that not only conduct the way the business of the board is held but also any interference by any individuals.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government spent \$26,000 on a propaganda campaign in rural newspapers last week to support a bill many Albertans oppose. This same government would have the people of Alberta believe that it does not interfere in hearings of the EUB. That simply is not true. The Alberta Liberals have obtained a letter written by a top official of the Department of Energy to the EUB pressing the EUB to rush through a decision on the 500 kilovolt power line through west-central Alberta. Given that the Minister of Energy said in this House last week that interfering in an EUB hearing was akin to interfering in a court case, how does the Premier justify such meddling by his government?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, at least the Alberta population knows what the cost of the ads were. We're still awaiting in this House the cost of the radio ads that the Liberal Party put out last spring. So much for openness and transparency from the other side.

I believe the 500 kVa line he was talking about is AltaLink. Those hearings, Mr. Speaker, are no longer proceeding. There will be a new board, that will hear the hearings on that particular line. There were many other issues that were assigned to it, and we want to make sure that it's open and transparent.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just as an aside, if the Premier did his homework, we released the cost of those ads, which were last February, in a news release the day the ads began.

My next question is to the Minister of Energy. Is the Minister of Energy aware of any conflicts of interest in this case, the 500 kilovolt line, involving the official as executive director of the electricity branch who wrote the letter to the EUB, a Mr. Kellan Fluckiger.

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, the situation with respect to the gentleman in question I think is a matter that has, again, been dealt with, as have most of the matters around that particular piece of business involving a hearing with respect to a 500 kVa line, that was an application in and before the EUB. As I had indicated, I believe that

I have taken very appropriate steps and used the procedures that are set out for me, the appropriate procedures to in fact deal with that particular issue. I believe I've dealt with that properly.

**The Speaker:** Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's well known that Mr. Fluckiger, the top government official who wrote the letter meddling in the EUB hearing, had a personal relationship with the top official at AltaLink, the owner of the project that he was supporting. The former Minister of Energy claimed that Mr. Fluckiger had no conflict of interest in his role with the department, but my question is to the Premier. Can the Premier explain why a senior government official is taking sides on contentious issues and undermining the independence of the EUB?

**Mr. Stelmach:** A couple of things. First of all, the hon. member said that they communicated the cost of the ads. I happened to miss that, so he has an opportunity to tell us what they were here in the most public forum.

The other is that the individual that's in question is no longer with the government of Alberta. Gone. He's retired.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, not only did the senior government official interfere in EUB deliberations; that same official does, as we say, have a conflict of interest. My question is to the Premier. Does the Premier agree that the interference and disregard for conflicts of interest raise serious questions about the entire process of regulating Alberta's electrical system?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy took appropriate action with respect to the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board. We appointed a special chair to assume the duties and look at how we can make changes to ensure that the appropriate action was taken. A number of decisions have been made by that individual, and it's again to ensure that the confidence of Albertans is maintained in the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's well known that this same Mr. Fluckiger is the chief architect of one of this government's most controversial pieces of legislation. In fact, he was the one who signed on behalf of the government a \$500-an-hour contract with a consultant to implement changes before the bill has even passed this Assembly. My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier do the right thing and pull this flawed piece of legislation until we can get to the bottom of this, until we can understand the full extent of Mr. Fluckiger's interest in the 500 kilovolt transmission line decision?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the bill is working its way through the process in this House. We're looking forward to debate over the amendments that have been tabled. This is a bill that's necessary, and we're working very hard with all parties in this Assembly to make sure that we pass the legislation.

**The Speaker:** Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

## Homelessness Initiatives

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If there was ever a day for all of us to think about those in our society who are living without a home, today is it. Right now, as the mercury drops and the snow falls, there are thousands of people on the streets. Addictions, mental illness, abuse: these are very real traumas that lead to chronic homelessness. We are the ones who are supposed to help them, and for so long we've neglected this duty. To the Premier: when are we going to see a specific plan from this government and a real commitment to end homelessness?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I find it amazing that he's asking that question today because the member was present when we made an announcement with respect to our plan to deal with homelessness. We are working with the Calgary Homeless Foundation. We're also doing the same work here in the city of Edmonton to ensure that over a period of time we find solutions to an issue that's really plaguing not only the province of Alberta but others across Canada. As I said when I made the announcement, every Albertan deserves a home, and we're working towards that.

**Mr. Taylor:** The Premier is right. I was there when he made that announcement. He announced a secretariat on homelessness and a plan to come up with a governance model for it next April. That is a plan to make a plan. That's not a plan of action. To the Premier: when will the government commit to specific assistance to cities and towns in implementing their own plans to end homelessness, specifics like funding assistance with permanent support of housing or Housing First initiatives?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, over and above the \$11.3 billion that will be going to municipalities over the next 10 years, we have committed this year \$7.5 million for winter emergency funding for Alberta communities: the city of Calgary, \$4.3 million, and that's for 450 spaces; Edmonton, \$2.2 million. Red Deer, Grande Prairie, High Level, Lloydminster, Lethbridge: there are an additional 940 winter emergency shelters. That's in addition to 3,100 spaces that are already available throughout this province. We are monitoring. As of last night I was given the fact that there were about 87 beds available in Calgary and about an equal number in the city of Edmonton.

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, last night they were all full. You know, what I'm looking for is a commitment, a specific timeline from this government to start shutting down emergency shelters because it has done its job properly and those shelters are no longer needed.

Today the Alberta Liberal caucus released a draft strategy for ending homelessness for public feedback and response. We're looking for that feedback by January 15. We will incorporate this into a final draft by the beginning of February. Just so the government knows, these are firm deadlines to develop a plan. We're committed to helping communities end homelessness. We're committed to helping people move beyond the shelter, Mr. Speaker. Since the Premier's government has not developed any policies yet, I'm wondering whether he will commit to accepting and implementing the Alberta Liberal plan for ending homelessness.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, it sounds good that they're finally getting down to work. They get a paycheque every month just like anybody else in this building, so I hope they're doing something.

On December 2 Calgary occupancy was 1,955; available spaces, 2,042. That leaves 87 unused. Edmonton occupancy was 810;

available spaces, 880. So that leaves about 70 unused. Those are the facts.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

1:40

### Métis Hunting Rights

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Métis Nation started negotiating with the Conservative government over a year ago to develop a harvesting policy that satisfied the Métis constitutional right to harvest outlined by the Powley case in the Supreme Court. A draft agreement was negotiated by the Métis and members of the government. Instead of implementing the agreement, the Conservatives betrayed the Métis and unilaterally cancelled the agreement. My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, why did your government lead the Métis Nation to believe that they were negotiating an agreement in good faith and then suddenly cancel it without notice and unilaterally impose another, less favourable agreement?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I believe the member mentioned "without notice." If I recall correctly, in the discussion on this item we extended the period by 90 days, and we held very intense consultation and discussion and dialogue within an additional 90 days. But I'll await the next question, and maybe the minister for SRD or IAR could give further detail to it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. There were 10 months of negotiations between this government and the Métis Nation. There was an agreement reached in principle that satisfied all the conditions of the Powley case. The Conservatives threw all of this work out the window. The Conservatives have given the Métis Nation little reason to believe their word means anything. Mr. Premier, your government has betrayed the Métis people. What plans do you have to restore their trust in your government?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I believe Alberta continues to be the only province that has recognized the Métis in many different ways. This special agreement: I believe we celebrated – what? – 25 years of agreement. That was under former Premier Don Getty. You were a member of the committee. We are also treating all Métis settlements as municipalities, so they receive funding on a similar base to other municipalities. We've also extended the municipal sustainability initiative to the Métis Nations. So we are working with them and continue to work with the Métis, and we'll find ways of resolving this issue, I'm sure.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's clear from this case that if you're not a powerful group, like the oil industry or a big landlord, working within the Tory government is a dead end. Other groups like building trades workers, the homeless, the seniors in long-term care, and Alberta landowners have learned the same bitter lesson: if your interest conflicts with someone with more money or more power, this Tory government will leave you out in the cold. To the Premier: why does your government consistently favour the rich and powerful over ordinary Albertans?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, you know, that kind of preamble is

pure nonsense. I'd like to stand in front of this House and say that I'm not one of the rich and powerful. I happened to be raised on a farm south of Andrew. I didn't ever earn as much money as he did driving a bus in the city of Edmonton. I don't know where the guy is coming from.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

### Temporary Foreign Workers

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The acclaimed international newsmagazine *The Economist* last week featured Canada's temporary foreign workers mess. Alberta was central to that story. It hit the mark in saying that the worst shortages are with unskilled labour. It also spoke of abuse. It spoke of the Chinese workers killed during unsafe work practice in Alberta. Treatment of temporary foreign workers is getting to be an international embarrassment. My question is to the minister of employment and immigration. When will the report on the deaths near Fort McMurray of the Chinese temporary foreign workers be released, and what will the government do to make sure this doesn't happen again?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry.

**Ms Evans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The death of any worker anyplace is always a tragedy, and the tragedy of the death of the Chinese workers is something that we certainly regret. A thorough investigation by occupational health and safety has taken time, but that file has been completed, and it has been passed to Alberta Justice for the review of Alberta Justice to make sure that the file is in an appropriate fashion. If any charges need to be laid, Justice will be the ones to make that determinant.

I would like to just respond to the second portion about: what will we do to make sure it doesn't happen again? Continually, in our government we work at adding people when it's necessary. Our monitoring has increased, and we've done employer sessions to make sure that we're getting more informed employers about health and safety regulations.

**Mr. Backs:** A supplementary to the same minister. Mr. Speaker, my father didn't speak English when he came to Alberta. My mother was born here and didn't learn English until she was eight years old. Neither spoke French even though they wished they did. They lived and prospered while they learned the language. Many Albertans have had the same experience. Many unskilled and semiskilled workers from places like eastern Europe are refused immigration because of poor English skills, yet those with English are readily employed nearby in Europe. We are losing out on a potential group of reliable and hard-working people because of rules that don't work. Will the government rectify this problem through its rapidly expanding provincial nominee program and pressure the feds to do better nationally?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Evans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have similar lineage from my grandfather, who did not speak English well when he came to Canada and had to learn on the job. The point that we're I think moving forward on at an accelerated pace is the provincial nominee program. We expect to have 2,500 PNPs, as they're known, this year. It's up from about 986 last year. Employers can bring them

over and provide them with the support to make sure they're able to work and learn the language if they need more application.

Mr. Speaker, with the federal government we are working to add to our language training with a million dollars to an enhanced language training program as well as \$12 million for English language training, separate from the enhanced training. We're doing a variety of things to try and help people who need language skills.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the second supplementary is to the Premier. Building trades say that some contractors use temporary foreign workers to avoid or undercut their work rates. These same contractors complain that these tradesmen won't work for them. Mr. Premier, what can the government do to end this unproductive war in our workplace, to create more harmony and make better use of Alberta and Canadian labour?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the construction trade organizations are working very closely with the minister and this government to increase the number of people in the workforce. There will obviously be some temporary foreign workers, but we're looking at expanding, reaching out to different corners of the world to bring skilled immigrants to the province of Alberta. We're working very hard to give our First Nations and our Métis opportunity to participate in very positive job opportunities through improved access and training in all of the trades. As the economy grows, certainly, we're feeling the pressure of a shortage of skilled workers. I do want to say that our labour laws don't discriminate against temporary foreign workers, but we're going to make sure that any issue that comes up is dealt with immediately.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

#### Child Care Licensing Regulation

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Children's Services. We all know how important it is to have the best child care possible for our children. Earlier this fall the Alberta government released the results of a consultation on proposed standards for daycares and other child care programs licensed by the province. At the time the minister said that the feedback would be used to develop the child care licensing regulation. What is the status of this regulation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to stand up today and give an update on where we are with the child care regulations. Also, I'm pleased to see that we have so many operators and parents that have joined us today in the galleries. Just to let the House and the member know, today we have launched the second phase of our consultation process. A consultation document and a questionnaire have gone up today. It's posted on the Children's Services website and does reflect the input that we have received to date and also has some revised proposed standards. I would encourage anyone that has an interest in participating to complete the online survey. As well, we will be holding some information sessions early in the new year.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. You say that you've made changes to the standards originally proposed. What types of changes have you made?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Tarchuk:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We feel it's important to approach the development of these regulations as a partnership between government, parents, and the child care community with a common goal that the regulations support quality, affordable, and accessible child care. I can tell you that our suggested responses for discussion coming from the first phase of consultation are that we move forward on the standards where we had overwhelming support, that we reconsider changing the standards that govern the provision of meals and location of washrooms and modify the standards related to staff/child ratios and staff certification requirements. Again, the document is on the website, and I look forward to getting feedback.

1:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you. To the same minister again: when do you expect the new child care licensing regulation to be finalized?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The consultation document and the questionnaire will be posted and available for people to participate online until February 4. Information sessions will be held throughout the province in January. We'll take a little bit of time to analyze the results. My intention is to have the regulations finalized when we proclaim the child care act in the spring of 2008.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

#### Child Care

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development a shortage of good-quality child care options not only diminishes the numbers among a potential workforce; it could also lead to a dangerous reliance on an underground economy of unregulated child care services. Other provinces have addressed these issues with a comprehensive plan to tackle affordability and availability with phenomenal results while this government continues to simply dole out occasional funding to the problem here and there. To the Minister of Children's Services: other than intermittent injection of funds, which has not seemed to be effective in the wake of recent daycare closures, what is the ministry's plan to address this crisis?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I wouldn't call it occasional funding. We made \$134 million available today for parents in this province to access the five-point plan. I would also remind the member that the five-point plan, that we have in place today, was based on consultation. It was based on what families and child care operators wanted in this province, and it supports parental choice.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you. New proposed regulations within Bill 4 only work to further exacerbate the problems facing the availability of child care spaces. Will the minister commit to ensuring that any regulations coming forth will not have any negative effects on space availability?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Tarchuk:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. Just a reminder that what we are after is quality, affordable, and accessible child care, so I think that we have the same objectives in mind.

I would also make a comment on the effectiveness of the funding, that you had made a comment about. As I mentioned just a couple of weeks ago in the House, this past year we have seen 1,600 additional spaces in this province, and we have also seen over 400 child care workers come back and work in the industry.

As far as your comments, I think they're good ones with respect to the regulations for Bill 4, and I think that's all the more reason why we have to be very careful as we move forward and why I've committed to doing this with the child care community, with parents as a partner with government.

**Mrs. Mather:** And we're delighted to hear that.

Earlier this year the Banff Child Care Centre was presented with a \$75,000 grant from the community initiatives program to assist with the centre's interior renovations. This is the largest grant of this type to a child care facility in recent years. To the minister. While there are a number of city daycares that are forced to close due to lack of funding to attract staff, this facility receives a considerable sum for renovations. How are these grants prioritized?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Tarchuk:** Yeah. First of all, just to comment, the project that you're talking about in Banff is a very good one. It was one that was put through the community initiatives program. To my knowledge I think many daycares are able to apply to that application.

In terms of how it was supported, they had community support, including the town council supporting that application.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

#### Forest Products Industry Sustainability

**Rev. Abbott:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week we learned of the indefinite closure of the Footner Forest Products mill in High Level. Now, this is just the latest forest products manufacturing facility to shut down temporarily or permanently in Alberta this year. Only a few months ago, for example, Weyerhaeuser announced the closure of its oriented strandboard mill in Drayton Valley, which will cease operation sometime this week. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. What is causing Alberta's forestry industry to close their mills?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar is correct. We have had a very high number of permanent and temporary mill closures in Alberta this year, and he's also correct in noting that this is very unfortunate. The government of Alberta appreciates that in this particular instance 150 employees have lost employment, and we are working with them to assist with that.

With respect to the industry itself they're in the second or third

year of sort of the perfect economic storm: high input cost in terms of transportation, the high dollar. Everything has gone wrong for this industry.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Rev. Abbott:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental question is to the same minister. Given that this is such a hard blow to rural Alberta, what steps are being taken by the Alberta government to address the economic downturn in our forest products industry?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, we're working closely with the industry to address the issue of global competitiveness. As I mentioned on November 6, I've appointed a special committee, three MLAs and three industry representatives, to develop policy recommendations that will address competitiveness. In fact, this committee met in Edmonton last week, and I had the opportunity to have dinner with them on Tuesday night. They have some exciting new ideas that address such things as cost savings in transportation and labour, new investments, and value-added opportunities. I put a high priority on this committee and expect to hear from them early in the new year.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Rev. Abbott:** Good to hear.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental is to the Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry. What is your department doing to provide support to the employees in High Level and Drayton Valley and other places around rural Alberta affected by these closures?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta Works, my department staff, have been in touch with the mayor of High Level. Also, for December 4 and 5 we'll be working with Footner, the human resources department, and High Level to see what we can do for the employees. We intend to run advertisements to let employees and their families know how they can gain extra supports when required. We're very confident that we'll find other placements for them. I think the important thing is to deal one-on-one with the individuals, find out what their preference is, and find out what they're best suited for. The skills evaluation is taking place as we speak.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

#### Supports for Disabled Persons

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. December 3 marks the International Day of Disabled Persons. The theme for 2007 is Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities and will raise awareness of the benefits of including people with disabilities in every aspect of social and economic life. My question is to the minister of seniors. People with disabilities are disproportionately poorer and more frequently underemployed. The salary for graduates with disabilities is 20 per cent lower than for other graduates. What is this government going to do to close the gap between people with disabilities and those without?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

**Mr. Melchin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, we were already

at an event today honouring the international day for persons with disabilities. Those with disabilities, it's true, do not and have not had the same inclusion in the workforce as the rest of Albertans. It is in response to that that we are putting a very aggressive effort into employability of those with disabilities, trying to assess: how can we, not just with those on AISH but all forms of disabilities, recognize the many talents and strengths that they have to offer?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. To the minister of advanced education. While 50 per cent of Albertans have a postsecondary education, that number falls to 36 per cent among people with disabilities. When will the minister commit to providing Alberta's institutions with the funding, the resources, and the supports that are necessary to fulfill the recommendations outlined in the A Learning Alberta report?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Technology.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, we are working on incrementally increasing the supports for all of our postsecondaries, not only for access but also for supports to the students with disabilities to ensure that they have a quality experience within our postsecondary system.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. Statistics released today said that there will be an increase in people with disabilities of 21 per cent. However, it looks like in Alberta the future will be 24 per cent for people with disabilities. My question to the minister of seniors: how can the ministries working together, i.e. yours and education, coordinate efforts, programs, and funding so that people with disabilities have the opportunity to go to school and not only go to school but find work without undue hardships?

**Mr. Melchin:** Mr. Speaker, I would say that's a very appropriate suggestion, that we do correlate a lot of the work that we have to ensure that they have opportunity for education, that they can have the skill sets that the employers would seek. In that regard, I'd be happy to see that we follow through with it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

## 2:00 Capital Infrastructure Planning

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In his most recent report Alberta's Auditor General made several recommendations about process relating to capital infrastructure planning, guidelines for assessing and prioritizing capital projects, and so on. Given the Auditor General's comments I have some questions for the Associate Minister for Capital Planning. What have you done to specifically address the Auditor General's recommendations in this important area?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a very important area, and I'm happy to report that we've made great progress in this area. We have to keep in mind, though, that our capital infrastructure plan this year alone is a record \$7 billion – it's the greatest ever in our history – 19-plus billion dollars over the next three years. That's nearly four times the national per capita average spent on

infrastructure, so it's quite a challenge. The Auditor General has pointed out to us as well that we have taken some significant steps already to improving our capital planning process overall, and I'm happy to tell you that we're right on track, right on time in finalizing those improvements.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that's very encouraging. However, the Auditor General specifically indicated that you should finish developing guidelines that describe roles and responsibilities surrounding assessment and prioritization of capital infrastructure projects. So where are you with respect to these guidelines? Are they ready?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, we are indeed finishing those guidelines. We have under way a number of very significant projects to assist. For example, we have a new capital planning manual coming out. We have a new accountability policy on grant-funded programs. We also have a new framework for capital projects, and so on. All of these will be completed quite soon, but we have to keep in mind, too, that our capital infrastructure plan has nearly tripled in size over the last couple of years, so it's quite a daunting task. In the end we will do what's right to secure Alberta's infrastructure future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I note that the Auditor General also recommended that Treasury Board develop objectives, timelines, and targets for reducing deferred maintenance. I'm certainly in favour of recent announcements of new buildings, new roadways, new schools, and new hospitals, but we must also do a better job of maintaining our existing infrastructure such as Bowness high school. What have you done to address deferred maintenance projects?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, in short, Mr. Speaker, we've done a great deal. I've worked very closely with our Premier and with our President of the Treasury Board and other colleagues here on implementing the Premier's new unanticipated surplus policy, which requires one-third of those monies to go to savings and two-thirds to go toward capital infrastructure projects. Of the two-thirds amount more than half must obligatorily go toward deferred maintenance. For example, when the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation rolled out 1,100 kilometres of new roadway work this year, over 800 of those kilometres were for repaving projects that sufficed the deferred maintenance area. I could give numerous other examples, but suffice it to say that the 350 additional million dollars that we put out earlier also helped a great deal.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

## Municipal Funding

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Conservative government's incompetence and mismanagement of municipal funding is colossal. They've amassed \$56 billion in infrastructure debt. That is bad enough, but the government is playing favourites. Instead of addressing the problem honestly, the Conservatives use public dollars as a way to try to fix their political problems in Calgary. Calgary hollered for more funding; now Calgary will get \$393 a

person. Edmonton will only get \$357 a person. Meanwhile, Strathcona county gets \$415 per person. To the minister of municipal affairs: how can you justify this blatant unfairness to the citizens of Edmonton?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This ministry went out and did consultation in the province. In fact, we visited eight locations across the province, talked to municipalities, had input from the associations, had input from both the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary. There are different views. Of course, the city of Calgary wanted to have the funding distributed by assessment. The city of Edmonton wanted it done by population. Mr. Speaker, in our consultation the municipalities asked us to be fair, and that was the priority.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, is the minister saying that it's fair that Edmonton gets \$357 a person, Calgary \$393 a person, the county of Strathcona \$415 a person? How is that fair to the citizens of Edmonton?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, the allocation was not done on a per capita basis alone. The allocation was done on 48 per cent per capita, 48 per cent assessment, and 4 per cent by kilometres of road. On top of that, municipalities got a base of \$120,000, and there was also an allocation for sustainability. This focused on fairness for all of Alberta. Do not forget that Calgary has over a million people whereas Edmonton has over 700,000 people.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, we're talking about per capita funding. That's what we're talking about. Edmonton is getting shortchanged.

My question to the same minister is simply this. What, then, is your message to Edmonton? Is the message: be happy with your status and accept being treated as second-class citizens? Because that's exactly what you seem to be saying.

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, this is about fairness. It is a focus on fairness. This formula is not a population formula alone. This formula looks at a balance. It looks at a balance for all Albertans and municipalities. In fact, when we were in Calgary this last weekend, the AUMA very much supported this allocation and this direction. In fact, if you took the AUMA, the AAMD and C, the city of Edmonton, and the city of Calgary, this formula met 85 to 91 per cent of what they asked for.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

#### Affordable Housing

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In discussions with a Calgary columnist last week a very positive alternative for the remaining approximately \$4.5 million which will no longer be spent on the Lieutenant Governor's residence was suggested. To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Will you consider designating this available infrastructure money for a specific affordable, accessible housing complex in Edmonton?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, we haven't made any decisions yet at all about where all this money is going to go at the time that we finish all of the plans that have been done so far. But I can tell you as Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation that it's my

responsibility to make sure that we are very careful with taxpayers' dollars. I also believe that we have a very capable President of the Treasury Board and a very capable Finance minister, and I believe that when we finalize the project costs, all the remaining money will go back into general revenue, and they will address issues that need to be addressed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that accessible, affordable housing is a constant challenge, will you consider making accessibility a priority for a project such as this?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing along with the associate minister worked very hard to develop affordable housing options for people in need. I'm sure that the associate minister would be happy to provide the hon. member with information about the work that she is doing in her department to address this.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Again I'm referring to a specific project, and I'll provide you with a little bit more detail. Considering the tremendous contributions of the Lieutenant Governors, the Queen's representatives in Alberta, will you consider a name for such a proposed complex which reflects their dedication to public service?  
*2:10*

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta has several significant buildings that we've named after Lieutenant Governors from the past. Grant MacEwan College in Edmonton, for instance, comes to mind along with the Lois Hole hospital for women. I'm sure that when the time comes for Alberta to recognize the contribution of our current Lieutenant Governor, we will find an appropriate way to do that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

#### Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Legislation

**Mr. Marz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In its first year of implementation the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act has shown some very positive results, with about half of the youth who participated seeking voluntary treatment after discharge and more than half reporting improved quality of life. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: after evaluating the effects of this program for the past year, is there any evidence to suggest ways of improving outcomes even further?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, the results of the PCHAD evaluation are encouraging and demonstrate the importance of government, community, and families working together, particularly with troubled teens and teens that are using drugs. The evaluation results indicate high levels of satisfaction by both parents and youth in the provision of assessment and information, and as the hon. member mentioned, many youth have continued further treatment through AADAC's voluntary services.

Amendments to the PCHAD legislation are being considered to address areas for improvement. The changes would consider, for example, extending the length of stay, helping parents to be more

aware of voluntary services, and improving family involvement, which we know from the evaluation increases positive outcomes.

Planning for the next phase of evaluation is currently under way. We'll look at the effectiveness of the service and examine the youths' and families' understanding of the voluntary resources before they reach the stage of filing a court order.

**Mr. Marz:** Thanks very much for that very excellent answer.

To the same minister. Many parents thought that the program was too short, while many of the youth thought it was too long. Is there any evidence to suggest that perhaps 10 days as opposed to five days would improve outcomes and reduce reoffending?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I wouldn't use the word "reoffending" because we're talking about young people who have not in fact been charged with or convicted of a criminal offence, at least not in the context of this treatment.

This is a mandatory treatment for substance abuse issues, and the legislation is put in place to address those issues. The purpose of PCHAD is to engage youth, provide detoxification, and begin a treatment plan to which they can commit. In some cases an extended period of time may increase the chances of engaging the young person or getting to the point where we're actually resolving the problem, so we will be looking at amendments to the act to accomplish that. I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that the Crime Reduction and Safe Communities Task Force actually recommended that, and those recommendations have been accepted by the government.

**Mr. Marz:** Again to the same minister: depending on what substance is being abused, is there a case to be made for longer mandatory detoxification orders?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there is evidence that some drugs, like crystal meth and cocaine, require a greater period of time for detoxification. That can occur, of course, in the mandatory setting or in a voluntary setting. AADAC offers youth detoxification programs that are driven by the individual assessments and have the option to extend time in detoxification as required. PCHAD provides a link to the youth treatment services that are based on what the young person needs. So it may be appropriate to have a longer period of time. Right now that's being done on an individual assessment basis. With the amendments which we hope to bring forward with respect to the act, we may provide for a longer time for that initial assessment period.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

#### Blood-borne and Sexually Transmitted Diseases

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past four years rates of HIV have been increasing, and for those same four years the government has refused to release the blood-borne pathogen and sexually transmitted infections strategy that would address these issues. My questions are to the minister of health. Why has it taken more than four years to approve this report?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question and one that I don't have a very good answer for. I have met with the chair of the committee and am very interested in the report and where it got hung up in terms of the process. I've been working on how we could bring that forward. It's a very important issue. We are seeing an

increase in infectious diseases and sexually transmitted diseases in the province, and it's important that we address those issues. What I'm looking at is to see whether the strategies need to be updated so we can bring them forward on a timely basis. I'm not sure why the report didn't come forward at the time it was created. I wasn't aware of it at the time, but I'm certainly working actively on it now.

**Ms Blakeman:** So we could have it updated before it's actually been released.

All right. To the same minister. There has also been a rise in sexual transmission of HIV as 73 per cent of infections in 2005 were sexually transmitted. Is there another plan to reduce HIV rates, or will the minister finally approve and implement this strategy?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, as I said, Mr. Speaker, I think the prudent course of action is to look at the strategy that was presented in the context of today's information and determine whether it's still the most effective strategy or whether another strategy would be more effective. That's what we're in the process of doing.

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, okay. To the same minister, then. Capital health's medical officer of health pointed out that this region has become the STD capital of Canada. What preventive action is the minister taking in the meantime to reduce the risk for Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I should reference that the comment that the hon. member is referring to was made during a forum on public health that was located at the university. That is one of the strategies that's very important, that we talk about public health issues and that we not be afraid to talk about those public health issues in public and raise awareness levels. It's very important that we raise awareness. We in fact issued a news release and made a public statement in the fall about the prevalence of sexually transmitted disease and the concerns. If I remember correctly, I made a statement in the House on that. I think it was earlier in the spring.

The first and most important thing is to raise awareness of the issue. Secondly, the provincial lab is gearing up to be able to do more testing to make sure that people know how they can deal with it themselves, but it's important that we bring a strategy forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

#### Strength of Canadian Dollar

**Mr. Cao:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency of Calgary-Fort has a major industrial park, the Foothills industrial park, where tens of thousands of Albertans are working hard in hundreds of manufacturing companies. In recent months these businesses have suffered many drawbacks, resulting in some downsizing. One of the drawbacks is the high Canadian dollar negatively affecting the exports, that results in low production and job loss. My question today is to the hon. Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry. What do you do, Minister, to address the negative effect of the high Canadian dollar on our Albertan manufacturing businesses?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, we are functioning today globally in an extremely competitive economy, and Alberta is no exception. It is both the best of times and the worst of times: low unemployment and a high need for labour. The Canadian dollar, of course, putting

it on par and even better than our American neighbour has meant that some people have to be looking at sharpening their pencils on productivity and innovation and ways to cope and still be competitive. It is a greater challenge. Our department offers the lean assessment. We will go in on the short term, help people assess how they can become more productive on the lines. We do industrial assessments for medium- and small-sized companies. We've done almost 40, and in our program . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Cao:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Besides the high Canadian dollar, manufacturing management told me that their production costs are rising in spite of their productivity improvement efforts. One company told me that the new forward rates for electrical energy were about 60 per cent over their previous contract because of the supply/demand pressure in our province of Alberta, and energy costs are the highest cost driver. My question is to the same minister. What is our minister going to do to help address these production costs?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, the cost of electricity is going up everywhere. There are pros and cons of doing business in Alberta, and this is one of the challenges. There are many other kinds of things that you can find in doing business in Alberta that are an extreme advantage, along with very many things in terms of our tax rate and the ability for workers to have a great service in education and in health care support services. The businesses admittedly will have higher costs in electricity than in some places, but across the globe, when you're using power, consuming power, you will pay the cost.

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Cao:** Well, thank you. My question is to the same minister. Do you have any plans to help sustain the Alberta manufacturing industry like the government helps other industries in their time of trouble?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, we talked earlier about how Alberta Works helps people who have had the misfortune of being unemployed for any reason. We continue in Alberta to have many advantages, many represented by ministers on the front bench who will tell you the piece of the economy that they hold dear, that helps them assure Albertans that they are getting the most competitive costs and the best living opportunity and place to raise a family anywhere in Canada. Where would you rather be than in Alberta to live, work, and do business?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that was 90 questions and responses today.

Now we will return to our Routine that we were on prior to the Oral Question Period, and I'll recognize the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East for a member's statement.

head: **Members' Statements**  
(continued)

#### International Day of Disabled Persons

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the International Day of Disabled Persons. It was proclaimed by a collaborative effort of the United Nations in 1992. It is to celebrate and acknowledge the experience and capabilities of people with disabilities. The day is to remind us to promote understanding about disability issues and to

increase awareness of the gains to be derived from integrating disabled persons into all aspects of political, social, economic, and cultural life.

Let's think of science: Dr. Stephen Hawking, Dr. Austin Mardon. Sports: Rick Hansen, Special Olympics athletes. Politics: Gary McPherson, a candidate for the leadership of the Alberta PC Party, and MLAs Percy Wickman and Weslyn Mather. Economics: foot and mouth painters who support themselves with their paintings, the kids in the Champ program who live with limb prostheses. Heros all.

But – and it is a big but – the intestinal fortitude to fight through all these hardships is theirs and theirs alone. Yes, there has been support. We've come a long way but not nearly far enough. The government must admit that Alberta's boom is a bust for most people with disabilities. There is a crisis in the human-service sector, and blaming it on a lack of workers is a cop-out when, in fact, decent wages for workers and obtaining decent employment for the disabled is a prime concern. In a province this rich a cop-out borders on immoral.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member violated a long-standing rule of the Assembly during that last statement.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

#### Alberta Urban Municipalities Association

**Mr. Cao:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association recently held its 102nd annual fall convention in Calgary. This year's convention theme was Sustaining Our Success, which this government certainly embraces. It was attended by more than a thousand delegates from across the province, representing 284 municipalities. Mayor Lloyd Bertschi of the town of Morinville was elected by the delegates as association president. Alderman Bob Hawkesworth of the city of Calgary had served as president for the past three years. Our AUMA partners held this convention knowing that they will have sustainable, predictable, and long-term funding as promised by our Premier.

The association recognized the Premier's dedication and involvement in municipal politics by presenting him with an award of excellence. The purpose of this award is to recognize outstanding civic leadership by present and past municipally elected officials. It should be noted that our Premier received a standing ovation twice when he spoke and received the prestigious award. Also at this event the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing presented the Alberta municipal excellence award to a number of outstanding municipalities. They are the towns of Banff and Canmore, Parkland county, the town of Stony Plain, the city of Spruce Grove, the city of Calgary, and the town of Athabasca.

Mr. Speaker, the success of Alberta's municipalities is important. I invite all members to join me in congratulating the AUMA on their achievements of more than a century and for continuous success in the future.

Thank you.

head: **Notices of Motions**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my duty today to give oral notice of two motions, which would be, first, Government Motion 38:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 46, Alberta Utilities Commission Act, is resumed, not more than three hours shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill at Committee

of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of this stage of the bill shall be put forthwith.

Also, which would be Government Motion 39:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 46, Alberta Utilities Commission Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill at third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of this stage of the bill shall be put forthwith.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, did you send me a note about a notice of motion?

**Mr. Martin:** No. About a notice of motion?

**The Speaker:** That's what we're on, Notices of Motions.

**Mr. Martin:** Oh. Sorry. I was thunderstruck by what he was saying.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood I wish to give notice for the introduction of Bill 225, Mines and Minerals (Alberta Value Added) Amendment Act, 2007, a bill to ensure greater upgrading of bitumen in the province.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, a notice of motion?

**Dr. Pannu:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Proceed.

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to give notice for the introduction of Bill 230, Protection for Persons in Care (Clients' Bill of Rights) Amendment Act, 2007, a bill to ensure that the rights of seniors in care are respected.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head:

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

#### Bill 57

#### Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007 (No. 2)

**Mr. Stevens:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to seek leave to introduce a bill being Bill 57, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007, (No. 2).

By tradition, Mr. Speaker, miscellaneous statutes contain typically a number of provisions which are noncontentious. I'll just briefly list those acts which are affected by this particular bill: the Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act, the Legal Profession Act, the Provincial Court Act, the Provincial Offences Procedure Act, and the School Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 57 read a first time]

head:

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

**Rev. Abbott:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of a petition. It's not in order for a petition, so I have to do it as a tabling. There are 185 signatures on here. It says that we the undersigned petition the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development to

act immediately on the motion passed at a public meeting on the overstocking of walleye in Pigeon Lake, held in Thorsby on April 24, 2007. The motion to catch and retain one walleye per day, no size limit, on a regular license, from May Long Weekend to March 31 2008 was passed by 90% of the nearly 300 in attendance.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have five tablings today. The first is a letter to the hon. Premier of Alberta dated November 26, 2007. It's from the Alberta Wilderness Association outlining their concerns and their opposition to the proposed Bill 46, Alberta Utilities Commission Act.

My second tabling is a letter from a constituent, Mr. Lawrence Kaban. Mr. Kaban is concerned about Alberta's labour laws and is suggesting five significant changes.

My third tabling is also from a constituent of Edmonton-Gold Bar, Wilma Nerenberg. She, too, is concerned about our labour laws and what should be done to change the Alberta labour laws.

Marilyn Wells, also a constituent of Edmonton-Gold Bar, is writing expressing her concerns, as well, regarding the Alberta labour laws.

My final tabling is from Bruce Nelson, and he is a resident of Edmonton-Gold Bar. Mr. Nelson is also proposing five ways to change and improve the Alberta labour laws.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Two tablings today. The first is the appropriate number of copies of a card being distributed by ACTRA Canada asking people to support more Canadian films and asking Canadians to demand that big theatre chains and the Motion Picture Theatre Associations of Canada show more Canadian films. So far we've only got 1.7 per cent of the box office in Canada.

My second tabling is copies of letters from constituents Kevin Guenetta, Siu Yu, Robert Taylor, Miranda Mach, Trevor Semper, Linda Smith, Brendolyn Clarke, Brian White, Meredith Day, and Gloria Menjivar, and they are all concerned with Alberta labour laws. I will focus on one today, "Full legal recognition of bargaining rights for public employees, including the right to strike combined with reasonable essential-services legislation."

Thank you.

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first is from Leon Comer, who is talking about child care and the proposed regulations. These changes being proposed assume a utopian situation currently exists in the province of Alberta in respect to child care, be it daycare, day home, or preschool level.

The other tabling is from six constituents of Edmonton-Mill Woods expressing concern about Alberta labour laws. A number of requests are listed, and I will just mention one, "The introduction of a process for first-contract arbitration."

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. One is an article from last week's *The Economist*, which I referred to in question period.

Another is the program for the International Day of Disabled Persons at Edmonton city hall today. That was mentioned also in Members' Statements by the Member for Strathcona and the Member for Lethbridge-East. Also, there was a speech there by the Member for Calgary-North West, the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings here today. I've got correspondence from the Seniors' Action and Liaison Team. They're a group of seniors devoted to working towards a civil society. They're urging the government to withdraw Bill 46.

The second tabling I have is the appropriate number of copies of a government study from December 2006 concerning the Métis population in Alberta.

Thanks.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, the international day for persons with disabilities, I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter I received from Matthew Russell. He writes that Alberta's postsecondary institutions are not providing adequate accessibility for disabled students and suggests that the postsecondary system could learn how to do so from the province's K to 12 education system, which he gives high marks in this regard.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The first one is more copies of letters from my constituents urging us to revamp Alberta's antiquated labour laws to ensure fairness for all working people. One of their ideas, for example, is to prohibit the use of replacement workers that break strikes. These letters are from Marinela Gonzales, Olga Berry, Joan Daniel, Patricia Lundie, Reynaldo Espiritu, Scott Brannon, Edward J. Robinson, and Angela Manning.

The second tabling contains two letters from two corrections officers, Trevor Hansen, with seven years' experience, and Thomas Keenan, with 20 years. Trevor states the changes corrections officers experienced over the past seven years but more profoundly over the last two or three and how they have taken on more but have not been appreciated or compensated by this government like sheriffs are. Mr. Keenan tells us how similar . . .

**The Speaker:** Let's go on.

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Okay. The third one is an e-mail from Donna Cardinal expressing her support for raw milk being offered as an option, especially from a health promotion perspective.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first tabling is a series of signatures from my Calgary-Varsity constituents on a petition that reads:

Whereas the ongoing rent affordability crisis is contributing to Alberta's worsening homelessness situation, we, the undersigned residents of Alberta, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly to

urge the Government of Alberta to take immediate, meaningful measures to help low-income and fixed-income Albertans, Albertans with disabilities and those who are hard-to-house maintain their places of residence and cope with the escalating and frequent increases in their monthly rental costs.

My next two tablings are from citizens concerned with lack of investment in Albertans who truly need a hand. The first is an e-mail and document from Dave Hughes calling on the government to immediately invest in supports for people with developmental disabilities.

The second is a letter from Linda Lyster outlining the negative and costly impacts of homelessness on children and urging the government to make affordable housing a priority.

My next set of tablings includes a program from Calgary's seventh annual Disability Arts Festival, entitled Balancing Acts, along with a poster advertising Balancing Act's visual art exhibits. I'm very proud of the organizer of this year's event, Nicole Dunbar, a fantastic former student from F.E. Osborne junior high school.

My next tabling is from Dan Hogg, a grade 10 constituent of mine who has chosen to exercise his democratic right by expressing his disagreement with requiring that at least 75 per cent of social studies curriculum be legislated as dedicated to Canadian history and requesting that I vote against Bill 215.

My last tabling is a \$26,000 taxpayer-funded government announcement running in rural papers entitled What Alberta Landowners Need To Know about Bill 46, the Alberta Utilities Commission Act. This brings the two-month taxpayer advertising total close to \$400,000.

**The Speaker:** Anybody else? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling five copies of my letter dated October 16 to the Crowsnest Pass Food Bank. As per my pledge of April 2, '07, half of my MLA indexed pay raise, \$146.25, is donated monthly to a food bank until AISH is similarly increased and indexed. The Crowsnest food bank has 2,185 volunteer hours, filled 426 hampers, and helped 2,125 people between January and September of this year. It is co-ordinated by Carmellia Saretzky.

My second tabling is my donation for November to the Vulcan county food bank. It operates with 960 volunteer hours per year, preparing 290 hampers per year. Brenda English is the administrator of the Vulcan county food bank.

My third tabling is five copies of a letter from Marg Triskle at the Good Sam's facility in Medicine Hat, who feels that younger people who suffer from MS should at the very least have a small wing of the building dedicated to their needs instead of being separated throughout the huge building. This separation produces social isolation because the majority of the residents are elderly, and their needs and interests are very different.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have 24 letters from my constituents Zena Rohoman, Carolyn Arcala, Mary Goberdhan, Muhammad Shahid, Anna Francis, Jeff West, Stuart Passey, Tracy Passey, Gemma Diaz, Rosita Hinds, Esmeralda Jose, Anita Escalona, Christine Dickson, Usha Belas, Maria Corpuz, Elisa San Jose, Deen Khotz, Sepina Williams, Nilesh Bali, Christine Buck, Mary Watson, Vilma Vasquez, Helen Savage, Judy Salicon. They're all concerned about Alberta labour laws and strongly believe in major changes to encourage fairness to all working people in Alberta.

Thank you.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

**The Clerk:** No notice having been given, written questions shall stand and retain their place on the Order Paper.

head: **Motions for Returns**

**The Clerk:** No notice having been given, motions for return shall stand and retain their place on the Order Paper.

head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than  
Government Bills and Orders  
Third Reading**

**Bill 212**

**Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and move third reading debate for Bill 212, Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act.

Throughout the various stages of the debate I have been pleased to hear the numerous insightful comments made by the hon. members of this Assembly. After thoroughly engaging and contemplating this innovative legislation, it seems that my colleagues see how it will benefit their constituents and impact their daily lives.

We have all listened to countless ways that this bill will enhance Albertans' quality of life. Powered by a strong investigatory agency, they will be able to voice their concerns about wrongdoings, and if need be, these concerns will be addressed. Whether the crime or disturbing behaviour in our communities is subtle or overt, it can touch and affect many people in unimaginable ways such as instilling fear, paranoia, and insecurity. Having a safer communities agency dedicated to hearing and addressing Albertans' safety concerns will help Albertans find true enjoyment and appreciation of their neighbourhoods.

**2:40**

With every story I hear of properties in our province being used for less than honourable purpose, I am reminded that this bill will be an outstanding addition to our current resources. Based on the various conversations I have had with constituents and stakeholders, I know this bill will be put to good use. Specifically, I am sure the province's Block Watch associations are looking forward to this additional tool in their quest for safer communities for their families. Their work is invaluable and ought to be supported and bolstered in any way possible.

I have also heard from aldermen in Calgary and police officers throughout the province with respect to this act. They have championed it as a new way to deal with the continual crime and disturbances that cannot be addressed through our traditional means. By targeting properties, this bill covers another avenue to strengthen our crime prevention and reduction strategies.

Mr. Speaker, crime touches us all and is, therefore, everyone's responsibility. It requires committed efforts from citizens, governments, police services, and community organizations. Bill 212 allows all stakeholders to work together and penalize criminals and peace disturbers in an effective manner. Be it rural or urban area, all Albertans have the right to feel safe and secure in their place of residence. Bill 212 will help achieve this. By ridding a community of activities which adversely affect the health, safety, or security of its residents or by stopping activities which interfere with the peaceful use of a property in the community, this bill will effectively

make an increased number of communities more enjoyable and safe for Albertans.

I am honoured to have been given the opportunity to bring the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act in front of my colleagues as a government member. While this bill truly complements this government's many efforts towards safe communities, it is also very much in line with its approach to community safety. This bill involves working with and engaging Albertans as was done with the Crime Reduction and Safe Communities Task Force.

I am quite happy with the prospect of this legislation actually becoming an additional tool available to Albertans in their quest to continue and enhance our strong tradition of safe and pleasant communities. This type of legislation has made a huge difference in communities across Canada. I look forward to seeing it at work in our province.

In closing, I would like to thank my colleagues on either side of the House for their positive remarks and co-operation with respect to Bill 212 and hope that they will continue to lend their support to this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Stevens:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and say a few words with respect to Bill 212 in third reading. First of all, I'd like to congratulate the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays for bringing it forward. The hon. Premier, as one of his priorities about a year ago, asked that I as Minister of Justice and Attorney General put together a task force to address the issue of crime reduction and safe communities. The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek was appointed in the spring together with other members on that committee. They travelled to some 14 communities, held meetings, received input via the Internet and other fashions, and this fall produced their report. It was on November 6 that the government released that report together with its response to it, where the vast majority of the recommendations at that time were accepted.

The purpose of the report was to lay out a comprehensive plan, which, candidly, Mr. Speaker, is unique in Canada, with a view to crime reduction and making our communities safer. One of the specific recommendations in the report – and this is of course based on what Albertans asked – was that we adopt a safe neighbourhoods act. Indeed, the specific recommendations included the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays' Bill 212 because it was known to the committee. So the committee at page 49 of the report had this to say:

Bill 212, the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, was introduced as a private members bill in the spring 2007 session of the Legislative Assembly. This bill should be reviewed, adjusted as necessary, and passed, if not in the fall 2007 session, then as a government bill in the spring of 2008.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that the member and other members of this Assembly obviously took that recommendation to heart because amendments were introduced. They were debated. They were passed. Bill 212 is a better bill as a result of that. It provides very much the thrust of what the task force was asking for in their recommendations. I can tell you that as a member of the executive of this government I am in full support of this bill on a go-forward basis. I think it will accomplish what safe communities legislation does.

I first became aware of safe communities legislation on becoming Attorney General in 2004. I had an opportunity at that time to spend

a day or so with colleagues from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia. It was at that time that I heard of the Manitoba and Saskatchewan experiences. Manitoba brought in similar legislation in 2001. It is the principal and earliest piece of legislation of this kind in Canada. I believe that since then Saskatchewan, the Yukon, and Nova Scotia have brought in similar legislation. Saskatchewan was second, so they have had some considerable experience with it also.

Effectively, many of the situations which make our communities less safe are criminal in nature, but there are also other aspects to them, and that is what this legislation deals with. It doesn't deal with the criminal aspect; it deals with the health and public safety aspects. Essentially, what it does is disrupt activities which are sometimes incredibly difficult to deal with through the criminal law. So what we have is a situation where prostitution houses, grow ops, drug houses, and other such activities, which can go on in our communities and avoid the criminal law because of some of the difficulties associated with enforcing that, can now be disrupted through this provincial legislation.

I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that this is a good bill. I will be supporting it as, importantly, it is one of the very early indications of the response of this Legislature in support of the safe communities task force recommendations, which is, indeed, a good thing for all Albertans.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, then Wetaskiwin-Camrose. Please proceed.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, support and thank the Member for Calgary-Hays for bringing forward Bill 212, Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. One of the main ingredients of this bill is the fact that residents will have direct reporting to police agencies and therefore help to make communities safer.

I would like to suggest that, unfortunately, at this time in Alberta there are a number of people who don't have residences, and their ability to report, therefore, is considerably limited. Of these who have no residence, the group that I'm very concerned about are children. A number of denominations not only in Calgary but in Edmonton and I'm sure in other municipalities run programs the equivalent of Calgary's Inn from the Cold, where children and their parents are sheltered in a church basement by, as I say, interdenominational groups. The stability that the children receive during the day in going to a designated school, unfortunately, is not paralleled in the evening because the parents line up at different churches each night to receive that shelter.

One of the ingredients of a safer community is having adequate food resources. As I pointed out in an earlier member's statement, 85 per cent of Albertans on fixed incomes or welfare are food insecure. Of course, children are among the most vulnerable. There are a number of creative programs that are run by nonprofit organizations, such as the food bank, that provide limited access to food, but unfortunately after I think it's five or six visits within a year, that is your absolute limit.

2:50

At a wonderful production of Theatre Calgary on Saturday night Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* was performed. The proceeds for that event went to the food bank. It was noted that no funding from the government supports the food banks. If we're going to be supportive of safer communities, such as Bill 212 puts forward to a small but

important extent, then we have to take into account not only home security in the sense of having a home to be secure in but then having the security of food so that vulnerable individuals have the same type of opportunities as those who are less vulnerable.

Another organization that helps to provide security to children, to the homeless working poor, and to seniors is the Meals on Wheels program. I thank the government for this summer having announced a sum of I believe it was \$5 million for this very worthy program, that helps children with their nutritional needs in a program called duck soup. It provides lunches for those children. Similar programs are happening in Edmonton and in our outlying communities. This program, Meals on Wheels, has been operating for 41 years. It has extended its program, which originally helped seniors who were at home, to now making bagged lunches for individuals who are in the drop-in centre who are able to work but don't have the luxury of a roof over their heads other than that mat on the floor in the drop-in centre, but they have the support of Meals on Wheels dropping off bagged lunches each day so that they can contribute to a small extent to the security of others through their employment.

If we're going to deal with safer communities, we have to also consider the vulnerable seniors beyond just the support that they receive from groups like Meals on Wheels. We know that from an economic standpoint as well as a moral standpoint seniors would like to be housed in their homes as long as they possibly can. In order to have the type of security that Bill 212 proposes, the seniors need to have the support. This can't all be put onto their families. Quite often the seniors' grown children live in other communities, and they can't provide the day-to-day support.

One of the things that would help with their security is bringing back the notion of seniors not having to pay the educational portion of property tax. This was an initiative that was taken away from them in the mid-90s, and it would provide them with some financial security and a safer community if the government were to restore that program. They do help some fixed-income seniors with their health, paying their health care premiums, and there is some assistance for extremely low-income individuals, seniors, living in their homes and trying to maintain them.

There are a number of seniors who would like to have greater security that are living in apartments, in rental accommodations, whose rents continue to rise. To provide them with the safer, secure communities that Bill 212 is beginning to address, then some type of control or ongoing support subsidy for those individuals who are vulnerable and could lose their accommodations.

Also in terms of safer and secure communities there are a tremendous number of seniors living in assisted living and long-term care where the ratio of caregivers to those in care has been dramatically reduced. These caregivers are doing their best to provide the security that the seniors require, many of whom are suffering from dementia and for whom these individuals are their only advocates. In terms of providing a more secure and safe community for those individuals, I would encourage the government to increase the wages of the caregivers, both the RNs, the LPNs, and the many individuals whose pay barely puts them above the poverty line.

Alberta is a wonderful province. It could be a more safe and secure province, as Bill 212 suggests, if we took into account the needs of individuals. We have attracted people from all over the world with our promises, and those promises stem primarily from our nonrenewable resource base: the oil and gas that is in the ground, the bitumen that is being extracted from the tar sands. To provide secure and safer communities, as Bill 212 suggests, then we have to make sure that the money that comes from these various enterprises, as the royalty commission noted, is sufficient to provide that quality of life for all Albertans.

We need to work to make Alberta a more inclusive province. We need to encourage immigration rather than just sort of a temporary taste that the temporary foreign workers receive. We need to provide them while they're here, helping our economy to prosper, with the same type of safe and secure communities that Bill 212 recommends for regular landed immigrants and Canadian citizens living in Alberta.

Alberta is a wonderful province. There should not be a need for a 10-year plan to end homelessness.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, Edmonton-Ellerslie, Red Deer-North.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to just make a few comments on Bill 212, the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. I was very heartened to see this legislation appear because, in fact, I probably almost two years ago had a meeting with the Manitoba Solicitor General, and he was discussing a number of innovations that they had enacted in regard to law and order in the province of Manitoba. He described in some detail this basic framework that is outlined here in Bill 212. Considering the, I suppose, similar types of constituencies that both the Manitoba Solicitor General and myself represent in each respective city, his description of the program in Manitoba was very encouraging. I can't wait to see this functioning and enacted here in the province of Alberta, in Edmonton in particular.

I recognize from several experiences over the last three years that it's very difficult to target and close a problem house in a community. I also know that a problem house can be the source of a crime wave in an immediate area where certain residents might be engaging in criminal activity. It really just is quite miraculous when a certain house might be closed where there's known criminal activity because suddenly everything just changes and becomes like night and day in terms of break-ins and selling of drugs and prostitution and all other manner of activities that you don't want in your neighbourhood. You know, having a tool to target houses that are at the centre of criminal or illicit activity and just giving another tool available to the police is fantastic. I know that the police officers in Edmonton-Calder and across the city of Edmonton and in Calgary and other cities as well will welcome this with open arms because the traditional mechanisms by which you have to engage in surveillance and court orders and whatnot are certainly cumbersome.

3:00

Having the capacity to just focus on a landlord and on the tenancy side of the agreement allows the police to do an end around and save a lot of time once a house has been identified as a centre for criminal activity. As I said before, it's miraculous how a place will become safe and how criminal activity will disappear in the night when it's perhaps just a small group of people in one home that is causing the problems that hundreds have to suffer under when there is this sort of activity about.

We were talking, I guess about a year and a half ago, about bringing this very thing forward as a private member's bill. I guess the power of positive thinking and interaction between our government and the Manitoba government as well as Saskatchewan's – and I think even Yukon now has something like this – have brought about the potential for positive change here in the province of Alberta. Certainly, the Alberta New Democrats recognize the value of this, and we will support it wholeheartedly.

It's interesting to see. Manitoba, I think, was the first government that brought this forward and then Saskatchewan and then Nova

Scotia. I know for a fact that Manitoba in conjunction with some other innovative tools has reduced the crime rate in certain neighbourhoods quite dramatically with this. There's another piece of legislation that the same solicitor general was describing to me which was sort of working in concert with this particular bill on focusing on houses. It's to move certain types of court activity into the neighbourhoods as well so that you had the swift delivery of justice within reasonably close proximity to where the crimes were taking place so that people who had been aggrieved and were victims of crime could see justice unfolding in the neighbourhood in a reasonably swift way. Again, this was a very positive piece of legislation that I believe is part of a package of things that we need to do to prevent crime, which is much more cost effective and positive as opposed to chasing down crime after it's already happened.

Of course, the keystone to building safer communities is to encourage and to properly fund the capacity for municipalities to engage in neighbourhoods. Community policing in its truest sense, not just some lip service to it, is the lynchpin that can make all of these other pieces of legislation function. When law enforcement officers are assigned to a smaller geographic area and engage in community policing activities over time with the same officer staff, it's quite transformative and the very best sort of crime prevention model that can help reduce crime and increase a sense of community and safety in neighbourhoods all around the province of Alberta.

[Mr. Lukaszuk in the chair]

It's the model that I'm sure many people are familiar with. I believe it's called the London constabulary model of community policing as opposed to what often is used in North America here, which is the Ulster, sort of more military organization for policing. I believe that it's been proven that the London constabulary model, if it's properly funded and maintained, over time prevents crime, especially violent crime and property crime, more than any possible alternative that you could have. So having the London constabulary model of community policing, Mr. Speaker, in communities such as Edmonton-Calder – and Edmonton-Castle Downs as well, certainly, can use the same type of model. [interjection] Yeah, I heard that there is a certain church that talks about the imminent Apocalypse, and sometimes you see signs of the imminent Apocalypse. I don't know if I'm seeing something like that now. Anyway, I don't believe in that kind of thing. I don't believe in it and respect the chair in all of its various forms. Certainly, we have to. [interjection] Yes, that's right. Nothing ever stays the same.

Bill 212 is a good piece of legislation, and the Alberta New Democrats will wholeheartedly support it. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 212, the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays for bringing such a timely bill forward. Clearly, there is a growing need to address some of the problems that criminal and disturbing activities present to the safety of Alberta's communities, not to mention the impact on the children and youth who live in these environments.

This is not to say that the tools which currently exist to deal with crime and crime prevention are ineffective. In fact, Alberta's police and law enforcement services do an admirable job of serving and protecting the people of this province, a task that grows more challenging in the face of continued growth pressures. Law

enforcement cannot do the job alone, however. They require the help of concerned and engaged citizens who care as much about solutions and effectiveness as they do. Whether it is an organized committee such as the Neighbourhood Watch program or as simple as knowing who our neighbours are, law enforcement agencies have said over and over that simple awareness goes a long way to preventing crime from taking place.

The busybody in your neighbourhood that is constantly in everyone's business and knows all the goings-on in the neighbourhood may be intrusive, but they may also be on to something. It seems that we used to know more about those who lived on our streets and who our children were playing with. It seems that we used to be more aware of our neighbourhoods and less concerned about offending people. Maybe we need to be more active in our communities by helping our neighbours and observing activities that look suspicious. Bill 212 gives citizens the ability to put this awareness to use and allows them to monitor those who are disruptive in their neighbourhoods and hold them accountable for what occurs.

Not only can this act be useful in removing criminal elements and activities which interfere with the peaceful enjoyment of our own property, but it can also do a lot to discourage them. Whether it is prostitution, illegal drugs, or gang activity, we can make the business of crime inconvenient in our communities. Crime can be thought of as a disease affecting our communities. All diseases require a hospitable host in order to thrive and grow or a safe place where they may lay dormant until one day deciding to strike. The key, then, is to make our communities inhospitable hosts for criminal activities that affect the safety of our homes, our communities, and our children. Ultimately, we can discourage criminals from locating in Alberta's neighbourhoods and remove the influence they can have on our young people. This is particularly important in thwarting the activities of gang members.

Gang recruitment practices operate in specific ways that target young people in order to keep their numbers up and perpetuate their existence. This is particularly true in cases where youth feel more disconnected from their parents and communities. Gangs prey on this and provide the sense of belonging that these youths believe they are missing. By forming friendships with their peer group, new recruits may become desensitized to and more forgiving of the violent activity that they are eventually urged to commit due in part to a misplaced sense of loyalty.

3:10

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of gang behaviour is this groupthink that it promotes and supports. Gang success is based largely on destroying self-identity. What better targets than children and young people who are still trying to determine who they are and what their identity is? Individual identity and responsibility is replaced by the collective identity of the group. It allows them to remove themselves from responsibility and culpability and dissociate themselves from the real impact that their crimes have on communities. A study by the John Howard Society refers to this as the proud dynamic, sometimes referred to as the mob mentality, for normal reason and judgment seem to go out the window. Being a part of a crowd or group gives a kind of permission for people to commit the actions as a member of a group that they would never do as individuals.

Gangs have also become more clever, Mr. Speaker. Rather than only operating on the fringe as they used to, gangs are now trying to normalize themselves in the eyes of young people by becoming a legitimate part of the community. We see examples of this normalization in the popular culture that bombards our children and reinforces the impression that criminal activity is simply another lifestyle choice, in some cases a glamorous one.

At the same time, by entrenching themselves in these communities, criminals and gangs shelter themselves from scrutiny and attention by hiding in plain sight. The mechanisms of Bill 212 allow neighbourhoods to shine a very bright light on these and other interrelated disturbing and inappropriate activities in our communities, including illegal drugs and prostitution. This helps to remind our children who and what these people really are.

Now, we are not talking about sheltering our children from the world or placing them in a bubble. That's not the goal. The goal here is to reduce the likelihoods. By removing these criminal elements, we reduce the likelihood that our children and young people fall prey to these activities either as victims or participants.

One of the ways we prevent our youth from going down these paths is to reach them before the gangs do. The mechanisms of Bill 212 can be a very effective part of this strategy by working in conjunction with many of the things that the community organizations are doing right now. Rather than just addressing the criminal activity, community prevention awareness programs specifically target youth at risk and try to create a more negative attitude toward gang activity and gang membership. As funny as it may sound, making gang life uncool is one of the best means of prevention.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that whether it is gangs, prostitution, or drug houses, like attracts like. The more that criminal activity is left unchecked in our communities, the more it signals to criminals that these are safe havens for them. Silence is permission, and standing by because of either fear or indifference only allows these activities to thrive and grow. We must assure our children that we will protect them and that we will not let fear or indifference silence us when our homes and way of life are threatened.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Bill 212 will go a long ways to help Albertans bring safety to their communities for themselves and their children. We cannot always control the influences our children are exposed to, but we can teach them about choices. I'm in strong support of Bill 212, and I encourage the other Members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in supporting this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak in support of Bill 212, Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. First of all, I want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays for introducing this badly needed legislation. The main purpose of this bill is to enhance community and neighbourhood safety by providing a way for people within the community to make a complaint to the government about properties that habitually negatively impact the health, safety, or security of one or more persons in neighbourhoods or interfere with the peaceful enjoyment of one or more properties in the community or the neighbourhood.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, will provide for a government agency to respond to these complaints and put an end to activity that adversely affects or harms a neighbourhood. I'm sure this bill allows for communities and neighbourhoods to have a say in the safety and security of their communities, and this is all about community empowerment and allowing people to be active in ensuring the safety of their neighbourhoods.

This will enable another tool for people to access above and beyond calling the police, who sometimes do not have the resources to effectively gather the necessary evidence to deal with some illegal activities. For instance, there may not be the necessary resources to conduct a full investigation of a possible house being used for purposes of meth production, drug trafficking, illegal liquor sales, or any other criminal offences.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

People within the community are witnesses to critical circumstantial evidence indicating illegal activities – vehicle traffic at odd times, noxious smells, and disposal of certain toxic substances – that police services could only determine through constant surveillance. Given the pressure the police face, this is another tool to be utilized for community safety.

A director in the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Public Security can investigate the complaint and take a number of steps, including informal resolution, warning letters, or application to the courts for a community safety order. These are all effective tools to discourage the illegal activities that may be harming the security of a neighbourhood.

This bill will be effective in putting more pressure on criminal organizations that use property to carry out illegal activities. It will also allow for people to take control of the direction their neighbourhoods take to ensure safe and healthy communities. [interjection] I'm not sure. They have the tools. What we need is a will. If there is a will, there is a way. The government has everything according to the recommendations of the task force, and my constituents are eagerly waiting because they have been suffering for a long, long time. This is a good bill. I am hopeful that this bill will definitely help the Edmonton-Ellerslie constituency as well as the other 82 constituencies throughout Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will be effective in putting more pressure on the criminal organizations as well that use property to carry out illegal activities. Investigators can also call in the support of police services or peace officers if need be, depending on the evidence. This ensures the safety of the civilian investigator and creates an integrated dynamic between the investigative unit and police services. A number of other jurisdictions have already passed a very similar version of this legislation. The provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Yukon all have brought forward this type of legislation. Bill 212 is very similar to the Saskatchewan version, and I'm sure it will help to combat crime in Alberta.

This is also about empowering citizens to take back their communities. It is another tool in the fight against illegal activities in our communities. The police do not have the resources to deal with all the complaints they receive. Even if the information is reliable, there simply are not enough police officers. This is a big question. Even though we had the task force and, you know, all the recommendations are on the table, I just want to know whether Albertans will see enough police officers on the road to protect Albertans. They are eagerly waiting because without a number of police officers, whatever we need, whatever is recommended in the task force – it is very important. With their help we can definitely reduce the crime in Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

3:20

This bill will create another investigative agency, staffed by trained investigators, to deal with problem properties in neighbourhoods where illegal activities are operating at this moment. Any tool to deal with the rise in crime in Alberta is welcome. This sends a message to criminal organizations and those who commit illegal activities that the people are watching and that they will not tolerate criminal behaviour in their neighbourhoods. The stakes can be high: meth houses, child exploitation. These are serious offences, Mr. Speaker, that need to be monitored by all sources, not just the police.

This bill provides that mechanism to help reduce crime. Empowering citizens in the war on crime is highly effective. People know what is happening in their neighbourhood and often can gather the evidence that is crucial in obtaining a community safety order, evidence that can only be discovered through proximity to the trouble property. For this reason, having a mechanism to allow them

to gather evidence and direct it to an agency of the government for investigation is a positive step in combatting crime.

As I said before, Mr. Speaker, this same legislation has been passed in other jurisdictions. This legislation does not change much from province to province and even retains the same name. The legislation improves community safety by targeting and, if necessary, shutting down residential and commercial buildings and land that are habitually used for illegal activities. This bill is very close to the recommendations made by the task force, as the Minister of Justice already mentioned, and this bill is critical in the fight to win back our neighbourhoods from criminal activities. This bill is definitely worthy of support. The Alberta Liberal Party always works hard and finds . . . [interjection] Oh, no.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, anything for crime reduction, making communities safe, is always welcome. I raised this question many times in a different way through members' statements, tabling letters, and asking questions about crime reduction in my constituency. It's a big issue. I hope that with this legislation and the task force recommendations, which I really like – the task force worked really hard, and most of them are worthy of implementation – it will definitely help to reduce crime in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red-Deer North.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'm very glad to rise and contribute to the discussion on Bill 212, the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, and I would like to thank the Member for Calgary-Hays for bringing this legislation forward. There's been a great deal of debate over the issue of crime prevention, and within this discourse Bill 212 has emerged as a very proactive and pro community initiative that seeks to protect the neighbourhoods of Alberta. I know that my constituents in Red Deer-North would embrace this legislation as I've had many discussions with frustrated constituents who've had to observe drug activity going on in their neighbourhoods and have suffered, some actually with physical contact.

Essentially, this bill would create a mechanism for citizens to report suspicious activities taking place on private property which are considered unsafe or threatening to their surrounding locality. As a result of these reports an appropriate public safety agent would launch an investigation and, if warranted, would hold the private property owners accountable for the threatening activity. The intent is to enhance the public safety of our communities through a more direct fashion than currently available via city bylaws and criminal legislation.

I recognize that we have previously engaged in a great deal of dialogue regarding this issue. However, I feel there are still some points we should look at before we close our discussion. In Committee of the Whole concerns came up regarding how quickly the directors of these public safety organizations would be able to operate. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, who brought this up, expressed that people could move in and out of drug houses as fast as they need to so that they don't get caught.

The questions, Mr. Speaker, are: how long does it take for a complaint to be resolved when we engage in the process suggested by Bill 212, and what time frames are we looking at? As this bill has yet to become law, I feel we can best answer this question by looking at other jurisdictions with similar legislation already in place. In Saskatchewan the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act is legislation that was created to improve community safety. It allows communities to shut down residential and commercial buildings that are habitually used for prostitution, solvent abuse, or the unlawful sale and consumption of alcohol and illegal drugs.

When this program started in Saskatchewan, they found that with the caseload at the time, they were able to begin an investigation within a week or two. Their successes with the program led to an increased caseload, and they are presently at six to eight weeks before they can get to a new file. This will be remedied in Saskatchewan by the addition of two more investigators in the new fiscal year. Overall the Saskatchewan Department of Justice has indicated that the resolution of complaints normally takes two to four weeks. The program has been extremely successful so far.

The province of Nova Scotia also has a version of the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. This has created a public safety investigative unit which targets illegal activity such as the sale of illegal drugs and alcohol, prostitution, and illegal gambling. Mr. Speaker, in Nova Scotia I understand there has been a definite sense of public satisfaction that something was being done to address the problem areas in both rural and urban neighbourhoods. The manager felt that the increased workload the investigative units are currently experiencing can be correlated to the public accomplishments of this program.

The province of Manitoba also has a Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act in place, which works by holding property owners accountable for threatening or disturbing activities that occur regularly on their property. The manager of the province's public safety investigation unit has stated – this is in Manitoba – that there have been more than 100 arrests and that 99 per cent of landlords have been co-operative in evicting drug dealers.

There have been only five repeat dealers among the 258 crack houses shut down since the Saskatchewan government legislated the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act five years ago. Manitoba does not have statistics that indicate reaction times. They prioritize each complaint based on its seriousness; for example, if children are at risk or if there is an imminent threat of violence. Due to the degree of complaints they receive and their current resources, more serious complaints take precedence. This circumstance varies the reaction times. Some complaints are dealt with rather quickly while others are handled over an extended period of time. Mr. Speaker, it seems logical to assume that enacting Bill 212 will play out in a very similar fashion as in the provinces that have been mentioned although we can certainly learn from them as we move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind the House that these other provinces have reported an overwhelming success rate in reducing crime in their communities. I would also bring up that with the additional niche role of this legislation and its agency, the traditional involvement of our police services is enhanced, not hindered. This synergy has led to the types of accomplishments that have been observed in these jurisdictions.

Safer community initiatives in other provinces have successfully helped people protect themselves and their properties and reduced the fear of crime by means of greater diligence and accurate reporting of suspicious incidents to the police and by fostering a community spirit. Communities with problem areas will keep investigators busy. This is a fact. However, with this legislation the message is being conveyed that law-abiding citizens won't tolerate criminal activities in their neighbourhoods. As this sinks in, it's reasonable to conclude that communities will shift from a stance of fixing their problem areas to one of maintaining the safety and order in their locales. In the end this community-based approach to crime prevention is an important one which has enjoyed a tremendous degree of success in other provincial jurisdictions.

I would conclude that the passage of Bill 212 would be in the best interests of all Albertan communities, and I urge my colleagues to support it. Thank you.

3:30

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Dr. B. Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to add my remarks to Bill 212, the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, in third reading. I appreciate the hon. Member for Red Deer-North and her comments about the possible effects of this bill because in third reading we're talking about the effects of the bill. I'm really glad to hear that in other jurisdictions, in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, there has been positive feedback about the effect of their legislation, that it really makes a difference in the community. As I mentioned previously, in second reading, I meet on a regular basis with a group in my community called the safe and caring communities committee, which is obviously the committee that needs to look at this kind of legislation and the effect of this legislation.

I think that what is really important is the proper follow-up to this bill. It's one thing to pass legislation in this House, but it's another thing to trace how it's going to be followed up in the community. So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I expect that it's probably the Solicitor General's department that needs to follow up on this and to especially educate the police so that they can educate the community to be able to put this into practice.

In our safe and caring communities committee that meets on a regular basis there are Edmonton Police Service constables that meet with us so that to the extent that they are aware of this kind of legislation when it is finally enacted, then they can help people in the community to be educated to look for signs in the community of the kind of criminal activity that this bill is dedicated to investigating.

In terms of the effect I noticed that there is a very fine website that the Saskatchewan government, Saskatchewan Justice, has to educate the public to look for the signs of when there are buildings that are being misused for criminal activity. On their website they ask the question: what should I look for in my neighbourhood? And they list common signs of illegal activity. Alone any of these activities or signs may not necessarily mean that drug dealing, drug producing, substance abuse, prostitution, or any variety of other illegal activities are occurring on a property; however, a frequency of these signs would lead one to want to do something about it. So this legislation outlines the process that a person can pursue to deal with their concerns.

What I'm concerned about is that if this bill is truly to be effective, we have a similar kind of website and a similar kind of educational process so that people are alerted to what the signs are that they should be watching for. Some of these signs of a particular building include frequent visitors at all times of the day and night, frequent late night activity, windows blackened or curtains always drawn, visitors with expensive vehicles coming up – Mr. Speaker, through this committee that I meet with, that has been reported in terms of some buildings in our neighbourhoods, so I think that's really an important factor – unfriendly people who appear to be secretive about their activities, people watching cars suspiciously as they pass by, extensive investment in home security, garbage that contains numerous bottles and containers, particularly chemical containers, and putting garbage out in another neighbour's collection area. That's a useful list.

I think that in the follow-up to this kind of legislation we need to have that kind of publicity because this bill I think is about empowering people in the community to assist.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time for this order of business has elapsed. I will now call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays to close debate on Bill 212.

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been a great honour and privilege to bring this legislation forward on behalf of the constituency of Calgary-Hays. I also appreciate all the supportive comments that were voiced during third reading. If passed, this act will work to make our great Alberta communities even stronger and more welcoming to good, hard-working Alberta families, business owners, and associations.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans are smart people who are well connected and in tune with their communities. They know when something is off. I am glad that we as legislators are recognizing the tremendous resource that is at our disposal for the combat against activities which slowly eat away at our quality of life. Alberta communities on the whole are overwhelmingly safe and friendly. Families flourish, grow, and thrive in our province. We chat with our neighbour, have social events to stay connected, and bring our children to these activities to make friends.

However, there can be trouble spots in any community. These areas require a bit of help to eliminate any inappropriate behaviour. With this bill Albertans can feel comfortable about calling their local safer community and neighbourhoods agency when they observe a lot of suspicious traffic on their streets, when there is rowdy and disturbing behaviour on a property, or if they constantly find paraphernalia in certain locations. Communities are for raising families and enjoying our prosperity and good health. They should not be a place which is overshadowed by illegal activities or disturbing behaviours as is sometimes the case.

Mr. Speaker, our police services work nonstop to keep communities as clean as possible. They do a remarkable job. I commend them for that and have the highest respect for each man and woman who wears a uniform. I hope the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act helps ease the load of our protectors. As was demonstrated by my colleagues, I believe that our current law enforcement services stand to gain tremendously from the tools this legislation brings. I am confident that having the ability to shut down a property or evict certain troublemakers is a good complement to our highly developed systems. I look forward to seeing Alberta's strong police services work with the safer communities and neighbourhoods agencies to achieve greater peace where our homes and families are rooted.

I thank all the members who spoke in favour of Bill 212. I kindly ask my colleagues to support this bill on behalf of all Albertans and our great province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 212 read a third time]

head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than  
Government Bills and Orders  
Second Reading**

**Bill 214  
Healthy Futures Act**

[Debate adjourned November 26: Mr. Coutts speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again and speak in support of a different bill, which is Bill 214, Healthy Futures Act. I want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre for introducing this bill.

Mr. Speaker, the object of this bill is to require government policy decisions to undergo a health impact assessment to examine a policy's effect on a wide range of factors like income, education, and environment that influence the health of our society and to ensure

that government decisions that could potentially affect the health of Albertans are subject to the greatest scrutiny to promote the protection, enhancement, and sustainability of the health of Albertans. A health impact assessment is a decision-making tool for predicting the effect of a proposed activity on the health of the population.

The World Health Organization supports the use of health impact assessments. HIA are based on four values. These values provide a platform from which the benefits of HIA can be derived and link HIA to the policy environment in which an HIA is being undertaken. The four values are democracy, equity, sustainable development, and ethical use of evidence. Democracy: allowing people to participate in the development and implementation of the policies, programs, or projects that may impact their lives. Equity: a health impact assessment assesses the distribution of impacts from a proposal on the whole population, with a particular reference to how the proposal will affect vulnerable people in terms of age, gender, ethnic background, and socioeconomic status. Sustainable development: both short- and long-term impacts are considered along with the obvious and less obvious impacts. Ethical use of evidence: the best available quantitative and qualitative evidence must be identified and used in the assessment. A wide variety of evidence should be collected using the best possible methods.

3:40

The EUB currently considers applications on a project-by-project basis, which results in short-term decision-making that doesn't consider environmental or health impacts. The perfect example of this is how completely unprepared the government was for the pace of development in northern Alberta. Former EUB chairman Neil McCrank commented to the *Calgary Herald* on March 15, Mr. Speaker, and I quote: we should look at the possibility of regional hearings where we examine the broader issues, the broader societal and environmental issues. It is expected that McCrank would be familiar with the flaws in the current process and sees a cumulative assessment as necessary as we look toward the future.

Mr. Speaker, oil sands development on the scale that we have in Alberta is bound to have an impact on the environment and, consequently, on the health of nearby residents, yet development continues with little consideration for the health of the community. Conducting health impact assessments on proposed developments would allow decision-makers to consider both short- and long-term impacts and prepare to mitigate potential health risks. According to the Radke report there are about 3,000 oil sands lease agreements with the provincial government, totalling 49,000 square kilometres. Approximately 97,000 square kilometres, or 69 per cent, of leasable oil sands areas are still available. For such an enormous geographic area with so much development the government should have a clear idea of what the impacts will be.

The 2006 urban service area population estimate represents an increase of 27,989 residents, or 77 per cent, an average annual increase of 8 and a half per cent per year. The 2006 population also includes some shadow population living in motels and campgrounds in the Fort McMurray urban service area. During the same seven-year period the number of people living in camps increased significantly and in the summer of 2006 stood at 10,442. Quite rapid population increases have implications for the entire community.

Mr. Speaker, the area northeast of the capital region centred in Strathcona and Sturgeon counties is within easy reach of the one million residents of greater Edmonton, and within 500 kilometres of the oil sands development around Fort McMurray. It is a prime area for growth in the oil and bitumen processing industry.

According to the Inventory of Major Alberta Projects, March

2007, there are potentially 12 more upgraders on the horizon. These upgraders, Mr. Speaker, would have an impact on air. They give off numerous harmful emissions, including sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide, volatile organic compounds, acids, ammonia, et cetera, and they require a large amount of water for processing. The key issues relate to the amount of surface and groundwater use in the extraction process, the overall impact on the quality of surface and groundwater, the level of greenhouse gas and other air emissions, land disturbance and the size of the footprints on the land base, land reclamation, and the impacts on wildlife, endangered species and population health. Health impact assessments are a prominent part of the Alberta Liberal Party's health policy, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 214 ensures that prevention and planning will secure a healthy future for all Albertans while maintaining our economic advantage. This bill enables health objectives to be considered on par with the socioeconomic and environmental objectives, bringing sustainable development closer. Development is crucial, Mr. Speaker, to Alberta's continued economic success, but such development must be sustainable and carefully planned.

The quality of public policy decision-making needs to be improved by taking the health of Albertans into consideration. The promotion and protection of health is essential to the well-being of society as a whole. This is a crucial time in Alberta's history, and we need to make the right decision to guide Albertans into the future. It is more sensible and cost-effective to focus on prevention rather than dealing with the problem created by unhealthy public policy, Mr. Speaker.

I think this bill is worthy of support, and definitely I'll support this bill introduced by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 214, the Healthy Futures Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. The Healthy Futures Act would require health impact assessments to be conducted for any major government project. These assessments would scrutinize government proposals in regard to the effect on public health. The focus would be on the potential effects on income, poverty, education, and the environment, among other things. Further, Bill 214 proposes the creation of a new committee which would collect and review all assessments and provide a generalized yearly analysis of the health regime. Bill 214 then aims to publicize all human impact assessments for public review before any projects are approved.

Mr. Speaker, if misunderstood, these assessments could precipitate misguided outcries. An example comes to mind. In February of 1998 Alberta Health released the Assessment of Respiratory Disorders in Relation to Solution Gas Flaring Activities in Alberta. Within the report no significant correlation between flaring and asthma was established, yet the fact that the assessment was conducted at all elevates unnecessary suspicion and fear in the public. Numerous articles were written regarding the potential effects of gas flaring in Alberta. Even those studies performed thus far negate any claims of harm. Public health impact assessments have the potential to become a public forum of opinion rather than informed decisions on empirical evidence.

Another concern is that the analysis of the data compiled by health impact assessments is subject to a significant degree of personal judgment and, therefore, is subject to misrepresentation or misappropriation. Mr. Speaker, personal judgment can often challenge the empirical data to represent a certain outcome. According to a May 1997 World Health Organization report . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but the time for this order of business is concluded. I would invite the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre to close debate.

3:50

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and my thanks to everyone that did stand up and participate in the debate on Bill 214, the Healthy Futures Act. I listened carefully to the points that were raised by members of the government caucus. You know, in going over the notes that I made, I really didn't hear good arguments as to why this particular bill shouldn't be passed. One of the strongest ones was, "Well, we can't do it because we're so short of physicians," which didn't strike me as a particularly good reason not to actually bring in something like health impact assessments. One person even said: health impact assessments are okay, just not this bill. Well, I'll come back to that a little later because I think there's something else going on here. We had another member who seemed to think that the bill was about joining a fitness club and some sort of wellness lifestyle and: get your vaccination, and everything will be good.

Really, the bill was based, in fact, on an environmental impact assessment, which this government currently uses or professes to use. That's the same sort of setup, and it is intended to be evidence-based. So contrary to what the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek was just saying, the whole point of this is that you gather information and then decide whether, in fact, it is a good idea on the balance of all things considered to proceed with a particular kind of development, not only one that government is doing itself or is funding or licensing in a large way. I think that's important, that it is evidence-based; it is not subjective. But it does require the government to work together.

I heard a lot of, "Oh, we couldn't possibly," but no reasons as to why that couldn't happen. It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, because at the very same time that you often hear members of the government caucus raising great alarm over the rate at which the health budget is increasing, when you put something in front of them that says, "Okay. Let's take a step back. Let's take a long-term approach to public health and wellness. Let's look at what we're developing in the province that may be affecting our health and costing us a lot of money, and let's do something about it," it's, "Oh, well, gee. No. Maybe not that. It's a good idea, but not this bill."

What I think might be happening here, Mr. Speaker, is that like many great Liberal ideas, they get pooh-poohed by the government caucus, but I suspect that the health impact assessment will miraculously be reincarnated as a government bill. We've seen that one before. We've got a health workforce strategy that the government just brought in. But oh, my goodness, when it was raised by the Liberal opposition, "Oh, we couldn't possibly; absolutely not." Or maybe the family violence bill that was originally brought in by the previous Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly by two, Alice Hanson. Or we've just had a bill come through on promoting awareness of personal directives. In fact, that's another policy position that is in the Alberta Liberal health policy book, called the red book, *Creating a Healthy Future*. So we have some 20-odd policies in here that, interestingly enough, are making their way into government policy. They don't want to give the Liberals credit, but there it is. This document has been out since 2003, and we're slowly seeing it turn up in government policy.

I suspect, Mr. Speaker, and I'm taking heart, that we will in fact see health impact assessments brought into place. This is an idea that Alberta needs. We need to balance industrial development with environmental protection and with public health and wellness. As I said, we have environmental impact assessments. Next I think we will see health impact assessments. That's what we need to have, or

we could be a very, very wealthy province with a lot of not very well people in it and not a lot of environment to support us once that development is gone. I don't think anybody in this Assembly wants to see that.

This is a very practical idea, and I expect that we will see it come back. I'm glad that a number of people got a chance to explore the idea. They could save themselves a lot of time if they'd like to vote for it now, but I suspect – and it's kind of sad – that just the very fact that it was brought forward by a member of the Official Opposition is enough for the government members to not support it, although, in fact, if they actually did look at it, or if it was coming from one of their members, they would support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:55 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Ady	Cao	Horner
Agnihotri	Chase	Johnston
Amery	Eggen	Miller, B.
Blakeman	Elsalhy	Miller, R.
Bonko	Fritz	Pastoor

Against the motion:

Boutilier	Johnson	Ouellette
Brown	Liepert	Pham
Cenaiko	Lindsay	Renner
Danyluk	Lougheed	Rogers
Ducharme	Lukaszk	Snelgrove
Forsyth	Lund	Strang
Griffiths	Melchin	Tarchuk
Hayden	Mitzel	Webber
Jablonski	Oberg	

Totals:	For – 15	Against – 26
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[Motion for second reading of Bill 214 lost]

**Bill 215**  
**School (Canadian History Content)**  
**Amendment Act, 2007**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

**Mr. Cao:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise in the Assembly as the sponsor of Bill 215, the School (Canadian History Content) Amendment Act, 2007. The central amendment to the School Act proposed through Bill 215 would enable the minister to prescribe a required number of hours of instruction in Canadian history for social studies courses in grades 10, 11, and 12, which shall be not less than 75 per cent of the total number of hours for each course.

Mr. Speaker, since the time I first introduced Bill 215 in the House, I have received lots of encouragement and support on the principle of the bill; that is, to have more Canadian history study in school. Support was expressed in e-mails, letters to the editor,

editorial columns, conversations. They are from individuals and organizations such as the Calgary Military Museum, the Historical Society of Alberta, history tellers, and book publishers. An interesting fact is that a few weeks ago a readership polled by the *Calgary Herald* indicated that 86 per cent of respondents agree that we need to learn and teach Canadian history in school. I would like to thank those who expressed their support for learning and teaching Canadian history.

Of course, like any matter of public interest, there is opposition and concern on the bill. I would like to address this concern as follows. The current School Act allows the minister to prescribe the content of school courses, so Bill 215 is just enabling that. It's not new; it's not a strange legislative process to specify content of school courses. The draft of Bill 215 currently specifies that the social studies courses must contain at least 75 per cent of Canadian history content. I plan to introduce an amendment to change 75 to 50 once the bill gets to committee stage, but it must be the first 50 per cent.

**4:10**

Bill 215 doesn't specify when the change in Canadian history content must be made in the curriculum. Certainly, I recognize the great effort spent developing and implementing the curriculum, so I leave the timing of the inclusion of Canadian history content to the next planned changes either in textbooks or teaching materials or the next overhaul of the curriculum. One university professor told me that Canadian history should be taught right at the beginning as part of the bachelor's degree in education or teacher professional development so that they can teach it in school.

In other words, Bill 215 doesn't and certainly doesn't propose to throw away everything now and to start all over. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, Bill 215 addresses the why and the what, not the how and the when, why we need to study and teach knowledge about our nation and what the content of our history is, the knowledge of our nation's past. The how and when are up to the experts, up to our hon. minister: the timing of the changes.

With that clarification, I can talk about the principle of the bill, but before I do that, I realize that the order of business in the House at the moment is not favourable for Bill 215. At best it can only be debated in second reading before the session ends, so I call on Albertans and my colleagues in the House to continue this initiative of requiring the learning and teaching of Canadian history. I will introduce similar legislation when the next opportunity arises.

Now, I would like to articulate in this Assembly that Bill 215 will serve a practical education purpose, will play a great role in enhancing societal awareness of Canadian identity and culture. Canada is defined by its land, people, and culture. Our Canada is a nation of citizens, a confederation of provinces with a past history, present loyalty, and strong patriotic pride. Canadian citizens must have a sense of belonging to and ownership of the nation. As a place to live, Canada is not a rooming or boarding house where residents are separate from the owner. As a place to live, Canada is more like co-operative and condominium housing, where ownership is the pride of caring residents.

What do we need to do to instill such caring ownership and pride in Canadians about our nation, Canada? There are many starting points, but we need to start somewhere, and that is what Bill 215 is about: starting at the learning stage in school. Mr. Speaker, hon. members of the House, if we don't fill the young minds with Canadian content, they will be filled with some other things, and some of it may be non-Canadian or anti-Canadian even. And if the minds have already been prefilled with only non-Canadian matters, what can we balance them with or tip them towards Canadian content for Canada's national interest?

Mr. Speaker, at this point I want to mention a number of points beyond the school class. Our citizens have the obligation for the future direction of our country, and this land is a place we belong to, the community we developed, and a nation of provinces we built together. Canada is not a place from which we demand and take but a place to give and to build collectively. Canada's citizens should have an appreciation for their country that goes beyond the shallow exterior or material layer. It's not just a place to make our living and pass our time. This country affords us the rights and values that are denied to many of our fellow human beings throughout the world. We must not take this for granted. We should encourage our citizens to learn how much effort and what sacrifices were made by people before us so that we can enjoy the freedom and the values of fairness, equality, and justice of Canada today.

Canada is not just a place to take refuge from patriotic activity in other countries. Any patriotic feeling and activity of the residents here must be, first, toward Canada. Canada has so much to offer. More than a place to emigrate, to make money, and then leave, Canada is a home country, a homeland of residents. People should not think, feel, or say that their homeland is somewhere else and take up residency in Canada and become Canadian citizens. Mr. Speaker, I believe the country where we live, work, play should come first. When we are citizens of Canada, it becomes our homeland, our home country. Canada is not like a shopping mall, where commerce takes place and everyone goes home after. Our country demonstrates some of the greatest aspects of unity, with cultures working harmoniously together to create a better life for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren. We need to have our hearts and minds behind our nation so that citizens will be empowered to enable our country to continually prosper and develop.

If we cannot concentrate on Canadian history or knowledge about Canada's interests, then citizens will seek other alternatives. These alternatives may negatively influence citizens' participation in decision-making. I believe it is important for our citizens to first have a thorough knowledge of our country as well as expanding the knowledge of other countries.

Although I encourage all citizens to take active engagement in Canadian affairs, Bill 215 is focused on educating a specific demographic of young Canadians to instill within them a passion for our nation. Canada has an eloquent history that, if we do not make an effort to study and learn, may be forgotten. Our understanding of the past will further our appreciation of who we are in the present and where we are going in the future.

Mr. Speaker, an interesting point. The two largest populated nations in the world, India and China, whose nations both have long histories, were only established as nations in 1947 and the other one in 1949 respectively. Canada was established in 1867. Unfortunately, recent statistics indicate that only 26 per cent of Canadians aged between 18 and 24 know this information. What's even more concerning is that when the same demographic of young people were asked this question a decade ago, a higher percentage of youth responded correctly.

Now, I believe that education is crucial in reversing our population's declining understanding or competency in Canadian history. Our current curriculum development process, which is designed to teach Alberta students to think critically and analytically, is important, but it cannot be the sole focus. Thinking critically, analytically is a skill set that we want all our students to have. However, we need to ensure that the content is Canadian history.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Bonko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to commend the Member for Calgary-Fort on his initiative 215 to in fact increase the amount of Canadian content taught in our schools. As a previous school trustee this is something that I struggled with, as to how much our students actually grasp as far as the history. I know that with their counterparts in the States, it's almost pounded into them, and they're very patriotic because of that fact, I think.

Getting back to Bill 215. I think the object of it is to prescribe that at least 75 per cent of the instructional time be allocated to the study of Canadian content through 10, 11, and 12. I think that does have some merit, like I said, but I believe that the decision should be left up to the school boards to determine that, obviously with a little bit of specific one-on-one with trustees, perhaps, or with the officials to find out exactly if they'd be in favour of this. Ultimately, I don't think that the government should be dictating this level of prescription for content in the social studies curriculum. I believe it should come from Alberta Education and/or from the school board itself.

Quite frankly, like I said, there is nothing wrong with it. I think it is an admirable thing. A lot of the individuals, as he was saying, later on maybe don't retain it. Maybe in the younger years they did retain it. Perhaps they need to do it in the earlier years, more content from K to grade 6 versus 10, 11, and 12. In the TV show right now *Are You Smarter than a 5th Grader?* these kids certainly are able to rattle off a number of specifics, whereas the adults seem to be dumbfounded when it comes to naming even some of the Great Lakes. These fifth graders are able to rattle it off.

4:20

Perhaps it would be more advantageous to give that Canadian content between K to 6 years versus the last years, when they're worried about specifically the mid-terms as well as departmentals. You know, you could be able to track that at 3, and they have 6 and 9, where they do the dip test, I guess, to find out exactly where they are with regard to the curriculum. That would be maybe a better route to find it, when you do it from K to 6, because you're going to be testing them twice as to some of the content that they would have in fact inherited through the program there.

One thing that kind of puzzled me when the member was talking – I'm not sure; I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, obviously – is when he says that when people come to Canada, this would be their country of choice. First and foremost they should in fact be, I guess, dedicated to it. It almost sounds as if you were trying to I guess tell people that Canada should be number one, and regardless of what other country you were from, that should be in the past. It almost was saying that, you know, you give up religious freedoms on that as well. I'm not sure where you were going on that one when you were strictly saying: "You know what? Once you're in Canada, Canada is first. The heck with the other places where you've come from." I'm not sure where you're going on that one.

**Mr. Cao:** Studying history.

**Mr. Bonko:** Oh, okay. History studies, he's saying. But for those particular reasons that I've listed, Mr. Speaker, again I think it would be better left up to the school boards. If we're going to do it, perhaps it would be better formatted from the high school level but drop it down to the K to 6, where they've a little bit more of an ability to grasp it and retain it a little bit better.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Strang:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to

speak to Bill 215, the School (Canadian History Content) Amendment Act, 2007, sponsored by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort. As we know, Bill 215 seeks to amend the School Act and establish a legislated minimum amount of 75 per cent Canadian history content to be taught in Alberta's high school curriculum. Currently the School Act permits school boards to prescribe an element of patriotic instructions to students and allows the Minister of Education to establish and prescribe courses. However, this is not an exceptional amount of Canadian history content required to be taught in any grade throughout the Alberta school system.

Canadian history is important in that it forms the foundation of who we are as a nation and as a people. With other interests, such as pop culture, becoming increasingly dominant in today's society, some feel that our youth are becoming less and less interested and engaged in acquiring historical knowledge. Today youth often find their cultural identities from beer commercials, and they are relying on the Canadian post ad to realize a sense of patriotism. The Ipsos-Reid annual Canada survey of 2007 found that only 70 per cent of Canadians could identify the beaver and hockey as the most unifying Canadian symbols, and as many as 31 per cent of Canadians felt strongly or somewhat attached to Tim Hortons Timbits as a Canadian symbol.

Perhaps as a result of the dwindling interest in history among this generation's youth population as well as the culture shift from historical matters, we as a nation and a province have seen a significant decline in voter turnout and civic participation. After the 2004 federal election Elections Canada conducted a thorough investigation into voter turnout and found out that on the federal level 18- to 20-year-olds had only a 39 per cent average turnout across Canada and a 36 per cent average voter turnout in Alberta.

With Canadians fully engaged in globalization, it is important that youth leaving Alberta's high schools are well educated, knowledgeable individuals with patriotic ambitions. This is essential in making Alberta's future leaders more competitive in the global economy and better positioned to guide our province towards a successful future. We know that unified beliefs among a group of people are integral to creating a strong and dynamic citizenship. Thus, by teaching more Canadian history content in our high schools, we can empower the youth of our province to create cohesive and vibrant identifying perspectives. This would possibly translate to helping create a stronger nation as well as serve as a key factor in helping individuals find their own cultural identities with a broad focus of Canadian patriotism.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's schools are first class. Time and time again we see the comparison studies from around the world. But when Alberta Education undertook a review of the social studies curriculum beginning in 1999, it found that there were gaps in the historical knowledge of some Alberta students. This was especially prevalent in the area of history relating to aboriginal people and Franco-Albertans, both of which have a significant impact in the formation of our province.

High school serves as an important tool in assisting youth in developing their identities by helping them find a definition for who they are in relation to the world. It is only fair to provide students in Alberta high schools with more resources and knowledge to be able to more accurately assess their roots, hence solidifying their identity.

Canada is also largely comprised of immigrants who have already had strong cultural ties, which, I might add, Mr. Speaker, is a great asset, but it's also important to have a unified force to increase commonality and belonging to all Canadians. With our strong economy and boundless potentials our province is a destination of

choice for many international immigrants, which provides a welcome boost to our labour needs.

As a requirement to be granted Canadian citizenship, potential immigrants are asked to write a quiz on our country's history, politics, culture, and geography. It has been recorded that an overwhelming 70 per cent pass the exam. A poll by Ipsos-Reid released in July of this year found that when asked to write the same citizenship test, only 40 per cent of the current Canadian citizens actually passed due to the lack of knowledge of Canadian history and facts. Interestingly enough, according to the Ipsos-Reid study 69 per cent of Canadians believe that part of what makes Canada a successful society today is that Canadians share a common history, heroes, and national symbols.

Tell me, Mr. Speaker, how we can have a strong identifying force in our nation when a large portion of our population can't even answer a simple question: is Canada a constitutional monarchy? According to the annual Canada Day history quiz conducted by the Dominion Institute in 2005, out of a random sample of a thousand Canadians, it was found that the average Canadian could only answer 40 per cent of the questions correctly. Again, a failing grade. The survey also found that university graduates achieved the highest average score of 9.5 while respondents with only high school education or less performed the most poorly, scoring an average of 6.9 over 20. This fact shows that for the most part with only high school level education in social studies Canadian students are only knowledgeable on about 35 per cent of Canadian history content. From the evidence presented, it appears that the average person either entirely loses interest in Canadian history or doesn't have a solid enough foundation to build upon in future years.

4:30

Mr. Speaker, to further prove my point, out of 1,000 respondents only one individual answered all 20 questions correctly. If taken, potentially, to Alberta's population of 3.1 million, this equates to only 3,500 individuals that could answer all the questions presented on this general knowledge questionnaire. The survey has revealed that respondents overwhelmingly agree that knowing their national history, especially key economic events, is important and that they will have to learn more.

Albertans and all Canadians require an increased historical foundation so that tomorrow's youth can move around and be knowledgeable about citizenship. This would also help immigrants to Alberta and all our population, for that matter, to gain appreciation for roots and perhaps adopt a patriotic spirit through identifying with Canadian culture, a spirit that would nurture communities and increase the quality of life for all of us.

Alberta's current social studies curriculum supports students in their journey to become responsible citizens and powerful leaders. Since the social studies 10, 20, and 30 review was completed in 2003, the Alberta high school social studies curriculum has already been more focused on anticipating and planning for direct needs of the future in trying to teach our children a full view of history. However, we can see from recent studies that the knowledge acquired by youth when going through Alberta high school . . . [Mr. Strang's speaking time expired]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. O Canada, our home and native land. O Canada, terre de nos aïeux. Pride isn't something you can simply cram into a series of memorized capitals, provinces, and territories. It's something you acquire through life experience.

Today I tabled a letter from a grade 10 constituent of mine, Dan

Hogg, who wrote expressing his disagreement with requiring that at least 75 per cent of the social studies curriculum be legislated. Earlier on the mover of this motion suggested: well, let's take it down to 50 per cent. Do I hear 25 per cent? 15 per cent? 10 per cent? 5 per cent?

I would like to start off by giving a little bit of background on my national identity. I had the good fortune of being the son of an air force pilot. As a result, I had a chance to live in each of the provinces with the exception of the Maritimes or British Columbia. I began my grade 1 schooling in Saskatoon, finished my grade 1 in Winnipeg, where I also did grades 2 and 3. The first part of grade 4 was again in Saskatoon. The rest of grade 4, grades 5, 6, and 7 were in Edmonton, Alberta, on the Namao air base. Grade 8 was in Toronto, grades 9 through 13 in Ottawa. As a young preschooler I lived in Quebec, in St-Jean, just outside Montreal. I also lived in Aylmer, Ontario. I said that I was fortunate because I got to live the life of Canada as opposed to just having it produced second-hand through textbooks or tests.

As a teacher for 34 years I taught Canadian history, and I taught it proudly. Within that teaching I always incorporated choice so students could choose which part of Canada they wanted to study, which province they wanted to specialize. In grade 4, when Alberta was a major component of the curriculum, I gave the students choices as to which western tribe or eastern tribe, for that matter, they preferred to study, and they, based on their personal interests and their personal pursuits, followed the curriculum with a degree of creativity and enjoyment because they had an opportunity to choose what they were going to study.

[The Speaker in the chair]

In junior high school in grade 8 we again studied Canada and got into a comparative circumstance between the economy and geography of Canada and the United States. We saw the similarities and the differences both geographically and politically.

I've heard comments that suggest to me an insular attitude: let's wrap ourselves around the flag; let's sing *O Canada* to the loudest potential. These outward acts do not make us more knowledgeable or better Canadian citizens. The best way to understand and appreciate the Canadian fabric is to travel and have that first-hand experience. We have had national programs that encourage students to go from province to province. I know that when I was teaching French at the junior high level, we partook of a particularly enjoyable French exchange down to Montmagny, Quebec. Then the students came back and had their Alberta experience. This was very meaningful for a number of the students who had never been out of either Quebec or out of Alberta, to have that first-hand experience.

Another troubling aspect that I see is pushing one more thing onto the school system as opposed to parent initiatives in terms of the education of their students. Mr. Speaker, 75 per cent or 50 per cent of the social studies curriculum: I'd be interested in what parts of the curriculum the member feels are not appropriate at this point or how many more hours he is potentially suggesting be added to that curriculum to fit all the Canadian content that he would like to see in place.

Then I would wonder: what specific parts of the Canadian content would he like to have included? For example, one of the things that isn't very much mentioned is our persecution of Ukrainians during the First World War. What also doesn't get a whole lot of mention is our persecution of black citizens who fled as United Empire Loyalists to the Maritimes and how badly they were treated there. We could talk about, perhaps, and provide a little more background for students about Mackenzie King and how he was very unwilling

to support Jewish refugees fleeing during the Second World War. There is a lot of history that does not get taught, but as we mature and as we become more informed through touring museums, through travelling across Canada, that is where we get the first-hand experience.

I was born, as I said, in Saskatchewan, but because of the number of eastern postings we had, travelling back and forth across the country was just part of my growing up. When I married the daughter of an Ottawa dairy farmer, the desire to connect with the Ottawa Valley was very strong. So those trips were very frequent. We spent a lot of enjoyable days and nights along the Trans-Canada with my daughter. We travelled to Newfoundland. She got a first-hand experience being on Signal Hill, where the first radio signal was received. She got to understand why they call Lake Superior a Great Lake. It's that kind of experience, rather than something grocery-listed or of a textural nature, that makes Canada great and appreciated by students.

4:40

Advocating that immigrants who come to Canada should have a knowledge of the country to which they have come is important, but I would suggest that a number of immigrants have a very good understanding. They did the research before coming here, some for economic benefits, others fleeing persecution. What we have in Canada is what I would refer to as a multipatched quilt as opposed to the traditional American melting pot. We want people to leave behind their baggage of past conflict, and we want them to embrace the Canadian values of inclusivity, of tolerance, but we don't expect them to leave behind any kind of cultural quality, arts, and background when they swear allegiance to the Canadian flag. The beauty of this country is that it's made up of immigrants from the first immigrants who crossed the Bering Strait thousands of years ago and joined with our first peoples. Canada has always been a country of immigrants, and that's what makes Canada so strong.

Pride is not something that you can teach. You can set it out. You can give reasons why a person would potentially want to be proud of the country, but mandating it in the form of an assigned curriculum, whether it be 75 per cent, 50 per cent, 10 or 2, is not going to accomplish the goal of creating better Canadian citizens. Giving students every opportunity to learn will achieve that goal.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Liepert:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to make a few comments on this particular bill from the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort. First of all, I just want to say that we've heard a lot in this House this session about Bill 46, how controversial it is and how the entire province is in an uproar. I would have to say that as the MLA for Calgary-West I haven't received a lot of letters about Bill 46. In fact, I've received almost none, so I'm sure that some of the hon. members in the opposition are probably texting out to their friends right now in the Rocky Mountain House area saying: write letters to the Member for Calgary-West. I say that because since the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort introduced his bill, I think I've received between my office as Minister of Education and MLA for Calgary-West in excess of a hundred letters because this is something that really resonates with people. I would say that there were probably as many that were supportive of the initiative as there were opposed, and I think it's fair to say that there were as many opposed as were supportive. So this particular bill clearly does generate good debate.

Mr. Speaker, the current curriculum in Alberta requires that a

social 30 or 33 class is taken in order to receive a high school diploma, but in addition to that we also offer Canadian history 20 and western Canadian history 20. It's very important to note as well that the development of a curriculum and what is taught in the curriculum needs to be done in conjunction with our postsecondary institutes because you very much want to ensure that the entry that postsecondary institutes are requiring is met and probably in many ways exceeded in our high school teachings.

Now, as you're probably aware, Mr. Speaker, the department has just in fact implemented a new curriculum in social studies. It went into place this year in grade 10. It will be implemented in grade 11 next year and grade 12 in '09. In the development of that curriculum there was intensive research and consultation that occurred as it was being developed. I'd like to outline some of the steps that took place in the development of this new curriculum.

There were three independent literature reviews that guided the development of the foundation document, the framework, and ultimately the Alberta program of studies; focus groups and consultations with departments of history at the University of Alberta, University of Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge; and continued contact with these postsecondary institutions to ensure that the history components of the program were meaningful and relevant to students. Finally, there were over 200 separate information sessions, workshops, provincial consultations, meetings, and working groups over a four-year period to complete the writing and revising of the program.

I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, to note that the development of the new social studies curriculum was not done in isolation by someone holed up in an office somewhere in downtown Edmonton. It was developed with a very extensive public consultation process.

I think it's also important to talk a little bit about the emphasis of the new curriculum. I think there are probably three areas that were attempted to be enhanced. First, it was determined through that consultative mechanism that our social studies curriculum needed to focus more on our First Nations, on our Métis and Inuit, and on francophone perspectives. That's clearly what is part of the increased focus.

Also, the new curriculum, Mr. Speaker, increases focus on historical thinking. It's important to note that in order to do historical thinking, students need to study history, not only Alberta's history, Canada's history, but world and ancient history. These histories are being examined through historical and contemporary perspectives within and across those cultures.

Now, I believe it's important to point out, Mr. Speaker, that the student of today is the business leader of Alberta tomorrow. To do business worldwide, it's important that when we're dealing with different countries around the world, we understand their cultures; we understand their history. I think many of us have on occasion really questioned. In some cases we might see a particular television program where a reporter from Toronto will go down to the U.S. and ask the Americans some dumb question about Canada, and we're always astounded about how little the U.S. knows about our country. I want to ensure that our students and our future business leaders understand all parts of the world as well as they understand our Canadian history.

In saying that, Mr. Speaker, I thought it was important to explain a little bit about the development of our new curriculum, but I listen with interest and appreciate the opportunity to not only participate in this debate but to listen to other members of the House.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Caldor, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of minutes to just make some comment on this private member's bill. At the very least I would certainly value bringing up this topic of Canadian history content because I think it is, certainly, a perennially much talked about and discussed part of our public school system. But just the way in which this particular bill is constructed, I think I got the impression that the hon. member was talking about moving this from 75 to 50 per cent. Is that what you had mentioned previously? Yeah.

I guess regardless of where the number comes from, I just do question mandating the percentage of the content from this House. As the hon. Member for Calgary-West just pointed out, we've in fact just gone through an extensive change of the social studies curriculum here in the province of Alberta, and that is the page which school boards and schools and individuals teachers are drawing from. As a high school teacher myself, and a high school social studies teacher, in fact, I can attest to the fact that probably the Canadian content of the old curriculum – I've looked at it, but I haven't taught the new curriculum – is at least 50 per cent already.

4:50

I guess it calls into question the notion of picking an arbitrary number out of the sky and somehow dropping it down onto the schools here in the province of Alberta. Certainly, we do have a lot of power and responsibility here in terms of public education, but we also have a mechanism by which we develop the curriculum in a reasonable way to meet the needs of not only high school students but to have it integrated into postsecondary education and into the needs of our society as a whole in terms of social studies education, not just with history but geography, political science, sociology, and all of these important fields of study that fall under the larger umbrella of social studies.

Yes, certainly, people can be shocked and appalled about the lack of knowledge of Canadian history amongst our general population, but I would not say that that is a function of having a higher or a smaller percentage of Canadian history within the content but, rather, how much, number one, is that information sticking in the public's mind? How relevant does it become for them as they walk out of a high school and into the larger world? Are they retaining that knowledge? That opens a whole other can of worms of education pedagogy and of relevance and, certainly, doesn't have very much to do, I would venture to say, Mr. Speaker, with the actual percentage that we would be placing on Canadian history as part of the larger social studies curriculum.

Let's not forget, as well, that while Canada exists as a sovereign nation, our integration into the world in the past and the present and the future is integral to understanding what people we are and what our role is as a nation in the world. Considering the brief history, really, of Canada as a sovereign nation, it's absolutely essential to understand what is leading up to the formation of Canada as a nation from our global perspective, different European colonial manifestations and from other countries as well around the world. That all adds to the mix of understanding what and who we are. Simply drawing an arbitrary line of Canadian history I believe is somewhat deceiving because, of course, Canada is still forming its identity based on the widest swath of inferences from around the world.

So, certainly, as a parent and as a citizen and as a former teacher I encourage a very high value of Canadian content to exist in our provincial curriculum, and I do believe that it has been increasing and has been fortified over the years. As I say, the larger question is to make that information relevant so that it sticks with people and that people have the critical thinking skills to use that knowledge in

the broadest possible way. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that that's when you will actually get Canadian content and Canadian history knowledge entrenched into the public's mind, and they will be able to use that information in an active way and become better citizens for it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak on Bill 215, the School (Canadian History Content) Amendment Act, 2007. The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort brings forth an important issue for Canada, which is educating Canadians on their culture and history. While it is very important to educate Albertans on their history and promote Canadian culture, our education system should also reflect the diversity and growth of our society.

For example, in my own community Red Deer is the midpoint in the Calgary-Edmonton corridor, located in an area of rolling hills and aspen parkland. The name of this community came from the large herds of elk, or red deer, in this area. The Cree called the district Waskasoo, while the Blackfoot called it Ponoka, which meant elk. The first Europeans saw that the elk of western Canada were very similar to the red deer . . .

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Red Deer-North, but the time consideration for this item of business has concluded.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

#### **Hunting and Fishing Tradition**

515. Mr. Mitzel moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to recognize the tradition of hunting and fishing for all Albertans.

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to begin the discussion on Motion 515. Every so often we have an opportunity to assemble to recognize the important contributions that certain groups have made in our province. We have a chance to provide them with the proper tribute that they deserve.

Motion 515 recognizes those that participate in hunting and fishing. Their contribution should not go unnoticed. From the early explorers to the settlers to the groups and organizations that still participate in these activities, I feel there should be an understanding of the important function these people who hunt and fish have made in Alberta throughout the years. Hunters and anglers are symbolic of our province's growth and success. This province was built upon those who are successful at these skills. These early people hunted and fished in order to survive and to earn a living.

Since these early days we have come a long way. We now earn our living in many, many other ways but still continue this tradition of hunting and fishing. Alberta can boast of having some of the best hunting and fishing spots in the world. Our diverse landscape provides for ideal opportunities to pursue these activities. There was a reason why early explorers and settlers immigrated to North America and eventually settled here. We have an abundance of wildlife.

We still have an abundance of wildlife, even after over 200 years. It's the hunters and fishers who keep most of our species going. They put in the money and they put in the hours. They really care

about what happens to our wildlife. They contribute millions of dollars to the economy. In 2006 the government of Alberta generated over \$150 million from fees, permits, and licences. This does not include the amount of revenue they provide to businesses across Alberta through rentals and purchasing equipment, not to mention the tourism each activity generates.

When it comes to the environment, the participants in outdoor recreational activities are some of the most educated and eco-friendly people in the province. These conservationists assist in the preservation of Alberta's natural habitat and the species through a variety of means, from acquiring private lands to put back into the public domain for the sole purpose of conservation, to the transplanting of species to encourage repopulation in areas which may have been depleted. Ask anyone from Ducks Unlimited, the Alberta Conservation Association, Pheasants Forever, the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, or the Alberta Fish and Game Association to only name a few, Mr. Speaker, and they will proudly tell you what they have done in order to enhance habitat and conserve and increase the species.

Hunting and fishing are well-regulated recreational pastimes that are available for all Albertans to enjoy. They're often used for sport but also to provide a necessary function to the province. There are many who work with conservation groups such as the Alberta Conservation Association that assist the provincial government to properly manage the environment. Hunting and fishing groups are the closest to the land and can do spot situations that, with notification to wildlife officers and conservation officers, can be investigated and rectified. An example of this includes reporting a poacher or even witnessing a situation where a source of pollution is endangering habitat and wildlife.

Mr. Speaker, Motion 515 enables all Albertans to recognize and understand the importance of hunting and fishing as a tradition, both in the past use and in the present day. Some anthropologists would argue that humans are still programmed for this chase since our species has been doing this far longer than any other activity. After emerging from the plains of Africa, our ancestors began hunting more than a million years ago, doing so in order to survive. In the traditional cultures the skilled hunter was a respected figure with a relationship to the species he sought. If you could not hunt, you could not eat. In our culture as we've become more urbanized, many of us have lost this connection with the natural world. The further we get away from the wild, the less we understand it. Those who hunt and fish are still connected to this natural way of life. They understand the past, and they embrace the future.

Conservation organizations as well as those who take part in outdoor recreation are vital to the preservation and sustainability of the environment. Not only are these activities a benefit to our economy; they also provide support for our natural habitat. Mr. Speaker, we need to acknowledge the positive impact that hunters and anglers have made on the province of Alberta in the past and today.

Thank you.

5:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

**Mr. Bonko:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Motion 515, hunting and fishing in Alberta. The mover is trying to make it sound like this is a tradition that all Albertans have. You know what? I don't know how many of us in the House have actually gone out and hunted or fished. It might be a little more of a catch on that one. But trapping? I come from a family

that does hunting and fishing, but we don't do trapping. I wouldn't call it a tradition in our house. It's kind of like a sport. We do it because we enjoy the sport of hunting as well as fishing, and it's become part of a tradition to go out and do it on a certain weekend and a certain month. To call it a tradition such as, you know, the Métis have done, that in itself is different. I'm not sure if this is to replace the interim Métis harvesting agreement with just the interim harvesting agreement for Albertans. I'm not sure where this one is coming from. Perhaps the mover would be able to clarify that one.

To call it a tradition where all Albertans go out, like on the annual hunting day, September 22 – the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development declared one day to be Provincial Hunting Day. I'm not sure if this is, you know, to up that one and make sure that everyone has the ability. Well, we all have the ability to go out. We just have to write an FAC, we have to go get a licence, and we have to make sure that we in fact have training in safe firearms use, that we're not going to angle the next person next to us with a long cast and hook them somehow. The other ones: make sure we don't get our leg irons caught when we're out there putting these big traps or snares out there.

But to ensure that this is a tradition for all Albertans I think is a bit of a stretch. A lot of people don't in fact own guns, don't in fact take part. [interjection] Yes. It's true. A lot of us don't own guns. In fact, there are vegetarians out there. To tell a vegetarian that, yeah, you have the right to go out there and hunt is, I think, a little bit of a stretch.

Like I said, the fact that we're trying to make this a tradition – I don't know. I'm not sure that we're trying to give the rest of the province and the rest of Canada the idea of where we are as Albertans. I mean, it's a great opportunity for us to get out in the wild and out in the wilderness to connect with our rural roots, to go out there and march within the trees and everything. We have to be environmentally sound as well as make sure that we respect nature. But to declare it a tradition I think is a little bit of a stretch.

You know, again, I talked about the First Nations people. I'm not sure if this is meant to, you know, take part in that or if it's to replace that. [interjection] The member is saying, "Not at all," but it's fairly vague in here where your motion is coming from. I'm not sure what the whole point of it is. It does recognize a tradition for all Albertans to be able to do it. I think we have that right right now without having this as a motion. Anyone can go out there and do it.

I just wanted to make a couple of specific points on that. I'll hear what some of the other speakers have to say, but I wouldn't be in favour of this particular motion as it is right now, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to join the debate on Motion 515, which proposes to recognize the tradition of hunting and fishing within the province of Alberta. I believe that tradition as it's used in the motion is meant as a collective tradition rather than a tradition that would necessarily apply individually to all Albertans, so for that reason I think it's a question of interpretation.

But I am supportive of the motion. I do believe, in fact, that the motion could have been somewhat broader, and I believe that it could have been inclusive with respect to providing some provision for the tradition of trapping in the province of Alberta. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I am proposing to move that Motion 515 be amended by inserting the word "trapping" after "hunting." The amended motion would read as follows: "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to recognize the tradition of hunting, trapping, and fishing for all Albertans."

Mr. Speaker, hunting and fishing and trapping have all played a key role in the development of our province, and I support the goal of the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, which is to recognize the importance of that tradition in our history. Trapping has certainly been an integral part of the development of Alberta long before we were a province, when we were, in fact, a territory that was owned and fully governed by the Hudson Bay Company, and then for a hundred years following that period, we were also part of Canada as a part of the North-West Territories and later as a province. But in the early days of development of our province of Alberta through the Hudson Bay Company the trapping industry certainly was the most important industry. It was also a strong tradition in the First Nations and the Métis citizens before that time, and it continues to be an important part of our culture, particularly for the First Nations and Métis citizens of the province of Alberta.

I believe that the proposed amendment allows Motion 515 to reflect the importance of the activity of trapping for subsistence and recreational purposes. Mr. Speaker, that would conclude my remarks with respect to the amendment which I have proposed.

**The Speaker:** Well, hon. members, we have an amendment before us. On the amendment, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Yes. I appreciate the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill attempting to make this a more palatable motion. Mr. Speaker, are we going to designate it A1?

**The Speaker:** There's only one that we have. We'll assume it's A1, yes.

**Mr. Chase:** Okay. Thank you.

Well, speaking to motion A1, to me what would have been considerably easier to accept is instead of flipping trapping and hunting, if we took out "for all Albertans" and just put "in Alberta," then it would make sense.

I've had the good fortune of having a father who thoroughly enjoyed outdoor pursuits, and last year, when he was 83, he managed to get two whitetail deer because he enjoys being out hunting, and for a number of years I enjoyed that same pursuit. By age four I had a pretty darn good aim with a .22, and I graduated, maybe to some people's horror, from bottle caps to gophers. I dispatched quite a few in my younger age. My father would pull me out of class, which I know my teachers were very appreciative of, and we'd go hunting, and what we would do is reward the teacher for having let me out of class by coming over and having a duck dinner or a goose dinner or pheasant or partridge, and it was very much appreciated.

When we lived on the bases throughout Canada, my father had the reputation of being a fantastic guide and sportsman, and therefore people would seek him out for his services and recommendations on where to catch the big one or, potentially, the big game. I can remember once having an air commodore come to visit our house at lunch and asking the air commodore if he could please pass his skin across the table – that was the duck skin – and, needless to say, my father was not appreciative of my comment.

But from an early age, as I say, I learned to shoot both with a gun and bow and arrow. Unfortunately . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Are you in favour of this amendment or not?

**Mr. Chase:** I'm speaking on amendment A1. I'm speaking on the joy that I personally experienced hunting and fishing. My trapping, I must admit, was limited to mice, and it was out of necessity.

By suggesting that the pursuits that I enjoyed and that my father

enjoyed numerous times, being the chairperson for Sarcee Fish and Game and having won numerous awards for his stewardship, such as the Order of the Big Horn – I at one point in my life enjoyed the experience of hunting and fishing, and it continues to be a pursuit enjoyed by my father. But pushing it to “for all Albertans” I think is too much.

**5:10**

If people choose to enjoy the outdoors, that’s their choice, but to sort of lord it over them as though this is an historical expectation for them in being part of the province of Alberta, I think, is taking it too far. People have to decide for themselves whether they want to pursue hunting and fishing and trapping. I will note that some of the greatest conservationists are in fact hunters, and the hunters and the fishermen serve as the first alert when a stream shows up with fish floating on it or when there is some kind of a disease that is affecting the wild animals.

There is a role for hunting and fishing, and some would suggest there is still a role for trapping although given what we’ve done to northern Alberta, that possibility is rapidly depleting because of the industrial development. The few animals that are left, especially when it comes to trapping, are having a hard enough time. The woodland caribou are being depleted. I’m not suggesting that anybody would consider trapping kit foxes, but the point is that sometimes traps that are intended for a particular animal end up taking another one. While we may have improved our trapping from the old-style vise traps to leghold traps and so on, in seeing a gnawed-off limb in a trap of an animal that found its only way of exiting, I question, given the space left in Alberta, whether trapping is still a pursuit. It’s not one, at least, for all Albertans, whether we stick it, as A1 suggests, before “fishing.” I don’t quite understand the change in the order. As I say, I would much rather see it: tradition of hunting, fishing, and trapping in Alberta.

I don’t want to denigrate our history, but I found it rather foolish, I would suggest, when the ministry of sustainable resources found it necessary to announce that we would have a special hunting day. We have a hunting season for various animals. We have fishing seasons for various types of fish. Designating a specific day I question. Also, the justification that if you shoot them in the woods, you’re less likely to run over them on the roads: I found that a little bit hard to deal with.

One thing I did know was that on that hunting day, when I was out in the area that the hon. minister represents, I surely wore my red jacket because I did not want to take any chances. I knew it was open season.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I have the hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Did you wish to participate on this amendment?

**Dr. Morton:** Not on this amendment, no.

**The Speaker:** The President of the Treasury Board caught my eye first. On the amendment?

**An Hon. Member:** Question on the amendment.

**The Speaker:** There are no questions. There’s no question period.

**An Hon. Member:** Call the question on the amendment.

**The Speaker:** Well, no. There are still people wanting to speak. The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you. I want to talk about the trapping. It’s not so much, Mr. Speaker, that people around the rest of Alberta would go do this, but I think it’s really important that children growing up in every part of Alberta have the opportunity, if they choose, to go hunting, to come out to the rural areas where we live and hunt and, if they wish, to apply for a trapline licence. My father had a trapline many, many years ago by the Mountaineer Lodge, so as young adults we could go there and actually really participate in trapping. When time permitted, as young people we obviously hunted and trapped rodents around the country.

One of the single biggest issues we face is the lack of respect for nature. I think the hon. member talked about the respect that hunters have. Many hunters are the most ardent conservationists we have because they know you have to look after your environment to ensure that what they care so deeply about is looked after, it’s replenished and regrown, it’s stocked, it’s managed, and it’s there for future generations.

I would hope that all the people that have had to live in the cities, where their parents moved for their jobs, know that as an Albertan, if they choose, they have the opportunity to come out to rural Alberta to hunt, to fish, to trap, to be a part of what many grandparents never had the opportunity to do because they weren’t in this country or be part of what the grandparents did because they pioneered this country. In fact, as early pioneers lived, much of what they ate was trapped, hunted. Many fish are trapped, and many of you will have probably watched or seen fish traps built that work much the same as an animal trap. So trapping was a part of gathering food for subsistence. Now it’s sport.

I think this is an appropriate amendment, and I think we should support it.

**The Speaker:** Speakers on the amendment? The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

**Mr. Lund:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that this amendment is very fitting because when you think of our history, hunting and fishing for subsistence, as the hon. President of the Treasury Board just commented, was very, very important, but so was the trapping. When you think of Rocky Mountain House, the Hudson’s Bay Company established there. The big reason that they established there was for the furs. Most of those furs were trapped. I think that this amendment fits right in with the whole intent of this motion.

**The Speaker:** Additional speakers on the amendment?  
Shall I call the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, on the motion as amended.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Just to show that collaboration works well between the parties of this House, I appreciated a suggestion, basically an amendment to the now amended motion, that came from the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, and that motion will be provided to the tabling officer and to all members shortly. I would think that it’ll probably end up being called A2, and I’ll speak to that motion at that time.

**The Speaker:** We have no amendment approved, the table officer is telling me.

**Mr. Chase:** It's being produced. That's what I was saying, that we collaborated.

**The Speaker:** Well, we're not going to deal with something we haven't seen yet.

**Mr. Chase:** No, no. It was just an introduction of the fact that it'll be coming forward.

**The Speaker:** We don't do it that way.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you.

**The Speaker:** We're back to speaking, then, on the motion as amended. Now, the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill spoke on the amendment, but he was speaking on the motion.

**Dr. Brown:** Correct.

**The Speaker:** Well, then you're out of this round too.  
Who's next? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to stand as a Calgary MLA and speak for this particular motion. I grew up in Saskatoon as an only child, and my father was an avid hunter and fisherman, not so much a trapper, though he did snowshoe. At a very, very early age I had the opportunity to have a gun placed in my hand, probably at the age of four or five, because my father believed that if you eat it, you'd better learn how to hunt it. That not only went with hunting, Mr. Speaker, but it also went with fishing. In fact, my dad always used to laugh when we were at the lake fishing because he'd have these grown men that would come out once or twice a year to fish, and they'd see this little tyke of about 12 or 13, and I could outfillet them on any of the fish. Again, I think people need to understand the importance of having the ability to get out and do some hunting and some fishing and some trapping. We've had the privilege on several occasions of enjoying some of the – what do you call that stuff?

5:20

**Dr. Morton:** Jerky.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** . . . some of the jerky that the Member for Foothills-Rocky View has brought us. It is really very, very tasty, and we've enjoyed it. So when he's been hunting, we keep asking him how he's doing so that we can have the opportunity to do that. [interjection] Well, Mr. Speaker, the opposition wants to try some of his jerky also, but I think that's up to him.

Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say that I do support this particular motion from the member and will be supporting it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since I always enjoy contributing to discussions on quality of life with my colleagues, I'm delighted to rise today and address Motion 515 as amended. I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for his drive to recognize the tradition of hunting, trapping, and fishing for all Albertans. Hunting, trapping, and fishing play a very important role in Alberta. They're part of our culture and are beneficial to maintaining a healthy environment.

The sponsoring member is right. Alberta does indeed have a very rich history with respect to these activities. For many years these

activities were performed out of necessity and for sustenance. However, they are now predominantly done for a very different reason, such as spending time with your family, recreation, and enhancing one's quality of life. My husband, Bob, has always said: if you don't want to hunt for your children, take them hunting; if you don't want to fish for your children, take them fishing.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans work exceptionally hard every day to bring our province the economic standing that it has. In order to achieve a healthy lifestyle, this work ethic must be balanced with challenging and relaxing activities. I also believe that hunting and fishing support the ancient hunter-gatherer habits buried deep in our genome. Many people find strength and peace when they go out to the beautiful countryside. For me this is a time to energize myself and get a little closer to nature. As Albertans we are privileged to have lush forests all over our province. Our citizens don't have to go very far to have adventure and fun-filled weekend getaways. Within Alberta's parks there are a number of activities they can choose from. Whichever they select, they will realize many benefits by participating.

Mr. Speaker, some people think that fishing is a very relaxing activity. The idea of being out in the middle of a lake with nothing to do but wait for a fish to bite your hook is a pleasant prospect for many people. Although putting a worm on a hook and waiting for a fish to bite is not my idea of a pleasant experience, I love to accompany my husband and read on the banks of the river while he fishes.

As of November 1 of this year 231,958 anglers had purchased a sport-fishing licence in Alberta. This is an increase of 2,618 over the same period in 2006. I guess this just shows that fishing is a very popular activity. Going out to Alberta's lakes and rivers also provides for family-building activities where parents can teach their children a new skill, and like Bob always says, it's better to go fishing with your children than to go fishing for them.

Hunting is another activity that requires Albertans to connect with nature, especially bowhunting, where wits, practice, and preparation combine to challenge the instincts and senses of the animals. Hunting is a very popular pastime in Alberta. When additional hunting opportunities were made available on September 4, 2007, nine hunting areas were sold out in the first 45 minutes, better than some concerts that come to Alberta.

Trapping is perhaps one of the oldest forms of harvesting wildlife and has been a traditional pursuit in Canada since the mid-1600s. Today there are over 2,300 trappers operating in the province of Alberta. Trappers are concerned with the well-being of the creatures they harvest. They seek to ensure that animals can be replaced by naturally reproducing wild populations. Indeed, without concerned trappers in the field constantly assessing fur-bearing populations, we would not be aware of the status of many species of Alberta wildlife.

Mr. Speaker, all of these activities promote healthy lifestyles, and they serve to develop characteristics such as patience, determination, and respect for nature. Spending more time on these types of expeditions also helps Albertans gain appreciation for and an understanding of the importance of wildlife in our province. Because of this hunters and fishermen and women are the best conservationists in the province.

I recognize the positive tradition of hunting, trapping, and fishing for all Albertans. I encourage all members to support Motion 515. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, on the motion as amended.

**Mr. R. Miller:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my

pleasure to rise this afternoon and add my thoughts to Motion 515 as amended. Mr. Speaker, I've discussed in this Legislature in the past my fond memories of growing up in this province and the many wonderful times that I had travelling I think pretty much to every corner of this province as a young person. My parents had one of the very first motorhomes on the highway. Between the Easter weekend and the Thanksgiving weekend myself and my siblings were never in the city on the weekend. We were always out somewhere in the motorhome camping and fishing, not necessarily hunting or trapping but certainly camping and fishing. I think it gave me and my brothers and sister and the many foster children that we had in our home a wonderful opportunity to experience some of what has been discussed in this House this afternoon.

I have particularly fond memories of fishing not just in Alberta, but having been born in a small community in north-central B.C. called Burns Lake, I spent an awful lot of time fishing in the lakes district. In fact, I did a fair amount of fishing in the Morice River as well, fishing for freshwater salmon. So fishing is certainly particularly close to me.

Mr. Speaker, myself and a number of other members of this Legislature have also taken advantage of an opportunity offered to us by Trout Unlimited, where every couple of years they do a float trip down the Bow River, starting in Calgary and spending an afternoon on the river learning a little bit about the river, particularly the trout population and so forth. A wonderful experience, and kudos to those folks for making that opportunity available because, once again, I think it gives members of this Legislature an opportunity to experience some of the things that we're talking about in the House this afternoon. For those of us that spend the majority of our time in the city, it's important that we have that experience.

There's a long history of trapping in my family, Mr. Speaker. My grandfather was a trapper in Burns Lake, B.C. I used to go out on the trapline with him, in fact, and check the traps. We'd occasionally bring in the odd beaver or the odd cougar.

**An Hon. Member:** Now, you're talking.

**Mr. R. Miller:** Yeah, there's an animal: the cougar.

You know, I have good memories of trapping. My uncle, my mom's brother, and then his children took over the trapline when my grandfather passed away, and as far as I know, they're still involved in that activity.

I also have a history, which I don't know if I've spoken about in this House before, and that is that I spent some time in Fort Smith in the Northwest Territories with the Hudson's Bay Company as a management trainee. At that time – this was in the late 1970s – that was a location that still collected pelts. The locals would bring them in, and we had a buyer right in the store who would assess the pelts and purchase them from the locals. Although I didn't train in buying, I certainly had exposure to it, and it was a fascinating process to watch.

I took a hunter training course, Mr. Speaker, when I was in grade 8 and very much enjoyed that. In fact, some of my fondest memories of school relate to that hunter training course. We went camping in the middle of January, a three-day trip up near Athabasca somewhere. Probably the reason it's most memorable is because it was colder outside than it has been this week. I think it was about minus 30, minus 35. That was quite an experience for grade 8 students to be out winter camping in those conditions.

5:30

So I respect what Motion 515 is trying to do here. I've experienced some of these myself. I've made an effort to make sure that

my children have had similar experiences, so it's all good on the surface, but I'm just not sure. There's something about this that is rubbing me the wrong way. I'm just not sure what the mover is trying to achieve with this motion. Perhaps when he has an opportunity in a few minutes to close the discussion, he may be able to express that. What's bothering me, I think, Mr. Speaker, is that I'm unsure what is being asked for by this motion when it says to encourage the government to "recognize the tradition of hunting, trapping, and fishing" because I'm going to guess that in many respects the government already does recognize that tradition. I guess my reservation hinges on the word "recognition" and what exactly we are asking for here.

As was alluded to earlier, we already have a Provincial Hunting Day, that was new this year, where the minister of SRD and his department officially recognized hunting. So I'm not sure now: are you asking for an official trapping day or an official fishing day? Maybe that can be rolled into the official hunting day, and we could change the focus of the official hunting day to capture trapping and fishing as well. I'm not sure.

I don't mean to belittle the motion because, as I say, I think there's a lot of good that can be recognized, but I'm just not sure what exactly we're trying to achieve here. It's sort of, quite frankly, motherhood and apple pie the way it reads right now. I hesitate to support something that is maybe going to go much further than that; that is, at least without knowing how much further it might go.

As I say, I've got great memories. I think the intention is honourable and probably something that I would vote in favour of, but I will need a little more information before I can make that determination because I'm just a little bit unsure as to exactly what it is that the member is trying to achieve.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will allow others to have the opportunity to speak to this motion as well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development on the motion as amended.

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to arise and speak to Motion 515, and I'm most happy to support the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat and his motion. A lot of the comments to this point have been retrospective in character, looking back upon the tradition and heritage of hunting, fishing, and trapping in Alberta. My remarks will be more prospective, looking forward on the important connection between hunting, fishing, and trapping and the protection of our environment and the very significant support that the hunting/fishing community gives to conservation of important habitat.

There's been a long-standing and mutually beneficial relationship between hunters, fishers, and trappers and the environment. The hunting and fishing community has always recognized that healthy habitat and abundant habitat is the key to healthy animals and healthy game. If you go back into the conservation movement in North America and, in fact, also the parks movement, it was led by people who were active in the outdoor sports of hunting and fishing. In fact, even in our province of Alberta, if you go back to the 1880s, even prior to provincehood, the record shows that it was hunters that lobbied for restrictions on hunting to protect the dwindling buffalo herds.

Today hunting also has an important commercial value to our province. Hunting tourism: we have not reached our potential there, and I'm sure this government will look forward to doing more in that respect. Thousands of hunting tourists come to Alberta every year to hunt and fish, and of course many others come just to enjoy the wildlife, which are supported by the kind of habitat we're talking

about. These tourists, whether they're hunting or just viewing, are an important stimulus to local economies, particularly in rural Alberta, because they purchase many services provided by Alberta businesses.

As we grow as a province, from 1 million or 2 million residents to 3 million and soon 4 million and then 5 million, the importance of conservation and stewardship of habitat both for fish and for wildlife becomes more important. I want to point out the important role in Alberta that hunters and fishermen play in preserving this through the licence fees they pay, through what's done publicly, their public support, and also private donations and volunteer efforts. For example, the Alberta Conservation Association, or the ACA, is a nonprofit, nongovernmental association that works collaboratively to conserve, protect, and enhance our natural biological resources. It receives funding from a variety of Alberta conservationists, including significant contributions from hunters and anglers. Every time a hunting or fishing licence is purchased, the ACA receives a portion of the funds to allocate to conservation projects.

In the 2007-2008 fiscal year the ACA received just under \$1 million for conservation work in Alberta. The purpose of this funding is to ensure that existing ACA habitat protection enhancement projects – ACA is the funder of the buck for wildlife program that was instituted in the 1970s, so this has deep roots in Alberta policy already – continue to operate as intended and the ACA meets their legal and ethical obligations towards Alberta's public.

On the private side I want to point out also that there are many groups that are very active in Alberta in raising funds for habitat conservation. I'd mention Ducks Unlimited Canada, Pheasants Forever, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and also the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep. The Foundation for North American Wild Sheep raised over \$200,000 for conservation in Alberta at their annual convention in Salt Lake City last January. I'd also, on the fishing side, like to point out and also thank groups like Trout Unlimited and Streamwatch, both of whom have taken me out this summer and shown me the importance of not just a good day of fishing but the importance of our water policies to make sure that fishing stays good.

Our efforts here in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, are just one part of a much larger puzzle of North American conservation. I want to give the House a sense of the magnitude of this effort by the hunting and fishing community of North America. I'm going to reference an article that the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat drew to my attention earlier last month. This is from the November 2007 *National Geographic*. It's a 30-page article. It's the lead article, actually, in the November issue of *National Geographic*. It's entitled *Hunters: For Love of the Land*.

*National Geographic*, which is a well-respected and completely authoritative and unbiased source, emphasizes the importance that North American hunters and fishermen have played both on the public side and also on the voluntary side in raising money, over \$280 million a year in the U.S. for scientific research on habitat. That's by Ducks Unlimited. Since 1937 Ducks Unlimited has protected 11 million acres of wetlands in North America, many of those on the Canadian prairie. I'd like to quote, if I might, from page 130 of the *National Geographic* article. *National Geographic* states, "The . . . irony is that many species might not survive at all were it not for hunters . . . the nation's 12.5 million hunters have become essential partners in wildlife management."

5:40

That's my basic message, Mr. Speaker, that the hunting, fishing, and trapping community are essential partners in wildlife conservation. They understand that healthy game populations require healthy

habitat. These groups spend a great deal of volunteer time, volunteer money to make sure that that habitat is there. For that reason I'm very proud to offer my support to the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat and to Motion 515.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffer.

**Mr. Cenaiko:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on Motion 515 as well as to speak in favour of the amendment that was introduced earlier. This motion is designed to recognize the important role of hunting and fishing activities in Alberta, past and present, and the economic benefits they bring to the province. In its 2006-07 annual report the Department of Sustainable Resource Development points out that hunting and fishing generated social and economic benefits for the province valued at more than \$1 billion.

**An Hon. Member:** How much?

**Mr. Cenaiko:** One billion dollars. These activities continue to have an important impact on the province and its economy either as industries or through recreation.

In addition to the \$5 million generated every year by the 800 commercial fishing operations in the province, recreational fishing contributes significantly to the Alberta economy: \$350 million in 2000, which rose to \$440 million in 2005. Much of this can be attributed to the economic trend emerging among the approximately 300,000 recreational anglers enjoying fishing in Alberta's lakes, streams, and rivers. Alberta's anglers are spending more time on sport fishing than at any other time in the last 30 years and in the process are generating real dollars for tourism and sport and recreation.

From 2000 to 2005 there was an impressive 28 per cent increase in spending on fishing packages, that include such things as guided trips, tours, and lodges. Rather than just heading to the nearest lake for an afternoon, fishing enthusiasts are planning vacations and weekend getaways that allow them to escape the city and spend time with their family and friends while picking up the latest in modern fishing gear. Much of this can be attributed to the continuing and sustained prosperity that the people of this province have been able to enjoy. With more money in their pockets Alberta's hunters and anglers can now spend more time and money on activities they enjoy and contribute to the economic growth of sport and recreational fishing.

Efforts are also being made to help these industries continue to grow and prosper by encouraging those who are currently non-anglers to take part in increased participation. In 2005 both the Family Day long weekend and the 9th and 10th of July, which coincide with National Fishing Week, were devoted to allowing anyone to fish without an Alberta sport fishing licence.

Not to be outdone, there were a number of game hunting opportunities provided for nearly 105,000 hunters in 2006-07, representing an increase of over 5,000 participants, almost 200 of whom were youth hunters. The popularity is growing, Mr. Speaker. Alberta recently designated September 22, 2007, as the first ever Provincial Hunting Day to promote hunting activities and awareness. Last year the province issued more than 381,000 big game and bird game licences to 100,000 hunters in Alberta, helping to contribute more than \$100 million annually to the provincial economy.

Mr. Speaker, hunting and fishing activities are clearly part of the active lifestyle of many Albertans as well as vital industries which

contribute to the economic prosperity of this province. I therefore encourage the passage of this motion. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

**Mr. Lund:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to have the opportunity to rise and speak to Motion 515. This certainly, as others have said, is a very important activity that occurred primarily for sustenance years back but has now evolved into being more of a recreation activity. Many have mentioned, of course, the various groups that have surrounded these activities, like the Alberta Fish and Game Association, Trout Unlimited, ACA, and others. Ducks Unlimited, of course, is a very, very active group in conservation. These people have been hunters and fishermen and trappers over time. They all know how important it is for the habitat, but also they've got to make sure that they leave enough seeds so there's a crop next year. That's where they became very much conservationists.

I can remember. We think of it being quite a number of years ago. I'm not so long in the tooth, but I do already remember that as a young person our family relied very heavily on the ability to go out in the fall and early winter and harvest a number of animals, not close to home like we are today where you can stand on the veranda and shoot a moose in the wintertime but having to travel long distances with a sleigh and team and then come back with a wagon box full of wild meat. Then there was a great canning bee, and believe you me, by midsummer you were sorry that the folks went out and got those animals because you got pretty tired of the canned meat.

I remember, as well, as a young fellow the family going out to fish. There was a lake called Swan Lake that was a good day's drive by the team and wagon. That lake even today has a unique type of trout in it, a salmonid, that has a very red flesh, and years back they always referred to it as the lake salmon. The flesh was very similar, very, very good.

Trapping, of course, was a major activity. I remember that as a young person we walked about a mile and three-quarters to school, much of it through bush, so we had a little trap line all along the way. We would set traps and catch weasels, mink, squirrels, et cetera, and made a few dollars. It was a great activity. I didn't enjoy the smell of catching the weasel and having to skin it, but my dad always said: if you go out and set traps and catch animals, you have to harvest the fur. So we had to go through that. I think it's a great idea that we would make sure that we remember and honour what happened.

I want to talk a little bit more and zero in on the fishing part of it. Fish are arguably the most important component of Alberta's lakes. There are some 51 species of fish believed to be native to the province, with an additional eight introduced species that are reproducing and maintaining a viable population. Our province is also home to some of the top fisheries in North America, and our lakes, rivers, and streams house many unique and varied fish species, like the walleye, for example, the largest member of the perch family, which is seen in Alberta lakes and is world renowned and highly valued as an excellent sport and commercial fish. Lesser Slave Lake has acquired a reputation for being one of the top walleye fisheries in North America and has become the prime destination of anglers seeking walleye in this province.

Over time fishing has broadened its scope from solely food provision to becoming a popular sport and an enjoyable recreational activity. As I believe some of my colleagues have mentioned, currently it is estimated that there are over 300,000 active anglers in the province. In addition, there are over 800 commercial fishing

operations. Although the dynamics of fishing today are very different than when the province was first established, I am confident to say that the tradition of fishing lives on.

With increasing fishing pressure on Alberta's waterways, there being an increase in creative fishing opportunities, lately there has been a trend for remote fly-in fishing lodges, such as the ones located in northern Alberta. Due to the pristine and undeveloped wilderness of that area these lodges offer some of the best sport fishing in all of Canada. In recent years Alberta's major urban centres have gained popularity among residents and travelers.

As a result there has also been an increased focus on expanding fishing opportunities in waterways across major metropolitan cities such as Edmonton and Calgary. With the North Saskatchewan River being known for its walleye, pike, and grayling populations and the Bow River being internationally acclaimed as a superb trout fishery, these modern fishing locations have been providing vast opportunities to anglers, with all the comforts and amenities that a big city has to offer. As time has evolved, so has our province's approach to fishing. However, its core purpose remains unchanged, and that is the fact that fishing has always served to unite the people of Alberta and give our province momentum. However, it has never gained adequate recognition.

5:50

In 2006 through the draft discussion paper entitled *The Need for an Alberta Heritage Hunting, Angling and Trapping Legislation*, the Alberta Fish and Game Association acknowledged the need for legislation to be passed which recognizes the heritage of these outdoor pursuits in Alberta. The Alberta Fish and Game Association stated that the current legislation in Alberta, the Wildlife Act, does not give adequate meaning to protecting the rights of hunters, anglers, and trappers and that without proper legislation there will continue to be no measure for these rights.

It is clear that hunting, trapping, and fishing have played vital roles in the historical and cultural development of our province, and to this day they are not fully recognized. I hope to finally give hunting, trapping, and fishing the recognition they deserve, and for these reasons I fully support Motion 515 as amended.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to voice support for Motion 515. I don't personally hunt, nor do I trap. I do fish, and I think I should do more of this as a sport, as an outdoor activity.

Mr. Speaker, I know that hunting and fishing and trapping have been a tradition that goes back many, many years in this province. You know, the First Nations and aboriginal people, for example, have used it as a way to sustain their communities and so on, but I have an issue with the words "all Albertans." As such, I would like to move an amendment, which I have prepared.

**The Speaker:** And we'll have to have it circulated as well, please.

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Yes. By striking out the words "for all Albertans" . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, sorry. Parliamentary Counsel advises that it has not been approved by the House officers yet. Did you hear what I said? Parliamentary Counsel has advised me that the amendment has not been approved by the table officers yet. That's a requirement in terms of our amendments.

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Sure. Thanks. I'll just speak to the motion, then.

**The Speaker:** You'll speak to the motion as amended.

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Proceed.

**Mr. Elsalhy:** We will not bother with this amendment. I'll just tell you what I was trying to do, Mr. Speaker. We don't have an issue with the intention of this motion. We just felt that it's assuming that everybody in this province likes hunting or likes fishing or agrees with it. We were just saying that while we want to preserve the intention of this motion by recognizing it as something that people in Alberta do, we didn't want to be making a statement that it's acceptable by everybody in this province.

Now, some people oppose hunting or fishing or trapping because of religious or cultural reasons. Some people oppose it because of the angle that it's cruel to animals and that it's cruel to those wildlife that are hunted or that are caught. I don't personally have this issue, and I know my colleagues in the opposition don't as well. [interjections] Some do.

What this motion as worded is presuming is that everybody is okay with it, is okay with the practice, that it's an outdoor activity, that it's a pastime, that it's a sport. We just wanted in our amendment to remove that clause "for all Albertans" and just make it "in Alberta," as in geography.

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, but under Standing Order 8(4), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I'd invite the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to now close debate on Motion 515 as amended.

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First off, I'd like to thank all that participated in the debate. Motion 515 as amended urges the government of Alberta to recognize the tradition of hunting, trapping, and fishing for all Albertans. Throughout the history of our province these activities have certainly, as many have mentioned, played a key role, and the goal of the motion is to recognize that importance.

To the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, I would like to assure him that there was never any intention on my part or any part of this motion to have any part of this replace the IMHA, the interim Métis harvesting agreement. There was no intent whatsoever.

I think also, to the other hon. members, the MLAs from Calgary-Varsity and Edmonton-Rutherford, what I was trying to recognize was that getting back to nature is getting much more difficult. Our rights are being challenged by many, many groups, as perhaps the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung started to allude to, groups like PETA, the animal rights activists, and others like that. What we were trying to do is recognize a tradition.

As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford mentioned, the

memories that we have of what we did when we were kids are in danger, and we may not in the future be able to do some of these things. The numbers that were suggested on the number of tags and everything else perhaps are impressive, but in the future there could be some problem with that, and that's the reason for this. Really, traditionally hunting and fishing and trapping were used as means of survival, which made them a necessity for early inhabitants. These activities helped foster the country's growing population and economy. Also, I recognize that today hunters, trappers, and anglers play a large role in the conservation of our wildlife and the management of it.

I think Motion 515 as amended recognizes this as well as the recreational aspects of these activities. Caring for our province's natural habitat I think is important to all Canadians and all Albertans. Our wildlife is now continually managed and preserved by government, individuals, and groups. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, hunters and trappers are some of the most educated conservationists in Alberta.

Motion 515 recognizes the recreational benefits of hunting, fishing, and trapping for entire families in these activities in the healthy outdoor environment. They are an escape from the stresses of everyday life, which are so predominant in contemporary culture. It is also a way of reconnecting with nature as our forefathers did, something that is getting lost. I think this speaks to what I was talking about earlier: that we're in danger of losing that ability.

The positive contribution that hunters, anglers, and fishermen have made and still make in Alberta is considerable. Whether for necessity or recreation, the participants, including the people who first came to this province and those who hunt, trap, and fish today, have contributed significantly to conserving the province's natural habitat.

Motion 515 is a chance – a chance – to give these Albertans the recognition they deserve and to ensure that these activities continue well into the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 515 as amended carried]

**The Speaker:** Now, this was a very interesting debate this afternoon. Without any doubt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore is correct that not every Albertan carries a gun. I want hon. members to note, to the three hon. members who sent me a note wanting to know if the reason the chair wore a gown is to hide his two pearl-handled Colt .45s, that such is not the case.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to a government motion that was passed by the House last week, I would move that we now adjourn until 8 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

