



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

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Issue 5

The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta

## The 27th Legislature

First Session

Kowalski, Hon. Ken, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, Speaker  
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[Errata, if any, appear inside back cover]

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, April 21, 2008

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon, and welcome back.

Let us pray. Guide us so that we may use the privilege given us as elected Members of the Legislative Assembly. Give us the strength to labour diligently, the courage to think and to speak with clarity and conviction and without prejudice or pride. Amen.

Hon. members, we'll now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Paul Lorieau, and to our guests in the galleries and to all members, please join in in the language of one's 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.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed a pleasure to introduce my first group of visitors from Edmonton-Castle Downs. These are students from Katherine Therrien elementary school, and I believe they're right above me here in the public gallery. Today these 22 students are accompanied by Mrs. Maria Di Castri and a parent, Ms Kris Walline. I would ask them to rise and accept the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Campbell:** Mr. Speaker, my party has been delayed because of road conditions. I'm told they'll be here around 2 o'clock.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Thank you.

The hon. Member for Strathcona.

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a delegation from Strathcona county and Vung Tau city, Vietnam. The city of Vung Tau and the county of Strathcona partnered under the municipal partnership program of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in May of 2006. With us today are Mr. Phan Van Minh, an expert in population management for Vung Tau city; Mrs. Le Thi Huong, vice chairwoman of the peoples' committee ward 12, Vung Tau city; Mrs. Thai Thi Hau, a statistical expert, the department of statistics, for Vung Tau city; Mr. Nguyen Thanh Phuong, delegation interpreter; from Strathcona county Gerri Chiles, intergovernmental liaison officer for Strathcona county; Phil Kreisel, strategic information analyst for Strathcona county; and Kristen Fisher, local coordinator of Vietnam partnership for Strathcona county. They are

seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that they all rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my honour and privilege to attend Mr. Jack Maguire's 90th birthday celebration at Allen Gray Continuing Care Centre in my constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie on Saturday, April 19. His wife, Doreen Maguire, was an incredible host.

Mr. Jack Maguire was born on April 19, 1918. He was a pioneer in the fur trade.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, sorry. We're in introductions right now.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Okay.

**The Speaker:** Do you have a guest to introduce?

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** I've got a guest to introduce, yes.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed, then.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Okay. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Mr. McGuire's family, sitting in the members' gallery: Mr. Jack Maguire Jr., Mr. McGuire's son; Mrs. Gerry Maguire, daughter-in-law; and Kerry Maguire, granddaughter. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome from this House, please.

### Members' Statements

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

#### Beaumont Chiefs Hockey Team

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Among the things that unite us as Albertans and Canadians is our love of hockey. No, this is not about the Flames although go Flames go.

In my constituency I'm pleased to have not one but two Capital Junior Hockey League provincial junior B teams: the Leduc Meyers Norris Penny Riggers and the Beaumont Chiefs. The CJHL has just wrapped up its 2007-08 season, and both the Riggers and the Chiefs gave me and the people in my constituency many reasons to cheer. Both teams made the playoffs. They faced each other in what was a very exciting semifinal round, including one game, Mr. Speaker, that went into double overtime.

Mr. Speaker, the Beaumont Chiefs won that round and went on to face the Sherwood Park Knights in the provincial junior B championships. Although the Chiefs did not go home with the championship, they still garnered an impressive accolade when forward Jake Quast was named the 2008 MVP in the CJHL annual all-star game.

The Leduc Meyers Norris Penny Riggers also garnered accolades this year, Mr. Speaker, as their coach, Jim Jones, was named CJHL coach of the year, after taking the job halfway through the season, and Clark Thompson was recognized as the league's leading scorer.

Along with many people in the Leduc-Beaumont-Devon constituency I'm extremely proud of every one of these young men and their coaches. I would encourage all members to join me in saluting their achievements.

Thank you.

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

### Excellence in Teaching Awards

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to inform the House of Alberta Education's 20th annual excellence in teaching awards program. Last week the Minister of Education hosted two banquets to recognize the 130 semifinalists selected from across the province. As parliamentary assistant to the minister I had the pleasure of attending last Tuesday's event. It was a great night, full of fabulous, lively entertainment, exceptional food, and warm company. I was particularly moved by the countless examples of teaching excellence that were recounted through stories heard from students, parents, community members, teacher colleagues, and administrators.

As a former school board trustee I can tell you that the semifinalists are examples of thousands of teachers throughout the province who work tirelessly to nurture the intellectual, social, and emotional growth of our children and youth. They are the front line of instilling good citizenship in young Albertans, and they spend every day helping students to find their passions and contribute to our society. Indeed, nurturing the minds of our children and youth is the passion of these dedicated professionals, and I for one am so grateful for all their efforts.

In particular I would like to congratulate the following semifinalists who teach at schools in my constituency: Bryan Clintberg, David Jones, and Susana Tomé.

This year the excellence in teaching awards program has been enhanced to include up to \$1,500 for each semifinalist to attend any educational conference of his or her choice.

On behalf of all members of this Assembly, parents, students, and former students, thank you to the exceptional teachers of this province, and congratulations once again to the 130 semifinalists.

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

### 1:40 Calgary Abbeydale Volunteer Awards

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize two outstanding volunteers from my constituency. Sir, they are part of the reason why I feel so much pride in representing Calgary-Montrose.

It is because of people like Lori Grdina and Heather Rashke that our communities stay alive and vibrant. Very recently they were awarded volunteer of the year awards for the community of Abbeydale. I want to thank them for their service. I want to thank them for the leadership that they show. I want to thank them for being an example to everybody else in the community, and I hope that they will continue to give their time so generously to make our communities better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Mr. Speaker, did you say introductions or Members' Statements?

**The Speaker:** We've been on Members' Statements. You'd be the fourth now.

### Parks and Protected Areas

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much. The government is soon to release a plan for parks and protected areas, and I look forward to that release because up to date parks and protected areas have suffered tremendously from a lack of preservation and planning.

Since Peter Lougheed left, leaving us the wonderful legacy of Kananaskis Country, parks have fallen into disrepair. Conservation officers, fisheries and forestry individuals have been reduced dramatically. There are no longer referees in the wilderness to look out for the flora, the fauna, the water, or the people who would come to these areas to enjoy and recreate.

I am hoping that the government's plan will take into account that only 4 per cent of Alberta is currently set aside under the designation of parks and protected areas. I am hoping that when they take that into account, they will also recognize that of the 500 designated areas only 45 of them currently have management plans. It is my hope that the government will have not only consulted but collaborated with key stakeholder groups, including the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the Alberta Wilderness Association, the Nature Conservancy, the Sierra Club. They will have taken into account various clubs and recreational affiliates, including the Alberta Fish and Game Association. They will have realized that you can't do everything in the same area, so they'll have talked to off-roaders and those who promote roadless areas, and they'll have talked to equipment enthusiasts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Organ Donation

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the student torch relay across Canada visited Edmonton and made a stop here at the Legislature. Students were given the honour of being received by the Premier on the Legislature steps. The relay, which began in Newfoundland in October of 2007 and is scheduled to end in Nunavut this June, involves over a hundred Canadian student torch champions, many of whom have a personal connection to organ donation. Through rain, through sleet, and even through the snow that we are experiencing here today, these courageous youth have marched on to promote an important cause.

The goal of the relay, Mr. Speaker, is to increase awareness of the importance of organ donation. In Canada there are 4,000 people who are presently waiting for a transplant. The need for organ donation touches all of us. I have personally lost a friend who died while waiting to receive a transplant and also had a friend whose life was saved. I first signed my organ donation card in 1976, and I want to encourage all members of this Assembly to sign their organ donation cards. Together we can turn the personal tragedy of organ failure into a happy ending for those who are affected.

I also want to salute the youth who are participating in this relay. By promoting organ donation, you are making an extremely important contribution to the community and helping to save lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Amber Thomas

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to recognize one of my constituents, Miss Amber Thomas. Amber, a resident of Drayton Valley, is one of seven Albertans who will participate in the Paralympic Games in Beijing this summer. She swam at the qualifying trials in Montreal from April 4 to 8 and achieved personal bests in all four of her races. Amber beat her best time for the 100-metre freestyle, landing her at 10th spot in the world leading up to the summer Olympic Games, and she is ranked 13th world-wide in the 50-metre freestyle races.

As the former mayor of Drayton Valley I had the opportunity to

formally recognize her achievements before she left for Montreal. Our community is so very proud of her showings and how she represents us in competitions away from home. She has been an excellent advocate for the disabled in Drayton Valley and our province and was instrumental in the addition of audible lights in her community to make crossing the street safer for the vision impaired. Amber is a testament to how all of us can achieve our goals and our dreams once we put our minds to it. On behalf of the people of Drayton Valley-Calmar and all Albertans congratulations and best of luck to Amber.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the requisite number of copies of the programs from last week's Edmonton and Calgary 2008 excellence in teaching awards dinners celebrating the 130 semifinalists selected from across Alberta. As I mentioned in my statement, these were wonderful events and were a small way to recognize the tremendous contributions that teachers make to the education of our students across the province.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have five tablings today. They are from residents of Edmonton-Gold Bar, and they all want significant changes to Alberta's labour laws. They would like to see "automatic certification of workplaces where more than half the employees have clearly indicated their desire to be represented by a union." They are Mr. Johnson, Merrick Meservier, Marie Verdugo, Inez Hovde, and, lastly, Mr. Zarko Grahovac.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and table the appropriate number of copies of a letter from a constituent named Debbie Morris. It's an excellent letter, a very extensive one, and it outlines her concerns with privatization and human resource issues in Alberta's health care system.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the 2007 annual review of mandatory premiums for the Automobile Insurance Rate Board.

Thank you.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mrs. Ady, Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation, and pursuant to the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation Act the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks & Wildlife Foundation annual reports for the years 2001-2002 through 2006-2007 and the financial statements for each year.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Lindsay, Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security, pursuant to the Gaming and Liquor Act, the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission annual report 2006-2007.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

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

#### New Royalty Framework

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This morning the price of west Texas intermediate oil was over \$116 a barrel. The government's new royalty framework stops being price sensitive at \$120 a barrel. As prices and, therefore, the value of our oil resource increase so, too, should the take of Albertans, who own the resource. My questions are to the Minister of Energy. What action will the minister be taking to ensure that when oil breaks \$120 a barrel, Albertans do not miss out on the true value of their oil wealth?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that the new royalty framework was set up using the best possible analysis of forward pricing for commodities that we have. We don't change the royalty framework or the structure on peak pricing of the commodity. As we look out over a number of years, it would be my suggestion that we'll find that the new royalty framework will indeed get the proper amount of royalty for Albertans.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So it sounds like nothing's going to be done.

Is the minister, then, satisfied with all the additional growth in margin, over \$120 a barrel, going to energy companies? Is he satisfied with that?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, the new royalty framework is set up in such a way that we have taken into account what we see as the best possible opportunities to get the information that we require on outgoing pricing. The framework is set up like that, and it will collect the appropriate royalty under those conditions.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: why is this minister allowing a state of affairs where Albertans are paying ever more at the pump for gasoline but will not be receiving any more in royalties?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, the commodity that individuals buy at the pumps is not regulated by the province of Alberta; it never has been. We don't regulate those types of commodity prices. The only thing that we get with respect to pump pricing is 9 cents a litre in provincial excise tax. We don't do anything else with respect to that commodity, and in fact it's freely traded in the province of Alberta.

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

#### Nuclear Power

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. In the past few weeks it's emerged that the Tories' provincial campaign manager, Mr. Randy Dawson,

has been hired by Bruce Power, the company wanting to build a nuclear power plant in the Peace River area. Nuclear power is too important to be decided in the backrooms, and the people of Alberta know that. My questions are to the Minister of Energy. Will the minister admit that the fix is already in and that this government is determined that nuclear power will go ahead in Alberta?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, I've said publicly a number of times and will say it in the House today for the advantage, of course, of our friends opposite and all Albertans that this government has not been a proponent of nor a detractor from any form of alternate energy, and we continue to hold that position. Nuclear energy is a very challenging topic not only in Alberta but around the world. People are very concerned about it, and we will manage that appropriately.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given nuclear power's history of massive cost overruns, debt, and environmental concerns, is this why the government is dealing with the nuclear industry through backrooms and insiders?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that in a very short space of time Albertans will get an opportunity to see that this government's being very proactive with respect to the issue around nuclear. I intend to have an expert panel take a look, an open look, at the issue of nuclear generation as it may or may not apply to the province of Alberta.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, given the delays in the implementation of the lobbyist registry and in a spirit of openness and transparency, will the minister commit to tabling to this House details of all discussions he or other members of his government have with Mr. Dawson on nuclear power?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, as you know, the request from across the floor leaves us in a bit of a situation. There are some discussions that take place with respect to ministries of the Crown that are not allowed to be put out in the public domain. With respect to the nuclear industry and how it may or may not pertain to the province of Alberta, we will have a good opportunity in the future for consultation with Albertans with respect to the issue.

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

### Highway Maintenance

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I drove up highway 2 from Calgary last night, I saw a scene of utter chaos: a lack of adequate road maintenance had ensured that dozens of vehicles had gone into the ditch. My questions are to the Minister of Transportation. Is the minister satisfied with the performance of privatized road maintenance companies?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, there are times when we have storms, freak storms like we've had these past four days. I can assure the member across that our maintenance crews have been working around the clock, 24 hours, to try to keep the roads safe, but when you have conditions like we just went through, with the drastic temperature changes, the snow on and off, the wind gusts – our maintenance crews are doing everything they can to keep Albertans safe.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't see a single sander, truck, or any other maintenance vehicle on the road north of Red Deer.

Given the unsafe conditions on the QE II and an unsanded and uncleared Anthony Henday Drive this morning, what contingency measures does the minister have in place if private contractors failed to do their job?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know what time the hon. member was on the highway, but I was on the highway last night coming into Edmonton, and there were sanding trucks in both lanes, because I slowed down to follow them for a ways.

Our maintenance contractors are paid only when they go out on the road, so they want to be out on the road because they get paid. They've added more trucks and plows to their fleet this year.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister commit to undertaking a full review of all the private road maintenance contracts to ensure that Albertans are getting the full value for their money?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, I honestly believe that Albertans are getting the full value for their money. We will always – always – review all of our contracts and review all of the work that's done in Alberta because we believe in the safety of all of our citizens.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

### Long-term Care

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Seniors' advocates have identified a lack of long-term care beds and severe staff shortages in long-term care facilities here in Alberta. They've reported that many seniors are being forced to remain in their beds 24 hours a day – and this is particularly in the case of people with dementia – simply because there's not enough staff to get them up. My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. Given that seniors are still being denied weekly baths due to staff shortages, will the minister acknowledge that this continuing neglect . . .

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I want to say that I thank the Premier for giving me the mandate to increase the access to quality health care and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of this delivery within our continuing care system. The health care aides that are provided in the continuing care system are the responsibility of the Department of Health and Wellness, so the Minister of Health and Wellness may want to supplement this.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, but my question is to the minister of seniors. Why, years after these types of stories were first reported, is this poor care still happening in our long-term care facilities?

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the recommendations from the Auditor General was for us to provide an inspection of all continuing care facilities. I'm very proud to say that by the end of this year we will have done those inspections to include inspecting the items that the member across has mentioned. I'm also very proud to say that in a number of our continuing care facilities we have excellent care for our seniors.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that that's true, but a number of facilities is not good enough. We need proper care for all our seniors. Can the minister tell us why seniors are being left in their beds 24 hours a day because there's not enough staff to get them up for meals and other things?

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is no denying that in Alberta we have a workforce shortage and that all industries and all services are suffering from that concern. One of the things that we have committed to is working with our agencies and our continuing care facilities to find a way to attract more employees and staff and to retain those staff members. Certainly, in order to provide good care for our seniors and for other members of our society, we need that staff, and by working with our agencies, we will find a way to improve that situation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**2:00** **New Royalty Framework**  
(continued)

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. Minister of Energy. The new royalty framework has significantly impacted junior oil and gas companies, creating barriers in accessing capital through new issues and debt financing. The recently proposed refinements to the new royalty framework address the economic viability of very deep wells; however, they did not alleviate the concerns of energy companies that implement new drilling techniques and take such risks to enhance recovery rates. Development drilling has remained stable in the industry; however, exploration is down 31 per cent over this past winter.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, we're going to need a question.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Okay. What is the minister doing to ensure that junior oil and gas companies in Alberta remain strong and are rewarded appropriately for their risk in exploration and acting as a catalyst in the Alberta economy?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The new royalty framework rewards all energy companies, including juniors, by providing a stable investment climate and good returns on their investments. The new royalty framework provides a substantial decrease in royalties for lower productivity wells. It's a mainstay of junior oil and gas companies in this province. Also, the sliding royalty scale put in place in the new royalty framework will better protect juniors by shielding them from low-quantity pricing.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: is the minister concerned with the lack of capital being raised for the Alberta-based junior oil and gas companies since the announcement of the new royalty framework?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, this minister cannot control the complex behaviour of the investment community. It's based on many factors. The lower U.S. dollar, rising labour and production costs, and a tightening of the credit market all play a role in investment decisions. The investment climate in this province remains positive for the energy sector as many of Alberta's international competitors do not offer the same level of political stability, transparency, and security.

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

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Junior oil and gas companies have a fundamental role in the Alberta economy. What is the minister doing to ensure that this critical market approach is still economical in Alberta, generating economic activity and wealth for all Albertans?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is one hundred per cent behind new innovation technologies to improve recovery of our natural resources. Programs such as our innovative energy technologies program and energy innovation fund commit millions in grant funding every year to promote new technologies to improve efficiencies, enhance recovery rates, and lessen environmental impact. In time enhanced recovery programs will point out the value in Alberta's resources.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

#### Safety of Temporary Foreign Workers

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On April 24, 2007, a tragic accident killed two workers instantly and injured four others at the Horizon oil sands project, operated by Canadian Natural Resources Limited. All six workers were here in Alberta under the temporary foreign worker program. My first question is to the minister of immigration and industry. When will the results of the investigation report from Alberta occupational health and safety be made public in the Alberta library?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Workplace Health and Safety's investigation is ongoing into the April 24 double fatality and the injuries that happened there. It's tragic when anybody is killed on the job, and I take every death very, very personally. My ministry is committed to improving workplace health and safety. At this stage, as the investigation is ongoing, it's premature to say exactly when the investigation will be terminated, but it will be done.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: where do temporary foreign workers working on remote

construction sites find the information where they have the right to file a complaint or object to unsafe working conditions? Where do they find that information?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Well, Mr. Speaker, with our temporary foreign workers we find that there was a lack of information that was available to them. We helped set up one toll-free helpline plus two advisory offices that provide services to temporary foreign workers. We also provide some very proactive inspections of those people who are using temporary foreign workers. So we are trying to maintain a positive relationship with them to ensure that they are aware of their rights in the province.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. Again to the same minister: given that on that site at that time there were about 120 temporary foreign workers from China who did not have English-language skills, how do you know that they now have the ability to phone that toll-free number and know what their rights are in this country? Is it available in Chinese, or is the toll-free number only available in English?

**Mr. Goudreau:** The member opposite is asking whether it's available in different languages. Well, at this stage, Mr. Speaker, and I can say that it is available basically only in English. Those people that are working with them: there are usually people that can do interpretation that are working with the group. There has to be a communications method with temporary foreign workers. Through the boss, then, some of that information is available. We are serious about the protection we are giving to our temporary foreign workers and want to make sure that their rights . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

#### **New Royalty Framework** (continued)

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Whitecourt-Ste. Anne oil and gas activity has been up and down. You know, we've seen rig counts even higher this past winter than the previous winter. We're seeing seismic crews appear in Whitecourt, so we know that there's going to be a growing activity this upcoming season. My questions are all to the Minister of Energy. With your new royalty framework, announced last fall, and with the increase in demand and the increase in the cost, are we going to capture that oil royalty when it goes past \$120?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, if you ask the right question, Mr. Speaker. There may be a misconception that if the price of oil exceeds the estimated price cap of \$120 a barrel, the province would not see any additional royalty. This is far from the truth. Regardless of the new royalty framework cap of \$120 per barrel the higher the price of oil, the greater the royalty return. In other words, should the world price for oil hit \$120, the province would collect 40 per cent of \$120. If it hits \$130, the province would collect 40 per cent of \$130 and so on.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, I mean, that's a good answer, but again to the same minister. You know, it was just last fall when we had this review. Prices were going up. Why didn't you make that clear in your scale, that past \$120 we would have that reflected?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, no one can predict with any certainty what the price of oil will be in the future. The province uses the best information available to predict market pricing. Oil prices are determined by world markets. The market goes through pricing cycles, and many analysts believe we're now at a high part of the cycle. Based on that assessment, our royalty formulas are appropriate for the longer term.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, again to the same minister: I guess that since it is past \$115 today, would you consider raising the cap to make it clear for everybody in the future?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, if oil is above \$120 a barrel and stays above \$120 a barrel for an extended period of time, then the province may have to take action to ensure that Albertans continue to receive their optimum value. Presently the new royalty framework is sound, and it offers Albertans increased royalties when prices are high and offers stability and predictability for industry and investors.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

#### **Firearms Regulation**

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday the Solicitor General deferred to the Minister of Transportation when asked if he would consider an innovative approach to crime reduction in Alberta. I have returned today to ask the same question of the Minister of Transportation. Will the Minister of Transportation amend the Traffic Safety Act in a similar manner to that of Bill 212 from the Second Session of the 25th Legislature to provide the authority to seize vehicles that contain firearms where the registered owner of the firearm is not in the vehicle?

*2:10*

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that the Firearms Act is already stating that you have to be registered to have a firearm. Maybe I misunderstand – I'm not a lawyer – but I don't think I can pack somebody else's gun.

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, the Calgary Police Association proposed a similar approach in February, noting that vehicles are seized from johns and those with sufficient demerit points. Will the Minister of Transportation commit to the same measure to address the proliferation of crimes committed with firearms?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, I would have to understand that Firearms Act a lot better than I do right now before I commit to anything along those lines.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, Mr. Speaker, a private member's Motion 503 calls for a similar seizure for racing on a highway. Why not amend the Traffic Safety Act at the same time to accomplish the same goal?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, I will say that I will work along with the Solicitor General and the Justice minister if need be to understand that and see if it really would make a difference or sense. I don't always understand those people across there because they don't always make sense.

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



### New Royalty Framework

(continued)

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has now been almost six months since the Minister of Energy announced Alberta's new royalty framework. As part of the announcement the minister indicated that he would open negotiations with both Suncor and Syncrude Canada towards amending their Crown agreements within 90 days in order to bring the royalty regime for those firms in line with the new royalty framework. My question is to the Minister of Energy. Now that the government has struck a new agreement with Suncor, what is the status of negotiations with Syncrude Canada?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, as the member has mentioned, we reached an agreement with Suncor early in the new year that will see it pay 20 per cent more royalty or an amount based on the new royalty framework starting in 2010.

Syncrude is a different company, Mr. Speaker, with a different existing Crown agreement, and our discussions with them are progressing in good faith. We believe we should continue that and resolve this matter in the best interests of Albertans. Keep in mind that the new royalty framework doesn't come into effect until 2009.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: keeping in mind that both the minister and the Premier have indicated that alternative measures would be considered if government is unable to satisfactorily conclude these negotiations, would the minister advise the House as to his strategy on a go-forward basis?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you. Mr. Speaker, while I won't comment on the details while these negotiations are under way, we have stated that the government of Alberta will not rip up contracts. Our successful negotiation with Suncor shows that that was the proper stance to take. That said, in the interest of fairness we expect that any agreement with Syncrude would be substantially similar to that which we have agreed to with Suncor and meet the same goal, which is to further the transition of these two pioneering oil sands projects to the new royalty framework.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** That was my last question. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Okay.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

### Automobile Insurance

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, people still don't like the automobile insurance rate schemes this government has put forward. On the one side, we have auto insurance companies making billions and billions and billions and billions of dollars, and on the other side – well, I guess, actually, it's probably the same side – we have the government helping them to increase their profits. My question is to the minister of finance. Why doesn't the government stick up for average Albertans instead of for insurance companies?

**Ms Evans:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I haven't

seen one shred of evidence of our sticking up for insurance companies relative to their profits. What I have seen is that we appealed the decision. Maybe the Justice minister would like to talk about the legal status of that particular judgment.

**The Speaker:** You have 15 seconds, if you can do it.

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government believes firmly that it is in the best interests of Alberta to appeal the judge's decision. We can't comment further on that because it's before the court.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much. I'm referring back to the finance minister's comments. It hardly seems justified, seeing as the insurance industry itself reports multibillion dollar profit lines. Why is the government allowing a situation where Albertans get a discount of a few percentage points while insurance companies have had a 2,000 per cent – 2,000 per cent – increase in profits in less than five years?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, in June the insurance rate board will meet again, and at that time they will be looking at the rates. At that time there may be some other opportunity to respond to anything they would bring forward, but quite frankly that is not on our agenda today. On our agenda is the follow-through. In the best interests of our people, as our Justice minister has said, it's before the courts. The rate increases are something that will be dealt with at such time as they bring them forward, or they may bring forward reductions. I have no idea.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much. Well, thanks for referring to the insurance rate board. I'd like to know why it is that of the 14 reports that are submitted to the Automobile Insurance Rate Board for its mandatory review of premiums, the government only seems to recognize the so-called facts brought forward by the insurance companies but not by those who are not an insurance company.

**Ms Evans:** Well, Mr. Speaker, until such time as we review exactly what is presented to the insurance rate board, it would be really unfair of me to comment. There's been an allegation by the member opposite that the government doesn't review all of that material. I'll look into that and respond in due course.

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

### Long-term Care

(continued)

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across Alberta long-term care facilities are being converted to assisted living in the name of providing choices for seniors. These changes, however, mean that seniors pay more for less. A conversion in Hinton meant that seniors were expected to furnish their own rooms, fetch their own meds, and they were left with no resort but to call 911 when they needed a nurse in the middle of the night. To the minister of seniors: when will the government put supports in place to keep long-term care facilities open rather than enabling the conversions, that put more burden on our seniors, their families, and the staff?

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A direct answer to putting supports in place for long-term care would have to come from the Minister of Health and Wellness because that is his mandate. However, I can speak on the continuing care program and the aging in place program. We find that seniors are happier to age in place, to stay in their homes as long as possible, and we're also finding that seniors are much older when they go into long-term care. Once again, we're talking about a workforce issue, which is also a concern throughout Alberta and in every industry.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that facilities like the one in Hinton have been converted over the objections of families involved, how can the minister justify the claim that these conversions are in the best interests of the residents or seniors?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, to answer directly on the Hinton facility would be unfair as I haven't had the opportunity to visit that facility yet. However, I would say that when we make conversions, we do them in the best interests of our seniors and of their families. I would commit to visiting the Hinton seniors' home to see how things are working out there.

**Ms Notley:** Well, I don't know how it can be in their interests when they reduce care. Nonetheless, will the minister act now to prevent the conversion of any more long-term care facilities into assisted living facilities?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we're doing to address this very issue is to have a demographic planning commission, and that commission, I hope, will help us to find the answers for the number of long-term care beds and facilities that we're going to need in our province and how many continuing care beds we will need. Those are issues that we are definitely working on in our department as we speak.

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

### **New Royalty Framework** (continued)

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Energy. Last week the province had a near record low sale for mineral rights. Now, some analysts are suggesting that this is a direct result of the new royalty framework, making Alberta uncompetitive when compared to other provinces or the United States. To the Minister of Energy: was this decrease in provincial mineral rights sales an expected outcome of the new royalty framework?

2:20

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, land sales bring in a steady source of income and resource revenue for the province. Keep in mind that Alberta experienced some record high land sales in recent years. Land sales that we're currently seeing are in line with long-term averages. One would expect that in the long run there will be slightly lower prices for mineral rights sales as a

result of collecting higher royalties. However, it's too early to measure any long-term impacts on land sale revenues from the new royalty framework.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first and only supplemental to the same minister: given that B.C. and Saskatchewan have experienced near record high sales in recent weeks, doesn't this say something about what is being experienced here in Alberta?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out that sometimes what's happening in other provinces says a lot more about what's going on there as opposed to what's occurring here in Alberta. Those provinces are benefiting from industry's interest in developing significant, new plays. We believe in the new royalty framework, and now that we've addressed the unintended consequences, we think that industry has the certainty they need to begin making new, long-term business decisions in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

### **Secretariat for Action on Homelessness**

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the weather takes a turn for the worse, like it has the past few days, we need to turn our attention to those Albertans who are homeless. Every year they suffer, yet every year their numbers grow, and the actions taken by the government accomplish very little. If government action was successful, then the numbers of homeless people wouldn't be growing every year. To the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs: can the minister tell us exactly when her Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness is going to meet and take action? Can she provide an actual date, time, place of meeting, and what the agenda of the meeting will be?

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

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be very pleased to answer that question. The Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness has met on two separate occasions. They had their inaugural meeting approximately a month ago, and they have made a commitment to meet every three weeks in order to develop the strategy for the 10-year plan. I have asked the chair of the secretariat – I don't know if I can name him – Mr. Snyder, to report back to this ministry with their strategy by September of 2008.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Given that on January 23 a news release indicated – and I'm quoting here – that “within six months, the secretariat will complete the provincial 10-year plan” to end homelessness, that would give a deadline of Wednesday, July 23, 2008, for a completed plan. Will the minister confirm that this will be a hard deadline with no extensions, or have we already had an extension on that?

**Mrs. Fritz:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the secretariat was not to be established until April of 2008. That was very clear in this Legislature. We fast-tracked that, and we established the secretariat much earlier. It will be reporting in September of 2008, which is a six-month window to bring back to the House the plan for the strategy on homelessness.

**Mr. Taylor:** In September it's already starting to get pretty cold in this province.

To the same minister: given that the city of Edmonton's Boyle renaissance project, a 900-unit development to assist homeless and at-risk people, is stalled because of high land prices, will the minister work with the city of Edmonton to find alternative strategies, including cost sharing, to acquire the necessary land so that this needed project can proceed, and will they commit to similar partnerships with other cities like Calgary, Red Deer, Lethbridge?

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

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do have a sound business plan in place in regard to land availability, and we have moved along that continuum over the past year. I am working closely with the mayor of Edmonton on the Boyle project in regard to land availability and, as well, with the mayor of Calgary on land availability. I know that through the previous Minister of Education there were, for example, sites at our school sites that were released or were being evaluated by municipalities for those that could be released for affordable housing or other projects that the municipalities determined.

Thank you.

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

#### High-intensity Residential Fires

**Mr. Benito:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recent large residential fires in Alberta have resulted in significant amounts of property damage, including a fire at a condominium construction site in Edmonton that destroyed and damaged a number of homes in July 2007. This is a very important issue for my constituents. My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. What is the government doing to address this concern?

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We expanded the mandate of the working group on fires to examine the issue of high-intensity residential fires. They provided a report. We took that report to the stakeholders, being builders, firefighters, municipalities, to analyze the impacts and the cost. We needed more information, and it's vital information. We need to get it right when they respond.

**Mr. Benito:** My second question is for the same minister. Can the minister tell us when we can expect to see the report and the government's response to this vital issue?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we've made great progress. It was a priority for me before, and it is a priority for me now. We don't yet have a date in place for the response, but we do plan to make the report public when we release our response.

**Mr. Benito:** My final supplementary, Mr. Speaker: will there be changes to the Alberta building codes, and if so, will this affect housing prices for Albertans?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can't speculate on the changes until we have a government response, but I can say that Albertans have asked us to find a balance, a balance between safety, affordabil-

ity, and technically sound practices. That's why we have taken it to the stakeholders. We needed to get more information on the impacts and the cost with the recommendations.

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

#### School Closures

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Woodcroft elementary, Ritchie junior high, High Park elementary, Windsor Park school, St. Clement school are just a few examples of Edmonton and Calgary schools which were set for closure in the last year. When schools close, it not only impacts students, teachers, and parents but also the community as a whole. To the Minister of Education: why has this government forced school boards to close so many established schools when there are thousands of students in the province waiting for new schools which will take both time and money to build, especially if wasted on P3s?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government isn't forcing any school board to close any schools. What this government asks school boards to do is to take a look at the needs that they have in their communities and to align the resources with the needs. If the use of a school is declining, they need to look at whether there are other uses that they can put that school to to improve its utilization or whether or not they need to change. The ideal solution is to make sure that there's an appropriate place for every child to go to school.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Building before closing or blowing up public institutions would save dollars and make sense. To the same minister: since numerous schools continue to close, making it quite clear that the school utilization formula is in desperate need of updating despite the government's claims otherwise, why has the government failed to take action, and will they finally update the school utilization formula in an open, transparent manner reflecting the Learning Commission's recommendations?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have no problem indicating that we will be looking at the whole issue of how we make sure that schools are in the right places for students, and that includes looking at the whole question of how you do a utilization formula if indeed a formula is appropriate for that type of circumstance. But I always learned that you save cents to make dollars.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Again to the minister: given that a number of schools slated for closure are in rural Alberta, such as Valhalla school near Grande Prairie, why has the government not done more to ensure that rural Albertan students are getting the best possible education in their own communities?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In education, of course, there is this wonderful balance and a very appropriate balance where we have locally elected school boards that work at allocating the resources that they get from the public dollars to make sure that the schools are available for students where they're needed. The hon. member is suggesting by his question that the provincial government should be telling school boards where and when to open and close schools. If we were to do that, then the next question would be: what role is there for locally elected school boards? I believe that locally elected school boards have a very fundamental role. It's a very difficult role, and we shouldn't be second-guessing them every time they play that role.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, followed by the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

### 2:30 Canmore Resort Development

**Mr. Rodney:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now for something completely different. Stone Creek Properties recently announced a one and a half billion dollar resort development for Canmore. The Village at Silvertip will include hotels, restaurants, a conference centre, and much, much more and will be built over the next 10 to 20 years, expecting to attract approximately 200,000 visitors per year. My first question is to the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. What is the government doing to attract investment and development to our tourism industry not only in the Rockies but in other parts of Alberta as well?

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

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This resort is great news for both Canmore and for the tourism industry. We're always looking to expand what we have to offer visitors in all parts of the province. A good example is the work we do with communities to help them develop investment-ready projects, and then we help them attract financing. This project is the result of an investment mission we sponsored last fall, and the Stone Creek Properties was one of the 18 opportunities from around the province profiled on that trip.

**Mr. Rodney:** Mr. Speaker, my first supplemental is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. This new resort development has led to concerns about the impacts on wildlife. What is your department doing to ensure wildlife are protected in the vicinity of this resort?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those concerns, of course, we share, and our wildlife biologists work closely both with Parks Canada and the town of Canmore to ensure the protection and preservation of the wildlife there. We've helped to identify and monitor habitat sites and the wildlife corridors that protect them. We've assisted Alberta Transportation in designing and implementing the underpasses, overpasses, and fences that you see along the road there. We've also participated in the Bow Corridor Ecosystem Advisory Group, which has advised Parks Canada, our own forest people, and the town of Canmore. These have been put into land-use guidelines, and this new project, of course, will be subject to those guidelines.

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

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is to the

Minister of Environment. Water availability is a concern in southern Alberta. How will this resort acquire the necessary water for this massive development?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member should know, the issue of water in the South Saskatchewan River basin is of utmost importance. There are two issues that need to be kept in mind here. One is the availability of water, and the other is the ability of the municipality to treat waste water and to also handle the additional pressures from storm water. I'm advised that the town of Canmore has capacity within existing licences to supply water. They have an excellent track record of dealing with waste water and stormwater, and we expect them to take those into consideration as they deal with this development approval.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House, followed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Timber Production Monitoring

**Mr. Lund:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In much of rural Alberta there are many small sawmills processing less than 3,000 meters of wood per year. These small mills depend on Crown timber, and they usually obtain it through the community timber program. The process that they use for assessing how much timber they've got is by measuring the finished product and then using a conversion factor. The Department of Sustainable Resource Development currently is asking them to change the process and go to putting in a scale or to measure as the logs come off the truck.

**The Speaker:** I'm sure the minister probably will anticipate the question.

The hon. minister.

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed I can. We have discussed this with the smaller sawmills, and they have opted for a new fixed-rate system in order to achieve a more consistent approach to payment. Now, to implement this new policy, we have had to adopt certain procedures. This includes determining the volume of the tree before manufacturing. This is the most fair, accurate, and consistent way of measurement. Also, these accurate volumes are critical for controlling the harvest, determining timber dues, and to determine reforestation after.

**Mr. Lund:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is extremely expensive, and these operators are price takers. They do not set the prices. I'm curious. Why couldn't they use the measurement off the truck, the scales that are on the trucks, that are very close to being accurate and much more accurate than the one process that you're proposing?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, you know that I'm always reluctant to blame anything on Ottawa, but in this case the federal weights and measures legislation requires that these loads be weighed on scales that have been certified under the federal legislation, and the hauling trucks do not and cannot meet that requirement.

**Mr. Lund:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that sounds like a cop-out to me. The fact is that those scales are very accurate. As a matter of fact, think about it: a trucker is not going to put on more than he can take across a scale, so those scales are fairly accurate. On top of that, now the department wants the operators to pay for the stumpage or the royalty before the product is processed, another nail in the coffin of these small mills.

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The simple fact is that it's more efficient to track logs going into a mill than when they come out as processed lumber. Logs going into a mill sometimes may not be processed or sold for months and even years, and it's difficult to determine which log goes in, what comes out. Paying for the log when it enters the mill assures accuracy of information not just for payment but also for reforestation purposes. However, we're very interested. If smaller sawmills have concerns about these new procedures that have been put into place, we'd be happy to meet with them and try to achieve greater efficiencies.

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

### Carbon Monoxide Alarms

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the years and especially this past winter a number of Albertans were affected by carbon monoxide poisoning, some tragically, and others were alerted to a threat by their home's carbon monoxide alarm if they had one installed. Improper venting on low-cost rental housing has not only made residents sick but in some cases has forever altered their lives. My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. What are the requirements for carbon monoxide alarms in Alberta homes?

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is a very serious issue. Last year alone there were 901 carbon monoxide related calls. The carbon monoxide alarms are a very valuable safety tool. Current building codes require that carbon monoxide alarms are put into new residences, and that's been since September of 2007.

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

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is also to the same minister. Given the facts that he's mentioned there, can the minister tell this House why alarms are not required in existing homes or in rental properties?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, it is a very important safety tool. We recommend owners of existing homes get carbon monoxide alarms. Buildings are subject to codes when they are built, and as such, safety codes are generally not retroactive. But I would also like to stress that these safety tools for rental properties are also subject to the same codes as homes are.

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

**Mr. Mitzel:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister mentioned, this is a serious issue. What else can Albertans do to protect themselves from the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, carbon monoxide poisoning is a tragedy that can often be prevented. The alarms are not a substitute for prevention. There are steps that Albertans can take: to have fuel-burning appliances inspected once a year, to be careful with automatic car starters that can accidentally start and leave a car running in a garage. In just over 10 years there have been 88 deaths that have occurred in this province, and 52 of them have been in homes from carbon monoxide poisoning.

2:40

### Orders of the Day

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, just a brief note with respect to the new procedures as a result of the changes made the other day. The Clerk will now identify and in the future the Government House Leader will have to identify, I guess, on Thursday which of those motions for returns and written questions will be called on Monday. This procedure, for members who have returned, is slightly different than it was before. It should be more efficient.

As I understand, Minister of Finance and Enterprise, 3 o'clock tomorrow is the estimated time for the presentation of the provincial budget.

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, that's correct, I believe.

**The Speaker:** All members are aware of that, then?

### Written Questions

**The Clerk:** Pursuant to temporary Standing Order 34(3.1) written questions are deemed to stand and retain their places.

### Motions for Returns

**The Clerk:** Pursuant to temporary Standing Order 34(3.1) motions for returns are deemed to stand and retain their places.

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 201

#### Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this would be the first procedure we have with respect to this matter as well. The hon. member who is presenting his bill will have 20 minutes to speak. Members thereafter will be restricted to 10 minutes each other than, of course, the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Premier.\*

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise in this Assembly today as the sponsor of Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act, 2008.

Hunting and fishing and trapping have been significant activities in Alberta in the past and continue to be practised by many who keep this tradition alive today. It has evolved into one of conservation, wildlife management, and stewardship.

Hunting and fishing and trapping are clearly important parts of Alberta's heritage. Prior to Alberta becoming a province and even for a time after that, being a skilled hunter meant that you were able to feed yourself and your family. If you could skillfully hunt and fish, you were an asset to those depending on you. Trapping eventually became a way of life for many as the fur trade evolved and expanded in response to the lucrative market for fur in Europe.

As stated previously, in the past the necessities of life in Alberta were dependent on the ability to hunt, fish, and trap. Hunting, fishing, and trapping are still a necessity but are necessary in a more ecological sense. It's no longer just about feeding your family or trading goods but about conservation, wildlife management, stewardship of the land, and love of outdoor activities.

Mr. Speaker, the abundance of wildlife in this province, the diverse landscapes, and our continued efforts to protect our environment make Alberta one of the most sought-after locations to partake in activities such as birdwatching, hiking, and photography. For all

\*See p. 90, right col., para. 8

of these, few places in the world have as great a diversity of wildlife. The province has 515 species that are traditionally considered wildlife, including 10 species of amphibians, 95 mammals, 402 species of birds, and eight species of reptiles.

Environmental stewardship is of paramount importance with our abundance of wildlife and natural habitat. This is widely recognized, Mr. Speaker, by all Albertans whether or not they hunt, fish, or trap. The wide range of voluntary actions that people take to conserve and protect the environment helps maintain healthy surroundings for all wildlife. Voluntary actions range from protecting and conserving our soil, air, water, and other natural resources to monitoring and managing wildlife species and habitat. Volunteer stewardship programs such as the Report a Poacher program people help to monitor a healthy ecology in all manners of habitat. These actions are also essential to the recovery of species at risk and preventing other sensitive species from becoming a risk.

I'll give you a couple of examples of how populations are managed for the benefit of the landowners as well as the local habitat. For many years hunters and local hunting organizations have participated in surveys for such things as deer and antelope harvests but also in counts as well. The results of these surveys have been used as a beneficial management tool for the deer and the antelope populations in many areas, particularly in the grasslands areas.

As a management tool, Mr. Speaker, in November of 2007 Sustainable Resource Development issued a quota hunt for elk near Black Diamond. A limited-entry quota hunt for antlerless elk was planned for a small part of wildlife management unit 212, north of Black Diamond in southwestern Alberta. The rifle hunt ran from December 3 to 20, 2007, Monday to Friday only. Hunters had to obtain and carry written permission from co-operating landowners that lived in the area. The hunt was to reduce the high number of elk creating problems for local landowners such as significant forage losses, fence damage, and increased collisions on local roads. When wildlife begins to overconcentrate in an area, it can become costly to farmers and also dangerous to those who drive on the highways in the area, not to mention the animals who are hit by the vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, the decision for this quota hunt achieved the desired results. Those who hunt, fish, and trap care about the wildlife in this province and are very aware of the need to keep the numbers at a manageable level while making sure that they'll be able to hunt, fish, and trap year after year. They understand that the health of the wildlife in Alberta needs to be protected and monitored so that our animals can continue producing and reproducing and future generations will be able to carry out these activities as well.

Another way that these stewards of wildlife learn and support conservation is by belonging to one of the 450 associations that support hunting, fishing, and trapping. These associations are vital to the preservation and sustainability of Alberta's environment and natural habitats. One such organization is the Alberta Fish and Game Association. It's a nonprofit, volunteer organization whose purpose is to promote the wise use of Alberta's fish and wildlife resources and the conservation of their habitats. In 2008, Mr. Speaker, the association is celebrating its 100th anniversary. Its membership includes some 14,000 Albertans in more than 100 local chapters located all across our province. The age and large number of memberships held by this association show the importance of hunting and fishing and trapping to Albertans from young to old and also indicates that these activities are intrinsically wound into the fabric of this province.

This bill acknowledges the impact that hunting and fishing and trapping have had in the past and will continue to have in the future of the province of Alberta. I personally enjoy hunting and fishing

and trapping. The activity of fishing includes today catch-and-release, a very popular aspect of fishing. Hunting doesn't necessarily mean harvesting. For me the thrill of hunting has included the opportunity to outsmart the animal in its own habitat.

Recently I had an opportunity to go hunting for antelope in the grasslands in southeast Alberta. I spotted three of them and noted where they were moving to, sat down on a rock, and placed my rifle across my lap. I then lowered my head so they couldn't see me watching them, and out of curiosity – they're very curious animals, Mr. Speaker – they came closer and closer until they were about 20 feet away from me. I looked up and moved. The motion of my head kind of startled them, but they didn't run away. They grunted and stomped and tried to get my scent. Instead of pulling the trigger, I simply said: "Bang. You're dead." I decided to stand up and see if they would spook. I stood up, and again I said: "Bang. You're dead." They took off, and after watching them run off, I went home. It was one of the best hunting experiences I'll ever have, and I went home feeling that it had been a success. Sometimes hunting isn't about shooting at all; it's about the skill it takes to get closer to wildlife and to enjoy nature.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, is not meant to insinuate that people who live in this province who do not hunt, fish, and trap are less Albertan than anyone else. It's to recognize the importance that hunting and fishing and trapping have had throughout the history of Alberta and the vital role they play today. The role these activities played in the evolution of Alberta from the earliest inhabitants to the thriving economy it is today and the impact that these activities have on conserving Alberta's natural habitat presently impact every Albertan.

It's not about taking part in the activities as much as it is about recognizing the importance they have in wildlife management and the environment. This legislation will identify and reaffirm the right to hunt and fish and trap as well. Without these activities and the role of conservation they have evolved into, perhaps – perhaps – Mr. Speaker, many of our 515 species would be endangered.

The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act recognizes and appreciates our past and the value these activities will play in the future of our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Just for clarification, an error was made by the chair. Under Standing Order 29(3)(a) the hon. members participating, other than the Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition, all have 10 minutes.\*

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, to be followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead, to be followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. Then if additional members would like to participate, kindly advise.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and speak to Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act. This bill is an important acknowledgement of both our civilization's dependency on and its responsibility to protect species and habitat in this wonderful province of ours. It's also an important recognition of First Nations and their right and responsibility to these same heritage values. I stand to support this bill. There's a real need to honour our heritage, both the natural heritage and the wildlife heritage, and the traditional values of our forefathers and foremothers and how they survived and maintained a sense of balance with their environment.

It's important to recognize that almost 100 years ago the Supreme

\*See p. 89, right col., para. 12

Court of the United States enacted an important bit of legislation – it was called the public trust doctrine – that related to our responsibility to protect wildlife and habitat. Three major decisions were made out of that. One, wildlife is a public resource; it's not to be privatized. Two, they banned the sale of wildlife and its products. Three, they banned the frivolous killing of animals. That meant that we must consume what we eat. Therefore, we can be charged if we don't consume the meat in our freezers because it's not ours; it's a public resource. Only by consuming it are we recognizing this important principle of protection and responsible use of wildlife.

There was a remarkable renewal in the diversity and the numbers of our wildlife after that Supreme Court decision. At the time there was a tremendous threat of extinction of large animals, including the grizzly, but the signature species, the buffalo and the elk, were already on the way out. Many of these continue to be threatened in our current environment. It's timely to remember these important responsibilities and the threats that continue with our unfettered growth and development in this province, and it is important to reassert the responsibility side as well as the right to hunt, fish, and trap.

The Alberta Fish and Game Association, the Alberta Conservation Association, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, guides and outfitters: a host of organizations have endorsed these important principles and these rights as well as responsibilities. They're also concerned about some of the directions of this government in relation to these time-honoured values. The open spaces proposal is one that raised real alarm across the province in its favouring of access on the basis of ability to pay and providing licensing to individual landowners, how this might affect wildlife management. How would it translate this privatization into public leases and the control of licences on public land? How would this move us, in fact, toward potentially the privatization of wildlife?

A second concern has to do with game ranching, which has already happened, then promoted actively by this government in the '80s, and now, as a result of the introduction through the purchase of elk from the United States, wasting disease has gotten into our wildlife and threatens to affect quite a number of ungulates in Alberta, if not other species, and potentially even the human population if it's anything like spongiform encephalopathy, the mad cow disease. There are some remarkable and threatening similarities.

Safety and security of wildlife as a public resource continues to be a great concern of all of these groups and of many Albertans. It's important to remember that the national chronic wasting disease strategy acknowledged that wildlife contributes an equivalent value to the gross national product that agriculture does. At least, that was the case in 1996, when it was last reviewed. It is important to recognize that this needs to be a consideration before any more subsidization or game ranching is fostered.

A third area of concern is the sale of public land. Is there a chance, for example, that the sale of public land may end up violating wildlife-related statutes and regulations? This issue is a very difficult one to get around because often the laws are reactive and not proactive. Until the impact on, for example, migratory birds and other wildlife occurs, there is no violation, and therefore there is no preventive aspect to our current legislation. Another aspect of this is the lack of transparency and accountability in the sale of public lands and the important acknowledgement of the public concern that the sale of public land be clearly in the best interest of the public and not threaten existing environmentally sensitive land or species.

A fourth concern is land-use planning and the framework that is about to come from the Sustainable Resource Development depart-

ment. This is a critical part of our planning for the future, obviously, with great implications for water but also for wildlife and habitat. The minister has admitted that our planning system is broken, yet he's unwilling to slow down the developments that are actually threatening species and threatening our sustainability from an environmental point of view.

The other long-term concern has been with how delayed and how slow the implementation of the land-use framework has been and with the need to move quickly and decisively on a strategic plan that honours our river systems in association with all land-use decisions for the long-term well-being of people and animals, including fishing resources.

Again, there is a recognized concern about species protection – several species, including the woodland caribou, are under threat – with a clear concern, then, around how we deal with this as far as habitat destruction and the plan to cull wolves as some kind of a remedy. Many Albertans are asking questions on how this relates to natural selection, how it relates to balanced sustainable development, and how much we are going to intervene in the habitat of our province and threaten additional species and then make wolves, for example, pay for our intrusions into this natural habitat. We clearly have to have a longer term plan, a longer term vision, and a priority placed on the environment in this province, or some of the great principles and values expressed in this bill will be lost.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I cede the floor to others.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to join the discussion on Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act, which currently proposes to recognize traditional hunting, trapping, and angling within the province of Alberta. These traditions did indeed play a significant role in our province's rich history, as I will point out. I fully support the goal of this bill as it seeks to reinforce the importance of the hunter, trapper, and angler in our history.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to highlight some important dates and events in Alberta's history regarding hunting and trapping and explain how these traditions served as the ever-important link between our First Nations people and European explorers and the economic incentive for exploration and development in what now constitutes our great province. When the first explorers made their journey to the west, what was then called Rupert's Land, a vast, rugged, and beautiful area which now lays within our boundaries, they learned first-hand from the First Nations people about the rich traditions of hunting, fishing, and trapping. The aboriginal people were exemplary in their skills, which were necessary to provide during bitter Canadian winters. Their prodigious hunting methods are a legacy that continues to this day. The knowledge and skills of the First Nations people gave the early European explorers a great appreciation for this region and its people. The land upon which we now build our own endeavours was first developed and explored for its innate value. It was a great land of opportunity and new knowledge.

As the fur trade exploded in the early 17th century, it became an essential part in the development of Canada, and that is true for most of Alberta. Companies such as the Hudson's Bay Company, a great icon in Canada's history and the oldest company in North America, began to migrate westward in an effort to establish their presence in the fur trade. The company's men and women set up outposts along

the way and constructed forts across Alberta. In fact, this Legislature is just adjacent to the location where the fifth Fort Edmonton was constructed.

One of the fur trade settlers in Alberta was Anthony Henday, who made his way near the present village of Chauvin in 1754 while on an official expedition for the Hudson's Bay Company. Henday wintered with the Blackfoot, learning in part the nature of hunting, fishing, and trapping in the area, as the French had done as well. Historically it was necessary for survival in Alberta to know how to hunt and trap. A skilled hunter was an enviable member of society. Indeed, the skilled hunter by his efforts demonstrated to the explorers the rich potential this region offers, as it continues to this day.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, the buzz spread quickly. By 1875 Fort Edmonton and Fort Macleod were the trading population centres of Alberta, supplying the country with fur and other local goods. After the 1880s the fur trade no longer played the same social, economic, or political role in Alberta but had a clear and present impact on the population's social customs and character of the province.

Now more independent from the fur trade, hunting and trapping are still embraced. As the role of the hunter, angler, and trapper evolved from being one of absolute necessity to one of choice, those who continued to partake in these activities upheld the traditional knowledge and associated values that go hand in hand. In 1907, two years after Alberta became a province, the first hunting regulation was established, and in 1908 the Calgary Fish and Game Protective Association was founded, and its mandate continues to this day.

With a vested interest in the now official province of Alberta settlers were no doubt enthusiastic about the permanence of our hunting traditions. The heritage of hunting and fishing and trapping must remain in both remembrance and practice. We are afforded the opportunity of preserving this heritage with our vast landscapes and sustainable animal populations alongside the robust industry, commerce, and agriculture that we so thankfully enjoy. This could not have been achieved without the contribution of hunters, trappers, anglers, and the individuals that travelled west during the fur trade to settle and explore the western wilderness.

Hunting and trapping were one of the cornerstones of our First Nations culture and an abundant source of immediate sustenance and valued trade commodities. The natural value of the hunt was embraced by the First Nations and taught first-hand to explorers like Anthony Henday. These activities helped to transform Alberta from a rugged, sparsely populated region into a land of promise and opportunity that by the turn of the 20th century many sought to make their new homeland. I think we can all agree, Mr. Speaker, that this legacy lives on with each passing day.

I must also emphasize that today the traditions bear a new semblance of preservation and responsibility, a goal that should always be at the forefront. Wildlife biologists, technicians, and enforcement staff work with current hunters, trappers, naturalists, farmers, ranchers, and industry to maintain our wildlife heritage and ensure that recreational hunting and trapping are managed responsibly with a conservation focus. These efforts ensure that the tradition of hunting and trapping and angling can continue to be appreciated as a pillar of our history and the province's founding for generations to come. It also promotes the opportunity for our citizens to experience the tradition, something that is especially invaluable when one lives in a busy urban centre. Hunting and fishing and trapping bring with them not only an appreciation for our history but also a profound respect for nature and her many offerings, which we find so abundant in our province but sometimes forget to acknowledge.

Mr. Speaker, as hunting has now become for the most part a leisurely endeavour, it has of course evolved, but its importance remains, and we must acknowledge it. The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat should be commended for bringing forth a bill which acknowledges that the hunters and fishermen, trappers, and those who came to learn were essential to the development of this province. They are historically important to all Albertans. I hope for all the members to appreciate this history and the importance of our traditions and support Bill 201.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The speakers that I have remaining on the list, some seven members, I believe, are all on the government side. Hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, are you interested in participating? Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, are you interested in participating? Okay. We'll bob and weave if there are additional members from different parties that do attend.

We'll proceed now in this order: the hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, followed by the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright, the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, then the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, then Bonnyville-Cold Lake, then Calgary-Nose Hill.

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak in support of Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act. I would like to speak today both about the past and the present when it comes to hunting, but I'll start with the past and the traditions of hunting, trapping, and fishing. I want to highlight that right from the beginning it was those communities – the trappers, the hunters, and the fishermen – that played a lead role in protecting the environment and the habitat that wildlife depend upon.

There are many different types of environmentalists. Some hunt and some don't hunt, and that's fine. There are a lot of differences between the two, but they share one thing in common. They understand that a healthy environment and, particularly, a healthy habitat is the key to wildlife, and the efforts of both have gone to support that.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Hunters and all outdoor enthusiasts and, I would indeed say, all Alberta citizens have a shared responsibility of ensuring that habitat remains strong and that wildlife continues to flourish in those habitats. It's one of the oldest forms of environmental advocacy in North America.

Several allusions have already been made to the historical precedents. I would draw attention today to President Theodore Roosevelt, former president of the United States of America, the president who started the national parks movement in the United States. Why did Theodore Roosevelt start the national parks movement? Because he was an avid hunter and outdoorsman. He spent time in the American west. Through his pursuit of wildlife he saw that with the growth of population, the spread of civilization, our wildlife needed protection. So right from the start we've seen a key role of hunters and other outdoorsmen in the protection of habitat and our wildlife.

At almost the same time, right in this province, in Calgary a hundred years ago this year, as the other hon. member has already alluded to, the Calgary Fish and Game Protective Association was founded for the same purpose. As luck would have it, there was a



wonderful article in the *Calgary Herald* of April 20, 2008, on page B6, an article by David Finch, one of our more well-known and respected provincial historians, on the 100th anniversary of the Alberta Fish and Game Protective Association. I'll read to you just one excerpt from that. This concerns the very first meeting of the Fish and Game Protective Association. Mr. Finch writes:

More than 80 men attended this meeting. Harrison Young, an inspector for the federal Department of Marine and Fisheries, attended and noted the meeting was "composed of all the best settlers in the country and principal men of the towns and villages."

In other words, it was the leading lights of the community that saw the importance of stepping forward and putting forward a conservation association at that point in time. Since then, the Calgary Fish and Game Protective Association has gone on to play a key role in the introduction of the Hungarian partridge, the ring-necked pheasant, various species of trout, all sorts of stocking, and also various important new habitat protection policies.

Even before that, before Alberta even gained official provincehood, in 1877 there was an ordinance for the North-West Territories for the protection of buffalo. It was enacted to deal with the efficiency with which buffalo were killed and transported, but its goal was to help preserve the vanishing buffalo, the buffalo that was disappearing from the prairies.

Coming back to today, we see thousands of tourists visit Alberta to see our wildlife and enjoy the majestic beauty of our great province. Many others come to do world-class hunting and fishing in our bountiful lakes, rivers, mountains, and prairies. With the increase in population and tourism greater consideration is necessary for our wildlife and their habitats. Wildlife management is vital to ensure that Alberta remains populated with a healthy, strong population of wildlife. Much of this is supported through the licence fees, donations, and volunteer efforts of hunting and fishing groups such as the Alberta Fish and Game Association and its affiliated organizations.

I want to refer to a recently published article in *National Geographic*, one of the most well-respected publications in the North American scientific community. This would be the November 2007 edition of *National Geographic*. There's a wonderful article entitled *Hunters: For the Love of the Land*. It makes a number of different points about the key role that hunters and hunting and fishing organizations play in the conservation of habitat, which again is the prerequisite for healthy wildlife populations. I refer to page 117 of this article, page 117 of the November issue of *National Geographic*. "The great irony is that many species might not survive at all were it not for hunters." *National Geographic*, I hardly have to say, is not a pro-hunting or pro-fishing organization; it's a scientific, public policy oriented publication, one of the most widely read and widely respected. It recognizes the key role hunting and fishing groups like Ducks Unlimited, like Pheasants Forever, like the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, like the Alberta Fish and Game Association play in providing support for this conservation. Hunters, fishermen, and trappers just don't talk about conservation; they put their money where their mouth is.

3:10

I'll draw attention to another group here in Alberta, the Alberta Conservation Association, or ACA, which is a nonprofit, nongovernmental association that has been charged with the responsibility of ensuring good stewardship of our natural biological resources and habitat maintenance. We work closely with them as a government. Every time hunting or fishing licences are purchased, the ACA receives a portion of these funds, which are allocated to conservation projects. Just under \$1 million has been allocated to the ACA in the 2007-2008 fiscal year for conservation work in

Alberta. The ACA also receives grants in biodiversity to provide research to our graduate students working in this field.

Another group, the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks & Wildlife Foundation, works at ensuring responsible management of donated lands and assets, supports parks and wildlife and related projects, and helps sustain a trained and dedicated parks and wildlife network.

I'd also like to recognize the work of the Alberta Trappers Association, the ATA. Of course, its members are active in the industry of trapping wild fur-bearers. Also, this is a managed activity, and they invest equal amounts of time in ensuring and protecting the habitat that's the prerequisite for our fur-bearing animals.

I want, then, to address one common misconception about the hunting and fishing tradition and perhaps this bill, that somehow it's something that's just of concern to Conservatives and not to a much broader spectrum of society. I appreciated the member opposite from the Liberal Party giving his support. I want to allude to recent developments just last week in American politics, where one of the candidates for the nomination of the Democratic Party in the United States, Senator Hillary Clinton – most people would agree that Mrs. Clinton isn't known for her conservative views, yet she spoke out very forcefully in support of hunting. This is from CNN on April 15, 2008. Senator Clinton said: some people now continue to teach their children and their grandchildren. It's part of culture. It's part of a way of life. People enjoy hunting and shooting because it's an important part of who they are. End of quote. So I'd like the record to show that Senator Clinton probably supports Bill 201 here in Alberta.

Finally, the members opposite are always concerned about the environment, as are we. Again, as it would turn out, just this weekend in the *Calgary Herald* on the opinion page, which would be section B, there was a large article entitled *Greening the Planet Is Up to Us*, and there are 10 tips on how Albertans can contribute to greening the planet. Very, very quickly I'll just skip to number 4: "Eat local." Nothing is more local than our local fish and game. Eat local, eat local fish and game, preserve the habitat that they depend upon, and support Bill 201.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, when I was a kid, there was one thing I liked better than my parents reading to me, and that was when I managed, instead of a bedtime story, to get my parents to tell me what it was like when they were little kids, back in a time when we were much more closely attached to our surroundings. My father used to talk about working at a market garden, growing and selling vegetables. My mother used to talk about hunting stories and fishing stories and about how there was always a supply of preserved dried fish underneath the stairs and that she could stop by there on the way and grab a piece of fish before she ran upstairs to bed.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for this opportunity to rise today and speak to Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act, as proposed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. The intent of this bill is to recognize the importance of hunting, fishing, and trapping within both our current society and as part of our heritage. It further reinforces the rights of Albertans to hunt, fish, and trap.

I would like to express my wholehearted support for the inclusion of trapping in this bill. It's important to acknowledge the signifi-

cance of this activity in the lives of Albertans both past and present. Before Alberta became a province and Canada became a country, the people that inhabited this land used trapping as a method of acquiring meat for nourishment and fur for warmth. One could argue that without trapping, these people may not have survived Canada's harsh winters. Boy, oh boy, days like today did happen before.

As the number of European settlers increased, so did the popularity and the prevalence of trapping. Trapping extended beyond necessity and became a livelihood. Fur became a form of currency, and the fur trade became the foundation of both commerce and economy in North America. This drive for fur and, inherently, the desire to trap led Europeans to explore the west toward the land that's now Alberta. Not long after, trading posts within the territorial areas, including present-day Alberta, were developed. Fort Edmonton, one such trading post, was one of the largest of its kind in the west. Fort Edmonton's final trading post site was where this Legislature stands today. This account substantiates the important role of trapping within Alberta's heritage.

As society progressed, it became less dependent on fur and game. Trapping then shifted from necessity to tradition. Although there are still a significant number of Albertans that sustain a livelihood as trappers, for the most part trapping has become a sport or form of recreation. However, there is a tendency to overlook the functional relevance of trapping in our current society.

Bruce Williams, the chairman of the Fur Institute of Canada, states, "Trappers personify the best in natural resource management." Trapping harnesses a renewable resource and ensures an aspect of population control. Trappers are stewards of this animal population. They're invested in the maintenance and the well-being of the species. They're sensitive to the population, knowing when their resource is limited. During these downswings or times of hardship most trappers opt not to set traps and instead opt to protect the animal population.

On the other hand, trapping often serves to control overprosperous populations. When an area is overcrowded, animals can upset the balance of an ecosystem and effectively starve as they deplete the environment's natural food sources. The animals are more likely to venture to neighbouring farming areas, threatening livestock and even pets. In addition, this circumstance is conducive to the spread of disease. Trapping is a key method of controlling or circumventing these issues.

In addition to trappers modifying their own behaviours in response to personal gauge of the animal population, trappers are required to report or register the results of their harvest. This data is collected by wildlife management officials and used to set harvest quotas for the following season. In the cases of some fur-bearing animals, like fishers, trappers are asked to turn in their carcasses for research purposes, and in the 2006-07 season these carcasses were used to establish the demographics of the fisher population such as age and gender. The findings resulted in an increase in the '07-08 harvest quotas.

While these statements explain how trappers care for and contribute to the sustainability of the fur-bearing population, it does not address the criticism that animal use and trapping is immoral.

3:20

The Fur Institute of Canada website published a quote by trapper Paul Tufts which explains that for him "morality implies a spiritual connection to goodness and respect according to conscience." This respect has fuelled the evolution of trapping methods. Provincially, federally, and globally funded research has allowed for the development of more effective and humane traps. New regulations that

ensure that animals experience minimal amounts of pain or discomfort took effect in Canada in the fall of 2007.

Now, from these statements and changes it's safe to say that trappers share a unique connection with the animal population, but I'd like to point out that they share a similar relationship with the environment. Trappers are often the first to notice irregularities or abnormalities that pose a potential threat to ecosystems. Trappers that hold permits to trap on public land are assigned one or more of the 1,700 registered fur management areas, or RFMAs, in Alberta. These RFMAs are portions of Alberta Crown land. This land, often navigated only by trappers, totals well over half of Alberta's entire geographic span. Now, these totals do not include those who trap on private land or the Métis or Indian populations that hold rights to trap on Métis settlements and on Indian reserves.

It's obvious from these statistics, Mr. Speaker, how trappers provide this province with unparalleled levels of surveillance that contribute significantly to the preservation of Alberta's bountiful beauties. For these reasons Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act, should become a part of our provincial legislation. It recognizes the roles of trappers in Alberta's history with sincerity and ensures the rights of Albertans to trap as well as to hunt and fish. Finally, it acknowledges and demonstrates an appreciation for how trappers contribute currently to our society.

Mr. Speaker, that's why I stand today in this Assembly in support of Bill 201. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Well, I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, followed by the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Berger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to rise and join the discussion on Bill 201, which proposes to recognize the positive impact that hunting, fishing, and trapping have had and continue to have on Alberta. The proposed bill, as presented by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, signifies a feasible opportunity for the tradition of hunting, fishing, and trapping to be acknowledged as a heritage activity of Albertans.

I would like to focus, however, specifically on fishing management. Mr. Speaker, in Alberta we are presented with the unique situation of containing an abundance of pristine water bodies fit for the canvases of paintings and postcards. Whether you enjoy fly-fishing for rainbow trout on the Bow River or searching for huge northern pike while lodging in a remote fly-fishing lodge, Alberta's lakes, rivers, and streams offer something for almost everyone. We have some of the best rivers and streams for fishing that Canada has to offer. The Bow River, Crowsnest River, Oldman River, and Maligne Lake are a few among many of Alberta's world-class fishing destinations. An Alberta angler has opportunities to fish rainbow trout, brown trout, cutthroat trout, and bull trout, or for those travelling anglers there are fishing lodges and resorts that offer ideal settings for the great northern pike, lake trout, or walleye fishing. Most of these fishing lodges and resorts offer guide services, and many offer float plane trips to some of the most remote and beautiful rivers and lakes in the province of Alberta.

It should be no surprise, then, that Alberta houses an extraordinary amount of fishermen as well as attracting many more from outside our province. With an estimated 300,000 recreational anglers and approximately 800 commercial fishing operations it is quite evident that Alberta is still a popular outlet for recreational enthusiasts. Actually, in 2000 recreational fishing was thought to contribute more than \$350 million to Alberta's economy. The reality, though, is that Alberta's economy is not tooth and nail dependent upon fishing as a staple industry. Rather, it is the recreational aspect of

fishing, the preservation of our pristine fishing environments, and the recognition that fishing is a traditional activity of Albertans which are most important in this debate. In fact, for many of us now fishing mostly represents a naturalist pastime for Albertans wishing to reconnect with nature. It is this connection which has kept fishing popular for so long, and any attempt to preserve this experience for our future generations should be pursued.

Also, Alberta fishermen often embody a sense of ecological fortitude. They understand how their environmental citizenship preserves and sustains their pastime and choose to continue this legacy. In other words, Mr. Speaker, fishermen help preserve our environment and have since the founding of this great province. I believe they should be recognized for it.

The same sense of environmental pride occurs among those who manage Alberta's fisheries as well. In fact, it is the policy of the Alberta government to maintain our native fish populations in all water bodies where they occur. Fish are raised in hatcheries and planted in water bodies to replenish dwindling populations as well as to establish new ones, ensuring the sustainability of our populations.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has a relatively sparse fish fauna. Therefore, any initiative which further protects our fish population should be welcomed with open arms. Another initiative intended to combat our sparse fish fauna is the 2006-2010 fish conservation strategy. This strategy was initiated in order to address Alberta's dwindling fish populations. Through the strategy habitats are typically listed as trophy quality, stable, vulnerable, or collapsed in relation to the amount of domestic, sport fishing, or commercial fishing. By following the fish conservation strategy, it is hoped that all Alberta fish habitats will maintain a stable or trophy quality rating.

It is important, though, that we do not become complacent when dealing with the sustainability of our environment. Rather, we must welcome new ideas like Bill 201 in order to secure the future of our environment and our fish population.

Mr. Speaker, fishing creates a connection between man and his environment, furthering a sense of ecological responsibility, a connection which has been prevalent since the beginning of Alberta's known history. It is this heightened sense of responsibility which deserves to be recognized.

It should be mentioned, too, that it is not just individual Albertans or our government that work to sustain our fish populations. Not-for-profit organizations in Alberta such as the Alberta Fish and Game Association also promote proactive options for environmentally responsible fishing. The Alberta Fish and Game Association is only one example among many associations in Alberta which exhibits fishing as healthy, vibrant, sustainable, and a historical activity of Alberta sportsmen. They understand a fisherman's link to his environment and recognize that fishing is an activity which has flourished in Alberta as a tradition.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is necessary because it offers clarity and would solidify Albertans' rights in the areas of hunting, fishing, and trapping without costing the taxpayers money. There is no question that fishing is a traditional activity in Alberta and is available to all Albertans. However, for many Albertans now fishing offers a means to reconnect with nature and a getaway from the turmoil of daily life. For others it may represent their livelihood as it has provided financial opportunity for Albertans throughout our history. Whichever the case, fishing in Alberta is a healthy, environmentally friendly activity closely linked with the traditional activities of Albertans in the past and Albertans today.

This bill would recognize the importance of fishing within Alberta as well as more clearly define hunting, fishing, and trapping rights

of all Albertans. For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I will vote in support of Bill 201. Thank you for this opportunity.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would now like to recognize the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

3:30

**Mr. Jacobs:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly pleased today to rise and share my thoughts on Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act. I want to acknowledge the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for putting this idea before the Assembly. It addresses an important aspect of Alberta's culture and also has some important practical implications that I would like to focus on.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's history is enriched by the tradition of hunting, fishing, and trapping. It was a practice of the land long before the first settlers, and its industry spurred the development of the first population centres. It is clear to me that these aspects of our history should always be acknowledged for their intrinsic value and practical considerations as well. My grandfather taught me to hunt, fish, and trap as a young boy. I was taught to hunt and fish only for food and to take only what we could consume. I was taught and expected not to be cruel and to not to leave wounded or injured game. Consequently, that taught me to be a straight shooter.

Over time we have seen the evolution of hunting, fishing, and trapping for food and livelihood to a recreational activity and a way of identifying with nature in today's world. The practical implication today is, by and large, the role that hunting, fishing, and trapping play in the conservation of our natural species, their habitats, and in balancing ecosystems. Humans are both the subject and engineer of their habitat. Historically we have faced the challenge of self-preservation, which also extends to species preservation. The ultimate end is ecosystem preservation, a more modern notion that we have the ability to address now more than ever before. Hunting, fishing, and trapping are natural parts of this interaction, and their necessity remains.

Species populations may degrade due to other species' overpopulation. Disease can threaten to overrun an entire region, or overpopulation may impose nuisance and duress on human industry. All these problems arise from time to time, and the human element needs to be reinforced.

Today hunters, trappers, and anglers are using modern technology and advanced knowledge gained through research to contribute to the preservation and long-term sustainability of our natural habitats across the province and elsewhere. They have perhaps the greatest interest in ensuring that we have a healthy, well-balanced environment for animals to thrive in abundance. Thus, hunters, anglers, and trappers have a keen interest in the habitats they operate in.

Throughout the province they further their vested interests by their mere participation, contributing valuable fee-based revenue to the government. For example, in the 2006-07 fiscal year over \$12.5 million in hunting fees was collected. Mr. Speaker, portions of this revenue are used to enhance the continuing conservation efforts that are in place throughout Alberta. The Alberta Fish and Game Association, as originally alluded to, founded in 1908 as the Calgary Fish and Game Protective Association, began as a wildlife conservation lobby group. They are an example of a prominent group that advocates the balance of sport and conservation here in Alberta.

Many hunters, anglers, and trappers would identify themselves as nature enthusiasts and conservationists. For this reason, hunters, anglers, and trappers play a tremendous role in preserving natural habitats and participate in the ecosystem management of our animal

species when overpopulation begins to create an imbalance. They are often called upon to provide practical and valuable insights in situations where overpopulation, disease, or species conflict needs to be addressed. For example, when the Cypress Hills region implemented their elk management plan to deal with elk depredation, they called upon hunters as well as academics, ranchers, and conservationists for their input. Their participation is necessary and should be properly acknowledged. They continue to preserve and promote the traditions that are most significant in our province and have played a crucial role in helping the practices of hunting, fishing, and trapping evolve so that conservation is a real and attainable goal.

As our province continues to grow, we are going to face challenges that require the collaborative efforts of hunters, anglers, trappers, conservationists, and government to sustain the equilibrium of our ecosystem. Hunters, anglers, and trappers cannot be left behind. We must ensure their role is preserved. Adequate human regimes are vital to the preservation of our habitats as well as the promotion of the values associated with these activities.

[The Speaker in the chair]

As a last point, I must state that legal hunting needs to be encouraged. We do not want to alienate the majority of hunters who exercise their skills for the benefit of sport and environmental conservation. Hunting, fishing, and trapping are all too often stigmatized by a bias within our society. Many people do not understand these practices in their holistic nature, which serves to inhibit their positive efforts.

We have the licensing system in place for close monitoring of our animal species, and we must ensure that it is not circumvented. The vast majority of hunters, I believe, would agree. Passing Bill 201 will enhance a recognition of hunters' rights and allow them to carry on a long-standing tradition. Mr. Speaker, I commend the intent of this bill, which will serve to highlight the many positive contributions that hunters make to our economy, culture, and environment.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 201 gives all Albertans a chance to properly understand and recognize the important contribution hunting, trapping, and fishing provides our province. We are blessed with a diverse landscape that provides for a variety of outdoor recreational activities.

With all these natural benefits, Albertans have also inherited the responsibility to manage them properly. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the majority of those who participate in hunting, trapping, and fishing are some of the best conservationists this province has. This is because they are some of the most educated individuals with respect to managing the land and preserving our natural habitats.

In Alberta there are dozens of organizations dedicated to providing proper educational tools and resources for those who participate in outdoor activities. One such group is the Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association. They are a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to creating an ethical, humane, and educated Alberta that values wildlife, fishing, and the environment. The programs delivered by this organization are some of the finest in North America. By providing material and information for instructors and online, they have the best possible chance to reach the entire province. By doing so, the Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association is able to educate Albertans on the highest standard of

sportsman behaviour, the ethical treatment of fish, wildlife, and all other living creatures, and improve programs such as conservation, education, and hunter education. Their online hunter education certification is a provincial requirement for all first-time hunters. This includes modules in wildlife identification, firearms, survival, first aid, and legal responsibility, to name a few.

On February 17, 2007, the organization celebrated a remarkable milestone: the graduation of their one millionth student in conservation education. With that many educated Albertans our province is on the right path to preserving its natural habitat for future benefits.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of organizations across the province that provide conservation education. We must remember that these are voluntary organizations, and many Albertans choose to contribute their hard-earned dollars to help fund them. There is an Alberta Wilderness Association, whose members are dedicated to proper wildlife management. They provide news releases, headlines, and information on different species and regions throughout the province.

Another educational organization is the Alberta Conservation Association, or the ACA. This group provides an abundance of information concerning hunters' education and conservation. The ACA in partnership with the Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association provides one of the finest education programs in North America, the Alberta conservation and hunter education program. This program is awarded to students who successfully finish hunting and game management 1 and 2. Students who complete this program must demonstrate knowledge of the basic parts and safe handling of bows, arrows, and firearms; describe techniques for targeting, handling, and dressing game animals in the field; and explain personal and legal responsibilities of the sportsperson. These personal and legal responsibilities follow federal, municipal, and provincial laws and regulations, such as laws that govern behaviour of the sportsperson.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to highlight another important organization that contributes to the education of hunters and game management. The Hunting for Tomorrow Foundation encourages public understanding, involvement, and support of hunting. This includes educating Albertans on the importance of hunting as a necessary tool in the maintenance of a healthy and abundant wildlife population. Our provincial government also provides a means of educating our hunters, fishermen, and trappers. Through the Department of Sustainable Resource Development there are various ways our government educates Albertans on proper wildlife conservation. Having an early start to education can be tremendously advantageous for our young Albertans. When they are given a chance to learn proper steps to environmental management, it can last them a lifetime.

Recently the Department of Sustainable Resource Development announced that it will make up to 140 jobs available for young Albertans through its junior forest rangers program. This summer the junior forest rangers program will offer young Albertans between the ages of 16 and 18 an opportunity to develop a life skill, including conservation and traditional hunting methods. These students can earn money while obtaining course credits for high school. It is a great way to introduce and encourage correct environmental and wildlife management.

A further example of numerous educational programs, the initiative put forth by the government of Alberta, is the standard trapping and conservation courses. If there is enough interest, these courses are held at various locations throughout the province during fall and winter. The participants learn from expert fur handlers

humane trapping techniques, fur management regulations, fur handling, and also marketing. These courses assist prospective licence holders to prepare themselves for writing the required trapping licence examinations. Also, the Sustainable Resource Development Department will provide the Alberta Wild Fur Management Study Guide in the event that no course is available at that time. Those are just two examples of the multitude of guides, programs, educational initiatives, and other resources available to Albertans. There are countless educational tools made available on hunting, trapping, and fishing.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that Bill 201 provides all Albertans with a proper understanding of the important role that hunting, fishing, and trapping have in managing Alberta's wildlife. We are fortunate to have such a wealth of educated conservationists at hand. Through government and other organizations Albertans are equipped with an enormous amount of information to guide them properly. Whether it's the first or hundredth time a hunter, fisherman, or trapper uses the information available to preserve and protect this province's natural habitat, they should be acknowledged for it. Therefore, I choose to support Bill 201.

Thank you very much.

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

**Dr. Brown:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hunting, fishing, and trapping certainly have been an important part of Alberta's heritage and their history. In the past these avocations provided food for subsistence and economic benefits to Albertans. Of course, the tradition began with First Nations and their tradition of hunting, fishing, and trapping. Relying on tools and methods that have been handed down from father to son, from mother to daughter, the aboriginal people developed the skills necessary to pursue game and to survive in the harsh climate of western Canada, particularly in the winter. Skills like the making of pemmican and drying and smoking of meat and fish were very important to the survival of the aboriginal peoples, and hunters and fishermen had skills that were highly esteemed by other members in their society.

With the coming of the European settlers to western Canada, we had the fur trade, which expanded rapidly in the 17th century. It played a very essential role in the development of western Canada. During the 17th and 18th centuries companies like the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company began to move their operations westwards into what is now Alberta, setting up outposts and forts, and it was these early forts and trading posts, centred upon the fur trade, that became the population centres of Alberta. Although the fur trade's economic importance began to decline in the late 19th century, the fur trade industry did help to transform Alberta from a sparsely populated region into a land of promise and opportunity that by the turn of the 20th century was turning to permanent settlements and farming and ranching as the mainstays of the economy.

On a personal note, Mr. Speaker, when my great-grandparents Samuel William Shaw and Helen Maria Shaw crossed the prairie from present-day Saskatchewan to Fort Calgary in the North-West Territories with their eight children and four teams of oxen in the spring of 1883, among their many tons of personal belongings were packed no less than 16 guns as well as many kegs of gunpowder, all essential tools for life on the frontier.

With the increasing population and a more efficient means of exploiting wildlife resources, culminating with the near extirpation in the late 19th century of the plains bison, which had roamed the prairies by tens of millions, there came the need to enact progressive

legislation to ensure that wildlife resources were preserved. The result was more and more sophisticated management of fish and game populations until today, where Alberta's system of registered traplines and carefully managed fisheries and wildlife harvests in the various wildlife management units preserves fair and equitable access to a truly sustainable wildlife resource for all Albertans.

While a few individuals remain as professional trappers for whom trapping is an important source of their income and hunting and fishing are still used for subsistence by some individuals, particularly in our First Nations and Métis communities, for the most part these activities are undertaken now for sport and recreation.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that most of those who continue to partake in these traditional activities continue to uphold the knowledge and the values of the outdoorsman passed on from one generation to the next and of the ancient bonds between people and their natural environment. They recognize the importance of maintaining and conserving the wildlife resource by protecting the habitat that sustains them.

For my own part, among my earliest childhood memories were the trips which I made with my father to the clear mountain streams, fishing for cutthroat trout, and to the prairie sloughs for the annual waterfowl hunts, and it was in those places where I absorbed my abiding love for the outdoors. As the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has stated, hunting and fishing is far more than harvesting the fish and the game. For me it is about experiences like resting in the marsh grass on a beautiful fall day with the smell of wild mint in one's nostrils. It is about the dew on the stubble of the wheat field as the sun comes up and the thrilling sound of an approaching flock of geese. It is about the sight of brilliant fall colours in the foothills. It is about the feel of the crisp, dry fall air, hiking up a mountain stream, and the taste of icy cold, pure water.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, hunting, fishing, and trapping have been significant activities for survival, commerce, and now for recreation. They played an important role in my life and in the history of our province and in shaping our identity as a people. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to stand in support Bill 201.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for St. Albert, and if there are additional members who would like to participate, would you kindly advise.

3:50

**Mr. Allred:** Mr. Speaker, having grown up in Waterton park, I feel compelled to speak to this bill. My mouth waters and my fingers itch at the frequent talk of cutthroat trout. My grandfather was a game warden. My uncle Frank Goble of Waterton was an avid hunter, fisherman, and trapper, and he was the one that taught me all about fishing and the appreciation for fishing. I also grew up with Andy Russell and his sons. Andy, as everyone knows, was a guide, outfitter, photographer, environmentalist, and author. All of his work was around fishing, hunting, and trapping.

If I read the first section of the bill – "A person has a right to hunt, fish and trap in accordance with the law" – I would suggest that this right is much larger. As has been mentioned, it's about our history and our heritage, but it transcends into the right and the pleasure to abide with nature. It's the right to build our character. Fishing, hunting, and trapping teaches patience, as the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat so eloquently told us about in his little episode with the pronghorn antelope. It teaches us to be observant, it teaches us to be avid conservationists and environmentalists, and it teaches us to be at peace with oneself. It obviously teaches us an appreciation of nature and all kinds of outdoor skills. It teaches us

respect and responsibility, respect and responsibility for nature and for our actions.

It's a shame that more of our youth today could not spend time hunting, fishing, and trapping. They would learn, for one thing, the proper use of guns, but more importantly they would appreciate their role in nature. In turn, they would be better citizens, respectful of the land and their role in society.

I think it's very appropriate that this bill be introduced today in 2008 in one of the bicentennial years of David Thompson, the noted explorer, surveyor, and fur trader with the Hudson's Bay Company and later with the North West Company.

In closing, I commend the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for introducing this bill. I will certainly support it with all my heart. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, followed by the Minister of Environment.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to speak on Bill 201, and I thank the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, who introduced it. You know, Bill 201 urges the government to recognize a tradition of hunting and fishing for all Albertans. Throughout the history of the province these activities have played a key role, and this bill will recognize that importance. Hunters and anglers also play a large role in the conservation of our wildlife and the management of it today, and Bill 201 recognizes this as well as the recreational aspect of these activities.

Traditionally, hunting, fishing, and trapping were used as a means for survival, which made them necessary for early inhabitants of Alberta. These activities helped to foster the country's growing population and economy. I know that when my father immigrated here from Holland after the war with \$110 in his pocket and a one-way ticket to Canada, getting that deer and that moose every fall played an important part of feeding all the children and the hungry mouths in our family. I remember those days very, very clearly.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it was important to families like ours, growing up in a small rural community with not a lot of means, to provide a growing family with the needs. Hunting and fishing did provide something for our family, something that was local, something that we could afford, something that taught my brother, my sister, and me how to handle our precious resource, our wildlife, with respect and with care. It also taught us how to use firearms and taught us to fish and taught us to feel the sense of nature within our family and how nature and the families in our area worked hand in hand. I think that a lot of people forget that point of where we grew up and how we grew up in Alberta, that it was not just a tradition in our family in the fall to go and hunt a moose or a deer but that it provided important food for our families.

Caring for our province's natural habitat is important to all Albertans. The management of our lakes, rivers, and streams by various organizations ensures that we'll continue to have fish stocks that balance and protect Alberta's ecosystems. This also provides an abundance of fish for the province's anglers and brings in tourists from around the world.

You know, we've had the opportunity right in the town of Whitecourt, through a small project that the town, the Rotary Club, and the fish and game associations – we have a little park, and it's called Rotary park. In that park is a huge dugout that the local volunteers have stocked with trout. You can fish there, fish with a kid with no licence. Mr. Speaker, someday maybe you'll be able to come to Whitecourt. We'll line you up with some kids to fish with, and you can sit there in your retirement age on a great little box along the river and along the pond and fish with some kids and not

need a licence. What a great thing to do. It's something you can do even in your constituency, I'm sure. But in Whitecourt-St. Anne we have that already there, so you just come on over, and we'll take you fishing for the afternoon. Our organizations do some great things. I enjoy the days that we have both ice fishing and fishing in the summertime, teaching the kids how to fish. I think it's a great opportunity for all of us, so, Mr. Speaker, maybe some day you'd like to come over and help me with that on one of our nice, bright, sunny days in winter. We can sit on a pail together and exchange stories and catch some fish.

Also, the economic benefits of hunting, fishing, and trapping contribute significantly to Alberta's economy and tourism, Mr. Speaker, and our new tourism minister would agree with this. She, too, would love to come out in the wintertime and sit on a pail, do some ice fishing. You know, it's a great way to spend a nice crisp 30 below day. At the same time, she could also see Carson Lake provincial park. It provides a great service for those from Whitecourt and Edmonton and, yes, even from Barrhead, but it needs some upgrades, too. So think about that in the upcoming budget.

Mr. Speaker, this bill recognizes the importance of the recreational benefits of hunting and fishing. Entire families participate in these activities in a healthy outdoor environment. They're an escape from the stresses of everyday life. That's the one thing that I have, and it's like that switch that's implanted in my head. I can turn off all the work and all the stresses that we have from our days here away from our families. You know, we can take the family out on the weekend, do some ice fishing, go down to Carson Lake park, go down to the Rotary park, go down to the McLeod River, go down to the Athabasca River and enjoy what we have here in nature.

I think this bill is worth while supporting. I'm surprised the opposition hasn't got on the bandwagon here and helped support this worthy bill. I think it's worthy for all of us to stand up and talk a little bit about the importance of hunting and fishing for all Albertans and to recognize the great history that's associated with hunting and fishing and Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I'll sit down at this time, and I'll let some others speak about this.

**The Speaker:** While it's certainly not often that the chair would intervene to perhaps clarify something that the previous speaker may have said, the chair does recognize that at one time in history a great American novelist by the name of Mark Twain once issued a statement saying that rumours of his death were greatly exaggerated. Hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, substitute "retirement" for that in the case of your suggestion about a particular member of this Assembly.

The hon. Minister of Environment.

4:00

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to rise and join in the discussion on Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act, introduced by my colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat. I'm pleased to support this bill, and I've been interested in hearing the comments of members throughout the afternoon, beginning with a very good speech by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. I think that he related some personal experiences, personal background, that many of us could probably imagine, in our own minds, being there with him.

Mr. Speaker, I want at the outset to make it clear that I do not hunt. As such, one would maybe assume: well, then, why are you standing up in support of this bill? It's for a very simple reason that I do not hunt – well, there are probably a number of reasons. But I

just never have been brought up in the tradition and culture of hunting that a number of other members in the room have. I have through my lifetime been involved in various forms or another. I've done a limited amount of fishing and thoroughly enjoyed the time that I spent at it. But it's just something that, I think, unless you have the kind of tradition that we've heard from some of the other members, we don't necessarily see the importance of, and it's for that very reason that I felt compelled to stand up and speak. I think there are increasingly more people in our society that, like me, don't have that tradition, that don't have that background in hunting and perhaps wouldn't appreciate the importance of a bill such as this.

This bill doesn't do anything other than recognize the traditions in this land that we're all so proud of and ensure that as more and more Albertans, like me, perhaps lose touch with those hunting and trapping traditions, we don't forget how important it is.

Let me also say, Mr. Speaker, that while I don't hunt, I certainly am more than pleased to participate in wild game dinners and the like, and if I do say so myself – and you can ask a number of members whom I've had the pleasure of hosting – I think I'm a pretty fair cook and have done a pretty good job of preparing some of the wild game that friends of mine who are hunters and fishermen have provided me.

There are critical reasons why we should be supportive of a bill like this. Let's just talk about some of the next generation of Albertans, those that perhaps don't share that tradition and those that I believe we need to be thinking about. I don't have children of my own. I certainly am around a number of friends who have children and grandchildren, and my observation as someone who's not a parent is that increasingly the children of today, the generation of today is becoming much more of a virtual participant in the world around them rather than a participant in the real thing. We've got all kinds of young people that perhaps have gone hunting on video games and have done all kinds of things in the virtual world but have absolutely no idea what it is that our forefathers and, in fact, the thousands and thousands of Albertans who do actively get involved in fishing and hunting are all about. I would say, Mr. Speaker, that I defy anyone to try and figure out how to cook a deer or a pheasant or a salmon that they caught on a video game as opposed to getting out into nature and doing it for themselves.

I went on a trip a while ago with someone who, after we got away, I discovered shared a lot of my interests, but one of them was not my passion and love for fine dining and food. That individual pointed out to me: you know, there are some people who love to eat, and then there are people like me who eat to live. Well, I would suggest that when it comes to hunting and fishing, the same principles apply. There are those who hunt to live. They hunt because, as some members have pointed out, it's an opportunity to provide for their family. But there are others, there are countless others who hunt for the love of it. They hunt because it gives them that appreciation that the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat talked about, the fact that you're pitting man against nature, that you're out experiencing the wonderful environment that we have here in Alberta. That, I think, Mr. Speaker, is the essence of this bill.

This isn't a bill about preserving the historical way of life. This is a bill about preserving our ability as Albertans to love and appreciate the wonderful environment that all of us have and will continue to have if we manage it in an appropriate and responsible way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've just found myself

caught up in this wave of nostalgia. Actually, strangely enough, my family were partners in a trapline west of Sundre many, many years ago, towards the Mountain Air Lodge. I can assure you that as a youngster, going there with my dad and my brothers, we saw a part of Alberta that was and still is pristine and beautiful. It presented an abundance of game and challenges, whether it just be with a camera or whether it be to see, like the hon. member mentioned, how close you could get to some of them. Some of them were grizzly bears, so we really didn't get too close to that. But that was something that probably very few Albertans had an opportunity to do. I certainly grew up in a hunting family, and to this day my father takes my children on the annual spring gopher hunt and until these last few years was very engaged in the hunting of deer and, certainly, geese and ducks.

Mr. Speaker, what we have seen over the last decade or so is an unbelievable growth in the number of deer and geese in Alberta. In fact, if we're not going to hunt these animals responsibly and try to maintain the balance, then we have to resort to other less popular methods, certainly as we have seen along the border where the deer population has truly exploded and the only real way to get them now is cull or, unfortunately, with our cars and trucks. Anyone who has travelled the highways or the byways or the back roads of our province, particularly at dusk, will know that we are killing literally tens of thousands of these animals. That's certainly not a pleasant way to go, as I'm sure the animal would say, but it also has a tremendous cost for all of us because of the insurance costs of fixing these vehicles.

The other unintended consequence of the very productive nature of our farms is that they produce a tremendous supply of food for the geese and ducks that migrate through here and stay for a certain time in the spring and fall. Many pictures of the Arctic would show you that the exploding population of snow geese has done virtually irreparable damage to some of the tundra in the north, and unless the numbers are controlled and these animals are culled and reduced to numbers that the north is able to sustain, we will suffer tremendous environmental damage up there. Even in the winter playgrounds that our geese are lucky enough to go to, they are becoming a pest. It's not what I think we want our Canada geese or the others to be known as: the manure spreader of the golf course.

**4:10**

The number of animals that are able to benefit from human control of what we grow as food is going to have to be regulated on the other end. We can't continue to provide an abundance of food without the control check in the population, without the appropriate use of hunting, the encouragement of hunting, the respectful opinion that you don't have to hunt and you don't have to like to hunt and that's okay too. But if you do, and if you choose to come to Alberta, as an industry it creates hundreds of millions of dollars worth of tourism and, certainly, the related guiding. My oldest son is a guide in the fall, takes time off from what are some pretty well-paying spots in the oil patch because he loves the opportunity to challenge himself and look for the big buck, plus the friendships you make with many of our new friends that come up from the States. It's just a month that he would give anything for.

So it's about identifying that while we are sometimes interfering in nature and sometimes there are unintended consequences, the age-old tradition of using hunting and fishing and other means is a very important way to try and maintain that balance of a healthy population of wildlife, a healthy number of birds and all of the other species that we're so lucky to share this Earth with. It's certainly one that we should encourage, and I think this bill sends a message to our government that we respect hunting and fishing. It's said:

feed a man a fish, and you've fed him for a day; teach him to fish, and he's drunk for a weekend. That's something we should all keep in mind, too.

I would just say that I appreciate the effort the hon. member has put into the bill, and I would hope that in a positive manner we reflect on the tremendous heritage and history that they've brought to Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Did you make that up, that last one? Of course.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

**Mr. Marz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One would wonder why I would speak in favour of this bill because I'm really not a hunter. Perhaps I can't say that in all honesty because too many of you in here have heard me speak out about control of the dreaded Richardson's ground squirrel, that has caused a lot of farmers grief for centuries. I, myself, have lost some prized horses that stepped in badger holes that were originally Richardson's ground squirrels' that were enlarged. I guess that is about the height of the big-game hunting that I have ever done. But I do enjoy a good feed of fish. I do enjoy my friends bringing over some elk and moose sausage that's properly prepared by people such as my colleague the hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

But I've seen an explosion in some of the animals that are being hunted. Whenever we butt up against the wilderness, natural predators are the first species that are expected to be controlled by government, and that usually happens. We all know what happened to the wolf population. Over the years they've been reduced and almost on the brink of extinction at times. The same with bears when cities are spreading out. We've seen a lot of bear reports and cougar reports even in places like the city of Calgary. People are very concerned about their safety. The first thing is that you've either got to get rid of them, or if they come back, they're usually destroyed. The more we control the predators, the more the prey animals expand and the more the need for them to be controlled.

I would rather have my friends that are avid hunters going out and enjoying what is a tradition of hunting and fishing and trapping than having to see many of us control them as I did last summer, taking out the front end of my new truck. It cost a good sum of money to fix the damage on it after a deer jumped out of the ditch. There's a lot of damage caused and insurance rates go up and that sort of thing through those types of accidents happening.

We see deer herds growing and growing. I've had several complaints about damage to hayfields in my riding, damage to haystacks by herds of elk coming in and getting through the fences, wrecking the haystacks and pawing up, actually, the dirt in the hayfield so that the hay didn't grow the next year.

Another thing that ranchers are doing to save some money is to swath feed. They just cut a green feed crop and leave the swaths so that their cattle can graze it. Well, the elk come in by the hundreds, and they root around in there, and they mark their territory in there. Then the cows won't bother touching that. Those herds need to be culled from time to time, and it's better to do it, as the former speaker said, through organized hunts where we can put tags on and limit the number that are being taken rather than have to do some type of cull later on, which nobody likes to see. So I support this bill.

I'm not only not much of a hunter; I'm not much of a fisherman either. I've been unable to even land a fish that somebody else catches and hands me the rod, so I'm kind of a failure at both hunting and fishing. I've never tried trapping, so I'm not too sure

I'd be much more successful at that. I'd leave it up to those that do that and do it well.

Mr. Speaker, that's about all I have to say. I would support this bill to make sure that these traditions are carried on for a much-extended time into the future. Hopefully, I still have friends that enjoy having me over for a good feed of venison or rainbow trout or Richardson's ground squirrel.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very, very pleased to join the second reading of Bill 201. From my perspective this is a great bill that recognizes the importance of hunting, fishing, and trapping in Alberta's history. It's the heritage that built up this province, in fact this nation. But there are people who argue that this bill should not include the statement that hunting, fishing, trapping is a right of all Albertans, not all Albertans are outdoorsmen or outdoorswomen who take part in this traditional activity. This position does not take into account the connection that hunting, fishing, and trapping have in our history, our environment, and, of course, our economy.

The economy I'm talking about here is tourism, tourism and the spinoff industries. Private businesses sell and rent equipment or provide tours for the benefit of hunting, fishing, and trapping in Alberta, not to mention the hotels, restaurants that serve these outdoor persons. Statistics taken from the Department of Sustainable Resource Development, 2006-2007: fishing, hunting, and trapping in Alberta amounted to an economic benefit valued at more than \$1 billion for the province, and specifically, recreational fishing provided the Alberta economy with a huge benefit, some \$350 million in the year 2000, a figure which grew to \$440 million in 2005. This economic spinoff is generated every year by commercial fishing operations in our province.

4:20

Now, between 2000 and 2005 there was a 28 per cent increase in spending on fishing packages. These packages included everything from guided trips, related scenic tours, and stays in lodges, both remote and those that are easily accessible. With all the fish and game here in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, I would not be surprised if the increase in the fishing and hunting industry was reflected all over the province. I know for a fact that I'm an outdoor person and advocate of anglers, and I enjoy Bow River fishing very, very much. In this context, in fact, I joined a program called hooked for life, which helps young children to fish in the Bow River, floating down the river enjoying the scenery and also enjoying the tradition of fishing.

Alberta's diverse landscape and abundance of hunting, fishing, and trapping habitats make our province one of the best places in the world to take part in these activities. It produces revenue directly for the province as well. You wouldn't be surprised at seeing so many, many tourists from all over the world coming here to hunt, to fish. I don't know whether anyone comes here as a tourist to trap animals, but I think there may be some. At a time when we look to expanding our green economy, supporting tourism, including all aspects of hunting, fishing, trapping, is a very, very wise step. These activities represent a true sustainable industry and if managed properly act as a renewable resource for the province, rural Alberta particularly.

Aside from the economic benefits, these activities and the tourism associated with them help promote an active lifestyle. In fact, it could get into wellness, health, prevention measures for good health. A walk along the river casting lines to catch some fish is very, very relaxing and also a healthy activity that I would love that every young person in Alberta, every senior in Alberta should strive for. Now, an active lifestyle will also create great friendships.



I'm proud that I support Bill 201, and I'm looking forward to the debate in other stages. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had not intended to speak in support of this bill, but I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat for introducing this bill. Listening to the speeches that have been given today with respect to the importance of hunting, fishing, and trapping in our province, I was moved to speak. I have given a lot of thought over the years to these issues and respect the fact that as a government this province and this government have been able to develop a system where we have been able to responsibly manage the environment in such a way that Albertans that respect these traditions are able to participate fully in these traditions.

As I mentioned, it's not something that I specifically have ever been involved in; I'm more of a hiker. However, what I would say is that when I look at the people in my constituency, in Calgary-Elbow, that talk about these issues, they are engaged in these issues. I think it would be a shame for us to think of this piece of legislation as only representing people that happen to live in rural areas. There are people in my constituency that are proud members of Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited. They are people that are passionate about environmental management. They are people that care about respecting the traditions of this province. I think one of the challenges that we have in the future in Alberta is to make sure that we can respect both the traditions of rural Alberta as well as the lifestyles of people who are living in the cities. I think this bill is a great example of how we can marry those two traditions and those two lifestyles.

So a very short speech. Thank you to my colleague, and thank you for the consideration today.

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

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act, and I want to thank the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for bringing this bill before us. I don't think I'm saying anything that's new when I say that this country was born out of trapping. I'm certainly not sure that our furry friend the beaver shares the same fondness for this pastime as we all know that there was a time when we didn't practise the type of husbandry that we do and the respect for our ecology that we do today. I think of groups like Ducks Unlimited, the Wild Elk Federation, and many other groups that practise conservation, that teach our children, teach our young the value of conservation, of conserving these great resources for our future.

Mr. Speaker, to recognize this activity as an integral part of who we are as a people, as a province, as a country I think is something that should definitely be celebrated and recognized through legislation in our province. I'm very pleased that we do have this opportunity, we do recognize this, and we are attempting to recognize this in our Legislature, that this is not something that is just practised at the whim of individuals, but we have evolved as a people, and we do recognize that ecological practice and education is such a vital part of who we are.

I'm really pleased that I have the opportunity to stand up and speak. Mr. Speaker, there are many, many people that live in my constituency that practise good stewardship of our environment and are hunters and trappers, and I'm sure that they would want me to stand up and speak very much in favour of this piece of legislation

and what it means for the heritage of this country. I come from a part of the world where we don't have this opportunity.

**Mr. Rodney:** Where?

**Mr. Rogers:** Well, Jamaica, as a matter of fact, hon. member.

Yes, we do have a lot of fish, but unfortunately the animals on the land because of the type of practices that I only wish were practised in that part of the world in those years, Mr. Speaker, that we've been able to nurture here – I just wish that we had those practices there because young people in that country would have the ability to see some of the animals in the wild that are long gone.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to stand today as the Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon and speak very much in favour of this bill. Hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, I want to thank you, and I look forward to the rest of the debate. I look forward to hearing from other hon. members and that we would see, hopefully, speedy passage of this bill.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Are there additional members?

Shall I call on the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to conclude the debate?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I really, truly appreciate all of the comments and all of the speeches here today. Especially, I appreciate the comments from the hon. members who do not hunt or who have never hunted, who don't intend to hunt because it speaks for a resource that we have here now that wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the people who actually do hunt and fish, who are in fact the greatest stewards of our wildlife resource and also really help with our habitat, if they hadn't done all that they've done and continue to do in order to be able to provide that opportunity for those people.

4:30

I think that along with this also goes, Mr. Speaker, an automatic default position that these people who perhaps don't hunt but hike or take photographs or enjoy nature are better served by the fact that there are animals there that they can see. There is beauty in the wildlife and the scenery that may not have been there if, in fact, the hunters and fishers and trappers since our early days in Alberta had not recognized the importance of this resource and had not kept this resource up as it is right now. There are more animals here now in many species than there were at other times. I think that we've learned by our mistakes, as one of the hon. members mentioned, about the buffalo hunt debacle, if you want to call it that, in that the species was nearly wiped out.

I think that spinoffs were also mentioned by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort with regard to, perhaps, a healthy lifestyle. I personally have hunted a lot, and I've climbed a few mountains in my day. I haven't seen anyone that was out of shape make it to the top and make it back down. I shouldn't be speaking right at the moment. There's a point to that: you certainly should be in shape in order to be able to get to the top of a mountain or to hike all day long or to pursue those activities, and as the hon. member mentioned even about fishing, to have the ability to walk along streams, to hike to other streams in the mountains or in remote areas, to be able to pursue that sport.

I think that I'm very heartened, I guess, by all of the speeches here today, and I'd like to again thank everyone for their participation.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a second time]

**The Speaker:** Before I call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, let me just advise all hon. members of a bit of historical information. If members look at the table directly in front of the Clerk, they will see the Mace. The Mace rests on a beaver pelt that was donated to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta in 2007 by the Alberta Trappers Association to commemorate part of the heritage of this Assembly.

### Bill 202

#### Alberta Volunteer Service Medal Act

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

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today and present to hon. members here in the Legislature Bill 202, the Alberta Volunteer Service Medal Act.

This enabling act will establish a committee that will have two tasks: launching a public campaign to determine the design of the Alberta volunteer service medal and recommending to the hon. Minister of Culture and Community Spirit the process of administering, selecting, and awarding the Alberta volunteer service medal. Now, this medal award is not replacing the existing various ways of volunteer recognition. It will be a wider form of recognition that reaches the ordinary individual for their exceptionally consistent volunteering service to their local community organizations.

Alberta is blessed with the highest number of volunteers per capita in the country and in the world. To sustain this high level of volunteer service and to prevent its potential decline, we need many approaches to motivate and to encourage volunteers. The launch of the medal design competition itself will be part of the public campaign for volunteer appreciation and awareness. Now, it will be up to the recommendation of the committee that is set up by this bill, but I can see a number of options for administering the medal awards. After the creation of the medal the government can choose to get involved in the medal administration itself or can give the medals to the community organization that requests them, and the community organization itself does the medal award administration.

Sir Winston Churchill once said, "We make a living by what we get, [but] we make a life by what we give." I find this a fitting quote with which to open this debate. As all members of the Assembly know, volunteering is a profound act which impacts the life of many people. It is an essential component to the well-being of our province as it contributes to the vitality of our economy, our environment, culture, and a sense of community. Bill 202 recognizes this fact and strongly supplements the action this government has taken in acknowledging the wonderful volunteers. However, it goes a bit further by entrenching this recognition as an official honour of the Crown on behalf of the province of Alberta. This is a specific level of recognition that I believe our province owes to many quiet but exceptional people whose generosity of spirit have created invaluable contributions to local Alberta communities.

Mr. Speaker, my position on this issue is shared by a number of people in the volunteer sector in the province. For example, I would like to quote Audrey Hobbs, the volunteer resources co-ordinator with the Olds and Sundre hospitals and care centre. She said: I really appreciate your initiative to support volunteerism in Alberta, and I feel that your idea of an Alberta volunteer service medal is an excellent one.

Carolyn Arell, senior host facilitator with the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, stated: I have read your suggested private member's bill, and I agree wholeheartedly with this concept; the work that is provided to this province by our volunteer sector contributes critically to the economic success of Alberta, and as one who has witnessed your dedication to volunteers and their skill set, I'm excited about this proposed medal.

Now, I have received a number of similar messages from other individuals and groups within the volunteer community, and their support for this idea comes from their enthusiasm as they anticipate a renewed sense of recognition of the contribution of their volunteers.

This leads me to address one of the best components of Bill 202. The Alberta Volunteer Service Medal Act would implement a year-long public competition to create a medal design, a wonderful opportunity to stir up excitement and to rally people as we promote and increase civic awareness about the importance of volunteerism. It would be an important step in helping to reinforce the critical role of volunteers in Alberta communities. It would also serve as a strong component of the goal of reinforcing Alberta's unique culture and special heritage of volunteer work. I see this happening in a fashion similar to what we did when the province celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2005. Many members here will recall that this occasion was marked by the presentation of centennial medals to people whose achievement benefited their fellow citizens, their communities, and this province. I would argue that this description continues to apply to many volunteers today and that these people are equally deserving of such high honour.

4:40

This brings up a point of Bill 202 that I would like to address: how do we select the recipients, and what are the details of this entire process? As I said, Bill 202 specifically states that the committee will do a study consultation and recommend to the government this process. So I would leave it to the committee to work it out. Basically, the selection will be left to the committee.

As stated in the bill, the committee should consist of four members representing different not-for-profit organizations in Alberta, and the remaining members will be appointed on the recommendation of the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit. Now, this committee will do all the detailed work and make recommendations to the government. The committee's expertise and knowledge will be necessary in recording and planning the technical framework implementing this award. My suggestion is that the idea of campaigning for the design of the medal will stimulate attention to increase the level of volunteerism in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer a final thought here. I hope that my comments today are not taken to mean that I do not realize the incredible level of appreciation that the province has shown for this valuable sector of our society. I simply believe that as Albertans we are blessed with an incredible amount of prosperity and with the fantastic chance to go one step further, to exceed ourselves and give something back to the people. I think that those people who give a lot to our communities across the province need to be recognized.

Now, we know that we occupy a prominent place in Canada, in North America, and this medal would reflect that prestige and honour. Mr. Speaker, I believe that we must step forward and seize the opportunity to appreciate Albertans that help to make this province the best place to live in the world.

I look forward to the debate from other members on this Bill 202. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome to my fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre.

Well, I'm in agreement with the sponsoring member of this bill. I think we are blessed in Alberta. Certainly, we're darn lucky, those of us that were born here, or darn smart, those that decided to come here, to a place where the oil and gas literally shoot out of the ground. That nonrenewable resource revenue has certainly made us very fortunate people. It really is a blessing.

What I find unfortunate is that we can't use that money to actually support our volunteers. That's not to say that the idea of the member, of giving medals to volunteers, isn't a nice one, but I think that if we really, really did value volunteers, we'd also value the work that they do in the organizations they work for. So if we wanted to help that volunteer charitable sector, that NGO sector, I think there are a number of other things that the government could certainly be doing or which could be recommended by private members to be done.

For example, building capacity in the NGO sector. We have absolutely hollowed out our not-for-profit agencies in Alberta. Over a significant period of time we've taken away their capacity to deal with anything going wrong. The budget amounts that they have, that they are granted either through contract or through a grant scheme from this government, have left them with no ability to recover. For example, if their basement floods and some of their records are ruined or it affects some other way of how they provide business, if they lose a key staff member, they're hooped; their whole service delivery is truly affected in a traumatic way. So it's the health of the organization. When we talk about capacity in any organization, we're partly talking about that organization's ability to recover from a setback, from a tragedy, from lost money, from acts of God, weather, or any number of other things. What we see in Alberta is that the capacity of our NGO voluntary charitable sector is not there anymore. It has been hollowed out.

One of the other issues that is really significant is some kind of program to retain our executive directors and CEOs of the not-for-profit/charitable/NGO sector. There are a number of stats that are out there, and you're certainly welcome to consult Grant MacEwan, which is in my fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre. They have a wonderful voluntary-sector program there, and I think it's from them that we see some statistics that say that in the next five years – and I think we're already one year into those five years, so it could be in the next four years – we're going to lose 80 per cent of our top management in the NGO sector, 80 per cent. Just imagine if we lost, let's say, 80 per cent of the deputy ministers in this government. Imagine how much it would affect how you are able to do your business and services provided to Albertans if you lost 80 per cent of your deputy ministers, who went off to other things. You'd be getting a retention program in place mighty quick, I'll betcha, because it's a significant factor in what's happening in our NGO/voluntary/charitable sector right now.

One of the issues that has been brought up in this House a number of times: again, if you really wanted to help volunteers and recognize volunteers and the agencies that they love and volunteer for, why don't we look at paying equal salaries for workers that are doing the same work as government workers? The obvious example there is, say, social workers. We have social workers on the government payroll and people who are social workers that are contracted by the government through an NGO to do work, and they get paid significantly less money. If we really were interested in this, we could look at some of those very concrete suggestions that have been made by me before in this House and certainly by the NGO sector quite a bit.

Another suggestion is to make the contracts that the government

issues or signs onto with the NGO/charitable/voluntary sector high enough to include those direct and indirect costs of providing the service. What the government tends to do is give a line item grant or a line item contract, so when they look at how much it was costing the government to actually do this and they look down and it says \$50,000, that's what the contract is for. But what's not included in that is the cost of the extra telephone line, the telephone, the desk, the additional photocopying, wear and tear on the photocopier, extra paper, extra office space possibly. Some NGOs have to move to a bigger space in order to be able to provide. None of those costs are included.

We now have a very interesting situation in Alberta where the volunteers and staff are raising money to subsidize the cost of providing that contracted government program. Isn't that interesting? We have volunteers fundraising to subsidize what used to be a government program and that the government has now contracted out with an NGO to provide. People are having to raise money through volunteer efforts, through bake sales and stair climbs and runs and all kinds of other things. So if you really wanted to help the volunteers in Alberta, I have a few other suggestions.

The same thing with grants. I mean, if you're really serious about this, look at the grants that you're providing to the NGO sector and look at increasing the base funding in the sports, recreational, heritage, museum, cultural, multicultural organizations. Again, what's happened over the last couple of years is that the grants that they are eligible to apply for have been reduced because the government brought in a rule that said: "Double-dipping, double-dipping. Terror, terror. Don't let those NGOs apply for any more than one grant." Well, the reason we got more than one grant was because we had to find other ways to try and get that money to the NGOs. A number of the base funding programs got augmented by other programs, so you'd get a special project grant to do something extra. Now the government comes back and goes: "You can't have those two. You can't have base funding and a special project grant. Pick one." Well, the whole point was to be augmenting what was going on, and that's just been completely reversed.

Now, I look at some of the steps forward that the government has taken recently, and there are new matching grants proposals in place. Again, the donation grant program is all about organizations raising more money to be matched by the government. Well, great, but we just talked about the organizations being incredibly stressed and under-resourced to start with, and we're now going to pull staff and volunteer time and effort away from the actual service delivery of what they do to go out and try and raise more money so that they can get it matched by government. There's now an additional step in there of what these volunteers are being asked to do.

4:50

I'm not sure how big a leap forward this was under this new scheme from the government because that's what people are doing. We've now got volunteers that are trying to raise money so that they can get a bit more money from the government so they can actually offer the service they used to be able to offer under a base grant funding. They're not spending time creating or delivering a program; they're spending time trying to raise more money. As it was told to me by a very well-known Tory who donated a lot of money and ran a big organization that gave away a lot of money, he said to me: "Laurie, you've gotta understand. The NGO sector and the corporate sector look to the government for leadership, and if the government is not putting money into these, what does it tell us? It tells us it's not valued by government. We're not going to get any brownie points for putting money into it, so don't bother." I still see that happening. I still see a lack of leadership from this government

actually investing money in programs that they say are important to them.

We've also got an enhanced charitable tax credit. Now, this does work because we know that there's a direct correlation between individuals donating money if they think they're going to get more of a tax credit. You really see that for the organizations who either are not established enough or have been turned down in application through Revenue Canada to get charitable status. It does make a lot of difference in how much money they're able to raise from individuals because people want something back for it.

When I looked at the actual bill – and the member is right. There are a number of volunteer appreciation programs already operating on the provincial – Wild Rose, for example – and on the municipal levels. But I have to say that I'm really, really cynical about having yet another committee that is appointed by members of cabinet. That's what the Lieutenant Governor in Council is. It's members of cabinet appointing the people that go onto these committees. Do I actually see people that are truly representative of our diverse community here, like maybe a few Liberals, maybe a few NDs, ever on these committees? Actually, no, I don't. Isn't that interesting? So, I mean, that's what we're going to get. I can almost guarantee you that a very well-known Tory who heads up Volunteer Alberta is going to end up on this committee. I'd just bet you money. But the person that's not a Tory that heads up one of the municipal ones: betcha they don't get appointed. What do you think? Pardon my cynicism, but I've been here long enough to earn it fair and square because, frankly, you guys don't have follow-through. You say this is for everybody, but you've already been criticized by a number of sources for the way you appoint people to boards that aren't qualified to be there.

When you talk about appointments to the committee in section 3 inside this bill, I don't have a lot of faith that we're going to see a good representation from Albertans. This will be about Tories being appointed.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I suppose I have not been here long enough as to get cynical, but I do definitely support Bill 202, the Alberta Volunteer Service Medal Act, as proposed by my friend the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort. The intent of this bill is to recognize the importance of volunteerism within Alberta and propose the development of a formal provincial honour to be awarded to an outstanding member of our society as recognition for their extensive volunteer contributions. This tribute would be presented in the form of a medal and awarded at a formal gathering.

Perhaps some hon. members may wonder why this government should advance such an award. I put this to every member in this House today, Mr. Speaker. As elected officials we all know the necessity of volunteerism in our society. Indeed, we would not be here if it were not for the many volunteers on our individual campaigns. Many of us will know an outstanding volunteer in our life that's deserving of this medal. Although I doubt the individual I mention will receive this medal as a result of this bill, from a personal level I must put forward to this House that I can think of someone in my family that would be deserving of such an honour, and that is my grandfather, whose name is Phil Hauk, and his lifetime of service going over and above what is required as a teacher, principal, mentor, and community administrator. I think of the organizations, the athletic clubs, the leadership in parks and

recreation, the training of members for the military, and the establishment of home care programs for the elderly. Mr. Speaker, at the age of 90 in Calgary he is still serving others and is a shining example of the positive impact volunteers can have on society as he has had on me.

The reality is that volunteerism is a way of building our society. It is a tradition that dates back long before Confederation, when aboriginal people offered their time, knowledge, and resources to European settlers as they first experienced Canada's harsh winters. The snow on the ground this weekend reminds me of the challenges that our ancestors once faced.

Mr. Speaker, modern volunteerism takes many shapes and forms. Generally, there is a common goal of improving the quality of life for the people that live in our society. If so, then is it not important that volunteerism be acknowledged for its ability to develop communities?

This motion is brought forth by a long-term Calgary MLA and supported by another one, and I have to say that I'm proud this weekend of our game 6 win last night. This notwithstanding, I wish to highlight an example in Edmonton of volunteerism. Edmonton's Fringe festival is the largest of its kind in North America, Mr. Speaker. This festival encourages and promotes the arts in many of its forms, from theatre productions to music performances and kiosks that sell art and handcrafts. It creates some sense of community amongst performers, vendors, and Fringe-goers. It brings Edmontonians together as they venture out of their homes and share their experiences regardless of what partisan affiliation they may have. This year's Fringe festival in Edmonton is in fact seeking 1,000 volunteers.

The Heritage Festival in Edmonton relies extensively upon volunteer capacity. This festival creates a sense of community by promoting the education and experience of the many diverse cultures that come together across Alberta. From this we can infer that volunteerism is capable of fostering a spirit within geographical areas such as neighbourhoods and cities. Furthermore, this demonstrates the development of a community within volunteerism, charities, and nonprofit sectors, one that is capable of propagating and advancing the ideals and spirits of generous acts.

Mr. Speaker, I pose this question: what more can we do to encourage such selfless acts? Not only does volunteerism promote a sense of community, but it also is capable of stimulating the economy. In Alberta there are more than 19,000 charitable organizations creating over 176,000 jobs. Unlike festivals or events described above, these organizations, while still relying on volunteers, strive to raise funds for their cause. In last year's budget our government made this task easier by increasing the charitable tax credit, but there's still a ways to go.

These goals foster relationships between companies and businesses as they volunteer their funds or even their goods or time. Such funds are raised or reinvested into our society and can be distributed in ways such as research grants, contributing to the expansion of our wealth of knowledge. They're even used to fuel the maintenance and growth of these charities. However this is spun, Mr. Speaker, the funds raised by volunteers stimulate our economy directly or indirectly.

In addition to community development and contribution to our economy, the individual who volunteers is educating themselves and further developing skills that are transferable to the workforce. For example, the person who volunteers on a committee is developing teamwork and communication skills, the person that is volunteering in a hospital is learning about the operations of our health care system, and the person who volunteers on a political campaign is learning our profession. Ultimately the individual who volunteers

is not only contributing to an improvement in the quality of the lives of others but also improvement of their own.

These statements, Mr. Speaker, outline the merits of volunteerism, but my question is: do we understand the true impact of volunteers in Alberta? The 2004 national survey by Imagine Canada reports that 1.2 million Albertans are volunteers, one-third of our population. Collectively these individuals contribute a jaw-dropping 214 million volunteer hours, equivalent to more than 111,000 full-time jobs. It is statistics like this that make me even more proud to be an Albertan. Volunteers often go unrecognized, but other provinces have enacted similar measures such as this one. Even Saskatchewan established a volunteer medal in 1995 under the NDP.

Bill 202 should be an important instrument that the government can use to continue its support of outstanding volunteerism that Albertans display. Mr. Speaker, this is why I'm supporting this bill, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon and the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

**Mr. Benito:** Good afternoon, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure and an honour to rise in this Assembly to join the debate on Bill 202, the Alberta Volunteer Service Medal Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort. Bill 202 presents us with an opportunity to recognize Alberta's volunteer sector by a process of creating and awarding an official medal on behalf of the government.

Mr. Speaker, I see this as being more than a mechanism for recognizing the charitable actions of our volunteers. I see this as a chance to encourage citizen engagement and promote an integration of social and economic development in our province's community. This vision would be realized through the process of creating this medal. In my view, it is a process which has the prospect of promoting a collaboration of individuals, organizations, and the government with the objective of cultivating civic pride and generosity. This is an admirable concept.

5:00

It is also a concept which is not necessarily unique. There is precedence in other Canadian jurisdictions which have also implemented similar medals as a way to recognize the volunteers in their populace. As a specific example I would like to refer to the Volunteer Service Medal Act of Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Speaker, the volunteer medal was launched in 2001 in order to recognize the important work being done throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Another factor that played in the creation of this medal was to commemorate the International Year of the Volunteer. Hundreds of nominations were received for this award from every area of the province, from individuals and groups and even international organizations. An independent selection committee was convened to set the award and nomination criteria, review the submissions, and select 96 recipients from among the nominees.

From November 19 to 27, 2001, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador presented 96 medals to deserving recipients in ceremonies across the region. The current Premier of the time, the hon. Roger Grimes, stated:

This volunteer medal is a way of recognizing the long-term accomplishments of volunteers in this province. The Newfoundland and Labrador Volunteer Medal will be presented to a small group of extraordinary volunteers who dedicate their time and efforts to benefit others.

This turned out to be a resounding success. The volunteer sector

of Newfoundland and Labrador applauded the government for recognizing the years of committed service each recipient had contributed to community development, safety, health care, education, sports, arts, and working with the disadvantaged. Of course, it should be noted that in this case the medal was offered over a specific time frame.

Saskatchewan is another example of a province that has also chosen to recognize its volunteers with a medal, but it does so on an annual basis. In commemoration of this province's 90th anniversary the government of Saskatchewan established an official decoration to memorialize the outstanding role that their volunteers have played in society.

The government of Saskatchewan has stated that a formal recognition of volunteers accomplishes two things: it expresses the gratitude of the province's communities, and it provides role models that inspire others. This medal was implemented through amendments to the Provincial Emblems and Honours Act and was passed with all-party support by the Legislative Assembly in the 1995 session.

Just like the concept that Bill 202 proposes to us today, the Saskatchewan volunteer medal is an honour of the provincial Crown. Criteria for the medal are that the recipient has provided without reward or gain outstanding volunteer service or exceptional community involvement in an area that is beyond the performance of the individual's normal duties or the exercise of the responsibilities of a profession to which that individual belongs. A public call for nomination is made annually in the late summer and early fall, and the recipients are announced the following January. It should be mentioned that only individuals may be nominated.

In 1998 the government of Canada accorded status to the Saskatchewan volunteer medal after national and provincial orders and national decorations and medals. This means that recipients of the Saskatchewan volunteer medal are entitled to wear it on national occasions and that recipients of Canada's national honours who also receive Saskatchewan honours may wear both in the sequence approved by the Governor General. This has proven to be an excellent way for the province of Saskatchewan to quantify the value of work done by volunteers. As the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan stated in 2007, "The Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal enables us to publicly thank our generous citizens who have made volunteerism a lifelong priority." Saskatchewan's success with this concept could serve as a template which we should consider applying to our own volunteer sector.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that this government has a long tradition of promoting and recognizing volunteerism. I believe that we can supplement this tradition by learning from the successes of other jurisdictions. The idea of a volunteer medal is not a new one. It has been applied with great success elsewhere. As such, I feel that it is definitely an idea we should consider, and I thank the Member for Calgary-Fort for addressing it. I urge all members to support Bill 202.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, followed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Rogers:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to join the debate on Bill 202, the Alberta Volunteer Service Medal Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort. In theory this bill seems like an excellent proposal on behalf of Alberta's volunteer sector. Day in and day out these individuals put in their time, hard work, and effort to assist with various important causes throughout our province.

Mr. Speaker, volunteers come from all walks of life. They may be educators, advocates, researchers, policy-makers, fundraisers, or small-town or rural councillors. They frequently and often work with many groups that require further assistance, such as children, seniors, immigrants, the disabled, animals, and many more.

Volunteering involves all aspects of society, Mr. Speaker, ranging from environmental monitoring to coaching your local hockey team. They express their generosity through their time and effort with no expectations of financial or any personal gain. In Alberta there are over 176,000 people engaged in the voluntary sector as employees but another 2 and a half million people who volunteer, contributing approximately 449 million hours to community services. Considering that there are 160,000 members on various boards that manage more than \$10 billion, the impact that volunteers have within the province is extremely large. These people are essential to Alberta's success, and Bill 202 would certainly recognize their contributions.

However, Mr. Speaker, we must also recognize that there are already a number of awards in place which recognize volunteerism across our province. The provincial government recognizes the role and contribution of volunteers through various awards given for exceptional service through the Wild Rose Foundation. The Wild Rose Foundation is a lottery-funded agency created by the government in 1984. Its mandate is to essentially assist and promote the spirit of volunteerism and philanthropy throughout Alberta's communities. I look at my own community, the city of Leduc, and I think of the many volunteers: the people working with the food bank, the victims' assistance society, hockey, minor sports, and in other communities like Devon, Beaumont, right across Leduc county. I know for a fact that our larger community would be that much less without these individuals.

Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to be a part of a function hosted by the Leduc-Nisku Economic Development Authority just last Tuesday morning, where we had some 400-plus volunteers in attendance for breakfast, and they were all thanked for the tremendous contribution that they make to our various communities in Alberta's international region.

5:10

Mr. Speaker, the Stars of Alberta awards is one way that the Wild Rose Foundation uses to recognize the achievements and benevolence that many Albertans demonstrate. These awards honour individuals that are nominated by community members and organizations for their remarkable volunteer contributions. They are presented to six individuals each year in the following three categories: youth, adult, and seniors. Two representatives from each category are presented with this prestigious award. The recipients of this award will also be inducted into Alberta's Volunteer Wall of Fame. Additions to this wall are part of a 10-year commitment by the provincial government to recognize the work and success of these exceptional citizens, and it's just a great way to celebrate that achievement.

Mr. Speaker, if I may, I'd like to highlight one example of the many great and deserving individuals of the Stars of Alberta volunteer award from 2007. Ms Helen Wentz from Taber was one of the recipients from last year. She began as a teenager assisting her church by teaching Sunday school and organizing a youth group. Among her other numerous achievements Helen helped to develop what is now known as the Taber Crime and Abuse Prevention Society, that stemmed from a passion for assisting victims in need. In 2003 she became a founding member of the Taber Community Against Drugs when it became apparent that there was an increasing problem with illegal drugs in the area. Her recognition with the Stars of Alberta volunteer award is a shining example of our

government's gratitude for her great service and time, ingredients which have contributed to the well-being of the Taber community.

In addition to the Stars of Alberta volunteer awards, the corporate volunteer awards of excellence is another example of our government's commitment to paying tribute to volunteerism. The corporate volunteer awards of excellence are designed to honour those efforts made by companies who contribute to the community in which they operate. There are three categories, Mr. Speaker – small, medium, and large businesses – and the awards are presented every June. The awards are an open competition for any local or international business that displays dedication and commitment to improving the communities in which they work.

In 2007 the winners of this award included Full of Beans from Irricana; Milano for Men from Red Deer; J.K.R. Excavating from Okotoks; Tim Hortons in St. Albert; the ATCO Group, a little company out of Calgary; and Intuit Canada, based right here in the capital city. Each of these recipients donated their labour and resources for charitable purposes across our province. This embodies the generous spirit of Alberta's businesses. There are many other businesses that encourage a culture of giving and volunteering. It makes me proud that our government will continue the recognition for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, our province is also a proud supporter of volunteer week, which this year falls between April 27 and May 3. This is an internationally designated week that increases awareness for those in the volunteer sector. Volunteer week provides a forum for those involved in the community to present different ideas and promote collaborative efforts to help achieve common goals. Along with Volunteer Alberta the government of Alberta facilitates a provincial focus to this event. This relationship is an excellent example of the province working alongside the volunteer sector, and it should be encouraged to continue well into the future.

Mr. Speaker, just to sum up, Bill 202, the Alberta Volunteer Service Medal Act, is, I would say, a great concept because it reinforces the fact that there are many magnanimous citizens whose efforts and character should be recognized. That being said, the Alberta government has many terrific initiatives and awards in place which already acknowledge our gratitude to our volunteers. The Stars of Alberta volunteer awards and the corporate volunteer awards of excellence are effective devices which help to foster community awareness and civic altruism.

I praise the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort for bringing this debate before this Assembly, and I would say that his intentions are extremely admirable. However, I believe that this is not the best vehicle to show all our volunteers how much their contributions mean to our province, and as such, Mr. Speaker, I regret that I cannot support the bill.

Thank you.

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

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some of the previous speakers have mentioned the importance of volunteerism in Alberta, and I certainly would agree with that. If one looks at the many fields of our lives here in Alberta in which volunteers are such an important part – for example, the cultural community depends to a large extent upon volunteers. Many of the charitable organizations giving help to disabled persons rely heavily upon volunteers. There are many charities, sports, recreation, seniors, health care.

The justice system, in which I have been involved, also relies heavily upon volunteers. We have lots of lawyers who give their services to legal aid, student legal services at the universities as well,

and also other aspects of the justice system which are aided by volunteers, including organizations like the John Howard Society.

All of these various fields of endeavour contribute greatly to the richness of life here in the province of Alberta, and I think that without those volunteers we would have a large burden to bear not only in terms of the hours involved but in terms of the economic cost of replacing volunteers were they not available.

I think that in order to have strong, healthy communities, it is certainly incumbent upon us to encourage the volunteer sector, and I would commend the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort for this endeavour. I think one way in which we can encourage more volunteerism is certainly to give them more recognition, and what better way to recognize the contributions of some of the outstanding volunteers than to award them a commendation such as a medal.

As I mentioned, economics are one factor which would certainly dictate that volunteers are an important part of the communities in which we live. The revenues created from the 176,000 Albertans employed in the volunteer sector are very, very considerable, and I think that, as I said, without their invaluable contributions the amount that we would have to spend to replace them would be truly quite significant.

Some comments with respect to the actual awarding of the medal itself. I think that the criteria would have to be very carefully thought out. The medal would have to be credible in terms of the criteria which were used in selecting those recipients. I would suggest that the consultation with the Governor General's office, who's in charge of the medals and honours in Canada, would dictate some of the things, including the appropriate numbers of medals which could be given out from time to time. It would be necessary, in order to be recognized by the Governor General's office as a proper order of decoration in Canada, that those medals would have a certain exclusivity and certain criteria with respect to awarding those medals.

Another comment that I have with respect to it would be the actual naming of the medal. The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort has suggested that the Alberta volunteer service medal would be an appropriate name. I would suggest that he might want to consider some alternative names to that because there is a national medal in Canada called the volunteer service medal. It was given out to all of those who served in the Second World War and in Korea, anyone who had served a minimum of six months in the Forces. Both of my parents had the honour of receiving those medals. There might be some slight confusion. In addition to the wartime service and military service, those were also given out in the last 10 years to members of the merchant navy, who were at last recognized for their contributions during the last war.

5:20

So with those comments with respect to the methods of awarding them, the criteria for selection, and so on and possibly tweaking the name of the medal, I would certainly wholeheartedly agree to support the proposition put forth by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, and I would urge members to support Bill 202.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Marz:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter into the debate on Bill 202, the Alberta Volunteer Service Medal Act, sponsored by the Member for Calgary-Fort. I think the very fact that we're here debating this bill today shows how much we in Alberta value our volunteers and appreciate all the work they do. I also appreciate what I believe the Member for Calgary-Fort is attempting to do in recognizing the contributions of our volunteers.

As I said, they do a great deal of work in all our communities and deserve to be appreciated and deserve our recognition.

I participate yearly in volunteer appreciation events throughout my constituency, and I can tell you it is a great celebration. You get to know exactly how much work is actually being done by all the great people that volunteer in so many aspects of our daily lives. For many of us in this Assembly, if not all of us, just the very fact that we volunteered in our communities probably was a factor in our eventually ending up here. People do get to know you through your volunteerism, and they appreciate what you do, and they usually ask you to do more. When you volunteer, you end up having a difficult time saying no. I guess that's how I ended up being a Boy Scout master when I only had a daughter. I didn't know how to say no. I didn't know how to say no when I was asked to coach hockey and become a manager for a hockey team. I never did it because I expected any recognition. At the time I just did it to contribute to my community and felt it was expected. We take a lot from our living in this province, and it's a chance for us to give back. I think it's a real honour for us to volunteer, to give back to the community that has done well by us.

I often tell young people that volunteerism on your resumé never hurt anybody and probably contributes to your getting a job in a lot of cases. Potential employers recognize that if you're a volunteer, you're willing to do something for nothing. You're willing to go the extra mile. I know I certainly look for that in a resumé when I am interviewing some people for a job.

This is a difficult bill, Mr. Speaker, to speak in opposition to. However, I do have some concerns with the awarding of a medal as a way of recognizing volunteer efforts. I personally always thought that medals should be reserved for those extraordinary deeds that people do, such as a person saving a life, often putting themselves at risk in the process of doing that, or for actions that are carried out routinely by people such as our firefighters or emergency personnel or police and especially our armed forces, who daily volunteer their services at the risk of their own lives. Those are the actions that I feel are more medal worthy. I feel the more medals that are awarded, the less significant they become. I know I would have a very difficult time donning a medal and standing at a Remembrance Day ceremony next to a young person that had his leg shot off and comparing the criteria for getting my medal to his or hers. I believe that using a medal to recognize the efforts of our volunteers takes away the significance of the medals of those who put their lives on the line every day and are recognized when they get a medal.

I certainly support the idea of recognizing the contributions of volunteers, but I feel a way other than the awarding of a medal can be found. As I said before, I myself volunteered for many years and didn't receive any recognition for it, but I have received three medals over the years. I've never worn them, and I won't.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I do support the intent of the bill in recognizing volunteerism, but I would say let's reserve the awarding of medals for our heroes who put their lives at risk.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would note that the clock is approaching 5:30, the normal adjournment, and given the tremendous progress that we made this afternoon, I would like to move that we in fact call it 5:30 and adjourn until 7:30 this evening, when we reconvene in Committee of Supply.

**The Speaker:** Before the hon. members go, I understand that there's a problem in several buildings here in the government precinct with respect to telephones. Apparently, the telephones are out in the Annex building, the Haultain building, and another building, not in

this building, so if you have emergency phone calls to make, just be guided and use the phones in this building.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:27 p.m.]





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